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## RADICAL MEDIA: A MIGHTY DEVICE TO EMPOWER WOMEN

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“There is no device for development more effective than the empowerment of women” – Kofi Annan

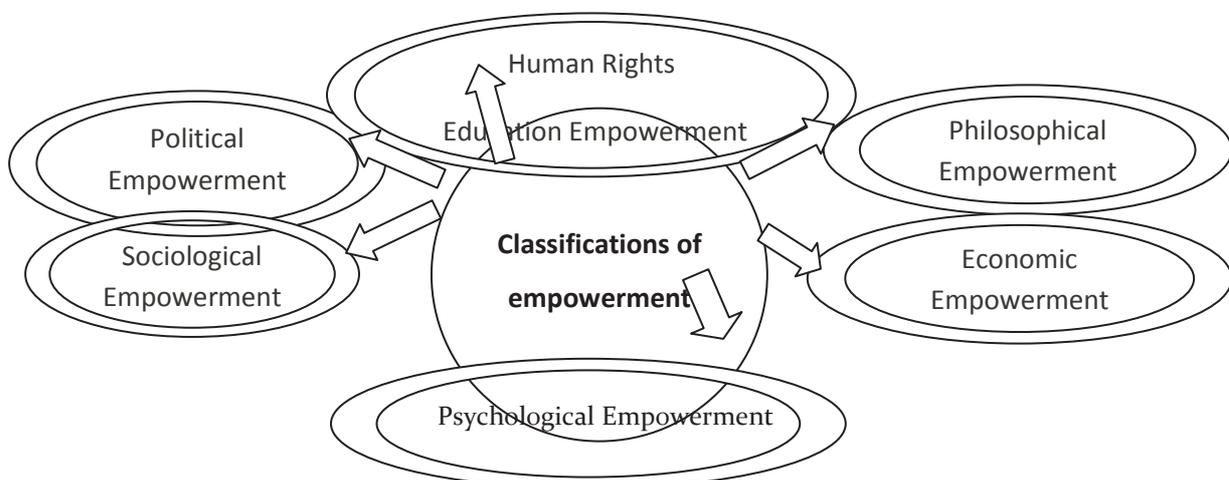
“Women must not accept; she must challenge she must not be awed by that it has been built up around her she must reverence that woman in her which struggles for expression” - Margaret Sanger

**Abstract:** Empowering women aims to inspire women with the courage to break free from the chains of limiting self belief patterns and societal or religious conditioning that have traditionally kept women suppressed and unable to see their true beauty and power. Woman in India make up to 52% of its total population. Woman empowerment in India is a much debated topic and a harbinger of challenging task as one need to acknowledge the fact of gender divide issues and discrimination against women as social malice since thousands of years. Mass media plays one of the significant roles in women’s development and its empowerment. Media can create an awakening inspiration to achieve their potential as prime movers of change in society. Radical media will be focused as one of the chief important radical requisites in helping the women empowered. It will help as the best means and access to speak out against the oppression and marginalization of women at the grass root level. Such media will help rediscovering the purpose of mass communication as any conventional or mainstream media refuses to acknowledge mass communication as the mission for the benefit of the common people and their survival. Thus the paper will specially highlight the positive perspectives of radical media as a developmental device to portray and resonates the views and ideas of the oppressed and marginalized women at the grass root level.

**Keywords:** Development, Empowerment, Media, Radical, Women.

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In India women comprise 52 percent of its total population and with the advent of 21st Century and its development in various scientific and technological era the status of woman are also changing at a fast pace but we cannot ignore the very existence of a world where woman are discriminated, marginalized and oppressed because of various gender divide issues. Women are vital human resources in improving the quality of life. The country’s overall development depends greatly on the inclusion of women in its development process. They have been the transmitters of culture in all societies. The status of women in a society is a true index of its cultural, social, religious and spiritual level. It is one of the most important criteria for estimating with precision the degree of civilization attained by a particular society in various period of its history. There is increasing realization that the process of development will be left incomplete without the active involvement of women. Self decision regarding education, participation, mobility, economic independency, public speaking, awareness and exercise of rights, political participation and many more factors ensure women empowerment. In short woman empowerment is the breaking of personal limitation. How to maximize the voice of those marginalized or weaker sections is a huge concern in the society and what the various devices are or medium to facilitate them to be heard in a society and why radical media should be the chosen one as radical to others is the present need of the hour.



**Ways to empower women:** Changes in women's mobility and social interaction, Changes in women's labour patterns, Changes in women's access to and control over resources and changes in women's control over decision-making. Political empowerment of women is only a part of the overall mainstreaming of women. Education of women means greater awareness of their role in society. Awareness of their rights, better knowledge of housekeeping and better performance of their roles as a housewife and mother. Education and training have opened up the avenues of employment and self-employment in the organized sector. As never before women are working in diverse fields as doctors, engineers, IAS officers, IPS officers, bank officials and in a wide range of sectors in the unorganized sector. In agriculture, most of the operations are run by women.

**Radical media in context of women empowerment:** Radical media are media inclusive of newspapers, radio, TV, magazines, movies, internet, etc. which provide radical information to the mainstream media in a given context, whether the mainstream media are commercial, publicly supported or government owned. Radical media concept originally aroused from the mainstream media's black out of radical opinion. It can be defined by rediscovering the purpose of mass communication. While radical media has been around for centuries, the concept did not begin to emerge as a specific form of media communications until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As social unrest became more prominent in a number of nations, people with radical points of view on issues such as race, religion, lifestyle, orientation, politics, and social organization began to use small presses to create their own publications. Brochures, newspapers, and eventually magazines provided a foundation for what was soon identified as fringe media, denoting the fact that these views were not generally held by the majority of the populace. By the 1960's, radical media has branched out from printed publications to the inclusion of low budget movies, as well as independent radio and television broadcasts that were syndicated on low-frequency media outlets.

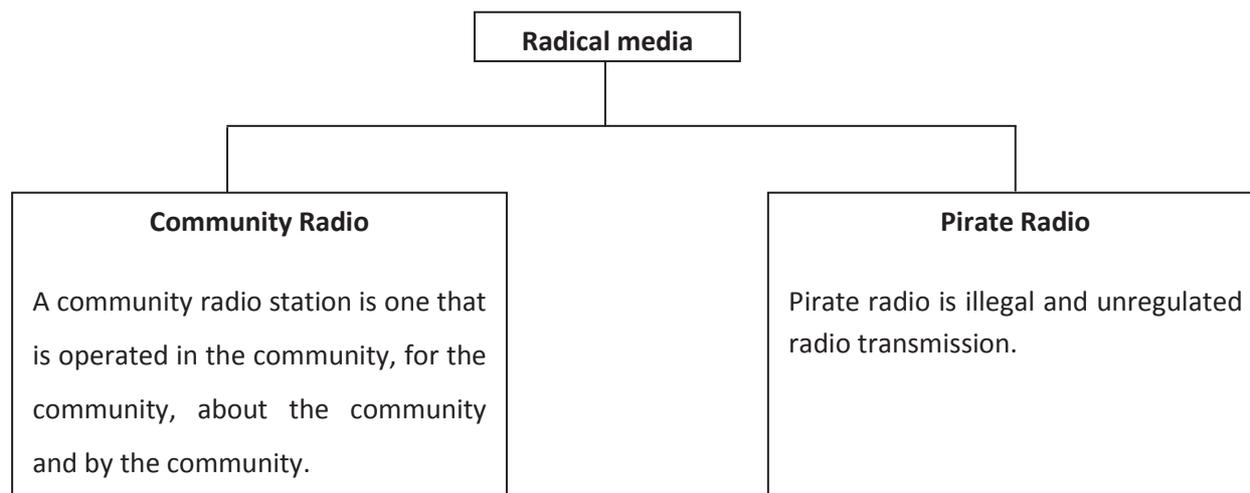
**Characteristics of radical media are:**

- Small scale and oriented towards specific communities, possibly disadvantaged groups, respecting their diversity;
- Independent of state and market
- Horizontally structured, allowing for the facilitation of audience access and participation within the frame of democratization and multiplicity
- Carriers of non – dominant discourses and representations, stressing the importance of self representation.

**Radical media: an effective device to empower women:**

Various mass media campaigns should be organized at the grassroots level through their understandable medium like traditional form of communication which includes puppetry, story- telling, folk arts, folk music and other vernacular mediums. By creating a social climate favorable and susceptible to varied women's issues. Undertaking different forms of radical mediums to voice out for the economic independency of women through woman's land rights an effective key to empowerment. Introduction of more feminist oriented research to explore and theorized the ways woman have intervened to challenge mainstream media representations of themselves by producing new forms of media where feminist values tend to be central both the production process and the content of what is produced. To promote more grassroots activism radical media can break the ice between the voice of the poor and the rich.

Radical media like woman's community radio should be promoted which effectively nurtures equality, diversity and promotes democratic values amongst women. Radical media with various development and participatory initiatives can help in equipping grassroots women leaders to become voice of change. More focus on community mobilization, outreach and mass media through radical media movement among the grassroots level. Such kind of medium which provide a forum of "for the people and by the people" concept gives a new reformation to the developmental concept of a society which are hardly acknowledged. Various programmes and policies should be made which are radical initiatives to the lesser known groups. Villages, communities should be maximized most in form of various radical communicational medium like that of folks and traditions to convey effective message since folk media being close to the hearts and minds of the people. Using traditional media helps in fostering new ideas and the adjustment to a new or evolving social or political situation.



### Community radio as an radical media in context of women's empowerment in rural India:

Community radio is a radio service offering a third model of radio broadcasting in addition to commercial and public broadcasting and worked as an effective device of radical medium for the plight of the voiceless and marginalized women. Community stations serve geographic communities and communities of interest. They broadcast content that is popular and relevant to a local, specific audience but is often overlooked by commercial or mass-media broadcasters. Community radio stations are operated, owned, and influenced by the communities they serve. They are generally nonprofit and provide a mechanism for enabling individuals, groups, and communities to tell their own stories, to share experiences and, in a media-rich world, to become creators and contributors of media.

**Pasumai FM 90.4**, a community broad casting service covering a distance of 35 kms. around Dindigul was launched recently. The channel aims at providing information to agriculturists, rural artisans, women and school children. It will also focus on environment issues, labour problems, global development in economy, technologies in agriculture and other fields. The broad casting commences with "Vaigarai Vanakkam" on inter-religious songs and environment news. Folk songs will be broad cast between 6:30pm and 7pm. "Munnilai Thagavalgal" will present important news at the local, national and international levels. A special daily programme, "Oorkolam povoma", will carry information on commerce and industry, banking and finance, reserve bank bulletins, exchange rates, success stories of rural artisans and farmers and leadership features. "Vanakkam Dindigul" a news bulletin at 8am will cover local news, taluk news, development news, NGO activities, vegetable prices at farmer's market, organic farming and foreign direct investment in the state. There are over 839 groups with 12,585 members participating in our community activities. 10 farmers' clubs are involved in our agriculture related programmes. Five youth forums have nearly 5000 students from schools, ITI and near by colleges. K. Sangeetha, station manager of Pasumai Vanoli said, "the radio primarily serves the agricultural community. Our daily 17 hours service from 6am to 11pm includes live phone-ins and sms based programmes which are a big hit with our audience. The programmes about Human Rights and children are also broadcasts. Children tune in for storytelling and general knowledge episodes. It focuses more on rural women. Time allotment as per the issues covered 20 social awareness empowerment programme like educational, cultural, health, environment, agriculture, rural, current affairs, entertainment and for elders. Recently Pasumai FM internet radio was launched. Networks with various mass media channels to disseminate development and human rights information. The radio is available in IPAD, I PACK , Internet, Apple, Samsung mobiles through out the world. [www.i-radiolive.com](http://www.i-radiolive.com).

#### Objectives

- To study the major role of radical media in empowering women
- To discuss the significance of community radio for women development
- To analyze the programmes which are liked by the respondent
- To find the willingness or interest among the target audience and their willingness to participate in community radio programmes
- To analyze the rural development of women through community radio

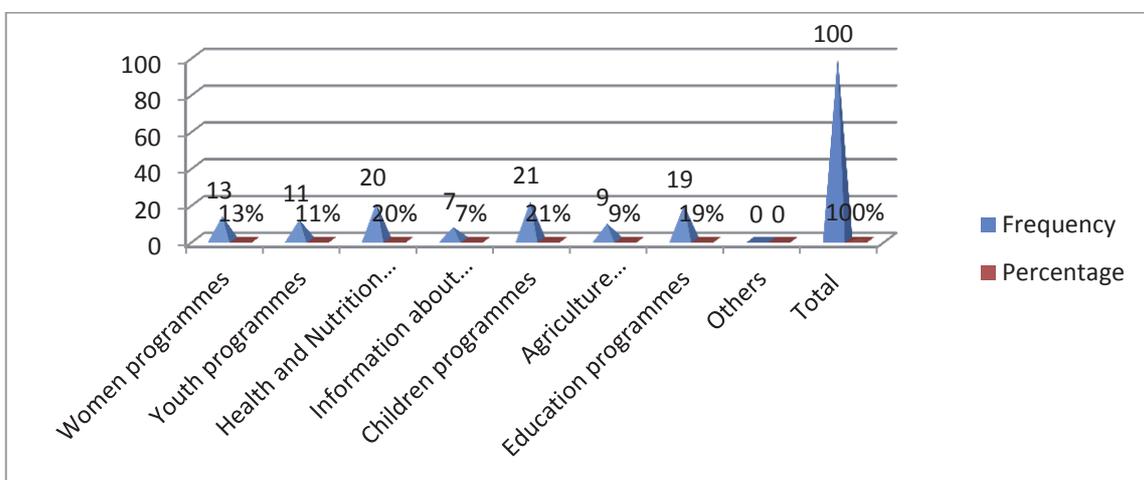
**Methodology of the Study:** The study is basically a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the role and importance of radical media as a device to empower women. The area that has been selected for the present

study is Dindigul district. A sample survey was carried out among the residents of Dindigul district. A total of randomly selected 100 sample of people residing in the urban areas of Dindigul district has been taken into consideration. Sources of data: Primary sources include survey work done among the residents of Dindigul.

**Table No – 1: Distribution of the respondents like the programmes in radio channels**

| Most liking programmes in Radio channels | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Women programmes                         | 13        | 13.0       |
| Youth programmes                         | 11        | 11.0       |
| Health and Nutrition Programmes          | 20        | 20.0       |
| Information about local community        | 7         | 7.0        |
| Children programmes                      | 21        | 21.0       |
| Agriculture programmes                   | 9         | 9.0        |
| Education programmes                     | 19        | 19.0       |
| Others                                   | Nil       | Nil        |
| Total                                    | 100       | 100.0      |

Source: Primary Data



**Table no.1** reveals about the details of the most favourite programmes in radio channels. The informations on health issues are not all reaching the poor sector in India 13%.But through Community radio the community can access the informations at ease. One fifth of the respondents (21%) were eager to listen to programmes related to Education, Children and Health and Nutrition Programmes. The majority of the respondents are from the age group of 10 to 39 years and their education qualification is less than Higher Secondary Level. More than one tenth of the respondents (13%) interested in women and youth programme. Less than one tenth of the respondents (9%) were interested in listening information about local community and agriculture programme. About 67% of the respondents were ready to participate in radio programmes. One -third of the respondents (33%) were not shown interest in participation.

**Table No. – 2: Distribution of the Respondents by having interest to participate in specific type of programmes of Pasumai FM 90.4CRS**

| Type of programmes to participate | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Women Programmes                  | 73        | 73.0       |
| Live Programmes                   | 50        | 50.0       |
| Music Programmes                  | 35        | 35.0       |
| Drama                             | 8         | 8.0        |
| Education Programmes              | 11        | 11.0       |
| Agriculture Programmes            | 28        | 28.0       |
| Health Programmes                 | 48        | 48.0       |
| Others                            | 29        | 29.0       |

Source: Primary Data

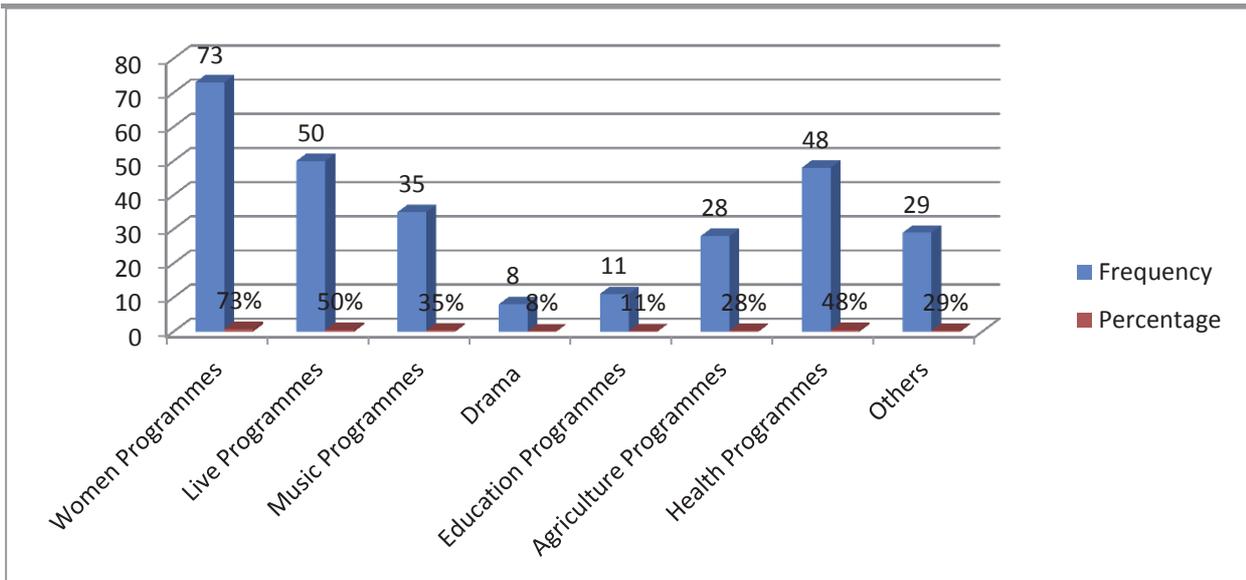


Table no. 2 reveals about the interest of the respondents to participate in categories of programmes of Pasumai FM 90.4Community Radio Station. Nearly three fourth (73%) of the respondents were willing to participate in women programmes.

**Table No. - 3: Distribution of the Respondents by improvement of their life style through the programmes of Pasumai FM 90.4CRS**

| Improvement in                 | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|--------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Attitude                       | 53      | 47     |
| Knowledge                      | 81      | 19     |
| Education                      | 86      | 14     |
| Income                         | 20      | 80     |
| Motivation and self confidence | 29      | 71     |
| Agriculture / Fishing          | 17      | 83     |
| Health                         | 78      | 22     |
| Nutrition                      | 65      | 35     |
| Sanitation                     | 22      | 78     |
| Family Management              | 15      | 85     |

Source: Primary Data

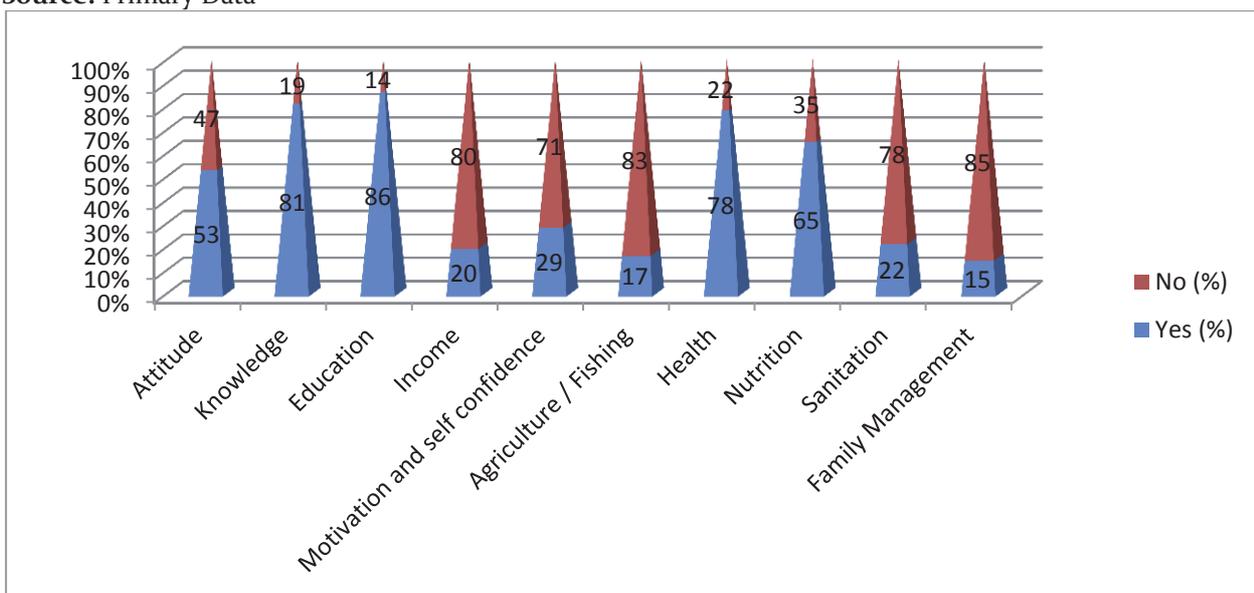


Table no. 3 discloses the distribution of the respondents by their life style through the programmes of Pasumai FM 90.4CRS. Most of the respondents nearly 86% felt improvement in education. Near to education, they got improvement in knowledge and Health also. About 65% of the respondents developed in their nutrition aspects by the programmes of Pasumai FM 90.4CRS. More than half of the respondents got improvement in their attitude.

**Conclusion:** Mahatma Gandhi very aptly said “if you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family”. So education is also one of the prime needs of women towards its development and empowerment in the society. Though radical media can act as a platform or bridge to surpass the barrier of essential communication and information; education is fundamental, pre- requisite of all human beings. Women especially at the grassroots level are often ignorant and uneducated and seldom speak out against atrocities done to them. Radical media like community radio, radical newspapers or developmental journalism can come to the rescue to highlight their problems and guide them their intrinsic and extrinsic rights. Women who are deprived of basic human rights can reach to various helpline through the initiative of radical media groups and members. Thus, there is no doubts that the developmental facts of women has always been the prime focus of planning since independence and a clear vision is needed to remove the obstacles on the path of women emancipation from the government and women themselves. The various Challenges posed by the new era have forced to provide a concrete and developmental aspects radicals in lieu of empowerment of women through the possible available media. There is a need for more action oriented programmed and policies which inculcate in understanding the various technicalities and prospects of media keeping into consideration women’s empowerment a must need of the society. Likewise, radical media and other positive approaches need to harness to bridge the age old gender divide issues in India to achieve the rightful share of women and their empowerments in most optimal way.

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