

Media support for farming and alternate livelihoods: A Comparative Study of ETV vs other TV channels in the State of Andhra Pradesh.

Social Justice

Access to Justice Life Liberty & Livelihood

C.S.H.N.Murthy Ph.D

Associate Professor in Journalism and Mass Communication
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Tezpur University, Napaam, Tezpur. Assam India 784 020
E-mail: csnmurthy@yahoo.co.in

INTRODUCTION

Indian agriculture has been on the decline for the last one decade, a fact which has become a matter of serious concern for both the Central and the State Governments. There are several factors which are affecting the agriculture and the farming community in India.

Firstly, the Indian agriculture has been mostly the monsoon dependent and there has been a continuous monsoon failure for successive years at many regions of India during 1999-2009. Paradoxically, there has been excess rain fall too in certain areas which resulted in the flash floods. Occasional untimely cyclones devastated the crops of small farmers. The area under cultivation for food grain crops has remained constant at about 124 million hectares from 1970-1971 till 2009.

Dr. M.S.Swaminathan has made an in depth study of the problems of ailing agriculture in India and has submitted a report to the Government of India. According to Swaminathan (2009) there has been man wrought destruction of farming too. The role of middle men, who form syndicates, to under price the produce of the farmers, the government's failure to offer support price at the right time, the role of private bankers collecting high interests from the farmers for short term loans, the over all price rice of all agricultural in puts, and the failure of the governments to provide quality seeds/manures at subsidized prices on time and small/marginal farmers' poor knowledge or expertise to overcome situational strategies in farming methods are some of the factors which have brought the Indian agriculture to the brink of disaster today (Drought threatens India's farm and its economy. The Economist. July 22, 2009. <http://www.economist.com/node/14070447/comments>)

Of all the three farmer groups (small medium and large-scale farmers), mostly the small/marginal farmers are worst affected and are even committing suicides. Commenting on the extremity of the drought situation, Santwana Bhattacharya wrote (India's rain brings crop of doubt: Sept 10, 2009) that the Indian government, for one, claims that it will be able to insulate the bottom rung of society from the vagaries of drought. The class of landless agriculture labour, bereft of any farm work, has been promised sustenance wages through public works initiated under the welfarist National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). But perhaps they are not the worst victims. For that, one may have to look at the next tier on the economic pecking order - the small and medium farmer, whose heavily debt-powered investments on often merciless plots of farmland represent one of the riskier forms of venture capital the world has known. It is from these strata that one hears news of farmers' suicides.

In the six weeks up to August 27, more than 150 farmers committed suicide in Andhra Pradesh

alone, according to an Associated Press report citing opposition parties and farmers' groups. That was six times the official toll of 25 farmer suicides in the state, where 70% of the 80 million population depend on agriculture, the report said

Though technologically India is today far advanced than it was during 1980s, when the country benefited largely from the green revolution and the white revolution, these advancements have not been rendered into a source of consistent and constant support to farmers in all the regions. As a result, the communication gap between the farming community and the expanding technologies and farming strategies has been constantly extending to the horizons leading to the further accentuation of misery of the farmers.

In the opinion page of The Hindu (Nov 22, 2009), in response to the call given by M.S.Swainathan for 'Second Green Revolution' to put the agriculture back on track with the spirited support of media, several people from scientific community, media, academics and lay persons clan have sought the media intervention as an essential strategy to help the farmers over come the current crisis (<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/Readers-Editor/article53140.ece> accessed on Aug 5, 2010).

Though there has been media support to agriculture for quite a long time both in the All India Radio (in the form of Radio Forums) and in the Television since the launch of Satellite experiment in 1975 with the help of ISRO, the support has not been proportionate to the needs of the farmers.

Though the land holdings in agriculture have been gradually declining, the number of farmers and the area of cultivable land have certainly gone up over years. Yet, the electronic media both the television and the FM Radio, which in the post liberalization has virtually benefited from the transmission of a variety of commercial programs and the market driven journalism, has hardly felt it either feasible or necessary to focus on the need to support the Indian farmers and the agriculture at this time when it is required most.

In Andhra Pradesh there are about 44 commercial television channels. Some of them are news channels where as a majority of them are entertainment channels. Out of these, only three television channels namely ETV (A Unit of Eenadu group of Media houses), Doordarshan (Government owned) and TV 5 (A Shreya Broadcasting Service Pvt Ltd) have been transmitting the programs on agriculture (see Table 1 for the details of the programs and their duration of transmission per week).

Where as Doordarshan has been airing the agriculture programs since 1978 when the programs were transmitted in the name of 'Paalu-Chelu' (Milk and Fields), the ETV established in 1995 started beaming the Annadata Program since its inception. The proprietor of ETV and Eenadu media group Ch.Ramaji Rao by conviction is committed to the cause of farmers' welfare and has been publishing a monthly magazine called 'Annadata' since Eenadu news daily was established.

Commenting on the significant place Annadata magazine occupied today in India's leading agricultural publications the ABC says, 'Annadata, a unique magazine for farmers was set up in 1969. Annadata's genesis lies in understanding that farmers need to know about farming in their own languages. Annadata has become one of the foremost magazines for farmers (Circulation ABC July-Dec 2005: 1, 66,145).The ETV channel which is airing Annadata program in the morning has started its second television channel ETV 2 on Dec 28,2003 and ever since it started beaming a 'farmer centric program' in the evening entitled Jai Kisan. The television channel TV 5 has begun to transmit the programs on agriculture entitled 'Annapoorna' since Oct 2, 2008.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The present study therefore is an effort to examine:

- i. how far the existing electronic media (in the private and the government sectors) are transmitting the agricultural programs enabling the farmers to make informed decisions in their professional practices at low costs with reasonable returns.
- ii. how far the coverage is addressing all the major areas of burning issues of farmers and farming strategies and techniques, and
- iii. to examine whether the existing programs are sufficient or need to be further broadened to offer more inputs for the benefit of the farmers.

METHODOLOGY

The three television channels which have been transmitting the agricultural programmes as mentioned above have been observed for their nature of the programs, coverage and the extent of the programs, content of the programs in order to find out how far these programs are meeting the requirements of the farming community in terms of knowledge expertise, resources of know-how and methods of practices both traditional and new, and the problems confronted on the day to day basis.

Sample: The contents of the months of May and June 2009, and January and February 2010 have been chosen for the study for both Kharif and Rabi seasons.

Primary Sources: The clippings of the transmitted television programs for these months have been recorded/collected from the respective channels and had been carefully scrutinized for their content.

Coding the content: The content of the clippings has been coded for the specific terms (e.g. *Cautions-Nivarana Charyalu*, *Techniques-Melakuvalu*, *Crop management-Sasya rakshana*, etc), and their relevant application to the agriculture. Also the relevant terminology related to specific categories and broad categories have been developed after watching the content for two or three times by the coders. The content was coded first time by the author for each category for all the channels. The same content was re-coded using the specific criteria as developed above has been by a coder from agriculture background. The inter-coder reliability using Holsti formula has been 90% which is a satisfactory value.

Secondary Sources: Books, magazines and relevant printed materials.

Operational Parameters:

1. *Annadata's programs:* Mainly meant for demonstrating the methods/materials/processes of farming across a spectrum of techniques/management.
2. *Jaikisan's programs:* Mainly meant to focus on an array of problems confronted by the farmers on day to day basis (eg. lack of support price, demand for manures/fertilizers, bank loans, protesting against the role of middle men, failure of the government to support the farmers in time, etc).
3. *Annapoorna programs:* Mainly meant to show programs falling under both the categories as explained in respect of *Annadata* and *Jai Kisan* of ETV.
4. *Kisan/Rytu Nestam programs:* Mainly meant to transmit the programs falling under both the categories as in the case of TV 5.

Selection Criteria of the programs: Almost all the channels have adopted a three point criteria of selecting/scheduling the programs. Most important of all being the timeliness/seasonal requirements and contemporary reporting by the media in general of the problems faced by the farmers (see Table 2).

Terms of Discourse: After a thorough study of the content under the sample, a number of coding terms under which the broad content could be placed have been developed. Due to inadequacy

of space and word limit, the author has not explained/defined all those terms here. But, the terms are self-explanatory and are given in Tables 3 to 6.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that there is a world of difference in the content between *Annadata* and *Jai Kisan*. It is indeed a matter of great surprise to see that two different and distinct orientations of programmes could be developed by a private television channel (*ETV and ETV2*) as to the transmission of agricultural programmes. Such clarity is definitely missing in respect of *Doordarshan* and *TV 5*.

Further time dedicated for the agriculture programs in *ETV* and *ETV 2* combined is almost equivalent (6 hours) to that of the time slot given per week by *Doordarshan* (6 hours and twenty minutes).(see Table 2).

Both the *ETV* and *ETV 2*, and *Doordarshan* have the prior-scheduling of the programs and develop the programs accordingly. Though *Doordarshan* by virtue of being run by the government cannot be flexible in amending its prior-scheduled programs based on the contingencies developing from time to time, *ETV* and *ETV 2* showed some departure and flexibility in respect of the content to be aired in times of distress/calamities or other exigencies, explained its producers Amirneni Harikrishna, Giridhar and Sekhar (*ETV 2*) as also Dr.V Ranga Rao and Vakula (*ETV*). In respect of *Doordarshan* programs the involvement of scientists is more due to its being a government run electronic media, says Dr.V.Ranga Rao.

In our study we found that *Doordarshan* engaged more phone-in programs using agricultural scientists though the programs are more of oral presentation of messages to the questions raised by the farmers. On the other hand, the *ETV* offers *Annadata help line* a live program where in the answers are shown practically being shot on the place/field which offered a demonstration approach to clarify the doubts raised by the farmers.

Dr.Ranga Rao is of the opinion that for many problems which farmers seek answers during phone-in, it may not be possible to answer their problems in depth. Hence, *ETV* has designed *Annadata help line* program where it would address the previously received questions through appropriate techniques/methods demonstrated through visuals/clippings.

Though this author has nothing against in accepting Dr.Ranga Rao's statement per se, the *Doordarshan's* efforts to offer on line answers through help-line through the involvement of scientists is in keeping with the scientific contour the programs deserve. The *Doordarshan's* view is that it offers credibility to the government run programs, says Yarlagadda Sailaja the producer of *Kisan*, *Rytunestam* and *Vyavasaya Vigyanam* programs.

Since *TV 5* commenced the programs only a couple of years back, the producer Sridevi explained that at the present they are having once in a week a live-show program to address to the problems of the farmers. But they are not supported by any practical clippings or visuals like *ETV*. Since most of the programs which *TV 5* transmits are based on the reporters' footage, they may be showing the reporters' footage only wherever applicable or relevant.

As for the distribution of specific programs (see Table 3a and 3b, 4, 5a and 5b, and 6a and 6b) some important striking similarities could be found. Almost all the channels have been focussing mainly on general agricultural practices followed by horticultural practices. Compared to the percentage of programmes aired in these two specific categories, the programs related to other areas such as poultry, fisheries, floriculture, etc are very less. Further programs like innovations and success stories are also very less in percentage. However, in this respect *ETV* and *ETV 2* are slightly a step way ahead compared to *Doordarshan* and *TV 5*.

Similarly programs like *Jai Kisan* of ETV and *Annapoorna* of TV 5 have more marketing focussed transmissions compared to the other problems encountered by the farmers such as low yields, power cuts, lack of irrigation support, lack of government support in times of calamities etc. (see Tables 4 and 5).

However, ETV has given a lot of importance to Crop Management, Innovations, Success Stories more than Doordarshan and TV 5. It is a great satisfaction among all other broad categories.

The study however found that there is presently emphasis on a few areas compared to the entire spectrum of farming problems and farmers' issues. A lot many areas, as is evident from the Tables 3 to 6b, are to be covered for which the study demands more dedication of time and coverage.

The study further concludes that the present study is a first ever attempt in a small way in relating the agricultural programs to the contemporary needs of the farming community, which is under severe stress, and there is an urgent need to undertake an extensive study on the entire gamut of the programs being transmitted entire year.

Further, the study calls for wider participation of many more electronic media channels in coming to the aid of the farmers and farming problems.

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Table I. Statement showing the Timings/duration of Farmers' Programmes in various Television Channels in Andhra Pradesh

S.No.	Name of the Channel	Title of Program	Time of the program	Duration of the program	Total Time per week	Remarks
1	Eenaadu Television (ETV)	<i>Annadaata Jai Kisan</i>	6.30 am 6.30 pm	30mts 30mts	3 hrs 3hrs	
2.	Doordarshan (DD)	<i>\$i.Rytunestam</i> (Broad casting:Statewide) <i>*ii.Kisan</i> (narrow casting: Local problems 90 kms radius) <i>iii.Vyvasaaya</i> <i>#Vigyanam</i> (Only Tuesday)	6.25 pm 7.00pm 6.30 am 7.00 am 6.00 pm 6.25 pm	35mts 30 mts 25 mts	2h 55mts 3hrs 25 mts	
3.	TV 5	<i>Annapoorna</i>	5.30 pm 6.00 pm	30 mts	3hrs	

- *Transmitted for one hour in combination with Broadcasting at a stretch between 6 am to 7 am in certain select local transmitters such as Bhimadole, Tuni, Anakapalli, etc. First 6am to 6.30am narrow casting (repeat) and 6.30 to 7 am broadcasting.
- \$ Rytunestam includes *agricultural news bulletin (first 8mts every day), phone in (every Friday), etc.*
- # Vyvasaaya Vigyaanam replaced Ryte Raaju –a first ever farmaers' quiz program which was carried out for 50 episodes in the country. Vyvasaaya Vigyaanam comprises three parts: Information about Agircultural Research Institutions and Local Research Stations, Success stories

of farmers selected by both Government of India and State Government of Andhra Pradesh, and Value Added Products.

Table II. Statement Showing Criteria of Selection of the Farmers' Programmes for Transmission

S.No	Name of the Channel	Criteria of Selection of Programs	Whether Schedules are drawn earlier? Yes/No	Remarks (if any)
1.	<i>ETV Annadaata</i> (Materials and Methods, farming techniques and crop-management oriented programs, etc.	1. Based on the news reports concerning agricultural problems of farmers from entire State. 2. Annadata Bureau planning based on seasonal requirements for crop-management, etc. 3. Farmers' on line feed back	Yes	Deviations are there from the scheduled programs due to natural calamities/crop failures due to fake seed sowing, etc.
2.	<i>ETV Jai Kisaan</i> (Farmer Centric Programs)	1. Based on the news reports concerning agricultural problems of farmers from entire State. 2. Annadata Bureau planning based on seasonal requirements for crop-management, etc. 3. Farmers' on line feed back	Yes	Deviations do exist sometimes
3.	Doordarshan -- <i>Rytu Nestam</i> -- <i>Kisan</i> -- <i>Vyavasaaya Vigyanam</i>	1. Based on the news reports concerning agricultural problems of farmers from entire State.	Yes	Deviations are very less compared to other channels.

		2. State Government Agriculture Department, Doordarshan Officials jointly work out the program schedules. 3. Scientists from AP Agriculture University and Regional Stations involved		
4.	<i>TV5 Annapoorna</i>	1Based on the news reports concerning agricultural problems of farmers from entire State.	No	Does not arise

Table III(a) Statement Showing *ETV Annadata* Program Distribution

S.No.	Category of Specific Programs	No of Programs Transmitted				Remarks
		May 2009	June 2009	Jan 2010	Feb 2010	
1.	Ag(General)	34	37	27	26	
2.	Horticulture	43	42	57	32	
3.	Ag(Cereals/Pulses)	12	10	12	22	
4.	Ag(Manures/Fertilizers)	05	01	06	07	
5.	Animal Husbandry	10	05	00	01	
6.	Poultry	02	14	09	11	
7.	Sericulture	02	01	02	01	
8.	Floriculture	04	0	01	02	
9.	Ag(Spices)	01	04	05	06	
10.	Pisciculture	05	05	05	06	
Total Programmes :		118	119	124	114	

Table III (b) Statement Showing *ETV Annadata* Program Distribution: Broad Categorization

S.No.	Broad categories of Programmes	No of Programs Transmitted	Remarks
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		May 2009	June 2009	Jan 2010	Feb 2010	
1.	Crop Management	75	84	87	90	
2.	Pest/Disease Control	22	22	28	19	
3.	Innovations	09	06	05	06	
4.	Success Stories	03	07	10	11	
Total Programmes :		109	119	130	126	

Table IV Statement Showing ETV Jai Kisan Program Distribution

S.No.	Category of Specific Programs	No of Programs Transmitted				Remarks
		May 2009	June 2009	Jan 2010	Feb 2010	
1.	Marketing	26	26	22	11	
2.	Low cost Technology	3	0	0	1	
3.	Irrigation	7	12	11	11	
4.	Labour Shortage	1	0	0	0	
5.	Power Cuts	2	1	1	03	
6.	Calamities	2	5	4	04	
7.	Low Yields/Income	5	5	6	03	
8.	Innovations	2	1	5	02	
9.	Success Stories	3	2	10	03	
10.	Seed Collection	1	0	0	0	
11.	Seed Distribution	4	5	3	03	
12.	Interviews	2	0	0	03	
13.	Lack of Technical Support	1	0	0	0	
14.	Low Prices	1	0	2	08	
15.	Counselling & Extensive support by Govt.	3	1	3	01	
16.	Support from Non-Govt. Society	1	4	2	03	
17.	Govt. failures	3	12	09	07	

	,Misuse/Corruption					
18.	Manures/ Fertilizers Availability & Shortage	0	01	2	03	
Total Programmes :		67	75	80	66	

Table V (a) Statement Showing Distribution TV5 Annapurna Specific Programmes

S.No.	Category of Specific Programs	No of Programs Transmitted				Remarks
		May 2009 (TP 72)	June 2009 (TP 70)	Jan 2010 (TP 73)	Feb 2010 (TP 73)	
1.	Ag(General)	48	36	32	32	
2.	Horticulture	21	17	26	26	
3.	Ag(Cereals/Pulses)	0	03	05	05	
4.	Ag(Manures/Fertilizers)	2	02	05	05	
5.	Animal Husbandry	1	02	01	01	
6.	Poultry	1	04	0	0	
7.	Sericulture	0	0	0	0	
8.	Floriculture	1	01	2	2	
9.	Ag(Spices)	2	01	1	1	
10.	Pisciculture	1	03	0	0	
11.	Innovations	0	01	0	0	
12.	Success Stories	0	0	0	0	
13.	Crop management	0	0	0	0	
Total Programmes :		77*	69	72	72	

Table V (b) Statement Showing Distribution TV5 Annapurna : Broad categories

S.No.	Category of Specific Programs	No of Programs Transmitted				Remarks
		May 2009 (TP 72)	June 2009 (TP 70)	Jan 2010 (TP 73)	Feb 2010 (TP 74)	
1.	Marketing	22	13	13	5	
2.	Low cost Technology	1	0	0	0	
3.	Irrigation	9	6	4	5	
4.	Labour Shortage	0	0	0	0	
5.	Power Cuts	1	0	0	0	
6.	Calamities	5	4	3	1	
7.	Low Yields	3	0	0	0	
8.	Innovations	0	2	0	4	
9.	Success Stories	1	1	2	2	
10.	Seed Collection	0	0	0	0	
11.	Seed Distribution	3	2	1	3	
12.	Interviews	0	2	0	0	
13.	Lack of Technological Support	0	0	0	1	
14.	Low Prices	0	0	0	0	
15.	Counselling & Extensive support by Govt.	0	0	0	1	
16.	Support from Non-Govt. Society	0	1	1	1	

17.	Govt. failures, Misuse/Corruption	1	0	1	0	
18.	Manures/ Fertilizers Availability & Shortage	3	0	2	1	
Total Programmes :		49	31	27	23	

Table VI (a) Statement Showing Distribution of Specific Programs in Doordarshan

S.No.	Category of Specific Programs	No of Programs Transmitted				Remarks
		May 2009	June 2009	Jan 2010	Feb 2010	
1.	Ag(General)	26	48	13	14	
2.	Horticulture	11	09	08	06	
3.	Ag(Cereals/Pulses)	04	05	03	05	
4.	Ag(Manures/Fertilizers)	03	05	5	04	
5.	Animal Husbandry	04	05	5	07	
6.	Poultry	01	0	0	0	
7.	Sericulture	03	03	0	0	
8.	Floriculture	0	0	0	0	
9.	Ag(Spices)	0	0	0	0	
10.	Pisciculture	02	04	4	04	
Total Programmes :		54	79	38	45	

Table VI(b) Statement Showing Doordarshan Program Distribution : Broad Categorization

S.No.	Broad categories of Programmes	No of Programs Transmitted				Remarks
		May 2009	June 2009	Jan 2010	Feb 2010	

1.	Crop Management	03	02	01	03	
2.	Pest/Disease Control	0	05	06	06	
3.	Innovations	01	05	07	0	
4.	Success Stories	0	0	0	0	
Total Programmes :		04	12	14	09	