

Article

The 'Sound' Medium Akashvani the Kisan Vani

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A B S T R A C T

All India Radio (AIR), popularly known as Akashvani since 1957. AIR was made a separate department under Prasara Bharati Corporation of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Communication by word of mouth alone had been possible until radio was used to spread the word. Radio has been the most important and the most effective medium for providing information and stimulating new attitudes wherever it has reached. Radio is an amazingly effective medium, popular, pleasing, even exciting. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the role which radio can play in our society with seventy percent of our people illiterate and with most of them living in rural areas. Radio has been the most important and the most effective medium for providing information and stimulating new attitudes wherever it has reached. Hence, Radio is called people friendly medium, particularly in rural areas it is farmer friendly medium. Indeed, Radio is a 'Sound' medium.

Keywords: All India Radio (AIR), Akashvani, Prasara Bharati Corporation, Mass Media, National Development

Introduction

Sound, undoubtedly, has immense potentiality. Among all human sensory organs hearing sensory organ is always alert round the clock. The sound alerts the human being and arrests one's attention, for the matter for all the living creatures. Sound attracts from all the sides and angles i.e., three sixty degrees. For instance, if we take visual sensory organs i.e. eyes, take rest while sleeping. But it is not the case with hearing. If any sound is produced and reaches the ears, immediately one awakes up even if he is in deep sleep. Sound creates emotional feelings. Every program in Radio definitely accompanies with music either in the beginning or ending. Other wise music of signature tune of radio at least. And some times with relevant folk or film songs. The song has three aspects – word, voice and music. Music is one of the art forms. The melody of its tunes sweeps the people off their feet. Life without music is insipid and barren. The word and voice from radio will make the audience to listen careful and register theme in it. In fact it works just like a magic.¹

Magic Multiplier with Immense Potentiality

Radio is proving itself as a magic multiplier, as rightly said by Wilbur Schramm in his book Mass Media and National Development. The role of radio in a country like India with a multilingual and heterogeneous audience is important and critical. This medium transmits information in the local dialects which can be easily understood by the rural illiterate masses. The transistor revolution helped farmers immensely. Radio can multiply the information to innumerable audience. It reaches the wide spread and scattered audience, with limited technological limitations as compared with any other mass media. Hence Radio (AIR) is playing a vital role in disseminating developmental message or information in India.²

Radio is the perfect medium for mass communication. If we compare it to other mass media, radio consistently ranks as the most popular means of disseminating information, regardless of the continent. What makes radio particularly appealing to research projects, however, is its interactivity, its capacity to provoke dialogue and to solicit the participation

of local populations. With its lower production costs and extreme versatility, radio lends itself just as well to rapid interventions as to the broadcasting of in-depth reports, and is just as suitable for the dissemination of information as it is for entertainment or educational purposes. Radio allows villagers to make their voices heard directly, regardless of their level of education or social standing.

Farm and Home Broadcasts

Realizing the contribution of radio towards reaching new agricultural technologies to farmers of United States of America in 1966, the then Union Minister of Agriculture Bharat Ratna C. Subramniam played an instrumental role in introducing Farm and Home Units at seven AIR stations in the country. This marked the beginning of a new era of farm broadcasting in India.³

The objective condition to utilize the services of AIR was the launch of Intensive Agricultural District Program (IADP), which aimed at providing a package of scientifically evolved and proven agricultural practices to farmers in selected districts of the country. It became imperative that the scheme be supported by strong agriculture information service. Besides creating *Information Centers* in IADP districts, it was decided that seven Farm and Home Units be located near these centers. In course of time the number of such units was increased to sixty across the country. From the day it was started, the farm and home Programmes of AIR were felt to be enormously powerful and effective to realize the objective of the betterment of farming community.

AIR has played a significant part in bringing new technology in agriculture to the door steps of farmers by providing desirable support to various training and functional literacy Programmes of the Ministry of Agriculture and Education. AIR purposefully supported the IADP and advocated various improved strains of crops for the farmers of different geo-climatic conditions of the country. The advocacy, gained considerable credibility among farmers as the broadcasts were duly supported by suitable linkages at the ground level.⁴

Another experiment called the *Charcha Mandal* for training the farmers was initiated and organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and it was also found to be a wonderful success as more than nineteen thousand Mandals were organized in quick time and qualitative interactions were enlisted.

The commitment of All India Radio to the rural audience dates back to more than a half century. All stations of All India Radio broadcast Farm and Home Programmes directed at rural audience. In fact, special Programmes have been designed to cater to the day to day seasonal needs of the farming community. To broadcast the latest technology and information for agricultural output is a continuous process

of its Farm and Home program. These Programmes not only provide information about agriculture but also create awareness about the ways and means to improve the quality of their lives. The Programmes are broadcast daily in the morning, noon and evening. The average duration of Farm and Home broadcast is 60 to 100 minutes per day. Farm and Home Programmes also include Programmes for rural women, rural children and rural Youth.⁵

All India Radio provides extensive Programmes on land and water conservation, sustainable agriculture, biotechnology, integrated pest management in crops, crop insurance schemes, environment protection, disaster management and role of panchayats in rural development etc. These Programmes are produced with the help of subject matter experts.

All India Radio maintains a very close liaison with the Ministries and Departments of agriculture and rural development of central and state governments. The Programmes are mounted in local and dialect from different stations. Local Radio Stations also broadcast regular Programmes on rural development in different formats. Dialogues, discussions, talks, interviews, features, serials, dramas, slogans, jingles, phone-in-Programmes, musical features and farm school on AIR etc. are used to convey the message through radio.⁶

Radio Rice - A Revolution

Involvement of radio with the green revolution of nineteen sixties was so intense and extensive that some strain of rice advocated by it in Tanjavur district of south India came to be called as *Radio Rice*. Playing a catalytic role, radio proved tremendously helpful in propagating new techniques in agriculture and hastening adoption by farmers. In conjunction with other agencies operating at the ground level and forming critical linkages in realization of Green Revolution objectives, radio broadcast formats evolved out a social reality and much so that the much touted rice by AIR Tanjavur came to be called as *Radio Rice*. The background of this success story was that Agricultural Research Station at Adhutharai near Tiruchirapalli invented a new variety of padded called ADT 27 which gave a yield of 40 bags per acre as against 20 bags per acre obtained through other traditional varieties. Radio programmes advocated the objective purpose of adoption of this strain of paddy and helped the agriculture extension workers a great deal to explain to the farmers about the newly developed variety in various stages of social adoption and catalyzed by radio. The strain underwent trail by some early enthusiasts. The grain at the field level hastened the process of general adoption and in the final analysis the role of radio was prominently underlined. Farmers identified this crop as *Radio Paddy* (Radio Nel) and subsequently ADT 27 became *Radio Nel* for all practical purposes. While inaugurating DTH serves of

Prasar Bharati the Prime Minister of India rightly referred to the role of AIR quoting as "I recall Indiraji's famous speech in which she described how some farmers had labelled a particular high yielding variety of paddy as Radio Rice. They were not aware of the name given to it by the agricultural scientists, but had identified it as *Radio Rice* because they adopted that variety after hearing about it on the radio."⁷

Kisan Vani

Although AIR has been dedicated to the service of farming community as mentioned above it embarked on the new initiative to turn the hardcore agriculture program into the *Voice of Farmers* i.e. *Kisvanvani* from 15th February 2004. The Programmes are broadcasts across the length and breadth of the country. The thrust of Kisanvani Programme is to educate the farmers on the subjects such as diffusion of innovation, Lab to land, knowledge and skill of modern and scientific techniques of agricultural practices, horticulture, animal husbandry, poultry farming, fishery, rural banking and self employment schemes and other allied activities.

Format of the Programme

Kisanvani encompasses a wide spectrum of formats having almost all the ingredients of a good agriculture program like *Aaj Ki Khabrein* (news of the day), *Aaj ka Bazar* (today's market), *Aaj Ka Mausam* (weather information), *Aaj Ki batein* (Special mention of the day), *Aaj Ke Kisan* (the farmer of today, interview based) and *Desh Videsh* (news from the country and abroad).⁸

Narrow Casting

Moreover, it is different from the conventional Farm and Home Program of AIR in its approach and focus; the approach being narrowcasting and need-based, covering the specific agro-climatic zone and focussed on field-based activities. About 90 percent of the Programmes are recorded in the field itself instead of the farmers and experts take part in these Programmes. This program is being broadcast in all the major languages and dialects spoken all over the country.

Feed Back

Getting feedback is a gigantic task. AIR Audience Research Unit is conducting weekly feedback studies in 96 AIR stations spread over 24 States and 3 Union Territories across the nation and posting them on AIR's website.

In order to obtain feed back from target beneficiaries and to extend research support to Kisan Vani Channel, Ministry of Agricultural and Cooperation, Govt. of India under the scheme "*Mass media support to agriculture extension*", in collaboration with Audience Research Unit of DG, AIR, New Delhi planned a country wide feed back study in primary coverage of all AIR Stations. Findings of the preliminary study provided an impetus to further take

up in-depth weekly feedback study to gauge the qualitative and quantitative impact of the Kisan Vani Program.⁹

The study of feed back from farmers is conducted with the following objectives:

- To gauge the frequency of listening to Kisan Vani program.
- To estimate information requirement of farmers for future scheduling of Programmes.
- To identify gap between "information supplied" and "information demanded"
- To provide the program producer/ planner periodic feedback/ suggestions received from the farmers.
- To record actual impact of Kisan Vani program among the target beneficiaries by way of obtaining qualitative information
- To quantify adoption of innovations under different schemes of income generation.
- To elicit target beneficiaries opinion on the information given under the Kisan vani program
- To solicit comments and suggestions from the target beneficiaries for the improvement of program

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this feedback collection is quite innovative and different from the conventional one, generally followed in development communication research. Instead of following the sample survey methodology, action research technique has been adopted. The idea behind this is to facilitate a classroom situation for beneficiaries wherein the field based researchers duly record their difficulties and expectations and appropriate solutions are provided through regular radio broadcasts.

'Sound' Medium in Transforming

Radio has been the most important and the most effective medium for providing information and stimulating new attitudes wherever it has reached. Radio is a very effective medium, popular, pleasing, even exciting. Radio has been the most important and the most effective medium for providing information and stimulating new attitudes wherever it has reached particularly the farming community. Hence, Radio is called people friendly medium, particularly in rural areas it is farmer friendly medium. Indeed, Radio is a 'Sound' medium in transforming the farming community.

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