

ROLE OF RADIO IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NORTH EAST

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Introduction

Radio is an effective medium in building a democratic society wherein every individual finds a space for himself and his society. As an effective medium of communication radio in a country like India where half of the population is illiterate and living in villages and remote areas is indispensable even in the era of satellite communication and information technology in order to aware and educate the people about health and hygiene, education, socio-economic empowerment and agriculture as well as rural development due to its extensive reach, effectiveness, popularity and acceptability. The use of radio in India specially in the rural setting is well accepted and well needed right from the beginning for obvious reasons like costs considerations, non-availability of electricity, poor transportation, high rate of illiteracy and indigenous nature of the programme. Radio has many advantages which makes it a popular medium for the people. Being an audio medium, radio reaches among rural people through receiving sets while crossing the barrier of illiteracy which makes it a popular mass medium to meet their information, education and entertainment needs through radio. According to Ramula 'rural development' means not only a process of realizing certain goals or values such as improved health, housing, communication, transportation and better nutrition but also a qualitative change in the socio-economic and political spheres in the direction set by the authoritative decision makers. It is a process of change that in political and physical structures as well as the value system and way of life of the people. The focus of this study has been investigated to examine the role of radio in rural development with special reference to North East India in the present scenario of information era.

Role of Radio in Rural System of Education

Pandey, Roy and Khan confined in his study that Radio can complement traditional forms of educational delivery. It enhances learning and provides information on various issues. With its wide reach, mobility and low cost, radio obviously has tremendous potential in India. While the AIR national channel broadcast programmes for learners spread throughout the country, the setting up of a large number of FM stations has opened up new avenues for greater use of radio in educational purposes. The applications of satellite based digital radio broadcasting systems in delivering distance education can be made cost effective in transmission and distribution of audio-visual courseware while using terrestrial FM radio transmitters in conjunction with satellite radio transponders will enable the global distribution of local content thereby helping the expansion of distance education. Thus, the concept of extension of education beyond institutional campuses emerged in the form of distance education or distance learning. Viewed as the means for improvement of social and economic conditions of the people particularly in developing countries with large populations in remote and rural areas, distance education is often used to enhance primary and secondary schooling in remote rural areas.

The Indian government's effort to provide community radio sets in the villages failed miserably since the benefit could not reach the rightful persons (Suriakanthi, 1995). People like to hear the reality of an event rather than a doctored account of an event. Since the real India exists in the villages, radio's goal for serving the masses has become more relevant in these days. Suriakanthi also predicted that a time will come in the near future when radio will be of the people, by the people and for the people. For this the broadcasting medium must be decentralized to make everybody a broadcaster as well as a listener and radio clubs will act as resource centers for field-based programmes aimed at achieving overall social development. Now Radio has playing in Northeast India as a teacher, educator and guider to the rural people of region by setting the Community Radio and broadcasting a valuable and interesting programmes.

Radio as a Policy Maker in Rural Development

According to Sardana (1995), members of the Panchayati Raj institutions must not be seen as public watch dogs keeping a vigil on government functioning rather they must be involved in decision-making exercises in an atmosphere of understanding and support from the top administrators while enabling them to perform their duties. They are the mirrors with the responsibility of reflecting the true image of the organization to the public. LumkoMtimdeet *al.* (1998) discussed the role of community radio stations in building participatory democracy and development in Africa. Manuel Chapparro (1998) analyzed the local and community radio in Europe in respect of democratization of telecommunications and the decentralization of media to communities through municipal radio stations.

Singh (2003) conducted an empirical study in Silchar town of Assam with an attempt to analyse the relationship between mass media communication and level of modernity among the middle class youth. The findings indicated that the mass media exposure alone was not solely responsible for the modernity level of an individual but there was a positive relationship between the two. Though variables like caste, class, occupation and education were found to be influencing it, there seemed to be a negative relationship between the caste and the level of modernity. However, the relationship between the two is far from being clearly defined as most of the individuals in the higher caste had medium level of modernity while some of the individuals in lower caste had high level of modernity. Since no respondent had primary level of education and very low level of modernity it was surmised that there was a positive relationship between an education and modernity.

The importance of communication through Radio in mobilizing people and seeking their willing participation in the development of a country is well recognized. Social scientists observed that access of required information is directly proportionate with the rate of any integrated development like rural development. At the same time it should consider the dominant features of social, cultural and religious stratification in the rural society. The spread of technological development in communication has changed the face of media and society in the past two decades. But these developments became so fast that social scientists and researchers divided on the issue of its impact on different communities and social groups. The delusions of new technologies to improve things made their inroads in developing countries like India in such a way that their multiple application increases only complications.

Radio has definitely an important role to play. In an Open and Distance Learning system, Community Radio can be educative and informative at the same time. Community Radio can play in peace building in an ethnic strife hit region as Assam. Community Radio can allow for more involvement of key people such as policy makers and make the people aware of the developments.

Role of Radio in Agriculture Awareness

Constituting 16 percent of the world's population, India is really in a critical condition. More than one-third of its citizens live below poverty line with more than 70 percent in rural areas. Agriculture remains a key sector of the Indian economy. Hence, providing timely information on agriculture and weather, social health care, employment etc. is utmost important to improve the conditions of rural people. Kanchan Kumar (2005) stated how the broadcasters conceptualize public access to airwaves and where the movement lies within the context of globalization and communication technologies. Peter Taylor *et al.* (2006) described social change as a process of dialogue, debate and action resulting in major shifts in social norms. Jorge Acevedo (2006) described community radio as a tool for democratic participation and human development. For this radio playing an important role now a days in remote area of North East India by providing appropriate information about pesticide and new techniques of agriculture system. Farmers are using their bids, pesticides and agriculture tools on the basis of information broadcasted by radio.

Role of Radio in Positive Social Change

Community radio has to potential to positive social change in rural parts of Northeast India. For example Cachar district of Assam situated in remote area of the country and only radio has giving platform for the villagers to communicate and air their grievances and requirements for better development of the area.

Even international studies reveals that a large number of developed and developing countries including China, Australia, Canada, Itali, Nigeria, Pakistan are also using radio successfully in reaching, “hard to reach”, rural audiences quickly and quite inexpensively a proper mean of communication. BBS Roy (1992) also observed through his study on *Television for Rural Development* that exposure to radio was found to be significantly high as 80% respondents having access to the medium and getting benefit of exposure to the broadcasts. He also pointed out that rural cum agriculture programme were high on the priority of listeners. MeharaMashani (1976) has rightly observed that public participation is only possible with local radio in order to implementation and successful of programme for achieving the objective of medium as an agent of socio-economic rural transformation. In another study conducted in the three villages of Hisar district of the Haryana state conducted by two faculty members of the Haryana Agricultural University based on TV viewing patterns of rural audience to ascertain the usefulness of KrishiDarshanprogramme was found a large majority of the respondents listen to radio programmes related to farming. They felt that they were being apprised about recent practices, more through radio than TV. Radio was noted to be a more credible source of agricultural information even in those households which had a TV sets. In northeast radio also playing an important role for buildup the society by providing information and educate them how to make society better where so many myth and social evil was spreaded.

Radio in Northeast

Assam has radio stations at Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Diphu, Guwahati, Haflong, Jorhat, Kokrajhar, Nagaon, Silchar and Tezpur. All India Radio Station Dibrugarh was opened on 2nd February, 1969. Mizoram has radio stations at Aizawl (31st July, 1966), Lungleh and Saiha. Nagaland has radio stations at Kohima, Makokchung, Tuensang and Mon. Tripura has radio stations at Agartala, Belonia and Kailasahar. Sikkim has radio stations at Gangtok (2nd October 1974). Arunachal Pradesh has radio stations at Itanagar, Pasighat, Tawang (23rd September, 1974), Tezu and Zero. Broadcasting of radio programmes in 24 tribal languages for listeners in NEFA started from Guwahati radio station on 4th May, 1957.

Meghalaya has radio stations at Jowai, Nongstoin, Shillong, Tura and William Nagar. Manipur has radio stations at Imphal (15th August 1963), Churachadpur and Ukhrul. The AIR Imphal station broadcasts at 882 kHz, 4775 kHz, 7335 kHz and FM in 103.5 MHz frequencies. The main regional language used in Manipur is Meiteilon (Manipuri), but Manipur radio stations also broadcast in Hindi, English and other languages.

The broadcasting service in the Barak Valley was started with the establishment of the All India Radio Silchar on 11th August, 1972. It was inaugurated by the then supply minister of Assam, Mahitosh Purakayastha.

The primary language of programme is Bengali but it also includes other languages such as Manipuri and Dimas. The regions covered by All India Radio Silchar are Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts. It also partly covers the hilly region of North Cachar and bordering areas of Manipur and Mizoram. Its primary coverage area is 5540 sq. km. (4.2 km. redial) and secondary coverage area is 6940 sq. km. (47 km. redial). Its transmitter is located in Bhorakhai (behind N.I.T.) which has a power of 2.0 KW and frequency of 828 KHz (362.32 M Band). The height of antenna is 108 metres. The commissioning of permanent transmitter building was in February, 1976 whereas the commissioning of permanent studio building was in December, 1976 and the commissioning of Regional News Unit was on 1st February, 1978. All India Radio, Silchar has three transmissions-First Transmission ((5.55 a.m. to 9.35 a.m.), Second Transmission (12 p.m. to 3 p.m.) and Third Transmission (5 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.). The timings of regional news are 7.35 a.m. to 7.40 a.m. and 7.55 p.m. to 8.5 p.m.

The first programme broadcast from All India Radio Silchar was recorded music programmes, followed by the recorded drama programmes made and broadcast from Kolkata. After sometime gradually recorded music programmes such as RabindraSangeet, Nazrulgeet, and Lokgeet prepared with the help of local artistes were broadcast.

There are various programmes broadcast from the Radio Stations of Northeast India. For example, Music Programme, Women's Programme, Children's Programme, Literary Programme, Agriculture Programme, Rural Development

Programme, Sports Programme, Family Welfare and Health Programmes, Commercial Sponsored Programmes, Other Programmes, Special Programme, Dialect Programmes

There are different wing setups for facilitated the programmes and broadcast information very easily. Engineering Wing, Administrative Wing, Security Wing, Audience Research Wing, Subsidiary Office of AIR, Silchar, News Services Division etc.

From the above discussion it is now clear that there are various paradigms and approaches about the effects of radio on society. Some researchers are of the view that there is direct effect of Radio on society and individuals while the others say that there is limited impact of radio on society and that is also under certain conditions. Some claims that there is no any direct effect of radio at all due to lack of appropriate and suitable mode of information. The differential opinions of the scholars on this issue make this a subject for fresh social investigation about the role of radio in the rural settings even in the era of satellite communication and information technology. In conclusion it is state that Radio gives a platform for many unheard voices and enables participatory development of Northeast. In rural area of Northeast India radio has been playing a vital role through programmes and creates awareness regarding many issues of society. Radio has enhances learning and provides information on various issues of the country. With its wide reach, mobility and low cost, radio obviously has tremendous potential in Northeast India.

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