Role of Akashvani in the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights

Vinay Kumar, Ph.D., Department of Journalism & Mass Communication
Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Language University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

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Author
Vinay Kumar, Ph.D.
E-mail : vinaykumar.lko@gmail.com

shodhsamagam1@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Public service broadcasting plays a vital role in strengthening democratic institutions and promoting human rights. In India, Akashvani, operating under Prasar Bharati, has historically functioned as a medium of inclusive communication and social development. This paper examines the qualitative contribution of Akashvani in protecting and promoting human rights through its educational, participatory, and awareness-based programming. It analyzes initiatives such as Janvani, Mahila Jagat, Yuv Vani, and Jagrukta to assess their role in advancing legal literacy, gender equality, minority rights, and civic engagement. The study argues that Akashvani serves as a bridge between the state and citizens by disseminating information about constitutional rights, welfare schemes, and social justice mechanisms, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Through multilingual broadcasting and community-oriented formats, it enhances access to information and encourages democratic participation. Despite challenges posed by digital media competition and structural limitations, Akashvani continues to remain a significant platform for rights-based communication in India's evolving socio-cultural landscape.

KEY WORDS

Public Service Broadcasting, Human Rights, Development Communication, Legal Literacy, Media and Democracy, Akashvani.

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are universally recognized entitlements that safeguard the inherent dignity, equality, and freedom of every individual. These rights are not granted by Governments but are intrinsic to

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human existence. They encompass civil and political freedoms such as the right to life, liberty, and freedom of expression, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights including the right to education, health, work, and cultural participation. In India, the protection of human rights is deeply embedded in the constitutional framework. Fundamental Rights enshrined in Part III of the Constitution guarantee equality before law, freedom of speech and expression, protection against exploitation, freedom of religion, and constitutional remedies. These domestic guarantees are further reinforced through India's engagement with international human rights instruments, particularly the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by the United Nations in 1948. The Declaration established a global normative framework that continues to guide democratic nations in shaping their policies and institutional mechanisms for rights protection.

While constitutional provisions and legal frameworks form the structural foundation of human rights protection, their effective realization depends significantly on awareness, accessibility, and public participation. Rights that remain unknown or misunderstood cannot be meaningfully exercised. In this context, media institutions emerge as critical intermediaries between the state and citizens. By disseminating information, facilitating debate, and exposing violations, media contributes to transparency, accountability, and democratic engagement. The role of media extends beyond simple information transmission; it functions as a platform for dialogue, a watchdog of power, and a mobilizer of social change.

In democratic societies, public broadcasting organizations carry an especially important responsibility in safeguarding human rights. Unlike commercial media, which may prioritize profit-driven content, public service broadcasters are mandated to serve the public interest. Their primary objective is to ensure that information reaches all sections of society, including marginalized and vulnerable populations. Public broadcasting is expected to promote inclusivity, reflect cultural diversity, uphold editorial impartiality, and strengthen democratic citizenship. These functions align closely with the principles of human rights, particularly the right to information, freedom of expression, and equal access to communication channels.

Within the Indian context, Akashvani, widely known as All India Radio, represents one of the most significant public service broadcasting institutions. Established during the pre-independence period and later integrated into the national communication framework after independence, Akashvani has historically played a pivotal role in nation-building and social development. Its evolution reflects the broader trajectory of Indian democracy, where media has been utilized not only as a tool for entertainment but also as an instrument of social transformation and public education.

Akashvani operates under the aegis of Prasar Bharati, which grants it a statutory mandate to function as an autonomous public broadcaster. The objectives outlined under this framework emphasize national integration, social justice, educational advancement, and cultural preservation. These goals resonate strongly with the human rights agenda, particularly in a diverse and pluralistic society like India. Through its vast network of transmitters and regional stations, Akashvani reaches urban centers, rural hinterlands, tribal regions, and border areas. Its multilingual broadcasting capacity ensures that information is accessible across linguistic and socio-economic divides, thereby promoting inclusivity and reducing communication inequalities.

As a developmental communication tool, Akashvani has consistently supported public welfare initiatives. During literacy campaigns, agricultural modernization efforts, health awareness drives, and disaster management operations, radio has served as a reliable source of verified and accessible information. In doing so, it contributes to the realization of economic and social rights, including the right to education, the right to health, and the right to livelihood. Furthermore, by broadcasting discussions on constitutional values, legal rights, gender equality, and social justice, it fosters civic awareness and participatory democracy.

One of the distinctive strengths of radio as a medium lies in its accessibility. Unlike digital platforms that require internet connectivity and technological literacy, radio remains affordable and widely available. This characteristic makes Akashvani particularly significant in bridging the digital divide. In many remote and rural

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areas where internet penetration remains limited, radio continues to be a trusted and primary source of information. By ensuring that even the most marginalized communities have access to knowledge about their rights and entitlements, Akashvani strengthens democratic inclusivity.

Moreover, the participatory formats adopted by Akashvani enhance its human rights role. Interactive programs, listener feedback segments, and community-based broadcasts encourage dialogue between citizens and authorities. Such engagement not only informs audiences but also empowers them to voice concerns, demand accountability, and participate actively in governance processes. In this sense, Akashvani contributes to the creation of a public sphere where democratic deliberation can take place.

At the same time, the contemporary media environment presents new challenges. The rapid expansion of private FM channels, digital streaming services, and social media platforms has transformed patterns of media consumption. Public broadcasters must adapt to technological innovations while maintaining their commitment to public interest content. Ensuring editorial independence, securing adequate funding, and modernizing infrastructure are essential to sustaining the effectiveness of public broadcasting in promoting human rights.

This paper, therefore, critically examines the role of Akashvani in the protection and promotion of human rights within the Indian context. It explores how the institution's programming strategies, outreach initiatives, and participatory mechanisms align with constitutional and international human rights principles. By situating Akashvani within the broader framework of democratic communication and development media theory, the study seeks to assess its continuing relevance in a rapidly evolving media landscape. The analysis underscores that while structural and technological challenges persist, Akashvani remains a crucial platform for advancing awareness, inclusivity, and civic empowerment in India.

Conceptual Framework: Human Rights and Public Broadcasting
Human Rights: Normative Foundations

Human rights encompass a broad and interconnected spectrum of entitlements that safeguard the dignity and well-being of individuals and communities. These rights are generally categorized into three major dimensions:

➢ **Civil and political rights**, including the right to life, liberty, equality before law, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and participation in governance.

➢ **Economic, social, and cultural rights**, such as the right to education, health, work, adequate living standards, and cultural participation.

➢ **Collective or solidarity rights**, which include the right to development, environmental protection, peace, and preservation of cultural identity.

These categories are not isolated; rather, they are interdependent and indivisible. The realization of political freedoms, for example, often depends upon access to education and economic security. Similarly, social equality cannot be achieved without guaranteeing civil liberties and participatory rights.

The modern normative framework of human rights is rooted in international instruments, most prominently the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted in 1948 by the United Nations. Article 19 of the Declaration recognizes freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information through any media and regardless of frontiers. This provision establishes communication as a foundational democratic right. Access to information enables citizens to make informed choices, hold authorities accountable, and participate meaningfully in public life.

In democratic societies, media institutions become essential mechanisms for operationalizing these freedoms. By disseminating knowledge, facilitating public debate, and amplifying marginalized voices, media contributes to transparency and social justice. Thus, freedom of expression and access to information are not merely individual liberties but structural conditions necessary for the protection and promotion of all other human rights.

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Public Service Broadcasting in India

Public service broadcasting in India operates within a statutory and constitutional framework designed to protect democratic values and ensure inclusive communication. Under the *Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990*, Akashvani functions as a national public service broadcaster with a clearly defined social mandate. The Act provides autonomy to Prasar Bharati while entrusting it with the responsibility to serve the public interest rather than commercial or partisan objectives.

According to the statutory mandate, Akashvani is required to:

➢ Uphold national unity and integrity.

➢ Promote social justice and welfare.

➢ Ensure diversity of voices across regions, languages, and communities.

➢ Provide balanced, objective, and impartial information.

These objectives reflect the normative foundations of public service broadcasting, which prioritize inclusivity, accessibility, and accountability. Unlike commercial media outlets driven primarily by market considerations, public broadcasting institutions are expected to cater to all segments of society, including marginalized and underrepresented groups. In a diverse and multilingual country like India, this responsibility is particularly significant.

The goals outlined in the Act align closely with constitutional principles embedded in the Constitution of India. Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws; Article 19 protects freedom of speech and expression; and Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. By promoting balanced reporting, linguistic plurality, and representation of disadvantaged communities, Akashvani contributes to the realization of these constitutional commitments.

Furthermore, public service broadcasting supports democratic citizenship by facilitating informed public discourse. Through educational programming, policy discussions, and participatory formats, Akashvani helps create a communicative space where citizens can access reliable information and engage with issues of public concern. In this manner, public broadcasting in India operates not merely as a transmission mechanism but as a democratic institution committed to advancing equality, social cohesion, and human rights.

Historical Evolution of Akashvani and Rights Communication

The historical trajectory of Akashvani reflects the broader evolution of media as an instrument of governance, development, and democratic engagement in India. Formally established in 1936 during the colonial period, radio broadcasting initially functioned as an administrative communication tool. However, even in its early years, the medium demonstrated its potential to reach geographically dispersed and socio-economically diverse populations. Following India's independence in 1947, radio was strategically repositioned as a state-controlled medium aimed at nation-building and socio-economic development.

In the post-independence era, the newly sovereign state recognized radio as a powerful vehicle for mass education and social transformation. With limited literacy rates and minimal access to print media in rural regions, radio emerged as the most accessible communication platform. During the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, Akashvani played a crucial role in disseminating agricultural knowledge, weather updates, scientific farming practices, and Government support schemes. These broadcasts contributed not only to agricultural productivity but also to the realization of economic rights, particularly the right to livelihood and food security.

Similarly, radio became an essential instrument during national literacy campaigns. Educational broadcasts, adult learning programs, and school-based radio lessons supported the expansion of literacy and awareness across rural India. By facilitating access to educational content, Akashvani contributed indirectly to the fulfillment

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of the right to education, which later gained constitutional recognition as a fundamental right. Public health communication also formed a significant component of its developmental mandate. Awareness programs on immunization, family planning, maternal health, sanitation, and disease prevention reached communities where healthcare infrastructure was limited. In this manner, radio advanced the right to health through preventive information and public awareness.

Beyond development communication, Akashvani increasingly incorporated themes related to social justice, gender equality, and minority inclusion into its programming. Special broadcasts addressing issues of caste discrimination, women's empowerment, and tribal welfare reflected an expanding understanding of rights communication. Over time, the role of radio evolved from merely transmitting Government policies to facilitating dialogue and community participation.

A significant institutional transformation occurred with the enactment of the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990, which granted autonomy to public broadcasting under Prasar Bharati. This transition marked a shift from direct Governmental control toward a model emphasizing public service accountability. The autonomy framework reinforced Akashvani's responsibility to provide balanced, impartial, and inclusive programming while safeguarding editorial integrity. It strengthened the broadcaster's commitment to democratic values, transparency, and pluralism.

Under this redefined mandate, rights-oriented programming gained greater prominence. Interactive shows, participatory discussions, and issue-based debates created platforms for citizen engagement. The focus expanded from development communication to rights-based communication, integrating themes of constitutional awareness, legal literacy, and civic participation. Thus, the historical evolution of Akashvani illustrates a gradual but significant shift—from a state communication instrument to a public service broadcaster committed to inclusive dialogue and the promotion of democratic rights.

In contemporary India, despite competition from digital media and private broadcasters, Akashvani continues to maintain relevance, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Its historical legacy, combined with its public service mandate, positions it as a crucial institution in advancing awareness, empowerment, and human rights discourse across the country.

Human Rights-Oriented Programming

Akashvani integrates human rights discourse across a wide spectrum of thematic programming. Rather than treating human rights as an isolated subject, the broadcaster embeds rights-based perspectives within governance discussions, gender-focused initiatives, youth engagement platforms, health communication, and social justice series. This integrated approach reflects a developmental and participatory communication model in which information dissemination, public dialogue, and citizen empowerment function together. The following subsections critically examine selected programs that illustrate Akashvani's contribution to rights promotion.

Janvani

Janvani represents a participatory governance format that enables direct interaction between citizens and public administrators. Through phone-in sessions, recorded queries, and moderated discussions, the program creates a communicative bridge between state authorities and the public. This format strengthens:

➢ **Right to participation in governance** by allowing citizens to raise concerns directly.
➢ **Administrative accountability** by requiring officials to respond publicly to grievances.
➢ **Transparency in governance** through open dialogue on public policies and welfare schemes.

By operationalizing democratic deliberation in an accessible radio format, *Janvani* contributes to strengthening procedural democracy. It ensures that governance is not perceived as distant or opaque, especially in rural and semi-urban regions where institutional access may be limited. The program reinforces citizens' confidence in democratic mechanisms and enhances awareness of grievance redressal systems.

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Mahila Jagat

Mahila Jagat focuses specifically on women's rights and gender justice. The program addresses structural inequalities that women face in social, economic, and domestic spheres. Key thematic areas include:

➢ Gender equality and constitutional safeguards.
➢ Awareness of domestic violence laws and protection mechanisms.
➢ Legal remedies under family and inheritance laws.
➢ Economic empowerment through self-help groups and entrepreneurship.

By inviting legal experts, social workers, and grassroots women leaders, the program translates complex legal frameworks into accessible language. It not only informs listeners about their rights but also encourages agency and collective action. In doing so, *Mahila Jagat* supports both civil rights (protection from violence and discrimination) and economic rights (access to livelihood opportunities). Its community-centered discussions contribute to dismantling social stigma and promoting gender-sensitive dialogue.

Yuv Vani

Yuv Vani serves as a youth-oriented platform designed to address the aspirations and challenges of young citizens. Recognizing youth as key stakeholders in democracy, the program focuses on:

➢ Right to education and equal opportunity.
➢ Employment awareness and skill development.
➢ Mental health awareness and counseling.
➢ Civic responsibility and democratic engagement.

Through youth-led discussions, debates, and expert interactions, *Yuv Vani* promotes critical thinking and participatory citizenship. The inclusion of mental health awareness reflects an expanded understanding of the right to health, encompassing psychological well-being. By empowering youth with information about educational policies, competitive examinations, and employment schemes, the program strengthens socio-economic rights while nurturing democratic values.

Jagrukta

Jagrukta functions as a legal awareness initiative aimed at enhancing citizens' understanding of statutory protections and welfare entitlements. The program covers diverse issues such as:

➢ Consumer rights and grievance mechanisms.
➢ Child protection laws and safeguards against exploitation.
➢ Anti-trafficking legislation and preventive measures.
➢ Right to Information and transparency laws.

The significance of *Jagrukta* lies in its ability to simplify legal language and contextualize rights within everyday experiences. In many rural communities, legal illiteracy remains a barrier to justice. By disseminating clear and practical information, the program strengthens access to justice and enhances citizens' confidence in institutional remedies. It promotes a culture of rights awareness that is essential for democratic accountability.

Swasthya Manch

Swasthya Manch emphasizes health communication as a core dimension of human rights. Recognizing that the right to health extends beyond clinical treatment to preventive awareness, the program addresses:

➢ Public health schemes and Government initiatives.
➢ Maternal and child health.
➢ Immunization drives and disease prevention.
➢ Nutrition, sanitation, and mental well-being.

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Expert interviews with medical professionals and health administrators ensure credibility and clarity. By providing accurate and timely health information, the program contributes to informed decision-making and preventive healthcare practices. During public health emergencies, such programming plays a critical role in combating misinformation and protecting the right to life and health.

Samajik Nyay Series

The Samajik Nyay series reflects Akashvani's commitment to social justice and inclusive representation. Dedicated to marginalized and historically disadvantaged communities, the program addresses:

➢ Issues affecting Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
➢ Minority rights and cultural preservation.
➢ Disability inclusion and accessibility.
➢ Anti-discrimination measures and social equality.

Through field reports, interviews, and expert commentary, the series amplifies voices that are often underrepresented in mainstream media. By highlighting grassroots experiences and challenges, it promotes empathy and social awareness among broader audiences. The program supports constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination while fostering social cohesion.

Analytical Perspective

Collectively, these programs illustrate a rights-based communication strategy embedded within public service broadcasting. They reflect three interconnected dimensions:

1. **Informational Function:** Disseminating knowledge about rights, laws, and policies.
2. **Participatory Function:** Facilitating dialogue and citizen engagement.
3. **Advocacy Function:** Promoting social justice and inclusive representation.

By integrating these functions, Akashvani moves beyond conventional broadcasting to become a platform for democratic empowerment. Its human rights-oriented programming demonstrates how public radio can contribute to awareness, accountability, and social transformation within a diverse and evolving media landscape.

Program Name	Rights Category Promoted	Target Audience	Communication Strategy
Janvani	Political Participation	General Public	Interactive dialogue
Mahila Jagat	Gender Equality	Women	Discussion + Expert Talk
Yuv Vani	Education & Employment	Youth	Youth-led Panels
Jagrukta	Legal Awareness	Rural & Marginalized	Informative Capsules
Swasthya Manch	Right to Health	All Citizens	Medical Expert Interviews
Samajik Nyay Series	Anti-Discrimination	SC/ST & Minorities	Community Reporting

Analytical Table: Human Rights Dimensions in Akashvani Programming

Functional Mechanisms of Rights Promotion

The role of Akashvani in promoting human rights extends beyond thematic programming. Its institutional design, communication strategies, and outreach mechanisms collectively function as structural tools for advancing democratic values. The effectiveness of rights-based communication lies not merely in content but in how that content is delivered, accessed, and internalized by audiences. The following functional mechanisms demonstrate how Akashvani operationalizes human rights promotion within the Indian context.

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Legal Literacy

Legal awareness forms the foundation of meaningful rights realization. Constitutional guarantees and statutory protections remain ineffective if citizens lack awareness of their existence or procedures for enforcement. Akashvani contributes to legal literacy by translating complex constitutional provisions, legislative frameworks, and judicial decisions into accessible and comprehensible language. Through expert interviews, simplified explanatory segments, and illustrative case discussions, it bridges the gap between legal institutions and ordinary citizens.

This democratization of legal knowledge is particularly significant in rural and semi-literate communities, where formal legal education and digital access may be limited. By disseminating information about consumer rights, labor protections, women's safety laws, and grievance redressal mechanisms, Akashvani strengthens procedural justice. Legal literacy programming not only informs individuals of their entitlements but also enhances their capacity to seek remedies and hold authorities accountable. In this manner, the broadcaster supports access to justice, which is a cornerstone of democratic governance.

Linguistic Inclusivity

India's linguistic diversity presents both a challenge and an opportunity for rights communication. A uniform language strategy would risk excluding large segments of the population. Akashvani addresses this challenge by broadcasting in multiple regional languages and dialects, ensuring that information reaches audiences across geographic and cultural boundaries. This multilingual approach embodies the principle of inclusivity and reflects sensitivity to India's pluralistic social fabric.

Linguistic accessibility enhances the effectiveness of rights awareness campaigns, as individuals are more likely to engage with information delivered in their mother tongue. For marginalized communities, including tribal populations and rural groups, language often determines whether communication is empowering or alienating. By respecting linguistic diversity, Akashvani reinforces cultural identity while simultaneously promoting national integration. Thus, linguistic inclusivity functions as both a communication strategy and a human rights principle, strengthening equality and non-discrimination.

Participatory Communication

Participatory communication is central to democratic media practice. Akashvani's phone-in programs, listener feedback segments, interactive discussions, and community-based broadcasts create opportunities for two-way communication. Rather than treating audiences as passive recipients, these formats recognize citizens as active contributors to public discourse.

Through participatory mechanisms, listeners can articulate grievances, share experiences, and seek clarification from experts and administrators. This interaction fosters a sense of ownership and civic engagement. It also enhances transparency, as public officials responding to questions in open forums are subject to public scrutiny. Participatory communication strengthens the right to freedom of expression and the right to participation in governance, both of which are essential for democratic legitimacy.

Moreover, community involvement builds trust between the broadcaster and its audience. When citizens perceive that their voices are heard and acknowledged, media becomes a facilitator of democratic dialogue rather than merely a transmitter of official information. This participatory orientation aligns closely with the principles of social responsibility and deliberative democracy.

Crisis Communication

During times of crisis such as pandemics, natural disasters, or public emergencies the role of radio becomes particularly significant. In such situations, access to reliable information directly affects the right to life, safety, and health. Akashvani has historically functioned as a trusted source of verified information, especially in regions where electricity disruptions or limited internet connectivity hinder digital communication.

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Crisis communication involves broadcasting timely updates, Government advisories, emergency helpline information, and preventive guidelines. By countering misinformation and rumors, radio safeguards public order and promotes informed decision-making. In rural and disaster-prone areas, battery-operated radios often remain the most dependable medium of communication. This accessibility ensures continuity of information flow even under adverse conditions.

Beyond immediate emergency updates, crisis-related programming often includes expert consultations, psychological counseling segments, and rehabilitation guidance. Such initiatives address not only physical safety but also mental well-being and social recovery. Consequently, crisis communication serves as a protective mechanism that reinforces citizens' right to information, security, and dignity.

Structural and Operational Challenges

While Akashvani plays a significant role in advancing human rights awareness and democratic communication, its institutional effectiveness is shaped by several structural and operational challenges. These constraints influence its capacity to reach emerging audiences, maintain independence, and compete within a rapidly evolving media ecosystem. A critical assessment of these limitations is necessary for understanding both the strengths and vulnerabilities of public service broadcasting in India.

Limited Digital Penetration among Youth

One of the most pressing challenges is the shift in media consumption patterns, particularly among younger audiences. Digital platforms, social media applications, podcasts, and streaming services have become dominant sources of information and entertainment. Although Akashvani has initiated digital streaming and mobile applications, its engagement with digitally native audiences remains comparatively limited.

Youth demographics often prefer on-demand, interactive, and multimedia-rich formats. Traditional radio broadcasting, while still influential in rural and older populations, faces difficulties in capturing sustained attention from urban and technologically connected youth. This generational gap may restrict the broadcaster's ability to effectively communicate rights-based content to future citizens and voters. Strengthening digital integration, social media presence, and podcast-based programming could help bridge this divide and enhance rights communication among younger listeners.

Funding Constraints

Public service broadcasting depends significantly on state funding and allocated resources. Financial limitations can affect program diversity, technological upgrades, research capacity, and talent acquisition. Budgetary constraints may also restrict the production of specialized investigative or rights-focused programming, which often requires expert consultation and field reporting.

Inadequate funding can further limit outreach initiatives in remote areas where infrastructure development is costly. For a broadcaster tasked with serving diverse linguistic and socio-economic communities, sustained investment is crucial. Without consistent financial support, maintaining high-quality content and modern transmission systems becomes increasingly challenging. Therefore, financial sustainability is directly linked to the broadcaster's ability to fulfill its public service mandate.

Competition from Private FM and Digital Streaming Platforms

The liberalization of India's media sector has resulted in the proliferation of private FM stations and digital audio platforms. These competitors often offer highly localized content, entertainment-driven programming, and aggressive marketing strategies. Private broadcasters may possess greater flexibility in format innovation and audience engagement strategies.

Digital streaming services and global platforms provide personalized content, podcasts, and algorithm-driven recommendations, reshaping listener expectations. In comparison, public service broadcasting must

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balance entertainment with educational and developmental objectives. The commercial orientation of private media can sometimes overshadow rights-based content, making it challenging for Akashvani to retain listener attention while adhering to its social responsibility mandate.

However, competition also presents an opportunity for innovation. By modernizing its delivery mechanisms, diversifying content formats, and leveraging its credibility as a trusted public institution, Akashvani can reposition itself within the contemporary media landscape.

Discussion

Akashvani operates within the broader paradigm of developmental communication, a model that conceptualizes media not merely as a transmitter of information but as an active agent of social transformation. In contrast to commercially driven broadcasting systems that prioritize audience ratings and advertising revenue, public service broadcasting in India is structured around normative commitments to equity, inclusion, and national development. This distinction shapes both the content and institutional ethos of Akashvani.

Developmental communication emphasizes education, awareness-building, and participatory engagement as tools for societal progress. Within this framework, Akashvani's programming aligns closely with constitutional values and democratic objectives. Rather than focusing primarily on entertainment, the broadcaster integrates public interest themes health, education, governance, gender equality, and social justice into its regular transmission schedule. Such integration reflects a media philosophy that situates communication as a public good rather than a commodity.

Its rights-oriented strategy can be analytically categorized into three interconnected dimensions:

a. **Informational Dimension (Legal Awareness)**

The informational function centers on disseminating knowledge about constitutional guarantees, statutory protections, and Government welfare schemes. By translating legal frameworks into accessible language, Akashvani reduces informational asymmetry between state institutions and citizens. This process enhances civic literacy and strengthens democratic participation.

The informational dimension is particularly critical in rural and marginalized communities where formal education levels may vary and digital access remains uneven. Through structured programs, expert interviews, and simplified explanations, listeners gain awareness of their entitlements and available grievance redressal mechanisms. Knowledge becomes a form of empowerment, enabling individuals to exercise their rights more confidently and responsibly.

b. **Participatory Dimension (Citizen Dialogue)**

Beyond one-way communication, Akashvani fosters participatory dialogue through interactive programs, phone-in segments, and community-based broadcasts. This participatory dimension transforms listeners from passive recipients into active contributors to public discourse. Such engagement reinforces the democratic principle that governance should be responsive to citizen voices.

Participatory communication enhances transparency and accountability by facilitating direct interaction between administrators, experts, and the public. It also encourages deliberative discussion on issues of social concern, including welfare implementation, public services, and rights awareness. By creating communicative spaces for marginalized voices, the broadcaster strengthens inclusion and civic agency.

c. **Advocacy-Based Dimension (Social Justice Discourse)**

The advocacy dimension involves promoting normative commitments to equality, dignity, and social justice. Programming that addresses gender discrimination, caste-based exclusion, disability rights, minority protection, and environmental sustainability reflects an implicit advocacy orientation. While maintaining institutional neutrality, Akashvani advances discourse that aligns with constitutional morality and human rights principles.

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This advocacy-based approach does not equate to political partisanship; rather, it reflects a commitment to ethical broadcasting that foregrounds social responsibility. By consistently highlighting issues affecting vulnerable communities, the broadcaster contributes to shaping public consciousness and encouraging attitudinal change.

Rural Relevance and the Digital Divide

In rural India, where infrastructural disparities and digital divides persist, radio continues to function as an accessible and cost-effective medium of communication. Battery-operated radios, community listening practices, and low transmission costs make radio particularly resilient in areas with limited internet connectivity. In such contexts, Akashvani's role as a rights-education platform becomes especially significant.

The persistence of socio-economic inequalities means that digital transformation alone cannot guarantee universal access to information. Radio's reach across linguistic, geographic, and economic boundaries ensures that fundamental rights education remains inclusive. Consequently, Akashvani occupies a unique position within India's media landscape—bridging traditional broadcasting with contemporary democratic needs.

Recommendations

In order to strengthen its role in advancing human rights awareness and democratic engagement, Akashvani must adopt strategic reforms that respond to technological shifts, institutional challenges, and evolving audience expectations. The following recommendations aim to enhance both its structural capacity and programmatic impact within India's dynamic media landscape.

Strengthen Digital Radio and Podcasting Platforms

As media consumption increasingly shifts toward digital and on-demand formats, it is essential for Akashvani to modernize its delivery mechanisms. Expanding digital radio services, mobile applications, and podcast archives would improve accessibility for urban and youth audiences. Podcast-based adaptations of rights-oriented programs could enable flexible listening and wider dissemination through social media integration.

Digital transformation should not merely replicate existing content but repackage it in innovative formats such as short explainer series, thematic podcasts, and interactive audio features. Strengthening digital presence would ensure continuity of public service broadcasting while engaging technologically connected generations. This step is crucial for bridging the gap between traditional radio audiences and digitally native listeners.

Introduce a Dedicated Weekly Human Rights Magazine Program

Establishing a specialized weekly Human Rights Magazine Program would institutionalize rights discourse within the broadcasting schedule. Such a program could include expert interviews, case studies, grassroots success stories, legal awareness segments, and listener interaction components.

A structured and recurring format would provide continuity and thematic depth, enabling systematic coverage of civil, political, economic, and social rights. It would also create a recognizable platform associated specifically with rights education and advocacy. Over time, this initiative could enhance public awareness, build institutional credibility, and contribute to sustained civic engagement.

Collaborate with National Human Rights Institutions

Strategic partnerships with national human rights bodies and related institutions would strengthen the credibility and factual accuracy of rights-oriented programming. Collaboration with organizations such as the National Human Rights Commission could facilitate access to expert insights, verified reports, and case documentation.

Such partnerships may also enable joint awareness campaigns, public consultations, and thematic broadcasts on emerging rights issues. Institutional collaboration ensures that programming reflects current

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legal developments and policy reforms, thereby enhancing its educational value. Moreover, cooperative frameworks reinforce the alignment between media institutions and rights-protection agencies.

Expand Community Radio Linkages

Community radio stations play a vital role in addressing localized concerns and grassroots issues. Strengthening linkages between Akashvani and community radio networks would enable decentralized content production and culturally contextualized programming. By sharing technical resources, training support, and selected content, the national broadcaster could amplify localized rights narratives.

Such collaboration would promote participatory communication and empower communities to articulate region-specific challenges related to land rights, environmental protection, gender equality, or access to welfare schemes. Expanding community radio integration also aligns with inclusive communication strategies, ensuring that marginalized populations remain visible within the broader media discourse.

CONCLUSION

Akashvani has occupied a significant position within India's human rights ecosystem by functioning as a medium of awareness, dialogue, and social inclusion. As a public service broadcaster operating under the mandate of the Prasar Bharati, it has consistently aligned its programming with constitutional values and developmental priorities. Through rights-oriented initiatives, participatory platforms, and inclusive linguistic outreach, Akashvani has contributed to strengthening democratic consciousness across diverse socio-economic segments of Indian society.

Its role extends beyond mere information dissemination. By translating legal frameworks into accessible narratives, encouraging citizen participation, and foregrounding issues affecting marginalized communities, the broadcaster has reinforced the practical realization of civil, political, economic, and social rights. In rural and underserved regions—where digital disparities persist—radio continues to function as a reliable and affordable medium for rights education. This enduring accessibility underscores the continued relevance of public broadcasting in the digital age.

However, the evolving media landscape presents new institutional and technological challenges. The expansion of private FM networks, digital streaming services, and algorithm-driven content platforms has transformed audience expectations and consumption patterns. To sustain its impact, Akashvani must balance modernization with its foundational commitment to public service values. Strengthening editorial autonomy, securing stable funding mechanisms, and expanding digital integration will be essential for preserving credibility and institutional resilience.

Ultimately, the contribution of Akashvani to human rights promotion lies in its commitment to democratic empowerment and human dignity. By fostering informed citizenship, amplifying marginalized voices, and facilitating public dialogue, it embodies the principles of social responsibility and inclusive communication. With strategic reforms and sustained institutional support, Akashvani can continue to serve as a cornerstone of rights-based broadcasting in India's democratic framework.

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