CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO ANNA FM - INDIA’S FIRST
CAMPUS COMMUNITY RADIO

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Radio is the most powerful invention in the history of mass communication. It stands the test of time as a simple, portable and cost effective medium to reach large audiences. In his first and last live broadcast over All India Radio (AIR) on November 12, 1947, referring to the power of the radio, Mahatma Gandhi said,

‘This is miraculous power. I see Shakti, the miraculous power of God in it’

Marconi’s pioneering work in wireless telegraphy to transmit messages across short distances prompted the development of radio broadcasting. Wireless communication was first used during World War I and later in 1920, radio stations were set up in Pittsburg, New York and Chicago. In the same year, the Marconi Company broadcast a concert from Chemlsford and two years later in 1922, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) was formed.

In India, Rao Bahadur C.V. Krishnaswami Chetty, an electrical engineer working with the Madras Corporation, DJ and amateur radio enthusiast, organised the Madras Presidency Radio Club (MPRC), and with help from friends first ushered in broadcasting. Later, with an experimental
broadcast from the Times of India (TOI), from Bombay in 1921, a number of radio clubs proliferated, the first being the Radio Club of Calcutta in 1922, followed by the MPRC. The clubs came together to form the Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) in 1927 which was given broadcasting responsibility and Lord Irwin inaugurated the first radio station in Bombay on July 23, 1927. Unable to sustain itself financially, the IBC went into liquidation in 1929.

The Government then took over in 1930 by setting up the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS) under the Department of Industries and Labour and re-designated it as All India Radio (AIR) in 1936 and the name is still being used. With nationalization, radio made rapid strides marking the beginning of a new era in Public Service Broadcasting coming under the control of the Indian Government until 1997. Covering 99.14% of the country’s population and 91.79% of the geographical area, AIR became a monopoly supported by a network of 229 radio stations.

But our founding fathers did not intend such total monopoly saying that one should approximate as far as possible to the British model, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The fact that the history of broadcasting in India is full of instances of delayed even restrictive pieces of legislative inputs which have failed to achieve the constitutional mandate of freedom of speech is rather well recorded. Recommending an institutional change, the Chanda Committee’s Report in 1966 said that a ‘creative medium like broadcasting’ cannot flourish under a regime of regulations.

The Verghese committee in 1978 called for a ‘National Broadcasting Trust’ (NBT) called Akash Bharati as an autonomous and independent public service, suggesting a highly decentralized four-tier broadcasting organization at central, zonal, regional and local levels. The first ‘real’ attempt at legislation was the Akash Bharti Bill, which was introduced in
Parliament after much pressure only to lapse with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 1979. The same Bill in its later rechristened version - the ‘Prasar Bharti Bill’ was enacted but failed to get notified. This was followed by a long legislative vacuum which was broken only as late as 1997 with the Government of the day managing its notification to make it a law. The Prasar Bharti Bill sought to give day-to-day functional autonomy to All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD) so as to free the electronic media from governmental interference.

But the next government wanting to keep airwaves under its tight control let the ordinance notifying the Prasar Bharti to lapse and even went to the extent of disbanding its board of trustees which had been appointed to look into the functioning of the public broadcaster. The Communication Convergence Bill of 2001 met a similar fate with the dissolution of the 13th Lok Sabha. The Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill (BSRB), latest in the long line of broadcast regulations was kept a secret for a long time and only after much public outcry was a draft copy posted on the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting website in August 2006 to invite public comments. Like many other earlier bills the problem with BSRB is that it reflected the same old government paranoia of controlling the media.

The Government’s monopoly was struck down by the Indian Supreme Court’s judgement in 1995 declaring that airwaves are public property. This led the Government to constitute an autonomous broadcasting authority to license and regulate the use of airwaves. In 1997, the Government set up the Prasar Bharati, (Broadcasting Corporation of India - BCI) as an autonomous body to give effect to the Prasar Bharati Act of 1990. The current broadcasting policy is based on the AIR code of 1970 which forbids ‘direct publicity of an individual or of a commercial benefit to an organisation’ and the use of ‘trade names amounting to direct advertising’.
In this broadcast scenario it would be interesting to know that various attempts were made by the Government to exploit radio’s potential across the four tiers of broadcasting, namely, Public Service, Private, Educational and Community Radio.

1.2 ANNA FM - INDIA’S FIRST CAMPUS COMMUNITY RADIO

Anna FM is India’s first campus community radio station and this study attempts at exploring at a broader level whether it has the potential to live up to the Indian Government’s community radio mandate and claim for campus based non-profit radio’s educational purpose for community development. Before going into the depths of the research study, this section traces the evolution of Anna FM, a historic landmark on the Indian broadcast space and its gradual rise from humble beginnings, the challenges faced and its future prospects in the context of studies across the world pertaining to participatory approaches for community development.

After a monopoly of over six decades, the Indian Government finally freed the airwaves in compliance with the Supreme Court Judgement of 1995 that declared airwaves as public property. Private Commercial Radio grabbed the opportunity first leaving little space for CR. But then CR Activists were not the ones to give up very easily. They came together with renewed energy and brought pressure on the Government to promote CR as a fourth tier of broadcasting. Their efforts bore fruit when in 2002, the Government invited educational institutions to set up CR stations. With rigorous licensing and regulatory bottlenecks, not many had the resilience to go through the gruelling paper work. Many of the prospective players opted out of the race but Anna University persisted at its goal. It took more than a year for India’s first CCR venture to actually take off amidst a lot of fanfare.
The launch of ANNA FM, India’s first CCR in February 2004, is a memorable milestone in the history of radio broadcasting in India, enabling students, faculty and the community to play an active role in managing radio stations. It was also the first time that a radio station was not government controlled. Anna FM gets its name from Anna University which was established in the year 1978. Widely popular for his exemplary writing and oratorical skills in Tamil, Anna was a former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

Located at the Educational Multimedia Research Centre (EMMRC), in the sprawling Anna University Campus in Chennai, India, Anna FM broadcasts on 90.4 MHz from a small multipurpose, transmission-ready digital studio costing Rs.800000 and an antenna costing around Rs. 4.5 lakh procured from Bharat Electronics Ltd. with lifetime warranty. In general, the permitted frequency range for CR in India is 87.5 to 108 MHz.

As per CR norms in India, Anna FM is equipped with a transmitter of 50 watts power, an antenna of 30 metres height from the ground level reaching out to a radius of about 5-8 Kilometres (Figures A8.1 and A8.2). The commissioning of ANNA FM was done in a hurry due to the ensuing elections in the country, with the result that Anna FM had just a couple of hours of content as it first went on air on 1st February, 2004.

Progressing from humble beginnings, after a four year saga of courage, dedication and enthusiasm by volunteers from within the campus and the community including media students, media faculty, EMMRC staff, Central and State Governments, NGOs and corporate, the station has expanded its resources with over 3000 hours of quality indigenous programs, diverse in content and format. Over the years, Anna FM has gradually increased its transmission hours and presently broadcasts for eleven hours each day in two transmissions, to a pluralistic audience, predominantly in
Tamil, except for instructional programs in English for school and college students, while consciously making increased efforts to make it fully participatory with the community involved at all levels.

The Director of the EMMRC is the Station Manager of Anna FM, supported by a regular Production Assistant for technical management of the station in addition to contractual staff. While the EMMRC takes full responsibility for Anna FM’s everyday activities that include recording, editing, transmission and studio maintenance, the Department of Media Sciences (DMS), situated adjacent to the EMMRC offering a 5 year integrated Masters Programme in Electronic Media, with an entire semester dedicated to the Theory and Practice of Community Media, looks after the planning and programming of Anna FM content in coordination with community volunteers, faculty, media student volunteers, partner institutions and station staff. Anna FM’s recurring expenditure of Rs. 50000 per month is mainly in the area of maintenance and human resources needed to ensure smooth transmission which includes honorarium to the presenters and anchors, travel, refreshments, printing and stationery. Committed to the cause of CR broadcasting at Anna FM, the Station Manager and the Faculty of the Department of Media Sciences and EMMRC do not receive any allowances or privileges for running the transmission. Participating content experts are presented with a copy of their program as a goodwill gesture and in some cases transport needs are taken care of by Anna FM.

Each media faculty member plans the program content each day of the week in consultation with media student volunteers and the community. A weekly chart (Appendix 1) drawn well in advance reflects the program mix that include topics such as health, education, environment, social awareness and community development as laid in the CR guidelines stipulated by the Government of India. The directive to adhere to the AIR broadcast code is
followed scrupulously despite ensuring creative freedom in program planning and presentation. The Anna FM program clock is designed with utmost care to ensure community-centred programming.

Endowed with the best of resources from within the university and outside, through its partner institutions, Anna FM spares no effort to involve the community at every stage of programming and make them an intrinsic part of the process. From health, education, women empowerment and entrepreneurship development to consumer awareness, environment, civic issues, lifestyle and nurturing local talent apart from special shows for the differently-abled, Anna FM has it all and more.

Having studied CR for a full semester even before India’s first CCR, Anna FM @ 90.4 MHz was actually launched, media students had little difficulty in grasping the nuances of CR Broadcasting that bridged the gap between public and commercial radio. As part of their Community Radio semester course, they are designated assignments pertaining to researching, scripting, interviewing, recording, editing, presenting, publicity and community interaction, based on their specific interests, talent, aptitude and involvement. Those with the gift of the gab don the role of student radio jockeys (RJ) and take turns to go on the air as per a monthly chart (Appendix 2), both in the mornings and evenings and strive to outperform each other. Trainee RJs are attached to the regular presenters and learn on-the-job through several transmissions, before going on air independently, while media faculty are in-charge of transmission to ensure smooth broadcasting. Though amateurs, they are encouraged to constantly upgrade their broadcast skills through refresher training sessions organized periodically by competent media practitioners to help imbibe as much a professional approach as possible to CR.
Right from digital recording and editing to preparing the play-list, handling the equipment and RJing, the students get themselves trained while on the job, seeking advice or support only when policy decisions have to be made. Student presenters use local dialect and adopt an intimate and informal style to strike a rapport with the listeners and make them feel at home. There is no talk down approach but just sharing of information in a simple language to ensure a participatory approach with no distinction between the broadcaster and the listener. Occasional messing up did happen but before long they were back on track dishing out their very best.

While Anna FM’s first few months of programming were more of student level productions, it soon began fanning out into the community in the coverage zone in a phased manner through live phone-in talk shows. The next stage saw the community actually producing studio-based programs all by themselves with minimal assistance from media student volunteers and Anna FM staff, thanks to training on practical CR broadcast skills apart from regular on-the-job training.

To encourage more community participation, Anna FM has a simple policy where anyone from the community with a program idea relevant to the coverage zone is welcome to walk in and use the studios, as a broadcast platform for voicing views and suggestions towards finding solutions to issues of concern for the larger benefit of the community, whether it as simple as street lights or as complex as environmental cleanliness.

Anna FM is particular about upholding broadcasting ethics. It is a big yes to music from the local community and a strict no to commercial music. Anyone from the community with a flair for music is encouraged to record at Anna FM and there is an hour’s broadcast slot each day to air them. To promote different genres of music, Anna FM conducts an Annual Anna FM Talent Hunt Contest open to all community folks. The Contest has gained
popularity for its flexible nature sans rules and guidelines, and runs for over a fortnight and all performances are broadcast on Anna FM, though prizes are awarded to the best in different categories.

From its inception, Anna FM has been keen on forging partnerships with willing organizations for expertise while producing programs, both studio and field-based, with the community. The partners from the Government include Chennai Police, National Council for Science and Technology Development (NCSTC), Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, the Metropolitan Transport Corporation, Department of Primary Education, Government of Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, Tamil Nadu Science Museum and the Saidapet Government Hospital.

NGO partners include The Banyan (NGO for the Mentally Challenged), Alcoholics Anonymous, Spastic Society, Ability Foundation (NGO for the Differently Abled), National Institute for the Visually Handicapped (NIVH), Nalamdhana (NGO working for the less privileged) and Child Relief and You (CRY-NGO for Child Rights) including corporates like Indicomm Software and the list keeps expanding each day as more community needs and concerns seek expression on Anna FM.

To ensure that the efforts ploughed into community broadcasting at Anna FM by the youth volunteers, translate into societal development at a larger level, it was felt necessary to conduct a feed forward study to assess awareness and find out the expectations of the community from Anna FM. A survey they conducted earlier in December 2003 had created some awareness about CR and the proposed station at Anna University. It was also felt that when youth producers don the role of researchers, there is a much better chance that the research outcome is interpreted right and productively utilized rather than depending on an external source. Hence media student
volunteers were engaged in research for Anna FM to understand the pulse of the community in its coverage zone (David 2004).

A group of forty media science students administered the survey on a hundred respondents each from both within and outside the campus on the 8th and 9th of August 2004. A total of four thousand such respondents from diverse backgrounds were covered and a major revelation of the findings was that though more than 80 per cent were aware of Anna FM, only 30 per cent actually tuned in, calling for a closer introspection and further revamping of its programs. A need for a stronger signal strength, enhanced publicity and better presentation style were some of the key suggestions made by the respondents.

International recognition soon followed with the Commonwealth of Learning and the UNESCO collaborating with Anna FM for a week long international workshop to train managers of CR stations in December 2004, drawing sixty delegates from across eleven countries to share CR experiences unique to their culture and exchange opinion on how best to forge ahead. Internews too utilized Anna FM’s resources to offer a seven day RJ training program to CR volunteers on disseminating HIV/AIDS messages in August 2005. Ten media science students from the university who received training in the effective dissemination of HIV/AIDS messages through CR using jingles and skits are health ambassadors for Anna FM and reach out to the community.

BBC Tamizhosai also collaborated with Anna FM to share localised global content, especially science programs for youth. Keen on exploring the potential for a long-term collaboration in sharing educational content, it offered a Tamil translation of its eight part series on Nuclear Science for rebroadcast on Anna FM.
In times of disasters, such as the tsunami of December 2004, a team of Anna FM youth volunteers reached out to the affected folk and let them voice their anxieties and fears. And during the unprecedented floods that marooned parts of Kotturpuram, Anna FM volunteers were there with the women folk willing to give a patient listening to their woes and offering them a platform to speak out their pathetic situation and broadcast messages for voluntary support towards rehabilitation.

Acknowledging Anna FM as a successful venture, the Government entrusted the university with the responsibility of exploring the possibility of setting up a CR based disaster warning system in the Andaman islands in the wake of the Tsunami and a feasibility study report has been submitted for consideration. The project proposal involves setting up of a network of seven CR stations in seven different islands with satellite connectivity to a disaster warning centre with training and monitoring support from Anna FM.

In addition to the mandate of CR to broadcast programs on Health, Education, Environment and Community Development as priority areas, Anna FM felt the need to build an inclusive society towards ensuring that the physically and mentally challenged are provided with a platform to showcase their unique talents and facilitate their natural acceptance into mainstream society. CR as an educational tool to the visually challenged was also demonstrated through Anna FM’s collaboration with the National Institute of Visually Challenged (NIVH) and Ability Foundation, an NGO working for rights of the differently-abled.

Of the three weekly programs for the differently-abled on the Anna FM Program clock is ‘Muyarchi Thiruvinai Akkum’ - Where there is a will there is a way - conceived and produced by two diligent media student volunteers, Archana and Kaushalya, trained as CR RJs and Producers at Anna FM. The radio magazine aired weekly is a collaborative effort with Vidya
Sagar, an NGO in the community devoted to facilitate an ideal learning environment sensitive to the needs of children with disability, mainly spastics.

Weeks of painstaking research and background work paid off with a weekly radio show highlighting the efforts of Vidya Sagar through interviews with special educators, the challenged students, teachers, parents and volunteers. Success stories of remarkable achievers who made it in their small but significant way proved what support can do as against sympathy. Most of these interviews would be field based on IC recorders, but Archana and Kaushalya made it a point to bring over the challenged kids to Anna FM, for them to have a feel of what CR looks and feels like, the studio from where they had earlier heard their voices aired.

And students, special educators and parents who listened to this program week after week felt and expressed gratitude at the opportunity to create awareness on inclusion through Anna FM, a platform that would not be easy to come by in the mainstream media, driven primarily by commercial concerns and operating on a totally different mandate. The program aired non-stop week after week for over a year is a testimony to the consistent efforts of the producers who did it beyond the demands of their rigorous academic commitments as students of Electronic Media. As part of the first batch of students pursuing this course, they were earlier witness to the preparatory work and anxieties that went into the setting up of India’s first CCR - right from putting the studio together, to the licensing procedures and the test transmissions.

“We first didn’t believe…that our campus will soon have a radio station. First we thought it was just being rumoured, but when things were close to reality, the idea began to sink in and excitement ran high on having an opportunity to work hands-on at a radio station…” (Archana 2005)
recalled Archana, while at the studios, reminiscent on the first anniversary of her programme. She went on to top her batch in academics and even win a media scholarship, which she rightfully attributes to her stint at Anna FM. Kaushalya is today a much sought after RJ with a leading private broadcasting station in the city, an opportunity which she too credits to the valuable lessons learnt at Anna FM.

“When I won a title at an inter-college competition for the radio category, I was surprised when the judge said that he realized the contribution of Anna FM in shaping us as sensitive broadcasters with an on-the-job exposure….and today I’m on the threshold of a great career with radio…….” (Kaushalya 2005)

Another major effort at Anna FM towards empowering its disadvantaged community is the long term collaboration with the National Institute of Visually Handicapped (NIVH). The programs aired for an hour every day on Anna FM are basically well structured lessons for undergraduate students who are visually challenged. Feedback received over phone from visually challenged students revealed how useful the on air lessons were in helping with their academics.

But for Anna FM, listeners in the coverage zone said they would need the help of volunteers to read out to them. Anna FM did what a thousand volunteers could not, in airing these lessons at a time of their choice. And it is this flexibility to CR in designing the program clock based on specific needs that scores over mainstream media. To further enhance community participation, student teams were soon encouraged to venture out into the community in the coverage zone of Anna FM. Participation being the key to CR broadcasting, it was decided to increasingly involve the community in to talking on radio.
And thus was born, ‘Samuthaya Nerkanal’ - Face-to-face with the community’, a weekly live phone-in phone-out radio talk show every Saturday evening (Figures A8.3 and A8.4). A regular team of Anna FM student RJs would be ready with all equipment checked and batteries charged for the WLL phone, and the radio sets. While Lakshmi and Mohanapriya anchor the show from the Anna FM studios, Satish, Anitha and Radhasree would identify locations from where they would get people to talk on the show. For the 5 pm show preparations would begin more than an hour in advance.

On most occasions, community folks decided on specific issues to take up for the live show - be it water, sanitation, traffic woes, ration shop irregularities, frequent thefts or even indiscriminate power cuts. After a brief introduction by the studio-based RJs, field-based RJs would facilitate the folks into speaking their mind out. Initially there was some hesitation in hitting it out frankly but with a little coaxing there could be no letting go of the ‘mike’ which is in fact the WLL phone receiver. Men and women folk from diverse socio-economic divides and even children participated without any inhibitions. This being their first exposure to media, one had to see to believe the sense of importance writ large on their faces. Never mind whether there were going to be solutions to problems aired, the fact that they could talk as a community and express themselves on air was indeed a positive beginning to collective thinking and action.

In fact it was a pleasant surprise to note that folks in the community who participated in ‘Samuthaya Nerkanal’ were meeting each other for the first time. Casual acquaintances forged close friendships through Anna FM and shared ways of coming together to address civic issues in the community. For the first time women stepped out of their homes, articulated their feelings and spoke on air. Where there was once hesitation in going on air, folks now
clamoured to grab the ‘microphone’ (WLL phone) to have their say and even asked for more air time. Children enjoyed displaying their talents, singing, rhyming and chatting much to the glee and envy of their doting parents.

Weeks later when the RJ team moved to another community in the coverage zone at Kotturpuram, the earlier community at Kannigapuram were angered as they felt Anna FM was theirs alone. A little explaining and cajoling helped and thus was born the innovation to bridge two different community folks by letting them connect through the live show and share their thoughts. And in the subsequent weeks two teams of RJs positioned themselves at the different communities with WLL phones and facilitated a networking of communities in the Anna FM neighbourhood. A resource demanding task that created waves in the community.

Earlier when media student volunteer Satish started off with this live show, he did it from a PCO (Public Call Office) and gathered the community around to talk. Then came the WLL phones but problems cropped up when the team missed charging them up completely before the show and now it’s the mobile phones that are extensively used. Recognising the potential of Anna FM, the then Chennai Police Commissioner, deputed a team of his officers to coordinate with Anna FM. A weekly one hour slot is designated on Sunday evenings featuring face to face interactions with slum dwellers, street vendors, auto drivers, bus drivers, students, slum children and fishermen coordinated by student volunteers on becoming Friends of Police.

Next followed a field based project on the ‘Role of Anna FM Student Volunteers in Societal Development’ conceived as part of the semester program on CR titled, ‘Theervugal Nichayam’ (Finding Solutions). A class of forty students formed 20 teams of two each and worked with the communities in the coverage zone to identify pressing civic problems being encountered. The teams coordinated with a representative of the community
and mobilized support to approach the civic authorities in the area and further coordinated with government officials and other development agencies to evolve strategies and solutions.

Apart from a detailed written report with photographic evidence of the progress made, the teams produced a 15 minute radio feature each, encapsulating the voices of the community airing their civic concerns and the officials who responded to the call of Anna FM. This series of 20 radio features broadcast weekly since June 2005 addressed civic issues ranging from sanitation and garbage disposal, to mosquito menace, lack of pedestrian crossing, missing street lamps, ration shop irregularities and bad roads. While some found immediate solutions to the issues they tackled, others achieved partial progress, mediating between the people and the powers-that-be to fulfil community objectives.

Acting on the complaint that the signal strength of Anna FM is not sufficient enough to have its programs heard in a few pockets even within its primary coverage zone, which is typical of a metropolitan city with its high rise structures, (while the reach is good enough in secondary coverage zones where the line of sight is clear), a media student conducted a fresh signal strength mapping of the reach of Anna FM as part of her Masters research project coordinated by this researcher (Figure A8.5). An earlier signal strength map drawn by a private firm responsible for the technical installation of Anna FM, was also studied in detail.

Data for the new signal strength study was meticulously collected with professional help from Doordarshan technical personnel using an instrument called the Devicer. Measurements were recorded for every one kilometre radius, extending up to 15 kilometres, in eight directions and the Anna FM polar map for signal strength coverage was drawn to identify the actual reach of the radio channel tuned to specific community needs. A copy
of the study findings was submitted with a request for augmentation of transmitter power for Anna FM to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), Government of India (GOI) in 2005.

Illustrations of youth volunteers straining every sinew to contribute their might to serve community interests are galore. The list is an exhaustive one, details of which may be beyond the scope of this thesis, but the underlying current of undiluted joy and enthusiasm combined with a passion to reach out to the community is evident, waiting to be further exploited for the larger benefit of the community. Earlier on, it was perceived that the community efforts of Anna FM were just student projects, embedded in to the media curriculum to merely obtain grades and percentages. But media student volunteers have displayed beyond doubt that their field assignments have brought them not just academic credit points, but a rare sense of social responsibility, triggered by the success of their efforts in catalyzing positive change, even if in small measure.

When two student volunteers Anitha and Radha, rushed in happily to the station, the other day, after having achieved what they thought was impossible, they created a history of sorts. Braving Chennai’s hot weather the team scurried from one traffic police station to the other, to finally succeed in providing a long pending pedestrian zebra crossing on the traffic laden highway for a community folks at Kannigapuram. The bright zebra crossing painted across their place the next day brought a change into the lives of the folks there and helped realize the power of CR in galvanizing collective action for common good. Endeavours such as these make us realize the powerhouse of youth energy waiting to be unleashed by community media. As CR practitioners, if we could tap this potential student resource, a social revolution would unfold and pave the way for a people-centred development.
It is here that CCR plays a vital role in contributing young and valuable human resources for the broadcast industry. CR stations can serve as an ideal training ground to groom radio stars and Anna FM is an example worthy of emulation. While some media student volunteers are already making waves on air, some others have won scholarships for media training and projects at national and international levels, a testimony to the confidence and freedom to explore gained at Anna FM.

If media students could shine as radio stars, their community counterparts weren’t far behind. Men, women and children who were hitherto hesitant for any community participation, have now become uninhibited communicators. From mere participants, thanks to a comprehensive CR broadcast skills training program, it is gratifying to note that a team of around thirty enthusiastic women from Kannigapuram and Kottupuram, now call in to book Anna FM’s recording studios in advance, to produce their own magazine shows complete with expert interviews, vox pops and jingles on a topical burning issue of concern to them.

A payment of Rs.250 per program produced may seem small, but the levels of satisfaction and self-confidence is unmatched, especially for the women folk who had earlier even resisted stepping out of their homes, leave alone venture to become CR journalists. And as a cascading effect this team is in the process of expanding its CR volunteer base to the twenty odd Self Help Groups (SHG) that have come together with the knowledge sharing and community bonding generated through Anna FM.

Earlier, in May 2004, while at the UNDP consultation on CR at New Delhi, Anna FM’s Station Manager received a scary call from the studios in Chennai, stating that Anna FM had received an infringement notice from WPC for not having procured a permanent licence from SACFA. Fortunately, a recheck confirmed that the permanent SACFA order for Anna
FM was ready and had been cleared just then. Such surprises spring up often like the sudden stinker served on Anna FM from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) advising it to adhere to CR guidelines. A prompt response reflecting a restructured broadcast content as advised was sent with the assurance to uphold the stipulations as expected of Anna FM.

It was in fact a tight rope walk for Anna FM, despite the financial support of the University and the abundant human resources at its disposal both within and outside. Even more challenging was the task of identifying volunteers, training and motivating them to be focused on Anna FM’s mission to help people reach out to themselves. A lot of energy went into research with a feed forward study administered on four thousand respondents in the coverage zone to understand the specific issues of concern to the community in an attempt to enable people-centred programming.

The painstaking efforts of the student volunteers to drive home the message, on how CR could act as the collective mind of the people, paid off with an increased people’s participation in all its broadcasts. To further facilitate organizational decision-making and ensure continuity between semesters and during institutional changes external to the project and to strengthen representation in production and inclusivity in content, a radio collective comprised of students and community members as an autonomous group would ensure smooth networking.

Though Anna FM can’t claim to have achieved all its goals so soon, it is a positive feeling going by the way things have shaped up, the partners, the volunteers, the program mix, the live shows, community support and the recognition, both national and international. All the more challenging is the fact that Anna FM is located in an urban setting with high rise structures so typical of a metro, due to which the signal strength is weak at some pockets
even within the coverage range in the heart of the city. The reach is however
good enough in far flung suburbs, where the line of sight is clear.
Representations have been made to the regulators for augmenting transmitter
power and antenna height, taking into consideration the geographical terrain
and population density.

As Anna FM moves on with its mission to democratize radio, it is
ever willing to share its experiences and resources with CR practitioners
across the globe and open to suggestions and ideas. From media student RJs,
it is now the community folks who anchor shows for their respective
communities, getting everyone to speak on air, right from the flower seller
and the vegetable vendor to the shopkeeper and the cyclist on his way home.

Having found a friend in Anna FM, expectations ran high, requests
for income generating self-developing skills came in and thus was born the
palm leaf based handicraft training program, formation of SHGs and the first
exclusive CCR venture with women - ‘Science for Women’, the first CR
Initiative in Participatory Science Communication sponsored by the National
Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC), Department
of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India (GOI), featured in the
forthcoming chapters.

Inspired by implementation of the first CCR project exclusively for
marginalised women, the pilot program, Anna FM’s, ‘Sakthi Arivaayadi’,
SFW program is presently being replicated across the country in 13 CCR
Stations including Anna University with Health and Nutrition as the main
focus. Coordinated by the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia
(CEMCA), the much awaited impact of the project’s second phase is bound to
catalyze many more such fruitful ventures in doing participatory CR at
educational institutions.
Archiving is a valuable source of program exchange amongst a network of CR stations. Anna FM meticulously preserves all its broadcasts including the live shows. Media student volunteers have created a database of Anna FM programmes to help anchors sift through the content effectively while creating the play list. The archival recordings are available for reference, sharing and rebroadcast by other radio stations, if appropriate, strictly for development purposes. As part of India’s Mission 2007 technology for rural India, the Vadalur Knowledge Centre acting as a knowledge hub for the villagers in and around the area rebroadcasts relevant radio programs from Anna FM through cable television to thirty nearby villages (Mission 2007).

That CR can be a personal and democratic medium, owned, managed and operated by the youth volunteers and the community, is now fast becoming a reality in India. Despite being campus based, Anna FM does not confine itself to being a mere campus radio as it is sometimes made out to be.

As Anna FM is well into its fifth year ‘what was seen as a political decision then turned out to be a milestone in the area of community outreach’ (Menon 2005), as there is this continuous learning and unlearning from experience to forge ahead, riding on the strength of student and community power, to take on the myriad challenges that normally come in the way of sustaining a non-profit venture of this sort. In the months ahead, Anna FM will attempt at converging traditional technology with newer technologies through radio browsing and web casting and enhance its scope beyond its prescribed mandate.

And this sustained day-by-day learning has guided Anna FM evolve and rise to a stature as collectively envisioned by the station’s participating community - to help reach out to themselves. Even more
remarkable and admirable, is the fact, that this has been made possible, braving the lure of Chennai’s airwaves, booming with popular filmy numbers.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Anna FM is India’s first attempt at establishing Campus Community Radio to demonstrate that a university model of Community Radio can fulfil the mandate of participatory communication towards empowering marginalized communities reach out to themselves in the areas of health, environment, education and community development as stipulated by the Government of India’s Community Radio Policy in the year 2002.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

CR in India is now on the fast track mode with 38 stations springing up across educational institutions in the country. They are presently at various stages of progress namely, i) research ii) infrastructure, iii) training, iv) programming, and v) networking with partners in realizing their dreams of making CR happen. The new Community Radio Policy Guidelines (2006) has further liberalised the licensing process to government run educational institutions by offering single window clearances and also opening the airwaves to NGOs and registered societies.

The present study based on Anna FM, the first licensed CR venture in India, seeks on a broader level, to unravel the many challenges encountered; the milestones achieved along its initial journey, as well as the brickbats it had to endure and also explore whether Anna FM is living up to the expectations and objectives for which it was first set up towards fulfilling the mandate of the community it seeks to serve in participatory mode.
For a developing nation like India, a particular focus on women is the need as women’s education is a significant indicator of development and can help bridge economic and education divides through informal education. In this context, it would be worthwhile to attempt a specific study aimed at understanding the role of India’s first CCR, Anna FM, in improving everyday science awareness among marginalised women, who need access to communication channels and media as well as the knowledge and skills to use them through innovative participatory programme formats that would be far from being academic in nature but be community centric, exploring scientific concepts as against the regular and monotonous formats.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

CR is an independent and non-profit development communication tool that facilitates democratization of the airwaves for the benefit of the common man. By encouraging freedom of expression and initiating an open dialogue, community radio can help people become opinion makers and participate in decision making. It can serve as a catalyst to mobilize the community to utilize local talent and resources and empower it with valuable life skills towards better standards of living.

To demonstrate through Anna FM’s ‘Sakthi-Arivaayadi - Science for Women’ project, sponsored by the National Council for Science and Technology Development (NCSTC), Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India (GOI), that participatory science communication through campus based community radio can inculcate Everyday Science Awareness amongst marginalised women respondents in the Anna FM listening zones of Kannigapuram and Kotturpuram in areas such as
i) Health

ii) Nutrition

iii) Environment

iv) Home Gadgetry

v) Fuel Utilization

vi) Food Processing

1. To understand the socio-economic, educational, health and media profiles of the respondents through determining frequency and percentage values of demographic variables.

2. To determine whether the samples have been drawn from populations having same means with relation to the demographic variables using Independent Samples ‘t’-test and ANOVA.

3. To determine the significant mean difference between the experiment and control group of respondents before listening to and participating in the SFW project using the Independent Samples ‘t’ test on the variables of a) Health b) Nutrition c) Home Gadgetry d) Effective Fuel Utilisation e) Environment f) Food Processing.

4. To determine the significant mean difference between the experiment and control group of respondents after listening to and participating in the SFW project using the Independent Samples ‘t’ test on the variables of a) Health b) Nutrition c) Home Gadgetry d) Effective Fuel Utilisation e) Environment f) Food Processing.
5. To determine the significant mean difference in the experimental group of respondents before and after listening to and participating in the SFW Project using the Paired Samples ‘t’ test on the variables of a) Health b) Nutrition c) Home Gadgetry d) Effective Fuel Utilisation e) Environment f) Food Processing

6. To determine the significant mean difference in control group respondents before and after listening to and participating in the SFW project using the Paired Samples ‘t’ test on the variables of a) Health b) Nutrition c) Home Gadgetry d) Effective Fuel Utilisation e) Environment f) Food Processing.

7. To determine the Reliability of the Survey Schedules using the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test.

8. To determine the association among the variables using the Karl Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test.

1.6 FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESES

Based on review of studies cited in the literature, the following hypotheses have been formulated. While the first hypothesis tests the homogeneity of the study sample, the hypotheses numbered two to five are based on cited findings from radio campaigns and experiments designed to measure effects of education in inculcating knowledge and promoting behaviour change (Coldevin 1990, McDivitt and Ayman 1991, Agrawal 1993, Storey et al 1997, Khan 2000, Sood et al 2004 and Jallov 2005).
1. There is no significant difference among different respondent groups based on the demographic variables reflecting socio-economic, educational, health and media profiles in terms of Everyday Science Awareness on the independent variables (a) Health (b) Nutrition (c) Home Gadgetry (d) Fuel Utilisation (e) Environment and (f) Food Processing.

2. There is no significant mean difference among experimental and control group of respondents before listening to and participating in the Science for Women project in terms of Everyday Science Awareness on the variables of a) Health b) Nutrition c) Home Gadgetry d) Effective Fuel Utilisation e) Environment f) Food Processing.

3. There is a significant mean difference between the experiment and control group of respondents after listening to and participating in the Science for Women project in terms of Everyday Science Awareness on the variables of a) Health b) Nutrition c) Home Gadgetry d) Effective Fuel Utilisation e) Environment f) Food Processing.

4. There is a significant mean difference in the experimental group of respondents before and after listening to and participating in the Science for Women project in terms of Everyday Science Awareness on the variables of a) Health b) Nutrition c) Home Gadgetry d) Effective Fuel Utilisation e) Environment f) Food Processing.

5. There is no significant mean difference among control group respondents before and after listening to and participating in the Science for Women project in terms of Everyday Science


1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1. “Science for Women (SFW)” is operationally defined as the “Title of the project on which the present study is predominantly based”.

2. “Sakthi Arivaayadi” is operationally defined as the “Vernacular Title of the project that addresses the woman in Tamil as ‘Know your potential’.

3. ‘Marginalized’ refers to being separated from the rest of the society, forced to occupy the fringes and edges and not to be at the centre of things. In the context of this study, ‘marginalised’ means women who do not have enough opportunities for free and easy access to participation and benefiting from media; women who need access to communication channels and media as well as the knowledge and skills to use them.

4. “Before” is defined as “Pre-test studies administered before the SFW project intervention” and “After” is defined as “Post-test studies administered after the SFW project intervention”.

5. “Everyday Science Awareness” is operationally defined as “Simple practical scientific knowledge on Health, Nutrition, Home Gadgetry, Effective Fuel Utilisation, Environment and Food Processing, necessary for everyday living, aimed at empowering the marginalised woman”.

6. “Experimental Group” is operationally defined as “The group of respondents who listened to and participated in Anna FM’s SFW programmes and in its various thematic outreach activities through the year long project period extending from July 2005 to June 2006”.

7. “Control Group” is operationally defined as “The group of respondents who did not listen to and participate in Anna FM’s SFW programmes and its various thematic outreach activities during the year long project period extending from July 2005 to June 2006.

8. “Everyday Science Awareness on Health” is operationally defined as “the general well-being of an individual attributed to simple practical scientific knowledge, necessary for everyday living, on matters related to Clean Drinking Water, Common Cold, Fever, Stomach Ailments, Blood Pressure, Diabetes, First Aid, Pain Relief, Hygiene, Dental Care, Preventive Medicine, Osteoporosis, Physical Fitness, Anaemia, Thyroid Problems, HIV/AIDS, Reproductive Health, Pre-natal and Post-natal Care”.

9. “Everyday Science Awareness on Nutrition” is operationally defined as “the general well-being of an individual attributed to simple practical scientific knowledge, necessary for everyday living, on matters related to a Balanced Diet
comprising Carbohydrate, Protein, Iron, Calcium, Minerals and Vitamins; Choice of Vegetables, Fruits, Nuts and Beverages; Iodised Salt, Memory Enhancing Foods, Kitchen Medicine, Right Cooking Practices, Food Adulteration and Kitchen Pest Control”.


11. “Everyday Science Awareness on Effective Fuel Utilisation” is operationally defined as “the general well-being of an individual attributed to simple practical scientific knowledge, necessary for everyday living, on matters related to Thrift Use of Electricity and Environment friendly Alternate Fuels”.

12. “Everyday Science Awareness on Environment” is operationally defined as “the general well-being of an individual attributed to simple practical scientific knowledge, necessary for everyday living, on matters related to Water-borne diseases, Maintenance of clean water sources, Water Conservation, Diseases due to Air Pollution, Planting Trees, Diseases due to Noise Pollution, Recycling of Degradable and Non-Degradable Wastes, Organic Foods and Organic Disinfectants”.

13. “Everyday Science Awareness on Food Processing” is operationally defined as “the general well-being of an individual attributed to simple practical scientific knowledge, necessary for everyday living, on matters related to Processing of Milk, Grains, Spices, Sea-Foods; Ready-to-Eat Packaged Foods, Sun-Dried Foods, Food Preservation Techniques, Food Colouring, Packaging of Processed Foods and Food Safety Standards”.

1.8 VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

The 17 demographic variables for study include respondents’ Age, Duration of Residency, Family Income, Family Size, Disability Issues, Religion, Education, Occupation, Marital Status, Motherhood, Maternal delivery status, Hospitalization for Major Disease, Menstrual Health, Access to FM Radio, Awareness of Anna FM, Listening to Anna FM and Time preferences for listening to Anna FM’s SFW programme.

The six independent variables for studying the Role of Campus Community Radio in inculcating Everyday Science Awareness among marginalised women through Anna FM’s SFW Project are Health, Nutrition, Home Gadgetry, Effective Fuel Utilisation, Environment and Food Processing.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is based on the experiences of this researcher as a Ph.D. student with the Department of Media Sciences (DMS) Anna University, Chennai. Field work was carried out from July 2004 to June 2006, at the Anna FM Campus Community Radio Station and its listening zone covering a radius of 5-8 Kilometres. The first CCR station in the country,
Anna FM began its operations on February 1, 2004. And for a major part of the research period, Anna FM was the only CCR station with full fledged operations involving community volunteers, media student volunteers, media faculty, station staff and partner organizations from government, NGOs, educational institutions and corporate bodies.

Some more educational institutions across the country had just received their licenses and were then in various stages of setting up their CCR stations; hence a study of other licensed community radio stations in educational institutions could not be taken up and is hence beyond the scope of this research. The present study therefore restricts itself to working towards studying the impact of India’s first CCR in inculcating everyday science awareness among marginalized women based on the researcher’s experience in coordinating Anna FM’s everyday activities in general between the years 2004 and 2006 and the SFW project in particular.

Due to the nature of the year long experimental study design involving administration of a series of survey schedules for the pre and post test studies, media student volunteers had to be given thorough orientation training programs periodically for correct understanding, interpretation, translation and administration of the schedules in the regional language Tamil. Moreover the present study includes only women as respondents.

There would be times when volunteers are hard to come by, when good quality programmes cannot be produced, when listeners ratio would fall, when discouragement would overpower because of criticism but there would also be times when a shy volunteer speaks into the mike like it was an extension of her, when a programme would create the change as was intended, and when the social capital that the CR station has invested in would begin to reap harvest. In spite of all the mixed experiences, odds, challenges and limitations that confront while implementing the project, the
main focus would be to rise above them and put all available resources to realize the objectives of SFW.

1.10 CHAPTER ISATION

Chapter 1 - Introduction to Anna FM - India’s First Campus Community Radio: This chapter gives a background of the history and development of radio broadcasting in general and the evolution of the Community Radio sector in particular. Tracing the evolution of Campus Community Radio in India with the launch of Anna FM and its rise from humble beginnings, the chapter includes statement of the problem, its rationale and objectives, formulation of hypotheses for testing, operational definitions, variables taken up for the study and concludes with limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review: The chapter includes an overview of community media at the global level and in India and narrows its focus to the campus community radio sector. With the purpose of locating Anna FM’s pedigree within the global campus community radio movement, this chapter identifies gaps in literature with respect to campus community radio and the relationship between participatory approaches, improved knowledge and behaviour change. Defining the phenomenon of campus community radio in India, as compared to other countries, the chapter identifies similarities and differences that justify the need for the study.

Chapter 3 - Methodology and Study Design: This chapter discusses the research methodology and design adopted with perspectives on experimental design, including identification of the universe, sample selection, construction of research instruments, field investigation process, reliability, validity and inferences from secondary data.
Chapter 4 - Analysis and Interpretation of Data discusses SPSS and the different statistical techniques employed, including frequency and percentage values of demographic variables; use of Independent Samples ‘t’-test and ANOVA to test whether the samples have been drawn from populations with the same means; Paired Samples ‘t’-test to find significance of mean difference between pre and post test studies; and The Karl Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test to determine the association among the study variables and finally a summary and discussion of the findings.

Chapter 5 - Summary and Conclusion presents a detailed summary of the results that reflect perspectives of the broader and specific issues raised in the literature. The chapter captures the profound understanding of community radio practices and their role in development communications that result from this study. The applications of this kind of research and also the impact on the researchers as well as the researched are also discussed to direct further study. The chapter concludes with recommendations and suggestions for academicians, policy makers and future researchers in this field of investigation.