

**Communicating Cultures and Building Identities:
An Ethnographic Study of Community Radios in Odisha, India**

A Thesis Submitted to
University of Hyderabad
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

By
Aniruddha Jena
17SNPC03



Department of Communication
Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication
University of Hyderabad
Prof. C. R. Rao Road, Gachibowli, Hyderabad, Telangana, 500046, India

June 2022



DECLARATION

I, *Aniruddha Jena*, hereby declare that this doctoral thesis, titled “**Communicating Cultures and Building Identities: An Ethnographic Study of Community Radios in Odisha, India,**” submitted by me to the Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, India, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy in Communication*, is a record of research done by me under the supervision of Prof. Vasuki Belavadi. This is a bona fide research work and has not been submitted in part or in full for the award of any degree or diploma at this or any other University or Institution.

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Student: Aniruddha Jena

Registration No.: 17SNPC03

Date: June 24, 2022

//Countersigned//

Supervisor: Prof. Vasuki Belavadi

Date: June 24, 2022



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This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Communicating Cultures and Building Identities: An Ethnographic Study of Community Radios in Odisha, India**” submitted by **Aniruddha Jena**, bearing registration number **17SNPC03**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy in Communication*, to the Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, India is a bona fide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance. This thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Supervisor: Prof. Vasuki Belavadi
Department of Communication
Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad, Telangana, India



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Communicating Cultures and Building Identities: An Ethnographic Study of Community Radios in Odisha, India**” submitted by **Aniruddha Jena**, bearing registration number **17SNPC03**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy in Communication*, to the Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, India is a bona fide work carried out by her. This thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

In addition, the student has the following publication/s and conference presentation/s:

Publications (Articles, Reviews, Commentaries, and Popular Writings)

1. Jena, A. (2022, February 8). Home Truths: The hyper-local radio bringing trustworthy news to India’s rural listeners [Online]. *The Sociological Review Magazine*. <https://doi.org/10.51428/tsr.qibt1089>
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Presentation at Conferences:

1. Presented a research paper titled “Safeguarding Ethnic-cultural Identities through Ethnic Media: The Case of Radio Dhimsa in Odisha, India” at the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) 2021 held at Nairobi, Kenya. (Virtual presentation)
2. Presented a research paper titled “Journalism Practice and Journalism Education in Odisha: Understanding the ‘WHY’ and ‘HOW’ Questions” at the 2nd South Asia Communication Conference (SACC) on 19th and 20th December 2019 organised by the School of Mass Communication (SMC), KIIT Deemed University, Bhubaneswar, India.
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6. Presented a research paper titled “Politics of Identity in Community Media: An Ethnographic Study of Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada” in the Citizen and

Community Media conference on the 6th and 7th of June, 2019 organised by Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

7. Participated as a Discussant of the thematic session titled “Dalit, Social Exclusion and Media” in the South Asian Communication Conference on Media and the Marginalised Communities on the 21st and 22nd of December, 2018 organised by School of Mass Communication, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar.
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Supervisor

Head

Dean

TO ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY RADIO

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements		XIII
Abstract		XVIII
Chapter No.	Chapter Titles	Page No.
1.	Introduction: Problematizing Community Radio	1
1.1	Setting the stage: Community Radio and Community Communication	1
1.2	Radio as a Medium of Communication	4
1.3	Community Broadcasting in India: History and Contemporary Scenes	7
1.4	Contextualizing Community Radio in India	10
1.5	Motivation behind the study: Learning, Unlearning, and Relearning	13
1.6	Outline of the thesis: Structure and overview	16
2.	Community, Culture, Identity and Community Radio: Conceptual Trajectories and Theoretical Underpinnings	19
2.2	Introduction	19
2.2	Community: Understanding the ‘Who’ and ‘What’ Questions	20
2.2.1	Popular Understanding of Community	21
2.2.2	Community as a Rhizome	24
2.3	Community in Community Media: In Pursuit of Definitional Coherence	25
2.4	Community Media: An Alternative Medium of Community Communication	29
2.5	Community Radio as a Form of Community Media	33
2.6	Positioning Culture, Identity, and Indigenous Knowledge in Community Radio	39
2.7	Researching Community Radio: Local and Global Standpoints	47

2.8	Theoretical Framework	49
2.8.1	Positioning Community Radio as Democratic and Participatory Media	49
2.8.2	Community radio and the counter-cultural public sphere	51
2.8.3	Community Radio and the Interpretation of Culture and Identity	53
2.8.4	Community Radio & Indigenous Epistemologies	55
3.	Researching Community Radio: Examining the Politics of Culture and Identity	58
3.1	Introduction	58
3.2	Research Objectives and Questions	58
3.3	Ethnographic Sampling	62
3.4	The Data Universe	64
3.5	The Interpretive Framework: The Search for Meaning	66
3.6	Methodology: The Art of Co-listening, Co-learning, and Co-creating	68
3.6.1	Case Study Approach: Developing a Critical Understanding and Examining an Initiative in Multiple Ways	70
3.6.2	Fieldwork: Doing Pilot Visits and Building Rapport with The Community	72
3.6.3	Leaving the Academic Baggage Behind	75
3.6.4	With The Community and Being the Community: Living an Ethnographer's Life	76
3.6.5	Desk Review	77
3.6.6	Participant Observation: It is all in the air	78
3.6.7	In-depth Interviews: Not yet There; Hence, Dive Deeper	79
3.6.8	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Engaging with the Diverse Meanings and Realities	81
3.6.9	Walk the Talk and Being-Along: To the Grazing Fields and onto the Hills	82
3.7	Dealing with the Data	83

3.8	Endgame: The Many Sounds and Meanings of Voice	85
4.	Communicating Culture and Consolidating Identity: Examining the Role of Radio Dhimsa in <i>Desia</i> Community	86
4.1	Introduction	86
4.2	Locating the Field: Socio-Political and Cultural Context	87
4.3	Radio Dhimsa: Contextualising and Historicising the <i>Desia</i> Broadcaster	92
4.4	Radio Dhimsa & <i>Desia</i> Culture	98
4.4.1	Understanding the <i>Desia</i> Community	101
4.4.2	Engaging with the <i>Desia</i> Culture	103
4.4.3	Countering Cultural Hegemony	105
4.5	Radio Dhimsa & <i>Desia</i> Identity	106
4.5.1	Building <i>Desia</i> Identity through Radio Dhimsa	107
4.6	Radio Dhimsa & <i>Desia</i> Knowledge Systems	111
4.7	Radio Dhimsa: The Reinforcer of <i>Desia</i> Culture, Identity, and Knowledge Systems	114
5.	Constructing Community and Building Identity: The Case of Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada, Odisha.	115
5.1	Introduction	115
5.2	History and Geography of the Region	115
5.2.1	Socio-Political Context	120
5.2.2	Language and Culture	122
5.3	SRUSTI and the Empowerment Project	126
5.3.1	Emergence of Radio Swayamshakti	130
5.3.2	Contemporary Scene	132
5.4	Constructing <i>Khadiali</i> Community: The Radio Swayamshakti Way	135

5.5	Radio Swayamshakti: Forging a Sense of <i>Khadiali</i> Identity	136
6.	Conclusion: The Need for a Cultural Turn in Community Media	141
6.1	Overview Of the Thesis: Reflections and Learnings from the Chapters	141
6.1.1	Reflections from the chapters	142
6.1.2	Major Learnings from the Study	144
6.2	The Connecting Threads	145
6.2.1	Creating Voice and Communication Infrastructures for the Margins	146
6.2.2	Building Communication Capabilities Through Participation	146
6.2.3	Countering The Majoritarian Threat	147
6.2.4	Addressing the NGOization Trap	147
6.2.5	Striving to be Hyper-local Media	148
6.2.6	The Everyday and Ordinary media	148
6.2.7	Not Just a ‘Radio’	149
6.2.8	Beyond the Development Paradigm	149
6.2.9	Promoting Local Epistemologies and Cognitive Justice	150
6.3	Contribution to the Field	150
6.4	Scope for future research	152
	References	153
	Appendices	173
	Appendix – Similarity Report	187

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Abstract

Community radio, based on its inherently local and communitarian characteristics is frequently defined as a medium that represents a particular community and positioned as a site for platformising community expressions while reinforcing local culture and identity using community experiences and expertise. Community radio as a site of resistance offers an important platform to the otherwise marginalised voiceless communities to actively participate in the overall programme creation, production, and consumption of their own programming.

This study analyses community radio as a form of community media to understand the pragmatics of the hyper-local media and how it engages with local culture and identity. Based on an ethnographic study, this thesis examines two indigenous community radio stations namely Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti, both located in Koraput and Nuapada respectively in the Eastern Indian state of Odisha. The study further tries to understand how community radio addresses the questions, politics, and fractures of culture and identity, and how they play out in a particular cultural site.

Moreover, the study explores how community radio as hyper-local media located as counter to the popular dominant media and how it helps in constructing community and building identity. This study also discovers how community radio is also serving as an alternative to the mainstream media which empowers the otherwise disenfranchised community and strengthens community voices to address the information and communication needs of the community using their voice.

Using an interpretive framework, the study reflects on the field data and experiences gained through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), participant observation, desk review and document analysis, and walk the talk and being along. This thesis contributes both to methodologies and the conceptual vocabulary for critically understanding the practicalities of community radio in India. Methodologically, it brings into focus the continued importance of ethnographic and collaborative research into understanding how community radios help constructing community, building identity and communicating culture. Ethnographic interviews highlight how ideas of voice, participation and access – central to the theorization of the community radio – are experienced. While the history of community radio in India took shape in the context of

global discourses about ‘development’ and uplift aligned with Western notions of progress and modernization, the more recent history of these broadcasters emphasizes their role in processes of construction of community and identity formation.

In examining two community radio initiatives, Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti, this thesis contributes to the scholarship on alternative and community media in general and on community radio in particular. Conceptually, this work calls for a cultural turn in alternative and community media studies to understand how community radio engages with local culture and identity and the larger questions and politics associated with them. Additionally, this thesis contributes to the theoretical and practical understanding of how community radio interacts with concepts such as community, culture, and identity.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Problematizing Community Radio

1.1. Setting the stage: Community Radio and Community Communication

“Radio Swayamshakti is not just a communication medium that informs us. It is an emotion that is part of our everyday lives. I am an 82-year-old man, but I am strong enough to help myself walk for three kilometres from my village (Nehna) to reach the studio of Radio Swayamshakti. There is something about Radio Swayamshakti which drives me to come over and record my poems. I wasn’t that fortunate to attend school as I was accompanying my father to the barber shop, but I had a keen interest in writing devotional songs in name of God. I am indebted to Maa Saraswati (goddess of knowledge); because of her blessings I am able to write my songs. Hence, I write in her name. I have been writing since my childhood and the local cultural committee of Khariar has been kind enough to publish four volumes of my poems and I get a monthly allowance from the district administration for my literary creations. But the kind of emancipatory experience that I get while recording my own songs at Radio Swayamshakti is truly unmatched. Having a medium that accommodates and represents local culture and identity is the best thing that can happen to a media dark community. While recording my poems at Radio Swayamshakti, I feel liberated and empowered. Radio Swayamshakti has transformed not just an old man like me but the entire community here to believe in strengthening local culture and consolidating local identity.”

---These were the words of Laxman Barik, who despite his old age continues to contribute to Radio Swayamshakti believing that it is a medium which belongs to the community and about the community. He believes that it is through Radio Swayamshakti that the cultural ingenuity of his community can be strengthened and reinforced in its truest forms.

Community is a group of people living together while sharing a common space with commonalities. It is through communication that communities are able to possess things in common (Fraser & Estrada, 2001). It is necessary to have a truly community run medium to ensure effective and viable community communication. For that to happen, community needs to realise and ponder over its information and communication needs and rights. Also, communication has a larger influence on community's social and cultural contexts and power dynamics. Communication here does not refer to the idea of the unstructured and more complex 'mass communication'; rather it is community specific, and it also considers the speech and oral traditions of the concerned community (Das, 1990). It is in this context the need for a community media in form of community radio arises to ensure sustained and effective community communication.

Why only radio? Because, radio is more accessible, convenient, and it doesn't require any magical skills to use it for community's development with progressive agendas that foster the process of social change (Pavarala & Malik, 2007). The best part of having community radio is that it caters to a specific community, and it addresses the information and communication needs while providing an opportunity to amplify their voices. That is why community radio has been called hyper-local media because it reaches out those otherwise marginalised and media dark communities whose voices and information and communication needs are not considered by the mainstream and popular media platforms (Pavarala & Jena, 2020; Jena, 2022). Also, there is a mechanical aspect to community radio

which highlights the relationship between a transmitter and receiver, but it is through the dynamics of communication that a sense of community is forged in the long run (Das, 2008). Community radio might not have received the same flair as other media platforms, but it has a tremendous potential to bring social change and transformations for the larger benefits of the communities whose voices are unheard of (Thomas, 2015).

Grounded in the philosophy of democratic participation and communication, community radio tries to be a media of the community which is fully controlled and managed by the community it caters to. It does that in an unquestionable manner which promotes deprofessionalization of content creation, production, and distribution by rejecting the expert culture of conventional media platforms (Atton, 2002).

This study examines community radio as a form of alternative and community media for communicating cultures and building identities. This work is based on an ethnographic study of two select community radio initiatives namely Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada. Both the community radio initiatives are located in locationally disadvantaged regions of the eastern Indian state of Odisha. Radio Swayamshakti (RS), an indigenous community radio station in the Nuapada District of the eastern Indian state of Odisha. This work draws on the existing literature in the contexts of countries like Australia, Africa, Europe, New Zealand, Canada, and Latin America by scholars who have discussed the potential of community media as an alternative form of media to counter the majoritarian and more dominant cultures and identities while creating conducive space to build community communication and voice infrastructures (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Deuze, 2006; Downing, 2008; Forde, Foxwell & Meadows, 2003; Forde, Foxwell & Meadows, 2002; Dutta, 2011; Skinner, 2015; Rosenberry, 2017; Rimmer, 2019;).

However, there are a limited number of studies that deal with how community radio as a form of community media engages with local and indigenous communities and their cultures and identities in the Global South. The absence of any comprehensive research on how community radio deals with indigenous community and identity in a culturally diverse and heterogeneous society like India makes it an important study. Situating and positioning culture and identity as concepts in community media, given the blurry theoretical frameworks, makes it all the more important to examine it in a diverse country like India.

Situated within the cultural and linguistic diversity of India, where most of the community radios are located in remote rural areas, this work is important in the context of the research gap discussed earlier (Pavarala & Malik, 2007; Backhaus, 2021; Ullah et. al., 2021; Malik & Pavarala, 2021; Pavarala & Jena, 2020). This study aims at adding a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how community radio engages with the ideas of community, culture, and identity. A detailed and critical examination of the existing literature and the emerging theoretical frameworks and standpoints are discussed in the next chapter.

1.2. Radio as a Medium of Communication

Unlike the new age media forms like television and the contemporary new media avenues, radio as a mass media is a bit old school medium, which is a medium of sound and voice. Radio is also often categorised as a sightless or a viewless medium. As an auditory medium there are three key aspects to radio communication and broadcasting and that are spoken-word, music and sound effects. The right blend of these three aspects makes radio broadcasting more lasting and appealing. Since it is an audio medium, it reaches out to the people from all clusters in the society irrespective of the educational and literacy levels.

Radio as a mass medium is tasked with identify the common thread to communicate with the maximum number of people at one go. The other reasons behind why it is a people-oriented mass media is that the listeners are from various classes and groups with varying social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. It is also important to note here that radio is a much cheaper medium of mass communication in comparison to other forms of mass communication (Kumar, 2000; Malhan, 2017).

In 1927, radio broadcasting started in colonial India with two privately owned transmitters installed in Bombay and Calcutta. However, the colonial administration took over the transmitters in 1930 and brought them together under the name of Indian Broadcasting Company. Later, Indian Broadcasting Company went into liquidation after a short span of three years prompting the colonial administration to come up with an Office of Controller of Broadcasting in 1935. With all these shaky starts to Indian radio broadcasting, finally on January 1, 1936, a permanent transmitter was installed in Delhi. It is considered as an important establishment in terms of the growth of radio broadcasting in India. Later, in 1936 only, All India Radio (AIR) was formed as the national broadcasting agency of India. At the time of independence, India and Pakistan together had nine AIR stations of which six belonged to India. These stations were located in Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lucknow, and Tiruchi (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001; Khandekar, 2010). The mission of AIR was to “produce and transmit varied programmes designed to awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich all sections of the people” (Das, 2008; Sen, 2003).

Soon after independence, the Union government of India was prompt to establish one radio station in each of the state capital cities. As a result, radio broadcasting in the state of Odisha started with the installation of AIR, Cuttack in the then capital city in the year 1948. On January 28th, 1948, AIR, Cuttack went on air in the service of the state. The very first

voice that reverberated across the state was ‘Akashvani Cuttack’ which later became the household name of AIR, Cuttack (Chatterjee, 2015; Panda, 2017).

Currently, there are 14 AIR stations on air in Odisha and they are located in Cuttack, Rourkela, Baripada, Berhampur, Bhawanipatna, Bolangir, Joranda, Jeypore, Keonjhar, Puri, Rairangpur, Sambalpur, Soro, and Deogarh. The state broadcasting service through AIR has played an instrumental role in promoting mainstream Odia culture and heritage across the state of Odisha (Mohanty, 2020).

Coming to Koraput District, there is one AIR station located in Jeypore. As already mentioned Koraput, region suffers from communication and other infrastructural issues. It can be argued that AIR, Jeypore is extremely important in terms of communication and information purposes for people of Koraput. In order to reach out to the remote areas of Koraput and to ensure radio is heard clearly, AIR, Jeypore was established in 1964 the third major AIR Channel in the state after Cuttack (1948) and Sambalpur (1963). Over the years, AIR Jeypore has been quite effective in catering to the communication and information needs of the tribal-dominated region. AIR Jeypore does news, talk, dramatic productions, and folk music selections etc.

After the advent of television as a mass media, radio’s popularity has gone down drastically. But radio has evolved with time and found new ways to get peoples’ attention. Earlier, if radio was primarily meant for information, communication, and education purposes, these days radio is more of an entertainment medium in its FM and digital avatars. So, it would be fair to state that radio as a medium of communication has survived all the challenges and hiccups that came its way. In contemporary times, radio is still acknowledged and appreciated for its uniqueness and attributes (Orissa Post News Network, 2020).

Particularly, in regions like Koraput, which is geographically side-lined and not located in an ideal position to get the latest communication infrastructures and facilities like Television and Internet to its interiors, a low cost and reachable medium like AIR Jeypore proves handy in reaching out to the rural interior pockets. In this scenario, AIR Jeypore is not just meant for entertainment purpose; rather it contributes to the larger social cause of the region by being an active communication medium. It also tries to bridge the disconnect between the state and the marginalised localities by disseminating state's messages and agendas to the rural audience.

Kumar also argues that radio broadcasting in India hasn't gone through any considerable changes to accommodate multiple voices catering to actual needs of communities that are otherwise side-lined and marginalised. She further observes that the very objective of AIR across the country was laid down by a top-down slant, which subscribes to the idea that it is the central authority who decides, plans, and implements without considering the voices and actual needs of the people whom the medium caters to (Kumar, 2003).

1.3. Community Broadcasting in India: History and Contemporary Scenes

The history of community broadcasting in India dates back to the first initiative undertaken by AIR in 1956. The initiative was popularly known as 'Farm Radio Forum' and UNESCO actively supported it. The idea behind this initiative was to offer and establish a two-way communication platform where audience, meaning the listeners, and engage and participate in the process of rural community broadcasting. For this project, a total of 150 villages were selected in Maharashtra (Nafiz, 2012). The main thematic objective was to promote the idea of 'Listen, Discuss, Act!' Through this idea, rural communities who were earlier just passive receivers of programme content were now able participate and get involved in

the process of programme production (Singhal and Rogers, 2001). This was considered as a successful model based on which the Government of India launched a very similar project named 'Radio Rural Forum' during the Green Revolution in the 1960s. The objective behind experimenting with 'Radio Rural Forum' was to offer a two-way communication facility to bring framers and the experts in the field of agriculture so that the farmers can be equipped with new and modern methods of agriculture and farming (Pavarala, 2007).

However, the government and the AIR didn't capitalise on the success of community and rural broadcasting after their successful experimentation with 'Farm Radio Forum' and 'Radio Rural Forum.' This resulted in having a separate participatory radio forum where participation of rural and community people was encouraged. AIR did set up an experimental rural station in Nagercoil town of Tamil Nadu State which had the potential of becoming a true model for the promotion of development and participatory community-based radio. But due to the lack of farsightedness of authorities and policy makers, this initiative never took off. Although community members were participating in the process to some extent, they never accepted the radio station as their own which helped in establishing that initiative as a true community radio.

The centralisation of AIR and airwaves was in place till the historic verdict of the Supreme Court of India in 1995. In the case of Cricket Association of Bengal Vs. Board of Cricket Control in India, the highest court of India ruled that airwaves are public property and that the government, or any private party have no exclusive right over it. It should be used for public good (Kumar, 2003). Following this historic judgement, decentralisation and deregulation of AIR and airwaves began albeit very slowly. As a result, AIR turned its regional stations to local stations where local communities could purchase airtime. But the ultimate decision was with AIR to decide what went on air (Kumar, 2007).

Following the Supreme Court of India verdict in 1995, the government on deregulation of the airwaves in 1999. Unfortunately, this didn't allow for community nor was there space for community news that is produced by the community members. In 1996, a group of about sixty delegates from various organisations and institutions like AIR, NGOs, universities, working journalists, activists, broadcasters congregated in Bangalore to deliberate on the possibilities of establishing community radio in India. The document that was produced as a result the deliberation was titled 'Bangalore Declaration of 1996.' This document urged the government to think through and develop a legal framework for the establishment of community radio in India (Kundra, 1997; Kumar, 2005; Nafiz, 2012).

The Bangalore Declaration of 1996 resulted in a movement that aimed at convincing the government to establish and promote community radio as a third tier of broadcasting (public and private broadcasting being the other two). In July 2000, the group of people who were advocating for community radio in India assembled again in a UNESCO-sponsored community radio workshop held in Pastapur. The Pastapur Initiative on community radio appealed to the Indian government to end state's control over broadcasting and to create a 'three-tier structure' so that the state and the private commercial operators as well as non-profit community radio could operate side by side. The Indian government didn't pay heed to the Pastapur Initiative but in 2002 it came up with new guidelines for community radios, which allowed only educational institutions to apply for license to run campus radio stations. Following that in February 2004, the first campus radio station was commissioned at Anna University in Chennai. It was considered as the campus avatar of community radio in India. But during that time, the Indian government was not very keen on giving licences to organisations that were not in its control (Pavarala, 2007).

After that a few small and grassroots level initiatives like Mana Radio in Andhra Pradesh and Namma Dhwani in Karnataka engaged with an objective to keep up the momentum of the community radio. But these initiatives were not that successful and the government was not very optimistic about the possibilities of community radio owned and managed by the community. Almost a decade after the Bangalore Declaration of 1996, the Government of India finally came up with an amended version of a community radio policy that was, to some extent, comprehensive. The new Community Radio Policy of 2006 allowed NGOs to set up community radio stations while its ownership and management structure needed to reflect on the communities they seek to serve. The policy was also criticised for its bias toward elite NGOs. The policy suggested that only established NGOs with a minimum of three years of service record were eligible to get a license. This kept out a number of small and recently established NGOs (Venniyoor, 2006; MIB, 2006; Kumar, 2007).

Finally, on October 15, 2008, the Deccan Development Society run Sangam Radio was established in a tiny village named Jarasangham mandal of Medak district of the then Andhra Pradesh and now Telangana (after bifurcation). This was regarded as the first truly community-owned community radio station in India as it is controlled and managed by rural women. More than a decade after the establishment of Radio Sangam, as on May 17, 2022, the country has just 356 operational community radio stations (MIB, 2022).

1.4. Contextualizing Community Radio in India

It was during the 1920s that radio broadcasting started in India and has since then been facing challenges and undergoing changes. Before India achieved independence, it was the colonial ruler who had total control over the transmitter and the receiver was left with the people, which basically means that the receivers were passive in nature. Not until 2004 did

this scenario change even after independence. The history of community radio (CR) in India is quite different in comparison to other countries. The concept of community radio has changed in India from time to time. And the very prefix ‘community’ has been used with radio in different and varying contexts. When the state distributed radio sets in the villages in the 1960s they were termed as community radio sets. All India Radio also started establishing community radio in the north-eastern region of the country in 2000. In the 1990s, several civil society organisations came forward to start narrowcasting in addition to purchasing airtime on All India Radio stations. Campus community radios were started in 2004 followed by the first community-owned community radio station in 2008. Thus, community radio in India has existed since the 1960s in different forms. They were known as community radio sets, local radio stations, community radio of AIR, narrowcasting, community radio programming, campus-community radio, and community radio stations, etc.

The historic verdict of Justice P. B. Sawant and Justice S. Mohan in the Supreme Court on February 09, 1995 declared airwaves as public property. The judges ruled that public property has to be controlled and regulated by a public authority in the interests of the public and prevent encroachment of the public rights. Following that landmark judgment, the community radio enthusiasts and activists had to wait for a decade to create not-for-profit radio stations that are owned and run by the local communities, particularly in rural areas.

Initially, discussions on CR were centered on the means and modalities of establishing a democratic, dynamic, and people-oriented form of public service broadcasting in the country. The community radio movement argued for policies that were quite unfamiliar to the Indian situation--a liberal policy for radio broadcasting emphasizing community participation and local control. Points like optimum utilisation of airwaves in public interest

and facility for community management of information exchange and participatory modes of decision-making etc. were emphasised. Importantly, the institutionalisation and expansion of the concept of community broadcasting were also proposed with the active involvement of people at every step across the length and breadth of the country (Pavarala & Malik, 2007).

Four years after the Bangalore Declaration, activists, academicians, community workers, NGOs, and media activist groups across the country who campaigned and networked for almost two decades in order to set up CRSs, finally joined hands in 2007 to form the Community Radio Forum –India (CRF-India). A few of the founding members of the CRF-India played a crucial role in shaping and positioning the new CR policy. Members of the group continue to play a key role in furthering the community radio movement in the country by constantly following and deliberating on the state's approach and movement.

Community Radio Association (CRA) (2011) is a new set up which is a group of operational community radio stations in the country. This association of operational community radio stations was an outcome of the first Community Radio Sammelan held in New Delhi in April 2011.

Similarly, a few other organisations like Voices and Maraa from Bangalore, Ideosync Media Combine from Gurgaon, and SN School of Arts and Communication, University of Hyderabad have played a pivotal role in the emergence of community radio in India, especially in research, documentation, and policy advocacy (Dash, 2015). International agencies like UNESCO, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ford Foundation, and Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) have partnered and have been associated with promoting the cause of community radio in the

country. These funding agencies have been supporting the community radio movement from the very beginning and have helped in the movement gaining momentum.

The movement seems to have achieved an identity but limited success. The movement has miles to go to achieve complete and true democratisation of the airwaves and people's participation in the decentralisation of radio waves.

The history chronicled here is not just about the chronological development of community radio initiatives in India; it is the concentration of community radio movement. The history also signifies that community radio movement in the country was about creating a space for a third sphere of broadcasting that will cater to the information and communication needs of the communities that are undermined and under-represented in the mainstream/conventional media.

As far as research is concerned, there have been studies that have focused on various aspects of the community radio initiatives like development, empowerment, participation, policy advocacy, gender, etc. However, still there are questions that remain and need to be answered. This research focusses on issues of local identity and culture which community radio as a local medium address. The subsequent chapters in this thesis help in examining that phenomenon through two case studies namely Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada. Details about the origin and evolution of select community radio initiatives and the motivation behind selecting them are separately discussed in the next section.

1.5. Motivation behind the study: Learning, Unlearning, and Relearning

Learning new things often begins with unlearning. Research is characterized as a multi-step process of learning, unlearning, and relearning. Research as an inquiry aims either at

addressing an existing issue or it focuses on understanding an issue critically. In the process of carrying out research, I learn new ideas while unlearning a few ideas to get it updated through relearning. So, it is a complex process of knowledge creation (Kothari, 2013). I am informed and guided by several factors like academic interests, orientations, ideology, issues, events, and experiences (Dash, 2015). Similarly, this research is also influenced by certain factors. This research is mainly influenced by two factors i.e., academic texts and my engagement with the field realities.

I am always fascinated by intriguing ideas and one such idea is community. My own academic background in media and communication studies also informs my choice for this study. Community is a very fluid and flexible idea and I used read how other academic disciplines have conceptualised and defined the idea of community. This curiosity led me to think about how community as an idea has been addressed and conceptualised in communication and media studies. I came across Sabita Bailur's (2012) work on the idea of community in community radio and that provoked me to dive deeper into the idea of community and community media. I was quite particularly fascinated by reading the works of Sabita Bailur (2012), Vinod Pavarala & Kanchan K. Malik (2007), and Biswajit Das (2008). Importantly, there was a common thread between all these works, and it was radio as a media. After engaging with some more familiar and relevant texts, I developed interest in examining and revisiting the idea of community in community media with a specific focus on community radio. Later, after a critical review of existing literature, I focused on understanding how community radio as a form of community media engages with community and its culture and identity. So, the transition from examining the idea of community to understanding the politics of culture and identity in community radio is critically and theoretically informed by scholarship in communication and media studies in general and alternative and community media studies in particular. These scholarships

are primarily located in countries like located in Latin America, Africa, Europe, Australia, and Canada.

Later, with more organised and structured readings, this research was methodologically informed by scholars like MN Srinivas (1979), Tuhiwai Smith (1999), John DH Downing (2011), Alfonso Gumucio Dagron (2001), Vinod Pavarala (2003), Ananta Giri (2003), Biswajit Das (2008), Mohan J Dutta (2011), and Samarendra Das and Felix Padel (2020).

The motivation behind selecting Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada was supported by my own experiences of being an Odia and a resident of tribal dominated district of Keonjhar. As a student, I had experienced Koraput for three years between 2013 and 2016. Having seen tribal communities closely and their cultures and identities getting immersed in the majoritarian and mainstream agendas of the state and its agencies, I was interested in understanding the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ of it. These regions are primarily media dark regions of Odisha. The mainstream media hardly considers giving airtime to the issues and problems of these locationally disadvantaged regions (Kanjilal et. el., 2021).

Being in a culturally, socially, and locationally disadvantaged space, both *Desia* and *Khadiali* communities are vulnerable to the mainstreaming agendas and cultural hegemony of the majoritarian Odia community and identity in the eastern Indian state of Odisha. Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada offer an alternative to the *Desia* and *Khadiali* communities in Koraput and Nuapada to forge a greater and consolidated sense of community and reinvigorate local culture and identity by producing, circulating, and consuming content in the local *Desia* and *Kosli* dialects.

After a pilot visit to Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti stations, I could come up with the following reasons behind selecting these two CRs as cases for this study are as follows:

- The first and perhaps the most important of these is the lack of academic research on community radios in Odisha. Currently, Odisha has 20 operating community radios across the state. But most of these community radios are centrally located and quite well-connected to the state capital. In contrast, Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti are situated in geographically marginalized areas. As a result, academic and media attention on these initiatives have been limited.
- Broadcasting in tribal communities, both Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti, feature programmes in the local dialects of *Desia* and *Kosali* respectively.
- Last but not the least, both the CRs are solely controlled by the *Desia* and *Khadiali* communities, who are responsible for the overall organization, production, and consumption of programme content.

The contexts in which the two CRs have evolved over the years is pointed in the case study chapters, along with details of their parent organizations.

1.6. Outline of the thesis: Structure and overview

The thesis is organised and structured into six chapters including this introduction, followed by a chapter on the conceptual background and theoretical underpinnings, methodology, two case study chapters and the conclusion. Two chapters exclusively focus on individual case studies and offer a comprehensive analysis of the realities at the select community radio initiatives. There are three broad objectives of this study that are supported by several questions which are addressed in the case study chapters and few are specifically discussed in the concluding chapter. But there are references across the six chapters to the research objectives and questions.

The first and introductory chapter lays out the larger context within which this study has been undertaken. The chapter sets the stage with a preliminary discussion on community, community radio and community communication, followed by a historical background and contemporary scenes on community radio in India. The following section details the motivation behind doing this study and the other factors, ideas, and experiences that influenced this study.

Chapter two focuses on the key conceptual trajectories and theoretical underpinnings of the study. The reason behind having an exclusive chapter for this is to highlight the larger research tracks and thrust areas that the scholarship in alternative and community media studies has addressed so far. In a slight departure from the traditional review of literature, this chapter critically situates certain concepts and ideas in the contexts and how they contribute to the larger conceptual background of the study. It was also important to problematize culture and identity within community media studies given the sparse literature available on these ideas. Broadly, this chapter brings together understandings on community, culture, and identity in relevance to community radio.

The next chapter on methodology discusses the ways and means used for carrying out this research. This chapter outlines my journey into the field that began with pilot study and how I selected the case studies for immersive fieldwork. The chapter then goes on to describe the research objectives and followed by research questions and the rationale behind them. Next, a discussion on ethnographic sampling is followed by a review of what constitutes data in this study. Within the methodology section, I elaborate on each of the methods and tools used and emphasize how each contributed to my field work. Similarly, the data analysis section also unpacks the ways and means used to make sense of the collected data. It helps develop concrete arguments to understand the larger ideas under investigation.

Chapter four on Radio Dhimsa is the first case study of this research. This chapter also contains a general discussion of the social, cultural, political, and geographical history of the Koraput region. It helps to situate Radio Dhimsa in the larger geographical scheme of Koraput, Odisha and understand its essence as a community radio station. The topics addressed in the following sections focus on understanding the ways and means through which Radio Dhimsa is engaged, understood, and how it addresses culture, identity, and knowledge systems in *Desia* culture. Moreover, these sections provide the key arguments, narratives and reflections that help in understanding the role and position of Radio Dhimsa in the *Desia* community.

The fifth chapter examines Radio Swayamshakti and its overall engagement with *Kosali* culture and identity. This chapter begins with a discussion of the wider social, cultural, political, and geographic history of the Khariar, Nuapada region. The following sections in the chapter discuss Radio Swayamshakti as an alternative media form for the *Khadiali* community in Khariar region and its overall mission and mandate for the community and its culture and identity.

The concluding chapter aims at highlighting the similarities, differences, and connecting threads between both the case studies. It starts off with a discussion on the relevant themes from the different chapters and draws deeper insights that span across the various areas of this research. It particularly focuses on the reflections and learnings from the earlier chapters. Next, the chapter states the overall contributions of the study and the possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Community, Culture, Identity and Community Radio: Conceptual Trajectories and Theoretical Underpinnings

2.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the key conceptual trajectories and theoretical framework of the study. It begins with an attempt to define the idea of community and drawing from literature and how scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds have engaged with it. Bringing together all the fragments of understanding on community, the second section of this chapter tries to offer a more cohesive and critical understanding of community.

The third section examines the association between the concept of community and community media. This section attempts to arrive at a definitional coherence to understand the community in community media. It also draws from existing literature to develop a more comprehensive understanding of community media and the various typologies in existence in different settings.

The next couple of sections attempt to establish community radio as a form of community media by focusing on the key attributes and characteristics of community radio and how it is positioned as a form of community media for alternative modes of communication for communities located in locational disadvantaged areas that are otherwise neglected and marginalised by mainstream media.

The sixth section of this chapter historicises community radio in the Indian context by focusing on the community radio movement and the subsequent development. It also helps in capturing the key historical moments that define the status of the contemporary community radio scenario in India.

The chapter's seventh section offers conceptual trajectories of culture, identity, indigenous knowledge, and attempts to establish a linkage between these ideas and community. The case study chapters in the thesis will help to locate these ideas in the context of the select community radio initiatives.

The next section in this chapter provides a critical overview of the variety of research that has been undertaken over the years on community radio in particular and community media in general. Later, it suggests and highlights the prominent facets and aspects of community radio research and alternative and community media studies while emphasising the need for carrying out research related to the understanding of local and indigenous culture and identity and how community radio engages with these ideas.

The follow-up section discusses the important theoretical framework and approaches. It also informs how the theoretical approaches help in analysing and interpreting the complex field realities and contexts to develop a more holistic understanding of how community radio initiatives like Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada address key questions and politics of culture, identity, and knowledge at the grassroots level.

2.2. Community: Understanding the 'Who' and 'What' Questions

Understanding of society has been constantly evolving. That is perhaps the prime reason why concepts and ideas related to society are open to continuous engagement. Here, I attempt to conceptualise the concept of community and understand the 'who' and 'what' of it. In the context of this research, it was imperative for me to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of community. Community as a concept has already been defined and redefined by various scholars. Considering the wide-ranging and

heterogeneous understandings, I try to understand community in a more nuanced manner. Also, it is important to locate the understanding in the context of community radio and how the concept of community is associated with community radio.

2.2.1. Popular Understanding of Community

The idea of community, like society, is also ever evolving and warrants constant introspection and research. Existing literature and contemporary discourse indicates a continuous attempt to organise and define community in a given context leading one to attempt a more nuanced study. Another critical factor influencing a nuanced study is the rapid advancements in technology. Globalisation too has had its impact in studying community. Therefore, theories on the idea of community have also undergone changes. In all, the primary objective and focus are to identify and distinguish the major roots of the community as an idea and relate it to community radio.

Gerard Delanty (2009) in one of his most cited works titled *Community: Key Ideas* argues that socio-political transformations have influenced the the idea of understanding community. Such transformations have also contributed to the idea of community becoming the central point of social and political theories. Furthermore, cosmopolitanism, postmodernism, globalisation, migration, and the evolution of the Internet have further complicated the understanding of community. Historically, community has been established as an idea and concept of universal nature but at times it has also been shaped into particularistic forms too. The term community itself is derived from the Latin word ‘*com*’ which means (with or together) and ‘*unus*’ which implies (the number one or singularity). The term community is a widely used and accepted in general and in academic discourses. But at times it is also contested and subjected to fierce criticisms and debates.

That perhaps is indicative of the evolutionary nature of the concept itself. Anthropologists, political scientists, historians, philosophers, etc. have all been holding different positions and all of them seem to be divided on the use of the term. While sociologists tend to define community as based on small groups and unions, such as neighborhoods, the small town or a geographically bounded locality, anthropologists have used community as culturally defined groups. Philosophical and historical studies have underlined the idea of community as an ideology, which is practiced to attain utopia. Apart from disciplinary usages of the term community, the other usages of community are political, where the focus is on rights, citizenship, civil society, and identity (Delanty, 2009).

Scholars believe that in some way, community and the constant evolution of the idea itself is the result of the cultural and anthropological turn in the social sciences in the mid-1980s. Scholars like Anthony Cohen argue that community as an idea, is less understood as a social practice than as a symbolic structure. Because at the end of the day, community is ultimately what the people think it is in real terms (Cohen, 1985). Cohen's justification about community is somehow talking about the idea of social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) that has been very influential in the debates and discourses on community in the last two decades. Unlike Cohen's argument, Barth (1969) claimed that community formation is based on territoriality, and that led to a view that it is not shaped by what the commoners have and share in common; rather it is what divides or separates people from others. However, both of them stressed on the symbolic nature of communities as culturally defined units of meaning.

Similarly, Benedict Anderson (1991), in his path-breaking book titled *Imagined Communities* strongly proposes that communities are something that are formed out of one's imagination. His proposition on community is primarily concerned with national identity. Anderson is of the opinion that the idea of community is shaped by various

cognitive and symbolic structures that are not underlined through lived spaces, experiences, and any immediate forms of social intimacy.

Raymond Williams discusses that earlier, community and society were used interchangeably. According to him,

“The idea of community is inherited from the root conception of society itself which is the domain of direct and indirect relationships opposed to the organised space of state. With time, society lost its sense as the domain of direct and indirect relationships, but the idea of community held on to it and it continued to designate alternatives to the status quo (Williams, 1976, p.75).”

From the above, one could observe that the term ‘community’ has been used as a genuine domain of social bond that does not need a state. So the community sometimes can be exclusive as well as inclusive too. But for scholars like Talcott Parsons, “the highest expression of social congregation and integration is the ‘societal community’ (Parsons, 1991, p.10).” Scholars like Rousseau, on the other hand, were very skeptical of the potential of the modern institutions to realise the essence of community. He believed that the modern state is a destroyer of human freedom and various political possibilities. According to him, the general will of the people is the only and authentic form of political organisation. And the community is the only sense through which human desire for freedom can be expressed. The loss of the sense of community is quite apparent and evident in the modernist tradition. Rousseau’s analysis is an organic conception of community and at the same time a critique of the modernist tradition (Rousseau, 1762; Munro, 2020).

Jodhka (2001) reflects that the debates on the idea of community versus individual are focused on the broader framework of rights to strengthen the social reality around the ideas of human/civil rights, question of citizenship and civil society, etc. These reconceptualisations have led to the questioning of formulations wherein community is no more seen as being compatible with traditional societies but rather is treated as a different social category altogether.

2.2.2. Community as a Rhizome

Going beyond the understanding of community as space, territory, culturally defined groups, social category, and interest, etc., I am trying to understand the idea of community as a rhizome. Rhizome refers to multiplicity, heterogeneity, and diversity while having different roots. After analysing the arguments and definitions of community mentioned above, it can be said that community as an idea has been conceptualised by various academic as well as non-academic groups, and more importantly all these conceptions are based on different premises and assumptions. What stands out clearly is that community and its earlier conceptions are different yet having some commonalities with each of the conceptions. The conceptions about community are interrelated and connected to each other on various grounds and premises. Although a few of the earlier conceptions of community might sound contradictory to each other, they are connected to each other on some or the other ground. The common grounds that the earlier conceptions of community are like society, tradition, culture, space, territory, interests, commonalities, ideology, associations, identity, social practice, social interaction, lifestyle, caste, religion, class, etc. Apart from the common ground or connecting points, one key idea that is attached to the idea of community so closely, is the idea of society. There have been major debates and

discourses that have resulted over the years to replace the term society with community. Still, in some cases, these two ideas have been used quite interchangeably. Basically there are three key arguments, that justify the commonality between society and community. The three are (a) community as society, (b) community in society and the last one (c) community in opposition to society. So all these three premises strongly suggest that society and community share an inextricable relationship and these two ideas are coherently connected to each other (Williams, 1985).

Being a rhizomatic concept, community in some sense also qualifies to be a social category and it is also perceived as a shared sense of identity that has some commonalities. On a more holistic note, community is also treated as a harmonising idea that is defined and conceptualised based on differences yet trying to harmonise the sense of togetherness, sharing, loyalty, etc.

Community as an idea, therefore, continues to be contested despite there being commonalities. Perhaps, all these together provide shape to the idea of community. The challenge is to undertake and develop a coherent framework that can bring together these fragments of understanding we have on community.

2.3. Community in Community Media: In Pursuit of Definitional Coherence

Many scholars have also defined the idea of community from the perspective of alternative and community media. Downing (2008) suggests that it is challenging to provide an exact and just definition of the term community in a lucid and accurate way and perhaps, it is due to the manifestation of varying types and forms of groups that can be identified and grouped under the umbrella of the concept of community. Focusing on the geographical factor, Myers is of the opinion that a group of people living in a specific geographic location can

be understood as a geographic community. But there might be different manifestations and forms of community existing within that bigger geographic community in the form of race, caste, class, gender, religion, etc. All these forms or categories can be termed as ‘sub-communities’ (Myers, 2000).

Rennie (2006) states that:

“Community is uncalculated, formed through a sense of affinity and identification, a recognised essence, or a sense of belonging. It also involves processes of group formation, mobilisation, and public participation. A community can also be defined in terms of “interest, language, and cultural groupings” (Rennie, 2006:3&40).

Although these features help fine-tune the nature of a particular community, it should also be noted that even within any single distinct community group, there exist further ‘social rifts’ that create smaller subunits within the community. Hence, the use of the word ‘community’ to show a distinct group of interest also makes “idiotic assumptions about the absence of class and other serious social rifts within the local issue” (Downing, 2001:39). Downing also suggests other types of communities such as working-class communities and gay communities as well as scientific communities, the ‘Black Community’ and the ‘Jewish Community’, the latter two being huge communities whose focus is centered on their race or religion. The “Community Standards of Decency” which describes acceptable standards of good taste is again another meaning of community (Downing, 2001).

There are also communities of practice and Wenger, Dermott, and Snyder (2002) put it as:

“Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis. These people don’t necessarily work together everyday, but they meet because they find value in their interaction” (Wegner, Dermott and Synder, 2002:4).

The evolution of the Internet and later, social networking sites, has led to the emergence of virtual communities. It is in this context that Fairchild argues that while the existence of virtual communities recognize that community radio also helps in building social networks, it builds in a traditional sense and these social networks are only limited to particular geographical and locally located communities with common interests, problems, passion, and concern, etc. (Fairchild, 2010).

Community, for the purpose of community media, may be defined as a territorially bound group with some commonality of interests, implying a common identity too (Pavarala, 2003). However, for Savita Bailur, the idea of community is a dynamic entity that is looking to form social relationships and networks (Bailur, 2012).

Drawing on his forty years of doing research with community radio initiatives, Donald R. Browne concedes that when community radio broadcasters are asked about defining community and the medium through which they reach out to the community, they often cite ‘geography’ as one of the prominent aspects in their definitions. By and large, the definitions suggest that the medium which they call ‘community radio’ is actually meant for serving a ‘local community’ or a ‘community of interest.’ So, Browne states that,

“There is no universally accepted definition of the word ‘community’ as applied to community radio, although *place*

usually appears on the list as a significant factor. But so are communities of language, ethnicity, gender, generation, sexual orientation, and topic of interest (professional, hobbyist, etc.).” (Browne, 2012:153)

He also presents three categories of community: ‘Community as a participant; community as audience; and staff and volunteers as a community.’ These categories somewhat help in developing a more comprehensive explanation of the term ‘community’ in community media in general and community radio in particular. (Browne, 2012:155)

Considering the variety and heterogeneous nature and form of community, understanding it vis-a-vis community radio is subject to a number of entry points that help engage with the idea of community. Some of the central features of the idea are that community is like a big family (Morris and Morton, 1998), it is about having shared duties and responsibilities that are fundamental to social cohesion and solidarity (Rennie, 2006), and also, about developing a greater sense of belonging (Fuller, 2007).

However, community for the sake of community media can be understood as a defining factor which is about the process of group formation, mobilisation, and public participation (Rennie, 2006) and these are some of the most effective means of reinforcing community values through common community platforms such as community media. Above all, the idea of community and its positioning in the field of community media is quite different from other social science fields. In community media, the idea of community is primarily understood as a group of individuals having a common territory, identity, network, and interest and the community members are using a particular medium for their own emancipation and empowerment.

2.4. Community Media: An Alternative Medium of Community Communication

There are different and diverse terms used for the idea of community media in general. It varies from scholar to scholar and region to region. But scholars have mutually subscribed to but attempted to delimit and arrive at a nuanced understanding of the term, albeit throwing up terms such as radical, critical, independent, participatory, grassroots, citizens', autonomous, tactical, or even social movement media.

However, most of the existing works find the 'alternative' as an umbrella that is accommodative of the diverse debates, discourses, and discussions. Nick Couldry and James Curran describe alternative media as "a form of media production that questions and challenges the actual concentrations of media power, in various locations and positions" (Couldry and Curran, 2003). However, they also concede that the term 'alternative' is a "more flexible, fragile and comparative term since it involves no judgment about the empowering effects of the media practices." (Mowbray, 2015).

The fundamental idea of community media implies that it is a participatory medium that is operated for, of, and by the community in order to express their diverse concerns and issues and empowers them to engage with media technologies to tell their stories from their perspective. In a similar vein, Chris Atton opines that:

"Alternative and community media are primarily interested in and focused on the social and cultural practices that enable people to participate directly in the organisation, production, and distribution of their own media, and how these media are used to construct and represent identity and community, as well as to present forms of information and

knowledge that are under-represented, marginalised or ignored by other, more dominant media.” (Atton, 2015:1)

Further, Atton argues that rather than considering community media as an entirely separate entity, it is also necessary to contextualise them in dominant, ‘mainstream’ practices, such as the use of citizen journalism and user-generated content by institutionalised media. He avers that they too offer democratic access to media tools and that local and global notions of citizenship and identity may be developed through them. (Atton, 2015)

Quoting Wendy Williams who chronicles the different understandings of alternative and community media over the years:

“Community media, grassroots media, autonomous media (, citizens media, alternative media, tactical and citizens media, small media, radical media, underground media, social movement media and civil society media. While all these terms have different analytical implications, what they share in a common interest to media that serve the interests of citizens (and particularly those on margins), and a belief in alternative funding structures of media institutions” (Willems, 2015:88).

A significant feature that characterises the body of literature above is the intimate entanglement between forms of media that distinguish themselves from the mainstream, and civil society organisations and networks. Generally, studies in the subfield of ‘alternative media studies’ tend to be positive about the supportive role of media in various

sections of society. For some, this almost leads to a disappearance of the analytical distinction between media and civil society (Howley, 2005; Willems, 2015)

As far as alternative and community media are concerned, it's not just limited to presenting a different version of the world; rather these media offer alternative versions of the world to understand and see the world of happenings through various lenses and spectrums. In most cases, alternative media practices take place within particular communities of interest, of varying size and composition; and most alternative media are community media. The construction of alternative media discourses matters because they enable what Alberto Melucci terms 'the construction of social life.'

Nick Couldry (2000) puts forth an argument that:

“If we are to consider the media not as a set of texts but as social processes, then how we describe, interpret and take the world that becomes aspects of media practice. Media practice is about naming the world; it is a process of ‘nomination’, to use Melucci’s term. Naming matters not simply because it generates categories or enables ordering. To categorise is not to understand the world; neither is it to engage with the world. The act of naming has deeper consequences; it is concerned with questions of who produces what about the world and how those discourses shape our ways of living in the world” (Couldry, 2000:3).

Also, it very much necessary for the community members to actively participate in their own media production, and that way it will pave the way for the activation of the micro-

public sphere or counter-public sphere (Fraser, 1990) which is essential as far as their right to communicate and communication rights are concerned (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008).

The naming of alternative and community media is not for once and all, rather it is an analytical category. And it is never definitive and absolutist in nature. Just like ‘community’, it is not easy to come up with an absolutist and concrete definition of alternative and community media. However, naming of our object of study might be seen as a series of acts of analysis, argument, and focus, each of which may be contextualised historically, geographically, and culturally. Terms like independent media, amateur journalism, citizen journalism, and citizen’s media, etc. are important and essential in their specific and particular context. But it is important to understand how these names are being mobilised and for what purpose (Couldry, 2010).

Therefore, Benedict Anderson wonders if the term alternative media is an analytical construction or it continues to remain in the imprecise realm of ‘common-sense’ concepts derived from everyday language that is thin on coherence and specificity (Anderson, 2012).

Downing suggests that:

“Alternative media generally serves two overriding purposes, the first is to express opposition vertically from subordinate quarters directly at the power structure and against its behaviour; and secondly to build support, solidarity and networking laterally against policies or even against the very survival of the power structure. (Downing, 1984:17)”

Due to the presence of all these varieties of names that are used for the understanding of community media, it is hard to come up with a precise and just coherent definition and this is what Kevin Howley indicates as a “lack of definitional precision” (Howley, 2010:15) and it is an ongoing process in which the idea has been evolving and will continue to evolve with time. Because it is indeed hard considering the difference in contexts, cultures, histories, and geographies about the evolution and emergence of community. Importantly, Dagron (2004) puts it as “nobody has a manual for it, a how-to recipe” and that is why it is impractical to provide a precise and accurate definition about community media that captures all the varieties and differences that are in place (Dagron, 2004:46). It is also important to understand that defining alternative media in general also means that one needs to consider all the varieties and forms of alternative communication mediums that are set up by different communities across regions to carry out communication processes within and between communities (Downing, 2001). Therefore, the multiple conceptualisations of alternative media and community media are also quite intriguing in the sense that it is a medium that is participatory, and it challenges the conventional ways of media organisation, production, distribution, and consumption.

2.5. Community Radio as a Form of Community Media

On the efficacy of radio as a mass media, Bertolt Brecht strongly advocates that radio as a medium should be converted from a mere information distribution system to a communication system for the larger good of the commoners. Radio has the utmost potential to be the most wonderful public communication system, if it were capable not only of transmitting and disseminating but of receiving, of making the listener not only

hear but also speak, not of isolating him/her but of connecting him/her. And that would have resulted in giving up being a purveyor and organising the listener as a purveyor. (Brecht, 1979)

History has been witness to continuous attempts to counter the monopoly and domination of public service broadcasting across borders. There have also been assaults on the government policy, regulation, state monopolies led by the left or left of center, and even legal community radio (Rowland & Tracey, 1990). In most cases, community radios have been positioned in opposition to commercial broadcasting in many countries like in the United States (Barlow, 1988).

In community radio, the community is not a passive audience. The community has access to and control of the medium itself (Rosen & Herman, 1977). Lewis (1984) defines community radio as:

“An autonomous, non-profit in goal, listener-supported and controlled, and deliberately offering a content alternative to what was generally available to listeners, while adopting a management structure and broadcasting style that challenged the traditions of professional broadcasting.” (Lewis, 1984: 137-50)

According to Bruce Girard (1992), community radio is meant, to serve the community, to encourage community expression and participation and to value local culture and identity. Community radio's sole purpose is to “give a voice to those without voices or whose voices are sidelined and neglected by the so-called popular and dominant media. It is also about providing a platform to the marginalised groups and to communities far from large urban

centers, where the population is too small to attract commercial or large-scale state radio to voice their community issues and concerns in their own media, which is entirely owned and managed by their community. The community has true agency over the community radio. It is the central community radio objective, and it is important to note that despite the multiple features of community radio that distinguish them from commercial radio, it is the community members' ability to access and participate in community radio and in the overall organisation, production, distribution, and consumption of their own media that justifies the true essence and potentials of community radio as an alternative form of community communication (Nafiz, 2012).

Taking underground radio into consideration in Taiwan as an instance, Ke (2000) offers a different perspective on contrasting community radio with alternative radio. Alternative radio gives an opportunity for alternative voices, values, and points of view. And more importantly, it opposes the conventional attitude of media and believes in decentralisation, and reflects the particular community's social needs and social reality. In fact, most of its alternative features are discouraged by the state regulations, once the alternative radio is legitimised as community radio. It loses the symbol of being an alternative and begins obeying the state's policies. On a different note, Maherzi (1997) defines community radio in the World Communication Report as:

“Community radio is usually considered complementary to traditional media operations and as a participatory model for media management and production. The term ‘community’ in this context is used in its geographical and sociological sense, designing the basic unit for the horizontal social organization. Community radio stations are designed to encourage participation by a large

representative sample of the various socio-economic levels, organizations, and minority groups within a given community. The purpose of the stations is to facilitate the free flow of information by encouraging freedom of speech and by enhancing dialogue within the communities concerned in order to promote better participation by their populations.” (Maherzi: 1997:148)

The sole aim of community radio is to empower the community people and by engaging them in the overall functioning of community radio which will justify the community member’s right to communication and to active citizenship (Malik & Bandelli, 2012). For Melkote & Steeves (2001) community radio is a critical medium for development. In simple terms, community radio is a platform that will act positively to foster and energise the right kind of spirit for social development and change, which implies that community radio stands out as a catalytic agent for the betterment of society.

On the efficacy and effectiveness of community radio, Pavarala & Malik (2007) argue that in order to emphasise on community radio to be relevant, contextual, and sustainable, it has to be owned by the community itself, which is the irony of the state of the affairs in the contemporary world, that it is very hard to find a community radio in India which is fully controlled, owned and run by the community members. Hocheimer asserts:

“When it comes to community participation, there comes the point how actually the community participation is occurring? And in community radio who is serving whom? Who is speaking for which community interest? And most

importantly who is deciding what legitimate voices are to be heard? (Hochheimer, 1993:473-86)”

The AMARC (French acronym of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters) (1995) defines community radio as:

“Community radio, rural radio, cooperative radio, participatory radio, free radio, alternative, popular, educational ... If the radio stations, networks and production groups that make up the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters refer to themselves through a variety of names, their practices and profiles are even more varied. Some are musical, some are militants, and some are musical and militants. They are located both in isolated rural areas and in the heart of the world’s largest cities. Its signals can be reached either within a radius of one kilometer, in the entire territory of a country, or in other parts of the world via short wave. Some stations belong to non-profit organizations or cooperatives whose members make up their own audience. Others belong to students, universities, municipalities, churches, or unions. There are radio stations financed by donations from their audience, by international development agencies, through advertising, and by governments.” (AMARC Website, n.d.)

Furthermore, the website of World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, VOICES, India- an NGO and AMARC member characterises community radio as:

“First, community radio is characterized by the active participation of the community in the processes of creating news, information, entertainment and culturally relevant material, and this with an emphasis on local issues and concerns. With training, local producers can create programs using their local voices. The community can also participate in the management of the station and comment on the programming and content of the programs.

Second, it is essential that it be a non-profit company. In these days of high commercialization of radio broadcasting, the character of community radio is its independence and responsibility in serving the community, not the advertiser. Since the community owns the station, some responsibility is maintained in managing the station.

Third, community radio programming is designated by the community to improve social conditions and the quality of its cultural life. The community itself decides what its priorities and needs are in terms of the provision of information.”

(AMARC Website, n.d.)

Community radio by nature is something that “emerges from within the community and which couldn't and shouldn't be imposed from above” (Jallov, 2004). Here, it is distinctly clear that the ownership of ideas and practices is with the community and is not dictated,

especially in an upward movement. 'Native informants' are able to speak with their own “irreducibly heterogeneous voices” through community media (Spivak, 1988).

Above all, community radio as a medium and idea has been contextualised and positioned in different situations and each has its own historical trajectories. Some scholars consider it a tool for giving a voice to the voiceless, a tool for development and empowerment; other considerations are that it builds a sense of solidarity in the community since it is a medium that warrants community participation at every stage of its functioning. As a local medium, it is situated at the heart of the community, and it becomes a mouthpiece and identity of the community. It takes the centrality of the medium itself into serious consideration and as a medium tries to uphold the sense of locality in the long run. This study here intends to take all these into its purview and particularly, examine the politics of identity, knowledge, and culture in community media.

2.6. Positioning Culture, Identity, and Indigenous Knowledge in Community Radio

This research's importance on the questions and politics of culture, identity, and knowledge necessitates a critical review of the literature that is available on culture, identity, and local knowledge systems. Raymond Williams asserts that culture is perhaps one of the most complicated and intricate words in the English language. He attributes it to the intricate historical development in several European languages. But now, it is being appropriated by many intellectual disciplines and incompatible systems of thought (Williams, 1976). Douglas Kellner focuses on culture, identity, and the politics of it and tries to understand the aforesaid concepts from the perspective of media and cultural studies. While grappling with the key ideas, he takes the help of cultural studies and situates the standpoints of media and culture in relation to society. He discusses the idea of a media culture and how media

itself is creating a culture of its own and the media consumers are consuming that (Kellner, 1995). On the enduring importance of culture as a concept, Surinder S Jodhka strongly argues that over the years, the idea of culture has evolved and acquired the status of a separate paradigm or framework within which most of the contemporary debates and discourses are being carried out on major and compelling questions of modern society and politics. Also, culture as a focal point or an entry point helps in engaging and understanding the fundamental questions of a society (Jodhka, 2001).

However, on the definition of the word and concept 'culture', Paul Willis suggests that culture is not about manners, rainy afternoons, or concert halls; rather it is about the daily lives, the bricks and mortar of our most commonplace understandings. What we do in our day-to-day lives; what we see; what we watch and eat; how we compare ourselves with others and many such things are being attracted to the interest of cultural studies. He further indicates that culture is one of the fundamental paradoxes of our social life that when we are at our most natural and our most every day, we are also at our most cultural. So when we are in the roles that look the most obvious and given, we are actually in the roles that are constructed, learned, and far from inevitable. Hence, the idea of culture implies our everyday lives and how everyday lives are constructed (Willis, 1977). But Graeme Turner specifically deals with popular culture, not the 'high culture' or 'elite culture.' Primarily, his attempt tracks the very shift from the 'high culture' to popular culture and cultural studies serves as a key site for mapping the changes and alterations that have taken place over the years regarding key methodologies and theoretical understanding of the broader idea of culture (Turner, 1990).

Identity as a concept has become more mobile, flexible, multiple, and diverse. Importantly, it is also subject to change and innovation. Bennett et al define identity as:

“It is to do with the imagined sameness of a person or of a social group at all times and in all circumstances; about a person or a group being, and being able to continue to be itself and not someone or something else. Identity may be regarded as fiction, intended to put an orderly pattern and narrative on the actual complexity and multitudinous nature of both psychological and social worlds. The question of identity centers on the assertion of principles of unity, as opposed to pluralism and diversity, and of continuity, as opposed to change and transformation (Bennett et.al, 2005, pp-172).”

On the power of identity as an evolving idea, Manuel Castells recognises that identity is a defining principle of social organisation and it helps in analysing the importance of cultural, religious, and national identities as various sources of meaning of people, and the implications of these identities for social movements. He further explores the construction of collective identities as they are related to social movements and power struggles in a network society. (Castells, 2010).

Timilsina in her work deliberates that the geographic location of population or people coming from different backgrounds staying in different locations together for years also leads to the emergence of new cultures and identities. She argues that the construction of the identity of individuals and communities is based on continuous interaction with their historical, social, and cultural past (Timilsina, 2019). Similarly, Stuart Hall asserts that the cultural identity of one community depends equally on past and future. According to him, cultural identity as a concept is about ‘becoming’ and ‘being’.

Coming to the flexible nature of both culture and identity, a sense of hybridity has crept in, and it is mostly because of the geographical movement of communities. Leeuw and Rydin (2007) point out that with constant change in their geographical location, communities frequently negotiate their cultural identity between change, similarity, and difference. They also argue that people tend to construct their own convenient sense of belonging depending on their geographical location and that construction of a sense of belonging brings in a sense of hybridity to their understanding of identity. So the idea of cultural hybridisation is a process through which the minority community creates its own cultural vision while altering and acclimatising with the culture of the majority and the mainstream community (Bhabha, 1996).

While focusing on the role of media and alternative media in particular in the cultural identity and politics of it, King and Wood (2001) contend that media and related technologies play a dynamic role in shaping and constructing cultural identities. Community radio as local media is potentially much more potent in shaping and upholding the cultural identities of the local communities and it can also help in addressing politics and the questions of culture and identity.

However, some scholars believe that identities and ethnic identities, in particular, are not simple. They are often layered and complex to comprehend. They are hard to be grouped as one identity as they change with social roles and conditions. All of these propose that there is an interplay of a variety of factors that decides the context of identity (Ross, 2017; Bedford & Didham, 2001; Jenkins, 2008)

In regards to identity in community media, Anderson et al. state that irrespective of whether it is in Global North or Global South, community radio as a sector has been struggling with issues of sustainability, human resources, neo-liberal media policies, and rapid digitisation

of media. Despite all these unfavourable reasons, which result in the creation of a not so conducive environment, community radios have been resilient across the globe. More importantly, while confronting the challenges, community radios continue to play an all-important role in strengthening the local identities of communities who are otherwise neglected by the dominant media (Anderson et al. 2020). In the case of community radios, Dash (2015) proposes that community radios are powerful means of communicative spaces in repressive media environments where smaller communities are neglected and marginalised in the popular media spaces. In that scenario, community radio also offers a more dynamic platform where people from those smaller and marginalised communities are able to express themselves. That way community radio works as an expressive device, which results in the formation of identity and community solidarity. Identity, in general, is multifaceted and culturally complex. Media adds to that already existing complexity by stimulating greater inter-penetration between cultures. Radio as a hyper-local media also seems to be an appropriate medium that helps in enhancing cultural identity and community solidarity. It can be very effective where there is still a prevalence of oral culture. AMARC, The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters also recognizes the importance of community radio in strengthening and developing local culture and identity (Pavarala & Malik, 2007, 17-18).

Stressing on the significance of the role of participation of community members in community radio, Carpentier, Lie, and Servaes (2007) comment that ‘Ordinary people’, meaning the commoners with community radio have the opportunity to voice their issues, experiences, and concerns. They can ensure that their voices are getting heard and they are being appropriately and adequately represented through their own media. They will also have their own gatekeeping mechanism to decide what is relevant to them and what is not. All of these are happening when the community members are participating in the entire

process of community radio broadcasting. This way the entire exercise helps them in getting emancipated and it also strengthens their internal and community identity. Positioning community radio as counter media, Girard (1992) states that in the age of media globalisation, media has been very much successful in enforcing a master culture and in erasing cultural heterogeneity and diversity. Also, it has promoted homogenisation of culture in a great way. In order to counter this, community radio is well-positioned as an alternative that promotes and supports community identity and culture while countering the threats of cultural hegemony promoted by popular and dominant media.

Focusing on the Kothmale Community Radio, Nafiz (2012) establishes that after being uprooted from their native place, the Kothmale Community Radio initiative was founded to help the community members get a new identity of their own. Positioning community radio as a powerful tool that promotes self-expression and alternative discourses in marginalised communities following democratic media principles, Backhaus (2020) offers an interesting detail that community radio also plays an important role in the formation and expression of mediatised identity.

Specific to indigeneity, indigenous communities, indigenous knowledge systems, and community radio, GN Devy's work is very instrumental. Although not directly linked to community media scholarship, his understanding of indigenous communities and their knowledge systems come in handy in developing a more nuanced idea and it helps in situating indigenous knowledge systems in community media studies. Devy claims that the term 'indigenous' has a sweeping history and it is recognised and legitimised in different contexts and trajectories. He further suggests that there are different terminologies given to 'indigenous people' across the world. And they are recognised as 'Aborigines' in Australia, as 'Maori' in New Zealand, as 'First Nations' in Canada, as 'Indigenous' in the United States. In the Indian context, these communities are identified by various titles like

Janajatis, Tribes, Notified Communities, Indigenous people, and Adivasis. These titles are used differently in varying contexts for multiple purposes like administrative work, anthropological research, and human rights activism. He is also uncomfortable with the way multilateral organisations like International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNESCO seek to represent these communities as one group, and that is as 'indigenous'. He is of the view that each of these communities has different genealogies, and that they should be distinctly identified and recognised for their distinctiveness. By grouping them as one group 'indigenous' we end up not considering the varying histories and rich cultural differences of each of these communities (Devy, 2009). On indigenous culture, Ramnika Gupta writes that indigenous knowledge systems are deeply rooted in the culture of the concerned community. It is reflected in their everyday lives. All the literature and cultural sources of knowledge in the indigenous community are closely related to nature and life. And it is about cohabitation with nature, freedom, equality, cooperation, brotherhood, social integrity, and honesty, which favours the indigenous knowledge systems to thrive in the community. She advances her argument that unfortunately, the rich history and culture of the indigenous communities get neglected, and the representation of the indigenous community in the mainstream educational and research textbooks is inadequate and inappropriate. The mainstream history writing in the Indian context never considered that indigenous communities have an account of their own and which is very much different and distinct from mainstream history (Gupta, 2009). It is in this context, that popular and mainstream media do not consider and acknowledge the rich indigenous and local knowledge sources while representing them or sharing their stories. In that kind of situation, community radio with its potential to revive local epistemologies can be very effective in promoting local knowledge systems and in rejecting 'expert knowledge culture' promoted by dominant media.

On community radio and indigenous knowledge systems, Backhaus (2019) avers that local knowledge is an important cultural dimension as it represents a deep past about the community and its cultural identity. Community radio is very relevant in offering a horizontal form of listening and dissemination of ideas. It helps in reinforcing the local knowledge systems and their values in a more effective way. Manyozo also interprets that indigenous knowledge tends to be dialogical, interactive, and deeply embedded within its local context which can be used effectively by local media like community radio to revive indigenous epistemologies that are under threat (Manyozo, 2018). While modernity and its hegemonic construction established indigenous knowledge as primitive, unscientific, irrational, or condemned it as ethno-knowledge, what is interesting to note is that both ‘indigenous’ and ‘modernity’ are mutually exclusive. It is important to reject the traditional anthropological and sociological constructions of the indigenous as primitive and understand it as a social structure with independent values and ethos. Practicing indigenous knowledge systems through community radio also helps in increasing social capital and building a sense of identity in the community (Das & Padel, 2020; Backhaus, 2019; Manyozo, 2018).

The above strands of literature are not entirely comprehensive while providing an understanding of the concepts and their trajectories in particular reference to this study. This helps in positioning the relevant concepts for the study. Subsequently, the case study chapters focus on these concepts and how they play out in a cultural site. The case study chapters also provide detailed descriptions about how community radio engages with and addresses the politics, fractures, and questions related to culture, identity, and local knowledge systems.

2.7. Researching Community Radio: Local and Global Standpoints

Having reflected on the various interrelated and associated concepts and ideas related to this study, this particular section specifically focuses on the broader scholarship on community radio in particular and community and alternative media in general. There is a significant body of literature now available related to various facets, aspects, and forms of community media. There are important studies done by scholars and researchers across regions that engage with issues and questions of history (Dagron, 2001; Atton, 2002, Downing, 2003; Dash, 2015; Hamilton, 2000), policy (Malik, 2003; Lewis, 2015; Raghunath, 2020), development (Backhaus, 2021; Malik & Pavarala, 2021), empowerment (Nirmala, 2015), political economy of community media (Fuchs and Sandoval, 2015), participation (Carpentier, 2011; Forde, 2015), volunteering (Milan, 2008), voice (Tacchi, 2008; Thomas, 2015; Couldry, 2010), gender (Malik, 2007), community and solidarity (Browne, 2012; Pavarala, 2003, Bailur, 2012), community radio journalism (Forde, Foxwell, & Meadows, 2003; Forde, Meadows, & Foxwell-Norton, 2002; Meadows, Forde, Ewart, & Foxwell, 2009), Indigenous communication (Forde, Foxwell, & Meadows, 2009) and so on. Such interesting scholastic contributions have been trying to establish the field of community and alternative media as a distinct field of study. Backhaus (2019) argues that both quantitative and qualitative research are relevant to community media studies and both these traditions of research have been used to investigate several traits of community radio. Considering the scope and nature of this study, the qualitative research approach is of particular interest as it seems fit for providing appropriate methodologies to address the key questions and objectives of the research.

Despite a variety of work that has emerged in the field of community media studies, scholars like Kevin Howley (2013) claim that there is still a presence of definitional issues which have adversely affected the theoretical development of the field. As a result, the

struggle for legitimacy in academia is still on. He further states that scholars failed to recognize the significance of community media in contemporary media culture and the volume of cultural production associated with community media remains underresearched. Meadows and others suggest that there has been a considerable rise in terms of the theoretical and empirical studies in the field of community and alternative media studies while many aspects are yet to be examined and researched (Meadows et al. 2009). By and large, this has been the global standpoint of research in the domain of community radio and community media studies.

As far as community radio research in India is concerned, the history is not very old. The first concrete and consolidated research was carried out in the early 2000s and it was aligned with the ongoing community radio movement (Malik, 2007). Over the years, community radio has emerged as an area of study that warrants comprehensive research and rigorous documentation in order to understand community radio-the media and the field more critically (Malik, 2017). With time community radio has evolved as a meaningful space of research and PhD candidates from across universities in India have been working on various facets related to community radio (Lakhendra, 2012; Ilamparithi, 2012; Belavadi, 2015; Dash, 2015; Raghunath, 2018; Backhaus, 2019). Scholars also recommend carrying out new studies that try to add a newer and interesting understanding to the existing domain of knowledge on community radio in India. Areas such as nature and context of participation in community radio, issues and status of sustainability of community radio, community radio as a cultural resource, changing policy subtleties of community radio, and so on (Malik, 2017).

Previous studies and researches have been very instrumental in helping me in coming up with a broader idea to investigate and this study is interested in engaging with questions,

issues, fractures, and politics of culture, identity, and knowledge systems of community radio.

2.8. Theoretical Framework

2.8.1. Positioning Community Radio as Democratic and Participatory Media

Community radio as a form of alternative media is small-scale in its scope and nature with a very specific and particular orientation towards certain communities. Certain communities implying those that are marginalised, disadvantaged, sidelined, and neglected by the so-called mainstream media. Community radio, while respecting the community's diversity and heterogeneity remains independent of state and market. As a grassroots media, it is horizontally structured, which allows better and more effective facilitation of audience access and participation within the framework of democratisation and multiplicity (Bailey Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008). In general, community radio as alternative media is non-dominant and counter-hegemonic media that stresses the importance of self-representations of the particular communities and issues and experiences. As Pavarala (2015) argues, in order for community radio to find more fertile ground and conducive climate to take root and grow more prolifically, it is paramount to have a ruling dispensation that promotes participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian social and political spaces. Community radio, as a grassroots media, thrives on democratic principles, which encourage greater community access, concrete community mandate, accountability, citizen engagement, and participation.

Based on these democratic and participatory foundations, community radio focuses on the importance of the communities' communication rights by creating their own media, which provides them an alternative to counter the mainstream and more dominant media. Louie

Tabing (2002:11) defines a community radio station as “one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community, and by the community.” Further, Tabing argues, “community radio can be managed or controlled by one group, by combined groups, or of people such as women, children, farmers, fisherfolk, ethnic groups, or senior citizens.” Using principles such as self-management and accountability, community radio indeed helps community members to be in the driver’s seat and take charge of their own affairs. In addition to the above-mentioned ideas, I have also been very keen on looking at the debates and discourses around participation, and in that reference, Paulo Freire’s dialogic communication as a widely accepted proposition serves as a normative idea in understanding participation and participatory communication in the context of this study (Freire, 1970).

Moreover, this study tries to understand how community radio as an alternative communication media that is owned and managed by the community emerges as a truly democratic and community-based media, which thrives on the principles of participation and democracy while focusing on community expressions, experiences, issues, and concerns. Examining two different community radio initiatives located in tribal spaces viz., Radio Dhimsa, and Radio Swayamshakti, this study highlights the nature and form of participation in such diverse social and cultural contexts. Also, the study tries to investigate if these grassroots expressions through community have led to conscientization and knowledge sharing (Freire, 1970; Malik, 2005); and whether participation in the community radio has truly helped the community members in developing a more critical understanding of their social reality, problems, and solutions?

2.8.2. Community radio and the counter-cultural public sphere

Dash in his study argues that the freedom to communicate and express should always be the fundamental right of every community in general and individual citizens in particular. More specifically, the marginalised and exploited communities, which are locationally disadvantaged and geographically positioned on the margins should not be ignored when it comes to their communication rights. These communities constitute a vast majority of the populace and it is important to have alternative media like community radio to provide them an important alternative to express themselves and their experiences (Dash, 2015). In fact, having access to alternative means of communication will result in the creation of greater and more participatory communicative ecologies that will help destabilise the dominant power structure and structural communication that neglect the communities on the margins (Das, 1990; Tacchi, 2006).

Community radio also plays a critical role in facilitating a more active and responsive counter-public sphere. Critiquing the original Habermasian idea of the public sphere, which is more popularly understood as the "bourgeois public sphere" (Habermas, 1991), Nancy Fraser's Counter Public Sphere argues that Habermasian idea of the public sphere is more of a conceptual resource, which is very much important to critical social theory, but it is not wholly satisfactory. She also contends that Habermasian Public Sphere is an inquiry into the category called Bourgeois Society, which Habermas calls the "liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere." Furthermore, Fraser contends that Habermas never expanded the idea beyond the bourgeois category while it was extremely important to problematize some of the debatable conventions that inspire the bourgeois model. Therefore, the absence of not having a more holistic understanding of the public sphere never helped in serving the needs of critical theory. She proposes that key ideas and attributes of universal ideation of the public sphere should have principles like open access, participatory parity, and social

equality, diversity, and multiple publics. Nancy Fraser revisits history and presents a revised account which also considers “the members of subordinated social groups—women, workers, people of colour, and gays and lesbians—have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics (p.57). Fraser calls the “subaltern counter publics” which are parallel discursive arenas that offer the members of the subordinate social group to engage in dialogue and develop counter-discourses, which in turn help these disadvantaged groups to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, needs, issues, and concerns to the more dominant and mainstream forces (Fraser, 1990).

Drawing on Jim McGuigan’s idea, the concept of cultural public sphere includes various channels and means of mass, popular, mainstream, and dominant cultures and the dissemination of the mediated version of cultural expressions and articulations using mass and popular media. The concept further argues that it refers to “the cultural articulation of politics, public, and personal as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication” (p.435). A cultural analysis of the original idea of the public sphere helps in developing a more critical understanding of how culture functions and cultural articulations and expressions are addressed through the idea of the public sphere (McGuigan, 2005). For purposes of this research, culture is fundamental to intervene into and understand the larger politics that the communities are addressing. In that sense, community radio functions as a counter media in opposition to the more dominant and majoritarian mass media that disseminates the dominant cultures and its expressions with a view to mainstream and culturally unify the fragmented communities.

Responding to the above argument, this study combines the idea of a counter-public sphere (Fraser, 1990) with cultural public sphere (McGuigan, 2005) to examine how community radio acts as a counter to the more dominant media and helps the socially, culturally, and

locationally disadvantaged communities like the *Khadiali* in Nuapada and *Desia* in Koraput forge a more active and working counter-cultural public sphere.

2.8.3. Community Radio and the Interpretation of Culture and Identity

Culture and identity are the two main entry points of this research. Understanding how community radio as a grassroots media engages with and addresses the key questions and politics of culture and identity in a cultural site is one of the primary objectives of this study. This study draws heavily from Kevin Howley's work on cultural analysis of community radio. Howley's work suggests that doing a cultural analysis of community media will result in knowing the true potential and efficacy of the medium. In his attempt to provide a more comprehensive and holistic definition of what community media is, he takes territoriality, society, and other cultural aspects into consideration. He also sees it as a factor, which is like a mouthpiece of the oppressed and the downtrodden etc. He then explains the status of the political economy in reference to cultural studies and community media and how in the past few decades the ideas of production, distribution, and consumption have gone through a drastic sphere of change. While talking about media reception as a form of cultural production, Howley positions community media as a medium of cultural mediation through which culture can be disseminated and presented in a mediated manner (Howley, 2002).

Also, for the purposes of cultural analysis, the "Circuit of Culture" as a tool of cultural analysis by Stuart Hall and later, as a concept by du Gay et al. provide the key to develop a more critical yet comprehensive understanding about culture, identity, production, representation, and consumption in a cultural site (Hall, 1997; Du Gay et al., 1997). This also helps in comprehending the overall engagement of community radio as a community-

owned and managed media with the local and indigenous culture and identity in a complex cultural site.

For interpretation of culture and identity, Clifford Geertz's work on the interpretation of culture provides the frames to analyse and comprehend the web of meanings that are embedded in the cultures of a particular community. Geertz's idea of culture and thick description, which banks on interpretative approaches, offer the right kind of space to accommodate the diverse meanings and significances of various cultural articulations and expressions (Geertz, 1973).

I also draw from the works of Manuel Castells and Tara Ross in order to understand and engage with ideas and questions of identity. Castells' work on the power of identity describes it as "The process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute or related set of cultural attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning" (Castells, 2010:6). Castells emphasises the construction of meaning and the cultural attributes associated with the idea of identity.

Similarly, Tara Ross in her unpublished work: Pacific media, culture, and identity provides a more constructivist understanding of identity and argues that the "constructivist view of identity is conventional in contemporary social science and identities such as ethnicity are not primordial or fixed by nature, but are socially constructed" (Ross, 2017:96). She further states that it is important to develop a more coherent and concrete understanding of the identities of both social and cultural while considering the larger social, political, geographical histories and the power structures that influence the construction of multiple identities.

Grounded on these larger theoretical premises and propositions, this study examines the politics of identity and culture in community radio and specifically interpret culture and construct identity in their respective cultural sites.

2.8.4. Community Radio & Indigenous Epistemologies

This study also tries to address the politics of knowledge and the questions related to it. The role of community radio as a local media is extremely crucial in addressing the key questions of local knowledge systems. The presence of local epistemological sources and studying how community radio engages with these epistemologies are some of the main objectives of this study.

In this connection, Indian literary critic GN Devy's work on the Indian understanding of indigenous communities and their knowledge systems is very significant. His scholarship on indigenous epistemologies helps in situating and positioning community radio initiatives in understanding local knowledge systems in a more nuanced way. Devy's narratives and arguments are situated in the larger understanding of indigenous communities worldwide (Devy et al., 2009). Additionally, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work on researching the indigenous informs the study in exploring the variety of issues and complexities that are embedded in indigenous communities and their epistemologies. Smith's work also influences my own subject position as a researcher and helps me critically understand and engage with the local communities in ways and means that truly value their cultures, expressions, experiences, practices, knowledge systems, and worldviews (Smith, 2012).

Besides, S. Kirsch's idea of reverse anthropology claims that in order to develop a more critical and authentic understanding, it is very necessary to go beyond the traditional ways

and means of doing ethnographic research by employing new ways and means of researching the local and indigenous that question the conventional anthropological and other sociological styles and patterns of engaging with local and indigenous communities and their lives and cultures (Kirsch, 2006).

Engaging with the local tribal communities and making sense of their cultures and life worlds was extremely important for this study. Samarendra Das and Felix Padel's (2020) work on East Indian Adivasis in their Magnum Opus *Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and The Aluminium Cartel* proposes that in order to position research in a robust space both methodologically and theoretically, it is essential to employ methods of co-learning, co-listening, and co-narrating as it promotes indigenous ways and means of engaging with the indigenous communities. They also recommend that it is important to refer and cite global scholarship and literature, but it is more important to ensure that the work should not fall into the trap of Western methods and methodologies. Additionally, they endorse Reverse Anthropology to overcome this canonical orientation to ensure that the subjects of research actually take the center stage and that they start questioning the researchers in order to ensure that the entire exercise is a process of co-learning. Their work problematises the embedded ethnographies and how these canonical and top-down studies take knowledge out of the communities by essentialising their indigenous identities. For these kinds of exercises, they use 'Extractive Capital' or 'Extractivism' in order to extract knowledge from the communities. Exposing the gaps in earlier ethnographies, they claim that extracting knowledge from the communities and not giving back is the hallmark of traditional ethnography.

Using the above theoretical underpinnings, this study underlines the ways and means of how community radio engages with indigenous and tribal communities and knowledge systems. Also, the research looks at how local epistemologies and knowledge systems are

being considered in the overall programming and how these are being represented. This study is not about extracting details and meanings from the tribal communities and rather a process of learning with and from the communities. Rather, it is about understanding and examining how they and their articulations, expressions, experiences, issues, and concerns are being engaged with and represented by their own media.

Apart from the above theoretical frameworks, this study is greatly informed by the interpretive and constructivist paradigms to make sense of the realities and experiences presented in the field. The two paradigms also inform the scope, methods, and epistemological and ontological positions of the research more accurately (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Cohen & Manion, 1994; Backhaus, 2019). The amalgamation of both approaches helps in considering the participant's views of the situation that is being studied, and the scope to generate a theory or a pattern of meanings (Creswell, 2013). The use of both the frameworks in this study helped me in making sense of how culture is communicated, identity is constructed, and indigenous knowledge systems are reinforced through the two CRs.

CHAPTER THREE

Researching Community Radio: Examining the Politics of Culture and Identity

3.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodological framework and research design employed for this study. It details the research objectives and supported questions while discussing the rationale behind them. The following section focuses on the ethnographic sampling used to select cases examined as part of this study. Next, the methodology section elaborates on the methods and tools used during the fieldwork of this study while emphasising how the chosen methods and tools contributed to this study.

Similarly, the data analysis section also unpacks the ways and means used to make sense of the collected data. It helps develop concrete arguments to understand the larger ideas under investigation. The conclusion focusses on the lighter side of the study by highlighting the best part of the fieldwork and how the experience has been wholesome.

3.2. Research Objectives and Questions

The broad objectives supported by research questions for this study are drawn after understanding and analysing key concepts like community, community media, community radio, identity, and culture. Existing research and literature mainly focus on mainstream media, identity, and culture, emphasizing how they play out in a cultural site. Other existing

works have focused on how media as an institution construct community and identity of its own.

Particularly after the cultural turn in the early 1970s, the major works in social sciences and humanities have shifted focus on culture as the focal point of the academic debates and discourses (Jameson, 1983). In communication and media studies, the cultural turn tended to analyse the social practice of communication, organization, and systems from a cultural lens. Hence, the directions in the field of communication and media studies have treated 'culture' & 'identity' as significant objects of study.

However, the very shift has not gone hand in hand with the overall demystification of ideas, i.e., culture and identity because of the multifaceted nature of the ideas. It remains a difficult exercise to position culture and identity as concepts in the field of communication and media studies because of the blurry theoretical and conceptual grounds.

After review, it became evident that there is a dearth of literature on how community and alternative media deal with local identity, knowledge systems, and culture. Hence, it warrants that one explores and understands how community and alternative media transact and address the issues and questions of identity, culture, cultural diversity, representations of identity and culture, local knowledge systems, and notably the discourses surrounding them. Most of the existing literature have an acute western focus, the research having been conducted in Ireland, Canada and Australia. Understanding culture and identity in a culturally diverse country like India therefore gains significance.

G.N. Devy's (2017) critical interpretation of local epistemology and language, Kevin Howley's (2002) provocative work on cultural analysis of community media, Pawan K. Varma's (2010) autobiographical account on the struggle for identity and culture, and Nick Couldry's (2010) analytical work on why voice matters reflect the varied approaches and provide greater conceptual clarity. I conduct my research building on these above-mentioned key texts. In addition to examining how community radio deals and transacts with local identity, knowledge systems, and culture this study seeks to examine and interpret its politics by taking two different community radio initiatives in eastern India as sites of investigation.

The broad objective of the study is to understand the dynamics of community and politics of identity and culture in community radio initiatives in India. The research objectives and questions thereof of the study are outlined below:

Research Objective One:

To understand the overall idea of community radio as a form of community media and its location in the larger context of the community's popular social and cultural practices.

1. What are the community's dominant social, cultural, and knowledge systems?
2. What is community radio?
3. What makes it an alternative media?
4. Who is the community in community radio?
5. Who owns and controls the community radio?
6. How do the community of broadcasters, content creators, radio supporters, and listeners make sense of the ownership of community radio?

7. What are the existing structures and functions of the select community radio initiatives?
8. How do the community radio initiatives enable community members to engage and participate in the organization, production, and distribution of their own media?

Research Objective Two:

To critically analyse and understand the content development process in the select community radio initiatives.

1. What is the process involved in content development?
2. How does the community radio consider local identity and culture while developing content?
3. What are the common attributes of the content broadcast by the select community radio initiatives?

Research Objective Three:

To examine how the select community radio initiatives construct and represent local identity and culture.

1. How do the select community radios construct, frame, and represent local identity and culture?
2. How do the content producers establish their own frames of participation, and creativity?
3. How do the select community radio initiatives counter global/majoritarian identities, cultural hegemony, and 'expert knowledge' culture?

4. How do the select community radio initiatives help in strengthening local identity and culture?

5. How do the select community radio initiatives address the politics of culture and identity?

The research objectives and questions listed above inform the selection of cases for this study. They were also useful in finalising the overall methodological framework, including the data collection methods, approach, and study analysis.

The methods and techniques used for data collection and analysis are outlined in the following sections of this chapter.

3.3. Ethnographic Sampling

Unlike in quantitative research, qualitative and ethnographic research sampling is a complex phenomenon. It is determined by the given number of participants, events, issues, cases in a particular and specific context, subculture, or group under investigation (Higginbottom, 2004; Dash, 2015). Hence, sampling in qualitative ethnographic research is non-probability in nature where there is no equal and certain chance of being selected for the study. Given the complex nature of the sampling in qualitative ethnographic research, the universe and study sample size considered for the study is, therefore, the entire subculture or group available to avoid any gaps and possible limitations in acquiring a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Werner & Bernard, 1994). The idea of sampling in this study is to accommodate and represent the overall important and relevant characteristics of the larger phenomena under investigation.

Scholars argue that sampling in ethnographic research is not always about population. It is about the wide range of a particular phenomenon that the researcher is interested in investigating or examining. At times, sampling in ethnographic work can start with something close to the entry point. For example, a recce or pilot visit and establishing networks with people and organizations can be the starting point of the sampling process (Dash, 2015; Werner & Bernard, 1994). In this research, I have tried in the best way possible to avoid rigidity regarding sampling procedure to accommodate a more complex and varied reality with a view that in qualitative research it is always better to have a broader understanding that provides for wider relevance. The larger aim of this research is to understand how community media in general and community radio in particular, engage and address issues, questions, politics, and fractures of culture and identity. Therefore, it was essential for me to opt for a more open-ended qualitative and ethnographic sampling procedure that is more accommodative and not rigid. Hence, these sampling choices are theoretically informed but based on some practical limitations of the larger methodological framework used in this research (O'Reilly, 2009).

After considering the study's broad objectives and research questions, purposive sampling was used to identify the two case studies, i.e., Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada. Also, the selection of the cases for this study was informed by a critical analysis of relevant literature, socio-cultural and geographic location, and the community radio initiatives' overall standing. As for the larger group of respondents, they were selected conveniently considering the larger purpose of the study to ensure that the maximum number of relevant respondents and important stakeholders are included for in-

depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and informal interactions to get a rich and comprehensive understanding of the ground realities.

3.4. The Data Universe

In qualitative ethnographic research, fieldwork is paramount, and the equation between the field and fieldworker is very dynamic. The idea of data in ethnographic research is very much linked to the idea of the field. The fieldworker is supposed to accumulate data in the form of information, observations, reflections, experiences, narratives, etc., to substantiate the core research arguments and achieve the larger research objectives (Dash, 2015). Also, fieldwork in qualitative ethnographic research warrants long-term presence of the fieldworker or researcher in order to make sense of the ground realities, which also helps develop a critical first-person account of the field (Gobo, 2011). The principles of village studies in India and the sociology of field studies are basically grounded on the very marriage between the fieldworker and the field. Through this marriage, the act of observation and interaction with the objects and subjects of the field results in meaning-making (Srinivas, 1979).

Although in this research the actual data is related to the specificities and particularities of the cases selected, the experiences, reflections, and narratives can perhaps be used to make sense of the contexts in other community radio initiatives across the country. The liberties of conducting this qualitative ethnographic research offer conducive scope to understand the multiple realities, experiences, and struggles associated with the select community

radio initiatives, i.e., Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti and the communities that control these grassroots media (Meadows et al., 2008).

On the efficacy of qualitative research design in studying alternative and community media initiatives, Downing (2003) argues that studies involving public or commercial radio units might have considered quantitative techniques to understand audience likes and dislikes. However, for alternative and community media, qualitative techniques yield better results because these are mediums that directly involve communities at the grassroots level. Hence, research involving alternative and community media should incorporate qualitative research because it will offer the scope to engage with the media and the community in a more holistic way to make a greater sense of the realities.

In this research, I have attempted to engage with data in more than one way to draw more meanings and contextualize them with the larger realities in the field. In order to do that, qualitative methods of data collection were indeed resourceful.

As Kirsten Hastrup (1987) points out, fieldwork in a qualitative ethnographic study is very much like looking in a mirror, which allows the researcher--ethnographer to understand all that is happening around. In the process, the researcher gets to see others while having an opportunity to look at himself/herself. That is why the researcher is both a subject and object in the process of doing fieldwork. In this research, I gained access to the community as a third person and became part of the community while simultaneously being a stranger to my own identity as a researcher (Srinivas, 1979).

I spent a total of eight months at the select community radio sites for the fieldwork, with multiple visits undertaken during the pilot study during early December 2018 and fieldwork between January and August 2019. As part of data collection, I used the case study method involving interviews (in-depth and conversational), focus group discussions (FGDs), participant observation, informal interactions/walk the talk, storytelling, and desk review of available documents and reports.

Using an ethnographic and interpretivist approach, the study aimed at gaining multiple insights in both the study sites to discover essential categories, themes, and concepts to arrive at a nuanced understanding. This study was located at the intersection and interaction between a few complex and flexible ideas like community radio, community, culture, and identity. Data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously to ensure the data's immediacy and not leave the small yet important everyday details and references. I also maintained a daily diary making notes of my impressions during the field visits.

3.5. The Interpretive Framework: The Search for Meaning

Quantitative research approaches are informed by a positivist paradigm which helps in creating meanings by accounting for norms, laws, and structures. However, in qualitative ethnographic research, social meanings emerge from larger social sciences philosophies like interpretive, phenomenological, and hermeneutic traditions (O'Reilly, 2009). The use of the interpretive framework is informed and supported by the methodological choices made in this research. Interpretivism is a strand of qualitative research philosophies rooted in the hermeneutics tradition, which is the study of theory and practice of interpretation.

The interpreter's job is to interpret the social, cultural, and written texts to reconstruct the intended meaning of the text. This act of interpretation helps make sense of social realities and create social meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The fundamentals of an interpretivist paradigm depend on the researcher's views of the problem or phenomenon under investigation. It is about making sense of multiple realities and field narratives via personal interactions with the field subjects (Creswell, 2013). This interpretivist paradigm also offers greater scope for being reflexive, which helps to understand the varied motivations, thinking, and ideas that inform the mosaic of social life. It goes beyond addressing and understanding the 'what' questions and further offers scope to understand the 'how' and 'why' questions of the phenomenon under study.

Moreover, being influenced by the philosophy of interpretivism, I try to understand individual human motives, shared meanings, and cultures in terms of their daily interactions and common-sense ideas in the wider context in which this research is located. This has been achieved by direct participation and full immersion in the everyday lives to gain critical knowledge about the social realities and meanings. Also, this is not attributed to the researcher only; instead, it is a process of co-creation which involves the subjects of research that informs the researcher's act of meaning-making (Charmaz, 2014).

Another characteristic of interpretivism is that it acknowledges the presence of complexities in society and suggests that it might not always be possible to come up with structured, concrete, systematic, and theoretical answers to all human and social problems. But it offers ways and means to accommodate the complexities involved in each problem because it acknowledges that every problem or experience is unique in nature. In general, interpretive researchers admit that values in research are important and at times, avoiding

the researcher's own bias and values is unavoidable. But all possible attempts are made to avoid those biases and values to make the research and its findings more value-free (Backhaus, 2021). In this research also, I have tried my best to be bias-free and objective in my approach, but as the interpretivism paradigm suggests, I have attempted to understand the phenomenon under study and describe it in a more nuanced way possible rather than claiming to find solutions to problems and changing the world.

This research acknowledges that there are multiple realities, and they are socially constructed while the meanings are embedded. The idea of what is already known and who is knowing is always interactive in nature. This paradigm contributes to the research's larger theoretical, methodological, epistemological, and ontological positions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; O'Reilly, 2009; Backhaus, 2021).

Using the idea of social constructivism, this research further focuses on multiple social actors, interactions, and the co-creation of social meanings. This also allows the researcher to acknowledge the existence of reality in the everyday sense of the term. The interpretive nature of the research questions required a flexible worldview and a more accommodative approach in order to acknowledge the existence of multiple truths, meanings, views, and understandings around knowledge and reality which underpins this research. This paradigm also avoids an absolutist approach to research.

3.6. Methodology: The Art of Co-listening, Co-learning, and Co-creating

Unlike other community radio initiatives in the country, Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada are quite different, considering their social, cultural,

political, and geographic settings. Perhaps due to their disadvantageous positions, they have been largely ignored by researchers, planners, academicians, and development professionals. Since both these initiatives are located in culturally vibrant spaces, I have attempted to work with them and learn from and with them to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how community radio is communicating culture and building identities while addressing the questions, issues, and politics surrounding it.

As Allen (2017) states in ethnography in communication and media studies, the researcher—the ethnographer-- studies a particular social and cultural community of people within their own natural environment without meddling much the larger social and cultural milieu of the community under investigation through intensive fieldwork which includes participant observation, in-depth interview, informal talks, FGDs, daily diaries, and desk review. While learning from the very canonical and conventional anthropological ethnographic traditions, this research goes further in understanding ethnography as both a process and product by incorporating the ideas of co-learning, co-creating, and co-learning with the communities to develop critical insights about the layered realities that are usually embedded in the community's social and cultural life (Dutta, 2020; Das & Padel, 2020). Organizational ethnography was useful in developing a deeper understanding of the community radio initiative and its parent non-government organisation (NGO). It allowed me to get a comprehensive idea of the staff structure, work culture, institutional management, organisational structure, logic, mission, vision, function, and the link between individual and organization, and effectiveness of the programs of the CRS (Neyland, 2007).

Overall, ethnography allowed me to work closely with both the community radio initiatives and the communities that run, control, and manage the media. The following tools and techniques were used to get the required evidence to address the research questions and attain the broad research objectives. The description of the use and relevance of each of the methodological interventions are discussed below.

3.6.1. Case Study Approach: Developing a Critical Understanding and Examining an Initiative in Multiple Ways

Sometimes studying multiple initiatives using single methods might be cause for worry, and there is a high possibility that depending on a single methodological tool might not yield the desired result. Considering this, I have used the case study method to examine the community radio initiatives from multiple vantage points and different contexts. Case study as an approach is specifically used to create an opportunity to generate an in-depth understanding of a particular case by engaging with the varied contexts and other particularities and complexities associated with the case (Yin, 2011). A case can be an individual, organization, event, initiative, community, social group, family, cause, or a phenomenon in its real-life context (Stake, 1995; Wimmer and Dominik, 2011).

A case study is not a single methodological tool; rather, it is one of the ways to engage with a particular case to understand the realities of the case qualitatively by examining it as a whole. In the case study approach, the variables are not categorized as independent or dependent variables, but rather the case is examined and analyzed comprehensively and holistically. The case study involved multiple tools, and techniques, including thick description of the case in the form of a situation or problem under investigation to develop

a well-rounded understanding considering all the stakeholders, events, settings, and factors that are linked to the select case (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2021).

For this research, case study was the most appropriate method and approach to examine both the select initiatives, i.e., Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada, to understand and engage with the similarities and differences in both the locations and also, to make sense of the subtle intricacies present in both the study sites. The case study allows examining both the initiatives in an in-depth manner to understand how these community radio initiatives engage with communities and how they create and build community voice infrastructures while building capacities of community members. It also helped make sense of the program content creation, distribution, and consumption. Further, with the help of certain methods like ethnographic content analysis and participant observation, I could manage to immerse myself in the overall everyday affairs of each of the select initiatives to understand how these initiatives accommodate the community, its culture and identity, and importantly, how these community radio initiatives help the community to challenge external threats while strengthening and reviving their local and indigenous culture. Moreover, the case study approach was also useful in understanding how these community radio initiatives successfully address the issues, questions, and politics of culture and identity through program contents.

I have used Margrit Schreier's (2018) idea of single and multiple case studies and Stake's (1995) typologies of case studies as 'intrinsic,' 'instrumental' and 'collective.' Intrinsic case study is carried out to understand only one single case in a limited way. It can be considered an instrumental case study if it aims to accomplish something beyond the general understanding of the particular case. This particular study can be categorized under Stake's

third type, i.e., collective case study – more than one case here, Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti. Both CRs are examined and studied critically to arrive at a broader understanding that is relevant and referential to the larger field of alternative and community media (Stake, 1995). While the two CRs selected for the study are different going by the community they cater to and their social, cultural, and geographic settings, their common goal is to empower communities and reinforce their sense of community.

3.6.2. Fieldwork: Doing Pilot Visits and Building Rapport with The Community

I visited Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada as part of my field work and it was my first to that region of Odisha. Before travelling, I had a telephonic conversation with the Station Director Biswajit Padhi. He shared one of the station crew members' number Pintu Nayak, who stayed inside the community radio campus. In fact, Team Radio Swayamshakti was kind enough to arrange my stay at the station and in hindsight, it was a decision to be constantly in touch with the station crew members and sharing the everyday with them.

I remember, I took the bus from Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha to Raj Khariar and it was an overnight journey of 430 kilometers. It was a Monday morning when I reached Radio Swayamshakti. Pintu Nayak and another crew member were there and they helped me settle there for some time. The location of Radio Swayamshakti was intriguing because of greenery around with a hill facing the front and a small concrete road crossing in-between. The station was just about 1.5 kilometres from the nearest Raj Kahriar market. After settling down, I started taking notes of the surroundings and had informal talks with the station crew members to build a connection and help them understand the purpose of my visit in detail.

During my fieldwork at Radio Swayamshakti, I interviewed the key stakeholders of the community radio initiatives like station director, station coordinator, programme coordinator, local contributor, community members, opinion leaders, volunteers, members of the district administration, cultural artists, activists, NGOs, local poets, writers, and others in general who are connected to Radio Swayamshakti. Besides, I also interacted with the local king Jita Mitra Singhdeo and his brother Nila Lohita Singhdeo to get an idea about the region's history in general and Khariar in particular. I also met the village cultural committees and radio listeners' and volunteers' club from many villages including Nehna, Amalapali, Badi, Khariar, Sinapali, Belpara, Birighat, Chandel, Badi, Kotipadar, and Lachhigaon and informally interacted with them. Those interactions really helped me get a grasp on the region and its social, cultural, political, and geographic history and the contemporary scenario. Details about the experience at Radio Swayamshakti are discussed in the case study chapter. After completing my fieldwork, I returned to Hyderabad and spent a few days organizing the data and everything I experienced at Radio Swayamshakti. It was essential to organise my messy field notes, memos, and recordings to make better sense of them.

After a couple of weeks, I embarked on my journey to the more familiar land Koraput, the 'Switzerland of East', because of its scenic beauty with hills, streams, rivers and flora. Since I was familiar with the place, I had already booked a dormitory closeby for the duration of my stay to ensure that I had a place to rest after the day's field work. The people at the community radio station were familiar to me since I had interacted with them during the pilot visit. In fact, one of them named Sabir Silo was my senior at Central University of Odisha. Therefore, I felt comfortable and soon got acquainted with the Team Radio Dhimsa. After a couple of days of informal interaction with the station crew members and

sharing my objectives and other essential details, I set about scheduling interviews with various personnel.

I began with an interview with SOVA NGO Director Sanjit Pattnaik, followed by Station Manager Sachida Mohanty, station crew members, content contributors, volunteers, cultural artistes, local community and opinion leaders, journalists, members of the district administration, and others who were directly or indirectly connected to Radio Dhimsa. All the in-depth interviews were conducted based on prior appointments. Hence, I had more time to spend with the station crew and community members. I accompanied the station crew and the volunteers' groups on their visits to villages to collect content ideas and meet the villagers, trying to understand how the Radio Dhimsa works on an everyday basis. This also helped me in getting connected to the community and its larger social and cultural life. I got to participate in their festivals and celebrations and understand how Radio Dhimsa makes content using community knowledge and talent.

In Koraput too, I visited and spent considerable time in a few villages like Limika, Duruguda, Machput, Baraguda, Chapar, Umiri, Lakhaput, Pondi, Jodiguda, Bodampur, Machara, Mastiput and Baraguda. Spending time in these villages with the community members and being part of their *Palli Sabha* (village-level meetings) and other local recreational activities like *Benta Puja*, *Chaiti Puja*, *Pousha Purnima*, *Dhangda Dhangdi Naach* (local festivals) helped me observe and understand the *Desia* community's culture from close quarters. It later helped me in understanding how these local cultures and identities get reflected and resonated in Radio Dhimsa's broadcasts.

Alongside carrying out fieldwork both in Nuapada and Koraput, I spent extensive time in the community radio stations at both sites. I regularly travelled with the station crew to the field to collect bytes and participate in recording sessions. Travelling with them, returning to the studio and sitting with them and observing them organise, structure, script, edit, and broadcast those contents gave me a wholesome idea about the organisation, production, and distribution of the content at both the stations. It also helped me in understanding the organisational dynamics quite comprehensively. The details about the other techniques and methods used in this research to acquire data while conducting fieldwork are discussed in the subsequent sections.

3.6.3. Leaving the Academic Baggage Behind

Theories offer valuable support to come up with researchable questions. They are quite useful in selecting the right kind of data and information required for the study. Moreover, theories offer conceptual understandings of what is reality, how communities are formed and operate, how people interact in their social and cultural environments, and other subjective aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. Importantly, theories help the researcher in finding the right entry point to understand and make sense of the larger social problems, issues, and realities by providing essential frameworks (Reeves et. al., 2008). As Lincoln & Guba (1994) argue, no research is theory-free. Particularly, in qualitative ethnographic research, one would do well to conduct research supported by relevant theories, frameworks, and methods. Theories are extremely important to unpack the presumed principles and preconceptions of the study (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Theory is innate and sometimes it also emerges from the fieldwork, but all research is theory bound.

However, it is also important to be cognizant that the research process is not entirely governed by theories (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). In this research also, I made every possible effort to remain theory-free while conducting the field work and to particularly focus on how the larger field experiences, narrative, and reflections can contribute to theory rather than theory influencing my fieldwork. Yes, theories were important in helping me concretize my research questions, methods and tools. However, once I left for fieldwork, I made a conscious effort to leave the baggage of theories, philosophies, paradigms etc behind me. It helped me in being open and less prejudiced while carrying out fieldwork. It also helped me in co-learning, co-creating, co-constructing, and co-listening with the community being studied to have agency in being researched. Leaving behind my academic baggage helped me in bridging the gap between the researcher and the researched by creating a space where the researched communities and their experiences and reflections were accommodated with a sense of gratitude and humility.

3.6.4. With The Community and Being the Community: Living an Ethnographer's Life

In ethnographic work, the researcher is expected to spend a considerable duration of time with the community being researched upon. Conducting a good ethnographic study warrants the ethnographer to be very alert and cognizant. It also demands the researcher's active participation along with a systematic observation of a community (Dash, 2015). Once the ethnographer is a part of the community, it becomes easier and convenient for the community to get exposed to the ethnographer because the community considers the ethnographer as their own. This positions the researcher in an advantageous position to understand the community and its social and cultural lifeworld from an insider's

perspective (Backhaus, 2021). The ethnographer is responsible for keeping track of and taking note of what people do and what they say they do.

For this research, my role was not just limited to observing the everydayness of the community and its people; rather, I was also interested in engaging with the ethnography of the media, and in this case, community radio. So, as a media ethnographer, I was trying to make sense of the everyday activities of media, i.e., Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshkati, and understand how these media engage and interact with their respective communities and their cultures and identities. The use of media ethnography was helpful in comprehending the people's understanding and interpretation of the media they use and media's understanding of people and their cultures.

3.6.5. Desk Review

Desk review of available documents related to the case under investigation is highly recommended as they form an important basis for any qualitative research studies. Also, it is necessary to get a preliminary idea about the evolution and existing conditions in which the case is running (Schensul, 2008). Documents are critical because they contain important details and meaningful messages about the evolution of the concerned organization or institution (Prior, 2008).

In this particular study, published and unpublished documents at the community radio sites were critically studied to understand the community radio initiatives and their parent NGOs i.e., South Orissa Voluntary Action (SOVA) and Society for Rural Upliftment & Socio Technological Initiative (SRUSTI) to understand how they are managed and the overall

historical and present contexts in which they function. These analyses and reviews focused on making sense of the underlying meanings associated with the documents.

The documents considered for the desk review and analysis mostly included annual reports, programme budgets, programme schedule, programme reports, volunteers and contributors notes, monthly programme records, and other media reports that previously reported the station. Some of these documents were very useful in getting important details and contacts to dive deeper into the complex realities of the community radio initiatives and their overall engagement with their communities. The data from the desk review also helped in analysing and consolidating the findings of the study.

3.6.6. Participant Observation: It is all in the air

Participant observation and note taking are crucial tools during the fieldwork process. Through participant observation, the researcher can reflect on the first-hand experiences gained during the fieldwork (Gobo, 2008). Particularly, participant observation has been strongly attributed to ethnographic traditions of research, which helps note the everydayness of a group of people and their interactions in a given social and cultural context (Darlington & Scott, 2002). Both participant and non-participant observations are useful research strategies used in ethnographic research (McKechnie, 2008).

I used participant observation alongside other methods (FGDs, interviews etc) to gather additional data and information. Through this method, I was able to establish direct contact with important social and cultural actors at both the study sites. Participant observation ensured that I remained in the local settings alert to the everyday lives and behaviours while also participating in the day-to-day affairs of the community. This included casual

conversations between people, their dressing sense, housing pattern, village location and its ambience, food habits, rituals, customs, traditions, ceremonies, and events organised by the community radio initiatives like feedback sessions, programme planning and recording sessions, and volunteers' and listeners' meeting etc.

The larger objective behind this exercise was to derive meanings and draw insights from the field observation notes taken during the process of conducting participant observation. At the community radio station, participant observation came in handy to take note of the crew's conduct, daily conversations and its nature, daily station routine, responsibilities, and overall engagement. Further, participant observation and systematic notes helped in understanding the various patterns, connections, dynamics, relationships and interventions related to the community radio initiatives from a critical perspective. This data immensely contributed to the data analysis.

3.6.7. In-depth Interviews: Not yet There; Hence, Dive Deeper

Interview as a tool for data collection during the fieldwork period is an important way to engage in one-to-one interaction with respondents concerned to get overall understanding of the phenomenon under investigation from their perspective. In-depth interviews are commonly used to collect relevant data information from key respondents whose opinions and voices matter. It is particularly useful when rich and meaningful details and embedded meanings are required to understand a particular subject (Gillham, 2000).

Open-ended, semi-structured questions help in maintaining a flow and at the same time gather necessary information from the respondents (Gerring, 2007). An interview guide aids in structuring the flow of information while enabling the researcher to ask sensitive

questions, follow up, even cross-question and cross verify responses. Such an interview is more likely to result in in-depth and wide-ranging responses.

During fieldwork in both the study sites, in-depth interviews were conducted with the NGO officials (to understand the dynamics between the parent NGO and the community radio initiative and what extent the larger vision and mission of the NGO aligns with the the community radio initiative), community radio crew and station manager, programme coordinators, contributors (to understand the initiative and its overall mission, vision, programme structure, crew composition, programme schedule, programme creation, production, distribution, consumption, and how the initiative incorporates local culture and identity in its programmes). Similarly, I also conducted in-depth interviews with village leaders and local opinion leaders (to understand the larger social and cultural context), cultural activists (to know more about the ongoing activism and the contemporary scene), academics (to know more about the local research and knowledge sources available currently), and a few other community radio supporters (to understand how community radio is accepted and received, and how the community is represented).

In total, there were 54 in-depth interviews conducted at both the study sites of which, 25 were conducted in Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and 29 were conducted at Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada.

Apart from the in-depth interviews, I conducted 22 additional casual and informal interviews (nine at Radio Dhimsa and 13 at Radio Swayamshakti). Some of the key narratives and experiences are mentioned as quotes and statements in the case study chapters to substantiate the larger arguments of the study.

All the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed and translated for purposes of coding and analysis. The duration of in-depth interviews averaged around 45-50 minutes, while the more casual/ informal interviews averaged around 10-20 minutes. These conversations richly contributed to the analysis and helped me reflect on the respondents' versions of reality. The interviews provided for multiple ways to look at reality.

3.6.8. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Engaging with the Diverse Meanings and Realities

Focus group discussion (FGD) is another research method used for relevant data collection in qualitative research (Morgan, 2008). FGDs are important vehicles to draw insights and varieties of information out of a diverse and heterogeneous group. Hence, the information and other relevant data elicited from FGDs are rich in nature and provide valuable insights to the study. FGDs create a democratic and participatory forum for respondents to provide diverse opinions on the subject under investigation. The researcher's job is to generate discussion and interaction and analyse how the interaction is taking place and how it contributes to the study in a broad way (Barbour, 2007). FGDs in this study helped in bringing together respondents who were not comfortable or unavailable for a one-to-one interview. However, they did create the space for people from similar contexts and backgrounds but rich experiences and diverse opinions.

As part of the fieldwork in both the study sites, I conducted a total of six FGDs with community members, members of the listeners' club, volunteers, and station crew who are involved in the overall functioning of the community radio initiatives. The respondents largely spoke on how the community radio stations engage with local culture and identity. FGDs also informed me on the community stakes, the process of content generation and

how community members contribute to making the CR station a truly community-owned, managed, and controlled organisation. Lastly, the FGD with the station crew helped me understand the station's overall dynamics and the ways and means of organization, production, distribution and consumption of community radio content.

The duration of FGDs was around one and half hours to two hours. All the FGDs were digitally recorded, and I took simultaneous notes, which were quite useful while transcribing them.

3.6.9. Walk The Talk and Being-Along: To the Grazing Fields and Onto The Hills

In addition to the recorded in-depth interviews and FGDs, there were occasions when I used to interact with community members in a very casual and informal space and tone (Duedahl & Blichfeldt, 2020). Walk the talk and being-along helped me understand a community's everydayness and how it contributes to being part of a community.

There were many occasions when I used to walk with the station crew to villages for program idea meetings, recording sessions and feedback sessions. Such walks also provided me with an opportunity to interact with shepherds, farmers and artistes. The objective was to live those moments with them and get to know how they engaged with the broadcasts as went about their work. These walks helped me articulate my arguments better and contributed to my understanding of community engagement. These interactions and conversations were not digitally recorded as I didn't want to introduce a machine between us. Such conversations were raw, natural, and unfiltered. Some conversations were brief and some long. Walking from one village to another, crossing the hills and unknown terrains while listening to their narratives of solidarity with the community radio was revealing in many ways. Once I returned to base, I made notes in my daily diary, although

these notes were mostly from my memory. Some of such quotes are reflected in the case study chapters that follow.

3.7. Dealing with the Data

Interviews, FGDs, desk review, participant observation, walk the talk and being along and daily diary constituted the data set for analysis. Data analysis is a continuous task throughout the process of fieldwork and beyond. Specifically, this research analysis was carried out daily during the fieldwork in order to avoid losing the everyday essence of the fieldwork and data (Stake, 1995). Since the study followed a constructivist interpretive framework, descriptive and interpretative methods were used for data analysis (Dash, 2015).

In order to draw more systematic meanings and references from the data, coding was useful in drawing up important themes, categories, and narratives. My reflections, experiences, and insights from the fieldwork were all part of the analysis. They contributed to the overall meaning-making and interpretations of the complex realities and helped in understanding the nuances of meanings embedded in the data.

The primary method of analysis used in this study is based on Glaser and Strauss's (2009) constructive grounded theory. All the interviews (in-depths and general ones) and FGDs were judiciously transcribed and at times translated as and when necessary to avoid missing out on the essential data. After the transcription and translation, supplemented by the daily dairy and field notes, coding was applied to generate themes, categories, and characteristics useful for interpreting the data. Coding helped in identifying connecting threads and also

differences present in both the case studies. An in-depth reading of the transcripts offered relevant quotes that added life to the arguments.

I have used Corbin and Strauss's (2015) three stages of coding – open, axial, and selective and Charmaz's (2014) more specific initial coding and focused coding at different stages. This process helped me identify, arrange, and systematically organize the data sets under various headings and subheadings like ideas, concepts, and categories derived from the qualitative data (Benaquisto, 2012).

Having organised the data sets under various headings and sub-headings I proceeded with highlighting aspects that were common and different in both the cases. A few of such highlighted aspects served as descriptors in the analysis stage. Axial coding at a later stage helped in identifying emerging connections, comparisons, relationships and contradictions among the various categories and themes.

It is pertinent to note that as against convention, this study adopted an open approach to data analysis in order to accommodate the smaller details and nuances emerging from the data. The open approach was informed by the constructivist interpretive paradigm of the study, which recommends avoiding too much rigidity in the analysis stage (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Backhaus, 2019). In fact, the concluding chapter provides a summary that details the connections, similarities, and differences while offering a comparative analysis to strengthen the final arguments.

3.8. Endgame: The Many Sounds and Meanings of Voice

This research was primarily about how community radio engages with issues related to culture and identity. Furthermore, I was interested in understanding how communities view community radios and how they see their cultures and identities reflected in their media's program contents.

As mentioned earlier, the ideas of co-learning, co-creating, and co-listening were the values that informed me as a researcher. The various interactions and engagement with community radio crew and members of the community manifested in multiple voices and meanings that added life to the engagement process and my fieldwork experience. These multiple voices also find a place in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. It is these multiple voices and meanings that have helped me understand how community radio can engage with the culture and identity of the communities it seeks to serve.

CHAPTER FOUR

Communicating Culture and Consolidating Identity: Examining the Role of Radio Dhimsa in *Desia* Community

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is about the first case study of this research. The chapter begins with a broader picture of the social, cultural, political, and geographic history of Koraput, Odisha, thus locating Radio Dhimsa in the larger geography of the region and understanding its presence as a community radio station. The next couple of sections focus on the presence of radio in the region before zeroing on Radio Dhimsa as a *Desia* broadcaster.

The subsequent sections constitute the core of this chapter. They are about understanding the ways and means in which Radio Dhimsa engages, understand, and address the concepts, ideas, questions, fractures and politics of culture, identity, and knowledge in *Desia* community. These sections also provide the key arguments, narratives and reflections that help in understanding the role and positioning of Radio Dhimsa in the *Desia* community. There is also a discussion about how Radio Dhimsa emerged as a true alternative media which is controlled, owned, and managed by the *Desia* community.

The concluding section sums up the chapter by establishing the role of Radio Dhimsa as a reinforcer of *Desia* culture, identity, and knowledge systems.

4.2. Locating the Field: Socio-Political and Cultural Context

Koraput is located in the KBK¹ region of Odisha. It includes eight districts viz., Bolangir, Subarnapur, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Rayagada, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Malkangiri. The KBK region accounts for a total of 30.50 per cent of total geographical area of the state of Odisha (Patra, 2011; Jena, 2016).

The KBK region is spread across the western and southern part of the East Indian state of Odisha and shares its borders with Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. Historically, this region has been infamous for hunger, poverty, and malnourishment. This region has been one of the most backward regions of India in terms of health, education and socio-economic development. Odisha occupies a unique position among the Indian States and Union Territories for having a rich and colourful tribal population. A majority of the tribal population lives in hilly and forest regions largely spread across the KBK districts. The tribal economy is fundamentally based on the idea of survival and is non-stratified in nature (Rath, 2019).

Tribal social systems are simple and their aspirations and needs are limited to their sustenance. The tribal population categorised as the Scheduled Tribes in Odisha have suffered from various social, educational, and economic backwardness due to historical, geographical, and political reasons. The tribal groups have been located on the margins and peripheries, which has resulted in marginalisation vis-a-vis the mainstream agenda of development and empowerment (Samal, 1992). These tribal populations have their own distinctiveness and social-cultural milieu, which offer them a sense of cultural identity.

¹ The old district of Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi (Popularly known as KBK). Subsequently, during 1992-93 KBK was divided into eight districts: Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Balangir, Subarnapur, Kalahandi and Nuapada. See more at: <http://kbk.nic.in/pdf/KBKProfile.pdf>

Currently, according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI)² and Government of India Census 2011 there are 62 Scheduled Tribes in Odisha. Odisha is placed third in terms of the highest percentage of tribal population in the country and their number stands at 95,90,756. These populations are spread across 30 districts and 314 blocks in the state. The tribal population constitutes 22.85% of the total population of the state and counts for 9.17% of the total tribal population in the country (Directorate of Census Operations, 2011).

These tribal communities speak as many as 74 dialects and 22 different languages. Their ethos, ideology, worldview, value-orientations, and cultural heritage are rich and varied in nature. A few tribal groups are identified as nomadic food gatherers and hunters while the other tribal groups are recognised as skilled and settled agriculturists and horticulturists. Based on their geographic location, tribal languages and dialects are again divided into different sub-languages³. The diversity of languages and their varied nature creates environment where the language/dialect changes every few kilometres. *Dui koshare boli, chali koshare bhasha* (Dialects every two miles and languages every four miles) is a popular saying in the region. It is recorded that the language spoken and followed by the ST & SC Development and Minorities & Backward Class Welfare Department-run schools are different from schools run by State Government's School and Mass Education Department. Students from various regions, speaking different languages and dialects study in these residential schools (SCSTRTI, 2021).

² Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) is the oldest of all the Tribal Research Institutes (TRI) in the country. See more at: <https://www.scstrti.in/index.php/communities/tribes>

³ Specialized language associated with a specific group.

The KBK region is populated by a significant tribal population comprising nomadic and ethnic tribes like *Paraja*, *Bhumia*, *Bhatra*, *Gond*, *Koya*, *Bonda*, *Didayi*, *Gadaba*, *Kondh*, *Dongria Kondh*, *Durua* and these tribal communities are mostly characterised and recognised by their indigenous culture, identity, lifestyle, occupation, languages, customs, beliefs, and festivals etc. The KBK region is often identified with problems like poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, displacement, and migration among others. Four districts in this region-- Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Rayagada are tribal dominated. The region is also rich in mineral resources like bauxite, chromite, lime, iron, and manganese that are covered with dense forest covers and water bodies (Gupta, 2019). Additionally, the entire KBK districts are located in the peripheries of the state surrounded by dense forests and hence, locationally disadvantaged. Lack of transport and poor communication infrastructure make the area remote and inaccessible. The region is also ill-reputed for the prevalence of left wing extremist (LWE) activism, which is believed to have daunted the overall development process in the region.

The average development ratio of the KBK region is much behind the national and state averages. This region is also regarded as the hotbed of diseases like malaria, dengue, Japanese encephalitis and diarrhoea. Women and child health is another issue of deep concern. Both the central and state governments have been constantly trying to address the underdevelopment through various developmental schemes. The state machinery as well as international donor agencies pump in financial and human resources to bring in positive changes in the area. However, these efforts have tasted limited success in the region.

One of the community radio initiatives i.e. Radio Dhimsa, considered for this study is located in Koraput, a part of the KBK districts. The undivided Koraput District used to be one of the largest districts of the country before it got bifurcated into four districts-- Koraput, Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Malkangiri in 1992.

The Koraput district was formed on April 1, 1936, which was earlier part of Vizianagaram District under the Madras Presidency. Koraput epitomises the tribal culture of Odisha. It is located in the extreme southern part of Odisha and shares its borders with Bastar district (Chhattisgarh), Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Vishakapatnam districts (Andhra Pradesh), Nabarangpur and Rayagada (Odisha) Districts. Being located on a section of the Eastern Ghats⁴, it has a different topography and the weather is quite different from the rest of the state.

Koraput two sub-divisions namely Koraput and Jeypore coming under the control of the Sub-Collector. The Koraput District is divided into 14 blocks namely Kotpad, Boriguma, Koraput, Narayanpatana, Pottangi, Machhkund, Jeypore, Dasamantapur, Laxmipur, Bandhugaon, Similiguda, Nandapur, Kundura and Boipariguda. According to the 2011 census, there are 226 Gram Panchayats, and 2045 villages in Koraput. There is one municipality in Jeypore and three Notified Area Councils viz., Koraput, Kotpad and Sunabeda.

Koraput is the third largest district in terms of size and also 15th in terms of population in Odisha. Only 16.39 percent of population reside in the urban areas and the rest in rural areas. The total population of the district Koraput is around 14 lakhs. The district has a good sex ratio compared to the other districts in the state. The literacy rate of the district is 49.21 percent while the state's literacy rate is 72.87 percent. Of the total population of the district, SCs and STs account for 14.25 per cent and 50.56 per cent respectively (Directorate of Census Operations, 2011).

I am a native of coastal Odisha. People from the coastal and mainland Odisha do not have a great opinion about Koraput. Being geographically located at a height of 2,900 feet above

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Ghats

the sea level, Koraput is much cooler and conducive for natural habitats and various flora and fauna. So after getting down at the district headquarter town of Koraput in December 2018, I suddenly found myself shivering with cold as it was raining outside. I was unaware that Koraput could be so cold. It was an entirely new experience for me. The region with its rich tribal culture, ingenuity, sacred cultural beliefs, innocence and their love for mother nature rubbed off on me by the time I left the place.

If one were to begin an academic inquiry into the social and cultural history of tribes then Koraput is the central point to start with. Dash and Samal argue that cultural identity of tribes can be recognised through their customs, traditions, festivals, dresses and ornaments. Like any other tribes, tribes in Koraput too have a specific locational origin and geographic history. These tribes have their own oral and written language culture (Samal, 2006). Tribal communities in Koraput are opposed to inter-community marriage and they practice '*Jholla*'⁵ system, which rejects the dowry system. They consider inter-community marriages as a potential threat to their population (Vidyarthi & Rai, 1976). Each tribe practices its own sets of cultural values and ethos; and has its own social bond, accord, administration, tradition, and value system. All these play a key role in maintaining law, youth dormitory, worship and collection of food, hunting, shifting agriculture, handicraft and so on for their subsistence (Samal, 1992).

Tribal culture can be broadly categorized as material culture and non-material culture. Aspects of science, technology, clothing, and food habits, etc. can be grouped under material culture. Whereas their values, goals, worldviews, thought systems, language, symbol, status, and role systems etc. are non-material aspects of tribal culture (Samal,

⁵ The parents of the bridegroom give a '*Jholla*' (basket) to the parents of the bride before accepting her in marriage. It is believed in the locality one never finds an instance of bride torture or bride burning in tribal society.

2010). All aspects of material and non-material culture in tribal communities are part of a larger culture (Aleaz, 1994).

It is in this context that the present study aims at understanding how community media initiatives like Radio Dhimsa in Koraput engage with tribal culture and how it addresses the politics and questions related to culture, identity, and knowledge systems.

4.3. Radio Dhimsa: Contextualising and Historicising the *Desia* Broadcaster

Since its establishment in 1936, the mission of AIR was to “produce and transmit varied programmes designed to awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich all sections of the people” (Das, 2008; Sen, 2003; All India Radio, 2013). Soon after independence, the Union government of India was prompt in establishing a radio station in each of the state capitals. As a result, radio broadcasting in the state of Odisha started with the establishment of AIR, Cuttack (the then capital city) in 1948. AIR Cuttack went on air on January 28, 1948. The very first voice that reverberated across the state was ‘Akashvani Cuttack’ which later became the household name of AIR Cuttack (Chatterjee, 2015; Panda, 2017).

Currently, there are 14 AIR stations on air in Odisha and they are located in Cuttack, Rourkela, Baripada, Berhampur, Bhawanipatna, Bolangir, Joranda, Jeypore, Keonjhar, Puri, Rairangpur, Sambalpur, Soro, and Deogarh. The state broadcasting service through AIR has played an instrumental role in promoting mainstream Odia culture and heritage across Odisha (Mohanty, 2020).

The AIR radio station in Koraput district is located in Jeypore. Established in 1964, AIR Jeypore plays a significant information and communication purpose for the people of

Koraput. As the third largest radio station, AIR Jeypore broadcasts news, talk, dramatic productions, etc. in Odia language (Pattanaik, 2019).

Although the advent of television has dented the popularity of AIR, the latter continues to be a major source of information for the people in the region. AIR Jeypore tries to bridge the disconnect between the state and the marginalised localities by disseminating the state's messages to the tribal audiences. Most of the programmes are broadcast in Odia.

Radio Dhimsa is located in Koraput district. It was established in 2012 with support from UNICEF-India. The community radio is licensed to South Orissa Voluntary Action (SOVA), an NGO that works in the region of Koraput (Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri, Nawarangpur). SOVA fosters community health, quality education, sustainable livelihoods, village governance, child rights and child protection in the region.

The NGO aims to achieve a healthy and self-reliant society, where people who are otherwise neglected and excluded, especially tribal women and children get equal opportunities and rights. It also works in favour of eradicating social discrimination and exploitation.

The origin of SOVA is linked to the issue of development-induced displacement suffered by the innocent *Desia*⁶ (tribal/indigenous) community of Koraput. It happened in the 1970s with the construction of the Upper Kolab Hydro-electric Dam. The hydro-electric project by the state forced the helpless and voiceless *Desia* people to leave their forests. These displaced people were asked to go further uphill and rehabilitate where they had no agricultural infrastructure and forest to survive on. As a result, many tribal infrastructures, agencies, and institutions fell apart. The *Desia* population was faced with lack of livelihood

⁶ *Desia* literally means 'one from the Desa Gaon (countryside)'.

options, health and community rights etc. Realising the enormity of the situation, SOVA came into being with a motto to intervene strategically to help the displaced tribal population fight for their rights and raise their voices. On the question of importance of SOVA in Koraput, Sanjit Patnaik, Secretary of SOVA has this to say:

“After spending many years with these *Desia* communities here in this region, we have realised that being an NGO, we need to be cautious of the issues and concerns of the community we are addressing. Since its establishment SOVA has been focused and committed to develop and support the tribal people of this region, speak for themselves and importantly, make informed choices. We prioritise the most vulnerable sections of the society like children and women. We try to ensure effective implementation of programmes in education, community health, village governance, livelihoods and child rights. Our mission has been to build a sustainable society and we are very much committed to that.”

(Personal Interview, 2019)

Over the years, SOVA has increased its reach from 13 villages in 1993 to 3500 villages in the undivided Koraput region. Working in close proximity with the tribal population over the last 28 years has helped SOVA to identify core issues and concerns of this region. Every five years, SOVA changes its strategic plan for its target population. Currently, issues like voice poverty, lack of media representation, cultural degradation, mainstreaming of *Desia* identity, social and political marginalisation, development and empowerment,

participation, and decision-making etc. are priority for the NGO. This provided the background for the establishment of the Radio Dhimsa community radio.

During 2006-08, SOVA had the opportunity to collaborate with UNICEF. UNICEF encouraged and supported SOVA to apply for community radio license because other approaches of spreading awareness like wall painting, pictures, *Desia* Naat (theatre) were not that successful in effective dissemination of information. SOVA gave it a serious thought and realised that Koraput already had AIR in Jeypore, which was not so helpful in catering to the needs of *Desia* Community. It was cumbersome to convince the state public broadcaster to buy airtime in order to spread awareness messages. “Having a community radio is about having their own media and more importantly in their local *Desia* language and they would have ownership over the community radio station,” says Sanjit Patnaik. Finally, with support from UNICEF, SOVA established Radio Dhimsa in 2012 to give the *Desia* community people of Koraput a platform to express their voices and strengthen *Desia* culture and heritage. Four years after establishment and signing of Grant of Permission Agreement (GOPA), in 2016-17, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting of Government of India issued SOVA the Wireless Operating License (WOL) to broadcast. Before that, Radio Dhimsa was narrowcasting programmes in the communities.

Radio Dhimsa is the first and only community radio station in the southern Odisha. It reaches out to the *Desia* population spread over sixty villages across six gram panchayats in Koraput. SOVA utilised the intervening four years before it got its broadcasting license to establish linkages with various stakeholders in the community. The SOVA team also roped in people from different government departments, members of anchayat raj institutions, civil society organisations, commercial units and village level committees to facilitate exchange of ideas and opinions to help serve the community better. Radio Dhimsa has promoted village volunteers and community reporters employing the ‘Each One Teach

One' concept. It is trying to generate local revenue to make the radio sustainable. Radio Dhimsa envisions a society where people participate in planning for their own development by optimizing delivery of government schemes. It also encourages community work in protecting and reinvigorating the local culture and cultural practices using local talent.

The *Desia* community finds it difficult to understand the government policies and programmes broadcast in Odia by AIR Jeypore. The local dialect of *Desia* community is called *Desia* Odia or Koraputia. *Desia* originally means the indigenous and tribal people living together in small settlements across the deep forests of Eastern Ghats⁷.

Radio Dhimsa is located in the Chappar village of Koraput. Radio Dhimsa acts as a hyper-local media bridge between the government and *Desia* people by reaching out to the *Desia* people in their own local language and dialect. In order to ensure that the *Desia* community doesn't feel neglected and alienated, Radio Dhimsa provides a platform for the tribal population to express themselves in *Desia*. The sole mission of Radio Dhimsa is to protect and uphold the *Desia* cultural values and identities and its indigenous knowledge systems and sources by programming its content in *Desia* dialect. On the mission and vision of Radio Dhimsa, the station manager Sachida Mohanty says:

“Radio Dhimsa is always committed to work with the marginalised *Desia* community here in Koraput. We as an institution are aware of the necessities of this area. Radio Dhimsa allows the disadvantaged

⁷ The Eastern Ghats are a discontinuous range of mountains along India's eastern coast. The Eastern Ghats pass through Odisha, Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu in the south passing some parts of Karnataka as well as Telangana. They are eroded and cut through by four major rivers of peninsular India, viz. Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, and Kaveri. The cradle of Eastern Ghats is Villupuram district in Tamil Nadu. See more at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Ghats

Desia community of Koraput to raise their voices and to strengthen their own cultural identity and knowledge systems. Even though Koraput is more than 500 kms away from the state capital i.e. Bhubaneswar, the marginalised indigenous groups of Koraput have found their voice through Radio Dhimsa and they are happy that at least they have a medium to strengthen keep alive their *Desia* values, principles, identities, and knowledge systems which are under threat because of a variety of reasons like cultural mainstreaming, modernisation, development induced displacement, the state educational policies and other approaches promoted by the state. Radio Dhimsa is truly of, for, by, and about the *Desia* community. Using democratic and participatory values and principles, it reposes the *Desia* community's lost faith in its own knowledge systems by reinforcing indigenous epistemological values and traits through radio programming. Radio Dhimsa has been successfully doing that with the active support and participation of the community. The *Desia* community owns the radio station and as a platform belongs to the indigenous values of the *Desia* community. Following the *Desia* community values, Radio Dhimsa is positioned as a *Desia* broadcaster and it always strives to be an agent of participatory development and empowerment.” (Personal interview, 2019)

Radio Dhimsa produces programmes in various formats like radio jingle, drama, interview, spot, skit and discussion. Since all the programmes are broadcast in *Desia* dialect, the *Desia* community is very much engaged with the programme contents of Radio Dhimsa as it is

the only platform where they can do programming in *Desia* dialect for their own community. There are volunteers in villages who are responsible for narrowcasting the programmes where radio signal is not reachable due to the FM radio's limited reach. Radio Dhimsa does so to ensure that no one is left out when it comes to communication and information. These volunteers play an important role in sensitising *Desia* people in understanding the positioning and objectives of Radio Dhimsa and more importantly, about their community and what it is going through because of mainstreaming of Odia culture, identity, and knowledge systems among the *Desia* communities.

Currently, Radio Dhimsa broadcasts programmes for 11 hours. The broadcasts take place in three time slots: 6 to 9 am & 10 am to 12 noon *Sakal Bela* (Morning session), 2 pm to 5 pm *Khara Bela* (Afternoon session), and 6 to 9 pm *Sanja Bela* (Evening session). The community radio station covers around 60 villages of which 45 villages receive the radio signal. In the rest of the 15 villages, Radio Dhimsa organises narrowcasting sessions to ensure last mile connectivity. Twelve community reporters are bestowed with the responsibility of bringing the community voices and issues to Radio Dhimsa.

4.4. Radio Dhimsa & *Desia* Culture

In this section, I try to engage with the *Desia* culture and understand how Radio Dhimsa addresses the key questions and politics of culture through its programming and other initiatives with active and genuine participation of the community.

Scholarship on community media and how they engage with tribal and indigenous cultures in the South Asian countries is hard to come by. The dearth of scholarship accompanied by blurry theoretical and conceptual frameworks makes it a difficult task to position indigenous culture in community media studies. This section also explores the role of Radio

Dhimsa in countering the cultural hegemony of the mainstream media and in addressing the politics of culture in the Koraput region.

This section engages with the following objective and questions to understand the dynamics and interplay between Radio Dhimsa and *Desia* culture. The broad objective and questions for this section are outlined below:

To understand *Desia* Community and its culture through Radio Dhimsa.

- a) How does Radio Dhimsa define and construct its community?
- b) How does Radio Dhimsa engage and represent *Desia* community and its culture while developing program contents?
- d) How does Radio Dhimsa counter cultural hegemony and appropriation by the dominant media?

Earlier discussions have shone light on how the *Desia* community stands out as a distinct cultural group due to its ingenious cultures, traditions, customs, festivals, dialects, knowledge systems and epistemologies.

Before positioning Radio Dhimsa that works for and with the *Desia* community, it is important to understand Koraput as a cultural site. Santakar Chelapila, a working journalist and a community radio enthusiast in Koraput for the last two decades says:

“I see Koraput as a land of rich cultural heritage, tribal lifestyle, and natural resources. Koraput is an emotion. It is not just a geographical space, but something more. Koraput is a way of life.

But unfortunately, Koraput has seen a lot of changes over the years. The way of life hints at nature, hills, streams, and tribal culture and life. The government employees and migrants from other districts have changed the overall demography and dynamics of the cultural fabric of the land Koraput. Koraput has always given to the nature and society. Be it the first kind of paddy from Jeypore, which was founded by the Gadaba community or coffee from Koraput. So the idea of being *Desia* or Koraputia doesn't belong to the ones who came here for work/job purposes. To me, Koraput belongs to the ones who have inhabited here for ages and the ones who have fallen in love with this land."

Sahitya Akademi Awardee Gopinath Mohanty's acclaimed work *Paraja* on Koraput and its tribals also echoes similar sentiments (Mohanty, 2021).

Koraput for the *Desia* community and Koraput for the white colour migrants are not the same. While the *Desia* community see it as a repository of culture, knowledge, faith, beliefs, nature, and life; the white colour migrants understand Koraput as a source of livelihood. In fact, the state also looks at Koraput from the point of view of land that has a lot of potential to add profits to the state's revenue. In the process of earning revenues out of Koraput, the state promises a lot to the *Desia* community. The state sponsored mainstreaming project works to fragmentate their local culture, assimilate, and also appropriate it sometimes in an attempt to appease the *Desia* community (Sonawane, 2018). It has become so systemic that the white colour migrants (government employees from

other districts) largely serve to propagate the state's social, cultural, and political agendas (Chaudhury and Patnaik, 2008; Lalgoulain, 2008).

Radio Dhimsa is very conscious of its programmes for the *Desia* community. It has a stated mandate to safeguard the community culture. The listeners' clubs and radio supporters' clubs of Radio Dhimsa help in reinvigorating local indigenous culture of the *Desia* community. Through its strategic and community-oriented programme contents, Radio Dhimsa challenges and counters the larger cultural hegemony, misinterpretation, and appropriation by the mainstream media. While the state owned AIR and other private FM stations largely depend on institutional experts, Radio Dhimsa encourages local expertise in its programmes. It has successfully identified the key sources of local knowledge and expertise to promote indigenous expertise and epistemology. Radio Dhimsa also provides the opportunity to local talents to do radio programming using their skills and knowledge. Through this exercise, Radio Dhimsa is quite successful in forging a greater sense of cultural oneness within the *Desia* community. The community shares a sense of belongingness with Radio Dhimsa since it broadcasts programmes in *Desia* and provides a platform for the tribals to voice their concerns and opinions and share the same with the other members of their community.

4.4.1. Understanding the *Desia* Community

Many scholars have suggested that community is not a static but a very dynamic idea. Although the *Desia* community is territorially bound, Radio Dhimsa identifies sub-groups within the community as both participants and audiences for its programmes.

Radio Dhimsa claims to have identified communities within the larger *Desia* community. For example, when it broadcasts a programme on the dying culture of the *Desias*, it is

aimed at the entire *Desia* population. Then, there are programmes that are meant for a particular group within the larger community. For example, a programme on role of the youth in community solidarity and development is specifically meant for young Dhangdas⁸ and Dhangdis⁹ of the community. Even as it fosters youth participation in community solidarity, it promotes the Dhangda and Dhangdi culture in the community.

On the standing of the community in Radio Dhimsa, Chandal Jani, one of the key proponents of *Desia* culture says:

“Not just me, rather our entire *Desia* community shares a very good association with Radio Dhimsa. When Radio Dhimsa was established, all of us consented and were given a chance to share our opinion with the officials of SOVA. Particularly, we the old guards were invited to the studio and made to understand the reason behind having this Radio station in this region. We were so glad then to realise that this station belongs to us and that we will be involved in making programmes for our own people in our own local *Desia* dialect. Which means it will be our media and it will be our voices in our tone and dialect. So we have been using this as a cultural platform and it has quite successfully forged a greater sense of community over the years. Now a days, people associate us with Radio Dhimsa and we identify ourselves with Radio Dhimsa. It has been working to strengthen and revive our culture through its *Desia*

⁸ Dhangadas the young adult males of *Desia* community.

⁹ Dhangdis are the young adult females of *Desia* community.

culture-oriented programming. It also works to empower our *Desia* community socially and culturally so that we can retain our distinct identity.” (Personal Interview, 2018)

The quote above is perhaps a reflection of Radio Dhimsa’s credentials as a community radio station that strives to protect and reinforce the ethos of the *Desia* population in Koraput that are otherwise ignored by the dominant media.

4.4.2 Engaging with the *Desia* Culture

Culture is one of the entry points to understand how Radio Dhimsa engages with *Desia* community. As an indigenous tribal community, it is the culture that sets apart the *Desia* community from the mainstream Odia community in Odisha. For the *Desias*, culture is lived and it plays an instrumental role in who they are and what they do as a community. Radio Dhimsa engages with the *Desia* culture in its pristine form. It does so by platformising Radio Dhimsa in revitalising cultural values (Nieborg & Poell, 2018). By ensuring participation in conceptualising, scripting and broadcasting programmes in the local dialect, Radio Dhimsa helps the *Desia* community achieve cultural empowerment. The programmes frequently sensitise the community about the possible threats to cultural degeneration.

Balaram Khara, one of the Radio Dhimsa volunteers and prominent faces in the community says:

“I would say that the culture of this region can’t be omitted or entirely forgotten and it is impossible to my mind. Culture is so integral to our lives and livelihoods as well. You will find culture in everything here and we happily co-exist with it. We haven’t completely discarded it; at the same time, the younger generation is not that active in promoting and practicing the local cultures. They have redefined it to suit modernity. The old guards are not so happy with the dilution. This has resulted in a sort of a ‘cultural tussle’. It is possible that we will soon sans our cultural values. This is where Radio Dhimsa comes in. It provides an opportunity for both the generations to enter into dialogue with each other. The other big media do not provide such a platform. (Personal Interview, 2019)”

Radio Dhimsa also seems to take its responsibility of representing and strengthening local cultures seriously. Its programmes like *Chaiti Parab* (Agriculture Festival), *Lenka Master* (Educational programme), *Kan Halchal* (What’s Up!), *Aama Gaon Ra Katha* (Our Villages, Our Tales) reflect on both the material (food, dress, housing, farming) and non-material cultures (language, music, dialects, traditions, customs, rituals, dance, theatre). By ensuring participation of all sections of the tribal community, Radio Dhimsa tries to build a bond with the *Desia* community and its culture (Park, 1943). The programmes are a reflection of everyday lives of the tribal community and become the cultural thread that binds the community together both socially and culturally (Bidney, 1946; Rader, 1947). By recognising and flagging the changes in local culture, Radio Dhimsa positions itself as a counter media to stall the progress of cultural amnesia and to reinforce local cultural values and ethos (Devy, 1992).

4.4.3 Countering Cultural Hegemony

The state capital is 12-hours away from Koraput and the Desias hardly find space in the mainstream media (Jena, 2016). Being on the margins, Koraput in general and the *Desia* community in particular is vulnerable to all sorts of socio-cultural intrusions. The imposition of the majoritarian culture is one of the central issues that the community grapples with. The hegemonic cultural agenda of the state is one of the pressing cultural questions that need to be addressed (Dutta, 2008). Without having one's own media and communication platform addressing such an agenda is an uphill task.

Mainstream Odia media sponsored both by the state and private players impose a hegemonic culture. On the other hand, their attempt to bridge the gap between the state and the tribal community through extensive use of Odia language is only resulting in cultural erasure (Kurt, 2016). Ultimately, this cultural erasure project will lead to cultural genocide, which is about total erosion of *Desia* cultural ingenuity, values, distinctiveness, and ethos (Padel & Das, 2010). In her response to how Radio Dhimsa as *Desia* community's local media counters this cultural hegemony project, programme contributor Aila Krisani says:

“We as a community understand that culture is dynamic and it is subject to change with time. But while we change over a period of time we try to ensure that we don't forget the core values of our culture. There are certain aspects of our culture that are preservable and Radio Dhimsa as local cultural media ensures that *Desia* people are sensitised to preserve those aspects of their culture that are under threat. It is a collective effort where Radio Dhimsa offers the platform and forum to *Desia* community so that they can be

empowered to voice themselves in an attempt to preserve their cultural values. The state's role in preserving our culture is tokenism. Museumisation doesn't work in our favour. Rather we need to be independent and have agency of our culture as that is something important to us. Radio Dhimsa helps us in countering that cultural dominance by offering us the agency and space to come up with our own agendas and programmes to culturally mobilise and unite the community to fight the big forces.”

(Personal Interview, 2019)

4.5. Radio Dhimsa & *Desia* Identity

In this section, I am interested in understanding how Radio Dhimsa engages with *Desia* identity and the ways in which it addresses the key questions of identity and politics. Available literature on alternative and community media studies indicate a concrete connection between community identities and how they get stronger with the presence of community media. Community radio as a form of community media helps communities strengthen their local and indigenous identity (Thomas, 2015; Backhaus, 2019; Anderson, 1991). Studies on this idea are very scarce, particularly in South Asia.

Because of the dearth of scholarship and research on community media and its engagement with local and indigenous identity, locating indigenous identity as a concept in the field of community media remains a major challenge.

This section engages with the following objective and questions to understand the dynamics and interplay between Radio Dhimsa and *Desia* identity. The broad objective and questions for this section are outlined below:

To understand *Desia* Identity through Radio Dhimsa.

- a) How does Radio Dhimsa make sense of *Desia* identity?
- b) How does Radio Dhimsa consider *Desia* identity in its overall programming?
- c) How does Radio Dhimsa represent *Desia* identity?
- d) How does Radio Dhimsa engage and address the question and politics of identity while countering mainstream and majoritarian identities?

4.5.1. Building *Desia* Identity through Radio Dhimsa

Identity in indigenous and tribal spaces is primarily based on their culture. The *Desia* community in Koraput is no different. Representation is key to their identity as it is linked to their future. Hence, adequate and appropriate representation of *Desia* culture and identity are crucial in building and strengthening *Desia* identity. However, the *Desia* community neither adequately represented nor appropriately. Their presence is limited to museums and parades on national holidays. The only instances they find representation in the mainstream media is when such parades are held, may be thrice a year.

On the question of how Radio Dhimsa facilitates the strengthening and safeguarding of *Desia* identity, volunteer Sukri Majhi says:

“It is evident from the programmes of Radio Dhimsa and its representation of our community and its culture. Earlier, our *Desia* region and local issues were hardly covered by the media. Getting space to represent our culture and heritage on AIR Jeypore used to be a very tough task. Having a radio of our own that presents the *Desias* comprehensively gives us hope and confidence that our

culture will continue to thrive. I also want to mention that identity is as ingenious as our culture and we don't see culture and identity as two separate ideas. Rather we see them as one and we use them interchangeably. Our culture is our identity.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

Even a cursory scanning of mainstream media channels makes it evident that there is lack of cultural sensibility and empathy shown by the so-called mainstream and popular media (Youkongpun, 2015). The mainstream media are engaged in presenting a distorted representation of *Desia* culture. But with the emergence of local and grassroots media like Radio Dhimsa, *Desia* culture is adequately considered and represented. This helps in building and consolidating *Desia* identity too (Jayasuriya, 2008). Construction of *Desia* community, communication of *Desia* culture, and building of *Desia* identity are prioritised by Radio Dhimsa, which ultimately strengthens Radio Dhimsa's position as a community media (Spreckels and Kotthoff, 2007).

Local and grassroots/ community media, in addition to providing a platform to practice and perform their native culture, also converts itself into a communicative space that helps in constructing their community and strengthen their identity. How identity manifests itself in Radio Dhimsa can be examined from three vantage points: Identity as community participation, identity as content and identity as representation and recognition. In fact, it might be useful to examine how all the three together strengthen the *Desia* identity.

Community participation is one of the key principles of community media and it helps the community media initiative establish long lasting rapport with the community (Manyozo, 2002). In the case of Radio Dhimsa, community participation is ensured in every aspect its

functioning including organisation, production, distribution and consumption of programme contents. The participation of *Desia* community members is ensured with them working as the station programme coordinators, programme contributors and volunteers. Members of the tribal villages are involved in both programme ideation and feedback sessions.

Tikana Khara, a Radio Dhimsa reporter has this to say about community participation:

“We as a community are largely marginalised in terms of media and communication as mainstream media don’t offer the scope for community participation. But Radio Dhimsa has immensely helped our community in making our voices heard through community participation. Being a *Desia* myself, I find it comfortable to communicate with our audience who are also *Desias*. Working with Radio Dhimsa has not only given me an identity but also strengthened our community identity by employing locals for the functioning of the station.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

Radio Dhimsa has established itself as a truly democratic participatory medium that promotes genuine participation and tries to consolidate the entire community and its multiple voices by offering various opportunities and initiatives like each-one, teach one, radio supporters club, contributors club, and volunteers club.

In Radio Dhimsa, *Desia* identity is also reflected in its programme contents. In fact, identity is embedded in its wide range of programmes that deal with local culture, livelihood, nature,

tradition, customs, music, dance, festivals, beliefs etc., That the programmes are all broadcast in the *Desia* language adds to its strength.

Programme Contributor and local artiste Hemant Jani provides an example of how the programme content reflect local identities and help strengthening it:

“*Geet Kudia* (Local Folk Music) is a special programme that Radio Dhimsa broadcasts once a week. This programme brings together local artistes who perform Dhimsa (*Desia* Dance), *Geet Kudia*, and *Desia Naat* (*Desia* Theatre). This programme offers the local artistes an opportunity that AIR hardly offers. This results in strengthening the local identity.”

(Personal Interview, 2019)

As Hemant Jani points out, mainstream media do not provide for *Desia* representation in their programmes. On the other hand, the artistes featured on Radio Dhimsa have become local celebrities. Aila Takri, Prem Naik (who has two *Desia* albums to his credit after he began working with Radio Dhimsa) and Aila Krisani are all artistes who have become popular after their programmes were aired on the community radio station

Uday has been working with Radio Dhimsa in the capacity of a Programme Coordinator right from the station’s inception in 2012. In an in-depth interview, he said:

“How people talk from inside a television or a radio set was a mystery for me. I had an undying interest to present my

knowledge of *Desia* culture. Fortunately, I got a chance to work with Radio Dhimsa. Today, I sing songs, write scripts and even accompany teams on narrowcasting sessions. Everywhere I go, people immediately recognise me and my voice from my songs on the radio station. I strongly believe that Radio Dhimsa is a force to reckon with in preserving identity, tradition, customs etc. through its programming. It is the only platform in Koraput that identifies hidden talents and offers them an opportunity to showcase their talents.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

4.6. Radio Dhimsa & Desia Knowledge Systems

In this section, I specifically try to examine and understand how Radio Dhimsa engages with *Desia* knowledge systems. The broad objective of this section is to understand the interplay between Radio Dhimsa and *Desia* knowledge systems.

The supporting questions are:

- a) How does Radio Dhimsa enable community members to engage and participate in the organisation, production, and distribution of their own media using their indigenous knowledge systems and cultural know-how?
- b) How does Radio Dhimsa consider *Desia* knowledge sources in its overall programming?
- c) How does Radio Dhimsa counter expert knowledge culture and promote *Desia* knowledge systems?

On the indigenous tribal culture and knowledge systems of Koraput, scholars like Jagabandhu Samal (2006) claim that *Desia* knowledge systems are part of the broader culture, and it is mostly non-material in nature. They play an essential role in the overall development of the community, and are critical to the social and cultural integration of the community.

Radio Dhimsa broadcasts specific programmes on local agricultural and health practices. It aims to safeguard community's indigenous knowledge systems through programmes such as *Chas Khabar* (Agriculture Information), a special programme focused on local agricultural practices. *Desia* farmers who are well-known for the use of indigenous methods in safeguarding soil fertility and improving the productivity of their small holdings. This programme challenges the modern ways of farming using pesticides and fertilisers, which in the long run is detrimental to soil fertility. While the state-owned All India Radio largely depend on institutional experts and private FM stations are busy promoting fertilisers and pesticides, the programmes on Radio Dhimsa aim at sensitising the community on the benefits of organic farming in the long run.

Chandal Majhi (82), considered an expert on indigenous farming methods says:

“In the last few decades, both state and private agencies have invaded our geographical as well as knowledge spaces. As a result, application of local knowledge is on the decline. These days the youth are least interested in local practices and cultural values. The books and texts that they are referring to and studying don't have a single mention of the *Desia* culture and tradition. Because of such exposure, the youth have begun distancing themselves from

their own culture. In fact, they think the more they distance themselves from *Desia* community, the more modern they have become. Similarly, these days I notice that the fertility and productivity of our land has reduced drastically. People have begun to use heavy machines, fertilisers, and pesticides which has negatively impacted the productivity of the land and is also resulting in health problems. Our knowledge is inspired by mother nature. Radio Dhimsa has been trying to sensitise people about this very threat, but this is not enough in comparison to how the new age people are being carried away with the state-promoted educational systems and modern means.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

Another outcome of the modernisation of the region has been a substantial inflow of people from coastal Odisha into the industrial towns of Sunabeda and Damanjodi in Koraput. This has meant that Odia is slowly replacing *Desia* in the region. Community leader Tinka Majhi shared his concerns in an interview:

“Mainstream modern education has nearly erased our *Desia* knowledge. One day, I visited a school and found out that there is a Salap tree (toddy palm, also has medicinal properties) and it is considered as sacred in our community. So a curious student asked the teacher pointing towards the tree, ‘Sir, what tree is this?’ The teacher was clueless and he didn’t have any idea about that tree so he ignored that question. The teacher is from the mainland Odisha and he is not

familiar with the ecosystem and culture of Koraput. Another student asked me: Sir, why there are no pictures and examples of our trees and people? I couldn't provide an answer but I realised how serious a threat is this for the entire Desia community in the long run.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

The concern that many tribals share is that their children are being educated in an environment that is alien to them. They are being educated by those who are from coastal Odisha and only provide examples from their culture. The *Desia* children do not get to see pictures and explanations of people and trees in their textbooks. Even the festivals discussed in the textbooks are those from coastal Odisha.

Radio Dhimsa tries to bridge this gap by broadcasting programmes that are about the local. *Desia* experts introduce local herbs with medicinal values that can cure common ailments that do not impose a cost on the poor tribals. As against the knowledge of the external expert, local expertise is featured in its radio programmes. The programmes highlight the local knowledge systems for the benefit of the community.

4.7. Radio Dhimsa: The Reinforcer of *Desia* Culture, Identity, and Knowledge Systems

The *Desia* community connects with Radio Dhimsa since they feel it gives them a voice and has values in the face of the growing influence of mainstream media. Prioritising marginalised communities and providing them with an efficient voice infrastructure to accommodate their voices, experiences, and reflections is truly an emancipatory means for the *Desias* in Koraput (Dutta, 2018; Thomas, 2015).

Based on the values and principles of participatory and dialogic communication, Radio Dhimsa helps Desia community counter the majoritarian voices that try to subjugate their voices (Freire, 1970; Carpentier, 2011; White, 1999; Dash, 2015).

Desias have songs and dances for every occasion like birth ceremony, marriage, first rain of the season, sowing, harvesting and death ceremony. *Desia Naat*, a local theatre form used to be based on mythological stories. As time progressed, it has been appropriated by the state to convey development messages. The elder *Desias* feel the theatre form has been compromised. What used to be performed in open spaces is now largely staged in auditoria. The *Desias* feel the ‘folkness’ is missing. The number of performers has also decreased drastically. The contemporary Desia Naat is very much like the mainstream Odia commercial Jatra. The younger generation does not seem to be interested in the traditional theatre form.

Positioned as a hyper-local media, Radio Dhimsa puts the last first. It continues to provide a platform and archiving the old art forms for posterity. The programming schedule of Radio Dhimsa ensures that *Desia* voices do not face erasure (Chamber, 1983; Jacobson & Storey, 2004). Challenging the agency of the state and mainstream media, Radio Dhimsa tries to give the agency back in the hands of the *Desias* by providing them with an amplifier of their voice and technology in which they are in full control of their own media and means of production, circulation, and consumption (Pavarala and Malik, 2007; Dutta, 2011; Atton, 2015).

As Radio Dhimsa is licensed to SOVA, it is important to understand how Radio Dhimsa negotiates with the larger agendas of the SOVA, which tries to address education, health, development and empowerment issues of the community. Radio Dhimsa ensures that it is not just a mere extension of SOVA; rather it has truly evolved as a community owned

media initiative where SOVA's role is just limited to facilitation. Radio Dhimsa largely enjoys editorial independence, although a few programmes reflect SOVA's agenda too.

As a community radio station, Radio Dhimsa's broadcasts forge a greater sense of community by enabling the Desia community to exercise agency over the programming content. It brings together the older and younger generations in its programmes where the guardians of the Desia culture can share their knowledge. By ensuring community participation, Radio Dhimsa has also established itself as a platform for co-learning and co-creation even while challenging the ever-growing influence of mainstream media on the *Desia* youth in particular.

By employing locals in all aspects of managing the community radio station and promoting local expertise, Radio Dhimsa has consolidated its position as a platform to take the *Desia* legacy forward.

CHAPTER FIVE

Constructing Community and Building Identity: The Case of Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada, Odisha

5.1 Introduction

Radio Swayamshakti, located in Khariar, Nuapada is the second case study of this research. This chapter begins with situating Nuapada in Odisha and proceeds to provide an historical account of how Radio Swayamshakti was established by its parent NGO SRUSTI.

The subsequent sections discuss how Radio Swayamshakti is helping build a sense of community through its broadcasts. There is also a discussion about how the community radio station helps consolidate the *Khadiali* identity.

5.2. History and Geography of the Region

Pre-independence, Nuapada was a part of the larger Sambalpur district until January 1, 1948 and after that it was added to the undivided Kalahandi (including the present Nuapada) as a sub-division with its district headquarter located at Bhawanipatna (Tripathy, 2010). On April 1, 1993, Nuapada was carved out as a separate district.

How Nuapada emerged as a separate district carved out of Kalahandi is based on a very long social, political, historical, administrative, and linguistic history. The journey from Nawapara to Nuapada dates back to 1610 C.E. The journey of Nuapada starts with Tannote estate (the present Nuapada district) which was created when Gopal Rai the younger brother of the Raja of Patna (Bolangir) got three *garhs* (forts) i.e. Goragarh, Kholagarh and Komnagarh, as his share (Senapati & Sahu, 1968; Singdeo, 2006). Later, Gopal Rai added

the present Khariar to his share, which he received as dowry from the King of Jeypore in Koraput.

Khariar, which is the main location of this study was recognised as Khurriar by The East India Company and it was placed under the Chotanagpur division up to 1861. It was then placed under Cuttack Tributary Mahals for one year from 1861-62. Later, it was transferred to the Central Provinces in 1862 along with Sambalpur and Patna. While Khariar used to have a king, the British administration reduced the King of Khariar to a revenue collecting Zamindar in 1863 (Tripathy, 2010).

Khariar remained under the Central Provinces till 1936. After that, the colonial administration on the basis of linguistic lines granted Odisha the status of a separate province on April 1, 1936. It was the first time that a province status was granted to a zamindari on linguistic basis. While granting the province status, the colonial rulers also added Khariar Zamindari and Padmapur Zamindari to Odisha Province in 1936. After getting added to Odisha Province, Khariar was recognised as Khariar sub-division and placed under Sambalpur district based on the recommendations of the Khariar Zamindar. By 1949, Khariar sub-division was named as Nuapada sub-division and it was changed in all government records as well. So, the change from Nawapara to Nuapada happened in 1949 and it was during that period when the Nawapara sub-division was added to the newly constituted separate district of Kalahandi with its headquarters at Bhawanipatna (Singdeo, 1987). Finally in 1993, Nuapada sub-division was carved out of Kalahandi and constituted as a separate district Nuapada (in Odia) and not Nuapara (in Chhattisgarhi). Nuapada- Nua (New); Pada (Settlement) means new settlement (T. & Gazetteers Unit, 2016).

Nuapada is also one of the eight districts that are part of the KBK region of Odisha. Nuapada shares its district boundaries with Raipur District of Chattishgarh in the west,

north and south and Bargarh, Bolangir and Kalahandi districts of Odisha in the east. The present Nuapada district is covered by hills stretching all the way to its south, which is part of the Eastern Ghats and includes plateaus of about 4000 ft (1200 m). This area has huge mineral resources and deposits such as laterite, graphite, and bauxite. The district also has rich forest resources, plentiful fertile soil, and water resources which have helped communities of food gatherers and hunters, settled agricultural societies from ancient times (Bagh, 2014). The civilizational history of the region is very rich and evidence of the creative expressions of cultural, social, and civilizational history that are visible from the paintings of caves at Jogimath, Khariar. The water bodies in form of rivers Jonk, Udanti, and Indra-Sunder with conducive climatic conditions encouraged agricultural societies to settle down for cultivation (Senapati & Mahanti, 1971).

The total area of Nuapada is 3,852 square kilometres which makes it 19th largest district in the state in terms of areas and it is 25th in terms of population. The district headquarter is located at Nuapada town. Nuapada district includes one sub-division (Nuapada), five Tahsils (Nuapada, Khariar, Komna, Boden and Sinapali) and five blocks (Khariar, Sinapalli, Boden, Nuapada and Komna).

Data from the 2011 census suggests that there are a total of 668 revenue villages with 109 gram panchayats with a population of over six lakhs. The total number of rural households is 1,51,761 of which 99,465 are considered Below Poverty Line (BPL), which is 78% of the total population. As per administrative records, there are a total of three Notified Area Councils (NAC) and 10 Police Stations. The total Scheduled Caste (SC) population of the district is 82,159 and Scheduled Tribe (ST) population is 2,06,327, which comprise 13.46 % and 33.80 % respectively of the total population. The sex ratio of the district is 1021 females per 1000 males (Directorate of Census Operations, 2011).

5.2.1. Socio-Political Context

Post-independence, during the first general elections the people of Nuapada actively participated and elected their representatives. There are two assembly constituencies i.e. Nuapada and Khariar. Nuapada district comes under Kalahandi Parliamentary constituency. While the traditional Zamindari structure helped the members of the royal families to win the general elections, their chosen candidates won from the reserved constituencies. The influence and dominance of the traditional elites i.e Gaotia both from adivasi and non-advasi groups, Brahmans, Karanas etc. prevailed. So, these groups mostly controlled the land for a considerable period of time (Singdeo, 2006). But during 1964-65, Nuapada faced acute failure of crop due to drought. The situation was so grave, and people were so helpless that some of them started mortgaged their land, properties, themselves, and sold their animals and children. The administration's apathy led to the death of hundreds of people due to starvation. That famine condition caught the eyeballs of the national and international media, agencies, and governments.

In 1965-66, the then Prime Minister and Chief Minister visited Nuapada and ensured opening of relief camps at Khariar and Nuapada. The famine broke the backbone of Nuapada's economy. The current state of the district can be traced back to the famine of 1964-65. The Nuapada District is yet to fully recover from the famine (Gupta, 2003; T. & Gazetteers Unit, 2016).

The district struggles to produce crops due to lack of irrigation facilities. The setting up of the Saipala, Patora and Jadamuda irrigation projects seem to have contributed little to the drought affected district. Again in 1985, the region got hit with acute shortage of food, which led to the infamous situation of malnutrition, child sale, and starvation death etc. (Sabar, 2015).

The Supreme Court of India, the High Court of Odisha and National Human Rights Commission intervened after a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) at the Supreme Court (case no.12847/1985) filed by Kishan Pattnaik and Kapil Narayan Tiwary (Advocatekhoj, 1989). This infamous incident gained momentum and it was discussed in state assembly and national parliament, which resulted in the then Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi visiting Nuapada. Nuapada continued to remain a cause of global embarrassment for Odisha and India due to the high number of starvation deaths (Bhargava and Ahmed, 1985; Chauhan, 2013). Even after a series of long deliberations and debates in the power corridors of central and state governments, an ambitious irrigation project on river Sunder-Tikhali-Indra named as Lower Indra Irrigation Project was drawn up. Work on this project began in 2000. However, two decades later, the irrigation project is yet to become functional. Irrigation problems still persist in the region and issues such as displacement, forest clearance, land acquisition, compensation, agitation, defective engineering work, corruption have slowed down the work (Pattnaik, 2017). Although, the project is yet to see completion, the chief minister Naveen Pattnaik inaugurated it while asserting that the project would transform the drought prone Nuapada district into an agriculturally rich region (OrissaPost, 2021).

Like in Koraput, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has gained considerable ground in the district with the groups taking shelter in the Sunabeda plateau. The government has been trying to address the issue of LWE with a four-pronged approach i.e. public perception, development, administration and security. The LWE groups on the other hand have been using livelihood and land issues to gain local support (Express News Service, 2021). The government has been focusing on creating job opportunities and building development infrastructure in the form of roads, communication, power, schools, hospitals etc. to change

the narrative of Nuapada as an underdeveloped and drought prone area where people are dying of starvation.

Over the years, Khariar Road and Khariar have grown into business centres, and have attracted people not just from other districts of Odisha but also from other states like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. In the last two decades, several developmental projects such as Upper Indra Irrigation Project, construction of National Highways, doubling of Visakhapatnam-Raipur railway lines and establishment of industrial complexes have resulted in better communication and connectivity to Nuapada.

The total number of schedule caste (SC) population is 82,159 in Nuapada and they belong to SC groups such as Dom, Ganda, Chamar, Ghasi, Dhoba, Keuta, Mehra, Beldar and Panika. The schedule tribe (ST) population in the district is much higher and their number is 2,06,327, which constitutes 33.8 per cent of the total population of Nuapada district. The STs found in Nuapada district include Gond, Bhunjia, Saora / Sabar, Banjara, Binjhal, Dal, Kandha, Mirdha, Munda, Paraja and Bhattoda. More than 99 per cent of the STs live in rural areas. Nuapada district's literacy rate in the last census of 2011 is 57.3 per cent (T. & Gazetteers Unit, 2016; Directorate of Census Operations, 2011).

5.2.2. Language and Culture

The 2011 Census report does not offer any concrete data about the language/linguistic map of the district. Due to its unique geographical situation, historical realities, and rich cultural specificities, the language spoken in Nuapada is a mixture of Odia and Chhattisgarhi dialect because of its proximity with Chhattisgarh (District Administration-Nuapada, 2018). However, one will find that there is certain uniqueness in the dialect that is spoken across the district, which is a fusion of Odia, Hindi, Kosali (also known as Sambalpuri).

Notwithstanding the presence of the Kosali dialect across Nuapada, people write in Odia (T. & Gazetteers Unit, 2016).

Given this rich historical and cultural past, Nuapada flourished on cultural and literary fronts. A lot of credit goes to pioneering individuals like Bhakta Kabi Chaitanya Dash who managed to build a name for himself through his sustained and unceasing literary creations. It is said that he taught and oriented the kings starting with Raja Brajraj Singh Deo who went on to take the cultural and literary tradition forward with great vigour and enthusiasm. Later, he turned out to be a greater litterateur of his time. During his tenure as the king of Khariar, Brajraj Singh Deo prioritised education and culture. He shaped the culture and literary map of Khariar and initiated a number of interesting cultural and literary projects including *Khadial Sahitya Samiti* (Khadial Literature Committee), *Chandan Yatra* (Chandan Festival), and *Ratha Yatra* (Car Festival) etc. These were the cultural and literary traditions initiated by Raja Brajraj Singh Deo which encouraged the local people to develop an interest in their local culture, tradition, and knowledge sources.

Khadial Sahitya Samiti formed in 1883, is the first literature community in Odisha and continues to be active. The committee also publishes a magazine titled *Khadial Jyoti* (The light of Khadial) in association with Khadial Cultural Committee. In fact, the literary meaning of *Khadial* is *Khadira Aalaya* (an abode of knowledge) and some people interpret as *Khadi* meaning chalk, therefore Khadial means a residing place where learned people live together (Yamin, 2010). Khadial became Khariar in written English but it is still called Khadial by the local people. So, the rich cultural and literary tradition initiated by Bhakta Kabi Chaitanya Dash has left a long-lasting impression on the region.

After Raja Brajraj Singh Deo, his son Prince Birbikram Singh Deo was fond of theatre and under his supervision a permanent drama stage was established in 1895 at Khariar. It was

named Birbikram *Rangamancha* (Auditorium) and it became the first Odia permanent drama stage in Odisha. The objective was to bring together the talents in and around Khariar who were interested in theatre to promote local cultural, literary, and knowledge traditions of the region through theatre. Although the number of artistes has decreased in the last few decades, theatre groups still stage shows on various local events and occasions.

After Birbikram Singh Deo, his eldest son Raja Artatran Singh Deo was very instrumental in the formation of Odisha Province in 1936. He was later nominated to Odisha Advisory Council as a member in 1936 and elected to Odisha Legislative Council in 1937 from Khariar Constituency. He promoted language and culture of the region to a great extent. He substantially donated his funds to Gopal Chandra Praharaj for publication of the Purna Chandra Odia Bhasha Kosha to develop and promote Odia language. His son, Raja Anup Singh Deo was conferred with the Kabi Saurabha title by the Braja Mohan Sahitya Samiti, Bhawanipatna in 1971 for his literary creations and poetry collections. His works include *Arati*, *Urmi*, *Latika*, *Murchhana*, *Sanachaya*, *Tripatri*, *Birahabaridhi* and other unpublished works.

The current generation of Khariar kings are also into the world of literature and culture that includes Raja Jitamitra Singh Deo who is a famous archaeologist and Patayat Nila Lohita Singh Deo who is a very well-known poet.

Apart from the kings and their family members in Khariar, local people have also hugely contributed to culture and literature. One of the biggest names would be Prayag Datta Joshi, who is regarded as the '*Kosali Bhashar Janak*' (Father of Kosali Language) and also as 'Kosal Gaurav' and "Kosal Ratna" for his extraordinary contribution to Khadiali and Kosali culture (Karmee, 2011).

In fact, Pandit Prayag Datta Joshi was not alone in promoting and developing Kosali language and culture. There were many other like-minded people during his time and beyond who have contributed to the larger cultural and literary development of the region. Notable names include Dr. Nilamadhab Panigrahi, Mr. P. R. Dubey and Pandit Prayag Datta Joshi who organised the first ‘Kosal Sammellan’ and spearheaded the ‘Kosali language’ movement in western Odisha.

In the following years, Satya Narayan Bohidar of Sonapur contributed immensely by writing the first dictionary and grammar books on Kosali language (Sahu, 2011). Later, Sri Hemachandra Acharya made a remarkable contribution by writing ‘The Kosali Ramayana’. This book popularised the Kosali language in its written form. Since the original script of Ramayan is attributed to Rishi Balmiki, Late Shri Acharya was conferred with the title ‘Kosali Balmiki’ (Karmee, 2012). Similarly, Dr. Nilamadhab Panigrahi wrote the ‘Kosali Mahabharat’. Later, he was nominated for the prestigious ‘Sarala Samman’ but it is said that he did not accept the award because of his affection towards Kosali language (Karmee, 2013).

Currently, there are many individuals who have received national recognition for their literary creations and cultural contributions. Poet Padma Shri Haldhar Nag, who is famously known as ‘Lok Kabi Ratna’, novelist Dhanapati Mahapatra, Dr. Dologobind Bishi, Dr. Harekrushna Meher, Poet Bipin Acharya, Nimai Charan Panigrahi, and dramatist Kesha Ranjan Pradhan, are among those leading the Kosali language movement. The ‘Kosali Sahitya Academy’ was set up in 2011 with a view to promote Kosali culture, language, and literature. The academy has felicitated several literary personalities of Kosali language and literature (Karmee, 2011, Kumar, 2018).

In general, Khariar, as a cultural hub in Nuapada district has been very instrumental in promoting both Odia and Kosali language and culture since the time of feudal rule. Other prominent indigenous languages like Bhunjia and Paharia have sustained their identity although they maintain a convenient distance from the mainstream Odia and local Kosali language and culture (District Administration-Nuapada, 2022).

The region also has archaeological importance and the 9th-10th Century A.D. temple of Dadhibaman in Khariar is a symbol of Dadhibaman Cult, which has been declared as State Protected Monument. Moreover, there are archaeological evidences unearthed by popular archaeologist like Dr Jitamitra Singh Deo who confidently writes in a number of his works that there are concrete evidence of early societies in Nuapada. These archaeological sites remain neglected. However, one will find traces of the activities of early man of the district. There are innumerable plain stone tools, chisel-edged stone tools used for hunting and food gathering. These are spotted across the foothills of mountains, river terraces and valleys and natural caves in different parts of the district that help us understand that early hunter-gatherer societies existed here in Nuapada. Other archaeological monuments include the famous rock shelters of Rishipiti, Jholpathar, Guru Donger of Boden Block and Dadhibaman rock shelter of Sunabeda plateau and a horseshoe like natural cave in Debahal village, all of which point to a rich civilizational history (Singhdeo, 2006; Senapati & Kuanr, 1980).

5.3. SRUSTI and the Empowerment Project

Society for Rural Upliftment and Socio Technological Initiative (SRUSTI) was established in 1995 as a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) based in Rajkhariar of Nuapada District. SRUSTI covers the entire Komna Block of 30 villages coming under five gram

panchayats with a total number of 3697 households. The NGO has played an instrumental role in strengthening 30 *Gaon Kalyan Samitis* (GKS), 15 Women Self Help Groups (WSHGs) and 15 *Balika Mandals* (BM) across the Komna Block. SRUSTI has been working for the last 20 years in this region.

It was founded when the Nuapada region was identified as an epicentre of poverty and hunger. SRUSTI's main objective was to address some of the pressing issues like hunger and poverty. Biswajit Padhi, the secretary of SRUSTI and his team wanted to use technology as a means to develop this region and explore potential solutions to the larger issues of this region. SRUSTI believes in simple and affordable technologies that will simplify people's lives. And the idea was to involve the rural people in the use of affordable technologies in the development process. SRUSTI aims at giving agency back in the hands of commoners who exercise it for the larger benefit of their communities.

SRUSTI works in difficult terrains which, to a very large extent hinders the mobility of Cluster Facilitators of SRUSTI to reach their communities. Communication and transportation are two major issues of the region. SRUSTI emphasises on core issues like sustainable development, empowerment, health, land and natural resources conservation, poverty alleviation, and hunger etc. Apart from these core issues, SRUSTI particularly focuses on two most vulnerable groups i.e., women and children. The Cluster Facilitators of SRUSTI work industriously to help the community find its own indigenous solutions to these issues. On the evolution of SRUSTI as a community oriented and pro-people NGO, Chairman Biswajit Padhi says:

“When we started SRUSTI in 1995 with an objective to work with rural communities that are otherwise side-lined in the mainstream

development project, we realised that their cries for access to education, health, and development mostly remained unheard and unaddressed. Initially, we found that people were not aware of the events, schemes, policies, and plans of the government and that was one of the major reasons why the local communities were struggling to get included in the mainstream agendas of development. As a result, the projects of the state that were implemented here in this region didn't reap the right kind of results. We also realised that women and children are the most marginalised and vulnerable groups here in this region and therefore our focus on health, education, economy, and empowerment. We began using low-cost, people-friendly technologies to help communities find their own solutions to the basic issues they face in their day-to-day lives. We believe in small interventions to improve the lives of the people. Over the years, we have grown with our communities, and we believe we have been successful in helping communities raise their voices before the state and local administration to address their economic, social, and cultural issues. That is the larger empowerment project that we are committed to.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

SRUSTI uses social marketing as an approach to ensure women and girls are economically self-reliant to meet their health needs and help them in getting empowered to raise their voices for their rights. SRUSTI, with the help of local Self-Help Groups (SHGs) ensures distribution of sanitary napkins through local shopkeepers at an affordable price. This

resulted in addressing menstrual problems in adolescent girls. Similarly, the introduction of SHGs by SRUSTI proved to be an effective strategy in the economic and social empowerment of women in the region. This also gave women the economic agency in the family. Not just limited to the economic independence and empowerment, SHGs also help women and girls address and engage with issues of reproductive rights and health, nutrition, gender, land, livelihood, etc. Alongside, it also supports women in income generation activities while seeking micro credit. An ideal SHG consists of 15-20 members, which allows room for genuine and democratic participation and participatory discussion. This helps in addressing and engaging with the wide-ranging issues and interests of the women and girls' communities. In total, SRUSTI has formed 1956 SHGs across the region of Nuapada.

Taking a step further, SRUSTI introduced the community savings pot concept to bring attitudinal changes amongst the women towards savings. This helped women in meeting their emergency health care expenses, particularly deliveries.

Apart from that, SRUSTI also sought to address the information and communication gaps of the community. Language used to be a big barrier to navigate through the path of development. The state and district administration use Odia language. It is way too different from the Kosali language that is spoken here in this region. Therefore, SRUSTI began to publish Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) materials in local Kosali language to ensure that local tribal communities were able to access this information. This to a large extent addresses the information and communication needs of the community while promoting and bringing desirable behaviour and attitudinal changes.

5.3.1. Emergence of Radio Swayamshakti

The story of behind the emergence of Radio Swayamshakti as a community radio station is related to the inspiring journey of SRUSTI that holds the community radio license.

It was during its work with rural communities in the Khadial, Nuapada region when team SRUSTI realised that people were not aware of the events, schemes, policies, and plans of the government. Nuapada continues to be neglected by the mainstream media. There were no media through which people could access information useful for them in their language. The communication inequalities largely affected the results of various development projects that were implemented here in this region (Dutta & Elers, 2020).

The district administration uses Odia and English as official languages to communicate with the communities and in issuing government circulars, orders and reports. Given the differences in language, the local communities are marginalised when it comes to getting the actual meaning of messages directed at them. Public broadcasters Doordarshan and All Indian Radio hardly give media time to the stories and issues of communities from this region. The Khariar tribes face a double disadvantage: Linguistic and representation in the mainstream media.

The biggest obstacle before SRUSTI was that as an NGO, its reach was limited and that led to the idea of reaching out to communities in faraway places through community radio. Team SRUSTI attended a workshop in 2010 on how to apply for community radio licence that was organised in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. After attending that workshop, SRUSTI held a series of discussions with the local communities and other stakeholders to explore the idea of setting up a community radio station. The objective was that the community radio station would cater to the communication and information needs of the local communities. It tried its luck by applying for a community radio licence to establish a community radio station

in Khadial, Nuapada (Pavarala and Malik, 2007; Dash, 2015). The infamous 2G scam happened and team SRUSTI had to wait since the government decided not issue licenses to NGOs. After a long wait SRUSTI got its community radio license in 2014. SRUSTI utilised the period between 2010 and 2014 to figure out community participation and the finances required to run the community radio station. Radio Swayamshakti was launched in 2015. Before setting up the community radio station, SRUSTI had a popular magazine named Swayamshakti that focussed and helped people know and realise their own strengths and talents. Station Director Biswajit Padhi shared a story that led his team to name the community radio station Radio Swayamshakti. The story is about one of the SHG groups that SRUSTI was supporting, and it had started a corpus fund for the women, and they used to provide loans at 12% interest. The group of women came to know about another organisation which started giving loans at 36% interest. The group of women objected and resisted that move and finally, the other organisation revoked that scheme. SRUSTI realised that if these women can gain some confidence to raise their voices for their own rights and needs then it would be beneficial for the community at large. SRUSTI named the community radio station after its magazine.

SRUSTI pitched Radio Swayamshakti as a medium that will help these local communities and people realise their own talents and strengths that are otherwise sidelined and remain unrecognised. Also, that Radio Swayamshakti will help in empowering the communities and strengthening their voices (Dash, 2015). Sharing the objectives of Radio Swayamshakti, Pabitra Pradhan, the Station Coordinator says:

“We believe that if people can access information in their language, it will be easier for them to make sense of the

information in Kosali. Once they have access to a communication tool like Radio Swayamshakti, getting information wouldn't be a problem and it will be great for the region as well. Radio Swayamshakti ensures that it reaches the last mile with relevant information to counter the threat of information imbalance and helps strengthen marginalised voices. Radio Swayamshakti's mandate is to shine a spotlight on the Khadiali community and its culture by representing the community and its culture appropriately on our community radio station.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

Radio Swayamshakti was the first and only community radio in the entire western Odisha region until the establishment of Radio Hirakhand in 2018 by SUPRATIVA at Sakhipara, Sambalpur, Odisha. Radio Swayamshakti began broadcasting in Kosali and prioritised reaching out to the socially marginalised communities like women and tribals of this region. Also, in order ensure financial sustainability, Radio Swayamshakti had plans of setting up a small commercial audio recording studio. However, that didn't materialise because of lack of professionals in this region.

5.3.2. Contemporary Scene

Currently, Radio Swayamshakti constructs its own community through messages and programming (Browne, 2012). Thriving on the famous idea that “community radio is 99% about community and only 1% about radio” by the legendary South African broadcaster

Zane Ibrahim, Radio Swayamshakti ensures that community enjoys complete agency in using the radio station in favour of community voices (Malik and Pavarala, 2021).

For Radio Swayamshakti communities are based on issues. For example, the station has specific programmes like '*Swasthya Hi Sampada*' meaning 'Health is Wealth' that deal with the health and hygiene of women and adolescent girls. Similarly, when Radio Swayamshakti observed that the youth of this region are deprived of information related to schemes, policies, and opportunities available for them, it launched the '*Nijukti Khabar*' (Employment News) aimed at the youth of the region. Like Radio Dhimsa, Radio Swayamshakti too addresses different sections of the Khadiali community through its issue specific programmes.

The current projects of Radio Swayamshakti are focused on understanding and engaging with the majoritarian cultures, identities and the mainstream agendas of the state and dominant media. Radio Swayamshakti also broadcasts programmes to revitalise the local Khadiali culture and identity while countering the hegemonic structures.

Important, the station does all of these while practicing and promoting the ideas of de-professionalization, conscientization, and community participation. On the Radio Swayamshakti's broadcasting culture, Programme Coordinator Asutosh Naik has the following to say:

“I joined Radio Swayamshakti in 2016 without any background and formal training in radio broadcasting, reporting and programming. Despite not having prior knowledge and experience, Radio Swayamshakti gave me an opportunity to join its team based on the sole criteria that I am a Khadiali and I am good at writing programming scripts in the local dialect. This has lent credibility to my work as a

community radio broadcaster. Not just me, other colleagues of mine here at the station are from the community and they were also unskilled and untrained when they first joined the initiative. Employing locals has also helped the station garner more community support over the years through community participation in various aspects of Radio Swayamshakti's functioning as a community media.”
(Personal Interview, 2019)

Radio Swayamshakti ensures de-professionalization by promoting and building capacities of non-experts and local community members to do programming so that they can run and take full control of their community radio station. Programmes are conceived, written, produced and broadcast by Khadialis for the Khadiali community.

Swayamshakti Roundtable (SR) is a monthly programme that aims at bringing the *Khadialis* together to provide them an open space where they discuss the most pressing issues of their community. In this programme, the community gets into a conversation and tries to reflect on the larger issues related to language, culture, education, and health to come up with a feasible solution. When I was at the radio station an episode on SR discussed the upcoming *Khadial Mahotsav* (annual festival). There was discussion about how external art forms have taken over the *Mahotsav* in the recent years. This particular episode discussed how it was important to promote local talent when there was so much available in the region itself. The underlying principle was about arriving at a consensus through deliberation.

De-professionalization, conscientization, and community participation has helped the station in building long-lasting association and rapport with the community and transferring the agency to the community so that it can take full control of its affairs.

5.4. Constructing *Khadiali* Community: The Radio Swayamshakti Way

Earlier, the Khariar region was the cultural hub of undivided Kalahandi. Culture plays a key role in the everyday lives of communities in the region. But with modernisation, the state of culture in this region has degraded to a great extent (Bagh, 2014).

Radio Swayamshakti uses the existing cultural affinity and solidarity and tries to strengthen and construct the larger *Khadiali* community through its programmes. The elder *Khadialis* opine that the younger generation are getting carried away by ‘outside’ cultures promoted and propagated by the mainstream media resulting in a cultural shift. The inter-generational transmissions of culture and communitarian values are affected in the process, which is a much bigger threat to the community. On the issues of cultural degradation and shifts, eminent litterateur and member of *Khadial Sahitya Samiti* (Khadial Literary Committee) Balaram Barik comments:

“Our community is facing a huge challenge. Our local culture is diminishing by the day. We must fight to retain our *Khadialiness* and for that all *Khadialis* need to come together. Radio Swayamshakti is a blessing because it identifies and recognises this issue and broadcasts our voices through its programmes to sensitise the youth about the essence of holding on to *Khadiali* roots.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

For an example, Radio Swayamshakti broadcasts a programme called *Bane Bane Katha* (Jungle Tales). This programme aims at reaching out to the community leaders and talents and provide them with an opportunity to share their life stories and experiences with the

entire community. The station believes that sharing the rich experiences and expertise of the community members can instil and invoke a greater sense of *Khadialiness*.

Radio Swayamshakti consciously recognises that *Khadialiness* can be consolidated and strengthened through increased involvement of the community in broadcasting programmes on the larger socio-political cultural transitions and by spotlighting local expertise. All the same it does acknowledge the changing social and cultural milieu.

5.5. Radio Swayamshakti: Forging a Sense of *Khadiali* Identity

Being in a culturally, socially, and locationally disadvantaged space, *Khadiali* community is vulnerable to the mainstreaming agendas and cultural hegemony of the majoritarian Odia community and identity in Odisha as also the mainstream media. To tackle this challenge, Radio Swayamshakti offers an alternative to the *Khadiali* community in Khariar, to promote *Khadiali* identity by producing and broadcasting content in the Kosali dialect.

Language plays a very critical role in the overall dynamics of the making of the community identity (Salawu and Chibita, 2016). The language that people use in the media eventually get to determine their chances of getting heard. So, a language spoken by the majority of people would have a greater chance of getting heard than a smaller language spoken by a small group of people. The Khadialis are considered a minority although it is their dialect that holds them together. Radio Swayamshakti recognises this encourages participation of all sections of the community on its broadcasts.

From the overall fieldwork and data analysis, it is observed that Radio Swayamshakti strengthens *Khadiali* identity through specific programming efforts. While mainstream media largely feature Odia litterateurs and culture experts, Radio Swayamshakti features

local talent in various fields including literature and culture to help forge the *Khadiali* identity.

Programmes like *Kabi 'O' Kabita* (Poet and Poetry) and *Aama Mati, Aama Loka* (Our Soil, Our People) are popular among the *Khadialis* because of their strong local appeal. These programmes promote local cultural artists, artistes, writers, young poets, and others interested in local art, literature and culture. These people get recognised for their art, creativity, and passion. This gives them a unique identity in the community and makes them feel wanted.

Arjun Chhetria, Pala Artiste & Cultural Activist of Khariar reflects on how Radio Swayamshakti promotes local talent:

“I have been practicing and performing *Pala* (folk ballad form) for 30 years now and *Pala* is a very well-received and regarded art form. But unfortunately, we as a community have not been duly recognised in the popular media space because of the difference we have in dialects which is much different from mainstream Odia. We have been successful in mobilising impressive talent from our *Khadiali* community members who are working to preserve this beautiful art form. Their work gets recognised solely because of Radio Swayamshakti. By broadcasting programmes on *Pala*, Swayamshakti ensures that the legacy lives on. When our people listen to *Pala* on the radio, there is a sense of belonging.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

Radio Swayamshakti's realises that another way of strengthening local identity is to have the station crew from the community. It seems to have worked well. There are five crew members working in Radio Swayamshakti. All of them are *Khadiali*. For each one of them, working for the radio station is a matter of pride. People in their communities recognise them as change agents who are working for the betterment of the community.

Sharing his experience, Pintu Nayak, Programme Coordinator at the station has this to say:

“When I joined Radio Swayamshakti, I was in the first year of my Intermediate in Khariar College. But I always had a passion for music, programme content creation, and more importantly, to do something artistic so that people can engage with my work. During that time, I got know about Radio Swayamshakti. It has been two years now and I have been thoroughly enjoying my work here. People appreciate our programmes because we talk about their issues and experiences in the local dialect and this entire process has immensely helped me grow as a community broadcaster and content creator. Today, I have my own *YouTube* channel named *Pintu Sambalpuri Vlogs* with more than 10,000 subscribers. People of this region easily connect with my *YouTube* channel since they were already acquainted with my work at Radio Swayamshakti. Working at the radio station has given me recognition.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

Anupama Patel, Radio Jockey at Radio Swayamshakti is a local icon. She says:

“After my father’s untimely death, I was in deep shock and couldn’t think of the future as my father was the only source of support and motivation in our family. I got a call from the Radio Swayamshakti’s governing body offering me a chance to join the initiative and continue my studies alongside. I accepted the offer and now work with the station. The station was patient till I improved my skills as a radio jockey and grew as an individual. I thoroughly enjoy my work and feel content with the identity when people in my village call me ‘radio jockey’. It has not only given me an opportunity to rediscover myself but also to create an identity of my own.” (Personal Interview, 2019)

Radio Swayamshakti seems to have created a positive impact on the other crew members too. It ensures capacity building of the crew and community members by giving them a free space with the freedom to experiment with their ideas and approaches to a programme. The presence of youngsters like Pintu and Anupama at the radio station helps build a connect with the youngsters of the community. They relate to them easily and get involved in content generation.

Here are some of the key findings from the evidence gathered:

- Radio Swayamshakti is an active means to consolidate the *Khadioli* identity by engaging the community in various aspects of the radio station.

- The station crew and community are free to decide on the kind of programmes they want to broadcast. SRUSTI hardly intervenes in the editorial decisions of the community members. This is one of the major reasons why the *Khadialiness* comes through in its programmes.
- The crew continuously experiments with the program contents in *Kosali* dialect to make it more reachable and appealing to the region and community.
- In order to strengthen local *Khadiali* identity, the CR station encourages local experts in its programmes. It banks on the local crew with active support and participation of the community to lend credibility to its broadcast content.
- The entire CR station crew is from the community. People have begun to associate the crew members with specific programmes. This too, has forged a sense of community.
- Radio Swayamshakti is safeguarding the feeling of being the ‘local’ and being for the ‘local’. It is providing them with information and messages in their own dialect. Radio Swayamshakti is not limited to being a medium of information and communication. It has evolved to being a carrier of the local culture and aspirations.

Radio Swayamshakti dons the role of a hyper-local media, while thriving on the true principles and characteristics of a community radio station. By retaining the idea of ‘local’ in all its operations, the CR station has been instrumental in strengthening local culture and identity and establish its credentials as a community-based organisation.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion: The Need for a Cultural Turn in Community Media

“It makes me happy to come to Radio Dhimsa to record Paraja songs (musical tradition of the Paraja tribe) for programmes meant specifically for our community. I feel at home here. Radio Dhimsa speaks to us, our culture, and our people. I am among the very few remaining artistes who can sing Paraja songs and use our musical instruments like the *Dununga* and *Dafu*. I work with Radio Dhimsa to help revive our dying culture. We are losing our unique cultural traits and identities due to the other media. Radio Dhimsa is a powerful tool to trumpet our culture and identity. Radio Dhimsa unites us and makes us feel as one.”

--Sada Jhadia, a member of the Paraja community and
programme volunteer at Radio Dhimsa

6.1. Overview the Thesis: Reflections and Learnings from the Chapters

This study examined and analysed community radio's role in addressing culture and identity in the community and analysed how it engages and addresses those issues and questions. From the two case studies, it is evident that the concept of culture and identity within the context of community and community radio are dynamic, fluid, and flexible. Further, the ideas are more content, context, and community-specific because

community radio is community-led media. The community radio stations in question find greater acceptance in the community since members of both Desia and Khadiali communities are involved in all aspects of their functioning.

6.1.1. Reflections from the Chapters

Here are the chapters of this thesis, along with reflections and explanations about each chapter's content.

As was discussed in the first chapter of this study titled *Introduction: Locating culture and identity in community media*, the chapter lays out the context in which the study is positioned and situated. It begins with a discussion of some of the most important concepts like community, community radio, and community communication. These ideas have been a constant theme throughout the thesis. Following this, the thesis presents a historical overview of the community radio movement in India. My experiences and the motivation behind the study are also presented in this chapter.

The purpose of the second chapter *Conceptual Trajectories and Theoretical Underpinnings* was to discuss the conceptual background and theoretical moorings of this study. This chapter was intended to emphasize the larger research tracks and thrust areas that have been addressed so far by the scholarship in community and alternative media studies. As a result, this was not a conventional review of literature. This chapter situated certain concepts and ideas in the context of the current study as well as how they contribute to the larger conceptual background of the study. It proceeds to problematize themes on culture and identity and place them within alternative and community media studies in order to generate key theoretical and methodological assumptions used in the study.

The next chapter on the methodology and research design *Researching Community Radio: Examining Politics of Culture and Identity* discussed the methodology and tools for this research. The chapter provided an overview of the my journey into the field, including a description of the pilot study he conducted and how he selected the case study to use for immersive fieldwork followed by the study's objectives and results. The rationale for the research objectives and supporting questions were also discussed in this chapter. The next section focused on how ethnographic sampling was arrived at to select case studies for this study, followed by a review of what constituted data for this study. The constructivist interpretive paradigm, which informed this research's methodological framework, was mentioned in detail. As part of this study, it was important to explain how methods and tools like in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, walk the talk/ being along, and desk reviews contributed to data collection. The daily dairy maintained by me helped in triangulating data from the field work. Likewise, the data analysis section detailed the ways and means used to make sense of the collected data. Data analysis helped expand my understanding of the larger ideas under investigation.

Chapter four *Communicating Culture and Consolidating Identity: Examining the Role of Radio Dhimsa in Desia Community* focused on the first case study of this research. It began with a discussion on the socio-political, cultural, and geographic history of Koraput. This section helped situate Radio Dhimsa in a wider geographic context and provide an understanding of how it functions as a community radio station. From highlighting the fact that Radio Dhimsa is the only *Desia* broadcaster, this chapter aimed at understanding the ways and means the community radio station understands, engages and addresses culture, identity, and knowledge within *Desia* culture. This

chapter also provided the key arguments, narratives, and reflections that lead to a deeper understanding of Radio Dhimsa's role and positioning in the *Desia* community.

The next case study chapter *Constructing Community and Building Identity: The Case of Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada, Odisha* investigated Radio Swayamshakti and its overall involvement with Kosali culture and identity. This chapter started with an overview of the socio-political, cultural and geographic history of Khariar, Nuapada. The following sections in the chapter examined Radio Swayamshakti as an alternative media forum serving the Khadiali community in Khariar, its overall mandate, mission, and purpose. The following sections examined how Radio Swayamshakti deals with issues, questions, and politics surrounding culture and identity.

6.1.2. Major Learnings from the Study

Here are some of the major learnings from this study:

- From the case studies, one can conclude that community radios located in culturally and spatially marginalised areas can play a crucial role in mobilizing the communities to revitalise their local cultures and reinforce their identities.
- Community radio can serve as a cultural media to strengthen and consolidate local and indigenous cultures and identities while addressing the bigger threat of cultural hegemony posed by the mainstream media and majoritarian identities.
- Community radios can create conducive spaces for building and amplifying voices that are rooted in the community's social, cultural, and work to consolidate community voices, cultures, and identities.
- Both the case studies are unique in their own ways. The case studies inform us that community radio can serve as a medium for social change by allowing

communities to take the lead in controlling their own media through sustained democratic participation and community solidarity. Such participation can lead to social and communication sustainability of the community radio initiative.

- Both the initiatives have taken advantage of the transformative potential of community radios to facilitate greater community cohesion and solidarity. In the long run, these characteristics contribute to the social and cultural vitality of the community.

6.2. The Connecting Threads

In the beginning, one of the core objectives of this study was to study how community radio relates to and engages with concepts such as community, culture, and identity. During the early stages of this research, it wasn't clear which community radio initiatives would be part of this study. The fact that a large percentage the 300-plus community radio stations in India are located in impoverished areas of the country demonstrates the need for the existence of hyper-local media to provide and amplify the voices that are largely ignored by the mainstream media (Jena, 2021).

In India, as an emerging field, community radio scholarship has largely focused on questions of development, empowerment, communication rights, and participation. The radio stations Radio Dhimsa in Koraput and Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada are located in Odisha, the state which houses 62 tribal groups of the 700 plus tribes residing in India today. However, communities such as these have hardly received attention from researchers on culture and politics of indigenous tribal identities.

6.2.1. Creating Voice and Communication Infrastructures for the Margins

According to Hochheimer (2002), community radio's fundamental purpose is to develop communication and informational capabilities of marginalized communities so that they can learn to communicate and share issues, concerns, and experiences. By enabling community members to share their stories and experiences in their own local and indigenous ways, community radio can make a significant contribution to the development of democratic communication and voice infrastructure (Rodriguez, 2001; Pavarala, 2003; Dutta, 2011). Both Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti provide the community with a medium for communication and information that is open to the community in their own distinct dialects with which to voice their stories and experiences. Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti have established themselves as platforms that provide the information their communities need and involve the very same communities in the functioning of the radio station and their broadcasts thereby reinforcing their unique cultures and traditions.

6.2.2. Building Communication Capabilities Through Participation

Ullah (2021) states that the credibility of community radio stations is undermined by the lack of true and sustained community participation. Both Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti ensure participation of community members in all aspects of their functioning. This gives the community participants agency in the creation, production and dissemination of programmes rooted in local culture and knowledge. In addition to ensuring participation, both the community radio stations meet the information and communication needs of the communities they serve. This results in a more democratic

media ecosystem that is participatory, democratic, and community-oriented (Malik & Pavarala, 2021).

6.2.3. Countering The Majoritarian Threat

Both the community radio stations seek out local talent for their programming and outreach initiatives. By doing so, they are addressing two issues in one stroke: Lack of representation of these tribal communities in mainstream media outlets, and countering the hegemony of the majoritarian Odia culture and identity. Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti have become countercultural media which are addressing the larger threats of cultural mainstreaming and hegemony (Downing, 2003).

6.2.4. Addressing the NGOization Trap

In both cases, the broadcasting license is held by the parent NGOs of the community radio stations. One of the potential risks is the NGOisation of the community radio stations, i.e the agendas of the parent NGO override those of the community radio stations.

In the case of both the community radios under study, the parent NGOs rarely exercise editorial control on the programmes broadcast by the CR stations. The parent NGOs' role is limited to facilitate the smooth functioning of the community radio. A much more precise way of describing it would be to say that both the parent NGOs and community radio stations manage to find a negotiated space and have put in place processes that rarely impinge on each other (Pavarala, 2021). One could term this as beneficial for both the community radio stations since negotiation also mean sustained interaction between the two. Greater engagement with members of the community also provides an opportunity for the CR stations to sensitise their communities about what

is at stake. This also prevents the community radio stations from being mere conduits for development messages of NGOs and the state at large (Reza, 2018).

6.2.5. Striving to be Hyper-local Media

Access and participation are two important factors of a successful community radio. The key is participation of local members of the community. Another key factor is about broadcasting programmes on issues concerning the immediate community. This contributes to the hyper-local nature of the community radio station. Programmes like *Hal Chal; Aamar Gaon, Aamar Katha; Bane Bane Katha* and *Kabi o Kabita* on both the radio stations reflect the hyper-local nature of the programmes. Needless to say, the talent featured on such programmes are also from the tribal communities. Selection of local issues and concerns, and local talent and expertise for their broadcasts has resulted in better chemistry and mutual trust between the radio stations and their communities. Both the community radios seem to be on their way to achieve their potential as a hyper-local media by reflecting the community in all its forms and activities.

6.2.6. The Everyday and Ordinary media

The programmes broadcast on both Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti are about everyday spaces and lived experiences of their communities. They provide space for community voices and opinions. This connects with the community and reflects the ordinariness of the media.

6.2.7. Not Just a ‘Radio’

A community radio is not just about the relationship between transmitter and community. It is an organising force that helps communities embrace media, while also serving as an emancipatory force (Coyer, 2007). Using their programming efforts and outreach activities, Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti support social cohesion in the community, instilling a greater sense of community identity and solidarity. By demystifying technology and not placing too much emphasis on professionalism, both the community radio initiatives encourage their community members to be themselves, broadcast and voice their opinion and feedback.

6.2.8. Beyond the Development Paradigm

Hochheimer (2002) and Pavarala & Malik (2007) point out that by and large, community radio in South Asia and India in particular has a very dominant development agenda that is backed and sponsored by the state. To communicate development to rural communities that are otherwise unreachable by mainstream media, the state often taps into the potential of community radio stations in media-dark areas. The use of community radios as conveyer belts to disseminate information and talk about rights and responsibilities is acceptable to a certain extent, but limiting them to just that is against the spirit of the medium.

Besides communicating development messages, the core programming of Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti seek to strengthen and promote local cultures and identities. In addition, these radio stations also address the larger questions and politics involved in the process.

6.2.9. Promoting Local Epistemologies and Cognitive Justice

An ideal community radio station puts the community first and at the centre of everything it does. Community participation in some cases is nominal. How accommodative they are of local epistemologies and cognitive justice is a question. Local knowledge systems are often ignored and discarded on the basis that they lack scientific temper. Local knowledge systems are also often subjected to abuse by the imposition of ‘mainstream knowledge practices’.

To a large extent, both Radio Dhimsa and Radio Swayamshakti make a conscious effort to identify and respect the generational, experiential and practice-based local knowledge systems that have been part of the Desia and Khadiali communities. *Chas Khabar* and *Bane Bane Katha* are cases in point. Programmes such as these initiate conversations between the elders and the younger generation that seem to get carried away by popular culture.

6.3. Contribution to the Field

As has been mentioned earlier, there is a lack of literature on community radio and how it engages with local culture and identity of communities. This study provides a comprehensive and diverse resource of literature on these topics (Jena, 2021). Despite the steady rise in the number of community radios across a diverse country like India, scholarship and critical research in the field have rarely moved beyond development,

voice poverty, empowerment, development communication, participation and sustainability.

Community radio policies and regulations in India heavily emphasize development and the state's use of community radio as a potential tool to connect the last mile with messages the development process (Malik & Pavarala, 2021; Ullah et al., 2021; Backhaus, 2021).

This study attempts to cover the knowledge gap in understanding the interaction between community radio, community and its culture and identity. As an extension of providing ways and means by which to examine the politics of culture and identity, it points to the need for a cultural turn in alternative and community media studies in India, as well as to develop critical theoretical and methodological frameworks and paradigms for a cultural analysis of community media in India (Howley, 2013; Bhat, 2018).

This study links different theoretical frameworks and employs them to study how community radios can engage and address issues, questions and politics of local cultures and identities.

Community radio policymaking in India has always been highly hierarchical and top-down in its approach (Raghunath, 2020). Livingstone and Lunt (2011) argue that policy deliberation often focuses on regulation and provision of content and ignores audience participation and views audiences as just recipients of content. With too much emphasis on the state's use of community radio as 'development media' the current community radio policy in India seems to ignore the deliberative potential of the community in emancipating itself through community radio.

Policy dialogues should consider how community radios can be effective in promoting local cultures and identities in addition to addressing the information needs of the community.

6.4. Scope for future research

The objectives of the current study permitted me to concentrate only on community radio and issues of culture and identity. Through its findings, it makes a few recommendations in the previous section.

Further research on questions like alternative imaginaries, political economy, voice and communication activism of community radio could bring up interesting findings and add to the growing scholarship on community media.

It is hoped that the findings from this study will influence my future research and also lead me to researching the other areas mentioned above. This research may not have wide-reaching implications, but it is an attempt to raise some critical questions and extend the research dialogue on community radio.

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Appendix – 1: Consent Forms

Appendix – 1.1. Consent forms for in-depth interviews



Participant Consent Form

Researcher's Declaration

I am a Ph.D. student at the Department of Communication, Sarojini Naidu School of Arts & Communication, University of Hyderabad, doing my doctoral research on 'Communicating Cultures and Building Identities: An Ethnographic Study of Community Radios in Odisha, India', under the supervision of Prof. Vasuki Belavadi. Radio Dhimsa is one of the community radio initiatives selected for my research. It is in this connection that I am seeking access to the community radio initiative and to conduct focus group discussions among their stakeholders as may be needed for my study.

I would like to state that:

- Your identity will be kept confidential, unless otherwise stated. While using data for publication purposes, pseudonyms will be used, unless you have consented otherwise.
- The interview with you will be audio recorded, strictly for academic purposes. On your request, I will stop the recording at any time during the conversation. If you wish to say something off- the-record, I will switch off the recording device and will not quote that part of the interview.
- If you wish, you may request to see a transcript of the interview before I use its contents for publication.
- The data collected during my study will be used only for academic purposes.
- The data could be shared with my research Supervisor and/or doctoral committee members, as may be needed.
- The data will be stored at the Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad and will not be made accessible to any outsiders.

- The data collected and the findings of the research project may be published in academic platforms.
- You have the right to withdraw cooperation from the research project at any time, without having to face any consequences.
- Any photographs I may take during my study will be used strictly for academic purposes.
- If you have any further queries about my project, you may feel free to contact my research supervisor, Prof. Vasuki Belavadi, Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad. vb@uohyd.ac.in.

Interviewee Consent

I have read and understood the above declaration by the researcher. I, therefore, give my informed consent to be interviewed for this study and to be photographed, as may be necessary.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Appendix – 1: Consent Forms

Appendix – 1.2. Consent forms for FGDs



Participant Consent Form for Conducting FGD

Researcher's Declaration

I am a Ph.D. student at the Department of Communication, Sarojini Naidu School of Arts & Communication, University of Hyderabad, doing my doctoral research on 'Communicating Cultures and Building Identity: An Ethnographic Study of Community Radios in Odisha, India', under the supervision of Prof. Vasuki Belavadi. Radio Dhimsa is one of the community radio initiatives selected for my research. It is in this connection that I am seeking access to the community radio initiative and to conduct focus group discussions among their stakeholders as may be needed for my study.

I would like to state that:

- Your identity will be kept confidential, unless otherwise stated. While using data for publication purposes, pseudonyms will be used, unless you have consented otherwise.
- The FGD with you will be audio recorded, strictly for academic purposes. On your request, I will stop the recording at any time during the conversation. If you wish to say something off- the-record, I will switch off the recording device and will not quote that part of the FGD.
- If you wish, you may request to see a transcript of the FGD before I use its contents for publication.
- The data collected during my study will be used only for academic purposes.
- The data could be shared with my research Supervisor and/or doctoral committee members, as may be needed.
- The data will be stored at the Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad and will not be made accessible to any outsiders.

- The data collected and the findings of the research project may be published in academic platforms.
- You have the right to withdraw cooperation from the research project at any time, without having to face any consequences.
- Any photographs I may take during my study will be used strictly for academic purposes.
- If you have any further queries about my project, you may feel free to contact my research supervisor, Prof. Vasuki Belavadi, Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad. vb@uohyd.ac.in.

Participant's Consent

I have read and understood the above declaration by the researcher. I, therefore, give my informed consent to be a participant in FGD for this study and to be photographed, as may be necessary.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Appendix – 2

Publications & Conference Presentations

Economic & Political WEEKLY

ISSN (Online) - 2349-8846

Expanding Discursive Spaces: Community Radio during COVID-19 and Beyond

VINOD PAVARALA
ANIRUDDHA JENA

Vinod Pavarala (vpavarala@gmail.com) is the UNESCO Chair on Community Media at the Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad. Aniruddha Jena (stapanjena@gmail.com) is a Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund (JNMF) Doctoral Scholar and Research Assistant to the UNESCO Chair on Community Media.

Vol. 55, Issue No. 49, 12 Dec, 2020

We acknowledge the documentation effort by Shruti Ravikumar that provided empirical inputs on the work done by CR stations in India.



Link to the article:

<https://www.epw.in/engage/article/expanding-discursive-spaces-community-radio-during-covid-19>

Safeguarding Ethnic-cultural Identities through Ethnic Media: The Case of Radio Dhimsa in Odisha, India

Aniruddha Jena

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines community radio as a form of ethnic media for safeguarding ethnic-cultural identities. This is an ethnographic study of Radio Dhimsa (RD), a Desia (indigenous) community radio station in the eastern Indian state of Odisha. Drawing upon the existing literature in the domain of ethnic community media, this chapter intends to add a more nuanced understanding of how ethnic community radio plays a key role in safeguarding ethnic-cultural identities while countering majoritarian identities. This study is important because very few studies have dealt with how community radio engages with ethnic-cultural identities in the Global South. Furthermore, this chapter also looks at how RD challenges the popular conventions of broadcast journalism while being positioned as a community radio station.

A. Jena (✉)

Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India

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141

A. Gladkova, S. Jamil (eds.), *Ethnic Journalism in the Global South*,
Palgrave Studies in Journalism and the Global South,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76163-9_8

Link to the chapter:

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-76163-9_8

REVIEW ARTICLE

COMMUNITIES OF JUDGES,
PROTECTION OF TRIBAL CULTURES,
AND THE PRINCIPLE OF ‘COMPLETE
JUSTICE’

Samarendra Das and Felix Padel, *Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel* (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2020), xxxii + 776 pp.

In a review article, in *SAR* 40(3): 434–9, Professor Upendra Baxi presented local people as a community of judges while discussing a study of dispute settlement processes in two Indian rural areas (Kokal, 2020). Different communities of judges are involved when India’s numerous tribal people fight for survival of their traditional cultures and protection of their local habitat, which is often brutally invaded by extraction-focused industrial development projects. In this wider context, Das and Padel provide a veritable treasure trove of material and discussion about aluminium production, bauxite mining and its destructive impacts on tribal lifeworlds in Odisha and elsewhere. Encompassing a complexity of ideas, events, histories, experiences and narratives, their book contains 20 chapters, 14 tables, 24 images, 6 maps and 8 appendices with statistics and a list of mines. In this new edition, the authors meticulously substantiate their arguments, providing important statistical details and references to make their work still more convincing. Their earlier study (Padel & Das, 2010b) appeared after the Justice M.B. Shah Commission of 2010 inquired into illegal mining of iron ore and manganese in India.

More than 10 years after this book’s first edition, the world looks at environmental matters in a very different way. Meanwhile, realisation that the Anthropocene has fully arrived has struck (Robinson, 2014), and the need for climate change justice is

Link to the article:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/02627280211034864>

Home Truths

The hyper-local radio bringing trustworthy news to India's rural listeners

Aniruddha Jena

8th February 2022

The Indian government is currently facing criticism and backlash for being irresponsible and overconfident in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic without heeding expert forecasts about possible future waves. The question has also been raised as to whether the government has a concrete vaccine communication plan to prepare people for vaccination, when there are adequate vaccine shots available. Engaging with the issue of vaccine communication is essential if India is to successfully carry out mass vaccinations to fight future waves of the pandemic.

Two aspects are key to the success of a vaccination campaign: building trust about a vaccine's efficacy; and sharing authentic and credible information about the origin, symptoms, management and impact of the disease. Media studies scholars Rubal Kanozia and Ritu Arya argue that these help to counter vaccine hesitancy, fight misinformation and debunk fake news about the disease and the vaccine.

Link to the article:

<https://thesociologicalreview.org/magazine/february-2022/covid-refigurations/home-truths/>

COLLECTION

Virtual Issue: Development & Social Change

in *Virtual Issues*

Introduction

Aniruddha Jena

PhD Candidate, Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, India

This issue identifies entry points in *Communication Theory* for studying development communication and global social change. Against the backdrop of the global impact of neoliberal regimes, the five articles included here make the case for social change as a concept worthy of attention and theoretical reorientation within the field of communication research. Three of the articles critique what has been termed “development communication,” referring to the concept and practice of “economic development” that for several decades has comprised the neoliberal approach to improving global standards of living. These articles chart critical shifts in the development communication literature, highlighting its entanglement with issues of power and social justice, and proposing new directions for a theory and praxis that support meaningful social change. Two articles take the theory of social change itself as their starting point, providing readers with an understanding of the impact, and limitations, of key social change concepts within communication studies and the fields it is in conversation with. Collectively, these articles interrogate the relationship between communication research as a field and development and social change in the world, address fundamental theoretical questions about the sources and nature

Link to the issue: <https://academic.oup.com/ct/pages/virtual-issue-development-and-social-change>

Presentation – 1



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Safeguarding Ethnic Cultural Identities through Community Radio: The Case of Radio Dhimsa in Odisha, India

BY

Aniruddha Jena and vasuki belavadi

was presented as an Online Conference Paper within the programme of the Community Communication and Alternative Media Section (CAM) at the annual conference of the International Association for Media and Communication Research, IAMCR Online 2021, hosted by United States International University - Africa, 11-15 July 2021.

Nico Carpentier
PRESIDENT - IAMCR / AIECS / AIERI

Dorothy Njoroge
CHAIR - LOCAL COMMITTEE NAIROBI

Presentation – 2



2 April 2019

Mr Aniruddha Jena
Doctoral Student
Department of Communication
University of Hyderabad

Dear Aniruddha,

It is my pleasure to advise you that your proposal, *Politics of identity in community media: An ethnographic study of Radio Swayamshakti in Nuapada, Odisha, India*, has been accepted for presentation at the Citizen and Community Media International Conference to be held at Deakin Downtown, Melbourne, Australia, on June 6-7.

I am also glad to inform you that you have been allocated an AU\$400 *Travel Grant for a PhD Student Working in Citizen and Community Media*. This amount will be reimbursed against either paid receipt of airfare to Melbourne for conference presentations or associated accommodation of no more than 5 days in Melbourne.

Please register for the conference, confirming your attendance by April 9, 2019, at <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/citizen-and-community-media-international-conference-2019-tickets-55193317699>.

Once all presenters have registered for the conference by April 9, 2019, we will release the 1st draft of the conference program around late-April.

We look forward to welcoming you in Melbourne and your participation in the Citizen and Community Media international conference, to make it a great knowledge sharing experience for all.

All the best, Usha

Usha Rodrigues

Dr. Usha M. Rodrigues
Convenor: Citizen and Community Media international conference June 2019
Senior Lecturer, Journalism, Deakin University
Usha.rodrigues@deakin.edu.au +61 3 9244 3045

Presentation – 3



Millennium Conference
Organisation Committee
London School of Economics
and Political Science (LSE)
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE

4 September 2019

To whom it may concern at the High Commission of the United Kingdom in India,

On behalf of *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* we would like to confirm that ANIRUDDHA JENA has been accepted to attend and present their work at our annual academic conference for 2019. The conference is entitled 'Extraction, Expropriation, Erasure? Knowledge Production in International Relations' and will be held from 19th to 20th October 2019, at the London School of Economics and Political Science, London, United Kingdom. Over 150 academics from around the world will attend to present their research.

Full Name: ANIRUDDHA JENA
Date of Birth: 04/13/1994
Nationality: India
Passport Number: R6890628
Passport Expiry Date: 03/18/2028

In recognition of the unique importance of their work and contribution to the discipline, *Millennium* has provided ANIRUDDHA JENA with a partial bursary towards costs associated with their attendance at the conference. They have informed us that the remainder of their costs will be covered by alternative sources.

Millennium: Journal of International Studies is a peer-reviewed and highly ranked journal that aims to publish critical, theoretical, and boundary-pushing articles from the discipline of International Relations. *Millennium* is based at the London School of Economics and Political Science and is published three times a year by SAGE Publications. The Millennium conference is widely regarded as one of the flagship annual conferences in International Relations and has become a centre-point of scholarly engagement on international affairs since its inception in 1980. In the

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Participants have been accepted to present their work at the conference through a highly competitive process on the basis of research excellence and creative contribution to the discipline of International Relations. ANIRUDDHA JENA's attendance will make a critical contribution to International Relations and global affairs. We sincerely hope you will consider their application favourably.

Should you require any further details in support of this visa application, please do not hesitate to contact the Conference Organisation Committee directly at millennium.conference@lse.ac.uk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly-Jo Bluen".A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emma Saint".

Kelly-Jo Bluen, Johanna Rodehau-Noack, Emma Saint
Editors, vol. 48
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Communicating Cultures and Building Identities: An Ethnographic Study of Community Radios in Odisha, India

by Aniruddha Jena

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