



Role of radio in rural development: With special reference to air

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Abstract

Media is one of the major contributors in development of any nation. Media is called as the fourth pillar of our Indian democracy. India was an agriculture-based nation but with the advent of industrialization people moved from agriculture-based economy to industry-based economy. And those who chose agriculture were left behind in the changing times. Radio being an important medium for exchange of information in the widest areas kept these people intact with the changing times. Today's age is the age of information, and radio is one of the most effective medium of mass media in comparable terms of its coverage, portability, cost effectiveness and reliability.

Radio has been an important component in rural development of our nation. It caters to the remote areas of the nation and provides infotainment to all. All India Radio being the largest media unit of Government of India, broadcasts programs for all generations and tries to bridge the gap between the city life and the rural life. This paper will help to analyze the role of radio in spreading information and bringing the rural population in the mainstream.

Keywords: radio, AIR, rural population

Introduction

Across the globe, radio is the most used mass media. It can truly be characterized as a medium that reaches the 'masses'. No other medium of mass media has the capacity to reach a large number of people at the same time catering their entertainment, educational and informative purposes. Radio as a medium is playing a significant role in the dissemination of information to the masses and also nation building by keeping people in close contact with our rich and diversified Indian culture. It reaches to the most remote areas of the nation and caters interests of all age groups with low cost civic sphere. The cost effectiveness of this medium makes it the most popular among people. It is a source of infotainment and useful tool of communication. The phrase, "a radio service by the people, close to the people and for the people", correctly defines the important characteristics of this medium. In India more than 70% of the population lives in villages and are not actively connected with different forms of media. But the population residing in these places, irrespective of the hurdles of literacy, electricity, connectivity listens to the radio.

All India radio: the public broadcaster

All India Radio came into existence on 8 June 1936. The first attempt to reach the rural population in India was made by the Bombay Station which started broadcasting in local languages like Marathi, Gujarati etc in 1933 (Luthra, 1986)^[4]. Initially some dramas were broadcasted on radio and they proved to be very popular and gave some effective lessons to the listeners. The British Government installed transmitters in villages, parks and community places. These transmitters were taken over by AIR. After India gained independence, the role of AIR increased immensely. New stations were set up and new programs were launched on experimental basis for infotainment of public.

Aims of AIR

- Welfare of people residing in the nation.
- Widen the knowledge of people by acknowledging national ideals.
- Provide full entertainment to people after a long day of labour.
- Community oriented programs for upliftment of people.
- Use of local language and local dialects from regional stations.

AIR broadcasts in many local languages to serve the various parts of the nation. It makes it easier to send the message to the masses. It also encourages the rural population to participate in the development process and makes them aware so that they can bring changes in the lives. Radio is a very effective medium to reach people because it can be heard by people who cannot read newspapers, it can be heard without any electricity consumption, it can be heard by anybody at any time because of its cost effectiveness. Today AIR has a network of 262 radio stations covering nearly 92% of the total area of the nation. It broadcasts a variety of programs in 23 languages and 146 dialects. Its external services are broadcasted in 11 Indian and 16 foreign languages with a reach to more than 100 countries of the world.

AIR broadcasts a variety of programs for the listeners. The programs broadcasted not only concentrate on agriculture-based programs like Kisan Vani, Kheti Ri Baatan, etc, but also touch up on the other aspects of a rural man. Programs based on music, drama, etc are also given equal importance. Youth based program like Yuva Vani caters to the needs of the youth of the nation. It provides infotainment of the youth including topics like general awareness, music, employment related updates, etc.

The basic structure of programs aired on All India Radio includes news; informative talks and discussions, dramas, skits and plays; folk music; programs of special interests of women and children. These programs are especially.

designed to serve the special target groups of people. Programs like Jaymala—which is a special program for the army personnels of our nation, is aired keeping in mind the stressful lives of the army men of India who serve the nation staying away from their homes for months and had to adjust in the most adverse climatic conditions. Sakhi–Saheli is another program aired on AIR which is especially for the women population. Mostly the rural women spend their days staying in their homes with almost no awareness of the outside world. This program provides infotainment to such women. These types of programs which are produced for a special group of listeners helps in the development of that particular community.

Since its formation All India Radio is living up to its motto of ‘Bahujan Hitaye, Bahujan Sukhaya’. Being the public-broadcaster, it is dedicated for the welfare of people rather than the profit making. Its main objective is to inform, educate and entertain the people.

All India radio in the era of digitalization

All India Radio also known as Akashvani has captured the minds and hearts of people since its inception. It has one of the largest libraries of Indian music recordings. As the digitalization age came up rapidly, AIR also adapted itself with the changing times. Now anyone can listen to AIR and their favorite broadcasts in online mode also on the News on AIR app and AIR website not just in Hindi or English but in major regional languages. The news service of AIR makes it the most reliable source of information. All of this truly makes AIR the broadcaster for public.

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