

Role of Mass Media in Rural Society: A Sociological Study

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The mass media can play a powerful role in any society and its importance in 21st century which is coming to close people throughout during 1960s that mass media play a very powerful role. This is concept of *Magic Bullet Theory* of mass communication that is the messages of mass media are injected as bullets in people's mind. The mass media apart from exerting influence on the members of the society can play a definite role. You have been a number of studies on the impact of mass media among the people. Scholars like Wilbur Schramm, Daniel Learner and others have tried to find out the influence that is exerted by the media on the society. According to Maxwell McLoney and Donald Shaw (Agenda Theory), Media set the agenda and media act as the gate keeper in providing information to the people. People get selected information reaches them after being filtered by the mass media. Albert Bandura (Social Learning Theory) says how people generally in the social setting. The media in 21st century have grown so big and powerful in the society. Apart from being the regular role of information other two education and entertainment being the two major functions of the mass media in our society. Those who are living in rural areas are less exposed to media than urban areas. Radio provides the general education by performing the role of providing news and information to people. Radio has more than 500 transmitters in the country and caters to 90% of people, covering more than 95% of geographical area of the country. It has been under government control and the provision of news in the major source of education to people. Also there are special programmes catering to youth and these are broadcast from All India Radio's central services as well as by the regional services. A few privately owned stations which cater the entertainment needs advertisement. Radio is the major source of revenue for the radio in our country; it also provides adult education as well.

The present paper is based on an empirical study with following specific objectives: 1. The nature of radio/transistor listening; 2. The type of radio/transistor programmes farmers prefer the most; 3. The frequency with which farmers visit other mass media; and 4. The role of radio in the dissemination of agricultural knowledge in rural community. For this purpose 300 farmers on the basis of caste, land holding and social economic status of two villages viz. Umarahan and Barain in the Chiraigaon Block of the Varansi district have been selected for the present investigation. Only a thin road divides these two villages; otherwise the agro-climatic conditions are more or less alike.

The first broadcasting station in India, with a 1.5 Kw medium wave transmitter, was opened in Bombay by the Indian Broadcasting Company in July 1927. In August of the same year, the Calcutta Station (1.5 Kw medium wave) was opened. Subsequent developments proceeded haltingly and in 1930, the Indian Broadcasting Company went into liquidation. However, the same year, the Government of India took over the broadcasting and established the Indian State Broadcasting

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Service. In June 1936, the name of the organization was changed to All India Radio. From 1935 onwards, the development of broadcasting was taken up seriously and the office of the controller of Broadcasting was set up with Mr. Lionel Fielden as the first controller. He along with a B.B.C. expert made a study of the broadcasting requirements of India and on their recommendations; the Government of India undertook a development programme on broadcasting with an initial investment of Rs. 40 lakhs. Since then broadcasting has developed considerably. The war provided an impetus and after freedom the needs of the development, the requirement of extensive mass information, the importance of knitting the whole country together and the compulsions of emergencies like foreign aggression brought a rapid increase in broadcasting facilities of the country. By 1975, the total number of broadcasting stations in the country was 71. There were, besides, three auxiliary centres as Vadodara, Darbhanga and Shanti Niketan. This is a considerable improvement over the position in country and about a dozen transmitters with about 275,000 set for the population of 320 million. At that time, less than 10 per cent of the country was covered by radio facilities. The location of the different centres of broadcasting are divided into north, east, west, south and the Kashmir zone. Over the year All India Radio's coverage has been steadily increasing. In 1975, the coverage stood at Home service programmes 740 hours per day, Vividh Bharati 275 hours per day and External service 53 hours per day. In the beginning, when radio was completely new, everything about it, its performance, programme-making and its apparently unorthodox approach were subjects of comment. Lionel Fielden, a remarkable personality who contributed extensively to the building of All India Radio in the initial stages. There are several major activities of All India Radio. These include cultural programmes like songs, music and drama; extension programmes like rural broadcasting, educational programmes, youth programmes, family planning, news services and external services directed to foreign countries.

The first definite attempt to introduce rural Broadcasting in India was made by the then North-West frontier provincial government early in 1935. In the same year, the Punjab Government decided to grant a sum of Rs. 48,040 towards a scheme of village broadcasting to be radiated by the Delhi station. These attempts, however, were only pioneer efforts as it took quite some time before the villagers could be made to appreciate the value of radio. At first the villager tended to regard the radio with suspicion, as possible means of taxation or instrument of propaganda apart from this, the limited range of his interests made him an excessively difficult listener to pleas. In 1939, there were in all about 100 community village sets working in India. The Research Department of All India Radio evolved a type of village sets which with its batteries and time switch used to cost about Rs. 300. Since then, the programme of rural broadcasting has been extended to large parts of the country and the community receiving sets have supplied to many villages, panchayats and other rural bodies. A programme of special significance which has been organized with the help of these communities receiving sets is the Radio nRural Forum in which the radio functions as a direct agent to promote thinking of development plan for the villages as well as their implementations.

The role played by radio in our country's socio-economic development which is unique and play a very important role in our socio-economic milieu. It is popular with farmers and villagers although very few people listen to radio in metropolitan cities these days because of the availability of T.V. as a medium of communication Radio covers about 90-95% of the country's geographical area and about 80% or more of the population. People listen to radio for new songs and for entertainment. There are separate programmes meant to cater to the young and old alike McLuhan says that Radio is a hot medium, since it does not require sensory participation. There are privately owned radio or media in our country although their reach is limited. These are like Cable T.V. in nature and supported by religious and educational and other such organizations. AIR is the state owned organization and is operated as a government department. There are various committees

appointed to go in the functioning of AIR from time to time. There was a talk of autonomy for radio and television when the Janata Party came to power and nothing was done about it. The characteristics of All India Radio.

1. The Radio is more popular with rural people than those in Urban areas. The main reason being that it is cheap and easily transportable.
2. The programmes of Radio are popular with farmers. These special programmes are meant to cater the rural segment of the population.
3. The commercial broadcasting are popular with youngsters. The film songs and entertainment which are broadcast with youth mainly because these programmes provide entertainment to the people.
4. People listen to AIR for news as well. There are news which are broadcast on All India Radio internally as well as externally.
5. All India Radio promotes national integration since it is government owned and have special programmes catering to these segments.
6. All India Radio promotes themes like adult education primarily healthcare and women's emancipation etc.
7. All India Radio has a role of ethics and code of conduct which is aimed at promoting friendly relations with neighbouring countries.
8. There is more education and information in Radio than entertainment. By the very nature of radio, people listen to it for education and information. Films and T.V. being powerful media providing the much sought after entertainment by and large the radio is government owned in our country and it puts restrictions on operation of the medium. Radio is popular in rural areas with segments like farmers, it is continued to be very popular.

Radio/Transistor is the most far reaching and popular means of communication in today's complex society. This channel overrides the geographical as well as human boundaries. Unlike the newspaper and other printed materials, radio/transistor reaches even the illiterate living in far-flung places which are inaccessible by rail or road. The importance of radio/transistor is unique in the sense that it transmits the news or ideas instantly to a large population living in particular geographic areas. It takes relatively very little time in the communication or percolation of the new ideas. In developing countries, the level of electronic technology and the nature and pattern of programmes as well as the overall media broadcast policy leave a deep impact upon every aspect of the country.

In the field of agricultural development, the role of radio/transistor is most significant. In developing countries like India, special programme to benefit the farmers are regularly broadcast. These agricultural programmes help induct the farmers into new ideas and techniques in agriculture. In short, these constitute a medium of interaction through which the farmers, administrators, planners and agricultural specialists could interact meaningfully. Planned agricultural development could also be substantially and significantly facilitated through the use of radio/transistor.

In order to understand the level and nature of media exposure, the respondents have been asked to state about their interest in radio listening. It may be seen that 20.57% respondents listen to the radio regularly, 67% listen to it sometimes, and only 12.33% respondent care to listen rarely. The caste wise distribution of data reveals that respondents in regular habit of listening radio have been found in greater portion among high caste (35.16%) than among the backward and the scheduled caste (17.36%) and (7.69) respectively. Among the scheduled castes most of the respondents (81.54%) listen to the radio only occasionally. The association is significant at 0.001 levels. It has been found that a regular habit of listening to radio has been found in greater proportion among high caste (71.43%) and medium (51.85%) educated respondents than among the low educated (12.39%) and the illiterate ones (8.40%). The differences are significant at 0.001 level. It has been found that

more respondents among big landholders (43.14%) listen to radio regularly than the small (17.95%) and marginal (15.20%) landholders. On the basis of social- economic status, it may be seen that as compared to low (10.83%) and medium (23.33%) social-economical status groups (73.91%) listen to the radio regularly. The relationship is significant at 0.001 levels. It may be seen that regular radio listening habit is found more among the high adopters.

It has been found that 8.67% respondents have their main interest in radio news. 13.33 % of respondents are mainly interested in agricultural programmes and 12.33% respondents are mostly interested in films/folk songs and music.

In contemporary Indian rural society, there has been considerable explosion of knowledge. Not only are the villages being influenced within the all pervading mass media but there has been a significant inflow in various other ways of new agricultural ideas and techniques to the farmers at the grass root levels. Sources of such dissemination of knowledge are varied though they may be broadly classified into two channels – formal and informal. Among the formal ones experiences of old and big farmers continue to remain as the most potential motivating and imitating factors of other cultivators in the areas. Among the formal channels radio, documentary films and newspaper are more influential channels which simultaneously connect a vast number of farmers scattered over a large area through indirect and impersonal ways by audiovisual aids or printed literature. With the increasing interest concern shown by the state in the welfare of farmers, many developmental agencies, either governmental or semi-governmental agencies have come up.

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