

## CHAPTER III

### *Sound and Substance: All India Radio in Northeast India-A History*

In the previous chapter, we have discussed social change in the context of gender and the role that modern day mass communication could play to dissolve inimical values and norms in existing patriarchal setups. While some scholars have underscored change however small or big to have been a part of human history since early historical times, others have stressed the quantities and magnitude of change to the spread of science, technology and industry and the faster means of communication and travel which have accelerated the process of social change in the contemporary period. Though change has been perceived to have been occurring at “all points of time in history”<sup>1</sup> bringing in a change in the “structure and function”<sup>2</sup> of a society, but scholars have also questioned as what has been the role and position of women in this process of social change? Have change been able to effect a social change in eradicating some of the traditional beliefs, practices and norms which impacts women and which come in the way of their true progress and position in society?

We live in a gendered society wherein both men and women have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. While men became more empowered with additional rights and broader space, women’s identity and responsibility continued to be rooted and identified within the family and the community. Scholars have stressed time and again as how women’s roles in reproduction were seen as primary and which were universally causing female dependence and subordination. The patriarchal structure of society it was emphasised was primarily responsible for women’s denuded rights and their continued exploitation, discrimination, control and oppression within the family, at the work place and the society at large. Vasanth Kannabiran and Kalpana Kannabiran asserted that the repressive patriarchal state sustains its control through a politics of hegemonic masculinity and a reverberating set of power relations and political processes in which patriarchy connects all

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<sup>1</sup> This perception has been presented by Paramjit S. Judge and Satish K. Sharma (eds.), “Introduction”, in Paramjit S. Judge and Satish K. Sharma (eds.), *Dimension of Social Change*, New Delhi, 1997, pp.1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Vago, *Social Change*, New Jersey, 1980.

institutions.<sup>3</sup> Scholars, have not only studied the relationship between patriarchy and ruling class interests in the context of the Indian state, but they also feel that the absence of a uniform civil code is another indicator that the Indian state is a protector of patriarchal values. The laws governing rape and marriage, women's rights to property, custody, guardianship of children, all of which are discriminatory against women, and are prominent examples of the way the state protects patriarchal interests.<sup>4</sup> Kamla Bhasin has stated that all economic, political, religious, social and cultural institutions are by and large controlled by men. She felt that an analysis of the main institutions in society shows that they are all patriarchal in nature. The scholar further stated that the family, religion, law and even the media are the "pillars of a patriarchal system and structure."<sup>5</sup> The media is seen to represent an important tool of the rich and the powerful which propagate class and gender ideology. Newspapers, magazines, films, television and the radio depict the stereotypical and distorted images of women. Television and radio are state owned in India and they continue to evolve as organs of the state. As the state is patriarchal in structure and functioning and with both All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD) being tools of the state, it would be interesting to analyse the question as to whose views are both these state controlled media upholding? This aspect too could be assessed better when its several programmes are examined in the later chapters to understand the extent to which programmes reflect patriarchy.

There has been a rapid progress in the development of mass media in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and mass media is considered as one of the important vehicle of social change. Modern mass communication with improved technology and network is regarded to have the ability to quickly and speedily disseminate vital information to every nook and corner and therefore become an important instrument to bring rapid change in society. Though the role of mass communication as a facilitator of gender sensitivity in society is still under study but scholars like Kamlesh Mahajan<sup>6</sup>, Arvind

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<sup>3</sup> Vasanth Kannabiran and Kalpana Kannabiran, "The Frying Pan or the Fire", in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia, (eds.), *Women and the Hindu Rights: A Collection of Essays*, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 131-132.

<sup>4</sup> Nivedita Menon, "Introduction" in Nivedita Menon (ed.), *Gender and Politics in India*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Kamla Bhasin, *What is Patriarchy?*, New Delhi, 1994, p.9.

<sup>6</sup> Kamlesh Mahajan, *Communication and Society*, New Delhi, 1990.

Singhal and Everett M. Rogers,<sup>7</sup> C.Christopher<sup>8</sup> have amply shown in their works the potential of the vast network of mass communication as an important component in human communication and the definitive role it could play in society. To understand this task of the mass media especially those of the two public service broadcasters of the country of All India Radio and Doordarshan in the context of gender sensitivity and social change we need to not only take a close look at the functioning of these organisations from its inception, but also understand the whole complex development of radio transmission and the coming of television technology from historical times to its present form along with evolving technology.

Communication being a social process is considered fundamental and vital to human survival. Fundamental, as every human society both primitive and modern based its social order and maintained it through the capacity of the members to communicate with each other and vital, because an individual's ability to communicate with others enhances her or his survival.<sup>9</sup> Communication always requires the source, the message and the destination. A source maybe an individual or a communication organization, the message may be in the form of ink on paper, sound waves on air, impulses in an electric current, and the destination maybe an individual or a group listening, watching or reading.<sup>10</sup> Thus the communication process involves the *communicator* or the encoder, the *message* which maybe in the form of words, pictures or signs, the *channel* or one of the mass media, and the *audience* also known as the decoder.<sup>11</sup> In communication therefore the source or the communicator either shares information, an idea or an attitude through a face to face interaction or through the various channels in modern day communication to an individual or a community at large.

Like communication, mass communication refers to the interactive processes and structures through which content is not only produced but also transmitted and

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<sup>7</sup> Arvind Singhal and Everett M. Rogers, *India's Information Revolution*, New Delhi, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> C. Christopher, *Dynamics of Journalism*, New Delhi, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Charles R. Wright, *Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective*, New York, second edition, 1959, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Wilbur Schamm, "How Communication works", in Wilbur Schamm, (ed.), *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, Urbana, 1965, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Warren K. Agee, Phillip H. Ault and Edwin Emery, *Introduction to Mass Communication*, New York, 1982, p.6.

received.<sup>12</sup> This whole process was possible largely due to the revolution in communication technology.<sup>13</sup> Scholars lay great emphasis on the technological development of mass communication and have also underscored its role in creating a common set of values and attitudes to thousands or millions of people at any given time who are constantly exposed to it. They have opined that besides other societal institutions such as the family, peer groups, school and church, mass media being easily accessible are attended by a large group of people, and therefore play the role of teaching and reinforcing social values.<sup>14</sup> In other words mass communication it is believed helps in the spreading of messages to an extended audience through the rapid process of reproduction and distribution along with an intermediary channel be it the radio, television or newspaper.<sup>15</sup> Mass communication has been described as a system that is constituted by the configuration of organisation and institutions producing and distributing cultural products that are theoretically available to entire populations in given societies at approximately the same time. It is also stated that the system is embedded in the society and societal life and both mass communication and society affects and are affected by the political, economic and all the other social systems that constitute a society be it conflict, change, control or social integration.<sup>16</sup> Citizens of the world are engulfed in an out-pouring of mass communications. Scholars feel that never before has such a torrent of spoken and written information, persuasion, thought stimulation and entertainment been directed at the mind and emotion.<sup>17</sup> The media messages, they feel play a crucial role in almost all aspects of daily life and how we learn about our world and interact with one another. Thus mass media, the vehicle of mass communication, are not only bound with the process of social relation but the impact of media both in content and in process on all areas of society is also considered vital.<sup>18</sup> Reiterating its ability to overcome the barriers of time and space and to encompass vast boundaries, Marshall

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<sup>12</sup> Sandra J, Ball-Rokeach and Muriel G. Canter(eds.), "Introduction" in Sandra J, Ball-Rokeach and Muriel G. Canter(eds.), *Media Audience and Social Structure*, New Delhi, 1986, p.11.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis Anthony Dexter, "The Basis of Mass Communication in Society", in Lewis Anthony Dexter and David White (eds.), *People, Society and Mass Communication*, New York, 1964, pp. 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> Elizebeth M. Perse, *Media Effects and Society*, London, 2001, p. 164.

<sup>15</sup> Larry L. Barker, *Communication*, New Jersey, 1987, p. 353.

<sup>16</sup> Sandra J, Ball-Rokeach and Muriel G. Canter, "Introduction: The Media and the Social Fabric" in Sandra J, Ball-Rokeach and Muriel G. Canter (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.10-11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> David Croteau and William Hayness, *Media Society*, (third edition), California, 2003, pp.15-16.

McLuhan a Sociologist, ascribes the impact of mass communication to have turned the world to a “global village” whereby countries of the world are closer to each other because of the advances in mass communication.<sup>19</sup> The role of the media he reiterates is so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences that they leave no part of us “untouched, unaffected or unaltered.” In short the “medium is the message.”<sup>20</sup> As most of the transactions are the exchange and movement of data, images and sounds that travel at the speed of light, it is the data streams of mass communication that ensure that at least in theory people are no more than a second away from anyone anywhere in the world.<sup>21</sup>

The large presence of media in all modern day society has made scholars raise questions not only on the social influence of the media but also on the effects and effectiveness of mass media. While ‘effects’ have been viewed as any consequence of mass media operations, intended or otherwise, ‘effectiveness’ on the other hand relates to the capacity to achieve given objectives be it attracting large audience or influencing opinions and behaviour. While trying to assess the effects and effectiveness of mass media, it is felt that there are some qualifications and specifications that also need to be considered. For instance, in seeking the effects of mass communication, one has to be clear of the time factor for which predictions are sought for and also the level on which effects occur, if it is on individual, group, institution, the whole society or the culture that one is investigating.<sup>22</sup> While stressing on the media effectiveness scholars also feel that changes in culture and society are slowest to occur and least easy to discern with certainty but changes affecting individuals are quicker to occur and also relatively easy to grasp.<sup>23</sup> Therefore while stating that mass media under some conditions functions as agents of social change, it is also important to specify the type of media and media content, the type and sector of society, the area of change and even the status quo of it. Only

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<sup>19</sup> Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, London, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Marshal McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message*, Corte Madera, 2001, pp.8-26.

<sup>21</sup> Kiran Karnik, “Emerging Communication Scenario”, *Mainstream*, Vol 34, No (38), 24<sup>th</sup> August 1996, p.9.

<sup>22</sup> Denis McQuail, “The Influence and Effects of Mass Media”, in James Curren, Michael Gurevitch, Janet Woollacott and Edward Arnold (eds.), *Mass Communication and Society*, London, 1977, pp. 70-71.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.70-71.

after all these conditions are taken into consideration is it possible to assess the functioning of mass communication, and its role in social change.<sup>24</sup> This becomes a crucial point to be kept in mind also while investigating the role of AIR in effecting social change in Northeast India. We cannot forget the fact of the difficult geographical terrain of the region and also the myriad people along with the variance in culture which needs to be addressed by the different programmes broadcast from the stations of AIR and their impacts on the targeted listeners.

The above varied views do indicate mass communication's role of influencing behaviour, either by confirming, reinforcing or stabilizing beliefs and social action which people already hold. Having assumed the significant role that mass media plays in passing information to society and in effecting changes in individual or a group's behaviour which could bring about social change in society, but as studies have also found individuals being resistant to change specially to deep rooted beliefs and norms, it therefore becomes necessary to find the truth of such views in the context of mass media's role in India. In this regard the effects and effectiveness of AIR and DD programmes being received by the targeted audience and their role in bringing social change and specially in upholding an egalitarian society also needs an in-depth study. While probing this question we would look into the history and the circumstances of the rise of the mass media in changing social order and the roles of each of the media specially radio and television in a more comprehensive manner. In the succeeding paragraphs, we would make a detailed study of the impact of communication technology on All India Radio and its spread to almost every part of the country. But while describing this, we would also try and understand the kind of impact that technology may have brought about in the quality and quantity of programmes which in turn may have affected social change and a change of values in society.

In order to understand the workings of the largest public broadcasters of the country we would take a comprehensive look at the worldwide history of communication technology and the arrival of radio and radio transmission of programmes, all a result of the technological explosion by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Karl Erik Rosengren, "Mass Media and Social Change: Some Current Approaches", in Elihukatz and Tamas Szecsko (eds.), *Mass Media and Social Change*, London, 1981, p. 248.

century. The succeeding paragraphs would not only shed more light on the nuances of technology but also an interesting narrative of the humble beginnings of radio signals from 19<sup>th</sup> century to it becoming one of the chief medium of communication after the Second World War across various nations. The oldest media are those of the printed word and picture such as the weekly and the daily newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets, direct mail circulars and billboards. These carry messages through the sense of sight. Radio is the mass communication medium aimed at the sense of sound, whereas television and modern pictures appeal both to the visual and auditory senses.<sup>25</sup> Dissemination of information belongs primarily to the news media both electronic and print. Entertainment on the other hand covers many different aspects and includes comics, crossword puzzles in newspapers, radio music and talk shows, television shows, serials, soaps and other forms of programmes.<sup>26</sup> Apart from these conventional forms of media, advances in technology in the last few decades including facsimile, satellite communication, computer networks, Video Cassette Recorders (VCR), optical fibre, lasers, transmission and reception hardware have led the way of transforming conventional communication system and have been greatly responsible for the communication revolution worldwide. The speed at which information is acquired, processed and disseminated is infact a crucial factor which highlights the importance of information and communication technology. These worldwide changes in technology have also impacted India as the new communication technologies is said to have revolutionised the flow of information.<sup>27</sup>

The history of worldwide evolution of technology in communication was a slow and gradual process and the effort of improvement of techniques in several areas by different individuals that culminated in the communication revolution of today. For several centuries before the electronic media, it was the print media in the form of books, newspapers, and pamphlets that served as the only means of reaching a wide audience from a distance. The technology of printing dated back to the beginning of the fifteenth century when inventors in Korea first created the 'cast metal type' that made printing possible. By 1450 Johannes Gutenberg the German printer, perfected the movable metal type technology and made printing more

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<sup>25</sup> Lewis Anthony Dexter, *op.cit.*, p.9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 359-378.

<sup>27</sup> Kiran Karnik, *op.cit.*, pp.9-11.

practicable by converting a winepress into the first printing press with movable type. Reflecting the power of the church in Europe at the time, the Bible which was previously hand-copied became the first book most often produced by early printers. It has been pointed out that it was the social forces along with the evolution of technology that determined the direction of media development.<sup>28</sup> Though the improved transportation technology increased the speed of communication throughout the nineteenth century, but it was not until the technological innovation of the telegraph by the 1840s that allowed the near instantaneous communication over long distances. The telegraph was a system that could send and receive electrical signals over long distance wires and was the first electrical device for the transmission of written messages. But the forces of change and the demand of faster speed to communicate at a more rapid pace led to the replacement of telegraphy by telex system in the early twentieth century which eliminated the need to use a code such as the Morse code, and instead users could henceforth type in a message and the identical message would appear at the recipient's end anywhere in the world through the telex method of communication.<sup>29</sup> However the invention of the telephone in 1876 by the Scottish-born American inventor Alexander Graham Bell who patented the first telephone, a device with the capacity to transmit sound over wires, and the very next year the invention of phonograph in 1877 by Thomas Edison, opened the way for more widely accessible personal long distance communication, marking the beginning of the first new mass medium since print.<sup>30</sup> Towards the end of the twentieth century the telephone played a critical role in ushering in the Digital Galaxy, providing subscribers with access to the internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) by means of devices called Modems (modulator demodulators) and also the cellular (cell) phone that has greatly enhanced the functionality and regularity of distance communication in the system of everyday communal life.<sup>31</sup> In later years from 1920s with the origination of magnetic tape that greatly popularised the use of cassette, the digital compact disc and MP3 that enhanced storage capacity, the invention of cinematograph by the two French Lumière brothers, Auguste Marie Louis Nicolas and Louis Jean, who were among

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<sup>28</sup> David Croteau, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Marcel Danesi, *Understanding Media Semiotics*, London, 2002, p.10.

<sup>30</sup> David Croteau, *op.cit.*, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Marcel Danesi, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

the earliest filmmakers in history which subsequently led to the motion pictures, the VCR and the introduction of Digital Video Disk (DVD) by 1997, all contributing significantly to communication and the rise of the mass media.<sup>32</sup> Films began at the end of the nineteenth century as a technological novelty and it almost instantly became a true mass medium as it quickly reached a large population even in rural areas. But in subsequent period though it has been observed that cinema has been subordinated to television in many ways and reduced its immediate audience, but media specialists also feel that by way of its integration with other media, cinema had become one of the cultural source and mass culture creator.<sup>33</sup>

As we continue to trace the genesis of communication and the invention of several medium towards this growth, it was found that by the first decade of the twentieth century innovations leading to the rise of radio presented new opportunities for communication. Thus it was for the first time in the annals of evolution of technology that radio became the foremost broadcast medium that introduced a new element to the media equation.<sup>34</sup> It became the earliest system for sending electrical signals through the air without wire via electromagnetic waves which was initially called 'wireless' and later 'radiotelegraphy' abbreviated to 'radio.'<sup>35</sup> The growth of radio succeeded soon as it was seen to be an inexpensive medium both in terms of production, management as well as reception. It could overcome the limitation of literacy helping the enhancement of cultural identity as well as the community pride. Scholars believe that its widespread ownership made it potentially a people's medium and a catalyst of social change.<sup>36</sup> How far this seemed to have been possible is difficult to ascertain in the near absence of empirical data on the impact of radio programmes. Except sketchy studies on the early use and impact of radio that suggests the use of radio around the time of World War I mainly to assist shipping, shore stations, military communication and the governmental publicity tool, very little information is available to the use of radio by individuals

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<sup>32</sup> David Croteau, *op.cit.*, p.11.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.32-33.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>35</sup> Marcel Danesi, *op.cit.*, p.11.

<sup>36</sup> Vinod Pavarala, "Breaking Free: Battle over the Airwaves", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No 22, 31<sup>st</sup> May-6<sup>th</sup> June, 2003, p. 2166.

and their importance in people's lives.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps radio became a tool of social change after the War years as we would understand in our further study.

The history of radio 'transmission' began as early as 1901 when Marconi and his assistants reported that they had transmitted the three dots of Morse code letter 'S' faintly across the Atlantic Ocean from Cromwell England to Newfoundland in Canada. After several other improvisation in its various parts the earlier word 'wireless' that was generally used to transmit signals was replaced by 'radio' based on the idea that rays replaced by electromagnetic waves were being spread out from a transmitter.<sup>38</sup> Early radio receivers were not friendly, in the sense they were "large, clunky, temperamental metal boxes" with lots of knobs, tubes, wires, and a large messy, smelly battery filled with acid, almost like the storage battery in an automobile. Upto the times when the dangerous batteries were replaced by radio sets in the late 1920s, the radio mostly belonged in the garage. By 1923, broadcasting had an audience of more than two million people in the United States, served by more than 500 stations, rising soon from half million sets in 1923 to two million in 1925 and by 1926, one house in six had a radio. It has to be said that it took a lot of vision to make the radio to its present position of today. The American Congress passed the Radio Act of 1927, broadening it in the Communication Act of 1934, which was the basic broadcasting law until it was modified by the Telecommunication Reform Act of 1996.<sup>39</sup> Broadcasting in America followed competitive market principles to capture the largest possible audience in other countries as well. Britain, established the government run British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which programmed what those who were in charge believed listeners needed to hear and should hear. In Germany, France, Italy, radio and television stations got funds as direct grants from government leaders and they became more or less government medium. Later with the introduction of commercials or advertisements, radio gradually became a lucrative business and the innovative use of a battery eliminator developed by 1930s made radio less cumbersome, thereby making it popular to be heard in cars and parlours. Commercials provided an economic base while Networks added to the programming

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<sup>37</sup> Irving Fang, *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolution*, Boston, 1997, pp.91-92.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.91-92.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.94-117.

base. The Federal Radio Commission, renamed later as the Federal Communications Commission, added controls. The ‘golden age’ of radio, thus began, spanning approximately from 1930 to 1950, when millions of people decided to tune in to the radio at home than going out.<sup>40</sup> Though in the years to come and with the rapid spread of television, radio broadcasting almost seemed to be on the road to ruin but fortunately it survived. By concentrating through its programmes targeting on ‘drive time’, the morning and afternoon hours when most listeners were on their way to and from work, radio gained its popularity.

In recent times the Amplitude Modulation (AM) and Frequency Modulation (FM) signal technology of radio transmission with CD quality sound has also helped in the popularity of the radio. Scholars believe that for many people, a radio voice or music was the first sound heard in the morning, or the last at night. It was technology that allowed radio to bring an audience of millions to the event itself be it sports, political conventions, baseball, football, boxing, and cricket commentary broadcasts, that enthralled millions of fans.<sup>41</sup> No longer was it necessary for media producers to physically distribute their products like in bookstores or movie theatres, and nor did the public have to travel physically to these locations to have access to mass media, but rather air waves were being used for communication directly to anyone who owned a radio receiving set.<sup>42</sup> Thus we find the beginnings of innovative use of radio programmes and radio advertisements to facilitate news and information to listeners far and wide.

The surge of radio technology from its earlier cumbersome machine to the improved form of battery operated one, and the increased popularity among audiences across several countries have made scholars believe that radio has several comparative advantages over the other media to become a tool for social change. It was felt that the radio is cost effective, ideal for the illiterate population specially in the rural areas of many countries, its language and content that can be made most suited to local needs, practices, traditions and culture and also of its increased

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.150-151.

<sup>42</sup> David Croteau, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

networking opportunities.<sup>43</sup> Radio is regarded to have spawned the 'pop culture' - a culture for all, ushering in what was called the 'Electronic Galaxy,' a Galaxy in which a standard form of distraction became available to virtually everybody, as radio receivers became cheaper and thus highly affordable to the masses.<sup>44</sup> While the above views may be true in context of other radio listening countries, but what we need to understand is the actual difference in real terms that owning a radio set meant for a large section of the population of our country, and also the transmission of radio programmes to changing social conditions with particular reference to the Northeast and if this tool, broadcasting varied programmes had a mass appeal specially among the women listeners.

To understand this we need to look into the evolution of audio broadcasting in India along with the ongoing worldwide radio technological breakthrough. The history of the evolution of the mass media in our country constituting both the print and the broadcasting media like radio and television had been a slow and a gradual process. India is said to have known the concept of mass communication and news from very early times. Indian mythology has reference of two eminent legendary characters *Narad muni* and *Sanjay* who informed people about the affairs of the state. In fact even the Muslim rulers in India attached great importance to the system of news reporting through trained pigeons, horse riders, tunnel runners, drummers, reporters and informers who were considered the main pillars of the administrative system.<sup>45</sup> The East India Company used the news writers to keep the administration informed of the law and order situation in the various parts of the country and the subversive activities of the neighbouring rulers and others.<sup>46</sup> The importance of the print media in British India resulted in 1780 to the 'The Bengal Gazette' pioneered by James Augustus Hickey which was a two-sheet newspaper and which had specialised in writing on the private lives of the '*sahibs*' of the company.<sup>47</sup> This patronage of the mass media was continued by various social reformers ranging from Raja Ram Mohan Roy through his 'Brahmanical Magazine' and '*Sambad Kaumudi*'

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<sup>43</sup> Frederick Noronha, "Community Radio: Singing New tunes in South Asia", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No 22, 31<sup>st</sup> May-6<sup>th</sup> June, 2003, p. 2168.

<sup>44</sup> Marcel Danesi, *op.cit.*, p.11.

<sup>45</sup> P.L Malhan, *Communication Media: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, New Delhi, 1985, pp.15-22.

<sup>46</sup> B.Kuppuswamy and Narendra Basu, *Communication and Social Development*, New Delhi, 1976, p.131.

<sup>47</sup> Naval Prabhakar and Narendra Basu, *Mass Media and Society*, New Delhi, p.53.

to Mahatma Gandhi through columns of his weeklies 'Young India' and 'Harijan' to campaign against the prevailing social ills and spread national consciousness.<sup>48</sup> After the Independence of the country, the print media which are largely owned by private citizens functions as a free press with the freedom of expression and independence for the print media being ensured in Article 19(1) (A) of the Indian Constitution. They are however accountable to the Press Council of India.<sup>49</sup> The Indian press has experienced an impressive growth since Independence and today as per the report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India, there are a total of 82,222 registered newspapers as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011, and a total of 11478 periodicals being published in India.<sup>50</sup> While delving into the role of the press Kamlesh Mahajan felt, that though in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the press was closely associated with the freedom struggle but after Independence, the press played an important role in highlighting the various problems and became the spear-head of popular opinion and in a way a close ally of the Government and its thinking.<sup>51</sup> This brings to the fore that though the freedom of expression for the Indian press was enshrined in the constitution yet, this medium too does function under government control and is not totally a "free" medium. Other scholars credited the Indian press for its ability to fulfil the information needs of the society and in creating awareness among the people with regard to many aspects of life and conditions of society relevant to them.<sup>52</sup> But as literacy levels were still low, the radio and later television were the two medium that appealed more to the mass audience.

After Independence in 1947, among the available mass media, radio was the only channel that had the potentiality to be quickly developed into an effective and truly national service.<sup>53</sup> Although India was a dependency, she was among the earliest countries in the world to adopt broadcasting. This manifestation was at first in the form of an experimental broadcast of a special programme of music put out by

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<sup>48</sup> Kamlesh Mahajan, *op.cit.*, p.97.

<sup>49</sup> Ganesh Subbarayan, "Mass Media, Social Change and Social Responsibility" in J.S Yadava and Pradeep Mathur (eds), *Issues in Mass Communication* Vol. 1, New Delhi, 1998, p. 59.

<sup>50</sup> *Registrar of Newspapers for India*, <https://www.rni.nic.in>, accessed in on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Kamlesh Mahajan, *op.cit.*, pp.100-102.

<sup>52</sup> Ravi Kumar Pandey and Raj Kumar Thakur, "Role of Press in Social Transformation in India" in J.L Singh, K.Gaur, and Ravi Kumar Pandey (eds.), *Communication and Social Transformation*, New Delhi, 2000, p.70.

<sup>53</sup> R.Habamutder, et.al, (eds.) *Radio and TV Journalism*, New Delhi, 1998, p.1.

the Bombay office of the Times of India in collaboration with the Posts and Telegraphs Department on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1921. However because of financial difficulties such adhoc broadcasting lasted only up to 1927.<sup>54</sup> The first regular radio service was soon inaugurated in India with two privately owned transmitters by the Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) at Bombay and Calcutta on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1927. The then viceroy of India Lord Irwin inaugurated the 1.5 KW stations which had an effective range of 30 miles (48 kilo meters). But this soon went into liquidation by March 1930. High cost of receiving sets of Rs 500 for a four valve set, an undercapitalised company, low standard of programmes and unfavourable Indian conditions and traditions not suitable to broadcasting were the reasons for the failure as reported by Lionel Fieldon the first Controller of Broadcasting, Government of India in his report on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1939. It may also be of interest to note, that Indian broadcasting then had borrowed much of its programming pattern, philosophy and even talent from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).<sup>55</sup>

In 1930 the Government of India took over the two privately owned transmitters of Bombay and Calcutta and also commissioned a third station in Delhi under the Posts and Telegraphs Department in the name of Indian State Broadcasting Service.<sup>56</sup> Encouraged by the experiment, the Government decided to place broadcasting on a permanent footing and appointed Mr Lionel Fielder from the BBC as the first Controller of Broadcasting.<sup>57</sup> The interests of the British government largely guided the expansion of radio during the colonial period and importance was given to the economic, strategic, engineering and administrative aspects. This was also evident during the outbreak of the World War II, when transmission hours were increased and centralized news bulletins in various Indian languages totaling 27 in a day, were aired for war publicity to counter Nazi propoganda and to promote the allied cause. AIR became the vital source of news and views covering events both at home and abroad. Though broadcasting began in India as a private amateur venture under the colonial rule, yet, besides catering to its own “interests” it also gave the princely states the right to construct and use transmitters and to collect fees for

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<sup>54</sup> P.N Malhan, *Communication Media: Yesterday Today and Tomorrow*, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 60-61.

<sup>55</sup> Kanchan Kumar, “Mixed Signals: Radio Broadcasting Policy in India”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No 22, 31<sup>st</sup> May-6<sup>th</sup> June 2003, p.2173.

<sup>56</sup> Naval Prabhakar and Narendra Basu, *op.cit.*, p.62.

<sup>57</sup> P.N Malhan, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

receiving sets as stipulated in the Government of India Act 1935. The government also passed the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1933 to deal with the alleged evasion of payment of licence fee and to monitor possession of wireless gear. On June 8, 1936, the nomenclature of the Indian State Broadcasting Service was changed to All India Radio (AIR) and in 1937 AIR was transferred from the Department of Labour and Industries to the Department of Communications and later relocated to the Department of Information and Broadcasting set up in 1941 which became a Ministry after Independence in 1947. AIR moved to its new Broadcasting House in Parliament Street, Delhi in February 1943 and in the same year the designation of the Controller of Broadcasting was changed to Director General.<sup>58</sup> Broadcasting along with post, telegraphs, telephones and wireless was placed in the Union List of the Seventh Schedule on January 26, 1950 under the newly effective Constitution of India.<sup>59</sup> Later in 1956 it came to be known as *Akashvani* with clear objectives to inform, educate and entertain the masses.<sup>60</sup> The word '*Akashvani*' was coined by Rabindranath Tagore in the 1930s. *Akashvani* is a Sanskrit word meaning 'celestial announcement' often found in Hindu mythology. Literally *Akash* means 'sky' and *Vani* mean 'sound or message' i.e. sound or message coming from the sky. The name was thought to befit a radio company and became official in 1956.<sup>61</sup>

During the early period after Independence AIR operated essentially for entertainment, but in the course of time the programmes were further diversified by the addition of school broadcasts, rural programmes and reading from literature.<sup>62</sup> The Government set up additional transmitters, the second unit of broadcasting called the External Services, expanded its news services and increased transmission hours. The result was a wide variety of programmes including talks, features as well as centralized news bulletins in various languages commencing from Delhi making a total of 27 news bulletins a day.<sup>63</sup> To 'serve' 'improve' 'inform', 'educate' and 'entertain' the masses were the clear cut objectives of AIR as is affirmed in all the

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<sup>58</sup> Kanchan Kumar, *op.cit.*, pp. 2173-2174.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.2173-2175.

<sup>60</sup> Naval Prabhakar, and Narendra Basu, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>61</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All\\_India\\_Radio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_India_Radio) accessed on 11th November 2010.

<sup>62</sup> P.N Malhan, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

*Annual Reports* of AIR keeping in view the motto, ‘*Bahujan Hitaya; Bahujan Sukhaya,*’ a Sanskrit phrase, meaning ‘the benefit and happiness of large sections of the people.’ With the above objectives the endeavor is to produce and transmit varied programmes designed to awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich all sections of people.<sup>64</sup> Thus from the early experimental transmission in 1921, AIR has since expanded its programmes, transmissions and set up more stations, transmitters and other infrastructures all over the country. The Directorate General, All India Radio functions under *Prasar Bharati* (Broadcasting Corporation of India). The Directorate General is the head and is responsible for the overall administration and supervision of the entire AIR network, and is also assisted by several officers under various wings, including Programme, Engineering, Administrative, Security and Audience Research wing.<sup>65</sup>

AIR’s home service consists of a total of 406 stations including Primary stations, Local Radio Stations, (LRS), Community Radio Stations (CRS) and Low Power Transmitters (LPT Relay) located across the country.<sup>66</sup> Full-fledged stations consist of 299<sup>67</sup> AIR stations spread all over the country. Almost 20,292 personnel are presently employed in the three streams of Programme, Engineering and Administration. Out of which, the percentage of women in Group ‘A’ ‘B’ and ‘C’ is 25.4% being one fourth of the total strength of staff, with women officers as heads of various wings holding key positions of responsibility and power at the Directorate and senior levels in the various stations.<sup>68</sup> Though women are employed either as part time and full time employees in the specialised fields of announcement, news, music, production, technical and the engineering section besides in some decision making levels, but what is worrying is the total strength of women employees which is a low 25.4%. In the present times of ushering in social change along with gender equality in society and where women are striving to find her rightful place in the developmental process, the 25.4% of women employees in the largest public broadcaster of the country is an area of concern. The Map in the next page gives a

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<sup>64</sup> Kanchan Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 2175.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.68-69.

<sup>66</sup> [www.allindiaradio.gov.in](http://www.allindiaradio.gov.in)

<sup>67</sup> *Annual Report, 2012-13, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*, New Delhi, p.158.

<sup>68</sup> *Annual Report, 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*, New Delhi, p. 77.

pictorial view of the total number of All India Radio stations in the country as on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012.<sup>69</sup>



<sup>69</sup> Annual Report 2012-13, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, p.158.

Having traced the history of the evolution of communication and the development of the radio from its inventory stage to its present status as a medium of mass communication and its functionality even in our own country in the above paragraphs, we will now look into the organization, structure and functioning of the AIR stations at the National, Regional and Local level to have a broader understanding of the study and thereby also trace the history of AIR in Northeast India in the context of social change.

All India Radio operates its broadcasting services through various stations on Medium Wave (MW), Short Wave (SW) and FM (Frequency Modulation). A comprehensive study of these stations is being highlighted for a more in-depth understanding of the functioning of AIR in the country. All India Radio offers a three tier system of broadcasting namely National, Regional (Primary) and Local. Heading the AIR services is the National Channel which forms the first stage, followed by the Regional at the second stage and the Local as the third stage. The National Channel started transmission on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1988 and works as a night service from 6.50pm to 6.10 am the next morning. The programme content in three languages of Hindi, Urdu and English on Science, Health, Sports, Literature, Humour, Current Social Issues and Cultural Heritage are basically designed to be the representative of the entire country. Hourly news-bulletins, alternatively in Hindi and English are broadcast only from the National Channel throughout the night. The Primary stations which form the second tier are broadcast largely on the Medium Wave frequency and follow a composite programming mix. Around 40 percent of total broadcast on Primary stations comprises of music, including classical, folk, film and music from various other languages. The third stage of the service of AIR is through the Local Radio Station (LRS) which is comparatively a new concept of broadcasting in India, and usually is meant to serve a small area and the local community. The AIR networks also comprise the *Vividh Bharati* Centres, FM Stereo Service, External Services and North Eastern Service.<sup>70</sup>

The policy of expansion of radio broadcasting infrastructure in state capitals and in border areas since 1960's was aimed to include the linguistic and

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<sup>70</sup> *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit., p.65.*

cultural areas that remained uncovered prior to this period. This strategy was realised even in Northeast India which did not lag behind the rest of the country when it came to the establishment of AIR stations and today mostly all the district headquarters of the Northeast have an AIR station. The Northeast comprising the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim has their respective Regional (Primary), Local and Community Radio Stations. AIR in the Northeast is the largest set up among the electronic media in the region having eight numbers of capital stations, ten Local Radio Stations and five Community Radio Stations besides the North Eastern Service broadcasting for all the eight states of the region and a Relay station at Dhubri in the Goalpara district of Assam. Altogether there are 35 AIR Stations in the Northeast out of which 24 Stations broadcasts their programmes in the Medium Wave supported by Short Wave and 11 Stations broadcast programme in the FM band.<sup>71</sup> Around 40 percent of the total broadcast of AIR comprises of music, News 20 percent and Current affairs 30 percent of the broadcast time. Other programmes include Radio Plays and Drama, Health and Family Welfare programmes, programmes for Women and Children, Farm and Home programmes for rural population aimed at empowering the rural masses are the other important category of programmes in the Primary stations. All the AIR stations follow a composite programming mix.<sup>72</sup>

The phenomenal growth achieved by All India Radio has made it one of the largest media organizations in the world. Presently with a network of 299 radio stations,<sup>73</sup> AIR today is accessible to almost the entire population of the country and nearly 92% of the total area. Considered a “broadcasting giant,” AIR broadcasts in 23 languages and 146 dialects, catering to a vast spectrum of socio-economically and culturally diverse populace.<sup>74</sup> As mentioned earlier in Northeast India too, most of states have a very high coverage in terms of area and population.<sup>75</sup> However to have a better insight of the AIR stations in the Northeast and their functioning we would

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<sup>71</sup> *Station Profile, Radio Broadcasting in North Eastern Region*, DDG (NER), 11th April 2009.

<sup>72</sup> *Prasar Bharati Annual Report, 2007-2008*, New Delhi, 52-53.

<sup>73</sup> *Annual Report, 2012-13, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*, New Delhi, p.158.

<sup>74</sup> [www.allindiaradio.org](http://www.allindiaradio.org), accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2012 at 10pm.

<sup>75</sup> For details of AIR coverage in terms of Population and Area please see (Table 1.) in page four of Chapter One.

now take a look at the profile of the various stations of AIR in the states of the Northeast.

Assam has a total of ten AIR stations, with five Regional stations at Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Silchar, Tezpur and Kokrajhar. AIR Dibrugarh is on the 300 Kilowatt (KW) medium wave (MW) Transmitter, Guwahati, on 100 KW in the MW, Kokrajhar, on 20 KW in the MW, Silchar on 20 KW in MW, and Tezpur also on 20 KW in MW. Diphu, Haflong, Jorhat and Nowgong has one Local Radio Stations each, and transmitting on 1KW in MW, 6 KW in FM, 10 KW in FM, and 6 KW in FM respectively and Dhubri is a Relay Station with a 6 KW transmitter on FM. AIR Guwahati which is a Regional or Primary station was commissioned immediately after the Independence of the country on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1948. Some of the major programmes of AIR Guwahati are *Chitrageet* and *Geetmalika* programmes based on film songs broadcast, Doctor-on-line a health programme and other programmes besides the news in Assamese. The languages and “dialects”<sup>76</sup> of the programmes are in Assamese, Nepali, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Bodo, Karbi, Tiwa, and Rabha.<sup>77</sup>

Arunachal Pradesh has five AIR Stations with Itanagar, Tawang, Tezu, and Passighat being Regional stations. AIR Itanagar is on 100 KW in the MW, Passighat, on 10 KW in the SW, Tawang, on 10 KW in the MW, and Tezu on 10 KW in the MW, and Ziro has a Local Radio Station on a 1 KW Transmitter and goes in the MW. AIR Itanagar as the Primary station was commissioned on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1986 and has various programmes in Hindi, Nishi, Adi, Apatani, Tangsa, Nocte, Khampti, Wancho and Tangin.<sup>78</sup>

Manipur with one Regional AIR Station located at Palace Compound at Imphal was commissioned on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1963 and is simultaneously aired on 300 KW in the MW, 50 KW in the SW and 10 KW in the FM band. Besides the Regional News in Manipuri, its programmes includes *Mani Mala* a quiz programme, *Tabiyu Nungaibiyu* a programme of old hit songs of Manipur, *Khungangi Thouram* a programme based on rural areas, play in Manipuri, request film songs programmes

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<sup>76</sup> The term “Dialects” has been used for the purpose of this work as found in all AIR and DD official communications.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.30-189.

<sup>78</sup> *All India Radio 2007, Prasar Bharati Broadcasting Corporation of India, New Delhi, pp. 30-189.*

and other programmes. Programmes are broadcast in Manipuri, English, *Hmar*, *Paite*, Hindi, Mao, *Thadou*, *Tangkhul*, and *Kabni*.<sup>79</sup>

Radio broadcasting in Nagaland started during the midst of political unrest in Nagaland, with a small makeshift setup consisting of a Secret Studio, Receiving Centre and 1KW MW Transmitter in a hired building at Kohima, the capital of Nagaland.<sup>80</sup> The Kohima station of AIR was formally commissioned on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1963, transmitting on the 100 KW Transmitters in the MW as well as on 50 KW in the SW, and 1 KW interim set up on the FM band. AIR Kohima is located in an area of 1,053 acres at the New Minister's Hill, Kohima town. AIR Kohima is a single channel station broadcasting programmes for 13 hours and 50 minutes daily. Nagaland today has four AIR Stations, with Kohima having one Regional or Primary Station, Mokokchung has a Local Radio Station, on 6 KW in FW, and both Mon and Tuensang having a Community Radio Stations, on 1 KW Transmitter on the MW. AIR Kohima broadcasts Regional News in Nagamese and English besides news in fourteen other Naga "dialects" broadcasts on a daily basis. The programmes under various categories of Music, Spoken Word, Drama, and Features are broadcasts in Nagamese and English which are the link languages, besides programmes in Hindi, Sangtam Yimchunger, Konyak, Khimungan, Chang, Zeliang, Phom, Kuki, Sema, Prengma, Lotha, Chakhesang, Ao, and Angami.<sup>81</sup>

Meghalaya today has five AIR Stations, with Shillong as the Primary station. Before its present status as All India Radio Shillong it was known as All India Radio Shillong-Guwahati with an evening transmission which was inaugurated on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1948 by the then Governor of Assam Akbar Hydari in the presence of Gopinath Bordoloi, Chief Minister of Assam. Shillong was then the capital of Assam. AIR Shillong-Guwahati began with office staff strength of a Station Director, one Programme Executive (PEX), two Transmission Executive (TRES), two programmes Secretary, five Music Staff Artists, one Head Clerk, Accountant,

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<sup>79</sup> *Prasar Bharati Annual Report, 2007-2008, op.cit.*, pp.80-88, *All India Radio, 2007, op.cit.*, pp.32-190.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Station Director, AIR Kohima, N.Nakhro, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2010, Excerpts from the introductory Speech of the Director Engineering and In-charge of Station K. K. Rengma, on the occasion of golden jubilee celebration, of All India Radio (AIR) Kohima on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013, as reported in '*The Morung Express*' dated 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

<sup>81</sup> *Prasar Bharati Annual Report, 2007-2008, op.cit.*, pp.80-88, *All India Radio, 2007, op.cit.*, pp.32-190.

Cashier, Clerk and Typist. It may be of interest to note that AIR Shillong was till 1978 located at the old High Court building that was also shared by AIR Shillong. It was in October 1978 that AIR Shillong shifted completely to its present location. AIR Shillong was known as All India Radio Shillong-Guwahati as till 1968 programmes were simultaneously broadcast from Guwahati Short Wave transmitter. It was on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1966 that AIR Shillong started functioning as an independent station with J.D Banerjee as Programme Executive In-charge of the station. The morning transmission from 7.00am to 9.05am began on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1974 and the mid day transmission on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1976.<sup>82</sup> The five stations of Meghalaya include AIR Shillong on 100 KW in the MW, 50 KW in SW and 10 KW in FM Rainbow and Tura also a Regional station on 20 KW in MW, Jowai with a Local Radio Station on 6 KW in FM, and Nongstoin on 1 KW in MW and Williamnagar on 1 KW in MW, both having Community Radio Stations. The programmes are in Hindi, Khasi, English, Garo, and Jaintia.<sup>83</sup> AIR Shillong has been broadcasting its Women's programme since April 1970. The format of the programme then was in a form of a 'special audience programme' from 5.30pm to 6.00pm every Saturday. The once in a week Jaintia women's programme began 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1977.<sup>84</sup> It may also be stated that presently there are two weekly women's programmes '*Nala Rympei*' (from our own hearth) and '*Ka Program Jong ki Kynthei ha ka Nongkyndong*' (a programme of women from the rural areas) of which *Nala Rympei* (may have been known by a different name earlier) has a broadcasting history of over four decades.<sup>85</sup>

Tripura has three AIR Stations with Agartala the capital having one Regional Station, on 20 KW in MW commissioned on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1967 and 10 KW in FM and Belonia on 6 KW in the FM and Kailashahar on 6 KW also on FM having

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Narimon Shadap, DDG, AIR Shillong, Interview with Khemensula Budon, Asst' Station Director, AIR Shillong, on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2013 at AIR Shillong, between at 1.30- 3pm, *All India Radio 2007, op.cit.*, p.31, Documents on 'profile of All India Radio Shillong' provided from Station Director, AIR, Shillong office.

<sup>83</sup> *All India Radio 2007, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit.*, pp.31-190.

<sup>84</sup> 'Profile of All India Radio Shillong', *op.cit.*,

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Narimon Shadap and Khemensula Budon, *op.cit.*, corroborated with scripts presented by AIR, Shillong prepared on the occasion of the 60 years of the establishment of AIR, Shillong.

one Local Radio Stations each. The programmes are broadcast in Bengali, Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Tripuri, and Kokborok.<sup>86</sup>

Mizoram has three AIR stations with Aijawl on 20 KW in MW commissioned on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1966, also 10 KW in SW and 6 KW in FM band, and Lungleh on 6KW in FM both with Regional Stations and Saiha with a Community Radio Station on 1 KW on MW. The programmes are in Mizo, English, Hmar, Paomih, Mara, Chakma, and Hindi. Besides *Chanchinthar* the Regional News, its programmes content include *Zaipawl* based on Mizo Choral songs, *Zokhawiam hawinn* based on rural areas, *Hla thlan* a programme based on request music and other programmes.<sup>87</sup>

Sikkim has one Regional Station at Gangtok on 20 KW in MW and 10 KW on SW commissioned on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1982 and the programmes are in Nepali, Hindi, English, Sikkimese (Bhutia), Limbu, and Lepcha. Besides the Regional News in Nepali and Hindi, other programmes include *Gramin Karyakram* a programme based on rural areas, *Geetimala* based on Nepali songs, *Chitranjali* based on Hindi songs etc.<sup>88</sup>

The installation of all the AIR stations in the Northeast have been approved and made operational in various years after the country's Independence. Since January 2002 under the phase-1 of the special 'North East Package' various projects of up-gradation of the existing up-linking facilities to digital system and expansion of various stations in the Northeast Region were undertaken at an estimated cost of Rs 24.8 crore. The current phase-II of the North East package has also been approved since May 2006 at a total cost of Rs 143.32 crore and there are many more FM and Relay Stations in the pipeline to be installed in a phased manner over the next few years. In order to expedite the pace of execution of projects in Northeast, the zonal office at Guwahati is also being strengthened both in terms of infrastructure and manpower.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *All India Radio 2007, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit., pp.33-189.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid., pp. 32-190.*

<sup>88</sup> *Prasar Bharati Annual Report, 2007-2008, op.cit., pp.80-88, All India Radio, 2007 op.cit., pp.32-190.*

<sup>89</sup> *Annual Report 2007-2008, op.cit., pp.70-71.*

In order to supplement and compliment efforts of All India Radio, the Government of India in 1999 had taken a policy decision to expand FM radio network through private agencies to provide programmes of local content and relevance, “improving quality of reception”, giving fillip to local talent, generation of employment and also as a means to earn revenue for the Government.<sup>90</sup> There is now a total of 236 FM Stations in the country, covering 24.94% of area and 36.81% of population. All India Radio also operates 15 FM Stereo channels known as FM AIR Rainbow in some of the major metropolitan cities, besides some state capitals and smaller towns including Shillong which is the only centre in Northeast India to relay FM Rainbow. The FM programming is a blend of information and entertainment, with one third of its content devoted to news and current affairs originating from Delhi. These channels are targeted at the urban audience, and include music, chat shows, helpline programmes, and interactive phone-in programmes. AIR FM Gold launched in September 2001, for the four metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai is also a 24 hours service.<sup>91</sup> It may be of interest to note that the policy of expansion of AIR networks continues even in the FM service as recently on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2013 FM Gold opened its fifth channel in Ludhiana Punjab making a total of five channels of FM Gold in the country.<sup>92</sup> AIR FM gold is considered a classic channel and has a blend of old and light classical music forming 70% of its entertainment segment, the other 30% is news and current affairs component.<sup>93</sup> Though FM constitutes an important network of AIR transmission specially at the urban areas but as the programmes in the FM mode are mostly of entertainment category based on latest chartbusters and its transmission in the Northeast is a recent development, no programmes of FM from the national to the regional level has been undertaken for the gender analysis of programmes under this study.

In addition to broadcasting through the terrestrial network of MW / FM / SW radio transmitters, Satellite broadcasting has also been introduced. DTH (Direct

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.45-46.

<sup>91</sup> *Prasar Bharati Annual Report 2007-08, op.cit.*, pp. 52-53, [www.allindiaradio.gov.in](http://www.allindiaradio.gov.in), accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2013 at 12.30pm.

<sup>92</sup> News Report, *Hindustan Times*, Ludhiana, August 16, 2013.

<sup>93</sup> *Prasar Bharati Annual Report 2007-08, op.cit.*, pp. 52-53, [www.allindiaradio.gov.in](http://www.allindiaradio.gov.in), accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2013 at 12.30pm.

to Home) Radio service, of AIR was inaugurated on 16 December, 2004 with 12 channels. At present, 21 Radio Channels including Radio Kashmir are now available countrywide through the Ku band in the DTH platform of *Prasar Bharati* (DD+). These are 24 hours free-to-air Radio Channels.<sup>94</sup> Community radio has also been established with the idea of bringing small communities together, broadcasting programmes focusing on rural empowerment targeting disadvantaged communities like the dalits, rural women and people with disabilities and presently Community radio stations have been established in a number of educational institutions of the country.<sup>95</sup> According to the scheme, ‘established’ educational institutions, such as universities, IIT’s, IIM’s, and residential schools could obtain licences to run their own radio stations with these campus radio stations permitted to air programmes on agriculture, environment, health, and other development-related information.<sup>96</sup> There are presently 86 Community radio stations operational in the country. The Government has also in December 2006 liberalized the policy for Community Radio stations and decided to grant permission for setting up such stations to ‘Non-Profit’ organisations like the Civil Society and Voluntary organisations, State Agricultural Universities, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutions, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Registered Societies and Autonomous bodies and Public Trusts registered under Societies Act or any other such act relevant for the purpose in addition to the educational institutions, subject to fulfilment of the eligibility conditions.<sup>97</sup> Kanchan Kumar making a study on the radio policy of the country however felt that though the basic objective to setting up community radio is to use this medium as the voice of the voiceless, the mouthpiece of oppressed people and generally as a tool for development, but the fact that community radio in India is established more in universities, colleges and schools, for the urban, educated, elite coterie in area that are already well served by media betrays the fundamental philosophy behind community radio to provide space for development and change oriented content. He felt that if community radio does not enable the marginalised,

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<sup>94</sup> *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit.*, pp 80-88, [www.allindiaradio.org](http://www.allindiaradio.org), accessed on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

<sup>95</sup> *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit.*, pp.46-53.

<sup>96</sup> Vinod Pavarala, “Breaking Free: Battle over the Airwaves”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No 22, 31<sup>st</sup> May-6<sup>th</sup> June, 2003, p. 2166.

<sup>97</sup> *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit.*, pp.8-9.

rural or poor populace to disseminate their' own messages, than the very purpose of community radio seem to be rather lost.<sup>98</sup>

AIR also operates its services through its commercial Broadcasting Service called *Vividh Bharati*. This entertainment channel of AIR began in October 1957 with popular film music as its main programme. It now provides entertainment for 15 hours a day, with the bulk of its programmes originating from Mumbai which are also relayed by other *Vividh Bharati* centers. Regional *Vividh Bharati* stations also produce and broadcast a few programmes at specific timings in their respective languages. Some of the popular programmes of *Vividh Bharati* include *Chitralok*, *Chaya Geet*, *Hawa Mahal*, *Jaimala*, *Sangeet Sarits* besides other programmes.<sup>99</sup>

At the time of Independence All India Radio's network consisted of six radio stations and 18 transmitters which covered 11% population and 2.5% area of the country. Since then AIR has grown quantitatively and as on December 2007, AIR has a network of 403 broadcasting stations in 23 languages and "146 dialects." It has 432 broadcast transmitters, 148 in the medium wave, 236 on FM and 48 in SW covering 92% of the total area and serving 99.19% of the people.<sup>100</sup> AIR broadcasts in 23 languages and 146 dialects, in its Home Service. The External Division of AIR ranks high among the External Radio Networks of the world in terms of its reach covering about 100 countries and includes 27 languages including 16 foreign and 11 Indian languages. Its main objective is to keep the overseas listeners in touch with the ethos of India and to project the Indian point of view on world affairs, and acquaint them with the developments in India along with information on various facets of Indian life, thought and culture. The three major services of External Services Division are (a) the General Overseas Service (GOS) in English, (b) AIR External Service in Hindi and (c) AIR External Service in Urdu. The External Services broadcasts follows a composite pattern and generally comprise of News and Current Affairs, Review of Indian Press, Newsreel, Magazine programme on sports, literature documentaries, features, talks discussions on various subjects and Music. The External Services Division has also started digital transmission, as well as

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<sup>98</sup> Kanchan Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 2173.

<sup>99</sup> *All India Radio 2007, op.cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

internet broadcasting of AIR enabling various countries to avail AIR's services on internet. The Direct-to-Home Service of *Prasar Bharati* called DD Direct Plus besides the various Doordarshan and other satellite channels also include twenty channels of AIR in the package that can also be heard on DD Direct Plus.<sup>101</sup>

The guiding principle of AIR as enshrined in its aim and objectives through its three tier system of broadcasting, at the National, Regional and Local level is to uphold the unity and democratic values in nation building through its programmes on developmental activities, agriculture, health, family welfare, science and technology both in the rural and urban areas, besides the special programmes in local 'dialects' on women that are also broadcast from all the stations.<sup>102</sup> All stations of AIR are equipped with channel-receiver terminals to accept centrally originated programmes from Delhi, with up-linking facilities for the distribution of Regional programmes through the INSAT-1B satellite.<sup>103</sup> Another key development of AIR is its thrust on modernization and digitalization of existing network. Digitalization of programme production facilities, uplink and downlink facilities are in progress to ensure good quality convergence-ready content, which will also support interactive radio.<sup>104</sup> The process of digitations has been taken up because of its several advantages and which now makes it possible to offer a whole range of new channels and applications along with a convergence of audio-video and data services within the same bandwidth occupied by a single channel in the analogue mode.<sup>105</sup> There are now 32 Captive Earth Stations with the help of which all the broadcasting centres of AIR throughout the country have been networked through satellite for the relay of National and Regional programmes. Likewise Down link facilities have been provided at AIR Stations to receive these programmes. Computer Hard Disc based recording, editing and playback system are set to be provided at 76 AIR stations with implementation at 61 stations already completed.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> D.S Mehta, *Mass Communication and Journalism in India*, New Delhi, 1997, p.36, *Prasar Bharati Annual Report 2008-2009*, pp. 54-57.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65.

<sup>103</sup> D.S Mehta, *op.cit.*, p.33.

<sup>104</sup> <http://india.gov.in/knowindia/radio.php>, accessed on, 11th November 2010.

<sup>105</sup> *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit.*, p.42.

<sup>106</sup> <http://india.gov.in/knowindia/radio.php>, accessed on, 11th November 2010.

The sustained growth of AIR since Independence was also due to the limited reach of the printed word as only 30 percent of the population was literate and 80 percent lived in villages and therefore the necessity of quick development of Radio became the policy of the planners and the government under successive five year plans.<sup>107</sup> Since the beginning of India's five year planning process the focus in broadcasting had been on 'expansion, extension and strengthening of the services' of commercial broadcasting of All India Radio. In the later five year plans consolidation and expansion of the regional services, installing and upgrading the transmitters, stress on raising the level of awareness both traditional and modern, technological modernisation, relevant programming and quality of broadcast were the main thrust areas of successive five year plan and its policy in broadcasting. Thus during the period of planning the core issues for the information and broadcasting sector ranged from regulation, providing information and entertainment to the people besides the modernisation of the infrastructure.<sup>108</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1997 both AIR and DD were brought under *Prasar Bharati* (the Broadcasting Corporation of India) with the mandate to organise and conduct public broadcasting services to inform, educate and entertain the public and to ensure a balanced development of broadcasting in the country. The Corporation is governed by a *Prasar Bharati* Board and functions at the apex ensuring formulation and implementation of the policies of the organisation and fulfilment in terms of the *Prasar Bharati* Act, 1990.<sup>109</sup>

Besides the great strides made in the technology of broadcasting with its policy of expansion and digitization, there has also been an increase in the budgetary allocation and in the eleventh plan, the Planning Commission has allocated an amount of Rs 4765 crore for the Broadcasting sector.<sup>110</sup> Total outlay allocated to AIR for 11th Plan is Rs. 1618 crore with major thrust areas of 11th Plan proposals being on digitalisation of studios and connectivity, digitalisation of transmission using Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) and DRM+ technologies, Expansion of FM coverage and strengthening of AIR coverage in border areas as well as

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<sup>107</sup> Dr Jan.R Habemutder, et.al (eds.) *op.cit.*, p.2.

<sup>108</sup> K.D Gaur and Rachiya Jawa, "Need for New Communication Policy" in Dr Jan. R Habemutder, et.al (eds.), *Communication and Social Transformation: Indian Experience*, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 90-91.

<sup>109</sup> *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit.*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.46-53.

E-Governance.<sup>111</sup> All India Radio is thus laying considerable thrust on modernization and digitalization of existing network. Digitalisation of programme production facilities, as well as transmitters, uplink and downlink facilities have all been taken up to facilitate good quality convergence-ready content and to support interactive radio.<sup>112</sup> Besides the massive digitization programme covering production and transmission, the analog equipment in many radio stations have been replaced by state-of-the-art digital equipment. All the above facilities have also been initiated in a phased manner in all the Northeast AIR stations as well under the 'North-East Package' of phase I and II since January 2002 prioritising up-gradation, commissioning of new transmitters, installations of permanent setup besides other facilities.<sup>113</sup> The above mentioned facts prove beyond doubt the comprehensive up-gradation and digitisation policy of AIR in all parts of the country. This growth in broadcasting technology that AIR has adopted would also perhaps shed more light to the progression of programmes with evolving technology. The adoption of the latest technology both in content creation, and transmission through a digitised mode has officially extended radio coverage today to 99.16% of the population and 92% area of the country. But what we need to comprehend is if the public broadcaster concentrated its efforts only in upgrading technology and expansion in infrastructures or has it also simultaneously put in increased effort to improving the content of all programmes specially programmes for women taking up their day to day varied problems and issues.

In addition to the development of technology to upgrade and expand the AIR reach, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has also over the years set up various review committees to suggest measures to improve its setup. A brief study of some of the important committees constituted are being taken up to understand the terms of reference and also their recommendations and if the suggested recommendations have been implemented for the betterment of the largest public broadcaster. When it came to matters of screening and reviewing the workings of the various media in the country the task was entrusted to several committees constituted periodically. The first formal review of the working of the

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<sup>111</sup> [www.allindiaradio.org](http://www.allindiaradio.org), accessed on, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>113</sup> *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit.*, pp. 70-71.

official media in India came about with the appointment of a committee by the MIB under the chairmanship of Asok K. Chanda, former Auditor General Government of India in 1964 to examine and evaluate the operations, policies, programmes and productions of the various media units of the ministry. Besides other suggestions it emphasised on mass production of low cost transistorised sets and their distribution, qualitative improvement of coverage and for the provision of two-channel transmission in all regions and the setting up of two separate autonomous public corporations for radio and television. These recommendations were effected many years later on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1976 when TV was separated from AIR under the name “Doordarshan.”<sup>114</sup> In 1978 a working group under the chairmanship of B.G Verghese was constituted to examine the functioning of AIR and DD to make recommendations regarding their future setup. Among the other terms of reference it included to examine the functional, financial and legal aspects to give full autonomy to Akashvani and Doordarshan and to suggest the form and structure of the autonomous organisations and their relationship with the government. In its 502 pages and two volume report presented to parliament on 9<sup>th</sup> march 1978 suggested a highly decentralised structure with a large measure of power delegated to the Regional and Local level so that the organisation enjoys the advantages of quick decision-making, sensitivity to local problems, familiarity with local customs and taste, and close linkages with various governments and institutions.<sup>115</sup> Kanchan Kumar is however of the opinion that neither the recommendations of the Verghese nor the Joshi committee (constituted in December 1982 to suggest recommendation to enrich programming of Doordarshan) to render more autonomy and discourage the use of radio and television by the government were implemented.<sup>116</sup> In recent years an attempt to revitalize the role of *Prasar Bharati* (earlier called *Akash Bharati*), to the status of a public service broadcaster was made by setting up of the *Prasar Bharati* Committee, the report of which was submitted on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2000. Its major suggestions were decentralisation and devolution and the emphasis on involving local groups and voluntary organisations in programme production.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Kanchan Kumar, *op.cit.*, pp. 2178-2180.

<sup>115</sup> Excerpts from 'Major Recommendations' of the Working Group on Autonomy for Akashvani and Doordarshan constituted under the Chairmanship of Shri B.G. Verghese, (February 1978).

<sup>116</sup> Kanchan Kumar, *op.cit.*, 2178-2180.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*,

Besides the appointment of various committees and working groups, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has also been examining the issue of introducing a legislation to regulate the operation of broadcasting services. The proposed Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill 2007, which if passed, would be called the Broadcasting Services Regulation Act 2007.<sup>118</sup>

Though the above mentioned information brings before us the history and the function of AIR since inception, its social responsibility and the evolution in technology that have extended the reach of AIR to almost every part of the country making it the largest broadcasting medium in the world in terms of its area of coverage and the strength of the population reached but what also needs to be analysed is the kind of role AIR has been playing in its existence of over eight decades as the public service broadcaster of the country. Are the programmes a reflection of existing social values and norms or have they become a medium to help bring in social change and gender sensitivity in society? Have the targeted listeners especially women burdened more by inimical patriarchal ideals been sensitised through the various technologically aided programmes, and assisted them to reap the full benefits of this public broadcaster? The answers would be grasped further as we take up the study of the varied programmes broadcast to understand the thrust in the content of such programmes and the benefits they have helped to achieve. This would be studied in greater detail in the succeeding chapters.

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<sup>118</sup> *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, op.cit.*, pp. 49-51.