CHAPTER-19

RADIO FOR ALL : A MEDIUM OF THE MASSES

Before 1921 the word Broadcast had a different meaning altogether, which was to scatter seeds etc. over a wide surface. Today as we all know, the meaning has changed – to disseminate audible matter from a wireless transmitter. This meaning came into being only in 1921-22.

The Marconi Station of Chelmsford came into existence in the spring of 1920 and they broadcast two daily programmes each of 30 minutes duration. Two years later in 1922, a Marconi station called 2LO was set up in London. This was later to become the nucleus of BBC.

The very first seed in the story of Indian Broadcasting was planted as early as 1923 when a group of radio enthusiasts in Madras formed a radio club and even initiated a kind of Broadcasting service that began broadcasting in India in July 1927 on an experimental basis at Mumbai and Calcutta, simultaneously under an agreement between Government of India and a private company called the Indian Broadcasting company.

At the time of Independence all India Radio had only six stations located at Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Madras, Lucknow and Tiruchirapalli. With a total complement of 18 transmitters. There were about 2,75,000 receiving sets at the time of Independence which today has increased to about 11 million estimated radio sets.

The objective of these radio programmes at the time of independence as visualised by the Vidyalankar committee was “to inform, persuade and inspire, to make people’s minds receptive, to familiarise them with social and material changes that planned development brings in its wake and to develop local initiative for decision making.”

At that time the main objectives of radio was two fold.

1) To extend the broadcasting, service so as to bring radio within the easy reach of entire population.

2) To devise programmes which would satisfy the needs and urges of a newly independent nation and at the same time provide an effective communication support to the tasks of national reconstruction.

Since 1957 AIR has existed as Akashvani and its objective according to its motto is ‘Bahujan Hitaya; Bahujan Sukhaya’. i.e. Benefit & happiness to maximum number of people. Its main objectives today are:

a) Uphold the unity of the country and the democratic values enshrined in the constitution.

b) Present a fair and balanced flow of information of national, regional local and international interest, including contrasting views without advocating any opinion or ideology of its own.
c) Promote the interests and concerns of the entire nation, being mindful of the need for harmony and understanding within the country and ensuring that the programmes reflect the varied elements which make up the composite culture of India.

d) Produce and transmit varied programmes designed to awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich all sections of the people, with due regard to the fact, that the national broadcast audience consists of a whole series of publics.

e) Produce and transmit programmes relating to development activities in all their facets including extension work in Agriculture, Education, Health and Family welfare and science & Technology.

f) Serve the rural illiterate and under privileged populations keeping in mind the special needs and interest of the young, social and culture minorities, the tribal population and of those residing in border regions, backward or remote areas.

g) Promote social justice and combat exploitation inequality and such evils as untouchability and narrow parochial loyalties.

h) Serve the rural population, minority communities, women, children illiterate as well as other weaker and vulnerable sections of the society.

i) Promote national integration.

THE PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Three tier Broadcasting system

AIR has a three tier system of Broadcasting namely national, regional & local. It caters to the information education and entertainment needs of people. It transmits centrally originated news bulletins in Hindi and English, music, newsreel, spoken words and other topical programmes to nearly 76% of the countries population.

The regional station in different states from the middle tier of Broadcasting.

Local radio provides utility services and reaches right into the heart of the community through each of its station serving a small area. The community in turn uses the microphone to reflect and enrich its life. The local radio has a down to earth intimate and uninhibited approach. They are area specific flexible and spontaneous, and enables the stations to function as the mouth piece of the local community.

NATIONAL CHANNEL

The national Channel of All India Radio (AIR) started function on May 18, 1988. It is transmitted from 6.50 PM 6.10 AM and transmits a mixture of programs including news, high quality Carnatic and Western Music, investigative reports & features, magazines, plays, Sports and an admixture of variety programmes.
EXTERNAL SERVICES
This is a bridge between India and the world. The external services division (ESD) broadcasts in 24 languages – English, 15 other Foreign Languages and 8 Indian languages for listeners in different parts of the globe.

The ESD projects the Indian point of view on world Affairs and acquaint the overseas listeners with the developments in India along with information on Indian life, thought culture, tradition and heritage.

ESD spans almost the whole of Asia, North, West & East Africa, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Europe & the Indian Subcontinent.

The programs comprise of news bulletins, commentary on current events and a review of the Indian Press. Besides these, newsreels, magazines on sports & literature, talks and discussion on socio economic, political, historical & cultural subjects, features on developmental activities, important events & institutions, classical folk and modern music of India’s diverse regions are a major part of the total programme output.

VIVIDH BHARATI-THE COMMERCIAL SERVICE
A self contained service of popular entertainment known as Vividh Bharati was started in October 1957 to meet the growing demand for popular music and light feature.

The commercial broadcasting was started in AIR in a very limited way on the November 1967, when the Mumbai centre of Commercial Service was inaugurated.

Commercials on the National Network were introduced from 1st April 1982 and on the primary channels from 26th January 1985 and till 1994, 62 AIR stations accepted spot sponsorships in their rural programs women’s programmes, film/light music (Indian Western) and other popular programmes.


Sixty percent of the programmes are film music the rest is devotional music, light music, short plays, talks, interviews and sponsored programmes. They were broadcast for a duration of about 14 hours on weekdays and 16 hours on Sunday and holidays.

NEWS
The News Services Division (NSD) produces bulletins in about 19 languages emanating from Delhi and relayed by several AIR stations. The Regional News units located in different parts of the country produce as many as 134 regional and 7 external news bulletins, it also produces bulletins for listeners abroad in 24 languages.

‘Spotlight’ in English and “Samayiki” in Hindi broadcast everyday, deal with topical events and issues.
The current affairs programme broadcast every Sunday has experts in different fields expressing their views on national and international issues across the table. Similar programme in Hindi entitled “Characha Ka Vishai Hai” is broadcast every Wednesday.

Composite news programmes called “Samachar Prabhat” and “Morning News” in Hindi and English respectively comprise a news bulletin, a commentary and a look at the daily press in the capital.

**FM SERVICES**

This is one of the hugely popular and perhaps the only channel with regular audience, especially in the Metros. This comprises mainly of musical programmes, talk shows and time slots are also allotted to private parties for broadcasting programmes. This is a 24 hour channel in the Metros. The main reason behind the popularity is its clear reception, thrust on entertainment programmes and viewer interactive programmes where viewers can phone in and express their views. Here one of the private parties broadcasts a midday programme called ‘Women’s hour’ in Calcutta.

**PROGRAMME COMPOSITION**

News Music and spoken word programmes constitute the three major pillar’s of AIR’s programme composition.

Talks, discussion and interviews are regularly arranged to provide a forum for all shades of opinion on national and international issues.

Radio plays figure both in the general programmes as well as in the programme for specific groups. Radio features and documentaries consists of narration, music, drama, interviews, poetry etc.

Programmes for rural listeners are broadcast from almost all AIR stations to provide educational and informational support to agriculture and rural development programmes. They seek to disseminate new agricultural technology to farmers in their local language dialects. The other subjects covered are rural co-operation, animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries and cottage industries. There are ‘Farm schools of the AIR’ where instructions and guidance on farming are provided to listeners. The audience find these programmes extremely useful and they command credibility and acceptability. There are terms such as ‘radio seeds’ and ‘radio fertilizers’ which originated from these radio programmes.

Special programmes for women are broadcast from all stations of AIR. These are directed to housewives and working women. They are educative, informative as well as entertaining. Programmes on health family welfare, household chores, nutrition and problems of working women are broadcast.

Programmes for children are broadcast for tiny tots and also children upto the age of 14 years.

In order to provide a forum for the self expression of the youth between the ages of 15 to 30 years, AIR broadcasts ‘Yuv Vani’ from 74 stations. This
services provide on opening for the talents of this age group to present their viewpoints by participating in a wide range of programmes, talks, discussions, interviews, plays, features and music.

Programmes for senior citizens are being broadcast from 17 capital station for a duration of 30 minutes every week.

Programmes for Industrial workers are being broadcast from around 40 station of AIR in regional languages for a duration ranging from 20-30 minutes.

There is a industrial advisory committee comprising of experts in the field of medicine and health relating to labour class, labour law etc. Which provides valuable advice and guidance to the industrial workers.

Educational Programmes of AIR cover a wide spectrum, primary, secondary, tertiary and university levels. Their aim is to reach students in the interior areas. Enrichment programmes are also broadcast for teachers.

Programmes on sports are very popular and sports events in India and abroad are covered by reviews, running commentaries and voice despatches. Apart from two five minute daily news bulletins, AIR also broadcast two half hour sports magazine programmes.

Interactive broadcasts like the phone-in-Programmes, Radio Bridge and voice mails, apart from peoples forum programmes, are recent innovation in broadcasting. In phone in programmes people telephone the station at a given number and ask question simultaneously and the experts reply to their queries immediately.

In voice mail the telephone massages are recorded and played back in a special voice mail programme.

Radio Bridge is a programme on special occasions and is broadcast live by uplinking AIR stations through satellite. It presents a live interaction among the participants including listeners in different parts of the country.

Radio paging, FM, Radio Broadcast technology are advantageous new features.

As the radio paging service would provide alert signals, emergency calls, valuable information etc. the service will be highly useful for medical professionals, business executives, application & emergency services.

AIR SOFTWARE SOURCES
1) In house production by AIR stations.
2) Programmes obtained through programme exchange service of AIR.
3) Programmes obtained from foreign broadcasting, organised under cultural exchange arrangements.
4) Co-production with specialised Institutions or foreign broadcasting organisations.
5) Sponsored Programmes — in house as well as outside productions.
6) Software projects — production of — financially viable programmes (In house and outside)
7) Programmes available on commercial records, C. Ds. etc.
8) Programmes obtained from SAVE (SAARAC Audio-visual Exchange)

RADIO FOR THE MASSES

Radio as a mass media and the concept or radio for all will be roughly measured in terms of the number of radio receiving or transistor sets in the country. As of 31.3.95 the area covered by Radio was 89.7% and there were 111 million receiving sets and Estimated Radio households were 104 million. The number is still on the increase.

In India one set is often used to serve a large number of people beyond the house hold. Although the transistor revolution that has swept every part for the country has reduced the importance of community sets, some recent studies have underlined the need of continuing to have community receiver sets at least in selected areas. In villages these community audiences develop rapidly into decision making bodies capable of speeding up common pursuits of the village.

Programme Composition
(Home Service — 1992)

Table - 19.1: Percentage of Home Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Type of Prog.</th>
<th>Duration Excluding SW Support</th>
<th>Percentage with reference to total Home Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hrs.</td>
<td>Mts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>231050.35</td>
<td>50.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>130848.30</td>
<td>30.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Spoken Words</td>
<td>219652.37</td>
<td>52.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>581551.42</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source : All India Radio 1995. Audience Research Unit, Directorate General, All India Radio
Table 19.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken words (excluding Vividh Bharati)</th>
<th>Duration excluding SW Support</th>
<th>Percentage with reference to total Spoken words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Talks/discussions etc.</td>
<td>58382.54</td>
<td>26.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Drama</td>
<td>15308.45</td>
<td>6.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Religious</td>
<td>1076.29</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Educational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(excluding Vividh Bharati)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>8061.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>29850.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>4722.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School/University</td>
<td>17901.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>5403.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Youth</td>
<td>22,690.17</td>
<td>10.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tribal</td>
<td>6062.41</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Armed forces</td>
<td>6962.58</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Publicity</td>
<td>14475.18</td>
<td>6.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Others</td>
<td>28752.47</td>
<td>13.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>219652.37</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: All India Radio 1995. Audience Research Unit Directorate General All India Radio.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH

As in all kinds of mass media, feedback is a very important part of programming. To evaluate the feedback, All India Radio has set up Audience Research Units at 38 AIR stations, 1 Audience Research Unit at commercial Sales Unit AIR Mumbai and 6 Audience Research regional units in Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Shillong and Allahabad.

The activities of these audience research units are:

1. Providing research support to broadcast at formative stage.
2. Evaluation of programmes and to provide qualitative and quantitative feedback to programme planners and policy makers.
3. Preparation of audience profiles.
4. Preparing popularity ratings of programmes.
5. Maintaining Data Bank of the activities of AIR and bringing out Annual compilations.
These activities are carried out through Feed forward studies, sample surveys, observation & case studies, quick feedback & weekly studies, Mail surveys, Formative Research, Experimental Research and content Analysis.

WOMEN'S IMAGE IN THE BROADCAST MEDIA

According to Tara Ali Baig, women predominate in Radio as announcers and newscasters and in general there are more scope for women in the electronic media than the print media.

A common complaint voiced by women interviewers employed in radio and television was that broadcasting is a state owned system and leaves little leeway for the staffs to experiment and develop new programmes hence creativity is stifled.

In 1977 in South India CARE started a project employing slum women to work with their peers in a multi media project emphasizing nutrition, health and family planning. Part of the project was a popular radio soap area. In which the adventures of a typical slum family illustrated practiced solutions for immunisation, male & female sterilization, deworming and vitamin A requirements. This programme generated interest for information beyond that presented in the programme, and hence extension agents were prepared to answer them.

Although a huge success, the practical problems that came up were lack of control over their family income, their secondary role in family decision making (even in matters concerning their own health) and the scarcity of basic facilities such as sewerage treatment and portable water.

But in the absence of the extension agents most broadcast programmes help people make optimal use of the resource at hand.

In Calcutta station of All India Radio there are two women's programmes, 'Mahila Mahal' mainly for the urban women which also caters to the rural women to a lesser extent and 'Sri Sadan' exclusively for rural women.

At the beginning the women's programme was produced by the renowned Birendra Krishna Bhadra. It was later taken over by Lila Mazumdar, the renowned writer. Then it passed on to Bela De, who later went on to become a household name. At present this programme is produced by Ruby Bagchi.

Initially the women's programme was immensely popular.

According to a 1979 survey by the audience research with of AIR Calcutta, on the popularity of women's programme in Basirhat area, a village in West Bengal, it was found that Mahila Mahal had a good reach among its target audience. About 76% heard the programme, 14.4% heard regularly, 30.4% frequently, 33.6% occasionally and 10% rarely. Among the non listeners, lack of time was the main reason. Majority of women felt that it helped them to learn many things of women's interest.

Initially the women's programme's contents were dominated by, cooking,
child care, beauty and maintaining family and very little was discussed about general topics. But today the stress has changed. Cookery, cosmetics and child care do not dominate. More important issues concerning education of women, self employment and increase in awareness of women find priority. Though the age old topics do exist, they are more scientifically explained. For example while giving tips on beauty, the expert also explains the importance of balanced diet and exercise to keep fit. It is not masks and mascara alone. Similarly when a recipe is given its calorie count and nutritional values are also explained.

According to the 1979 survey the several topics of interest in a woman’s programme was rated as follows.

Table - 19.3 : Topics of interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>% of Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knitting</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Welfare</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Hygiene</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Care</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employment</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in Profession</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution to personal problems</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uplifting of women</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage customs</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific development</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical item</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political issues</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International development</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Culture</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about people in other country</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus we see that among rural women topics like cookery, childcare, knitting and family welfare still take top priority as compared to general topics.

According to a general survey by AIR Calcutta Audience Research cell in 1998 among a total of 78.3% studio based programmes only 0.3% are women's programmes. Among listeners, audience for woman's programmes in Rural areas are 4.0%, in Urban they are 3.6% and total audience for women's programmes were 03.8% among a total no of 1200 respondents.

As far as the likeability of women's programmes are considered 02.8% were satisfied, 01.0% were not satisfied and 96.2% were non-listeners. Thus we see that the percentage of audience of women's programme have declined. Whereas in 1979, 14.4% were regular listeners, in 1998 only 03.8% were listeners. The two reasons for this decline could be

1) The widespread influence of TV.

2) The general decline of standard of women's programmes.

To combat this, AIR has staged a lead forward in its software and research and development aspects. In its general programmes the women's perspective is also focussed and the general attitude towards women in the Radio programmes are much more balanced than other media. They have succeeded in the role of educating and informing, especially in the rural areas where it is an affordable medium and has a wider reach than all other media.

Conclusion: Today All India Radio does face occasional fireworks or adverse comments of critics. It also has an intrinsic weakness of not enjoying credibility because of its being a government controlled medium. Yet AIR is considered by media authorities and researchers to have proved its worth and utility both as an informational channel and a development and cultural activist.

Extension research and other field surveys have already given great credit to radio as a credible promoter of suitable climate for development and progress, also for having advanced farm education and cultural renaissance. Its contribution in the form of transmitting useful and timely information, motivation and suggestions for rural development is conceded. Its sponsors claim that radio is helping to create a climate of opinion in which social change can take place and people could be involved in the process. Thus AIR has an active role in furthering India's education, music and other practicing arts. The increasing number of listeners letters and transistors are obvious indications, though improvement and innovation know no bounds. Since today television is increasingly becoming a moneymaking machinery and catering to the entertainment aspect of the media, the task of educating and informing the masses both literate & illiterate becomes the responsibility of Radio.

REFERENCE