

Radio and Entertainment

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“Howzat!” went the shout and the crowd erupted with joy! A tiny gully in Bangalore had now evolved into a melee of men, children and women who hugged and cried. Amarnath had bowled out the West Indies to bring India their first World Cup. Men ran out into the streets holding their radios high. Wait. Radios? This is the part of the story when my dad would always tell me how radios meant so much more back in the day. Crowds had gathered before radios for weeks then, to listen to Ravi Chaturvedi paint a vivid picture of every Indian match in their minds. They all had a different picture of their own and they loved it. That was the magic of the radio- A source of entertainment for the masses. Which some believe, it still is today.

The television was a luxury and this was the main reason the radio had caught on as the favourite of the public. Geeta Dutt’s songs were enjoyed from Gujarat to Assam, local shows and artists now found a bigger crowd to please and above all, it had brought the world closer. The radio above all, was the source of entertainment for all, from uncles to busy professors, drivers to a clerk. But what happened then?

As Freddy Mercury sang goodbye in ‘Radio Gaga’, TVs had become the new thing! The movement, the styles, the fashion! It was beautiful. Around this same time more and more people were now seeing their star athletes play. And the world had truly come closer. No longer was war in pictures on a newspaper, people now saw war tear through Afghanistan while others were horrified to see an Indian Prime Minister fall to bullets; all while they sat in the comfort of their homes. Moving pictures had taken over and video had truly killed the radio star. Or had it?

Entertainment like all other social entities is an ever- evolving being. But as evolution had made fishes come out of water for the whales to go back in again, Radio did make a return. Some would say, quite a big one. We must agree that radio had started as a medium for the masses. But did that go away? Not really. Still today, in remote parts of the country locals use radios to tune in to the news and other forms of entertainment. Many other places have active community radios all over the country who serve their community and bolster their identity. Organizations like SMART have also played a vital role in using the medium of community radio stations to spread awareness about social issues, education and even global issues like climate change.

Meanwhile, when it comes to feasibility, it doesn't hurt that most mobiles have radios and most radios are very cheap. So a radio is still like a curtain over the population and in the middle of it all is entertainment. How, you ask? Well, even in the advent of the internet, radio didn't die out. Some might actually argue that it has become stronger. Although it is not totally radio, podcasts are voices and sound, not pictures. Podcasts have also brought foreign entertainment and shows to a wider audience and are much easier to edit and release than television or video entertainment.

While popular artists and researchers hold the belief that the radio won't die out, we have definitely changed with the radio. There is regional variety in it and it comes with its own simple mechanisms. It's entertaining even to open up a radio and see how it works. It is funny how in movies with post-apocalyptic scenes, what do we see the protagonist carrying? Yes! A Radio!

Today, with media so accessible and overwhelming, we're constantly feeding on content. All of our heads, while we sit with family, walk on roads, travel on the metro are either buried into phones or buried into music and other entertainment. Thus entertainment has become overwhelmingly huge and varied. There's a piece of content for everyone's liking, a 'genre'. But was it the same back in that gully in Bangalore that day when India had won the world cup? Not quite. Radio shows were few and they were desperately waited for. Everyone on the streets then knew what song had played the previous afternoon or what drama was cooking in the morning shows. They were definitely different people, shaped by the radio. Just like we are today, very different. But radio still has that effect and has it to this day, be it in podcasts or community radio shows in some corner of the country. I believe it's all like Freddy Mercury truly had sung, "Radio! Someone still loves you!"



