ALL INDIA RADIO AS A TOOL OF AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN INDIA: REVIEW ARTICLE

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Abstract: *Communication channels play an important role in disseminating information to its public. For promoting agriculture in the country various communication tools have been used that includes traditional media, print, radio and television. Some communication channels are inaccessible to rural farm community. But radio can play a significant role in disseminating information to rural illiterate and semi-literate farmers as it is affordable and accessible. It is a powerful communication tool which reaches the farmers in the absence of regular and stable electric supplycan run with a battery. It is also a portable medium which a farmer can carry with him/her to the place where they work and listen to the station while doing their work. Radio with its flexibility, immediacy, immense potentiality and capacity caters the needs of national, local, and rural masses in every corner in the country. From the beginning 1927 the All India Radio, the public broadcaster till now serving different needs of the public. At present the AIR with its 415 stations, reaching 92 per cent of area and serving 99.19 per cent of the total population in the country with its programming in 23 languages and 146 dialects. With 96 stations broadcasting Kisanvani programme, it is an essential medium serving the farm community. The paper examines the significant contribution of radio (AIR) in promoting agriculture in the country.*

Key words*: Agricultural promotion, All India Radio, agricultural development*

Introduction

India is agricultural country. Since ages agriculture has been the backbone of Indian people, meeting the important basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Today it ranks second worldwide in farm production. Agriculture and allied sectors includes forestry and fisheries accounted for 13.7 per cent of the total Gross Domestic Product) in 2013 and about 50 per cent of the total workforce. "India is the world's largest producer of many fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, major spices, fibrous crops like jute, staples like millets and castor oil seeds. It is second largest producer of many dry fruits, roots and tuber crops, pulses, eggs, fish, coconut, sugarcane and different varieties of vegetables (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations www.fao.org)". Agriculture an important sector of Indian economy, accounting for 14 per cent of the nation's GDP, about 11 per cent of its exports, more than 60 per cent of the population still depending on agriculture as its principal source of income and it is also a source of raw material for a large number of industries.

Introduction of Radio in India

Radio broadcasting was started in India in 1923 with the establishment of Bombay (Mumbai) Radio Club in July 1923. The Calcutta Radio Club (Kolkata) was gone on air in November 1923. The Madras Radio Club started broadcasting on July 31, 1924, but it was closed and the Madras Corporation re-started the broadcast service in 1930. According to an agreement of July 23, 1927, the private Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) LTD was authorised to operate two radio stations that is Mumbai station began on July 23, 1927, and the Calcutta station followed on August 26, 1927. On March 1, 1930, however, the IBC went into liquidation. The British Government took over the broadcasting facilities, beginning the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS) on April 1, 1930 (on an experimental basis for two years (www.prasarbharati.gov.in) and finally took the control over it permanently in May 1932. Later in 1936 the radio broadcasting service in the country was renamed as All India Radio.

The broadcasting in the beginning included mostly of agricultural news with emphasis on weather, prices, transport, etc. without ample listeners. Later the broadcasting introduced educational programmes. In 1950s United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) suggested (a plan that was succeeded in Canada 'Farm Radio Forum') for organization group listening where the permanent listener groups meet regularly, listen to certain broadcasts that are specially designed for them and discuss what they have perceived from listening to the programmes.

The first of its kind in promoting agriculture the Radio Rural Forum was launched in India. Formally the **Radio rural forum** programme broadcasts were began on January 26, 1956i.e.on Republic Day in India. But the organization of the forum was delayed as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) asked some more time to complete its preliminary work for the assessment of broadcasting. The UNESCO project of Radio Farm Forum was confined to five districts of Bombay State that are Poona (Pune), Ahmednagar, Nasik, North Satara and Kolhapur. 145 villages were selected for the project and 145 forums with about twelve to twenty members mostly men. The farm broadcasts were aired twice a week on Sunday and Thursdays. They were part of the daily rural hour programme. The duration was 30 minutes during 6.30 p.m to 7 p.m that covered subjects like agriculture, health and literacy. The evaluation study concluded that "radio farm forum as an agent for transmission of knowledge has proved to be a success beyond expectation. Increase in knowledge in the forum villages between pre-and post-broadcast was spectacular, whereas in the non-forum villages it was negligible. What little gain there was occurred mostly in the non-forum villages with radio (Mathur J.C and Neurath Paul, p. 105)."

All India Radio played an important role duringthe Green Revolution period in 1970s. Green revolution can be defined as "the introduction of high-yielding varieties of seeds and the increased use of fertilisers and irrigation collectively." Green revolution provided the increase in production that is needed to make India self-sufficient in food grains. Genetically modified high yielding wheat was first introduced in India in 1963 by Dr. Norman Borlaug. All India Radio played a vital role in creating awareness about these high yielding methods/techniques. Along with high yielding seeds and irrigation facilities, the enthusiasm of farmers mobilized the idea of agricultural revolution and is also credited to All India Radio. M.S. Swaminathan and his associates had contributed towards the success of green revolution.

Another important contribution of radio was 'Operation Flood.' "Dr. Kurien's leadership enhanced the milk production where the role of media particularly the Radio was very successful in sensitizing for participating in cattle diary. Through radio, farmers were convinced and encouraged to start cooperative movement with societies purchasing the milk (Ravi. B.K, 2013 p. 299)." All India Radio the only radio at that time "helped forego every conventional approach of the famers and radio became the friend of farmers. It helped practices from unidirectional approach to multi-directional and integrated approach in areas of animal husbandry and others. Ravi B.K., 2013, p299)."

To help the needy farmers in the country the Union Cabinet officially started **'Kisan Call Centrist**'s answer the queries of farmers in their local languages/ dialects. These Kisan Call Centers are functioning since January 21, 2004. These centers are being operated through toll-free telephones with number 1800 -180-1551 from eight selected locations in the country. These call centers functions at three levels which include at the first tier/level the Kisan Call Centre would provide immediate replies to farmer's queries. Second level unanswered questions would be transferred to specialists and at the third level reply is again given to the farmer by the call centre operators or by post, or personal visit which means the farmers queries are 100 per cent answered. At present in India these call centres are situated in Mumbai, Kanpur, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Delhi and Kolkata.

All India Radio as a tool of agricultural communication

Radio plays an important role in the society. It provides information, education and entertainment for the public. It has become as part of our daily life. It is the only source of information, education, and entertainment for many people in rural India as it is affordable and accessible. In the same way radio helps in passing on information to farm community as quickly as possible. From the beginning radio introduced in India it has its remarkable contribution in promoting social education, health, nutrition and agriculture etc. The public broadcaster All India

Radio in its mission it mentioned that it has a responsibility to "produce and transmit programmes relating to developmental activities in all their facets including extension work in agriculture, education, health and family welfare and science and technology (www.allindiaradio.gov.in)".

In 1992 a survey was conducted on Chitradurga FM Station in Karnataka where a team of about 500 medium and larger farmers with access to FM programmes were selected and questionnaire was administered. The study concluded that "72 % of farmers said they followed the FM's agricultural programmes and the agricultural scientists on air (Ravi, B.K, 2013)." But the study also concluded that the "information given through Chitradurga FM station was not sufficient and wanted more (Ravi B.K, 2013" but still audience sought information from it. The study also concluded that 62 per cent of the respondents said that they are encouraged by advices given on that FM station from agricultural scientists regarding crops.
A study was conducted by Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) for the Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India "the farmers were getting higher degree of information from the print and electronic media. About 35 % farmers were sourcing information from radio and about 55 % were availaing the same from television. (as quoted by Grace Kujur, M.N. Jha, B.N. Chaudhary, D.C. Kabdal, V.S. Deepkumar, R.C. Singh, P.A Deshmukh, in Media Support to Agriculture Extension: success stories of All India Radio, p. 11 & 12, 2009." This study shows that there is increase in importance of electronic media in the field of agriculture extension in the country.

A study was conducted by OnkargoudaKakade (2013) to find out the credibility of AIR's radio programmes in dissemination of agricultural information in Dharwad Karnataka. the researcher selected 260 farmers from Dharwad, Bijapur, Gadag in Karnataka. The results indicate that "the farm radio programmes are the second credible, next to agriculture extension workers. This might be due to the fact that extension worker is very much available in the village and gives the information in required format. (OnkargoudaKakade, 2013)". The researcher further concludes that "the Farm and Home units programmes" of AIR "should be more effective, to achieve high credibility. Further, content of the farm radio programmes, which one broadcasted should be made available in print form and possibly in audio form as well in all the RaitaSalahaKendras (Advice Centre for Farmers) for reference by the farmers (OnkargoudaKakade, 2013)" the study concludes. The study concludes that a large percentage of farmers opined that the information which broadcast through agricultural radio programmes as practically applicable. And majority of the farmers considered information broadcast throughagricultural radio programmes as reliable.

The ministry of Agriculture, GOI, implementing a Central Sector Scheme entitled 'Mass Media Support to Agriculture Extension' with title *KisanVani* an exclusive project for promoting

agriculture in the country. It was launched during the Tenth Five Year plan periodin 2004 to promote agriculture by using electronic media for transferring technology and information to the farmers. For decades, All India Radio has been using the existing medium wave (MW) and short wave (SW) and Frequency Modulation (FM) network for broadcasting agriculture-based programmes. Presently, *KisanVani* is being broadcasted from 96 FM stations of AIR, days a week, while the phone-in-programmes such as "Ask the Expert" made radio more interactive.

AIR's hardcore agriculture programme '**Kisanvani (**meaning the voice of farmers**)**' was launched on February 15, 2004. Now all the local radio (LRS) stations of AIR producing and transmitting Kisanvani programmes. The primary aim of Kisanvaniprogramme is to educate the farmers on all the subjects relating to cropping patters, advance agricultural practices, animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries, horticulture, rural banking and self-employment schemes and other allies subjects/ activities necessary for the farmers. Kisanvani includes a wide spectrum of formats having almost all the ingredients of a good agriculture such as 'AajkiKhavrein (news of the day), 'AajKa Bazar' (today's market), 'AajKaMausam (weather information)', AajKeKisan (the farmer of today, mostly interview based programme) etc. The Kisanvaniprogramme is different from the conventional AIR's Farm & Home programmes in its approach and focus; the approach in Kisanvani is being narrowcasting and need-based, covers specific agro-climatic zone and focused more on field-based activities. 90 per cent of the Kisanvani programmes are recorded in the field itself. The programmes of Kisanvani are being broadcast in all the major languages and dialects spoken in the coverage area. AIR's Audience Reserch Unit conducted a study in 2005 revealed that "most of the farmers felt that the information provided in Kisanvani could be actually practices/ adopted. However the degree of adoption varied from year to year (Grace Kujur, M.N. Jha, B.N. Chaudhary, D.C. Kabdal, V.S. Deepkumar, R.C. Singh, P.A Deshmukh, p. 30, 2009)".

In 2006-07 a study was conducted ProggyaGhatak in West Bengal to find out the feedback from listeners of AIR on Kisanvaniprogramme. ProggyaGhatak concludes that "the information given was easy to understand" the farmers adopted "some common technologies/practices adopted" aired in the programme. That study also concluded that specifically women farmers were getting adequate information on "cattle feed, bio-gas, vermin-compost etc. (ProggyaGhatak, 2006-07 http://www.caluniv.ac.in/global-mdia-journal/student_research-june-2010/p%20ghatak.pdf)"

Farm-School on AIR

Farm School programme is one of the innovative devices of AIR based on intensive training modules on specific agricultural and allied subjects. The listenerswere registered for each of the specialized courses. After undergoing the listening, the participating farmers were made to sit

through an examination to ensure the extent of knowledge transfer happened. The successful trainees were rewarded with prizes.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research signed a MOU with the PrasarBharati's All India Radio for dissemination of agricultural technologies to various stakeholders by using a dedicated time slot 7:05 to 7.30 pm on every Friday. The first programme of the Council '**KrishiJagat**' was aired on April 9, 2010 through Indraprastha channel of AIR, Delhi station (April 9, 2010, www.icar.org) It includes features, success stories and discussion forums on agricultural research, education and extension. It involves scientists, farmers, entrepreneurs and policy makers from different fields.

Samruddhi on AIR, Bangalore

A unique Farm School programme, Samruddhi(farm school on All India Radio) was started by Indian Institute of Horticulture Research (IIHR), Bangalore under 'Mobilising Mass Media support for sharing Agro information' project in collaboration with AIR, Bangalore. "Under this programme information was disseminated to farming community members by experts in regarding Agriculture, Horticulture, Poultry, Fisheries, and Dairy (www.iihr.res.in)". The important objective of the programme was to disseminate information on latest agricultural technologies developed under the National Agricultural Research System for the benefit of the farming community. The programme was held from July 2011 to October 2011. It was aired in 'KrishiRanga' and 'RaitharigeSalahe' programmes of AIR station Bangalore. A quiz use to conduct at the end of the programme where the farmers were questioned and given prizes.

At present the **All India Radio's** Farm& Home section monitors and supervise programming activities for rural listeners in its broadcasting service. The programmes are specially designed to serve the day to day seasonal needs of the farming community in the country. The farm programmes are being produced in Hindi and all regional languages/ dialects. The farm programmes includes latest information and technology for best agricultural practices. It creates awareness about the ways and means for improving the agricultural productivity and quality of farming community. The programmes also include rural development schemes, hardcore agricultural programmes on animal husbandry, fisheries, dry and wasteland agriculture, along with employment schemes, loans and training facilities, sanitation, health, hygiene and nutrition. ***Marali Baa Mannige***(return to soil) a programme on financial and literacy was designed by All India Radio, Mysore and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) started in January 2014 to spread economic opportunities for the youth in agriculture and other rural sectors and the financial institutions have resources to support entrepreneurial spirit of youth in rural areas for rural economic activities. The programme also highlights the schemes

launched by Union government and State government that are aimed at promoting agriculture and rural areas. It also talks about the technologies developed by agricultural universities and research stations to help the farmer in agricultural sectors. In view of the adverse effect of climate change and extreme weather events on agricultural productivity, AIR "reformatted its weather forecast and made it comprehensive (alllindiaradio.gov.in)".

Conclusion

Radio plays an important role in providing information, education and entertainment to all the sections in the country. It pays special attention to rural development and agriculture. It is an affordable and accessible medium for many in rural India and it also can run with the battery as many of the farmers can carry the radio set with them to their fields and listen to the station. It is proved as an effective medium in conveying farm/ agricultural messages to its listeners. All India Radio since its inception has played a remarkable role in promoting agriculture in the country. Kisanvani of the AIR is very popular among the agricultural community as it provides them information about weather, new technologies, pesticides, agricultural inputs, information on seed varieties, market rates and new farming techniques etc. Mathur J.C and Neurath Paul concluded that Radio Rural Forum as an agent for transmission of knowledge to its listeners. B.K Ravi (2013) study in on Chitradurga FM radio in Karnataka concludes that radio sensitized farmers in participating in cattle diary and convinced and encouraged them to start cooperative movement with societies purchasing the milk. OnkargoudaKakade (2013) concludes that a large percentage of farmers opined that the information which broadcast through agricultural radio programmes as practically applicable and reliable. Grace Kujur, M.N. Jha, B.N. Chaudhary, D.C. Kabdal, V.S. Deepkumar, R.C. Singh, P.A Deshmukh, (2009)" concludes that most of the farmers felt that the information provided in Kisanvani (community radio) could be actually practices/ adopted but the degree of adoption varied from year to year. ProggyaGhatak (2006-07) study in West Bengal reveals that information provided through Kisanvaniprogramme on AIR "was easy to understand and adopt" for the farmers. That study also concluded that specifically women farmers were getting adequate information on "cattle feed, bio-gas, vermin-compost etc." The above studies provide that All India Radio (AIR) the public broadcaster is paying a significant role in fulfilling the agricultural needs of public in the county since its inception.

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