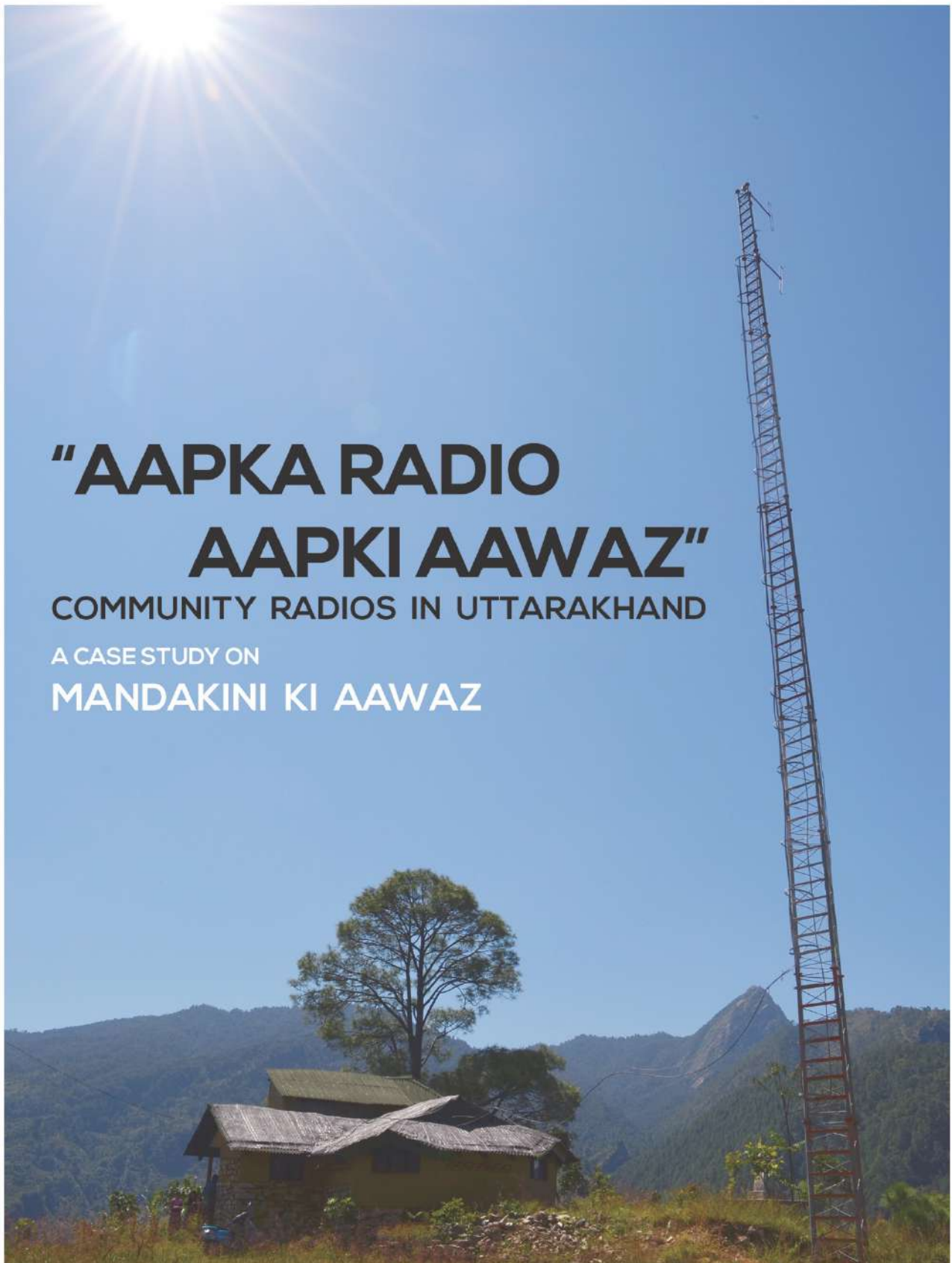


"AAPKA RADIO AAPKI AAWAZ"

COMMUNITY RADIOS IN UTTARAKHAND

A CASE STUDY ON

MANDAKINI KI AAWAZ



Aapka Radio, Aapki Aawaz
Community Radios in Uttarakhand

A case study on Mandakini ki Aawaz

DISCOVER INDIA PROGRAM

2018

November 2018

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this report entitled “*Community Radios in Uttarakhand*” submitted by the undersigned Research Team was carried out under my mentorship. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

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During our on-field journey we had faced many challenges but at the same time there were experiences that we took back with us. We would also like to express our gratitude towards Mr. Manvendra Negi and the people working at Mandakini Ki Awaaz for accommodating us at their community radio station and welcoming us with a warm heart.

ABSTRACT

Mandakini ki Aawaz is a community radio station located in the hills of Rudraprayag, Uttarakhand. Centred around the local community, Mandakini ki Aawaz aims to provide a medium of mass-communication for the residents of the otherwise remote villages of the area. It encourages local communities to take part in the management and content creation of a radio station that belongs to the community. On the other hand, it also mirrors the realities that participatory endeavours have to face in communities that have deep-rooted structures in place. Through primary data collected from members of Mandakini ki Aawaz and 4 villages around the radio station the research undertook a study of the functioning of Mandakini ki Aawaz, the management hierarchy within the organisation, and if and how gender or caste equations factor into this. The research entailed an in-depth analysis of the participation of the community members in managing the radio station, the composition of member as well as the audience, and process of content creation. The study also explored the socio-cultural impact that the content aired by the station has on its audience. The research examined the programmes aired by the station, the process behind making them and the patterns and nature of issues that are addressed. Owing to the relative obscurity and small scale of such a project in mainstream discourse, much remains to be studied about the scope of community radios as a participatory medium, especially in unique geographical areas. This research aims to throw light on the merits and limitations of community radios as a medium full of potential in bringing about more participatory forms of mass communication at a grass-roots level.

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Chapter 1

Introduction



1.1 Introduction

Community radios play a significant part in the media structure of a diverse and developing country like India. There are various media institutions and scholars who have defined community radios broadly and differently. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of women defines community radio as a “short-range, not-for-profit radio station or channel that caters for the information needs of people living in a particular locality, in the languages and formats that are most adapted to the local context” (“Community Radio”, 2018).

Community radio stations help provide a platform for the people of the community to converse among themselves with minimum intervention of the government. The very fact that these radio stations are present within community and are run by the people living there, gives the community radio stations a chance to deliver content which is often neglected by the commercial radio stations. A major difference between commercial and community radios, is that commercial radios perceive the audiences as targets of advertisement, while community radios treat their audience as participants (Study of Listenership, Reach, Effectiveness of Community Radio Stations in India, 2018).

According to the Guidelines laid out by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, any organization that wants to obtain a community radio license, must adhere to four basic principles:

1. It must be a non-profit organization, and must show evidence of service to the local community for at least three years.
2. The community radio station must be designed to operate and serve a well-defined community.
3. programmes must adhere to the educational, informational, social, cultural and developmental needs of the community.
4. Must be of a legal entity i.e. must be licensed under Societies Act or a similar Act.
(Policy Guidelines for setting up Community Radio Stations in India, n.d.)

1.2 Historical overview of community radios

1.2.1 Community Radios Globally

The broader, more commercial tools of broadcasting often overlook rural or minority groups. Therefore, community radios have emerged globally in order to mend this communication gap and deliver basic information to these minority groups. These community broadcasting tools have set themselves apart from the commercial broadcasting and public services by tailor making the content specifically to serve the basic need of information.

In the United States, Europe, Ireland, Germany and even parts of the Arab world, amateur broadcasters were experimenting and using radio broadcasting as a form of rebellion to express their point of view around the time of the first world war. The seventies and eighties saw a period of ‘solidarity’, with new found supportive legislation and regulation in countries, and a growth in networks that were not just local, but extending to the national and international level as well. The New World Information Communication Order (NWICO) was created during the 1970s with the help of UNESCO, to facilitate the restructuring of global media flows. The NWICO worked towards reducing the monopoly that the United States and Europe had over the flow of information worldwide. It helped bring local and alternative media to the spotlight, and with recognition of communication as a human right. The eighties saw an overall increase in acceptance and legalization of community radios (King, 2017). The neo-liberalization period of the 90s showed a change in media policies. Most policies during this period were aimed at creating strong national networks, diminishing the need for community and local radios. However, the latter half of the 90s experienced a resurgence of community radios. Community radios started expanding to over fifty countries, and radio regulations in over forty countries were changed to support community radios. This surge in community radios fueled by the desire to curb injustice and fight for democratization of media today draws parallels with the early revolutionaries (King, 2017). Radio, although one of the oldest forms of communication, still stays relevant in the 21st century today

1.2.2 Community radios in India

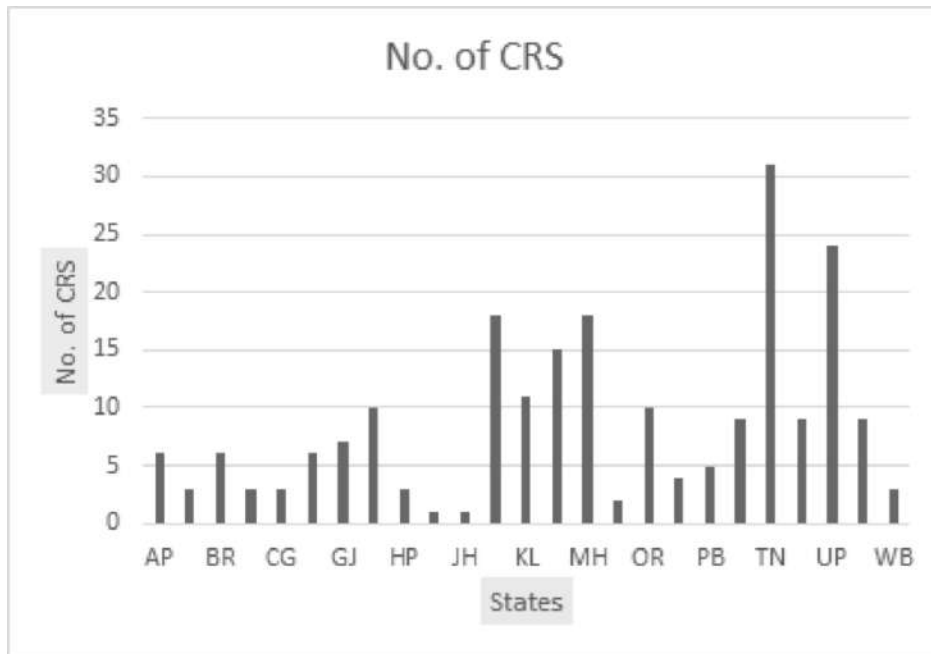


Figure 1. Number of community radio stations across India ("LIST OF OPERATIONAL COMMUNITY RADIO STATION AS ON 21.05.2018", 2018).

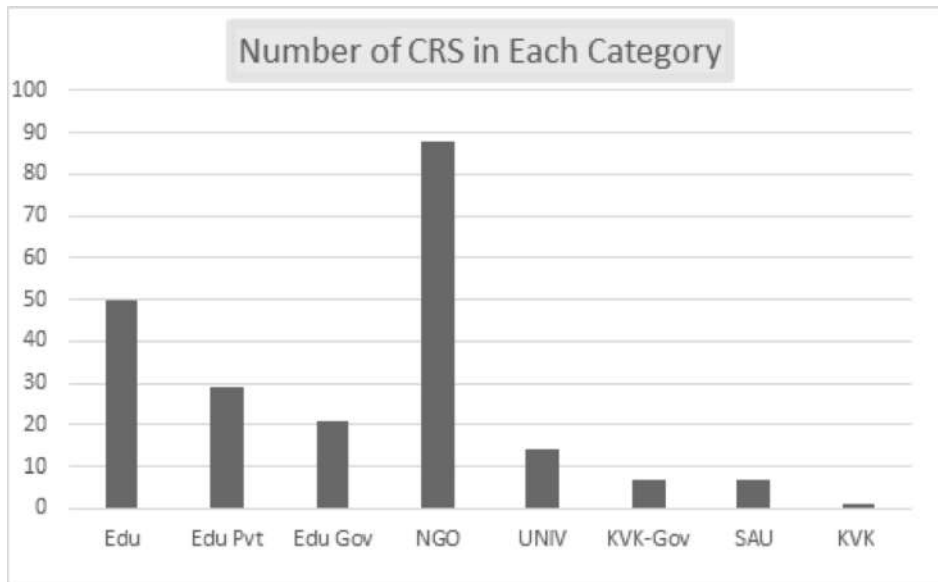


Figure 2. Number of community radio stations in each of the 8 categories ("LIST OF OPERATIONAL COMMUNITY RADIO STATION AS ON 21.05.2018", 2018).

Post-independence, it was India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who had the vision of employing community radios in India as a tool of education. In 1995 the Supreme Court declared airwaves as public property that must be used for public good (Bhat, 2011). Community radios were later recognized by the Indian Government in full force under the guidelines set in the amendments to the policy made in 2006. The community radio movement in India was greatly promoted by UNESCO's International programme for Development and Communication (IPDC, 2008) with the goal of helping the growth of media in developing countries (Panveska, 2011). As of August 2018, there are a total of two hundred and thirty eight operational community radios, as compared to the one twenty six operational stations reported in 2012 (Mib.gov.in, 2018). The increase in the growth rate over the past six years signifies that community radios are being made accessible to more rural areas. The programmes being broadcasted in the local dialect eliminates the language barrier thus making it more accessible to all (Tarafdar, 2015). Some of the most famous community radio stations are '*Namma Dhwani*' which operates in Karnataka, '*Kunjali Panje Kutch Ji*' in Gujarat, Deccan Radio in Hyderabad, Uttam Radio in Patna, Radio Active in Bihar, Radio Popcorn in Bhopal, *Jan Vaani* FM in Kerala, and Radio Sharda in Jammu and Kashmir. All of these stations, have placed primary focus on broadcasting information regarding women's health, sanitation, and education (Dadhich, 2014). As of May 2018, around three hundred and fifty applications were under consideration by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to set up community radio stations (Mib.gov.in, 2018).

1.2.3 Community radios in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand lies in the northern part of India, and on the southern slopes of the Himalayan range and has a hilly terrain covered by dense forests (Pike, 2018). For a state comprising of such a unique and difficult terrain, the existence of telephonic towers and communication satellites are almost impossible. The rural population along with the mountainous topography create perfect conditions for the community radios to thrive in. Community radios do not require a lot of capital and technology. They are a simple yet effective medium through which informative and entertainment programmes can be broadcasted. According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, there are a total of nine working community radio stations in Uttarakhand as of 23rd August 2018. These radio

stations are connected with regional networks of the All India Radio, and function on frequencies allotted by the Centre. To name a few prominent ones, ‘Hello Doon’, ‘Radio Khushi’, ‘Kumaon Vani’ and most recent ‘Mandakini ki Aawaz’.

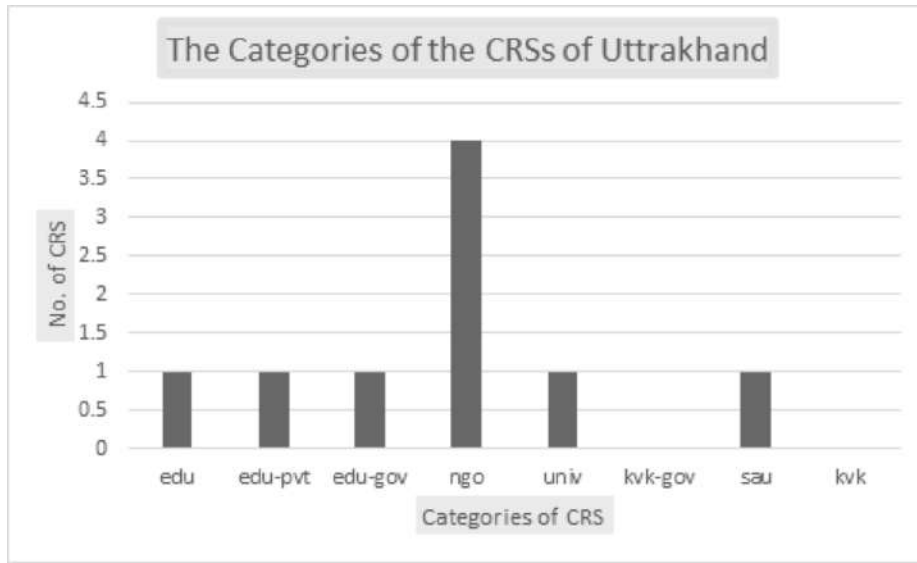


Figure 3. This graph shows the variation in the categories of the community radio stations in Uttarakhand ("LIST OF OPERATIONAL COMMUNITY RADIO STATION AS ON 21.05.2018", 2018).

1.2.4 Mandakini ki Aawaz

Located in the disaster prone district of Rudraprayag, ‘Mandakini ki Aawaz’ radio station was setup in Semal Sari village. This system was set up primarily to announce instant weather alerts, including warning people about impending natural calamities like floods and earthquakes. There are seven similar radio stations in the state which covers ten to twelve kilometers of area. Mandakini ki Aawaz covers a twenty kilometer radius including two lakh people across the districts of Rudraprayag, Pauri, Tehri and Chamoli, making it the largest community radio station in the state of Uttarakhand (Singh, 2018).



Map 1: Location of Mandakini ki Aawaz, Uttarakhand

Source: <http://janmsidh.com/uttarakhand.jsp> (Made using Photoshop)

1.3 Role of community radios in Uttarakhand

1.3.1 Disaster Management

During the month of June, in 2013, a devastating flood hit Uttarakhand and the state faced a massive natural calamity. A large number of residents lost their homes along with all means of communication and the number of deaths rocketed (Jethwaney, 2013). This disaster brought out the need of community radios as a tool for disaster management. Community radios are vital in alerting citizens in advance about incoming calamities. They also provide assistance during rescue operations and post disaster relief. The role of community radios, in saving lives during the first crucial hours after the disaster has occurred is extremely effective. These stations also act as a medium of surveillance and uniting family members

1.3.2 Women Empowerment

The empowerment of women is one of the main goals that community radios are trying to achieve. The radio stations have strengthened the participation of women in the production of programmes and have also created an awareness about healthcare, education and sanitation. They also act as a platform for women to actively contribute to processes involved in decision making at the village level like the *Panchayati Raj* (Nirmala, 2015). Mandakini ki Aawaz introduces and trains local women in radio operations, leading to an informative as well as inspiring change for women. Participation of women was initially low but is now increasing at a considerable rate. Their meaningful and relevant content promote both social and financial stability in the community (Singh, 2014).

1.3.3 Rural Development

Community radios in rural areas act as a platform for the people of the society to share their stories, views, opinions and experiences with others in their social group. It creates a bond among the townsfolk. It promotes interaction and connection amongst the people. They broadcast programmes that talk about the aims for development set by the government. The people can thus actively participate to achieve these aims. It helps all the people in the community to take part in this process and be well informed. It spreads awareness and facilitates the involvement of people in decisions of the institutions like the *Panchayati Raj*. It helps to increase the standard of living in these households. Through programmes broadcasted on these radio channels, it can help solve the needs and problems of the people. They can be discussed on air, and people can come together with creative solutions. It helps spread awareness in areas such as education and work opportunities, thereby mobilizing the workforce and raising literacy rates, which in turn will increase household incomes and social conditions (Sharma, 2018).

1.4 Rationale

The usefulness of this form of media in these rural areas combined with the growing popularity of this medium was something that peaked our interest. Mandakini ki Awaz is a community-run media platform in the era of mainstream media being controlled by very few

powerful people. The effectiveness of community radios in a geographically unique terrain like Uttarakhand, and its active role in disaster prevention, rescue, relief and rehabilitation is quite unique in today's day.

Additionally, the content of the program, which is locally produced is quite different in nature when compared to the content of highly centralised, mainstream media. The effect of this content in various areas like health, education, employment and gender-caste hierarchies has been explored through the research. Focusing principally on local content allows to shine the spotlight on local identity, life, and culture. Specifically, owing to the vulnerability of the area to natural disasters, the role of community radios here is particularly important. The extent to which they have helped, how effective they are in the moment, and whether they are more helpful than other mainstream media in these local areas has also been addressed in the report. We were able to understand the importance of community radio in Uttarakhand and specifically the way the government is involved in the development of community radios in remote areas of the state.

In a world where institutions and information channels are increasingly undergoing centralisation, the community radio movement in India reflects an important avenue for promoting participatory mediums. How the government, NGOs, and local communities manage the same, especially in remote areas, and for crucial areas like disaster management, has been addressed in this report.

1.5 Research Objectives

- To understand the management and functioning of community-run radio stations, and the extent of community participation in the same.
- To explore the socio-economic and cultural impact of community-run radio stations in Uttarakhand.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What are the policy parameters in setting up a community radio station?
2. What is the ownership and structure of community radio?
3. What is the kind of program content community radios create?

4. What has been its impact in spreading awareness regarding health and education in rural areas?
5. What are the impacts, if any, on the existing gender-caste hierarchy among rural communities?
6. What has been the role of community radios in facilitating employment creation and financial inclusion in rural Uttarakhand?
7. Do community radios help in information dissemination in the event of a natural calamity?
8. Are community radios more resilient in the event of a natural calamity when compared to other forms of media?
9. Do community radios broadcast entertainment programmes?
10. What is the funding pattern of community radios?

1.7 Methodology

The research followed a qualitative method of data collection. The sample consisted of the 4 villages of Bhanaj, Sena, Gadsari located near the station, and Tilwara which did not receive connectivity from the station as it was blocked by the hill Kartikswamy. A total of 19 residents of the villages were interviewed and 8 members at the radio station. The sampling method used was snowball sampling, and all the interviews taken were based on informed consent. The two primary stakeholders for the study were:

1. Members of the radio station: The employees at the radio station were the primary stakeholders of this research. They provided valuable insight into the functioning of the station and the content that is aired. The content aired was the basis on which the impact on the audience was understood.
2. Residents of the villages: The residents of the villages comprised of people who listened to Mandakini ki Aawaz and those who didn't. These interviews helped us understand the impact that the programs of the radio station have had on those who tune in, and also the reasons behind why people do not listen to the station.

Qualitative methods:

Interviews: The people working at Mandakini Ki Awaaz and the people staying in the nearby villagers were interviewed. We held one-on-one, formal semi-structured interviews, in person, of the people managing, program coordinators, content makers at Mandakini ki Awaaz. This was the most important source of data. It helped us frame questions according to the information required. People working at Mandakini Ki Awaaz gave us information related to Uttarakhand, government policies etc. Interviews of the audience from different villages gave us different opinions on Mandakini ki Awaaz which was most effective through interviews. Audio-visual recording of some of the interviews was done based on the consent of the interviewees.

Focus group discussion: we interviewed a group of 15-20 women staying in the Gadsari village. They were asked questions about their daily lives. Their interviews were a combined perspectives and opinions on Mandakini ki Awaaz. While interviewing, these women were closely observed, their opinions, the kind of approach they had towards us, by which the behaviour of the villagers was understood. Moreover, it also provided information on the lifestyle of the villagers. It helped us understand the dynamics of various situations.

Secondary data: The data that we already had about the community radio station, its policies and its history was also a form of secondary data which was an integral part of our research. Mandakini Ki Awaaz provided us with their achievements and hardships that they went through which was a form of secondary data as well that helped us get a better perspective about them.

Life stories: Most of our data was taken from people and their life experiences and experiences related to Mandakini Ki Awaaz. Their life stories were what we based our documentary on as well, because these interviews gave us first-hand information about if and how Mandakini ki Awaaz has helped the people in the past and how it has or has not proved beneficial for the local villagers. The information collected was used to form themes and conclusions to our research objectives. Codes and sub codes were then made in accordance to our objectives and deviations were identified from our pre-field work and knowledge.

1.8 Limitations

While interviewing a selected audience we faced a few limitations as well due to imperfect knowledge about the people living in the area. Since Rudraprayag is a remote area, it was difficult to collect data from all parts of the village. This was one of the reason we could not get access to all the people living in that area.

Since none of the research members could speak Garhwali, the native language, language barrier was a major hindrance for the research. Due to this a lot of the data that we found could not be interpreted by us.

Although we had literature pertaining to community radios there was not enough literature on community radio in Uttarakhand specifically. There was also not enough information on licensing of community radios. Lack of quantitative data about the role of community radios during disasters was a problem that we faced until we reached on-field where we spoke to Mr. Manvendra Negi who told us the way their community radio functioned during disasters.

Chapter 2

Literature Review



The following chapter is an elaboration of the literature which we came across during our research on the topic ‘Community Radio Movement in Uttarakhand’. There are six major themes under which we have broadly classified the literature that we have found, namely history, political and policy barriers, sustainability of community radios, functions and features, socio-economic and cultural influences and disaster management.

2.1 History

2.1.1 Global History of Community Radios

King and Wyman elaborate upon the history of mass communication in their articles wherein they talk about how the radio was the first medium of mass communication, beginning in the year 1893 under the expertise of Nicolai Tesla. The discovery of radio waves by Heinrich Hertz caught the eye of Marconi, a renowned scientist at the time, who realized these radio waves could be used to transmit telegraph messages in 1891; what we now call “wireless telegraph”. The next year, Nikola Tesla was able to transmit electromagnetic energy wirelessly and had a public demonstration of the first radio in 1893, at St. Louis. Various scholars trace the history of community radios through different paths; Lewis (1984), Rennie (2006) and Rodrigues (2001) begin at the Americas in the nineteen forties, highlighting indigenous roots of community radios by tracing the origin to indigenous groups.

As most new technologies during the era of colonization, radio broadcasting too was overtaken by imperial powers for personal, political and economic gain. The radios were mainly dominated by the military and the corporates, which only pushed other radios to be a community based media (King, 2017). The struggle to establish the community radios was initially a fight between corporate or military versus individuals trying to experiment with community broadcasting for domination. King also mentions the forms of rebellion in the United States, Europe, Ireland, Germany and even parts of the Arab world, where amateur broadcasters were experimenting and using radio broadcasting to express their point of view around the time of the first world war. This made community broadcasting one of the earliest uses of radio broadcasting. The campus based community radio station in Ontario, Canada is one of the longest standing radio broadcasting unit, established in 1923 (Redmond and

Zimmerman, 2012). By the 1940s the community radio movement had evolved from solo hobbyists and pirates to communities setting up stations.

King refers to the second phase of the community radio movement by stating that it revolves around the expansion of community radio broadcasting. While some communities were gaining recognition and being allowed to hold community radio broadcasting, some were more secretive about their radio practices. They faced the risk of imprisonment or their station being shut down if they were not covert about their operations. Community radios were the voice of several revolutions across the world; the Dominican Republic, the Arab nations against aristocracy in their states, several communist and anti-communist parties in Europe and even anti-fascist communities in states like Portugal. These clandestine groups may have worked underground and in isolation, but they contributed greatly to the expansion of community radios to continents around the world. This was the wildfire period of community radio (King, 2017).

According to his article, the seventies and eighties saw a period of ‘solidarity’, with new found supportive legislation and regulation in countries and a growth in networks that were not just local but extending to the national and international level as well. The New World Information Communication Order (NWICO) was created during the 1970s with the help of UNESCO, to facilitate the restructuring of global media flows. The eighties saw an overall increase in acceptance and legalization of community radios. While some stations were turning above ground-legal associations, some were not as lucky. King gives an example of two organizations that were operating underground in the 1940s in Ireland and were caught and sentenced to imprisonment for illegal broadcasting. Despite this surge in importance of community radio stations, the neo-liberalization period of the 90s showed a change in media policies. Most policies during this period were aimed at creating strong national networks, leaving community and local radio stations behind. However, the latter half of the 90s experienced a period of resurgence with regards to community radios and continues till date (King, 2017). Community radios expanded to over fifty countries, radio regulations in over forty countries were changed to support community radios and associations were formed in 8 countries. Another factor that helped with this growth was the increase in accessibility and also affordability, the advent of the internet only further

supporting this expansion. This resurgence period fueled by the desire to curb injustice and for democratization of media today draws parallels with the early revolutionaries of the wildfire period.

2.1.2 History of Community Radios in India

Community radios came into action in India years ago with the agenda of bringing people with different backgrounds together and showing unity in diversity. Though with time the government loosened its reigns over these radios, there were many obstacles in the path that led to what community radios are today. It should be for the people, by the people. Similar to what King discussed in his 2017 paper, even in India, the content broadcasted through radios was controlled by the government.

Radios began broadcasting news in India in 1930s and it was called the Indian State Broadcasting Service which was later renamed as All India Radio. As mentioned in the UNESCO handbook, All India Radio was set up as a monopoly in broadcasting in 1935, parallel to its British counterpart BBC. The Chanda committee was set up in 1966 to break this monopoly, with multiple subsequent committees attempting to institutionalise the participatory model. The supreme court of India passed a landmark judgement in the year 1995 declaring airwaves as public property, creating a balance between commercial and government radios, and making a participatory model where the people get to voice their opinions. It allowed for easier access to licences for setting up stations as well. Wyman in his 2008 article has discussed about radios then moving on to be community radios in 2004 when Anna FM was introduced as the first ‘campus community radio’. Steadily, by 2008, India had around 40 community radio stations, ‘*Sangam Radio*’ being the first community radio in India (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2001).

Pavarala, in his book ‘Other Voices’, talks about ‘VOICES’, a Bangalore based group of media promoters, that suggested that they start working on community radios in 1996. At the same time, such initiatives were taken over by the ‘Deccan Development Society’ when they started ‘Sangam Radio’ in the Southern region. ‘Alternative for India Development’ and ‘Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan’ used All India Radio’s broadcasting stations to talk about the issues related to their area. He points towards the issue of the airwaves belonging solely

to the government until 1999 which meant that the radios were controlled by the government. But in 1999, the government allowed the commercial radios to operate freely. He also talks about the rules released by the government during 2003 regarding the framework for community radios which was written and planned by Dr. Hari Om Srivastava. Unfortunately, only educational institutions were allowed to set up community radios. In 2006 the government came up with a new set of guidelines which began to allow NGOs, educational and agricultural institutions to be able to manage community radio stations. As of 2016, there were 136 community radio stations out of which 36 were run by NGOs and the others were run by educational institutions (Pavarala, 2011).

Agreeing to Pavarala, Noronha commented that it was after 1999 that radios were not considered as a “government monopoly” , in turn, it became a broadcasting service which was commercial in nature. There has since been a transition towards a more decentralized system, and community radios have been trying to get closer to their communities (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2001).

There seems to be a common link between the problems faced in setting up the first few community radio stations in the 1940s and setting up of community radio stations in India. The issue of the influence of imperial powers over radio broadcasting for personal politics and economic gain has been discussed in King’s paper of 2017 as well as Pavarala’s 2003 paper. There has been a long struggle to make community radio stations a democratic form of media.

2.1.3 History of Community Radios in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand is prone to many natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, landslides etc. Frequent changes in the weather conditions have caused frequent disasters. In the recent years, Uttarakhand has witnessed many such disasters. The most impactful incident was the floods which hit different parts of Uttarakhand in 2013. This particular incident caused the rise of community radios in this area as it was the only medium to connect with the isolated communities affected by these floods.

The first community radio which was set up in Uttarakhand was Kumaon Vani in the year 2000. According to a report on the Socio Economic Impact of Natural Disasters in Uttarakhand published in 2015 by Piyooosh Rautela, Kumaon Vani faced many problems. Initially people did not receive the idea favourably. He said that this was due to the existing negative image of radios which made them think that radios would not give the right information and are fraudulent, mainly because of the control of government over the airways. Rautela then talks about how this community radio station created an audience in Uttarakhand which believed that community radios would benefit them (Rautela, 2015).

Hentral Vani was established right after Kumaon Vani in 2001 and it is one of the very few community radios that operated before the Uttarakhand floods. In the International Journal of Applied and Natural Sciences, 2016, the authors, Archana Bhatt and S.K. Kashyap state that Hentral Vani started from narrowcasting its content and took it to various communities, insisted them to listen and encouraged them to participate. They started collaborating with various organizations to come up with the plan of broadcasting its content in the satellite radio. Their other aim was to provide free access of radio service to rural population by distributing radio sets among the people (Bhatt & Kashyap, 2016).

The same journal talks about many other NGOs that started to apply for the license to operate a community radio once it gained popularity but during the floods, it became difficult to obtain a license. Poor connectivity made the setting up of stations even more challenging. At present, there are many community radio stations which are operating in Uttarakhand like Himgiri ki Aawaz, Hello Haldwani, Mandakini ki Aawaz, Hello Doon, Hentral Vani etc. There are also organizations like *Krishi Vigyan Kendra*, *Kumaun Agriculture and greenery advancement society* etc. which hold the license for operating the community radio but at present are not operating (Bhatt & Kashyap, 2016).

2.2 Political and Policy Barriers

Community radio's pride themselves on the fact that they are 'for the people and by the people', but looking at how the government had monopolized control over the airwaves, one would have a hard time believing that. From policy changes, shifts in ownership and protests, community radio has undergone a massive transformation over the years.

Gopalakrishnan in his article states that, in India up until 1995, radios were still caught in the stranglehold of the state-run 'All India Radio' (AIR), the country's national public radio broadcaster. All India Radio, however, had taken 3 of the main areas of radios, creating a state monopoly over radio. This was halting the progressive development that was being made by implementing these radios in the first place (Gopalakrishnan, 2003). Connecting to the statement of Gopalakrishnan, Pavarala in his article says that, In 1995, The Supreme Court of India passed a landmark judgment – "airwaves would now be public property and the interest of the public would come first". All India Radio being successful and the only radio in the market made it very difficult for other radio stations to be set up (Pavarala, 2011).

Pavarala and Noronha both mention in their articles how the government allowed commercial radios to operate free from their control in the year 1999. This is when radio shifted from "being a government monopoly to a highly-commercialized broadcasting service" (Noronha, 1998). Unfortunately, only educational institutions were allowed to set up community radio which was a setback as the educational institutions were surrounded by people who were well off and who had various other forms of media other than radios. This led to the government introducing new set of guidelines which began to allow NGOs, educational and agricultural institutions to be able to manage community radio stations.

Pavarala in one of his articles talks about how the educational institutions failed to recognise the disparities present in rural areas and this made it impossible for the voiceless to be heard. Licensing has also been an obstacle for the community, as mentioned by Pavarala in his book 'Other Voices', because every time they tried to establish community radios it took 5 ministries just to get a license for operating a radio. Even though there was a need for more community radios in Uttarakhand due to floods, government did not show any interest in simplifying the procedure. Upon this, the organization applying for license had to have a record of providing at least 3 years of service to the community prior to the application. This caused a lot of problem for the people who were applying for the establishment of radio. He also emphasises on the need to convey relevant information to the community in another article. The programme should reflect the needs and interest of the people. It is required that at least fifty percent of the content should be generated by the participation of the local

population for whom it has been set up. He mentions the difficulties that community radio stations face because they only have a small broadcast area of about 15-20 kilometres in aerial distance of the community, and have restrictive broadcasting rights. However, AIR is still the sole provider of news and current affairs on radio, as most of the topics cannot be covered by public-owned radio stations (Pavarala, 2011).

As per an article written by Noronha, India has currently granted permission for the setting up and execution of community radio stations. But, this technology which can help in reaching out to the middle and lower class people in countries, which are still battling poverty, is far from practical. This is because the federal government decided in 2003 that community broadcasting licences would only be given to “well-established educational institutions or organizations recognized by the state or central governments” (Noronha, 1998).

According to an article written by Rajalakshmi, An increased amount for the license fee is also a barrier which restricts many communities to enter the market. On March 22, 2012 The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology decided to increase the annual license fee for community radios from 19,700 rupees to 91,000. This hike had increased the cost by 400%. Community Radio Forum(CRF) stated that Government of India had been deploying various strategies to suppress freedom of media in the country. One such method was unreasonably raising the barriers to entry, causing smaller stations to drop off and creating an unfair playing field (Rajalakshmi, 2012). The article by Dhar further states that, This was against the Supreme Court judgement which stated that these community radios are created for the public good. After extensive protests, the Ministry decided to go back to the original license fee of 19,700 (Dhar, 2012).

With time, India began to run these radios autonomously but the policies and its formation was done by the government. Thus, radios have grown immensely popular but have failed to reach the non-affluent because of the archaic laws followed by the government. Community radios are fast becoming an integral part of various regions across the country and democratizing airways is an essential part of it. For a state such as Uttarakhand, which is crossed by the Himalayas, community radios are of utmost importance.

2.3 Sustainability of Community Radios

In numerous rural parts of India, community radios are seen as the sole source of information for the natives. Even with the expeditious growth in technology all over the world, many villages in India are still unaware of the world we live in. According to Faheem Hussain and Rahul Tongia, community radios have been established in remote areas, in order to empower people by providing them with knowledge of the world around them (Hussain & Tongia, 2008).

Most community radios in India face a number of difficulties. According to Hussain and Tongia, one of the difficulties is financing the radio station. The initial cost of setting up a radio station requires a substantial amount of monetary investment for all the equipment. Over time as the machinery keeps deteriorating, the cost of repairs increases. Furthermore, in order to provide the audience with entertainment they are required to pay for guest speakers and licenses to air music and other performances. With revenue of these stations being minimal, the expenses are not an undemanding task to cope with (Hussain & Tongia, 2008).

Additionally, to the financial setbacks mentioned, Hussain and Tongia broach upon the social obstacles that the community radios have to overcome. This includes, acceptance of the programmes by the audience in a manner such that they feel a sense of belonging to the radio station. Also, the community radio has to be in tune with the changing times and constantly keep altering the content. The person who is responsible for writing the content must be very well versed with the local traditions and the existing values of the communities. They need to be cautious about hurting sentiments, which might cause the radio station to lose their audience (Hussain & Tongia, 2008).

Lastly, there is the difficulty of attaining human resources. Z.N. Mavindidze and T Gondwe refer to this component as the central and imperative part of the functioning of a radio station. Right from the setting up of the station, heavily skilled human labour is required. Apart from their obvious requirement for airing the shows, and content writing, they are also required for the technological support (Mavindidze & Gondwe, 2018).

The problems mentioned above are a stimulus to the question of sustainability. According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and Commonwealth Educational

Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), there are four aspects of sustainability of community radios, namely, social, financial, institutional, and technological (“Sustainability of a Community Radio”, 2018).

Dutta mentions how financial sustainability deals with low cost of running the radio station. This involves sponsorship, running advertisements, either government promoted, or through private organizations and companies. There could possibly be some kind of nominal membership fee structure for those who want to be actively involved in the station. The radios can run special announcements requested by the members of the community for a small price, to get through to a larger number of people through this one medium of communication.

Additionally, Dutta goes on to talk about social sustainability, which deals with the needs and aspirations of the community, while honouring its long standing beliefs and values. It has to do with preserving the local indigenous culture, embracing diversity, and safeguarding the needs of the local talent. Providing relevant, time sensitive information efficiently is essential. It can help play a part in decision making too, as those who are involved in the community radios will get a shot at being part of a decision making organization, like the *Panchayati Raj*, for example. To sustain a community radio station, they need to have management committees composed of members of the community itself.

Buckley writes on institutional sustainability of community radios which mainly involves training people of the community to take part in the functioning and running of the radio station and thus building the capacity of the station and giving it a better structure. The people can have a resource pool for the managing of the station, so resources can be taken as and when needed to keep the station going. The station can indulge in outreach activities by going to areas and educating people about the community radio station they run, thus spreading awareness about the work they do and advertising to possible new subscribers of the station. They can entertain volunteer groups who want to come in and see the working of the station, and better understand how they function by lending a helping hand (Buckley, 2013).

For technological sustainability, Buckley says it is imperative that the community radio station finds technology at a low cost, but still extremely durable for harsh weather

conditions and wear and tear. As far as possible, they should get insurance, and look at it as an investment for the future. They should write up an Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC), so they can get their equipment checked and serviced once a year at some nominal cost. They should also indulge in networking in order to exchange valuable information and news that they may not get otherwise through normal everyday means. The workers at the station, should be educated and trained in handling this complex equipment as well (Buckley, 2013).

2.4 Functioning and Management

2.4.1 Mandakini ki Aawaz

Mandakini ki Aawaz is a community radio station. It was launched in September 2014 by Mandakini ki Aawaz Kalyan Sewa Samiti, a NGO run by Mr. Manvendra Negi, along with Bangalore based People's Power Collective, a public trust. People's Power Collective is a registered trust in India, which believes in the power of unified action. In 2013, People's Power Collective was in the middle of its community radio training and field work in Uttarakhand when the June 2013 floods devastated the region. There was a complete communication breakdown, as all networks were ineffective during the floods. There was also a dearth of information in Garhwali, the local language. Significant rescue operations proved to be fruitless due to the communication breakdown. Through Mandakini ki Aawaz, People's Power Collective is dedicated to supporting the communities in the Uttarakhand, spreading awareness and providing information about various topics.

In an article published by Rupica Saxena, she says that Mandakini ki Aawaz Kalyan Sewa Samiti applied for the license for setting up the community radio in 2010. They were then issued a 'Letter of Intent' (LOI), due to the delay caused by the line ministries in providing them with the requisite clearances. They received the 'Wireless Operating License' (WOL) in 2014, 4 years after they had initially applied (Saxena, 2014).

Mandakini ki Aawaz was the 4th community radio station that is run by an NGO in Uttarakhand, providing FM services to more than 328 villages and covering the Rudraprayag Chamoli, Tehri and Pauri districts of Uttarakhand (Saxena, 2014). The motto of the radio station is '*Aapka radio, Aapki Aawaz*' which translates to 'Your Radio, Your Voice'. The

programmes are broadcasted in Hindi and Garhwali, and are aimed to spread awareness and provide entertainment. Special programmes are aired on Sundays for women and children.

According to an article written by Ishan Kukreti, topics such as education, drinking water, sanitation, nutrition, livelihoods, migration and community well-being are covered in the radios broadcast, with special emphasis on educating individuals about handling disaster and what they need to do during a crisis. It informs people about how to open bank accounts and get ration cards. Since the radio is operated by the people of Uttarakhand themselves, it helps them to preserve their culture and language.

Mandakini ki Aawaz has proved to be a link between the government and the people of Uttarakhand in recent times. According to Mr. Negi, there was a major electricity problem in Khor for a very long time. Although the electricity department had made arrangements for power supply in the area, many people were still living without power. This problem was solved once they made their voices heard through Mandakini ki Aawaz. Uttarakhand is listed as one of the disaster prone zones of the Indian subcontinent by the 'National Disaster Management Authority'. Forest fires, earthquakes, floods and landslides are an ongoing theme in Uttarakhand, with preventive measures being few and far between. Mandakini ki Aawaz broadcasts programmes about forest fires and how to control them, regularly sending out updates from the forest department (M. Negi, 2018).

In an interview with Saritha Thomas, the managing director of People's Power Collective, she said that one of the biggest barriers faced during the rescue and relief operations after the floods of 2013 was the absence of timely information in Garhwali. She believed that Mandakini ki Aawaz will eliminate this problem with broadcasts in Garhwali. She stated that initially, the people of Uttarakhand were skeptical about the community radio. They believed that it was outdated medium of communication. However, after the floods of 2013, there was no communication whatsoever as all networks proved to be ineffective after the disaster. This drove home the importance of the community radio as a simple, economical and effective medium of communication (Thomas, 2018).

While Mandakini ki Aawaz was set up with the intention of mainly being a medium of communication during times of disaster in Uttarakhand, it is also providing the local

residents with an opportunity to discover their creative side. Shivanand Nautiyal, the head of production at the radio station, comes on air regularly as a radio jockey. He possesses a postgraduate degree in Political Science from Garhwal University, and he said “I had heard radio programmes before but being a part of one was a new thing for me. I had never thought that I could be a radio jockey too. I used to sing in villages during *Ramlila*, but now people across 300 villages of Uttarakhand listen to my songs and appreciate them”. Thus, Mandakini ki Aawaz not only plays a vital role in spreading awareness about disaster prevention, but also stimulating the creativity of its operators (Nautiyal, 2018).

The article by Ishan Kukreti further states that the biggest issue faced by Mandakini ki Aawaz is that of financing. Money has proven to be a scarce resource. Reportedly, there is a government fund of Rs.100 crore set aside for community radios, but it has not been granted to anyone so far. There are still cases of low power supply in the region, and low capacity of the only diesel generator donated to the station makes operating the radio a difficult task. With proper financial backing, and significant upgrades, Mandakini ki Aawaz can become an even bigger success in the forthcoming years.

2.4.2 Features and Functions (UNESCO)

2.4.2.1 Features:

Written below are some of the features and functions that are essential for the functioning and management of a community radio station, according to the Community Radio Handbook, 2001.

Community participation is one of the key features of a community radio station. Unlike conventional commercial radio stations, it marks the audience as the “protagonists”; the stations aim to keep the audience involved in management and producing the content. The programmes are aimed at helping with the holistic development of the community. Their approach towards providing news differs from that of mainstream media. They create shows aiming at social change or development and weave in news and incidents into these programmes rather than focusing on just the news story. Entertainment and educational programmes are also from and by the community, there are no professionals coming in but

rather individuals from the community that share their experiences (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2001).

The citizens' democratic right to accurate information on time, and from a reliable source is upheld by following certain principles relating to access and participation. The programmes broadcasted by the station should be accessible to all members of the community. The community participates in forming rules and policies for the station, helps with management policies and content creation. They also have the freedom to comment and criticize on the content- ensured through continuous communication between the audience and the producers of the programme. However, they are independent of interference from any local or state governments, political parties, or any other commercial or religious influences. Another principle that these stations aim to abide by is that of social inclusion and representation of various interest groups; they strive to include minority groups seamlessly into the community (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2001).

The establishment, administration, management and financing of the station is also done by the community. The stations are usually owned by the community through a trust, foundation or a similar medium, with the rare exception of a private owned station that has been passed on to the community to be used as a radio station. Although a democratically owned and managed entity, these stations still have a representative committee or board of directors with managers for day to day work. One aspect that community radio stations struggle with during initial stages is financial sustainability, which can be easily overcome with a mix of sources including membership fees, fundraising events, donations and sponsorship (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2001).

2.4.2.2 Functions

Preserving culture and language, and emphasizing identity of the community through various media is one of the main functions of community radios. According to the handbook, culture as a concept is constantly evolving and adapting with time, thus the government should allow wide frameworks for establishing culture without interfering with the content. Community radios facilitate this transitioning nature of different cultures while staying true to their roots by producing content locally, in local languages, through dance, music, theatre,

and more. The content of the programme also allows for a diverse range of views and opinions to be aired. This doesn't ensure harmony within the community, there is always space for some discord amongst different interest groups, but community radios provide a healthy platform for them to understand each other. Diversity is also seen when it comes to the formats and styles that programmes are aired in and in the topics covered in these programmes. The formats include interviews, group discussions, broadcast of community meetings, etc. depending on the preferences of the audiences. The programme content adheres to the needs of the community that the station is serving, rural areas for example would require content relating to topics like farming, small scale businesses or fishing (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2001).

The idea of democracy in a community faces the challenge of large a population today. Information aired on the radio may reach local authorities and people working in the government which will encourage them to take action against issues presented. The handbook highlights one of the most prevalent issues faced by most democracies today, of how politicians cease to communicate and take into consideration the people's views once they are elected, which prohibits some important issues from being addressed. The community radio establishes a platform for people to listen to other community members and to be heard themselves, which helps overcome this barrier. This is an important tool for social and economic change. More often than not community members also have differences in opinions amongst themselves, these issues can be tackled merely by unifying the community's perception of the issue and then coming to a solution through discussion.

Some countries that have recently transitioned from authoritarian or other non-democratic party systems to democratic ones lack knowledge regarding how these systems function. The radio stations help establish the rules of the democracy and explain its nature to the citizens. They also help in ensuring good governance in areas where certain politicians or government authorities take advantage of their position merely by letting them voice their concerns. Broadcasting the meetings of the authorities and also having a question-answer session between the authorities and community member are two other methods of having control over the activities of the government.

The participatory model of these radios encourages sharing of information and innovation amongst the community. When one farmer figures out a new method of harvesting which turns out to save time or if a family finds a new bank nearby that offers farm credit, they can come on air and spread this knowledge amongst the community members. The model also allows women, youth and various ethnic societies to participate. This participatory model demystifies the job of the broadcasters to a great extent, since they live and work from within the community. They are constantly given good and bad feedback, making them valuable professionals in the field.

2.5 Socio-economic and Cultural Influence

2.5.1 Rural Development

India being the largest democracy in the world, it is difficult for every citizen's opinion to be counted. Thus, to ensure that this can be achieved, media plays a very important role in our country. More than 67% of the Indian population stays in rural areas therefore community radios are important for rural development ("India Population", 2018).

Community radios help to overcome the obstacle of connecting urban media to the rural population. The 'audience' of this form of media generally consists of the isolated communities and villages who are in search of some kind of aid in order to improve their present day condition. The listeners consist of people living within the coverage zone of a particular community radio station. Community radios offer third model of radio broadcasting in addition to commercial and public broadcasting. In 2004 the first community radio was launched in the country (Kumar, 2018). According to Valecha, in the article "How community radios tune into society", we have over 207 community radios in the country. There are many positive impacts of community radios in the country especially leading to rural development (Valecha, 2018).

Community radio is like a platform for people on which they share their stories and life experiences. The locals also come together effectively to communicate and solve basic problems and try to raise the economic state of the area. They do so by regularly broadcasting programmes about children education, agriculture, health etc. (Sharma, 2012). Once the community radios start small scale activities with the active participation of the

local community, gradually it can widen the scope and deal with larger issues in the future. Sharma, in his article, “Community Radio: A s for Rural Development” tries to put across the fact that community radios have greatly helped in the rural development in India, especially in Uttarakhand. He says that the practice of community radios has been extremely useful in rural households and most importantly marginal farmers, hill women and fisher folk. They have also helped them participate in the development programmes of the government. He believes that if they continue to tune in to the community radios, then it will help erase the divide between the rural and the urban standard of living (Sharma, 2012).

According to Jacob and Venniyoor there is a community radio station in Uttarakhand called Radio Khushi which has been an important part of rural development. This radio station invites politicians, local personalities, *gram panchayat pradhan*, and businessmen to come and share their experiences and knowledge with the listeners. This community radio station runs its own educational programmes like *Pratham shiksha* and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. Apart from this there are functions which the community radio stations offer, that directly impact the development of the community, like youth developmental programmes and encouraging women to start their own business by providing free training (Jacob & Venniyoor, n.d.).

Community radios have resulted in impacting lives of the people greatly. During the Uttarakhand floods community radios of the affected regions constantly broadcasted live programmes to inform the people about the current situation and also tried to reach out to families affected by the flood (Manzar, O, 2013). In the event of natural disasters, communication systems and wireless structures are usually gravely destroyed. As a result, the medium through which information is passed on to victims is lost. Regular facilities such as print media, telephone, internet, television are unavailable. In these situations, radios act as an effective means of communication which are not affected by blackouts. However the low output radio stations such as community radios are able to reach a large broadcast area rather than large radio stations. Local communities play a huge role in sharing, transmitting and collecting detailed information related to disasters which are limited to these individual communities and cater to the specific needs of the victims who live in such communities (Hibino & Shaw, 2013).

Sharma talks about a successful case in Uttarakhand called Kumaon Vani where the community radio was helpful. The hill women in Uttarakhand were in horrible conditions where they had to work from early morning till late in the evening. This is one of the many reasons why these women were suffering from numerous health issues like back pain, anemia and reproductive tract infection. This had caused a higher maternal mortality rate in Uttarakhand than any other state (Sharma, 2012). In view of the above mentioned problems, the government gave permission to start Kumaon Vani. It is set amidst the hill community, which is their number one target audience. Their main goal is to spread knowledge about good health practices, sanitation, family planning etc. that they should engage in. A rural woman belonging to the village around the community radio station stated that these problems have decreased after engaging in all the health practices given to them. Other hill women too then started to engage in these practices, leading to almost all villages following it. Community radios have therefore helped rural development in a significant way.

Community radios have the power to connect with citizens and provide them with important information in their local dialect. They have played an integral role in providing fuel to initiatives and movements throughout India. People are also allowed to spread messages about important issues at hand especially in rural areas where there is little scope of communication. There are many initiatives taken up by people to empower and provide social justice to the poor and less fortunate. Community radios therefore serve as an important platform to do so.

Two of the many community radio initiatives are-

1. *Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan*

One of the cases that Pavarala and Malik talk about is the *Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan* community radio station. This station has helped significantly towards women empowerment. It is primarily set up for the women in Kutch and deals with problems that they come across. It helps them in acquiring control over resources and decisions about their family to the community at large. This is important because most women lack self-confidence in the rural areas of Gujrat and most of India. They commenced their programme in the form of a 30-minute broadcasting and it was known as *Kunjali Paanje Kutch Ji*

(KPKJ). This programme has brought many social issues to light which were initially taboo to speak about, like –

- Sati
- Female foeticide
- Education of girls
- Harassment of women

During their 30-minute programme a time space of seven minutes was kept aside to interview the people of the villages, such as the ‘sarpanch’ and women from the village. This gave them, as well as other villagers, an insight into the unspoken voices of society. After many episodes of KPKJ, *Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan* aired 3 to 4 more different kinds of programmes which largely involved women empowerment and fighting against social evils (Malik & Pavarala, 2007).

2. The Community Radio Project of Deccan Development Society (DDS)

Pavarala and Malik also elaborate on another case where in 1998, a UNESCO supported community radio was set up in the Medak district of Andhra Pradesh, run and managed by rural Dalit women. These socially active women also happen to be members of the Deccan Development Society (DDS), a local NGO. The radio mainly helps with women empowerment, and the spread of knowledge and awareness about their cultures and traditions (Malik & Pavarala, 2007).

Their NGO wants to bring together village groups and make a local government out of it that stands for women, empowers the *Dalit* and also helps the poor. The society organises education and training workshops to help with this aim.

UNESCO considered the DDS women fit to be part of ‘Women Speak to Women’ project when they saw the work being done by them and their want for a community radio station to address the local issues. The cost amounts to about Rs 500 an hour. Some issues which were recorded were about diseases of women and children, seed sowing, public health, summer camps, old crops, empowerment, local knowledge, etc. .

With better participation from people and support from the government, community radios can serve as an efficient tool towards rural development, which is why community radios should get more importance and the support that it deserves.

2.5.2 Women Empowerment

The position of women in India's patriarchal society has been undergoing constant change over the last few decades. Women being the mainstay of our society, play a significant role in building the nation. Community radios have also played a small but significant role in making this happen.

Gauri mentions in her article, 'How Community Radio Is Giving Rural Women the Voice They Never Had' that community radios give rural women the opportunity to facilitate their own upliftment and progress. The rural women use the radio as a source of strength and courage. They have become more courageous by having the strength to fight for their rights. Gauri further added that, women use this medium of propaganda as a source of making themselves aware of the issues relating to them such as maternity, basic nutrition, wellbeing and exploitation. They also use this medium to voice their difficulties and make necessary changes in their lives for their own benefit (Gauri, 2014).

In order for this to be achieved, community radios had to go through a lot of initial groundwork. Prithviraj Singh mentions in his article on Mandakini ki Aawaz that it took them seven-year long years to get the permissions to be broadcasted. Mandakini ki Aawaz was the first community radio in Uttarakhand which was majorly run by women. Located in Rudraprayag district, the station was setup in Sem village. There were seven similar radio stations in the state which would cover 10-12 kilometers of area. However, Mandakini ki Aawaz covered more than a 20-kilometer radius of hills which oversaw an audience of over 2 lakh people across the regions of Rudraprayag, Pauri, Tehri and Chamoli districts, making it the largest community radio station in the state of Uttarakhand. It took nine months to prepare nearby young women and girls for radio tasks, says Sarita Thomas, who is the author of People's Power Collective and a moving soul behind making the radio a reality (Singh, 2014).

Another radio station called the Namma Dhwani (Our Voices) of Karnataka is India's first cable community radio station. Nirmala, in her article 'The role of community radios in empowering the women in india' mentions that, it was initiated as an association of the Budikote people group in March 2003, and two NGO's, MYRADA and VOICES with funds given by UNESCO. VOICES is dedicated to advancement of communication and building support within the people of the community while tasks relating to the broadcast production were finished by the Budikote people group. The audience members of this community radio are principally uneducated women, who generally have little access to data. In the past couple of years, various capacity building programmes have been completed with the assistance of NGOs. Till date, Namma Dhwani is a Community Multimedia Center, with radio, video, and satellite offices and completely independent through privately created income. Nirmala said that, it has substantially more effect on women with regards to creating awareness about wellbeing and sanitation, training, saving funds, and family framework, and so on and it achieved noteworthy changes in the life of the general population in Budikote. Thus, many rural individuals can use this platform actively to help change their methods of living (Nirmala, 2018).

In Anuradha Roy's article on the impact of community radio of Mann Deshi Tarang we learn that, Mann Deshi Tarang, Maharashtra, which was set up on 16 December 2008 by Mann Vikas Samajik Sanstha, is an NGO working for the upliftment of rural and marginalized women. Mann Deshi Tarang is giving pertinent programming aimed for improving municipal and social life. It has turned out to be helpful to the women throughout their life. It expanded their knowledge, and encouraged them to broadcast their ability and furthermore inspiring them in various other aspects.

Even though community radios have proven to be a boon to women living in the rural parts of India, there is still a long journey that needs to be covered. Community Radio and Participatory Communication in India had the opportunity to interview rural women and ask them about a few suggestions on the changes they would like to see in the daily broadcasting of the community radios. As a result, rural women suggested that the programmes should be for a shorter duration and it should be more participatory in nature.

2.6 Disaster Management

During natural calamities, the role of community radios is tremendous. Manzar in her article said that community radio stations which have a range of 15-20 kilometres, have a great impact like the integration of mobile phones in the urban areas. The greatest power of community radios is the one it possesses in times of natural calamities. In times of need such as a post natural calamity situation, information provided by a community radio can have an empowering effect. In the case of the 2013 cloud burst and subsequent floods, lack of information was a major problem (Manzar, 2013). Hibino & Shaw in their articles said that local communities play a huge role in sharing, transmitting and collecting detailed information related to disasters which are limited to these individual communities. This caters to the specific needs of the victims who live in such communities. They can also function as a medium of surveillance, broadcasting messages regarding safety of individuals and reconnecting family members. This specific information is vital in the absence of other media platforms. The ability of a community radio station to do so is hugely determined by the fact that most of their members are a part of the affected areas and can therefore have a deeper understanding of the reality encountered by the victims and can articulate the victims' interests more accurately (Hibino & Shaw).

Community radios assist in giving a voice to the voiceless and also provide a platform for the development of the local area. The local communities play a role, specifically the youth, in saving lives during the first few hours after the natural disaster has occurred is vital. The government has come out with a number of relief measures, unfortunately these measures have not been able to reach the communities which are most affected. These community radio stations which use local-dialect to broadcast information have helped in warning the locals about floods and cyclones and have helped farmers deal with unpredictable weather.

Globally, community radios have proven to be a useful tool in disaster management. In Indonesia, a radio station known as Lintas Merapi FM broadcasts information and regular updates regarding the volcanic activity of Mount Merapi located in that region. Information such as how to combat a disaster, storing food and stockpiling, medicines, water, etc. is relayed through their broadcasts. In India, community radios provide better access to people

living in the disaster affected areas by broadcasting necessary and vital information via the establishment of mobile community radios.

Articles written by authors like Manzar and Joshi tell us that during the occurrence of natural calamities, the people affected by the incident are in desperate need of answers and information. Community radios hold a significant importance in all three stages of a natural calamity. In a pre-disaster stage, community radios help in issuing warnings on the basis of forecasts (Joshi, 2017). Jethwaney in her article stated that community radios broadcast a number of other things such as practices of first aid, sanitation methods, information regarding emergency procedures alongside with safety plans which are to be followed during and post disaster stages. After facing an unfavourable natural calamity the community would require moral support to facilitate rehabilitation and provide necessary information such as location and accessibility of relief supplies. These radio stations can also broadcast information regarding which areas have been affected the most by the disaster and those areas that require immediate attention. Apart from this, locals can call in to the station and provide first-hand information of what is required and what the situation is like in each area (Jethwaney, 2013).

As mentioned in Jethwaney's article, in June 2013, Uttarakhand, suffered a mass destructive calamity. The death toll was high and a number of residents lost their homes along with all means of communication. This disaster led to how a community radio could contribute and act as a tool for disaster management. Post Uttarakhand floods, the need for community radios, especially during times of disasters, has been reignited. She stresses upon how a Bangalore-based charitable public trust called 'People's Power Collective', along with the assistance of the disaster management department, helped to establish a few community radio stations in disaster prone areas in Uttarakhand. One such station is known as Mandakini ki Aawaz which decided to use their radio station as a tool for disaster management. Their main strategy was to assist with relief and awareness building. They achieved this by identifying those in need, connecting with the media, and aiding on-ground agencies to make sure that their relief facilities reach villages (Jethwaney, 2013).

Rather than relying completely on government responses, it is important for local communities to develop a system for disaster responses. Rural areas in India are often the

worst affected in the event of a natural calamity. Most of these communities are isolated which further worsens their situation. Community radios have the power to connect with citizens and provide them with important information in their local dialect. They are also recognized as the cheapest form of media which can be easily operated in remote areas. Radio continues to change and evolve, however it remains as means through which the largest audience is reached. Therefore, being a multi-purpose medium, community radios can help individuals and save numerous lives during both natural and man-made disasters.

2.7 Major Gaps

There is a volume of literature that has been produced regarding the community radios. However, while reviewing the literature, we could identify certain gaps in it. We observed that there wasn't enough literature which speaks about the community radio stations in India, especially in Uttarakhand. We also felt that more could have been researched and written about, especially their role in natural calamities (2013 Uttarakhand in particular). Furthermore, there was no literature which could explain the role played by community radio stations in Uttarakhand, a place of high cultural, socio-economic and geographical diversity.

Chapter 3

Functioning and management of Mandakini ki Aawaz



3.1 Overview of Rudraprayag

Situated in Sena Gadsari village in Rudraprayag, Uttarakhand, Mandakini ki Aawaz, a local community radio station broadcasts to 1098 villages and covers a population of approximately two lakh people from the nearby villages ("mandakinikiaawaz.org", 2018). According to the 2011 census, Rudraprayag has a population of 242,285 of which males are 114,589 and females are 127,696. The average literacy rate is 81.30%.

The village of Sena Gadsari has a total population of two hundred and one people including forty-one households (GOI, 2011)

3.2 History of Mandakini ki Aawaz

The foundation of Mandakini ki Aawaz was established in 2001 by Mr. Manvendra Negi. It was during that time that a Himalayan trust in Dehradun conducted a programme, where they spoke about the concept of community radios, their functions, and its success in neighbouring countries such as Nepal, which peaked Mr. Negi's interest. This led to the establishment of a centre, with the help of the *Gram Panchayat* in the village of Bhanaj, by Mr. Negi. The station continued its operations on a small scale, growing slowly over the years and by 2005 Mandakini ki Aawaz was able to broadcast their programmes on the world space satellite radio for up to an hour and a half. They used to visit various villages and play their programmes through the medium of narrowcasting for the residents. Besides this, programmes were also aired through cable casting on the television for those limited number of people in the village that owned a T.V.. In 2006, the government introduced a policy stating that not for profit organizations could receive a license to establish community radios. Post implementation, Mandakini ki Aawaz registered itself as a not for profit organization under the name of Mandakini ki Aawaz Kalyan Sewa Samiti.

Ms. Saritha Thomas, the director of a Bangalore based trust, People's Power Collective, collaborated with Mandakini ki Aawaz in 2013 (M. Negi, 2018). The training programme with PPC was to start on the 17th of June 2013, a day after the devastating floods

of 2013 hit Uttarakhand. The team got to experience first-hand the need for a reliable source of information during this time of emergency. The floods of 2013 played an integral part in establishing the prominence of the radio station. As a majority of the communication networks are destroyed during natural disasters, the community radio proves to be instrumental in spreading awareness and information. The station was designed and constructed with the help of ‘*Didi contractor*’, using only local resources. It is the first radio station in India to be disaster resilient. People’s Power Collective conducted an intensive, 18-month long training programme in Rudraprayag for the people working at the radio station, to teach them how to run a community radio. This included workshops on how FM radio works, writing scripts, fieldwork and broadcasting programmes. People’s Power Collective provided them with financial support for the first eighteen months only, while working towards helping them attain financial sustainability. Mandakini ki Aawaz is currently fully financially independent (Mathuriya, 2018). After receiving approval from the government, they started broadcasting in 2014. (M. Negi, 2018).



Image 1: The disaster resilient Mandakini ki Aawaz radio station

Source: Discover India Program 2018

In Rudraprayag, the use of their local language, Garhwali, is rapidly declining with each generation. Mr. Negi established a radio station as a medium to preserve this language, maintain the culture and heritage, and help build a community amid the villages of the region. Additionally, the station could provide local talent a platform to gain recognition and praise (M. Negi, 2018). While establishing the radio station, they encountered a number of obstacles. In 2001, they did not have a recorder, but this was solved when the Himalaya trust donated a Walkman recorder the consequent year. Also the public's lack of awareness about and confidence in the station proved to be a hindrance. They did not know that such a platform existed where they could voice their grievances and display their talents (M. Negi, 2018).

3.3 Functions and Departments of the radio station:



Image 2: The office at Mandakini ki Aawaz

Source: Discover India Program 2018

At the radio station, the entire team is divided into five different departments namely- content, communication, fieldwork, production, and finance and networking. Initially the station comprised of only four members, Mr. Narendra Khandari, Mr. Satya Suri Rotan, Ms. Archana Brown, and Mr. Manvendra Negi (M. Negi, 2018). As the station grew over the years, the number of people working at the radio station have also increased to 7 members at the station and 5 on field. Mr. Manvendra Negi is the founder and station manager of Mandakini ki Aawaz. The content team is headed by Ms. Uma Negi. She overlooks the script

“I wasn’t able to join MKA when they initially started the training with PPC, but when I heard Uma ji and Poonam ji on the radio I wanted to join the station immediately. My family questioned whether I had the confidence to do the work and I told them that with the right training I would be able to do it”.

-Poonam Badiyari

writing of the programmes including plays, advertisements, and, other educational and entertainment broadcasts. Ms. Poonam Rawat is in charge of the communication department (Bharati, 2018). She prepares bills for advertisements. She also reads and responds to emails that they receive, and provides assistance to the content writing team. Occasionally she goes on air to talk about the daily news, and interacts with the locals on subjects such as the traditions and culture of the Garhwal area (P. Rawat, 2018).

The field work department is run by Mr. Devilal Bharati who has been working with Mandakini ki Aawaz from 2004. He received his training from People’s Power Collective on how to record programmes on field. Along with him, there are a few other reporters on field, namely- Banu Prakash Bhat, Rajendra Singh Negi, Lakshman Singh Negi, Hemant Parsona, Grishan Goswami, and, Rajveer Negi. On field they cover topics such as folk music, children’s poems, comics, plays, and, stories shared by the elderly in the village. Apart from these, they also cover healthcare facilities, transportation, standard of education, and employment of the locals (Bharati, 2018).

The production unit of the radio station is headed by Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal. He joined Mandakini ki Aawaz with no background in the communication and broadcasting field. He learnt his role in the radio station through the training he received by People’s Power Collective (Nautiyal, 2018).

Ms. Poonam Badiyari and Ms. Bhagyashree Negi do not work under one specific department, but help all departments at the station. Ms. Poonam Badiyari joined the team when she heard Ms. Uma Negi and Ms. Poonam Rawat on the radio and wanted to be another woman getting her voice heard. She has now been working with them for the past four years, and is part of the core team. She performs functions such as editing, mixing and recording (Badiyari, 2018). Ms. Poonam Badiyari also works in the editing and mixing department of the radio station. She goes live on air to broadcast special programmes (B. Negi, 2018).

3.4 Gender Ratio, Women empowerment and Discrimination

On visiting the radio station, Mandakini ki Aawaz, a prominent feature that stood out was the gender ratio of the people working at the station. There are four women and three men who work full time at the radio station. Apart from this, they have four male reporters and one female reporter who provide information from the field. According to Mr. Manvendra Negi the villages comprise of a higher number of a women than men, as the many of the men move to cities after a certain age in search for jobs.

The lack of transportation facilities proves to be an obstacle for the people working at the radio station. The women who work at Mandakini ki Aawaz live at least ten to fifteen kilometers away from the station. On inquiring about whether this was an issue for the women, Mr. Negi told us that while it did cause some hindrance, the employees at the station worked their way around it. Ms. Poonam Badiyari and Ms. Bhagyashree Negi come from the village of Kandara, which is around six kilometers away from the station, and they walk up and down every day. They do however have to leave earlier than others in order to make the walk home. The families of those working here worry about their safety due to the long walks to and from their place of work. Sometimes the family members accompany them halfway, or meet them on their way back from work to ensure their safety. Mr. Negi said, “Their families have done thorough research on Mandakini ki Aawaz, and the people that work here, to ensure it is a safe environment for them to work in. Only after this have they come to work here.” (M. Negi, 2018)

Most of the women in the villages nearby have gotten an education. In these villages, the style of education is co-ed. This way everyone is getting the same education without any differentiation. While conducting interviews with the employees at the station and the audience in the villages, we found that most women in the villages of Rudraprayag no longer face issues with discrimination in receiving an education. There was a time when a girl passing grade five or eight was enough, around a decade ago, but they are now completing both their Bachelors and Masters. This does have its exceptions, though rare, with some families where the sons have gone on to complete their masters and settle with a job in other cities while the daughters of the family end their education post twelfth grade or their bachelors and are married off.

Mr. Negi was not the only one who had felt this change in the mindset about women. Ms. Poonam Badiyari, a woman who works at Mandakini ki Aawaz also felt this way. She said that while before women used to get mocked for working, now everyone is proud of the women who work. She feels proud working for the station. When some villagers see her walking back home after work, they talk to her about her work and also recognize her from working at the station. (Badiyari, 2018)

When we interviewed Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal, we asked if there was a particular reason for more women working at the station than men, and he said that the radio station wanted to send a message out to the community that no matter what caste, religion or gender they belong to, anyone and everyone can get involved with them. It was part of their vision to have diversity, especially women. At first it was just Ms. Uma Negi and Ms. Poonam Rawat who were the women working at the station. When other women, like Ms. Poonam Badiyari heard them on the radio, it made her want a job and to be like them (Nautiyal, 2018).

When the discussion turned towards discrimination and how prevalent it is, Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal felt that there is no discrimination at the radio station, but it does exist in the nearby villages. We found out that there is one person from the OBC caste working at the station, Mr. Bharati Ji, who said, “I do not feel ostracized by the others working there. I am treated the same” He is in fact one of the founders of the station, along with Mr. Negi (Bharati, 2018).

3.5 Funding of Mandakini ki Aawaz

Quoting the words of Mr. Negi himself, “The process of setting up a community radio station is a very big task because of the policies set up. Everything needs to be handled in Delhi, and since we live in such a remote area, it becomes a very long and tedious process of communicating and acquiring the license” (M. Negi, 2018). But what made it easier for them was that their community radio station was set up in a disaster-prone region, and thus, after a lot of waiting and patience, they finally acquired a license. In 2004, Mandakini ki Aawaz was narrowcasting, which is the dissemination of information to a narrow, specialized audience. However, in 2006, the government passed a law allowing Not for Profit organizations to establish radio stations. Post PPC’s 18-month long training initiative with the station, the radio station has been funding themselves entirely, mainly through advertisements. People have been enthusiastic about advertising on the radio. Policies laid out by the government states that advertisements can be aired for five minutes every hour. Manvendra Negi states that the money that receive for the advertisements played during one hour is enough to financially support the production for that hour. The rate has recently been changed to seven minutes per hour and the rate is four rupees per second. The station therefore works on the principle that for every one-hour programme, they make sure to have advertisements for seven minutes in order to support their costs. According to Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal, “the cost of running a radio station is eighty to eighty-five thousand a month. But the operating cost of Mandakini ki Aawaz is approximately sixty to sixty-five thousand rupees a month. This cost includes the wages for the six to seven people working here, a cumulative of forty thousand. We also have to incur electricity costs which is a thousand rupees. If there is no electricity, the generator is then used which costs us the same amount in three days’ time. This a big challenge for our community radio stations, which is especially located in such a secluded area” (Nautiyal, 2018).

Apart from advertisements, Mandakini ki Aawaz receive donations from people in the villages. One project that they are currently working on is to run the station on solar power. This project is attracting a lot of donations. As of now, they have received just over one lakh rupees from these donations. The electricity keeps fluctuating and diesel costs are very high, so the requirement of solar power is urgent. People also make donations to the kitchen such

as utensils or they make food, tea or coffee and bring it to the station. There are also others who pay the fees to become members of the NGO called Mandakini ki Aawaz Sewa Samithi. People feel really proud to be a part of the organization. These donations are voluntary and the radio station hasn't approached anyone for financial help. Recently, at the celebration of their fourth year anniversary, nearly ten thousand people donated to the organization.

3.6 Policies

Post the 2013 floods, the need for community radio stations have heightened and has become crucial in spreading timely and accurate news updates. Hence, the government has passed a policy where they provide a financial aid of five lakh rupees towards setting up a community radio station. Another positive change in the policy structure has now enabled community run radio stations to work with government organizations such as Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), etc. Such a collaboration will improve their training methods, provide better equipment for their daily broadcasts, etc. Third, there have been talks about making community run radio stations a separate entity by itself and hence, to have its own government department. This would ensure adequate help to these types of radio stations, which would further foster their growth rate.

On the other hand, these community radio stations do not receive enough attention and help as its not considered an effective and helpful medium of communication in the eyes of the central government. The government still prefers billboards and hoardings over community radio stations. In fact, even at the district level people do not have full faith in believing that community radio is an effective form of communication information. They still believe that posters and banners are the only form of advertisement. That is why the radio station does not get full support from them as well. The government's policies regarding community radio stations have not been implemented well. For example, although the policy says that a transmitter with 250 watts is allowed, the government only allows for a transmitter with 50 watts to be used. Due to the low capacity of the transmitter, the radius of the area covered by the broadcasts are reduced and thereby restricts their connect with the public. Since they're are living in a hilly terrain there are times when their signals don't cross two kilometres. So a more powerful transmitter is required to ensure everyone in the region receives the signal and are able to tune in to the radio. Another instance of where the radio

station felt that the government could have been more effective towards helping community radios was seen post the 2013 floods that hit Uttarakhand. All the roads were flooded, none of the telephone networks were working, there was no electricity and the radio stations weren't able to contact the bigger media platforms. To counter this problem during emergencies, their suggestion to the government has been to install an emergency transmitter in the disaster prone area. But even after multiple requests, there has been no follow-up by the government about this. According to Mr. Negi, if these problems are solved and the government provides them a reasonable amount of support, Mandakini ki Aawaz can become a state-wide community radio station (M. Negi, 2018).

Apart from this, there are a few policies that even Mandakini ki Aawaz has formed. First, being that every member of the radio station is obliged to report correct and true news at all times. Second, there must be a total background check about the legitimacy of the person requesting to broadcast an advertisement before it goes on air. No advertisements relating to consumption of alcohol or smoking is aired. Third, Mandakini ki Aawaz keeps records of their programmes for at least three to four years in case of any wrong allegations made about them or any dispute related to the content they have previously aired. Fourth, all members working at the radio station are prohibited to speak ill about the person and allege her/ him of anything until legally proven. All these policies are strictly followed by the people working at the station to ensure safe and hassle free broadcasting of their programmes.

3.7 Broadcasting process and the equipments used:

Mandakini ki Aawaz is a type of radio station service which caters to the interests of the people of Rudraprayag, broadcasting content which is favored by the local public. This radio station is often overlooked by mass media broadcasters. Community radio stations has a distinctive advantage of receiving transmissions throughout battery operated receiving sets which are portable and low in terms of costs. Mandakini ki Aawaz's listeners are living in a particular coverage zone which it broadcasts to. It is through the means of community radios that people can participate to produce and broadcast programmes of local concern.

Community broadcasting is referred to as a broadcasting service which works not for profit, owned and operated by a particular community which works under a particular trust or

foundation (“Policy Guidelines for setting up Community Radio Stations in India”, 2018). In this case Mandakini ki Aawaz broadcasts its content over the coverage of Rudraprayag and works under NGO Mandakini ki Aawaz Kalyan Sewa Samiti (M. Negi, 2018). The community radio station should ensure that the programmes that they broadcast are in line with the mission statement and objectives set by the founders. They are entrusted to take in account the needs of the audience and be responsive to them. Themes which are broadcasted cover a large range, from civic to social, religious, informational or environmental. Bhagyashree Negi, who works for the content team said that the content that is broadcasted to the audience of Rudraprayag is mostly collected by reporters who go onto the field to gather information. She further added that another important source for the broadcasting team is newspapers. Mandakini ki Aawaz have around 5 reporters who are from different villages of the district. When they find news which is suitable for the station to broadcast, they report to the station through the phone or they write a report and send it in through mail. Then the script writing team of Mandakini ki Aawaz frame it in such a way that it can be broadcasted to the general public (B. Negi, 2018). Even matters such as almanac and astrology related information is broadcasted on Mandakini ki Aawaz every morning (Prakash, 2018).

The equipment used by Mandakini ki Aawaz plays a key role in the quality of content which is broadcasted. Like all radio stations, Mandakini ki Aawaz has a transmitter which helps generate radio frequency. This is applied to the antenna of the radio station which sends and receives radio signals. Mandakini ki Aawaz also has something called as a ‘receiver’ which picks up the encoded signals generated from the transmitter, decodes it and then allows it to be heard by the general audience listening to a particular frequency in the surrounding area. The radio station also has a microphone in the recording room. The microphone turns sound into electrical impulses. Also the most common equipment that is present at a radio station is by far a computer. A computer can provide with a whole lot of broadcasting functions. The script written which is to be broadcasted also is made on a computer. The radio station also has a CD player through which pre-recorded audio files are played. The most intensively used equipment at Mandakini ki Aawaz is headphones. Anyone at the radio station needs to hear what is going on air through the means of headphones this can be done. An ‘On Air’ light is also present at the entry of the studio room. Several musical

instruments like a guitar, keyboard, flutes etc. are kept in case people come to showcase their talents on air. Another important equipment used by Mandakini ki Aawaz is a generator. In case there is a shortage of electricity or power cuts, the generator kicks in to supply electricity. This turns on automatically when there is a power cut. Most of the equipment present at the radio station are present in a place called as the rack room (Nautiyal, 2018).

Chapter 4

Programme Content



Mandakini ki Aawaz Kalyan Sewa Samiti is operational seven days a week. The work timings vary in summer (*Grishma kal*) and winter (*Sheeth kal*). During the summer season the radio station operates from 6:00 am to 7:00 pm and during the winter season the timings are from 7:00 am to 6:30 pm.

The following is the schedule that the radio station follows:

4.1 Summer Schedule (March- August):

Monday- Saturday

Start time	End time	Name of the programme
06:00am	07:00am	<i>Dev Aradhana</i>
07:00am	09:00am	<i>Dandiyon Ma Gham</i>
12:00pm	01:00pm	<i>Goun khulyon ka haal chaal</i>
03:00pm	04:00pm	<i>Pharmaaish</i>
04:00pm	05:00pm	<i>Gham bhudidi samoun</i>
05:00pm	06:00pm	<i>Goun khulyon ka haal chaal</i>
06:00pm	07:00pm	<i>Dev Aradhana</i>

Sundays:

Start time	End time	Name of the programme
06:00am	07:00am	<i>Dev Aradhana</i>
07:00am	09:00am	<i>Dandiyon Ma Gham</i>
10:00am	11:00am	<i>Noni nonyano ka dagada</i>
11:00am	12:00pm	<i>Didi-bhuliyon ka dagada</i>
12:00pm	01:00pm	<i>Goun khulyon ka haal chaal</i>

01:00pm	02:00pm	<i>Dana-sayano ka dagada</i>
02:30pm	04:00pm	<i>Pharmaaish</i>
04:00pm	05:00pm	<i>Gham bhudidi samoun</i>
05:00pm	06:00pm	<i>Goun khulyon ka haal chaal</i>
06:00pm	07:00pm	<i>Dev Aradhana</i>

4.2 Winter (September- February):

Monday- Saturday

Start time	End time	Name of the programme
07:00am	08:00am	<i>Dev Aradhana</i>
08:00am	10:00am	<i>Dandiyon Ma Gham</i>
12:00pm	01:00pm	<i>Goun khulyon ka haal chaal</i>
02:30pm	03:30pm	<i>Pharmaaish</i>
03:30pm	04:30pm	<i>Gham bhudidi samoun</i>
04:30pm	05:30pm	<i>Goun khulyon ka haal chaal</i>
05:30pm	06:30pm	<i>Dev Aradhana</i>

Sundays:

Start time	End time	Name of the programme
07:00am	08:00am	<i>Dev Aradhana</i>
08:00am	10:00am	<i>Dandiyon Ma Gham</i>
10:00am	11:00am	<i>Noni nonyano ka dagada</i>

11:00am	12:00pm	<i>Didi-bhuliyon ka dagada</i>
12:00pm	01:00pm	<i>Goun khulyon ka haal chaal</i>
01:00pm	02:00pm	<i>Dana-Sayano ka dagada</i>
02:30pm`	03:30pm	<i>Pharmaaish</i>
03:30pm	04:30pm	<i>Gham bhudidi samoun</i>
04:30pm	05:30pm	<i>Goun khulyon ka haal chaal</i>
05:30pm	6:30pm	<i>Dev Aradhana</i>

4.3 Programmes Broadcasted

4.3.1 *Dev Aradhana:*

This is the first programme that is aired by Mandakani ki Aawaz. In hindi the phrase *Dev Aradhana* translates to worshipping God. They start off the day with this programme, talking about what day of the week it is, the date, and about their horoscopes for the day. The programme is presented by pandit Dayanand Nautiyal, who is not a full time employee at the station, but does this show every morning. They also talk about the weather forecast for the day and the next 48 hours in Rudraprayag and the nearby towns. *Bhajan-Kirtans* or religious songs, are played during this hour, along with readings of excerpts from the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Mahabharatha*. Majority of these are sung/voiced by the people of nearby villages, the people working at the radio station go to the nearby villages to record these songs and the same is edited and then broadcasted.

4.3.2 *Dandiyon ma Gham:*

The next programme is aired from 7:00 am to 9:00 am and is called *Dandiyon ma Gham*. The radio station asks the viewers either a question or a riddle every day in their local language- Garhwali; this question/riddle is first aired during this hour. The viewers answer the question by calling the radio station throughout the course of the day, and a record is

maintained to register the names of those that have answered correctly. The names of the first ten viewers who give the right answers is then announced on the radio station. There is also a section called *Potli*, which literally translates to ‘bundle’ but in this case refers to a short bit on a particular topic. Some topics covered in these *Potlis* are things related to the household, kitchen or students. Every *Potli* has a different objective every day, under the students *Potli* for example, they may talk about patriotism and then play a patriotic song sung by one of the children of the village, or talk about something like maintaining hygiene.



Image 3: Group member Dyuti Kumat and Annu Gandhi on air

Source: Discover India Program, 2018

4.3.3 Goun Kholyu ka Haal Chaal:

Between 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm a programme called *Goun Kholyu ka Haal Chaal* is broadcasted, which translates to the wellbeing of the village and its villagers. Radio stations are not allowed to broadcast news on air, but the lack of definition to what comprises of news allows the station to broadcast information about the nearby villages as news. The news they provide comprises of updates on roads which are under construction, fares held in different

villages, opening of new schools, hospitals, and other such local events. Also the community radio station is allowed to broadcast advertisements for five minutes every one hour. The advertisements broadcasted during this period may vary from ten seconds to one minute depending on the requirement of the customer. The community radio charges a fee of four rupees per second to broadcast an advertisement. Many different types of advertisements are broadcasted, for example business related advertisements like spreading awareness about a new soap which has been introduced in the market. The kinds of advertisements aired by the community radio station differ from mainstream media, they promote local businesses and provide opportunities to individuals in the villages for something even as small as wanting to sell their cow (M. Negi, 2018).

4.3.4 *Pharmaaish:*

The community radio brakes for lunch between 1pm to 3pm. After which they begin their evening broadcast which starts at 3pm and continues till 7pm. The evening broadcast starts with their request show- *Pharmaaish*. During this programme the locals call the community radio station and place their request for songs, poems, plays etc. which are then aired by the radio station. Many of these songs/skits are either locally produced with the help of the villagers or at the radio station by the employees. The songs and skits produced by the employees always have a message behind them, so when these particular songs/skits are requested due to their musical value, the message is also reiterated in the process. For example, there was a skit that spread awareness regarding alcoholism and the ill-effects of it, which helped Mr. Dhani Lal Tantai (a resident of Bhanaj village) help himself and quit drinking alcohol (B. Negi, 2018). This programme continues till 4pm after which the next programme starts (M. Negi, 2018).

4.3.5 *Gham bhudidi samoun:*

The phrase *Gham Bhudidi Samoun* means history of a place in Garhwali. Mandakani ki Aawaz helps spread awareness about their community by talking about their history during this programme. One of the villages which comes under their radar is chosen by the radio station and the history and culture of that particular village is spoken about. One of the main objectives behind setting up Mandakani ki Aawaz was to try and conserve the local culture

which seemed to be losing its identity. The locals of that area had started speaking in Hindi more in comparison to Garhwali which was their local language. Thus, this programme helps Mandakini ki Aawaz in preserving the culture of their land. While conducting interviews with the audience in nearby villages, a lot of the elderly citizens of the community were proud of the fact that the radio station produced most of their content in Garhwali and helped inform the younger generations about their culture and history. In this very programme the question and the riddle of the day is answered and the first 10 people who give the correct answers are announced. The programme is aired every evening from 5:00pm to 6:00pm. The *Dev Aradhana* programme from that morning is then repeated in the evening, from 6:00pm to 7:00pm. This is the structure of programmes followed throughout the week, with an exception to Sundays (M. Negi, 2018).

4.3.6 Sunday Specials:

On Sunday the radio station organises special programmes for their viewers which are different from the ones broadcasted during the week. The first programme of the day is called *Noni Nonyano ka Dagada*. The main focus of this programme is towards children, and is similar to the *Potlis* that are aired throughout the week. Children from the nearby villages are often invited to come and host the show with the radio jockeys, Rushabh Negi and Rahul Chaudri were a few of the more regular participants (Nautiyal, 2018). Children sing songs, recite poems

Full on Nicky:

Full on Nicky is a special that Mandakini ki Awaaz airs every Thursday, with repeats every Monday. It is a show that the BBC radio in the United Kingdom airs, brought to MKA through PPC. The target audience of the show is 11-19 year olds. They discuss career options, about crimes committed on them and how they can protect themselves and other issues of their interest.

and talk about their school life in this programme. This programme conducted by Mandakini ki Aawaz to involve the children with the radio station and to improve their overall skills- public speaking, gaining general knowledge, learning how to run the station and more. From 11am to 12pm is the *Didi bhuliyon ka karaykram*, which addresses issues relating to the women in the nearby villages. This may be women workforce related matters- like encouraging women to take up jobs in the villages and mentioning the available job opportunities, house or kitchen related matters. This programme is aired by Mrs Uma Negi

and Bhagyashree Negi. Like the other two specials on Sundays, guests come in to join them. Vital issues related to health and hygiene are taken up during one of the *Potlis- 'Doctor Didi'*, addressing issues that women have been too hesitant to talk about; it is conducted by a female doctor that visits the station for this programme (U. Negi, 2018). After this programme the radio station breaks for lunch from 12pm to 1pm.

Specials for occasions:

On days like Gandhi Jayanthi, Independence day, Republic day and more, the radio station features special programs to celebrate the day. They prepare their content in accordance with the occasion. We had the chance to be present at the station on the 2nd of October, Gandhi Jayanthi. The station aired content cantering Mahatma Gandhi's life and his achievements.

Between 1pm and 2:30pm *Dana-Sayano ka dagada* is aired. This programme is aimed towards involving the senior citizens with the rest of the community. All topics related to senior citizens are covered in this programme. This initiative is taken up by Mandakani ki Aawaz to make sure that the senior citizens never feel as if they have been left out or neglected by the community, and to imbibe a sense of belonging amongst them. An example that Mr. Manvendra Negi shared with us was:

“Recently we did a programme on what work people can do after retirement, they can help the community, they have 60 years of experience on them which can benefit the community. If you were in the education sector, then you can spend half an hour everyday with the students in the villages to help tutor them since the education scenario is not great in our area. If you were in the agriculture sector, there are a lot of issues regarding farming, which you can help with. The youth today are full of energy and have courage, while the retired citizens have experience so if the two come together then they can help with the development of the village.”

-Manvendra Negi

The Requests *Pharmaaish* is the last programme which is aired on Sundays, it is aired between 2:30pm to 4 pm. Any request by the locals for any song or poem can be done during this period.

4.3.7 Specials:

Mudda: This translates to “issue”. A *mudda* can be aired at any point of the day, during any of the shows, it addresses issues that have occurred in the village. For example, if a road is blocked due to a landslide, or if one village has not been receiving electricity for the last few days, the issue is spoken about during the *mudda* programme. This also helps convey the message to the respective authorities and encourages them to take action.

Khoya paaya: This is a service provided by the radio station- “Lost and Found”. Any articles that have been reported lost or found are brought to the attention of the audience through this section. Similar to *Mudda*, this section may also be aired at any given point during the day. The person who finds the lost item is rewarded by being praised on air, and receiving a token of appreciation from the station and the owner of the item.

Jhalak: This section was started to help facilitate a growth in the community-ness amid the villages that listen to the station. The *Jhalak* or glimpse of one town is prepared with the help of the residents and then aired so that people tuning in from various towns and villages can learn more about the said town. The *Jhalak* may include information related to the location and history of the village, the population, the main source of income, the roads that lead to and from the town and more. This has helped residents of Rudraprayag become more aware of their villages and has also provided employment opportunities in some cases.

4.4 Process of Content Making:

According to Mr Manvendra Negi, the entire radio station has been divided into 5 departments for convenience. The content department, responsible for making the programmes, is headed by Mrs Uma Negi. Most of the content aired on the various programmes broadcasted by Mandakini ki Aawaz is obtained from the community itself. The citizens of the neighbouring villages often visit the station and help in producing the content. In turn, members of the station also visit these villages in search for interesting content or when they are invited by the residents of the villages themselves. Those members of the villages that are not able to come to the radio station to showcase their talents call the station to come visit them. The station also pays visits to the villages when there are skits being enacted for the residents, during fairs, festivals and almost all other social gatherings. The

content gathered from the village visits are usually in the forms of folk songs, skits, and interviews. The employees that are part of the fieldwork also keep updating the station with news that they gather from the villages regarding things like roadblocks, protests and strikes, forest fires etc. This content obtained from the visiting villagers or by the on field members of the station can later be broadcasted on one of the various programmes aired. For example, there is a “*Mudda*” programme during which issues such as a badly maintained public school toilet can be brought up. Apart from merely airing such matters of public concern on their programmes, the radio station also takes the initiative of reporting these matters to respective officials and in turn keep the public aware of how the officials are looking into the matter. Mandakini ki Aawaz follows 28 different formats for their programmes, which have all developed over time through their own experiences. Some of the formats are solely used by Mandakini ki Aawaz.

The content team, like every other team or member in the station has been either trained by People’s Power Collective or received second hand training from people who have been trained by PPC. This Bangalore based NGO, had aided the radio station and worked with them through an intensive eighteen-month long training process; which started in September 2013 (People’s Power Collective, n.d). Mandakini ki Aawaz Kalyan Sewa Samiti is now self-sustainable financially and operationally, something that was PPC’s core aim. (Thomas, 2018). The process of content creation for each programme or broadcast varies from one programme to another. According to Ms Poonam Rawat, a member of the core team at the station, the process of creating an advertisement takes anywhere between 10-12 days. The first step upon receiving the contract, is to speak to the client requesting the advertisement and find out certain major details. The next step is for the person in charge of content to write the scripts for the advertisement. Before the advertisement can be recorded, it must be approved by Mr Manvendra Negi and the entire team, and then by the client itself. It is then recorded, followed by the various stages of editing and mixing. If the client is satisfied with the final outcome of the advertisement, it will then be aired.

All members at the station actively participate in hosting the shows. Each member handles different programmes, and prepares the content for their respective parts. Ms. Poonam Rawat has acknowledged that if any of the members try to go on air unprepared,

they will last no longer than five or ten minutes. Therefore, it is essential that they are prepared before going live on air. This is done through conducting team discussions, referring to books and in turn making notes. Each member going on air takes up responsibility to prepare their own content before they do so. They prepare the content by deciding beforehand which topics they want to cover for the day, which is completely at their discretion. For example, if a programme based on traditions and cultures is to be aired, the content is prepared by looking into which traditional aspects and festivals they want to throw light upon. There are certain rules and policies that the members have to follow while producing the content. As mentioned above, by law they are not allowed to air news. The members have to tread carefully when addressing sensitive issues related to gender or caste biases, which according to Ms. Uma Negi is a hindrance in having open discussions or disseminating important information related to these matters. Advertisements cannot encourage the use of alcohol or tobacco. They need to consider whether the content is appropriate for all ages or not, and whether it applies to real life scenarios in the villages.

Mr. Devilal Bharti, who is involved with fieldwork and production at the station, states that when the field work team visits the villages, they record music- folk/ religious/ anything personally written, poems and occasionally skits as well. These recordings are later converted to the MP3 format back at the station and then re-played on the radio for the public after editing and putting in background music. When a programme is solely made from interviews/ group discussions on field, the members of the station who go on field, call the radio station from the villages. They introduce the village they are in, followed by the members of the village they are speaking to. This conversation is then recorded through the IC recorded and sent to the radio station. This recording is then converted to the MP3 format, edited and broadcasted that very day. When there are issues that require immediate attention, the content is recorded and aired not more than fifteen minutes after. For a five-minute report, the radio station takes around ten minutes to edit it before airing. The villagers who are recorded are informed on what time it will be aired. This is how the live conversation with the locals are aired. Due to the effort made by the station to go from village to village, the locals now have the confidence to have conversations with outsiders and feature on the radio. This change was observed by the members of the fieldwork team at the station over the years, especially amongst the women of the villages. Those that once hesitated to step out of

their houses now volunteer to speak to the members of team Mandakini during their field visits (Bharti, 2018). The team at PPC also mentioned that they observed this change during the field visits they make. This has helped seed a community in Rudraprayag and achieve the essence of community radios by maximising audience involvement in producing content (Thomas, 2018). There has also been an increase in the number of people that approach the station themselves to perform or sing. This has not only had a positive impact on the confidence and skill of the performers but also helps provide employment opportunities, by spreading awareness. According to Mr. Devi Lal, this is one of many changes that Mandakini ki Aawaz has brought about.

Ms. Bhagyashree Negi is the voice of an informative programme aired between 12pm and 1pm everyday- *Goun khulyon ka haal chaal* wherein she reads out the daily news. Since 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm could be a busy time for most people leading to them missing out on the programme, this programme is repeated again in the evening. According to Ms. Negi, the news aired pertains to the nearby villages and surrounding areas. This news aired in the local language of Garhwali is obtained from their own reporters as well as from the newspapers. The radio station has around nine to ten operating reporters hailing from various villages such as Bhutul, Augustmuni, Chandrapuri and Rumsi. The reporters convey the news to the radio station either through a phone call or by sending in a written report. Apart from the on field reporters and newspapers the radio station is also affiliated with the District Information Centre (DIC). The DIC shares whatever news they possess with the radio station who later pass it on to the people. This news contains information regarding policy changes and additions made by the government.

Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal who heads the production department, states that programmes are aired on radio for an average of eight hours each day. Out of these, live programmes are aired for six hours whereas repeat programmes are aired for two hours. The content for the live programmes are mostly obtained from the reporters calling in from the various villages. For example, villagers call in to report about which areas are facing heavy rainfall during the monsoons. This news when broadcasted on the radio is helpful to the others. Content is also recorded during the various fairs held at Augustmuni, Rudraprayag, Chamoli etc., during festival times. These recordings are also sent back to the station for

editing and broadcasting. Depending on the degree of importance and urgency the radio station takes anywhere between fifteen minutes to one week to broadcast the recorded content.

Chapter 5

Audience



This chapter talks about social background of the audience and listenership of Mandakini ki Aawaz. It delves into some social indicators like sex ratio and literacy rate prevalent in the villages, and talks about the women working at the radio station and their families. It describes the improvements the station has facilitated in gender norms of the area through the programs that it broadcasts. At Mandakini ki Aawaz, they broadcast entertainment programs along with educational ones. The entertainment programs seem to be more popular than the others. This chapter also talks about the various disparities prevalent in the society. However, the locals that listen to the station do feel that it has impacted the society in a positive way and helped bring about changes that promote development.

5.1 Impact of Mandakini ki Aawaz on its Audience

5.1.1 Mandakini ki Aawaz in the village

Mandakini ki Aawaz broadcasts numerous shows all-round the year. The programmes range from addressing gender and caste related issues, to educating Garhwali people about their tradition. For women empowerment and issues related to women, Mandakini ki Aawaz has designed many programmes where guest speakers are called to raise awareness among women about their rights, and encourage them to study. According to Manvendra Negi, when it comes to caste, the station tries to avoid broadcasting anything that might offend the people. The most integral part of their programmes is to safeguard their traditions from fading away. They include many deep-rooted songs and plays in their production. This helps people keep in touch with the Garhwali language and learn about their region's history. Rudraprayag faces a colossal problem of isolation, as a result locals are unable to find entertainment. The radio station has countered this problem by incorporating historical lessons in plays, which the audience seems to enjoy.

Conferring to the statistics given by Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal they cover three hundred and fifty villages (Nautiyal, 2018). Additionally, with the introduction of the Mixlr app where radio stations are given a platform to broadcast their shows on the internet, their audience has increased considerably. All over the world ten-thousand people have opened their channel at least once on the app. Due to the limited range of the radio, the app has helped immensely, now people can listen to the programmes on their smartphones. However,

people do not have the financial means to buy a radio let alone a smartphone. As a result, many people in the village haven't even heard of Mandakini ki Aawaz. Many people are still left in the dark and Mandakini ki Aawaz is incapable of reaching them.



Image 4: Students at a school in Sena village who listen to Mandakini ki Aawaz

Source: Discover India Program 2018

(Consent was taken from the teacher for this picture)

5.1.2 Literacy Rate in The Region

According to the census in 2011, 78.82% of Uttarakhand is literate. This statistic might not hold true for a village like Rudraprayag. Nevertheless, we noticed that lot of the youth was pursuing their undergraduate degrees, and some were even preparing for the army. The younger women were even going to colleges in neighbouring towns like Augustmuni.

5.1.3 Audience Feedback on Mandakini ki Aawaz

After talking to the villagers, and getting information regarding the audience of Mandakini ki Aawaz, we have seen that there have been mostly positive feedbacks given by the locals about the radio station. The station has been helpful in various small ways. For example, one person said that the station helps people find their lost possession by

broadcasting it. Another person said the station broadcasts the new government policies which helps create awareness among the locals.

According to Manvendra Negi, the founder of Mandakini ki Aawaz, the concept of community radio is that they are able to inform people within a certain radius about various things such as news, in the local language (M. Negi, 2018). This can only be done by community radios because the major news channels do not inform people about the events happening around their region. However, the community radios bring the news about the particular area to the local people living there. Information regarding whether the roads are fine or not can only be broadcasted on community radios because the matter is of small importance for a big news channel. Even when the natural disasters occur, the native people know most about it, and they are the ones running the community radio. This is because the big news channel takes time to collect the information and notify people regarding the disasters, while the community radio can act upon it when they see it in the area soon as possible. By the information we gathered, they have been able to accomplish just that.

Every local that we interviewed, and asked if Mandakini ki Aawaz had impacted their life, gave various reasons of how this radio has been helpful to them. One teacher that we interviewed said that it had been really helpful for her as they broadcast the weather of the particular day and inform them if it is safe for them to leave the house. According to this, many set their routines of their daily time table. A local in one of the villages also said that this radio has helped in bringing old traditions to the new generations, and also bringing back their traditional language, Garhwali, so the locals of the village start talking in that language once again and not forget the culture they were brought up with. He also said that it helped greatly in empowering women as there are a lot of programmes related to that, so eventually there will be a change in women empowerment. The children of the village listen to this radio as well which has educational programmes on specific days, so it benefits education for the children too. We asked the people of Mandakini ki Aawaz as well, if they get any feedbacks regarding their programmes and they too said that people who listen to the radio call and tell them that the programme was very good. According to them, the people get so happy that sometimes they invite the people of Rudraprayag to make a programme about their village and make everyone listen to it through the radio.

From our interviews, there hasn't been any negative feedback regarding Mandakini ki Aawaz, but when we spoke to Manvendra Negi, he gave us both positive and negative feedback. There have been cases where the people have voiced their dislikes about their programmes in the form of suggestions. People would give suggestions by presenting their points as to why some information does not fit in the programme, or will give some extra information that needs to be added. This form of feedback has been given to them quite a few times. Fortunately, there hasn't been a case where Mandakini ki Aawaz has gotten negative feedback on programmes due to it being a sensitive topic or people reacting badly towards it. This is also mostly because they try and balance both sides of the topic, and then only present it in front of the audience no matter what. For example, in a gender debate, they will make sure that there are both sides to the debate by ensuring that there is a man or a woman in the debate or even a person from an organization that works on gender issues.

5.2 Gender relations

5.2.1 Sex-Ratio in the Village

According to the World Health organization (WHO) the ratio of men to women globally is close to 105 men to every 100 women. Narrowing it down to India, it is 943 women to 1000 men, according to the 2011 census ("Sex Ratio", 2018). Bringing it down to a yet smaller scale the ratio is 963 women to 1000 men in Uttarakhand. In Most men migrate to bigger cities after marriage in search for jobs. As Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal had mentioned, occasionally the sons also follow their fathers to work in cities resulting in a dwindling male population (Nautiyal, 2018). Due to this migration, women need to stay in the villages and find work there. This has created a situation in which women are not getting the opportunity to further pursue their education.

5.2.2 Problems Faced by Women in The Village

Some of the problems that the women in Rudraprayag face are:

- *Early Marriage*— Many families prefer to get their daughters married at a very young age as they are viewed as a burden. This is because women are not perceived as

earning members in families. Furthermore, since the income levels are not sufficient to sustain them, a non-working member is seen as a liability.

- *Educational Disparity* – Although the disparity has decreased over the last decade, women still do not have the same opportunities as men. Most women in the villages are now encouraged to study at least till the twelfth standard, if not complete their bachelor's degree. However, even after receiving this education, the women are expected to stay at home, or work in the fields, while their spouses either move to the city to work, or work in the village itself.
- *Women are overburdened with work*- After marriage most men shift to cities close by such as Dehradun and Delhi, while the women stay back in the village. From farming, to taking care of the children, and managing all the household chores, all responsibilities lie with them.
- *Married women have to leave their homes* – After marriage, most women usually leave their houses and move in with their spouse and in-laws. In many instances, they are not treated well by their husband and his family, but they still continue to stay there.

5.2.3 Family Life in the Village

During one of the interviews with a resident of Rudraprayag, Prachi narrated the story of her nuptial and life at home. She says that her marriage was an extremely unusual one, since the man was significantly older than her. Moreover, she had refused to marry him on several occasions. However, she eventually succumbed to the pressure and gave in to the marriage. Prachi's life since then has only revolved around managing household chores. This resulted in her education falling on her priority list. Even though Prachi desires to be well educated and work, the obstacles created by her family are so enormous that she cannot pursue her education. Most of the times she has to tutor herself and can only attend college twice a week. In the patriarchal society that surrounds her, she is forced to look after the in-laws while the husband left for Delhi soon after the wedding. Even wearing clothes of her choice was objectionable (Prachi, 2018). Another example of the patriarchy was noticed

during Mrs. Urmila's interview. She too was against her marriage, but the circumstances surrounding her such as poverty, forced her into marriage. Furthermore, the relationship she shares with her in-laws is strained, and they hardly meet each other. Urmila only educated herself till class ten, due to which she cannot work (Urmila, 2018).

5.2.4 Mandakini ki Aawaz's Impact on Women

Mandakini ki Aawaz is said to have made great contributions to women empowerment. They fought against gender discrimination which was highly prevalent in these villages earlier. There are two perspectives, first being from the radio station's viewpoint, and then from the villagers.

According to Bhagyashree Negi, who is part of the content writing team, the programmes for women are the most important that the radio broadcasts. In these programmes, they talk about women's daily routine, their employment as well as their education. She hopes that more women get the opportunity like her to work and to be independent (B. Negi, 2018). Furthermore, the radio station has brought about a change in the lives of women since its inception. Earlier, when their reporters used to go the locals houses to interview them, the women of the family would just stay silent. They would avoid the people from Mandakini ki Aawaz. But now, after four years, it has substantially changed. Women themselves are coming up to them and asking to be recorded for their programmes (P. Rawat, 2018).

They educate women about the job-opportunities that are available. There are special shows where they debate about gender issues like different jobs for men and women, and the discrimination that the girl child faces when it comes to education. They also talk about how boys and girls should choose the correct path for themselves, and how they can be guided along the way (U. Negi, 2018). Manvendra Negi told us about the other topics they broadcast, such as encouraging women to work. While broadcasting, they encourage women to make use of their talents, such as sewing, singing, and painting which can be productive endeavours. Not long ago, they broadcasted a programme regarding the hobbies people can engage in after retirement. Combining the enthusiasm of the youth, and experience of the

elderly, can contribute to community development. Mandakini ki Aawaz also broadcasts information about events in nearby villages, pertaining to women (M. Negi, 2018).

According to Poonam Badiyari, who is part of the core team, “the majority of the recording is done by the women. Before Mandakini ki Aawaz, the women used to barely converse with each other and it was very difficult for women to leave their houses to work without being mocked by men. But now, the women at Mandakini ki Aawaz are proud of working there and even the men have started to respect them.” She gave an example of the villagers sometimes giving them a ride home. They are well renowned in the neighbouring villages, and most people recognise them. Once women in the village saw the work done by the ones working in the station, they were encouraged to come out of their houses and look for employment (Badiyari, 2018).

In order to find out whether the local people believe that Mandakini ki Aawaz has impacted gender discrimination, we interviewed a variety of locals, including farmers, shopkeepers and labourers. While interviewing them, we got mixed reviews. Some people were oblivious to the fact that there was even a radio station in Rudraprayag called Mandakini ki Aawaz. The few villagers, who do know about Mandakini ki Aawaz were not aware of the programmes that they broadcast to encourage women. By gathering this information, we inferred that most people listen to Mandakini ki Aawaz for both entertainment and educational purposes. “Mandakini ki Aawaz really did help in creating a change in the society.” (Lal, 2018) When we interviewed a professor that taught in a nearby school, he told us that they have a lot of programmes related to empowering women, and there are a lot of listeners to this station, so the change in the attitude towards women is inevitable. One man when interviewed spoke about the fact that on radio, they bring in female doctors and teachers to talk, which really benefits women and changes their perspective.

5.3 Caste hierarchy

As of September 23, 2008, there were 65 acknowledged castes in Uttaranchal (then, Uttarakhand) (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2018)

It is amongst the top five states with regard to diversity in castes. This fact in itself explains the social dynamics of the place. To better understand the caste structure, one of the members at Mandakini ki Aawaz said that there are different castes in her village, and many people also belong to the scheduled castes. Talking to more people from the village and the people working at Mandakini ki Aawaz, we concluded that almost every village has around three to four castes, one of which would most certainly be either a SC or OBC.

One of the mandate of the research was to understand the caste dynamics of the villages, with our focus on the audience of the radio station (the villages in the radar of the range of the radio). It was quite clear from the answers given to us while interviewing that there existed caste discrimination, in some form or the other.

One of the interviewees, Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal, the production head of Mandakini ki Aawaz, spoke at length on this issue. According to him, though caste discrimination exists, it has decreased drastically since the last fifteen years. Fifteen years back, a person from an upper caste would not even drink a sip of water from a glass even if the shadow of a lower caste passes through it. Discrimination, though exists, has taken different forms now. In social gatherings of the whole village, like weddings, the people belonging to SC do not eat with the upper class people (Nautiyal, 2018). Inter-caste marriages within the upper and the lower class are also very rare and unpopular. Speaking about inter caste marriages, another of our interviewees shared an incidence from her life. Prachi who lives in Sena-Gadsari village, mentioned in her interview how her brother wanted to marry a girl, but her father and mother in law are against it. The girl he wants to marry is from the Kalla caste (also a *Pandit*, like the boy), but from Polli village (Prachi, 2018). Apparently, the Kallas from that particular village are considered to be lower in social status than the caste from which the boy belongs to. Hence, the parents of the boy won't accept this relationship.

Further in this conversation, Mr. Nautiyal denied the notion of separate housing areas from the lower classes. He clarifies that this notion existed years ago when the people belonging to the lower classes would live separately, far away from the main area of the village (Nautiyal, 2018). He belongs to a Brahmin household, but the house right adjacent to his house belongs to a Schedule Caste family. However, he does not deny the fact that some villages, such as Bhanaj still follow this tradition. On the field visit to Bhanaj, people were

specifically asked about this notion. We found that there was a clear divide in the village. The village was divided into parts, upper and lower. The upper part of the village was where the upper caste families had built their houses and the lower part was where the SCs/STs/OBCs lived.

The social and economic discrimination which existed in the village for decades has resulted in a deep divide between the population. Denying any kind of an occupation discrimination, Shivanand Nautiyal says that people from all the castes can now be seen working together and taking the same income. He agrees to the possibility of an economic gap due to the history of discrimination faced by the marginalised groups (Nautiyal, 2018). From his and many other interviews we inferred that a primary factor behind this was education. The government or any other educational institutions does not discriminate between the children based on their castes. Everyone gets the same knowledge from the same teacher or professor. Also, as Mrs. Prachi from Sena-Gadsari said, while in school she used to share her food with people from different castes. Recalling another incident from her school days she mentions how her mother once shouted that she should have not been born to a brahman household, because she touched the feet of her Dalit teacher to pay respect (Prachi, 2018). Adding to the economic gap issue, Shivanand Nautiyal proudly says that the situation has changed now-a-days. In his area, around ten years back, the SC people would go on playing drums from one household to the other for food. Also, when there was any upper caste marriage, the left-over food was distributed amongst the SC people.

I've walked in a field visit with a young girl and we were doing Namaste together to everybody and behind her was her mum and I could hear her mum saying, "what are you doing?" She then caught up with me and said, "See what my mum is saying, she's saying not do Namaste. I can say it but I can't put my hands together." This was because she was in a higher caste and she was in the lower caste area. I continued to do my Namaste and I wasn't going to preach about it. And then later on she caught up with me and she asked if this would ever change in our village. And I said the fact that you are asking the question means that you begin the change.

-Sarita Thomas, 2018

Bhagyashree Negi, one of the workers from Mandakini ki Aawaz proudly told us about the programmes which they have aired so far to address this issue in particular.

Moreover, Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal also presented a different side to this issue. He explained, how sensitive the issue is, and what could be the possible outcomes of dealing with it, since community radio station is such a simple medium of mass communication and so close to the hearts of the people to Garhwal (Nautiyal, 2018). He believes that any change in the society cannot be brought about overnight, but at the same time, little steps can be taken towards it. “The change you want to see in the society has to first start from your end”. For example, whenever a team from the radio station goes for a field visit, everyone sits together and eats, no matter what caste they belong to. He says that fundamentally, as a community radio platform, we cannot tell people what they should be doing and what not, but there are other things which can be done. For example, not discriminating amongst the audience, no matter from which caste they belong to. The way they talk to an upper caste person, the amount of respect they would give, should be the same for a person belonging to SC.

Also, speaking about these issues, may create a divide amongst the audience. For example, if the radio station speaks a lot about caste discrimination, the people belonging to the SC, ST or OBC might favour them, but the remaining, upper caste people might cut themselves off the station. And, for any community radios, its audience is the most important part of its functioning. Continuing the point about the time taken to bring about any social change, he confessed about the amount of time he himself took to change his views. According to him, it was in his school and college life that he was exposed to such liberated views. He can understand the process and the people will have to go through, and the amount of time it can take.

Mrs. Uma Negi (the Content Head), in her interview, told us about how she and her team have tried to address this issue. She, like Mr. Nautiyal, also feels that it is a little difficult to talk about such sensitive issues on a platform such as a community radio. However, understanding the importance and need to address the issue of caste discrimination, they came up with several programmes. Mrs. Negi herself has written a couple of plays and poems about this issue to spread more awareness amongst the villagers (U.Negi, 2018). As mentioned earlier though, these issues cannot be addressed directly. So the skits will have characters that work together to save the day, with the names ‘Lal’ and ‘Nautiyal’ representing the lower and higher caste respectively. This doesn’t tackle the issue head-on,

but a listener in whose mind these caste distinctions are deeply rooted, gets the message. Moreover, they arrange a lot of debates on topics such as this, wherein they either invite some villager or a personality who has knowledge about the respective issue of debate. While talking to Mr. Manvendra Negi, we asked him about the possibility bias, or the lack of it thereof, in these debates. He replied proudly by saying that all the debates on this platform are certainly unbiased. They always try to present a balanced picture with both the sides being given equal opportunity to speak and raise their point (M. Negi, 2018).

We also interviewed some people who were the audience of Mandakini ki Aawaz. A restaurant owner, Mr. Vijay Pasi Rawat was one of our interviewees. He told us that twenty years ago, there existed a lot of discrimination against the lower caste community of the Garhwal region. He further adds that, “However, Mandakini ki Aawaz took the initiative of spreading more awareness about such social issues, and has played an important role in reducing caste based discrimination” (V .Rawat 2018).

Another person interviewed was Mr. Anushriya Prasad Malasi. He belongs to a Brahmin dominated village. Speaking about the reservation system he further adds that, “This system has only been successful in creating a divide amongst the Garhwal population and helped the politicians fetch more votes”. He thinks it is in fact the main cause of the lower caste people being trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty (Malasi, 2018). Instead, he suggested that government should invest the funds spent on reservations on improving the education system of the country and implementing the two child policy. He further clarifies his point by saying that it was because of reservation that the whole stigma around the work associated with the dalits developed. The work which they used to do earlier at least used to fetch a considerable amount of income. Currently, people feel ashamed to be performing such jobs, and hence, most of the dalits in the villages are unemployed. This way, he says, that reservation has only helped the already well to do dalit households and not the ones which actually needed upliftment. Once again emphasising on the importance of education, he says that this change can only happen with the help of education based on skill development.

Finally, when asked about the role of Mandakini ki Awaz, he promptly said that it has played a major role in helping spread awareness. However, at the same time he also believes

that there is a lot more to be done. Just like Mr. Shivanand Nautiyal and Mr. Malasi, Mr. Manvendra Negi, the founder of Mandakini ki Aawaz, also agreed to the fact that any social change is a slow and gradual process, but, Mandakini ki Aawaz has, in all these years, tried to move towards this collective goal by taking small steps.

Chapter 6

Conclusion



Community radios are still a fairly new concept in India. Since the landmark Supreme Court verdict of 1995, the movement was given a fresh lease of life post the policy change in 2006 which declared that community radios could be owned and managed by NGOs (Bhat, 2011). The government has helped foster this growth to a certain extent. The financial aid policy for setting up a community radio station and the policy allowing these stations to collaborate with government organizations are two other major changes over the years that have greatly helped the movement.

However, obstacles remain. Both the general public and the government machinery remain sceptical of the medium. They are unaware of how powerful a medium these organizations can be when it comes to mass communication. The long, bureaucratic procedures at the time of registration, the lack of attention to this form of media, low paying jobs and the government not implementing its own policies discourages many from starting or joining a community radio station.

Community radios cover several topics through the content that they air, ranging from educational programs, health and livelihood to local news. It is a great tool for development as it provides a platform for the voices of the citizens of the villages that aren't able to reach mainstream media. Community radios also help in providing important information pertaining to the locals of their own community that bigger media platforms skip out on. Considering the various examples (from across the world) already mentioned in the report, it can be said that a community radio station in a disaster prone area is of great importance. It is highly important for the assistance during and post the disaster relief operations. During the 2013 floods in Uttarakhand, when most of the means of communications were disrupted, people understood the importance of a community radio station (Thomas, 2018). Mandakini ki Aawaz has not only helped disseminate important information during large scale natural disasters but also regarding smaller matters in the villages like roadblocks or jeep strikes. To the citizens of the village, this type of news focussing on them is more important.

According to Sarita Thomas Mandakini ki Aawaz is one of the only financially independent community radio stations in India today (Thomas, 2018). The process of advertising set up by the station is convenient for the members of the village and has helped them in several ways. In rural areas generally there is a difficulty in gaining access to the

mainstream media platforms to advertise. The existence of community radio stations has helped solve this problem to a certain extent; members of the village who wish to sell their cow for example, can advertise this through community radios at affordable rates. A group of women who produce incense sticks, have been able to grow their business and inform people about their business through Mandakini ki Aawaz. There is no criteria for picking what ads go on air, as long as they are legal and within the policy guidelines. These advertisements are the main source of income for the station, even though they provide air time at a concessional rate to their community. Mandakini Ki Awaz embodies the true essence of a community radio station- which is to help build the community rather than make profits off of them. The station had been provided with most of its equipment when PPC conducted their training programme in 2014, thus purchasing new technology or not having enough equipment has not been an issue for them yet. The problem that they do face when it comes to the equipment is that the government only allows them to use a transmitter with 50 watts while the policy states that they should be allowed a transmitter with 250 watts. Due to the hilly terrain that they function in, this is a serious impediment in reaching their audience. There are certain villages, like Tilwara, which do not receive the FM connectivity since it is blocked by hills.

The government has also not been responding to their demand for an emergency transmitter, which is crucial in times of disaster. With the help of the government, community radio stations can help disseminate important information on time and also develop the rural areas.

The radio station airs various kinds of content on a daily basis. From news updates about events in Rudraprayag to folk music and more. However, after the interview of the audience it was understood that out of all the things that they listened to on air, the music that was played was what was most liked and remembered by the people. When the team was initially narrowcasting its programmes in the villages, they noticed that the only reactions they were getting were to do with how sweet their voices were, or how good they sounded, not about the content that they were airing. This was when they realised that to the people of the villages this concept was still very new, and they were going to take some time to warm up to it. Music, storytelling and poetry were the easiest entry point for the station to reach

their audience (Thomas, 2018). This is why the station aims to tackle certain issues, for example- alcoholism, through the media of music and drama. They incorporate important social messages into the skits and music they produce, helping the message stay in people's minds for longer. By playing Garhwali folk music, they also help in preserving the culture and language of the region.

The programmes that the station airs are made keeping in mind the feelings of all sections of society while at the same time trying to subtly tackle certain sensitive issues like the gender-caste hierarchy in the village. They claim to have been able to influence the minds of their listeners over the years. Ms. Sarita Thomas, in an interview narrated a simple instance of how the locals of the region, who belong to a higher caste, once refused to talk to Mr. Devlal Bharti (a Dalit) but now sometimes 'invite him for tea and even hug him'. They don't however invite him into their houses for the same. So the discrimination still has some of its roots in place, which will take a long time to completely end. The people at the radio station also mentioned in their interviews that they are entirely discrimination-free with regards to gender or caste but there is a certain degree of questionability to this. The station has 4 female and 3 male employees at the station but 4 male and 1 female employee doing the field work. They also have only one employee that belongs to the lower caste working with them (Nautiyal, M. Negi, U.Negi, 2018). The team aims to achieve equality for all caste and gender groups, but these issues have been intrinsic to their community for thousands of years, and will take decades to completely eradicate; reiterating the need and importance for a radio station that pays attention to the needs of the locals (Thomas, 2018).

As inferred from the various interviews, not everyone in the village can afford a radio. Out of those who have a radio, the elderly and most the women do not know how to operate it. This lack of knowledge and skills makes this section of the population depended upon the young working class men. As mentioned in the sections above, most of the men have left the village for a better living in the cities. Hence, the benefit of the shows run especially for the elderly and women can be questioned.

The research study reveals a few things about the functioning of community radios. Mainstream, largely urban-centric media sources remain disconnected from the more remote

areas of the country and content-creation comes from a small group higher up. The participatory model of community radios can go a long way in decentralising existing unequal media systems. These radio stations also have the potential to decentralise knowledge production and represent local cultures and traditions otherwise missing from mainstream media. The culture and heritage of rural communities that are fading from public life and narrative can be preserved through such a medium. However, the idea of community-managed, participatory medium in management and program creation was minimal at Mandakini ki Aawaz. The existing caste and gender relations of the average Indian village are a big obstacle to enabling equality in participation and opportunity in an endeavor such as running a radio station, or anything else for that matter. Such deeply-embedded realities yet pose a huge challenge to the idea of community radio stations that are truly participatory in its essence.

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GLOSSARY

1	<i>Panchayati Raj</i>	Assembly Rule
2	<i>Krishi Vigyan Kendra</i>	A Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) is an agricultural extension center in India. The name means “farm science center”
3	<i>Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan</i>	A Gujarat based Women’s organisation
4	<i>Aapka radio, Aapki Aawaz</i>	Your Radio, Your Voice
5	<i>Pratham shiksha</i>	Primary Education
6	<i>Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</i>	Indian Government programme aimed at the universalisation of elementary education
7	<i>Dalit</i>	Literally means broken/scattered. A term used to refer to the depressed class of society in India
8	<i>Pandit</i>	A Brahmin scholar or a teacher of any field of knowledge in Hinduism
9	<i>Gram panchayat Pradhan</i>	Village council



Mandakini ki Aawaz