

# Role of All India Radio and Doordarshan in the Development of Indian Music

Dr. Dushyant Tripathi

Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Music, S.D. Govt. College, Beawar, Rajasthan, India

## ABSTRACT

With the initiative taken by the then I&B Minister, B.V. Keskar, National Programme of Music, a 90 mts. feast of Classical Music was started in 1952 for broadcast over All India Radio on Saturdays from 9.30 p.m. to 11 p.m. and presently, it is broadcast on Sundays also. On the similar lines National Programme of Regional Light & Folk Music is broadcast on every 1st Thursday of the Month from 9.30 pm to 10.30 pm.

All India Radio and Doordarshan has been playing a very important role in the propagation & preservation of Music in General and the rich Classical Music and Folk Music Traditions in particular. Many eminent artistes have been associated with this organization like Pt. Ravishankar, Pt. Pannalal Ghosh, Acharya Brahaspathi Madhuri Mattoo Veena Dooraswamy Iyengar, Dr. Shemangudi Srinivas Iyer, G. N. Balasubramanyan, Emani Shankar Shastri, Dr. Sumati Mutatkar, Voleti Venkateshwarlu, S. Gopalakrishnan, M. Y. Kamashastri, T.K. Jayarama Iyer, Satish Bhatia, Hafiz Ahmed Khan, T. K. Govinda Rao, Dr. R. K. Srikanthan, Dr. Bala Muralikrishna to mention a few, who have contributed immensely towards achieving the goal of All India Radio in this direction.

**KEYWORDS:** doordarshan, all India radio, development, music, Indian, role

## INTRODUCTION

All India Radio (AIR), also known as Akashvani (Hindi: आकाशवाणी, romanized: Ākāśavāṇī, lit. 'Voice from the sky'), is an Indian state-owned public radio broadcaster founded by the Government of India, owned by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and one of Prasar Bharati's two divisions. It was established in 1936.<sup>[2]</sup> It is the sister service of Prasar Bharati's Doordarshan, an Indian television broadcaster.<sup>[3]</sup> Headquartered in the Akashvani Bhavan building in New Delhi, it houses the Drama Section, the FM Section, and the National Service, and is also home to the Indian television station Doordarshan Kendra, (Delhi).

In terms of the number of languages transmitted, the range of socioeconomic variety it serves, and the size of its broadcasting organisation, Akashvani is the largest radio network in the world. AIR's home service comprises 420 stations located across the country, reaching nearly 92% of the country's area and 99.19% of the total population, and has programming in 23 languages and 179 dialects.<sup>[4]</sup>

Ākāśavāṇī is a Sanskrit word meaning 'celestial announcement' or 'voice from the sky/heaven'. In Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, Ākāśavāṇīs are often featured in stories as a medium of communication from heaven to mankind.<sup>[1,2,3]</sup>

When the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS) was renamed All India Radio, Rabindranath Tagore rechristened it as Akashvani, the voice that comes over from the skies, through a poem penned for the inauguration of Kolkata's shortwave service.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

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Ākāśavāṇī was also used in the context of radio by M. V. Gopaldaswami in 1936 after setting up India's first private radio station in his residence, "Vittal Vihar" (about two hundred yards from AIR's current Mysore radio station).<sup>[7]</sup> Akashvani was later given as All India Radio's on-air name in 1957; given its literal meaning in Sanskrit, it was believed to be a more than suitable name for a broadcaster. The name Akashvani was suggested by the poet Pandit Narendra Sharma.

When India became independent in 1947, the AIR network had only six stations (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Lucknow, and Tiruchirappalli). The three radio stations in Lahore, Peshawar and Dhaka remained in what became Pakistan after the division. The total number of radio sets in India at that time was about 2,75,000.

In August 1947, All India Radio hired its first female newsreader, Saeeda Bano, who read the news in Urdu.<sup>[11]</sup>

On 3 October 1957, the Vividh Bharati Service was launched, to compete with Radio Ceylon. Television broadcasting began in Delhi in 1959 as part of AIR, but was split off from the radio network as Doordarshan on 1 April 1976.<sup>[12]</sup> FM broadcasting began on 23 July 1977 in Chennai, and expanded during the 1990s.<sup>[13]</sup>

Deccan Radio (Nizam Radio 1932), the first radio station in Hyderabad State (now Hyderabad), went live on air on 3 February 1935. It was launched by Mir Osman Ali Khan the seventh Nizam of Hyderabad with a transmitting power of 200 Watts. On 1 April 1950, Deccan Radio was taken over by

the Indian Government, and in 1956 it was merged with All India Radio (AIR). Since then, it has been known as AIR-Hyderabad (100 kW)[4,5,6]

Vividh Bharati began in 1957 and is one of the best-known services of All India Radio. Its name roughly translates as "Diverse Indian". It is also known as the Commercial Broadcasting Service or CBS. Commercially, it is the most accessible AIR network and is popular in Mumbai and other large cities. Vividh Bharati offers a wide range of programmes including news, film music, short plays, music and comedy. It operates on different mediumwave as well as FM frequencies in each city.

#### Some programmes broadcast on Vividh Bharati are:

- Hawa-mahal: Radio drama based on novels and plays
- Santogen ki mehfil: Comedy
- Aaj ke fankar: Description of life and works of a film artist
- Chhayageet: Songs of announcer's choice with impeccable scripting

The external services of All India Radio are broadcast in 27 languages to countries outside India via high-power shortwave radio broadcasts. Mediumwave is also used to reach neighbouring countries. In addition to broadcasts targeted at specific countries by language, there is a General Overseas Service broadcasting in English with 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours of programming each day aimed at a general international audience. The external broadcasts began on 1 October 1939 by the British government to counter the propaganda of the Nazis directed at the Afghan people. The first broadcasts were in Pashto, beamed to Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier Province. Broadcasts soon began in other languages including Dari, Persian, Arabic, English, Burmese, Japanese, Chinese, Malay and French. The external services broadcast in 16 foreign and 11 Indian languages, with a total programme output of 70<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours per day on medium and shortwave frequencies.

Two high powered FM stations of All India Radio are being installed in Amritsar and Fazilka in the Punjab to supplement the programmes broadcast from transmitters operating from Jalandhar, New Delhi, Chandigarh and Mumbai, and to improve the broadcast services during unfavourable weather conditions in the border regions of Punjab.

Today, the External Services Division of All India Radio broadcasts daily with 57 transmissions with almost 72 hours or programming covering over 108 countries in 27 languages, of which 15 are foreign and 12 are Indian. The foreign languages are Arabic, Baluchi, Burmese, Chinese, Dari, French, Indonesian, Persian, Pushtu, Russian, Sinhala, Swahili, Thai, Tibetan, and English (General Overseas Service). The Indian languages are Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Konkani, Kashmiri, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Nepali, Punjabi, Saraiki, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.[7,8,9]

The longest daily broadcast is the Urdu Service to Pakistan, around the clock on DTH (direct-broadcast satellite) and on short- and medium wave for 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hrs. The English-language General Overseas Service is broadcast 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours daily. During Hajj, there are special broadcasts beamed to Saudi Arabia in Urdu. AIR is planning to produce programmes in the Balochi language.[20]

The external services of AIR are also broadcast to Europe in DRM (Digital Radio Mondiale) on 9950 kHz between 17:45

and 22:30 UTC. These external transmissions are broadcast by high-power transmitters located in Aligarh, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Gorakhpur, Guwahati, Mumbai, and Panaji on shortwave and from Jalandhar, Kolkata, Nagpur, Rajkot, and Tuticorin on mediumwave. All India Radio Amritsar plans to start a booster service on the FM band. Some of these transmitters are 1000 kW (1 MW) or 500 kW. Programmes are beamed to different parts of the world, except for the Americas, and the reception quality is very good in the target areas. In each language service, the programme consists of news, commentary, a press review, talks on matters of general or cultural interest, feature programmes, documentaries, and music from India and the target region. Most programmes originate at New Broadcasting House on Parliament Street in New Delhi, with a few originating at SPT Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Jalandhar, Kolkata, HPT Malad Mumbai, Thiruvananthapuram, and Tuticorin.

The External Services Division of AIR is a link between India and rest of the world, especially in countries with Indian emigrants and Indian diaspora. It broadcasts the Indian point of view on matters of national and international importance, and demonstrates the Indian way of life through its programs. QSL cards (which are sought-after by international radio hobbyists) are issued to radio hobbyists by AIR in New Delhi for reception reports of their broadcasts.[10,11,12]

Direct-to-home (DTH) service is a satellite broadcast service in which a large number of radio channels are digitally beamed down over a territory from a high-power satellite. AIR broadcasts various national and regional stations available to listen on DD Free Dish. The DTH signals can be received directly at homes using a small-sized dish receiver unit containing a dish antenna installed on a building's rooftop or on a wall facing clear south and one indoors.[21] DTH service is offered on twenty one channels via Insat.

#### DISCUSSION

Doordarshan (abbreviated as DD; lit.'distant vision, television') is an Indian state-owned public television broadcaster founded by the Government of India, owned by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and one of Prasar Bharati's two divisions.[1] As one of India's largest broadcasting organisations in studio and transmitter infrastructure, it was established on 15 September 1959.[2] Doordarshan, which also broadcasts on digital terrestrial transmitters, provides television, radio, online and mobile services throughout metropolitan and regional India and overseas.

Doordarshan operates 46 studios and 33 television channels, including the two pan-India channels (DD National and DD News),[14] 17 regional satellite channels, 11 state networks, an international channel (DD India), a sports channel (DD Sports), DD Bharati, DD Urdu as the cultural and informative channels and an agricultural channel, DD Kisan. On DD National (formerly DD-1), regional and local programs are carried on a time-sharing basis for terrestrial broadcasting only. DD News was launched on 3 November 2003 by replacing DD Metro (formerly known as the DD-2 entertainment channel), which provides 24-hour news. These channels are relayed by all terrestrial transmitters in India. The regional-language satellite channels have two components: a regional service for a particular state (relayed by all terrestrial transmitters in the state), and additional programs in the regional language available through cable

operators and DTH operators. DD Sports broadcasts sporting events of national and international importance. It is the only sports channel which telecasts rural sports such as kho-kho and kabaddi.

A new regional channel, DD Arunprabha (a 24/7 satellite television channel focusing on the North Eastern region) was scheduled to begin its broadcasting on 15 February 2018;<sup>[15][16]</sup> however, its launch was placed on hold.<sup>[17]</sup> DD Arunprabha was launched on 9 February 2019.<sup>[18]</sup>

On 9 March 2019, Prasar Bharati brought 11 more state DD channels to the satellite footprint of India through DD Free Dish. This includes five channels for the North-eastern states: DD Bangla, DD Chhattisgarh, DD Goa, DD Haryana, DD Himachal Pradesh, DD Jharkhand, DD Manipur, DD Meghalaya, DD Mizoram, DD Nagaland, DD Tripura and DD Uttarakhand.<sup>[19][20]</sup> DD Bangla, launched on 9 August 1975, consisting of soap operas, infotainment series, news and current affairs, social programs and films in Bangla in its programming.<sup>[13,14,15]</sup>

On 13 April 2019, DD Retro<sup>[21]</sup> was launched by Prasar Bharati and showed old classic Hindi serials of Doordarshan. The service, however, shortly ceased its operations on 1 April 2017, due to the low viewership.<sup>[40,41,42]</sup>

Prasar Bharati is Doordarshan's parent body, and its board members are appointed by the Government of India through the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.<sup>[26]</sup>

Doordarshan has been used, especially during the Emergency, to disseminate government propaganda.<sup>[27]</sup> During Operation Blue Star in 1984, only government sources were used to report the story. Doordarshan was complicit in the production of a video claiming acts of violence which, when investigated by independent journalists, were found to be false.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

In 2004, it censored a controversial documentary on Jayaprakash Narayan, an opposition leader during the Emergency.<sup>[28]</sup>

In 2014, When Doordarshan broadcast a 70-minute Vijayadashami speech by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leader Mohan Bhagwat, the Narendra Modi administration and the BJP were criticised for "misusing" the public broadcaster. According to DD director-general Archana Datta, the "speech was like any other news event; therefore, we covered it."<sup>[29][30][31]</sup>

Since private television channels were authorised in 1991, Doordarshan has experienced a steep decline in viewership. Although it earns significant advertising revenue—due to its compulsory feed—from the highest bidder for national events (including cricket matches),<sup>[32]</sup> there has been a proposal to fund it by imposing a licence fee to own a television in India<sup>[37,38,39]</sup>

## RESULTS

All India Radio has been playing a very important role in the propagation & preservation of Music in General and the rich Classical Music and Folk Music Traditions in particular. Many eminent artistes have been associated with this organization like Pt. Ravishankar, Pt. Pannalal Ghosh, Acharya Brahaspathi Madhuri Mattoo Veena Dooraswamy Iyengar, Dr. Shemangudi Srinivas Iyer, G.N. Balasubramanyam, Emani Shankar Shastri, Dr. Sumati Mutatkar, Voleti Venkateshwarlu, S. Gopalakrishnan, M.Y. Kamashastri, T.K. Jayarama Iyer, Satish Bhata, Hafiz Ahmed Khan, T.K. Govinda

Rao, Dr. R.K. Srikanthan, Dr. Bala Muralikrishna to mention a few, who have contributed immensely towards achieving the goal of All India Radio in this direction.<sup>[16,17,18]</sup>

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In a pioneering effort as an experimentation to harmonize the rich and beautiful Indian melodies and present them as orchestral compositions,<sup>[34,35,36]</sup>

Vadya Vrinda Unit was started in 1952 in Delhi and later at Chennai in 1975. The Vadya Vrinda Units had a number of artistes playing on different instruments which not only was an effort towards keeping alive and show casing many rare instruments for posterity but also to provide job opportunities to many artistes. It is again a matter of pride that many eminent artistes have been part of the Vadya Vrinda Units at Delhi and Chennai and Vadya Vrinda compositions of Pt. Ravi Shankar, Pt. Panna Lal Ghosh, T.K. Jayaram Iyer, Anil Biswas, Emani Shankar Shastri, H.L. Sehgal, M.Y. Kamashastri and others have been preserved in the archives of All India Radio which stand as testimony to their creative excellence and mastery.

Akashvani Sangeet Sammelan is an annual music event organized all over the country featuring both eminent artistes and upcoming youngsters from the stream of Hindustani and Karnatic Classical Music. This was started in 1955 and is a very prestigious and much sought after event for both artists and Classical Music lovers.

Thayagaraja Aradhana Music Festival – a live broadcast from Thiruvaiyaru, the SAMADHI place of St. Thayagaraja is an annual event in the month of January.

The Trinity & other Vaggeyakara Festival is a three day event held in the month of April every year at different venues, featuring compositions of Karnatic Music Trinity – Thayagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshatar and Shamashastry along with many other composers of post Trinity period in order to give variety of compositions to the committed and devoted listeners.<sup>[19,20,21]</sup>

The Folk and Light Music Festival is again an annual event organized all over the country during the month of July to bring to fore varieties of Light and Folk formats across the country in all its splendor and grandeur.<sup>[31,32,33]</sup>

To scout young talents and give them encouragement AIR has been organizing the AIR music competition every year during August, in different disciplines – Classical, Light, Folk, Vocal and Instrumental and it is a matter of great pride that the present day stars in the field of music are mostly prize winners of the prestigious AIR Music Competition.

All India Radio has a time tested and much acclaimed Music Audition System in order to select artistes, grade them and offer broadcast engagements. The audition rules in vogue are available on this site. (The revised rules are being framed.)

There are four grades – B, B-High, A & Top awarded to artistes which is purely based on performance quality adjudged by a Committee of Eminent Musicians/ Experts in

the field. Recently, a few artistes have been awarded the National Artistes Honor, keeping in view, their seniority & contribution for the cause and promotion of Classical Music-Karnatic and Hindustani.

All India Radio has also Top Grade Western Music Artistes – Classical and Light from the Eastern Zone besides a few A Grade and B-High Grade Artistes in different disciplines.

The Central Archives of All India Radio has a rich treasure of very valuable and rare recordings of Artistes preserved for posterity. These recordings are now being made available to music lovers through releases in the form of CDs as "Akashvani Sangeet"[28,29,30]

### CONCLUSION

Prasar Bharati Chairman Dr. A. Surya Prakash has said that All India Radio and Doordarshan are preserving the Indian culture and classical music.

Addressing an Odisha Journalism Award function in New Delhi, Dr Surya Prakash said Parliament has given the responsibility to Prasar Bharati to maintain the heritage and diversity of India.[22,23,24]

He said the private channels are only showcasing entertainment programmes but DD and AIR are promoting the Indian culture. Dr Surya Prakash urged the people not to post messages on social media without verifying it.

Press Information Bureau Principal Director General Sitansu Kar, former Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry Amarendra Khatua and University Grants Commission member Professor Sushma Yadav also addressed the gathering.[25,26,27]

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