



## Beyond the Textbook: 'Majhi Radio Shala' and Pedagogy of Audio-Literature in Rural Schooling

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### Abstract:

The research paper examined the pedagogical effectiveness of the educational program Majhi Radio Shala (My Radio School) among rural students in Mhaswad village, Satara district, Maharashtra. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the inadequacy of digital education systems in rural India became evident, and a significant gap in digital infrastructure, the so-called digital divide, was formed, which threatened to marginalise vulnerable populations and leave them out of the education sector. As the pedagogy of the urban population moved online, rural students were systematically excluded due to low connectivity and limited hardware. This paper posits that community radio is a viable, low-cost alternative for distributing literary and educational material. The paper shows that, with the introduction of local folklore, such as Dhangar Ovi and Bharud, into the syllabus, more appropriate cognitive learning and cultural relatability are achieved than with standardised textbooks that lack tension. The study hypothesises that the Majhi Radio Shala will enable passive listeners to become active learners by grounding its education in the local aural-scape. The results indicate that education delivered in a medium that honours the community's oral traditions not only promotes continuity of learning in times of crisis but also democratises knowledge and establishes the rural dialect as an acceptable mode of teaching academic work.

**Keywords:** Community Radio, Audio-Literature, Rural Education, Digital Divide, Oral Traditions, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Man Deshi Tarang Wahini, COVID-19 Education.

### Introduction:

The systematic reliance on printed books as the medium of knowledge in Indian education has traditionally created a distance between rural students whose traditions are rooted in oral expression. This literacy-based model assumes literacy and access to resources, which are not always the case in agrarian societies. This model proved fragile, as the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the need to switch to digital learning immediately. But for the pastoralists and farmers of drought-afflicted Maan Taluka in Satara, online learning was logistically impossible. With unpredictable electricity, prohibitive data prices,

and a limited number of smart devices, thousands of students were crippled by a complete halt to education.

It is in this vacuum that Mann Deshi Tarang Wahini (90.4 FM) emerged not only as an entertainment provider but also as critical educational infrastructure. The paper examines how the station has transformed from a community-engagement station to a community-education station through the Majhi Radio Shala project. It explores a pedagogical shift in the so-called visual-textual teaching of audio-literature, in how the radio station used the rich history of oral literature in the area to sustain academic

interest. The station does not merely substitute for the classroom by airing educational content that uses dialects and folk stories, but it improves the classroom. This study will demonstrate that radio is no longer a thing of the past and is a culturally responsive resource that can help close the digital divide in the modern world.

### **Methodology:**

This study uses a qualitative case study research design to analyse the role that Mann Deshi Tarang Wahini plays in rural education. The study area will primarily be restricted to the station's broadcast coverage area, which includes about 110 villages within the Maan Taluka. The research methodology is tripartite and entails content analysis, evaluation of listeners' data, and pedagogical mapping. To begin with, the Majhi Radio Shala program schedule was analysed in detail to divide broadcasts into educational types (formal curriculum vs. informal storytelling). The special focus was on incorporating oral folk traditions, including Dhangar Ovi poetry and local legends, to learn how indigenous knowledge was reused to serve educational purposes.

Second, this paper uses secondary data on audience demographics and listening rates. This involves measuring patterns of listener feedback, call-in frequency, and involvement in particular shows such as Folk stories and Standard News. Such information plays a crucial role in matching cultural relevance with listeners' retention.

Third, the study adopts the theoretical framework of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Walter Ong's concept of Secondary Orality. Through this lens, it is possible to analyse how contemporary broadcast technology retrieves conventional forms of learning, such as listening and reciting, to make education available. By positioning the station's output against these educational theories, the research assesses the effectiveness of audio-literature in a population

where oral tradition remains the primary communication medium. The synthesis of this data allows for an overall understanding of how high-tech educational exclusions can be addressed with low-tech solutions.

### **Case Study: Majhi Radio Shala as an Education Tool:**

*Majhi Radio Shala* program on Man Deshi Tarang Wahini emerged as a crucial pedagogical equaliser, bypassing these technological barriers to deliver education through a medium that remains free and universally accessible."

#### **1. Bridging the Digital Divide: Accessibility vs. Exclusion:**

The main pedagogical advantage of the Majhi Radio Shala of Man Deshi Tarang Wahini is that it avoids the technological obstacles that characterise the digital divide in rural India. In the Satara district, particularly the drought-affected Maan Taluka, reliance on digital education platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed stark inequalities. Although cities transitioned easily to Zoom and Google Classroom, rural students were at a dead end: unstable electricity supply, high-priced data plans, and the absence of smartphones for every household member. In this respect, community radio was the great equaliser. The radio audience is unlike the internet, which demands subscriptions and digital literacy, and is free to use and easy to operate.

Man Deshi Tarang Wahini will reach a potential audience of 50,000 listeners across 110 villages. With this existing infrastructure, the Majhi Radio Shala has ensured that a pause in physical classes did not amount to a pause in learning. The radio offered a low-tech but high-coverage remedy, broadcasting educational material into the homes of the most marginalised of the population, such as the children of shepherds and farm workers, who are the first to

fall out in emergencies. This accessibility is not just a convenient logistical matter but a basic pedagogical position: education should be available on the medium the student already has. The internet data lift eliminated the economic

barrier posed by radio, turning passive household radios into active educational tools and making literature and language learning democratic worldwide during a highly critical global emergency.

**Table 1: Comparative Access Costs for Rural Education (Monthly)** *A comparative framework showing the economic barrier removed by community radio.*

Education Medium	Hardware Requirement	Recurring Cost (Monthly)	Dependency Factors	Accessibility Level
Online Learning	Smartphone / Tablet	₹200 - ₹500 (Data Packs)	4G Network, Electricity	Low (Economic Barrier)
Satellite TV	Television Set	₹250 - ₹400 (DTH Fee)	Continuous Electricity	Medium (Power Barrier)
Community Radio	Basic Radio Set / FM Phone	₹0 (Free to Air)	Battery / Solar	High (Universal)

### Chart Description (Figure 1):

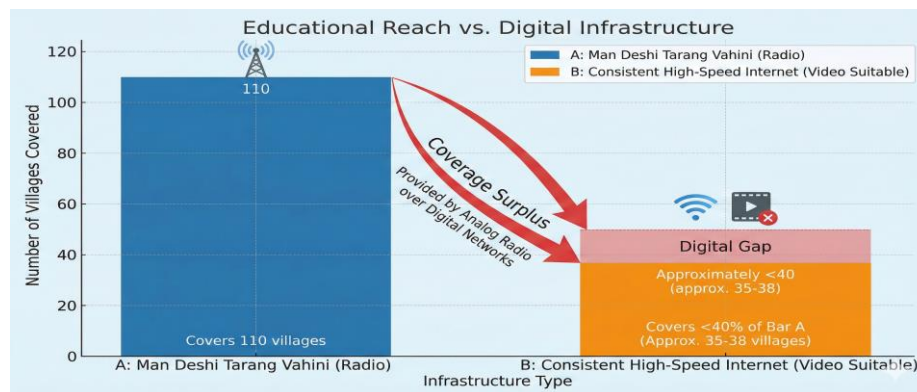


Figure 1 illustrates a significant geographic digital divide in educational infrastructure. The bar chart compares the reach of Man Deshi Tarang Vahini (analogue radio) with that of consistent high-speed internet. Radio (Bar A) successfully covers 110 villages, whereas adequate internet suitable for video streaming (Bar B) reaches fewer than 40, less than 40% of the radio's coverage area. This quantitative disparity is visualised as a "Digital Gap," highlighting the substantial "Coverage Surplus" currently provided by the analogue system. The data suggests that legacy technologies like radio remain crucial for equitable educational access where digital networks are insufficient.

## 2. Content Analysis: Localising the Curriculum through Folklore:

The pedagogical strategy that makes the curriculum design of Majhi Radio Shala stand out is the teacher's path of localisation, in which the local culture gathers the general educational needs and assigns them to local cultural material. The program incorporates the rich oral traditions of the region into the learning process, rather than merely broadcasting audio versions of state textbooks that, in most cases, contain examples that are city-centric and would not be familiar to their rural schoolchildren. The station exploits the fact that the community listens to high genres such as Dhangar Ovi (at an average of 40% engagement) and Folk Stories (25% engagement) to educate on literary concepts. An example is a

lesson on poetic meter/metaphor not taught based on English sonnets or school textbook Marathi poetry, but on the beat of the Ovi or the Bharud.

This approach justifies the student's indigenous knowledge base. When the student listens to a lesson based on a Dhangar legend they have heard from their grandparents, the terror that usually accompanies formal school education disappears. The school is no longer foreign or an imposing body bringing foreign knowledge, but rather a continuation of the village's cultural life. This is in line with the station's overall mission as the keeper of oral traditions, but has reused

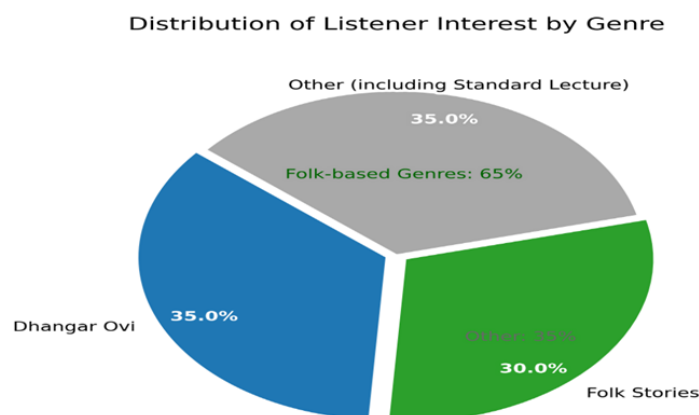
preservation as pedagogy. The folk stories serve two purposes: they are cultural objects being maintained, and they are also teaching resources being exploited. The strategy builds cultural confidence in students, enabling them to adopt a critical approach to literature without feeling alienated by the language or situation. This was confirmed by data indicating that the orator attended least when the material did not reflect their cultural existence, meaning that educational retention would follow a similar pattern, as the research showed.

**Table 2: Curriculum Mapping – Textbook vs. Radio Pedagogy**

*Examples of how 'Majhi Radio Shala' adapts standard syllabus topics using local oral literature.*

Subject	Standard Approach	Textbook	'Majhi Radio Shala' Adaptation (Audio-Literature)	Pedagogical Benefit
Poetry Meter	/	Standard Marathi Poems (e.g., Nature poems by urban poets)	Dhangar Ovi (Pastoral songs) & Abhangs	Connects rhythm to daily work; aids memorisation.
History Civics	/	Dates of battles; Political structure	Local Legends of Biroba & Oral History of Mhaswad	Contextualises history in the student's own landscape.
Ethics Values	/	Moral Science chapters	Manachya Goshti (Stories of the Mind)	Uses narrative therapy/storytelling for moral reasoning.
Language Arts		Formal Grammar rules	Dialect vs. Standard comparisons using local skits	Validates the "Maan" dialect while teaching standard forms.

### Chart Description (Figure 2):



A pie chart based on engagement data, visualising that nearly 65% of listener interest is concentrated in "Dhangar Ovi" and "Folk

Stories." The chart visually demonstrates why using these specific genres for education is a data-backed strategy for maximising student

attention compared to standard "Lecture" formats.

### 3. The "Classroom Without Walls": Interactive and Communal Learning:

Unlike the solitary process of reading a textbook or the segregated nature of screen-based learning, Majhi Radio Shala creates a shared learning ecosystem that, in effect, builds a classroom without walls. Radio listening is not a personal activity; it is a social medium, mainly practised in communal areas such as fields, courtyards, or community halls, particularly in the Mhaswad rural setting. This sense of togetherness is what makes education feel like a family activity. Whenever a lesson is being aired, the student is not the only one listening, as siblings and unlettered parents often do. This incidental listening to parents helps them be involved in their child's education, which English-based textbooks never allow.

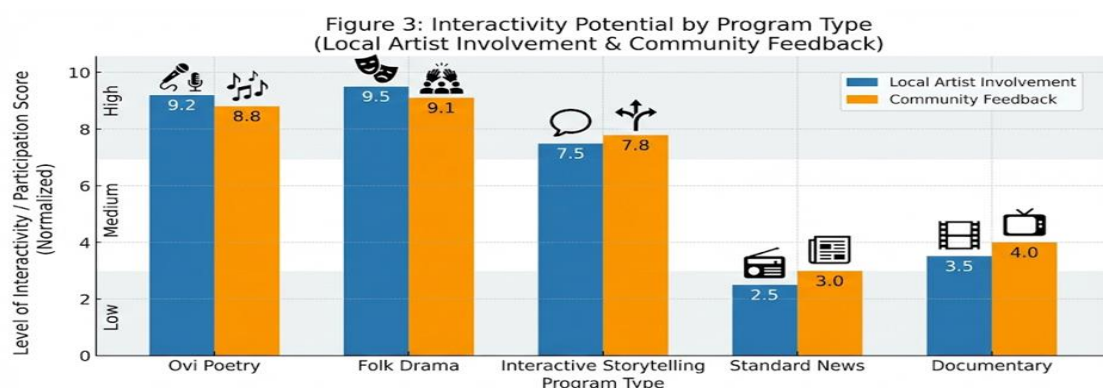
Moreover, the station establishes a feedback mechanism that integrates classroom

interaction at scale. The radio station has an interactive communication with its so-called students through call-in bits, letters, and community polls. The statistics show that the community has participated extensively in the development of programs, especially in the Dhangar Ovi poetry, where listener participation has been classified as "High". Applying this to the education field, the student or local teacher becomes more of a producer of knowledge when they add their voice, stories, or even questions to the program; they become more than just a table taking information. This evocative model disintegrates the inflexibility of the conventional classroom. The role of the so-called teacher is not only the person who speaks authoritatively on the radio, but the community itself, which always provides content, responses, and confirmation to the radio station. This feedback and broadcasting process is necessary to keep the pedagogy dynamic and adaptive to the community's needs, which change over time.

**Table 3: Modes of Interaction in Radio Education**

*Analysis of the feedback mechanisms that transform broadcasting into a two-way educational dialogue.*

Interaction Type	Participant Role	Mechanism	Educational Outcome
Content Creation	Local Artists / Teachers	Recording stories/lessons	Localises the "authority" of knowledge.
Direct Feedback	Students / Listeners	Call-ins & Letters	Allows for doubt clearance and engagement checks.
Cultural Validation	Community Elders	Submitting Folk Tales	Inter-generational learning: elders teach youth.
Performance	Student Listeners	Reciting poems on-air	Builds public speaking confidence and ownership.



Analysis illustrates significantly higher interactivity in culturally-rooted formats (Ovi Poetry, Folk Drama) compared to passive formats (Standard News), driven by both artist engagement and audience response.

**Chart Description (Figure 3):**

A bar chart derived from participation data. It compares "Local Artist Involvement" and "Community Feedback" across different program types. High bars for Ovi Poetry and Folk Drama illustrate the potential for high interactivity in educational modules that use these formats, in contrast to lower interactivity in "passive" formats like standard news.

**Discussion and Conclusion:**

These students' experiences with Mann Deshi Tarang Vahini's educational activities illustrate that community radio is not just an analogue novelty—it's an essential, flexible technology for rural education. By shifting pedagogical attention from "reading text" to "listening to narratives", Majhi Radio Shala successfully overcomes the social and economic divides caused by digital scarcity.

The secret to their popularity is that they have embraced "Audio-Literature". Using the Dhangar Ovi, Bharuds, and local legends as learning resources, the station affirms its students' cultural background. The educational work becomes a choice to resist assimilating people into the urban model and instead to affirm community life. The high participation rate in folk programming indicates that models grounded

exclusively in the digitalisation of content cannot constitute an attractive future for rural education; rather, integrating local traditions into modern educational delivery channels should be the way to go.

In short, Majhi Radio Shala is a scalable model for rural education in developing countries. It shows that when technology (radio) meets culturally relevant pedagogy (folklore), a system of education can be born that is robust, equitable, and profoundly rooted in the land it serves.

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