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Community Radio Broadcasting In Chhattisgarh: Relevance And Challenges

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Abstract: The geographical and cultural condition of Chhattisgarh state makes it very suitable for community media. There is a lot of diversity here culturally and linguistically as well. Language, lifestyle of people, food, art and folk music, all effectively define the culture of Chhattisgarh, but the mainstream media has been constantly ignoring these heritages and the cultural aspirations of the people, for which there is a need for a medium that can become the voice of the people. Due to inaccessible hilly terrain, dense forests and the network of rivers, many areas of this state remain cut off from each other. During the rainy season many areas are in the grip of heavy rains and it becomes difficult to reach these areas. In such a situation, even restoring communication services is a big challenge, in which the mainstream media has often failed. According to the geographical economic and cultural situation of Chhattisgarh, radio proves to be the most suitable of all mediums of communication. Here the need of communication of the people can be fulfilled easily and effectively through the broadcast media. This paper points out the challenges towards the community radio. It also discusses about the relevance of the community radio as a medium of communication for marginalized people.

Keywords - Community media, Community Radio, Broadcasting, Chhattisgarh, Development.

1- Background of the study

Radio has been known and recognized as a reliable and popular mass medium since its inception. Radio is the most widely available mass medium in the world for over a century. Its importance remains the same today as it was decades ago. Community radio broadcasting was an important step taken for development needs of developing and underdeveloped countries. Over the years community radio has become source of strength for downtrodden, marginalized, and oppressed people. Community radio is a radio for the people, of the people and by the people, it has democracy in its roots. Today, community radio is proving to be a medium to help people, reach various goals of development by connecting people with issues of public concern in different communities and institutions, in different areas of the country. UNESCO defines a community broadcasting media as-

‘Those which are independent, Not-for-profit, and governed by and in the service of the communities they serve.’

Thus, according to UNESCO, community media form a third pillar between commercial media and public service media, thereby creating a healthy democracy. Community radio is uniquely capable of meeting the development, information and entertainment needs of the area it serves. It must provide what are in fact 'essential services' to the community served. It must provide unbiased information, links and feedback that are difficult to duplicate and of great value to the community and particularly in areas where literacy rates are low, or women are under represented. Health, Poverty, Agriculture, Access to water, Sanitation, alcoholism, low income, superstitions, there are the major issues to look after for the development and improvement in

their society. Participatory communication is today a vital solution for the development needs of underprivileged groups.

Large number of people in Chhattisgarh are living with very low living standards. Also there are a lot of social evils, in its society. Society of Chhattisgarh is somehow different from the other parts of the country. They have their own tradition and formats to communicate the messages to generations, but in time being some of them, which we can say the marginalized and downtrodden, are left out by the mainstream media of the state as well as the National Media. They are truly voiceless in absence of a truly community based, participatory mode of communication. However community radio has proved a better tool for participatory communication, and also a tool for development but in Chhattisgarh there are only a hand pick number of community radios are working. In that case the questions rises that how community radio can help them. This study is to all about finding the answer of that question so that how this medium will help the oppressed society and community especially of this state and will spread awareness and empowerment. In Chhattisgarh there are some community radio stations which are serving different communities with different objectives. But collectively, all these radio stations work keeping in mind the interest and development of a particular place and a particular community. Community radio broadcasting has found its way in Chhattisgarh from the year 2009, when Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya, Raipur got permission for establishing a CRS. The main motto behind this is to help development in agriculture and allied fields. After this, various community radio stations were started for different communities in the state. Some radio stations are being operated in educational institutions while some are being operated by various non-government and not-for-profit organizations. They are associated with a particular community with their own specialized goals. However, everyone's strategic goal is to connect their community with development. To create awareness among them and at the same time to empower them. In such a situation, this study investigates how community radio fulfills the aspirations of the deprived communities of this region.

2- Emergence of Community radio broadcasting in Chhattisgarh

Journey of community radio broadcasting is started here with Radio IGKV, Raipur in early 2009, in very slow pace. Even after more than a decade since the inception of the first community radio, the number of community radios in the state has not increased as much as it should have. There are only 15 operational CRS in Chhattisgarh as on date 17th January 2025. This paper dealt with the concentration of the community radio stations, specialty and the particularity of the area which they serves, their target audience or community, their goals, and about their content. Radio broadcasting in India started in 1920s, while it took decades for radio broadcasting service to start in Chhattisgarh. The first radio broadcasting station in Chhattisgarh has started on October 2, 1963 from Raipur by All India Radio. According to Prasar Bharti there are 13 radio stations in state, namely Ambikapur, Bilaspur, Jagdalpur, Raigarh, Raipur, saraipalli, Manendragarh, Konta, Kharod, Korba, Pandariya, Kanker and Dongargarh. FM service was started in the state in 1991-92, whose stations are in Raipur, Bilaspur and Raigarh (**Patel, 2020**). Gyanwani has also broadcasted in the state as an experiment of educational radio. The broadcast of Gyanwani started under the joint aegis of AIR and Indira Gandhi National Open University (**Sreedher & Murada, 2018**). Raipur was chosen as the center for this broadcast service in the state. In September 2009, Raipur based Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya Received a letter of intent from the ministry of information and broadcasting for setting up a community radio station. Thus the first community radio broadcast started in the state. Today total 15 community radio stations are working in the state, as on 17th January 2025. The list of community radio stations of the state is given below-

Table 1: Community radio stations in Chhattisgarh

| S. No. | Name of Community Radio Station | Organization | district | Category |
|--------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Radio Neotech 90.4 FM | Neotech Technical and Management College | Sarguja | Educational Institution |
| 2 | Radio Raman | Dr. C.V. Raman University, Kota | Bilaspur | Education Institution |
| 3 | Hamar Radio (90.4 FM) | Vikas Anusandhan Sansthan | Surajpur (Bishrampur) | NGO |
| 4 | Radio Saawan | Govt. Boys Higher Secondary School | Balrampur | Educational Institution |
| 5 | Radio Samwad 90.8 FM | Kushabhau Thakre Patrakarita Avam Jansanchar Vishwavidyalaya | Raipur | Educational Institution |
| 6 | Arpaa Radio (90.8 MHz) | Libra Welfare Society, Bilaspur | Bilaspur | NGO |
| 7 | Sahyogi Radio | Sahyogi Mitra Mandal | Durg | NGO |
| 8 | Radio Lokwani | Sutra Samaj Seva Sansthan | Durg | NGO |
| 9 | Radio Sangwari | Samata jan Kalyan Samiti | Rajnandgaon | NGO |
| 10 | Radio Dhoom 91.2 MHz | Janmitram Kalyan Samiti | Raigarh | NGO |
| 11 | Gyanodaya 91.20 | Surguja Gyanoday Association | Surajpur | NGO |
| 12 | 90.4 FM | Sanjay Nishakt Jan Kalyan Samiti | Kabirdham | NGO |
| 13 | Radio Raipuriya 90.00 | The Vision Foundation | Sundarnagar, Raipur | NGO |
| 14 | Mitan Radio 91.2 MHz | Relief and Help Society | Durg | NGO |
| 15 | Radio Mahtari 90.00 | Nav Kaushal Vikas Sansthan | Mahasamund Chhattisgarh | NGO |

This table shows that as on date there are 15 community radio stations are operational, out of which 4 stations are run by educational institutions while 11 are run by NGOs. Apart from these, a community radio station, operating in the Krishi Vigyan Kendra category has already been closed.

3- Objectives

This paper makes an in-depth study on community radio stations operating in Chhattisgarh with the main objective of;

- Points out the challenges towards the community radio in Chhattisgarh.
- It discusses about the relevance of the community radio as a medium of communication for marginalized people.

4- Methodology

This paper used document review to respond to the research problem. It reviewed the existing study on community radio, latest policy document from the MIB and key informants' interviews to gather the required data. Here using the case study method, the availability, potential and challenges faced by various community radio stations in Chhattisgarh have been studied in depth. The Acceptance of community radio by people has also been measured through survey method.

5- Radio IGKV 90.4 FM Raipur: A Case Study

5.1- Overview of the radio station

In the year 2009, with great enthusiasm and hope, the ministry of Information and Broadcast of the Govt. of India issued the first license for a community radio station for Chhattisgarh to the Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya. Thus Radio IGKV 90.4 FM became the first community radio of the state. Radio IGKV aims to help development in agriculture and allied fields by increasing quality manpower, providing relevant technological solutions, piloting their fields, uses and supporting other related activities. The university has the objective to at least double the crop yields in the region with appropriate increase in livestock husbandry, fishery and agro forestry. It was operated by Krishi Vigyan Kendra of Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya, Krishak Nagar in Raipur. Aim of this CRs is to encouraging innovations in agriculture to facilitate farmers. Unfortunately, this radio station could not run for long and due to technical flaws, this radio station failed in its initial phase.

5.2- Strategies for Development goals

In an agriculture based state, the importance of community radio in disseminating agricultural information was understood. After getting the radio license, many notable steps were taken for program production and broadcasting. At the initial stage, programs based on agriculture development were prepared through people associate with the local Akashwani radio station.

5.3- Challenges faced in operation

This station proved unsuccessful during its initial operation. Being an initial experiment, the first problem came in the field of technology. The initial broadcasting area was less than 1 kilometer and even after that, difficulties in broadcasting continued. It was difficult to be heard by the community. Within a few days, the radio antenna was damaged due to weather. Academic engagement of related people, lack of will power, continuous difficulties in broadcasting and absence of skilled human resource, the radio could not be revived and its broadcasting stopped completely in initial stages itself.

6- Radio Raman 90.4 FM, Kota, Bilaspur: A Case Study

6.1- Overview of the radio station

Radio Raman 90.4 FM is a Community Radio Broadcasting service situated in campus of C.V. Raman University, Kota in Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh state. Radio Raman broadcasts informational and educational programmes to the 15 km radius of area which included approx. 225 villages. This radio station has functioned from 31st May 2014 with detailed aims and objectives which are as follows, Radio Raman is not for profit but to inform the community through education, entertainment, health and awareness. This radio station broadcasts informative programs daily to a community of about 225 villages within a radius of 15 kilometer. Radio Raman is associated with every section of the community like children, women, farmers, youth and elders through various programmes. People of every class are provided information according to their interest. Apart from the above programs, many other programs of development are also broadcast from here. 6 days a week from 11:00 am to 4.30 pm daily 5.30 hours broadcast is being done from here. From the year 2014 till now, this radio station has maintained consistency in its work.

6.2- Strategies for Development goals

The location of the university has been very supportive. There is easy contact with nearby villages, tribal people and schools. So the program started for children is attended by children from nearby localities. The university has adopted five nearby villages and aim to involve school children from those villages with the programs. Along with this, a small pocket radio is also distributed to connect with the listeners. Initially it started from these adopted villages only. Earlier people had no idea about community broadcasting. Today people recognize that this is the radio of their community.

6.3- Challenges faced in operation

The station have faced many difficulties in broadcasting. There is no dearth of funds and resources like other radio stations. But when the transmitter broke down, it had to be sent out to be built. It used to take at least a month and in the meanwhile listeners used to go away from the station. And then everything has to start from the beginning.

7- Radio Lokwani 89.6 FM: A Case Study

7.1- Overview of the radio station

Radio Lokwani is a CRS operating in Patan, Durg district. This station is operated by an NGO named, Sutra Samaj Seva Sansthan. Its main objective is the all-round development of the rural people of the state. This station is striving for education, health and awareness along with promoting the local language. Lokwani Durg 89.6 is also an online community radio station from Chhattisgarh. Its programmes mainly contains information that will be helpful to the local farmers.

Operating in Patan area of Durg district, this radio station tries to connect with maximum number of people through its programmes. Most of its programs are interactive. Durg has the distinction of being the most literate district in entire Chhattisgarh. This is also evident from the feedback the radio receives from the listeners here. Excellent source of water, fertile land provides better opportunities for agriculture. At the same time, due to industries, the working class is also present here in large numbers. Overall, people of every class are present here for whom programs are being prepared in Radio Lokwani. This relatively new community radio has also started innovation in program production. Vaccine awareness, promotion of local talent, programs for the elderly, and programs for women, farmers, and workers are prepared and broadcasted from here. The broadcast time of this radio is also from 06 in the morning to 10 in the night. For this reason also, it is emerging as an alternative to other services in the field of radio broadcasting.

7.2- Strategies for Development goals

This radio is heard in many villages of Patan region. Right now this community radio station is new but people are connecting with it. This is what is motivating us to work. There is an increasing tendency among teenagers to go astray. We want to create programs to bring awareness among them.

7.3- Challenges faced in operation

When this community radio started, the country were going through the corona and widespread lockdown. It was very difficult to collect resources for program creation. At the same time, due to technical problems, the broadcast was interrupted many times. The antenna was damaged several times and repairs were difficult due to its location. The broadcast occurs in the rural and semi- urban region, where it is very difficult to reach people have many options due to which is very difficult for people to pairs with community radio. The early broadcast of this community radio station was a long time between Covid-19 and Lockdown, which caused a lot of struggle to survive and its economic needs.

8- Awareness and Participation

The data for assess the awareness and the participation, has been collected through a systematic and planned survey. Total number of the respondents is 200 in number which includes 93 male and 107 female respondents, aged from 18 to 70 years. Education makes a person strong and aware of his circumstances. Radio is a cheap and convenient medium of communication. However, at present, the feature of FM radio is also being found in mobile phones, due to which the trend of taking radio or transistor set has reduced. But reliability of radio continues even today, which can be seen in this way, 51 respondents have considered newspapers as reliable, 61 respondents have considered television and 60 respondents have considered radio as reliable. Two respondents consider magazines as reliable, while 26 respondents consider internet as reliable media. The best and most important feature of community media is its tendency to participate. Respondents were asked about any type of participation related to production, operation or management in their community radio. The data obtained is as follows-

Table2: Participation in Community Radio

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|
| YES | 75 | 37.5 |
| NO | 125 | 62.5 |
| Total | 200 | 100.0 |

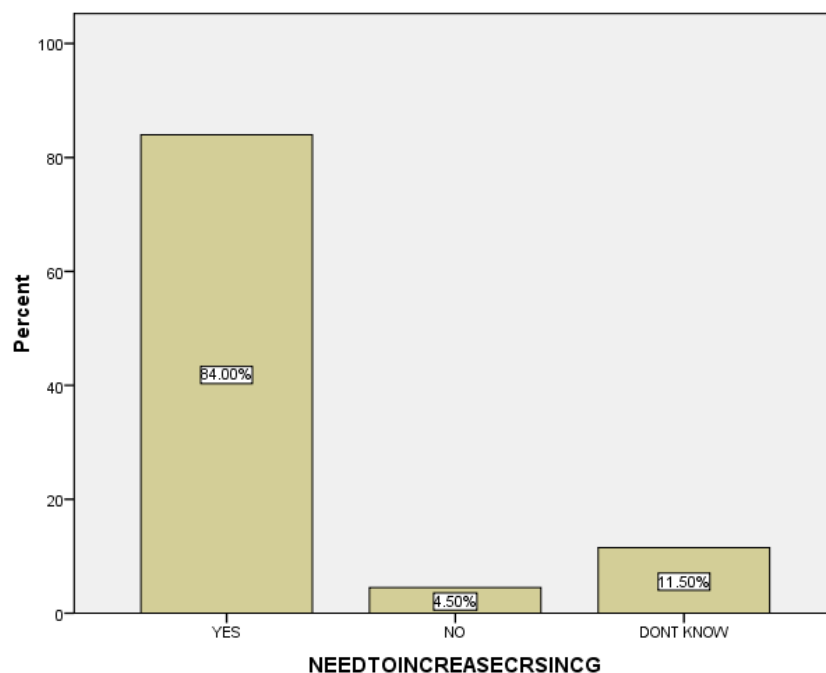
The presented table shows that 75 respondents i.e. 37.5 percent have accepted the participation while 125 people have not done any kind of participation.

The experience of participation was also asked from the respondents. 25 per cent respondents rated the experience as very good, 10.5 per cent rated it only good while 3 per cent were neutral. Community radio is viewed as a process in social development. It provides a forum for dialogue and discussion for the people of the community where they themselves discuss issues related to their development. In the response of the question, whether community radio enhances the process of social development, 40.5 percent people answered yes community radio enhances the process of social development. There is a dearth of community radio stations in Chhattisgarh. Table 1 shows the current situation of community radio broadcasting in Chhattisgarh, out of 33 districts only 10 districts are having community radio broadcast. Considering this as the basis the respondents answered, whether there is a need to increase the number of community radio stations in the state. The figures obtained are as follows-

Table 3: Need to increase CR in CG

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| YES | 168 | 84.0 |
| NO | 9 | 4.5 |
| DONT KNOW | 23 | 11.5 |
| Total | 200 | 100.0 |

In response to this question, 84 percent people have answered yes, 4.5 percent people have answered no, while 11.5 percent people have admitted that they do not know whether there is a need to increase the number of community radio stations in the state. No. The graphical presentation obtained on the basis of data is as follows-

Figure1: Graphical presentation of need to increase Cr statins in CG.

9- Findings

9.1- Prospects and Opportunity

Community radios of Chhattisgarh are broadcasting social development programs like education, health, culture, awareness etc. Positive changes in the society are also being promoted through them. This is determined by the survey question that, CR in Chhattisgarh are bringing positive change in Society, 64 Percent respondents answered in its favor. There are also some experience noted from the interview, for example, there is a musical programme, named 'Farmaishi Geet' broadcast from Community Radio Lokvani 89.6 Patan, Durg, in the peak period of Corona, people were asked about their Corona vaccination, and on demand songs were recited on giving proof of vaccination. In this way, many people were affected by this became aware and an environment was created in this area for corona vaccination awareness. Community radios of Chhattisgarh are broadcasting social development programs like education, health, culture, awareness etc. Positive changes in the society are also being promoted through them. Phone-in programs are being preferred in community radio. Feedback from stakeholders is also being conveyed to radio through social media and mobile apps.

9.2- Challenges

Although community radio is a broadcasting service working for a particular community, the goal of improving the standard of living will not be achieved until community radio reaches the people. Community radio stations of Chhattisgarh are facing several problems in reaching out to their communities. For example technical problems, fault in transmitter and antenna, disrupt broadcasting for months. Many technical Problems are also faced in the region due to lightening and heavy rain. It was also seen in the research that a large number of respondents do not have radio sets or mobile phones, in such a situation, radio programs do not reach them. The biggest problem in running a community radio is funding. Despite the very low licensing fees, many times the running of these community radio by the organizations is affected due to financial reasons.

10- Limitation

Chhattisgarh is a big and untouched state. Reaching out to the underprivileged community and all the community radios here, that are in operation is a difficult and time-consuming undertaking. Another factor is community determination. The community of most community radio stations is not well defined. These community radio stations want to create programs for women, children, farmers, workers, laborers, students etc. in the places where these community radio stations are located. But due to lack of resources and lack of proper training, the kind of connection with the community that is expected is not possible. Many times people do not even know that programs are being made for them with the expectation of their betterment. The qualities of different communities are also different.

11- Conclusion

In Chhattisgarh, community radios are working by making their identity among the community and making the community a partner in the development process. But the concentration of community radio is highly centered in the state. Most community radio stations are in locations where the area and community are already in better condition. Out of 33 districts of the state, only 10 districts have community radio stations. There is not even a single community radio station in Baster division, the southern and largest area of the state. While this area of the state is geographically and administratively quite isolated and inaccessible. A large area of this area is also deprived of facilities like education, health, sanitation, drinking water etc. In this situation, there is a need to establish maximum number of community radio stations in this area of the state. So that the diverse tribes and other communities here do not get isolated in the process of development.

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