

**'A new revolution in communication'**

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Community Radio has to go a very long way, passing all the speed breakers of existence and enlightening the masses with the goal with which it came into existence.

As the bell of development of masses rang when the Supreme Court of India ruled in judgment of 1995 that "airwaves are public property". This came as an inspiration to groups across the country, but to begin with, only educational (campus) radio stations were allowed, under somewhat stringent conditions. That was the good beginning, as the development of masses cannot come overnight.

Core areas of community radio development are not in the city, but in rural areas, including tribals. The area coverage of community is 5 km to 7 km with is not enough as villages are scattered in the larger areas, so more powerful transmitters to cover 100 km areas are needed.

Recently, when the government announced 50000 community radio licences, but they are not going to give it at one go, proper channel of distribution has to be done. The government must distribute community radio on the basis of area coverage.

The community radio development received the boost after international organisation, UNESCO grants to set up community radio in many parts of the country. This has only come when the government has declared to set up more than 6000 community radio by 2008.

This set up must go to the people who deserve the exposure and connection to the digital world. It is the first time in the history of Independent India, a radio station for local and run by local, all work done by local was established. Lot to learn and share knowledge which were with them always and no body was interested to listen them.

The success of Community radio will depend on the penetration of the CR in rural and tribal areas, connection with rural masses, including children's, illiterate masses and women and bring them to one platform of CR.

Programmes on the CR should be according to the like and dislike of the particular areas, science and technology, IT and new development must be given importance, Distance Education should be promoted so that a student living in the interior of the village, must know what are the career prospect if he want to continue his studies while he is working.

A group of community radio must be formed between the community radio, as government has given permission for 5 minutes of advertisement on every 1 hour of broadcasting, (for example, if there is 10 CR in an area spanning to more than 200 km and they form a group, with their understanding, then the group can sell the advertisement space of whole 10 CR) and these will be beneficial to all CR can earn so as to incur cost and pass on benefits to listeners as well as advertiser.

International organisations such as United Nation Development Programme, UNESCO, and etc help must be taken when setting up CR in tribal and rural areas, this will help people to know how much serious government is for uplifting them and giving them knowledge. The local schools should be the center point of broadcasting and relay points, talk show and other programme should be done so as the students as well as parents are involved.

Some time an open discussion in the village can do much awareness, “go to the people” tell this radio station is yours.

Involvement of local is the key word for the development of masses. The community radio should act as the knowledge bank which gives information for free.

Survey the area what they want to hear, “local, local, local” is the only person who will help you what they want.

The government should be very careful while granting licence to NGOs, who are not involved in the development communication. Let the universities and schools lead the Community radio revolution in the country and they can give the content and other important information as participant to the CR. Recently, the government has also banned few hundred of NGOs for not working for what they were appointed, the government must be stringent in giving licence to NGOs.

The government must make compulsory for colleges and universities to have their own community radio. The setting up of the CR in colleges and universities can benefit them, as there are institutes who need studios for recording, they can provide them on rent to cover up cost. And they can record programme and sell them in the market. The content permission must be sort by the government.

As, I recollect the words of Yunus Mohammed, Noble laureate and Grammen Bank chairman, when he was in Mumbai university speaking on the subject how micro finance can bring down poverty, he said, **“There are serious problems, but the solutions to these problems are very simple”**. It struck my mind, because he was the man that made it possible. In the country like Bangladesh, he used the tool of micro finance to help eradicate poverty as his bank has more than 70 million women members. The same way we can transform the whole country with CR, which can provide knowledge and hope to see future to the people even they live in village or non-metro cities.

### **Community Radio in Campus**

After the success India's first campus 'community' radio, Anna FM launched on 1 Feb 2004, which is run by Education and Multimedia Research Centre and all programmes are produced by the students of Media Sciences at Anna University, Mumbai University's CR (107.8) will be on air from September 5, 2007. The community radio wave is gripping the city, but to have a revolution it should grip the village and rural areas of the country.

The CR of Pune campus is not much popular as the Anna FM and even Mumbai- based SNDT CR with the help of Gyan Vani has not made their mark in operation.

The success of Campus CR depends upon the student's involvement and commitment to their work.

Help must be sought from private participation to provide equipments, software, hardware's, furniture from corporate, as they take schools to run without their interference, they can also take the CR.

Asian countries need people to people contact, after the CR people of the village will know what is happening in their surrounding.

### **International development**

Even in the *UK* the community radio has made its presence know, by the Radio industry regulator Ofcom as the name for the new 'third tier' of the UK radio industry. The idea for this new level of radio broadcasting was piloted by the Radio Authority (now Ofcom) in 2002 with the licensing of 15 "Access radio" stations (now superseded by "community radio"). The one-year licenses were extended in 2003 for a further year, and in 2004 a consultation was issued by Ofcom on the creation of community radio. The first full licences for Community Radio stations in the UK were issued in 2005.

### ***South Korea***

Korean government licensed a few small power community radio stations in the

Year of 2005. Maximum power is 1 Watt and it reaches 5km.

### *Canada*

Canadian community radio stations target commercially underserved minority language communities such as Franco-Ontarians, Acadians or the First Nations, although some small communities also have English language community stations. Community radio stations are most commonly operated by cooperatives.

### *Japan*

Japan has a series of low power community radio stations across the country.

### *Jordan*

The first community radio was established in Jordan using the internet. AmmanNet.net was established in November 2000 as a means of bypassing government restrictions on private non governmental radio.

### **All India Radio Help**

As in India where AIR has more than 98 per cent coverage by area, can play a very important role in providing CR services, they can provide expertise and set up CR for the NGOs and other qualified for setting up CR.

In this case the govt can have a watch on the CRs in from of regular checks and uncalled checks, so that if any irregularities are found government can cancel the licence.

### **Transmitters**

The government must give more emphasis in granting CR licence to organisations, unversities, NGOs in villages, four tier, three their cities. The coverage area should be

more than 80 km to 100 km. As their interest will not clash with the private FM broadcaster.

### **Separate body**

A separate organisation must be formed for the controlling and setting up the CR as if all 50000 CR is operational in next 5 to 10 years, it will be difficult to have the body at that time.

### **Area of more focus**

Schools, Colleges, Universities, Panchayat, Post Office, Rural and interior parts of the country.

### **Programmes and schedule for CR**

Communication development programmes, IT development information, employment information, educational information programmes, cultural programmes, local meeting, school childrens participation, upliftment of illiterate people, special programmes for illiterate people, women interaction programme, exchange of information with locals.

CR is the first step to digital revolution; this will strike their minds of immense opportunity in the digital and IT field. The knowledge of acquiring information has been made simpler with the help of CR



The schedule must be decided on the basis of public acceptance of programmes, start with two hours daily, morning 8 am to 9 am and other broadcast from 7 pm to 8 pm.

A special slot must be dedicated to women and their problems, health care, home remedies after consultations of doctors.

### **Success stories**

**Namma Dhwani**, a partnership between Boodiketee community in kolar district MYRADA, an NGO and VOICES, a development communications NGO based in Bangalore, with technical support from AIR, Bangalore. The programme was a huge success and 4000 people were under this, including 1930 families who were living under poverty line, literacy level was also very low.

**Pastapur Community Media Centre**, a partnership between the Deccan Development Society (DDS) Pastapur and Women Speak to Women, project by UNSECO. The owner as well as audience are 100 dalit women's group consisting 4000 members of 75 villages. DDS also receives funds from UNESCO. It has the coverage area of 30 km with 100 watt transmitters.

**Chalo Ho Gaon Mein**, a partnership between three NGOs, the National Foundation of India, Delhi based, Alternative for India Development (AID) Lesilegunj and Panki division and Manthan Media Collective, Rachi. The programme covers 45 villages and local FM station is used as channel.

**Kunjali Pachee Kutch Ji**, in partnership with Kuch Mahila Vikas Sanghathan, Bhuj and Drishti Media Collective, Ahmedabad. The place of operation is Kutch district of Gujarat.

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers must be attracted to CR with what they will be getting when they will work for CR. Training must be given to volunteer by AIR officials so as to understand the radio medium. The volunteer should be aware of **what they are doing to whom with what aim.**

A toll free number should be provide for listeners to call and must be explained what is toll free no (no charges are paid by the dialer only the caller has to pay for it.)

### **Not-for-profit**

A CR must be not-for-profit, as in rural and village, volunteers must explain what is the meaning of “Not-for-Profit”, unless people who need the CR in rural, village and tribal don't understand why they are operating a radio, it is impossible for the success of the radio. The initiative of CR has to upgrade the life of people to whom they should be connected with the digital globalisation. Global village will not be successful unless it has roots in interior of India.

Exposure of Radio will a gift from the government to people who till know was connected via third or fourth person or technology, but after CR revolution people will be involved in the success of CR.

## **ID**

Identification card must be given to people involved in the CR for recognition and as appreciation of his work for CR.

## **Employment**

The person working in CR will get all the technical knowledge of pre-production, production, post production, sound recording, mixing, radio jockey, etc and may aspect of radio programme and development. With this experience, they can work for full-fledged FM radio station. The government must try to provide them with some certification of certificate or direct the CR to give certificate for their work and involvement.

**“CR must become tool to impart knowledge and uplift the people left in the digital age”**

## **Sources:**

Wikipedia.org

Unesco.org

IGNOU: Community Radio (MJM-1)

**CR: Community Radio**

**Profile:**

Completed Master Degree from Madurai Kamaraj University in May 2007, awaiting results, Completed PG Diploma in Communication and Journalism from Garware Institute, Currently pursuing PG Diploma in Audio Production Programme from IGNOU.

A hardcore Media professional with more than 4 years of field and 3 years of desk experience, with working knowledge of web, print, and a stint in Television Journalism.

Currently working as Journalist, Correspondent, Research Assistant for Employment & NRI Times, [www.cvc.tv](http://www.cvc.tv), Australia-based internet radio and Dr Asrani Associates' group of medical portals ([www.growingwell.com](http://www.growingwell.com)/[www.justeves.com](http://www.justeves.com)).