

## ARTEE in Historical Perspective

Association of Radio & Television Engineering Employees, ARTEE started its journey from the holy city of Allahabad in January 1967 with the name 'Non-Gazetted Engineering Employees Association'.

Starting with a handful of committed engineering employees, today we are the largest media employees Association, representing about 10,000 employees; a testimony to the hard work and determination of the associated members.

As per the Indian culture, all good events starts with *Aarti*, a traditional light offered to the gods. Today ARTEE has become a symbol for good things for the employees.

### **Background:**

India is the largest democracy in the world and second largest country on the basis of its population. Unity in diversity is the mantra as we move around the country spread over different terrains from ocean to mountains, having 16 official languages in addition to more than 1000 dialects. India is a semi federal system, geographically divided by 30 states but overall control is in the hands of the Central Government. The President is the Constitutional Head but a democratically elected Prime Minister along with his cabinet exercises the administrative control.

- ❖ India was under colonial rule for more than 300 years, and got independence in 1947.
- ❖ Trade unions all over the world bloomed after the industrial revolution in the west. Indian workers took cue from their counterparts from the rest of the world and got unionized as and when the Indian Agricultural and Industrial sectors were getting modernized. The major contributory factors in the formation of unions in India rested with the textile workers in Western India, Jute mills in the east, Railway and Postal workers spread all over India, from the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The numerous unions spread far and wide saw the birth of a wider body *All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in 1920*.
- ❖ The first statutory recognition of the rights of the workers to organize themselves into unions came in the late twenties by way of *Indian Trade Union Act – 1926*.
- ❖ After Independence, politics impacted the unity amongst the union movement and Central Trade Unions got divided on the basis of political ideologies. Besides AITUC, a number of central unions emerged on the horizon like *Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)* in 1947, *Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS)* in 1948, *United Trade Union Congress (UTUC)* in 1949, *Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS)* in 1955, *Center of Indian trade Unions (CITU)* in 1964 etc.
- ❖ In addition the Government sector workers too came out with their National Unions such as *All India Railway men Federation, National Federation of Postal & Telegraph Employees, All India Defence Employees Federation, Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers* etc. **The Government Sector Unions are not supposed to align with political organizations** (some of these unions got affiliated with political parties after conversion of their organisation as Corporation).
- ❖ However the impact of politics on Indian workers and unions is quite significant. The political parties in India range from extreme right to extreme left, consisting of dozens of major political parties and a large number of regional parties. The unions too are considered as major vote banks. Many reputed union leaders end up with strategic understanding with political parties, which in turn results in diminution in commitment towards the movement itself. In addition the government lays down strict conduct rules for its employees, which further acts as a deterrence in taking up union activities. It therefore becomes quite difficult for the government sector workers to undertake union activities. And all of us indulging in such activities are doing it only on the basis of our members resolve and strength. The workers' movements have made enormous contributions in the freedom struggle of India. Even in the post-independent era, the suppression of workers' rights echoed in the State and National elections and at times resulted in poll reverses for parties in power.

## **B. Electronic Media In India**

### **i) ALL INDIA RADIO (AIR)**

Radio Broadcasts started in India before Independence.

- The first radio broadcast started by the Radio Club of Bombay (now Mumbai) in May 1924 followed by the Radio Clubs of Calcutta and Madras (now known as Kolkata and Chennai respectively). But the broadcasting of these Radio Clubs came to an end in 1930 due to financial difficulties.
- The Indian Broadcasting Company came into existence in 1927 and started broadcasting from Bombay and Calcutta. It also faced liquidation and closed down in October 1931, and restarted again in November 1931 with some solution for the immediate financial crisis.
- BBC started an empire service in 1932 which resulted in increase in the number of imported radio sets, thereby resulting in an increase in the income for the Government (from the license fees, import duties etc. which made the broadcasting financially more viable). So the Government started expansion of Radio network.
- The post of Controller of Broadcast (later renamed as 'Director General' in 1943) was created in 1935. The Delhi station of All India Radio started on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1936.
- The name *All India Radio* was adopted from June 1936. The short wave services, to cover a wider horizon, were started in 1938. The external services started from 1<sup>st</sup> October 1938.
- At the time of partition, in August 1947, 6 stations remained with India and 3 went to Pakistan. Five more Radio stations came under AIR when the princely states became a part of India.
- Central News Organisation, which came into existence in 1937, was split up into two wings viz. News Services Division and External Services Division in 1948. These two wings are currently catering to the needs of News and External Broadcasts.
- During nineties AIR started FM broadcasts, phone-in-service and Radio-on-Demand etc for quality broadcasts and in an effort to bring Radio further closer to the listener.
- From a mere 6 stations in 1947, AIR has widened its base upto 336 stations with coverage of 95% of area and 99% of population along with DSS.
- More than 320 private channels are functioning in Radio (FM) broadcasting in India.

### **ii) DOORDARSHAN (TELEVISION) –DD**

The Television services started in India on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1959 from Delhi and the service was named 'Doordarshan', meaning 'bringing the distant things closer'.

- Initially transmission could cover an area of around 40km in and around Delhi.
- Programmes were beamed twice a week for one hour.
- For the first time, the ceremonies of Republic Day (26<sup>th</sup> January) and Independence Day (15<sup>th</sup> August) were telecast live in 1960.
- School TV (STV), to train science teachers in Delhi schools was launched in 1961. Regular services with daily News bulletins in Hindi and other entertainment programs started in 1965. English News bulletins started in 1971.
- Indian broadcasting entered the satellite arena with Satellite Instructional Television Equipment (SITE) in 1975 with the help of ATS-6 satellite of USA.
- In 1976, Doordarshan got de-linked from AIR, as far as functioning was concerned; Doordarshan started selling commercial air time.
- Colour Transmission started in 1982, with the New Delhi Asian Games in 1982.
- A record number of 184 TV transmitters were installed in a single year in 1989-90.
- India launched its first satellite Aryabhata in April 1975 and then followed with the INSAT series.

*All India Radio & Doordarshan are amongst the few organizations using domestic satellites for National & Regional services. The satellite communication boosted the Radio & Television broadcasting from, six Radio stations at the time of Independence (15<sup>th</sup> August 1947) to 336 Radio stations and more than 1500 TV stations (including 66 Production Centres) in the country covering more than 90% of population through 21 channels.*

The space over Asia in general and over India in particular is fast becoming a private property and the major satellite and cable TV companies in the world view India as one of the top broadcasting market, especially in the light of the Supreme Court's pronouncement in 1994, on *freeing the airwaves from the Government as well as some private broadcasters' monopoly*. With the launch of ASIASAT-1 in April 1990 the cable TV has set in. Since then the number of cable TV homes have been increasing rapidly. Right from the media baron Rupert Murdoch to sundry business houses have started investing in the media sector. Today programs through more than 280 channels are available to the Indian viewers from domestic as well as foreign private broadcasters. Television in India is no longer an urban phenomenon but it reached the rural and even remote areas of the country.

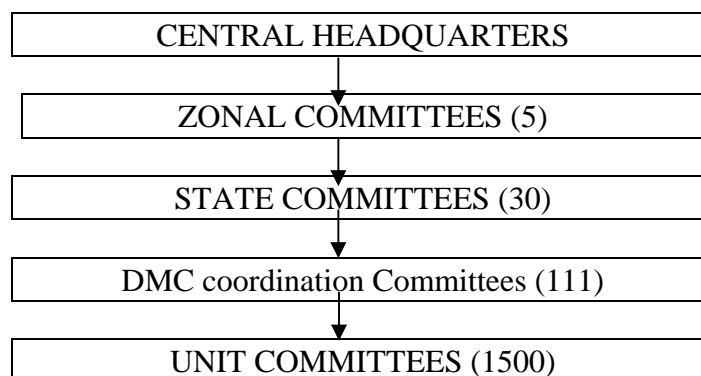
Broadcasting as a regular service had been under the control of the Government, except for the first 2 years and 8 months. Even though it functions as Public Broadcaster on education and entertainment there were allegations that it was being used as a tool for propagation of particular ideology of the Government of the day by filtering the News through political angle. It was in the emergency period in India, that people at large realized the potential of an Independent media. A bill for autonomy of the 'Electronic media under Government Control' was introduced in the Parliament by immediate next Government in 1977 but the legislation could not see light of the day as the government could not last long.

Ultimately in 1990, the Parliament of India passed the bill, named 'Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act', which was finally notified on 22 July 1997. In fact most of our present problems are direct fallout of the haste in which the act was notified in 1997. Even after a span of 12 years Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) is in the transition stage as the National & Public Service Broadcaster failed to prove the financial viability. Major part of the funding of this public broadcaster is still depending upon the government as the remaining part is coming through commercial revenues.

*The concept of autonomy has faded out in the era of revolution in Commercial Broadcasting in the country. It is the high time for the policy makers of the country to think seriously about entrusting the responsibility of AIR & Doordarshan with the Government of India by repealing the Prasar Bharati Act 1990.*

### **Association of Radio & Television Engineering Employees (ARTEE):**

Association of Radio & Television Engineering Employees, popularly known as ARTEE is the largest Employees Association in AIR & Doordarshan, representing the engineering employees from Helper (Group "D") to Assistant Engineer (Group "B" gazetted) spread over more than 1500 AIR & TV stations. The Association set-up is as follows.



At the Central office we have President, General Secretary, two Vice-Presidents, one Additional General Secretary, Treasurer, four Secretaries, Editor Filament (News Letter), Website Administrator and members of the departmental and office councils. The Editor, Web admin & council members are nominated by the President. The other office bearers in Central, Zonal, State and Unit offices are being elected by members for two year term.

- ✚ ARTEE is a multi cadre Association having different layers of workers in Supervisory and supporting levels in engineering side as its members. The majority of posts in the cadres of Engineering Assistant, Technician and Helpers are filled through direct recruitment while some part of these cadres and the other cadres are filled through departmental promotion.
- ✚ Our members are the second, after defence personnel, facing frequent transfers due to the large number of stations. There are incidents where the authorities are trying to use it as a tool to harass the staff who is taking active participation in Association, even though department has a transfer policy after a long struggle by ARTEE. We are on constant vigil to protect our members from any such harassment.
- ✚ Being operational cadres taking care of the National as well as Public Service Broadcaster of this great country, we always keep the interest of the organization above anything even while fighting for our rights.
- ✚ While fulfilling the responsibility towards the members to protect their financial, functional and social rights and to fight against the victimization/harassment of working class, we had been compelled to agitate on many occasions for the issues like working & living conditions, carrier prospectus, rightful remunerations, downsizing of staff, outsourcing etc. some of the agitations were:
  - ❖ 1973: Mass Holiday
  - ❖ 1978: 45 days Relay hunger strike
  - ❖ 1980: 30 days work to rule
  - ❖ 1982: General Strike with all government employees and courted arrest during ASIAD (Asian Games)
  - ❖ 1984: 30 days Dharna
  - ❖ 1989: Silence observation protest.
  - ❖ 1991: One day tool down strike
  - ❖ 1993: 3 days tool down strike
  - ❖ 1997 to 1999 : Waves of Mass Holidays and Strikes
  - ❖ 2000 : Agitations under the common platforms of National Federation of Akashvani & Doordarshan employees (NFADE) of 8 Association.
  - ❖ 2002 : Agitations under the platform, Joint Forum of Akashvani & Doordarshan Engineering Employees (JFADEE)
  - ❖ 2004 to : A wave of Agitations like March to Parliaments, Dharnas, Gate Meetings, Public  
Still continuing: & political campaigns, etc under the common platforms of National Federation of Akashvani & Doordarshan employees (NFADE) of 21 Associations, led by ARTEE.
  - ❖ 2009 : Gate meetings, Dharnas by ARTEE to settle various issues related to the recommendations of 6<sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission.

***Summary of the outcome of these agitations were:***

- 1) ***There was an ever increasing organizing success and morale of the employees belonging to our cadres as well as other streams in the electronic media, got a boost.***

- 2) *As an outcome of agitation in seventies:*
  - a) *The working hours were fixed, holidays defined, extra hours of duty compensated*
  - b) *From a bare minimum, the numbers of staff quarters were increased.*
  - c) *A comprehensive Transfer Policy came into existence in 1981*
  - d) *Routine conciliatory meetings become regular and management agreed for frequent decisions as and when occasions arouse.*
- 3) *The 1982 ASIAD (Asian Games) agitation brought wider unity amongst all AIR & TV employees, irrespective of their sections. This agitation left ARTEE's impact on other Central Government employees Associations/ unions to pursue the issue of Bonus to Central Government employees (till then only the employees of Railways and P&T staff were getting bonus). The eighties saw Bonus being given to all Central Government employees.*
- 4) *The mid eighties witnessed the management's attempts to remove stagnation in engineering cadres, on a moderate scale. However a large number of Engineering employees were benefited by promotions.*
- 5) *The late eighties brought the challenge to the Association to fight for staff welfare at the numerous Low Power Transmitters (TV relay centres – LPTVs) set up due to TV expansion.*

✚ The milestones in our Association activities were:

- 1967: formation of ARTEE at Allahabad, UP State
- 1970: Headquarters shifted to Delhi
- 1971 Started publication of FILAMENT, RNI No.23285/71
- 1977: Non Gazetted part removed from the name of Association
- 1981: Renamed as Association of Radio & Television Engineering Employees (ARTEE)

✚ As a cadre based welfare Association, we are aware that our strength lies in our members and regular interaction between the leadership & members is necessary for the smooth functioning of the Association. We organize workshops/seminars/conventions in Regional/State/Zonal/National levels to bring awareness amongst the members about various issues in addition to the regular publication of newsletter (named Filament) and updating our website ([www.arteeindia.org](http://www.arteeindia.org)).

✚ The National Conventions we have organized are:

- 1971: 1<sup>st</sup> National Convention at Delhi
- 1973: 2<sup>nd</sup> National Convention at Delhi
- 1977 3<sup>rd</sup> National Convention at Delhi
- 1978: 4<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Delhi
- 1981: 5<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Kolkata
- 1982: 6<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Delhi
- 1987: 7<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Delhi
- 1990 8<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Kolkata
- 1992 9<sup>th</sup> (Silver Jubilee) National Convention at Delhi
- 1995 10<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Kolkata
- 1997 11<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Mumbai
- 2000 12<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Lucknow
- 2003 13<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Mumbai
- 2005 14<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Chennai
- 2007: 15<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Parbhani, Maharashtra
- 2009 16<sup>th</sup> National Convention at Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum).

National Conventions were interspaced by various Zonal, State and Regional conventions in between.

## ARTEE's Global Moves

ARTEE has always believed in thinking above the narrow limitations of cadre, religion, linguistic, regional and national aspects. When the managements throughout the world are looking for mergers and globalisation, we also realized the necessity for unity of workers worldwide, cutting across the borders.

Accordingly ARTEE became affiliate to the Union of Media workers throughout the world, i.e. FISTAV. Later FISTAV became Media & Entertainment International (MEI). The four international unions, FIET (Financial & Insurance sector employees), Communication International (CI- of employees working in communication field), International Graphical Federation (IGF – of printing workers and journalists of point media) & MEI joined together to become a very strong platform for the workers under the banner, Union Network International (UNI - fondly called as '**you and I**') from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000.

ARTEE has been very actively participating in various activities of UNI and attended various courses/conferences of UNI from time to time. Some of them are:

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| Leadership training course at Kathmandu, Nepal   | : 10-18 September 1998.                                |
| Women empowerment course at Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia  | : 13-17 December 1999                                  |
| MEI World Conference at Vienna, Austria  | : March 2000   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> UNI-MEI Asia/Pacific Broadcasting Workers' Workshop<br>Seoul, Korea  | : October 2003.  |
| 4th UNI-MEI Asia/Pacific Broadcasting Workers' Workshop<br>Jakarta, Indonesia  | : 25-27 March 2004                                     |
| UNI APRO India National Training Course for Women Leaders<br>New Delhi, India  | : 16-19 February 2005                                  |
| UNI-MEI South Asia and Southeast Asia Broadcasting Workers'<br>Workshop. Colombo, Sri Lanka. (4 participants from ARTEE)         | : 24-26 February 2005                                  |
| UNI APRO training course for Young leaders, Delhi  | : 27 <sup>th</sup> April to 01 <sup>st</sup> May 2005. |
| UNI APRO/FES Workshop on Enhancing Skills of International<br>Labour Standards & Framework Agreements Colombo, Sri Lanka         | : 9 – 15 May 2005                                      |
| UNI APRO / FES Organiser's Course for Young Unionists<br>Colombo, Sri Lanka.   | : 4 –10 July 2005                                      |
| 6th UNI-MEI Asia - Pacific Broadcasting Workers' Workshop,<br>Bangkok, Thailand. (Two participants from ARTEE)                   | : 7-9 March 2006                                       |
| National Training course for Women leaders under the Global<br>Equality Project (GEP) at Hyderabad (Two participants from ARTEE) | : 15 <sup>th</sup> to 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2006        |
| UNI/UNI APRO – Empowerment Course on Train the Trainers<br>for SOUTH ASIA at Katmandu – NEPAL                                    | : 6-10 November 2006                                   |
| UNI-MEI/UNI APRO Forum a Cultural Agenda for ASEAN<br>Kuala Lumpur,  | : 12-14 September 2006                                 |
| All-India Broadcasting Workers Encounter, Mumbai,<br>(Nine participants from ARTEE)  | : 20 November 2006                                     |
| Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Workers' Workshop at Jakarta, Indonesia<br>(2 participants from ARTEE)                                 | : 22 to 24 August 2007                                 |
| The World Executive Board meeting of UNI held first time in India at Delhi   | on 25-26 October 2007.                                 |

## **ARTEE took lead role in NFADE:**

Being the largest employees Association, ARTEE always considered its moral responsibility to fight for the interest of employees by maintaining brotherly relationship with other employees associations. With this concept ARTEE took the initiative to form the National Federation of I&B Employees way back in 1982 to fight the common issues of **Bonus to all government employees**. Again in 1999 the National Federation of Akashwani & Doordarshan Employees was formed under the leadership of ARTEE to take up common issues including to fight against the curtailment of employees in the name of redeployment. We also formed and led JFADEE for common causes of Engineering fraternity.

After realizing the ill effects of Prasar Bharati to the employees, the **National Federation of Akashwani & Doordarshan Employees (NFADE)** was constituted again in the year **2004** under the chairmanship of the then President Shri Rabin Dasgupta to protect the rights of AIR & DD employees as central government employees.

The NFADE started its show of strength with the Gate Meeting at Akashwani Bhawan on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

**Silent March from Mandi House to Shastri Bhavan on 09.11.2004** has created a history in the employees' movement in Delhi.

Sit-in-Dharna at Akashvani Bhavan & all metros Addressed by five hon'ble members of Parliament; Sh.Chittabrato Majumdar, Sh.Dipankar Mukherji, Sh.Nilotpal Basu, Sh.D.Raja & Sh.Ajay Maken on 30.11.2004

March to Parliament (Addressed by Sh,Gurudas Dasgupta on **16.12.2004**).

These three steps have compelled government of India to think very seriously on Prasar Bharati and the fate of its employees.

The strength shown by NFADE constituted of 22 associations was so strong that it compelled the then Hon'ble Minister of I&B Shri S. Jaipal Reddy to address the three day long hunger strike at Akashwani Bhawan on 5.5.2005 and to declare that the rights of the employees should be protected. Shri Jaipal Reddy announced this as an iron cast assurance, which boosted the moral of employees thus instilling confidence in the minds of all employees.

Thereafter the continuous efforts of NFADE through various steps of agitation ensured the restoration of facilities such as **General Pool accommodation, CGHS**, admission of ward in **Kendriya Vidyalayas** and the **benefit of 6<sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission**.

The Hon'ble union Cabinet in its meeting held on **29.01.2009** decided to retain the AIR & DD employees joined up to 05.10.2007 as Central Govt. employees on deemed deputation, on recommendation of Hon'ble GOM.

The fight is still on to convince the Government about the ill effects of the two types of employees in the highly sensitive National Public Service Broadcaster and thereby finally ensure the same treatment to the employees joining after 5/10/2007 also.

The achievements of NFADE are only due to the unity of associations, which brought a feel of confidence among all the employees irrespective of cadre and stream. The larger federations in other departments and even the international platform appreciated the strength of NFADE.

We feel it is the high time for the Political decision takers of the country to think very seriously about the relevance of Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) in the era of commercialisation of Broadcasting in India when more than 280 Television and more than 320 Radio channels are available to the masses of the country in Private Broadcasting field. It is very important to compare the present scenario with the situation prevailing in 1978 & 1990 when no private channels were available in Indian Broadcasting field.

We are confident that the days are not far that Govt of India will take a decision to take over the National Public Service Broadcaster by repealing the Prasar Bharati Act 1990.

***ARTEE is being affiliated to the Confederation of Central Government Employees & Workers, the Umbrella organisation to protect the interest of the Government employees of the Country.***

### **ARTEE always in the role of a Watchdog and Protector of employees**

ARTEE is aware of its responsibilities towards making maximum efforts for the betterment of the organisation while fighting for the welfare of the employees. We always keep our eyes and ears open to ensure that activities are not taking place against the interests of the organisation and its employees.

***We have now started agitation with seven point charter of demands to ensure justice to our members.***

ARTEE believes in leading from the front

Unity is Strength!

Long Live ARTEE

Long live Unity