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Radio Revolution in India: The Story of Phenomenal Medium and Its Challenges

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Since broadcasting has been opened up to private broadcasters about 6-7 years ago, the private FMs have thrived. Suriyan FM and many other FMs like 93.1 and others have ushered in an entertainment revolution. The monopoly of All India Radio has been broken and AIR has also come up with some FM stations. The situation has changed some years ago and it has ushered in private FM stations. Also some community radio stations and college FM stations like Anna FM, MOP FM and Loyola FMs have come up in big numbers. All these promise to bring out a broadcasting revolution in the country. India experimented with FM broadcasts in the mid nineties in five places including the four metros of Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi, plus the tourist destination of Goa. These were followed by stations in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Jaipur and Lucknow. The channels in these cities pay license fee and initially news was not permitted in FMs but it must have been added later as these channels inform locally the news and the weather broadcast as well as the traffic situation. The earlier players include the Times of India, Hindustan Times, Mid –Day and BBC, but new players have emerged in the FM scenario. We would need to examine both the private broadcasters and the government funded publicly owned All India Radio to reform further. Mainly it is found out that the public service broadcasters’ programs are found to be wanting more entertainment and should make listeners more interested in listening to these programme. There is a need to reform the private broadcasting to such an extent that it can provide more news and takes more interest in the public welfare. THE radio waves are set for a revolution, fully 15 years after satellite TV turned our viewing habits topsy-turvy. Heading the change are, well, the ordinary people that comprise civil society, unlike large media houses that were at the vanguard of the TV tsunami. A small community radio started by illiterate rural women of Zahirabad in Medak district is making itself heard in villages afflicted by domestic violence, crop failures, livestock diseases and frequent droughts. It is the only radio station in the country that is operated and maintained entirely by Dalit women, none of whom has studied beyond class X. What began two years ago as an experiment to broadcast messages of marital harmony to menfolk in a couple of villages has been transformed by these women into a community radio that now covers more than 500 villages in a 30-km radius and addresses issues like domestic violence, debts, failure of crops, livestock-rearing, healthcare and education. The message is in their own local dialect with help from their own people. In fact, the evening slot of cable TV has now been taken up by ‘Radio Sangham’ for an hour when programmes, interviews, songs and plays are broadcast.