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Medium And The Message: A Profile
Of Rural Community Television System In Karnataka

By

Leeta Rao
Introduction:

In this age of exploding information technologies, and more interactive media of communication, the phrase 'Development Communication' appears rather incongruous. Not that the lastest and the most advanced sophisticated technologies emerging on the media scene cannot be called Development. Perceptually and by usage, development communication has always been with reference to a state of underdeveloped or non developed situations, which in turn symbolically represented the deprived and the underprivileged or the exploited people of the world. As if the humanistic concern so inherent in the process of communication could be transplanted into the process of development merely by the conjunction of the principles of communication and development. This optimism in the role of communication in development has resulted in significant growth of telecommunication and mass communication technologies in most developing countries. Concurrent with this growth of technology have been a plethora of communication activities by various developmental agencies such as health, agriculture, nutrition and so on. In the Indian context, the focus of much of these activities have been the rural sector.

As the media technology developed so did their usage in a variety of experimental efforts to evolve suitable communication approaches in support of development projects and programmes. Over the years considerable research data has also accumulated that provide a variety of critical perspectives on these exercises. Not withstanding this storehouse of knowledge, we still seem to be groping for a clear understanding of the nexus between communication and development.
The steady development of communication technologies eventually resulted in the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment, (SITE). However, there was a marked difference in what was attempted through SITE to the earlier efforts in communication strategies.

Conceptually and practically, the genesis of rural television system can be traced to SITE. Whatever the shortcomings of SITE, there were many unique features of the experiment, the most significant perhaps being its total rural orientation. Viewed now from a historical perspective, SITE appears as a statement of faith—that technology would bring in a process of interaction to unite a vastly diversified nation; evolve an Indian definition of the democratization of the means of communication; and establish a harmonious blend of an ancient culture with an innovative new technology. Threading through these pearls of wisdom was the hope that this new technology would finally find a way of bridging in the rural/urban imbalances in both communication and development sectors. No one could doubt the ability of satellite technology to provide rapid and efficient transmission of information to the remote corners of the country. Making information available is certainly a big step forward. However, if access to information is expected to promote social action, then a clearer understanding of the Information processing by the intended audience becomes a precondition.

It is perhaps unrealistic to expect that a year long experiment would provide us with all the clues to the complex quiz of information processing. At best we could only say that there was a social context in which information processing takes place. SITE brought home, very clearly, that we needed to come to terms with a uniquely Indian and highly complex social context in the rural setting. Imported models and methods of enquiry were impractical and meaningless.
So also the imported new technologies transplanted on a placid Indian countryside. The satellite technology with a ground segment of microwave links or direct broadcast reception facilities ensured a quantitative increase in information reach rather than a qualitative improvement in the ability to understand the information provided. Thus while the social science evaluation of SITE lacked the precision and objectives of the hardware component, it did raise several question on the use of the technology in the rural sectors. The intention obviously was that the search for answers would continue. Somehow, the concerns implicit in SITE also seem to have vanished into space along with the borrowed ATS-6 satellite.

**Post SITE Situation:**

While SITE was time bound project of one year duration, some continuity of service was anticipated and built into the planning of the experiment. Consequently six districts in India that were part of the SITE project, were selected for the SITE extension continuity project (SECP). Community viewing sets originally procured for SITE were installed in the districts of Gulburga (in Karnataka State), Hyderabad (in Andhra Pradesh), Muzaffarpur (in Bihar), Raipur (in Madhya Pradesh), Sambalpur (in Orissa) and Jaipur (in Rajasthan).

The three base production centres set up during SITE at Hyderabad (for Gulburga-Hyderabad), Cuttack (for Sambalpur) and Delhi (for Jaipur, Raipur, Muzaffarpur) were expected to continue production of programmes as during SITE.

For SITE, three districts of Karnataka - Gulburga, Bijapur and Raichur were selected for the experiment on the basis of socio-economic backwardness. After SITE, the 400 community sets located in the three districts were to be redistributed among the villages in Gulburga District under
the SECP scheme. Initially the selected sets were to be placed in the 240 villages of Gulburga district that were within the service range of the low power transmitter planned for the district. The 1 Kw power transmitter commissioned in 1977, has a service range of 40 Km. However, the software support facility continued from the base production centre at Hyderabad. One hour capsules of programmes would be sent to Gulburga everyday by rail/road transport for local transmission. The programme prepared in the local language, Kannada, were meant to cover all aspects of the development programmes of the region.

As was the case during SITE cost of the time the television sets were installed in the village schools. And one of the school teachers usually the headmaster, became the custodian of the television set. He is responsible for operating the sets every evening and reporting faults to the maintenance centre located at Gulburga. He is paid an honorarium of Rs.25/- per month for this work.

Quite clearly the operation of rural television service was expected to follow on the management pattern established during the SITE year. However, pre SITE aspirations and post SITE reality are two different stories.

Initially the package of programmes followed the SITE formula of a mixed fare of information and entertainment content. It was restricted to one hour per day during the week days, followed by a regional feature film at the week end.

Once INSAT-1B became operational, the transmitter was hooked to the National network. Subsequently, the transmission mission duration also changed to the regular four hours of Delhi programmes with two feature films during
the weekend. However, the one hour package in regional language has been continued and every evening the transmission begins at 7.30 with the regional language. At 6.40 every evening, Delhi programmes are linked except for Saturdays when the local language feature film is shown.

The whole of Sunday is linked to Delhi with all the sponsored programmes and the evening telecast of a Hindi feature film. With increasing commercialisation, the network programmes originating from Delhi can hardly be termed 'rural' in nature. Thus, over the ten years since SITE, there has been a gradual shifting away from the SITE philosophy of "the desire to gain experience in the development and testing of a satellite based instructional television system, particularly in the rural areas".

As part of the overall SITE evaluation scheme, Bangalore University had taken up the Karnataka cluster area for observation during the SITE year. The Gulburga rural areas were a familiar terrain. It seemed obligatory, therefore that we take stock of the changing media situation. More so, in view of the expanding network of television system with claims of total population reach. Sans its novelty, is television being accepted as a medium of information/education? How is it being used to provide support for developmental activities in the District? Are the programme relevant to the rural audience? These were some of the questions with which we went back to villages of Gulburga.

1. INSAT - The Indian National Satellite system - Government of India, INSAT co-ordination committee 1984 (P3)
One immediate realisation when we started this study* was that it was unlikely that television by its mere presence would cause any major changes in Media operations or modifications of existing infrastructure meant to provide communication support to development activities. Rather, the task was one of integrating the medium to strengthen whatever was being done. Our experience has been that even this integration is a hard task. As a media institution, district level television system has no standing and as medium of communication is it is best considered an extension of the Indian film. Dismal as this initial realisation was, the effort has been to understand the existing status of development support communication activities in the district and in that context analyse the problems and potentials of the television medium as an effective, supportive tool.

The District set up:

In the entire scheme of policy planning and implementation strategy of all government programmes the 'District' has a unique place. Whatever the area of concern (be it education, family planning or fisheries), the policy formulation and planning is always at the Central or State government level. However the implementation of the schemes to ensure that the benefits eventually reach the intended rural population begins at the District level. Thus all development projects intended for improvement of the rural populace, coalesce into the District administration unit. A network of administrative channels then originates from the District to reach out to the grassroot level. The entire machinery of policy formulation to programme implementation assumes the model of an hour glass with the District occupying the central position of the narrow tube that controls the flow. There is much criticism of this organisational structure from a variety of perspectives - that it shifts the responsibility and policy commitments of political leadership

* Sponsored by Indian Space Research Organisation.
to the red tape bungling of the bureaucrats; that this vertical flow of resources often results in considerable delay in the benefits reaching the people; and that it hardly provides any opportunity for feedback to the planners and policy makers as to the lacunae in specific programmes. Particularly in the field of Information/Communication efforts, research studies have repeatedly thrown up the fact that this long channel of information flow through this bureaucratic system invariably introduces distortion and dilution to such an extent that the original ideas and themes are not really reflected at all in the final message reaching the audience.

Obviously the choice of a 'District' as the unit of implementation of all development schemes is based on the assumption that it will bring in certain amount of decentralised efforts of implementation. However, it cannot be a yardstick for measurement of performance of all activities. Particularly for development support communication efforts, the present organisational structure is more an impediment than an asset. The problem is that while most development programme implementation begin at the District, the communication support activities for the programmes need to be initiated at this implementation stage. However, communication/information campaigns are treated much like any other development agency, resulting in centralised production of 'messages' for decentralised distribution. Thus losing their significance and relevance in the diverse social context of rural India. This emerges quite clearly from an analysis of the District level communication system.

Development Support mass communication effort at district level:

Each district has a mass media co-ordination committee, with the Deputy Commissioner, who holds the overall administrative authority over the District as the Chairman. The
members are drawn from all the development agencies/departments functioning at the district level, such as Directorate of Agriculture, Department of Health and Family Welfare and so on. Also among the members are the media units located at the district headquarters such as AIR, the Departments of Information and Publicity wings both of the Central and State government.

The main objective of this co-ordination committee is to organise publicity campaigns to carry the message about the various schemes, projects and benefits provided by the various departments to the threshold of the poor people in the rural areas. The campaigns are organised from time to time in selected groups of villages using all available media in the district. Normally a campaign would have exhibitions, song and drama, talks, films, and the popular local folk forms like levanis and harikathas. The district information office is given the task of co-ordination and to mobilise the resources of all other development departments/agencies.

Besides these campaigns aimed at creating general awareness about the development activities in the district, the individual departments/agencies, such as Health or Agriculture, also have their own media units to organise media campaigns on specific projects/programmes. The Agricultural extension wing, for instance, organises regular media activities through its Farm information cell. In co-ordination with the local station of All India Radio they also prepare the daily farmers programmes providing day to day information to the farmers.

Similarly the Health and Family Welfare department organises its media campaigns through the Health Education Units. These campaigns are however, project specific and form a part of the overall project plan. For example, in Gulbarga, the District Unit had identified the main health
problems such as Malaria and Jaundice. Through their network of health workers, auxiliary nurse aids and field workers, information pertaining to the causes, prevention and cure of these ailments were made available to the people through group discussions, training/demonstration programmes as also the use of media. One illustration is the use of films related to the specific topic as a part of group discussions or the use of radio to broadcast special programmes.

These two streams of mass communication activities, one that is aimed at general awareness and the other specific to project or development sector, are important because they raise several significant questions related to planning of development support communication activities.

One aspect of considerable importance is the source of message. The approach of the media co-ordination committee is to be a promoter of government policies and plans. In the project specific campaigns of the development agencies (such as Agriculture or Health) the message generation is based on an identified problem. Sequentially from this specificity of message emerge clarity of idea, choice of appropriate relevant illustrations, the need to conform strictly to specified periods of time and locales.

Also inherent in the project specific campaigns is the considerable dependence on the field worker for effective media utilisation as well as communication functionaries. In contrast the campaigns of the mass media co-ordination committee are implemented through the central/state departments of information/publicity who do not have any field staff beyond the district level. Invariably their campaigns use a media mix formula of films and folk forms. Given the paucity of resources and personnel, the attempt is to ensure coverage of all villages by rotation, rather than any consideration of need.
Also using field workers as primary change agents in communication campaigns helps to integrate the service/communication components. This is significant because it ensures better feedback system and allows for speedier follow up/corrective measures. In the campaigns administered by the Information departments, the service-communication components are separate, which demands that a highly efficient co-ordination must exist between information flow and the services promised. Given the administrative set up as it exists this is a rarity. Invariably in such situations, information component loses credibility both with the people and the administrators.

These problems of campaign planning, implementing and monitoring could be analysed from different perspectives. But the effort here is only to establish the context in which television must enter the process of development support communication efforts. Significantly during our study, there was no effort either by the mass media co-ordination committee or the development agencies to use television in their activities in any way. Without exception the planners and co-ordinators of developments activities share the view that television could be an extremely useful tool in their work, but blame the television unit for lack of initiative and creativity in translating the developmental messages into meaningful programmes. The television personnel on the other hand indicate that rarely do the development agencies approach them with concrete ideas and plans. The truth, one suspects, may be a mixture of both. It may also be further proof of the general lack of co-ordination between various agencies involved in the development support communication/information activities. However, the television unit located at a district level faces certain operational hurdles that may also contribute to its lack of effectiveness. Some of these issues as observed during the study are being presented here:
The harwar: component:

The SITE continuity phase of transmission of television signals to Gulburga has gone through several phases of shifting controls.

During SITE all the operational/maintenance aspect of the project were controlled by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). As the regional centre of the Karnataka cluster, the maintenance wing of ISRO was set up in Gulburga. The programmes were produced at Hyderabad for both the neighbouring states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Following SITE year, there was a break of television service till 1979 when the transmission tower was set up in Gulburga. The operation of the system then shifted to Doordarshan (Indian Television) along with the service maintenance units. In consultation with the Districts authorities, Doordarshan identified 240 villages for installation of the television sets. The criteria of selection was mainly that they have supply of electricity as also possess a solid building such as a school where the television could be kept. The studios of Hyderabad continued to supply the programmes of about one hour duration to Gulburga everyday. These were pretaped programmes generally sent by rail/road transport everyday for local transmission.

Once INSAT 1B became operational, all the regional transmissions were linked to Delhi for the National network programmes of four hours duration. From 1982 onwards, Gulburga also became part of the National hook up though the one hour regional programme from Hyderabad has been continued.

Since then under the television expansion scheme of commissioning a network of low power transmitters, Karnataka State capital was also given a full fledged regional centre.
And in 1981, Doordarshan transferred the service/maintenance aspect of the community television system to the State government department of information and publicity. Thus at present the system is operated by three different authorities. The high technology component of satellite service is the exclusive domain of ISRO; production and transmission of programmes are in the control of Doordarshan while service and maintenance of the community television sets is the responsibility of the department of information, government of Karnataka.

Nor surprisingly the situation is full of paradoxes. For one, there is no single entity who can be held responsible to ensure that the system functions regularly. The most vulnerable link in the whole chain is obviously the service and maintenance unit. The locales where the sets are kept in the villages can hardly claim to be ideal. They are stored in the school room along with other school property including, in some cases, foodgrains to provide the midday meal to the children. Rodents that bite the wires and sometimes even the felt lining of the loudspeaker unit are common features. The fluctuating power supply often results in repeated failures of the components. This calls for a team of trained service personnel who should continuously tour the villages to ensure proper maintenance. In actual fact the people in charge of service/maintenance do not have any training in the field. Only a few technicians, originally with All India Radio, have some kind of orientation to service/repair of radio sets.

When SITE was operational a highly competent group of engineers and technicians were on the scene to ensure continuous functioning of the sets. When the unit was transferred to Doordarshan, some of these professional staff were absorbed into the service along with other trained technical staff who were posted to the centre. Also the original television sets made by Electronic Corporation of India in Hyderabad, were designed and fabricated to suit
the kind of field situation anticipated for SITE. Each unit was like a kit with replaceable printed circuit boards. Almost in all cases of repairs, the technicians would carry a set of printed circuit boards with them to the field, locate the faulty board, replace it with new ones and bring back the original for repairs. They were, therefore, able to attend to a number of units in a day and most importantly, could make the television sets functional immediately. Only rare cases of major repairs required that the set be removed from the villages. This practice was followed both during SITE and by Doordarshan once they took charge in 1979. Also the sets being new, the repairs during these early years were normally of a minor nature which could be attended to without much difficulty by the field staff. At the time the information department staff took over the maintenance, a number of additional problems also cropped up. Crucial among them was that Electronic Corporation decided to discontinue fabrication of printed circuit boards for the SITE continuity sets. Thus once the boards in stock were exhausted, the technicians and service personnel had no alternative but to repair the boards one by one and sometimes even re-wire them. A considerably time consuming job that will require engineering skills beyond those of a technician. Not surprisingly the sets needing repairs have slowly accumulated over the years and now it is almost an impossible task to rectify it. The service personnel also point out a significant detail. According to them, after about five years use in rural setting, a telecasting set should be automatically changed. There should have been an effort at gradual replacement of these old sets with new ones. This would have ensured a continuous demand for a new sets with Electronic Corporation Ltd, who in turn would not have discontinued production. In the process of shifting responsibility from one agency to another, no one seems to have given thought to this aspect of long term planning. Consequently in the
present state of affairs, it would be more meaningful to start afresh rather than attempt to introduce any ad hoc corrective measures. Until a decision to that effect is taken, however, the present state of disrepair will continue. In any case, decisions of this kind are rarely based on technical feasibility and operational efficiency alone.

A decisive political will to promote rural television system may in turn enthuse the local administration and development agencies to become more active supporters. Possibly, in such an environment the media professional responsible for the software cannot be anything but enthusiastic. In other words, a transplanted technology must first fit into the socio-political system to become functional and effective. In that sense the situation just presented is perhaps not very unusual. It is the updated old story of the successful surgery wherein the patient dies.

The _software component:_

Given the situation of large scale disuse of the television facility, it is hardly surprising that those who should be concerned with its maximum utilisation are also equally indifferent to the situation.

The base production centre located at Hyderabad is some 240 Km away from the transmission centre. The daily package of programmes arrive from Hyderabad by rail/road transport. Some times a few programmes are also made available from Bangalore Centre since it became operational. Initially when the transmission tower was commissioned, it was proposed that a small studio be also attached to it for making locally relevant programmes. Due to some land dispute this did not materialise and the programmes continue to be produced at Hyderabad. A production cell with sufficient number of producers, researchers, studio facilities and field equipment is set apart to make this one hour daily
programme schedule. The research unit is required to provide formative research inputs to all programmes, prepare necessary audience profiles and needs assessment studies to assist the producers in understanding the problems of the area, undertake evaluation of programmes and provide feedback to the producers. The producers in consultation with subject matter specialist and in coordination with the user agencies are expected to prepare the programmes.

These statement of purposes, however, do not always translate into actuality. For several years now no meaningful research has emerged from the research and evaluation cell. One reason is that there is no clarity as to what programmes are being planned and on what themes. Lacking this directive, no meaningful research input to programme production is possible, nor is it being attempted.

An often repeated recommendation of SITE Evaluation studies was that most hard core, need based, instructional type programmes must be produced in the field. This would ensure contemporaneity, timeliness and be relevant to the audience. By all accounts field based programmes are rare. The annual report of the research and evaluation cell shows that the studio based programmes were the most predominant (about 44 percent of the total) while field based programmes accounted for a marginal 11 per cent. A more disturbing fact, however, is the large scale repetition of programmes already telecast. The report once again notes that more than 50 per cent of programmes telecast during 1984 were repeats. The repeats were not only subject specific information/instruction programmes, but also included musicals, dramas, skit and even puppet shows. The only format in which there were no repetition were feature film/film songs based programmes and TV reports.

While the report only refers to the year 1964, this obviously has been the general practice for several years now. During our field visits, villagers (most often children) unanimously spoke of this repeat programmes phenomenon. One boy went to the extent of saying that if we mention the title of a programme, he could easily repeat the entire programme sequence shot by shot. Some even said that the programmes shown during the SITE year were still being shown, almost a decade later. Admittedly there may be a certain amount of exaggeration in these claims, but there can be no doubt about the total paucity of fresh, new innovative programmes.

In contrast to the practical problems of the hardware component, this less than professional approach of the programme production unit is difficult to explain. Except that it seems to reflect the general air of indifference and apathy that prevails in Doordarshan vis-a-vis rural audience. In the process they seem to be offering a protective shield to the other equally accountable functionaries of the district administration as well as the development agencies, who are also required to make every effort for maximum utilisation of the media services. Again in this process of shifting responsibilities no one can really be held accountable for non-performance or failures.

The final link in this sequence of events, the rural viewer, remains a passive skeptical spectator to this drama of conflicting interests and ambiguity of purposes. Thus the medium entering a rural scene remains an elite, urban stranger. Much like a naive, city visitor the television is also treated with amused tolerance. No demands are made on its services nor is there any attempt to ensure its merger into the main stream of village life.
The Audience component:

With majority of the sets not functioning, it seems strange to talk of an audience at all. However, it is evident that not only are people aware of television but are also quite clear as to what they want from it. This becomes obvious by monitoring the viewing patterns of the audience, if not their verbal responses.

The mere installation of a television set in the village does not necessarily imply its regularity of operation or regularity of viewing. A number of non-media factors influence the usage of the medium. The locale and the custodian are two clearly identifiable factors. One of the reasons for the choice of a school to keep the television set is that it is a non-controversial place, with access to all. Supposedly the school has no affiliation to any class/caste group and thus not involved in the local conflicts of influence and authority. This is only partially true. Ironically, it is this supposed nature of neutrality that often makes the institution of learning the most vulnerable in local disputes. Invariably by extension, television is also very much a part in such conflicts. Instances of this are many, but a few will suffice to illustrate the point.

Often the village elite control the affairs of the community, directly or indirectly. In rare cases, however the prominent landlord may have differences with the village panchayat (local) administration. Television then is an apt tool to establish the status and authority of the most powerful. In one instance it was shifted from the school to the courtyard of the leading landlord, who ensured that the TV functioned regularly and allowed the people to assemble in his place everyday to watch the programmes. In another instance it was shifted from the school to the local temple premises. In yet another situation, the television authorities finally had to remove the set from the village altogether.
In villages where such conflicts are absent, the physical location of the school also becomes an important factor. Obviously it must be accessible to all. Ideally, therefore, it must be located in a central place. Central place is not necessarily central to the village, but more often is a point where much of the community will converge as a natural place of gathering. It may be the market place or the public well or the proverbial peepal tree in front of a place of worship, or the tea shop or a bus stand. If the school, by chance, is located near any of these places then television is accessible to a larger group of people. But such places also mean a constantly mobile audience. A dispairing situation to the researcher who sets out to gauge audience reactions and study the impact of the medium on community. Often the research problem gets into reverse gear and the report ends up highlighting the impact of the community on the medium.

Given an ideal situation of harmonious relationships and convenient location, the next major link in the contact between the medium and the masses is the custodian. During SITE, and later, much evidence has been compiled on this important village functionary. They can only be reinforced here.

To ensure regular functioning of television and mobilisation of the audience the custodian must obviously be a local resident. In many cases the school teacher, a government servant, is from outside the village. If he is from a neighbouring village the tendency is to commute (by bicycle) to work. To stay back late nights everyday so that the people can watch television demands a high level of motivation and commitment from the teacher. Invariably the television is not operated regularly at all. In case the local population, particularly the unemploy ed semi educated youth, protest the television promptly goes out of order. An alternative would be to
ensure that the local teacher is always made the custodian. It would again be unfair to expect such an individual to be immune from the local fueds and affiliation, or to forego family obligations to ensure smooth functioning of television services. Most local resident teachers also have family business/land to take care of besides their teaching work. More than that being a government servant he becomes a multipurpose village functionary for all government programmes of action. Without exception he is the enumerator of census data and the motivator for family planning schemes. Television, being a new comer on the scene gets the least priority.

Again in rare cases, the almost ideal situation does emerge. A school teacher who has a social standing of eminence in the local community, well respected and given all co-operation in his varied activities. Invariably, in such situations television functioning and the audience attendance has been remarkably regular. It is in such situations that the perceived utility of the medium by the rural audience can at least be estimated.

Entertainment gets high priority as compared to any other expression of felt need. Most respond that television could be an excellent source of information regarding developmental projects and benefits, but few can recall any such event. The most frequent source of information appears to be interpersonal contact and peer group networks. Though the mass media is referred to often as a source of information the association is, most of the time, with radio. This distinction of radio as a possible source of developmental messages as compared to television as a purely entertainment medium appears rather significant.

These articulated responses can also be validated with an observation of their viewing habits. It is almost like the weekly fixed point chart that programme executives at Doordarshan draw up. Every Saturday and Sunday the village
community converges on the school ground. This is the only time that women also show up in large numbers to see television. These are the days of the feature film shows. From Tuesday through Friday, a motley crowd of children and young adults (mostly male) promptly arrive at the school just before 6 'o' clock in the evening. For the next half hour or so follows the song sequences from feature films. Twice a week in Hindi, once a week in Kannada and once in a while other regional languages. Immediately after the programme is over, the audience also melt away and the set is switched off. On Mondays even the most consistent viewer would rather be absent from the vicinity of the television. It is the day set apart for agricultural programmes.

Depending on the day therefore, the time of switching on the television as well as the size of the audience varies. The television set is also mobile to cater to this varying audience size. If the extension cable is long enough the set comes out into the large courtyard of the school building to the satisfaction of the film viewing crowd. On other days when there is a smaller group the set is kept on the single table inside the small congested headmaster's room. On the days when there are no audience the set is replaced in the box in which it was brought to the village in the beginning.

At one level of analysis this may seem to be a total waste of an expensive, effective medium capable of activating hidden aspirations as well as initiating purposive social action. On the other hand how can any one deny even this minimal use, when it so obviously fulfills a void - a few moments of relaxation (if not entertainment) in the daily grinding life of rural India. Watching a routine formula based commercial film on a small screen in a big courtyard of the village school crowded with tired minds and bodies at the end of a hard day, theories of development, communication, social action and motivation seem to belong to a distant intellectual realm. As distant as space.
Conclusion:

Does the experience just presented provide any directions for future policy on planning of development support communication systems? It seemed essential that a summary statement, even a set of questions, ought to be presented. A task easier said than done. A re-reading of the paper pick out the hidden questions revealed a startling reality. The questions seemed quite familiar. They had been asked over and over again in many forums the world over. Perhaps the clue was in the answers. What was needed was a set of new solutions. Soon enough, the answers also began to sound familiar. It left me with a grudging admiration for the hopeless villagers who sat through the tedium of watching repeat programmes through the years with hardly a murmur of protest. Perhaps we could also borrow their wisdom - a patient perseverance that the future would eventually show the way?