

Review Article

A Review on Community Radio Stations of Karnataka

Abstract

This review paper explores the impact and contributions of community radio stations in Karnataka, India. Since the inception of community radio in India, these stations have evolved to address various local needs and issues. Karnataka, with its diverse array of community radios, exemplifies how this medium supports grassroots development and community engagement. The paper examines several notable stations, including Antarwani, Krishi, Radio Siddhartha, and others, highlighting their roles in education, health, agriculture, and cultural preservation. Through their targeted programming and community involvement, these stations empower local populations, promote social awareness, and facilitate inclusive communication. The review underscores the significant role of community radio in filling gaps left by mainstream media, demonstrating its effectiveness in fostering local development and addressing specific community needs.

Introduction

Radio broadcasting in India has evolved significantly since its inception, with a rich history divided into three main categories: public radio, private radio, and community radio (Fraser and Estrada, 2001). The journey began in 1923 with the formation of the Radio Club of Bombay and the Calcutta Radio Club by amateur enthusiasts inspired by developments in Europe and the United States (Neelamalar, 2018). These early initiatives led to the establishment of the Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) in 1927. However, facing operational challenges, the IBC was taken over by the colonial government in 1930 and renamed the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS) (Kaul, 2020). In June 1936, under the direction of Lionel Fielden, the ISBS was rebranded as All India Radio (AIR) (Duggal and Hoene, 2023). Later, in 1957, AIR adopted the name Akashvani, and the same year, the Vividh Bharati Service was launched, featuring popular film music (Deshpande, n.d.). Today, AIR boasts an extensive network with 591 broadcasting centres located across the country, covering nearly 90% of the country's area and 98% of the total population. (Prasar Bharati, n.d.).

Despite the vast reach of AIR, the necessity for community radio emerged due to the lack of grassroots-level participation in public media (Ochichi, 2014). Community radio, unlike public and private media dominated by government narratives and corporate interests respectively, offers a platform for local voices and participation. This form of radio broadcasting allows communities to engage directly in planning, programming, and decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and addressing local issues effectively (Mhagama, 2015).

The concept of community radio globally dates back to 1947 with the establishment of Radio de los Mineros in Bolivia and Radio Sutatenza in Colombia (Ramírez-Cáceres, 2021). These stations empowered miners and peasants by voicing their struggles and needs. In India, the campaign for community radio gained momentum following a 1995 Supreme Court ruling that declared airwaves as public property (Parthasarathi and Chotani, 2010). Anna FM, launched by Anna University in February 2004, was the first community radio in India.

Initially restricted to educational institutions, community radio guidelines were expanded in 2006 to allow NGOs and other civil society organizations to operate stations, leading to significant growth in this sector(Press Information Bureau, 2023).

Community radio in India has played a crucial role in development, addressing issues from agricultural practices to social evils, and supporting educational and moral enhancement(Sharma, Rathore and Sharma, 2021). The medium's importance in fighting social evils, illiteracy, and poverty has been well recognized, with various non-governmental organizations and media-activist groups advocating for local radio broadcasting services. The Community Radio Forum (CRF), formed in 2007, along with the government's supportive policies, has contributed to the proliferation of community radio stations across the country. Currently, India has 338 operational community radio stations, each serving as a platform for community engagement and democratic communication(Patil, 2021).

In the context of Karnataka, community radio stations have made significant strides in empowering local communities. By providing a voice to marginalized and voiceless sections of society, these stations have become vital tools for local development and cultural preservation. This review paper aims to explore the landscape of community radio stations in Karnataka, examining their impact, challenges, and contributions to community development. Through this examination, the paper seeks to highlight the role of community radio in fostering inclusive growth and participatory communication in the state.

Antarwani Community Radio Station

Antarwani Community Radio Station (CRS) is dedicated to creating equal opportunities for different societal communities to participate in its programs. All students are actively involved in producing educational content, including Spoken English and English grammar lessons, which benefit students significantly. The station also broadcasts programs aimed at enhancing communication skills and personality development. Awareness programs on critical issues like environmental protection are also part of the broadcast schedule. The station's mission is to provide socio-educational and cultural benefits to the community, with a particular focus on women's awareness programs created by local women(Community Voices, n.d.).

Antarwani CRS offers a wide range of programs covering social, religious, cultural, agricultural, health, and hygiene topics. These programs aim to educate and enrich the local population, reaching over 20 km and benefiting around 15,000 people. Key programs include "Sangeetvani," a music program featuring various genres; "Mahilavani," which addresses women's issues and health; "Negilayogi," focusing on agricultural development; "Arogyavani," which brings medical specialists to discuss health issues; and "Visheshvyakti," featuring prominent personalities sharing their experiences. Signature programs like Gramavani, Arogyavani, and Mahilavani involve significant community participation. The station, established on September 23, 2009, operates on a frequency of 90.8 MHz and broadcasts from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM and 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM.

Krishi Community Radio Station

Krishi Community Radio Station (KCRS) 90.4 FM, operated by the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, serves as a vital educational tool for the farming

community. Launched on May 17, 2007, it was the first agricultural university in India to establish such a station. KCRS primarily broadcasts programs on agriculture, environment, health, education, and community development, with a small segment reserved for entertainment. The station's content, delivered in the local Kannada dialect and occasionally in simple English and Hindi, is sourced from university scientists, progressive farmers, and state government officials. The broadcasts aim to address farmers' problems, covering topics like cropping patterns, agricultural practices, animal husbandry, horticulture, and more (Balasubramani, n.d.).

The station operates with a modern setup, including state-of-the-art equipment for field recording and transmission. Programs like "Varada Basanna Charche," "Soundry Lahari," and "Krishi Chintrana" are designed to meet farmers' needs, broadcasting from 6 AM to 9 AM and 5 PM to 8 PM daily. KCRS's effective range is 10-15 km, making it a crucial source of timely and location-specific agricultural advice. The station's operation is guided by a technical advisory committee, including university heads, development departments, input agencies, NGOs, and farmers.

Radio Siddhartha

Radio Siddhartha 90.8 FM, the first community radio station in Tumkur, commenced transmission on June 12, 2008. It aims to assist the local community, including media students, women, children, and farmers. Broadcasting occurs in three shifts: morning (6-9 AM), afternoon (12-3 PM), and evening (6-9 PM). The station is equipped with advanced technology, including On-Air Audio Mixers, Digital Audio Workstations, Professional CD/DVD Players, Microphones, Headphones, and Audio Monitors, ensuring high-quality broadcasts (Siddhartha Media, n.d.).

Radio Sarang

Radio Sarang 107.8 FM, established on September 23, 2009, is a community radio station in Dakshina Kannada. It is unique for broadcasting in four local languages: Kannada, Tulu, Konkani, and Beary. Radio Sarang broadcasts 16 hours daily from 6 AM to 10 PM and has a global presence through a digital app. The station has won three national awards for its innovative programs, including "Antarabelaku," which highlighted the lives of visually impaired listeners. Unlike commercial radio, Radio Sarang focuses on development through issue-centric programs, giving voice to marginalized groups and highlighting developmental issues often overlooked by mainstream media (Radio Sarang, n.d.).

KLE Dhwani

KLE Dhwani 90.4 FM, based in Belagavi, Karnataka, and addresses health issues through programs like "Aarogya Dhwani." (Community Radio Sammelan, 2019). It also collaborates with the Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Department of the Government of Karnataka on projects like "Swaccha Meva Jayate," focusing on drinking water safety, sanitation, and waste disposal. These programs highlight the importance of clean water, sanitation systems, and environmental hygiene, playing a crucial role in community education and development.

Divya Vani Neladhani

Divya Vani Neladhani 90.8 FM operates with the mission of empowering the Dalit community and other underprivileged groups. The station focuses on raising awareness and providing a platform for the voices of marginalized communities. Its programming includes a variety of social, educational, and cultural content designed to educate and uplift its listeners. By addressing issues such as social justice, education, and health, Divya Vani Neladhani plays a crucial role in advocating for the rights and needs of the Dalit community (Das, n.d.).

KLE Venudhwani

KLE Venudhwani 90.4 FM, located in Belgaum, Karnataka, is managed by the KLE Society and focuses on educational and health-related content. The station broadcasts programs that cater to students and the general public, offering educational material, health tips, and cultural programs. Venudhwani serves as an important medium for community education and awareness, often collaborating with local health departments and educational institutions to provide relevant and impactful content to its listeners (KLE Venudhwani FM, n.d.).

Radio Ninada

Radio Ninada 90.4 FM, based in Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka, aims to provide a mix of educational, cultural, and entertainment programs. The station's broadcasts include content on local culture, agricultural practices, and social issues, helping to preserve and promote the local heritage. By addressing community-specific concerns and interests, Radio Ninada plays a vital role in enriching the lives of its listeners through informative and engaging programming (SDM College Ujire, n.d.).

Kalike Dhwani

Kalike Dhwani 90.4 FM, located in Bangalore Urban, Karnataka, is dedicated to educational programming and community development. The station provides a platform for discussions on educational initiatives, community welfare, and social issues. Kalike Dhwani collaborates with local schools, colleges, and NGOs to produce content that is both educational and beneficial to the community. Its programs aim to foster a sense of community engagement and lifelong learning among its listeners (Kalike, n.d.).

BEC Dhwani

BEC Dhwani 90.4 FM, situated in Bagalkot, Karnataka, is operated by the Basaveshwar Engineering College. The station focuses on educational content, particularly in the fields of science and technology. BEC Dhwani broadcasts lectures, discussions, and interviews with experts, providing valuable information to students and the general public. The station also covers community issues and local events, making it a key resource for education and community information (Basaveshwar Engineering College, n.d.).

JSS Radio

JSS Radio 91.2 FM, based in Mysore, Karnataka, is managed by the JSS Mahavidyapeetha. The station focuses on educational and cultural programming, offering content that promotes learning and cultural awareness. JSS Radio broadcasts a variety of programs, including lectures, cultural shows, and health tips. The station aims to serve the educational needs of the community while also promoting the rich cultural heritage of the region (JSS College of Arts, Commerce & Science, n.d.).

Namma Dhwani

Namma Dhwani 90.4 FM, located in Kolar, Karnataka, is known for its community-driven approach. The station involves local community members in the production of its programs, ensuring that the content is relevant and engaging. Namma Dhwani broadcasts a range of programs on health, education, agriculture, and social issues, aiming to empower the community through information and participation. The station's focus on local content helps to address the specific needs and interests of the Kolar community (Community Voices, n.d.).

Radio Manipal

Radio Manipal, operated by the Manipal Academy of Higher Education, serves as a platform for educational and cultural programming. The station broadcasts lectures, discussions, and cultural events, catering to students and the local community. Radio Manipal also covers health-related topics and community issues, providing a well-rounded mix of content. Its goal is to enhance the educational experience of students while also serving the information needs of the broader community (Manipal University, n.d.).

Other Community Radios in Bengaluru

Bengaluru is home to several community radio stations, each tackling a range of civic issues. Radio Active 90.4 MHz, the city's first community radio station, covers a broad spectrum of topics including the environment, disabilities, HIV/AIDS, child rights, the rights of sex workers, and transgender issues. Ramana Voices 90.4 MHz serves the visually impaired community, working to raise awareness about their social needs. Sarathi Jhalak Community Radio 90.4 MHz is managed by women and offers workshops on HIV/AIDS awareness. Radio Universal 106.8 MHz, operated by Universal College, focuses on women's empowerment. These stations provide a diverse mix of programs, both developmental and non-developmental, with significant emphasis on women-centric issues, education, health, and job opportunities.

Conclusion

Community radio stations in Karnataka have become crucial players in local development and empowerment. Each station serves its unique audience by addressing specific needs—whether it's agricultural advice, health education, women's issues, or cultural promotion. These stations provide a platform for local voices, allowing communities to actively participate in creating and sharing content that directly impacts their lives. From educating farmers about new practices to raising awareness about social issues, community radios are making a tangible difference. They help bridge the gap left by mainstream media by focusing on grassroots concerns and fostering a sense of community. As this review highlights, the

growth and success of community radio in Karnataka reflect its vital role in promoting inclusive development and offering a space for diverse, community-driven dialogue.

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