CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION
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In this study an attempt has been made to pursue every aspect of the mobile theatre of Assam and its impact on the socio-cultural life, specially in North Kamrup Area. Here in this chapter we shall try to recapitulate the whole aspects that have already been studied. Assam is a unique land, compared to the other parts of the country. Being a homeland of various tribes and cultures, people of this part celebrate different festivals in every month of a year. And in performing arts it has a rich tradition. Before the birth of Sankardeva many folk performing arts like oja pali, putala naach, nagara nam, and others were quite popular art and its performance has been made mandatory on various religious ceremonies. When Sankardeva innovated ankia nat or bhaona to spread the message of ek saran nam dharma among the native, the people of Assam tasted an extra aroma of performance. This popular theatre has been performed in every corner of the state with popular enthusiasm. Sankardeva who is often regarded as the father of Assamese theatre, popularized this bhaona performance in entire Assam. He first wrote the drama, conceived the dance, composed the songs and tunes and harnessed all these for creating bhaona. The use of painted scenery as early as in 15th century was certainly a unique thing for Assam. The inexhaustible Indian epics, which have been the common pool for providing themes
and inspiration to authors in and outside India provided Sankardeva plots for his dramas. In an age when printing was unknown this great vaisnavite reformer recognized and used bhaona as an effective medium to reach and preach to the common people of the land. Bhaona has been living in the land even after the death of Sankardeva. In this regard Sattradhikars have made the most vital contributions by carefully preserving the tradition of bhaona performances in their respective Satras.

However in the early 19th century, when Assam was passing through serious political catastrophes and the land had been occupied by the British, bhaona lost a good deal of participation of the people on account of the continued uncertainties that prevailed.

During the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century a new theatrical movement entered Assam through the Calcutta Stage and slowly began to establish itself mainly in the North Kamrup Area. Jayadev Sarma, Tithiram Bayan, Manohari Das, Harichandra Das, Bhogiram Kalita were the leading pioneers of this theatrical movement. These theatre troupes popularly known as yatra Parties performed plays either in Bengali or Assamese translation of Bengali language in different parts of the state, specially on occasions like Durga Puja, Ras Mahotshav, Siva Puja, Doul Utshav etc. Yatra was neither fully Bengali nor fully Assamese. The odour of Bengali tradition was no doubt felt in yatra, yet except its concept, the other aspects of yatra was very much Assamese.
Three decades later, in 1963 two brothers, Achyut Lahkar and Sada Lahakar of Pathsala set the wheel in motion by setting up the first mobile theatre- Nataraj Theatre. It was the first fully commercial theatre party of Assam. After that many theater parties emerged but except a few most of them were closed down. It is interesting to notice that in an age of Information and Technology, where cinema, cable TV, dish TV, and VCD/DVDs have captured the attention of all sections of people all over the world, the popularity of mobile theatre is not decreasing rather increasing. The reason behind it is the close relationship established by the mobile theatres with the common masses. On the one hand mobile theatres produce a class of playwrights and on the other entertaining the common masses, it partially solved the unemployment problem of the region. It also creates an environment of social harmony as people coming from different parts involved with mobile theatre, worked under one producer and entertained thousands of people in every night. Many social organizations and institutions developed in Assam have received direct or indirect support from these theatre troupes. However what mobile theatres have been doing is not fully satisfactory in present situations. Many times they fail to establish themselves as socially as well as morally responsible organizations. Often these theatre troupes are being blamed for their much concentration on the commercial aspects.
PROBLEMS FACED BY MOBILE THEATRES

After this study it is seen that the problems faced by the mobile theatres may be considered as one of the chief causes for the degradation of their quality on stage performance. Most of the producers in this regard express that in spite of their willingness they could not compromise with the commercial aspects. The problems faced by the Mobile theatre troupes may be discussed under the following heads:

Poor Road Condition

The basic nature of every mobile theatre is to perform their shows in different areas. For that they have to carry this make shift theatre halls from one place to another. But the poor road condition of the remote villages (speciaillly the weak wooden bridges) often creates trouble. Though PMGSY improved a lot, many roads are yet to be developed. Owing to this poor road condition many times theatre parties fail to reach their destination on time and fail to perform their shows.

Bandh Culture

During 1980's many students organizations and insurgent groups were formed in the state. These organizations just to satisfy their demands often call on bandh. Besides the insurgent groups to make the administration mechanism instable often violate the existing law and order
situation. Many a time the fight between the militants and the police or army also creates panic among the masses. If any mobile theatre happened to be passing by these affected areas its direct impact is seen inside the theatre hall at night.

**Lack of experienced playwright**

In Assam there are as many as 15 playwrights whose plays have often been performed on stage for the last five to six years. Keeping in mind the commercial aspects and to keep their position alive, these playwrights produce a large number of plays every year. As the demand for new plays is more these playwrights are being forced to write more plays. And as a result the quality of these plays suffers a lot. To cope up with modern trend these playwrights often introduce modern songs and dances in their plays. It of course disheartened the audience who are very much interested on the aesthetic part of a play on stage. In other cases, the producers of mobile theatres never like to compromise with the commercial aspects and encourage no playwright to produce an artistic play which may commercially be flopped on stage, as he has to spend a huge amount of money every year.

**Disrespect to the agreement by the host organization or institution**

A mobile theatre always makes an agreement with the host institution or organization before the commencement of the performance of plays.
on that place for three to four nights in a year. In the agreement paper it is clearly mentioned about the payable amount for every show. At present a well developed mobile theatre, like Kohinoor or Awahan asks for rupees fifty to sixty thousand per show. According to the agreement the host organizations are compelled to pay that amount. But in many cases it is seen that the host organization hesitates to pay the needful amount. The foul weather specially in the month March and April often creates trouble and as a result less number of spectators come to enjoy the show and it leads to the financial loss of the host organization. These types of situation create a major mis-understanding between the host organization and the mobile theatre troupes. Many a time it leads to an unpleasant situation where the producer at the end has to surrender.

**Presence of terrorist activities**

There was a time when the people of this area used to march for ten to twenty kilometers at night to enjoy a play. But today one can not expect those days. The uprising of the insurgent groups in the entire North East often paralised the law and order situation in the state and its direct impact is also seen in the theatre halls. The feeling of insecurity creates confusion in the mind of the theatre lovers. Besides unexpected ‘bomb blast’ and ‘encounters’ sometimes disturb a theatre party in performing plays for one or two nights.
Lack of Govt. aid

Though there is a tradition to provide financial assistance to the leading dramatic clubs of the state by the state government, in the field of mobile theatre it is pathetic to observe that little attention from the part of government is paid. Many a time it is seen that owing to financial trouble, some producers had to close down their troupes. These producers could have continued their performance if they had been provided financial support from the state government. Even today government of Assam has not taken any step for the uplift of the mobile theatres as a whole. 'Technically it is difficult to handle a single theatre individually, because a mobile theatre is not a public property... it is an individual case' says Goutam Bora, Minister of Cultural Affairs Govt. of Assam.

The state government announces a scheme named Silpi Pension for the disabled old artist of theatre and other cultural activities. But there are many artists, who are being deprived of this scheme and living in trouble even today.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Until and unless we solve these problems facing by the theatres, we can not expect much from these beautiful and unique mobile theatre troupes of Assam. In this regard the following recommendations may be suggested.
1. Everybody is aware that in most modern and progressive countries of the world, the theatre being the life blood of the country, is receiving subsidies and other financial assistance from the state. In case of the Mobile theatre of Assam there should have such provisions from the state. This assistance may be given in the form of cash subsidies or loans or properties or mobile trucks or such other facilities. It will definitely improve the position of mobile theatre, making them self supporting.

2. Another important aspect where more emphasis should be given is ‘training’. In the present phase the growth of the dramatic activity in the state, the unmistakable enthusiasm for drama has to be matched by adequate training facilities. For that a central institute should be established to provide training of the highest standard in acting, production, play writing and other should equally emphasize on technique and theory both ancient and modern.

3. Apart from regular training to be imparted at this institution, special courses, camps, and seminars for those already in the field and willing to come in this field should be organized. In this case the whole expenditures should be borne by the state government.

4. All the folk dramatic troupes along with the mobile theatres should be organized in a manner suitable for their traditions and modes of expression and for this purpose a number of training camps and courses should be arranged and special assistance given to those trainees.
5. Adequate steps to be taken not only for the careful and scientific study of the folk drama as well as the dramas performed by the mobile theatre in different parts of the state, for preventing their decay and disappearance and for giving them reorganization and new lives.

6. In order to make available to workers in drama and theatre in the state the result of studies research and experiments and all mobile theatre related materials should be published in the form of books by the state government.

However, all the above cited matters will be fruitful if we become conscious and do our needful for the development of mobile theatre. In this regard mobile theatres also have lots of responsibilities. They must response to the impulses of creativity and expression and to the demands of human contact and understanding. They must synthesize the impulses of playwrights, instrument players, actors/actresses and spectators to foster a medium of focused interaction that incorporates the human experience and embodies each cultures aspirations and values.

To conclude this study let us quote Robert Cohen. He says 'Can there be any conclusion concerning the current theatre? No there can not. Simply because what is current is never concluded.' Mobile Theatres of Assam may be implied to what Cohen had said. A mobile theatre of the state is like a book and we are in the beginning. The aspects that we have discussed in the forgone chapters may be a little part for a big movement that had to evoke in times to come.

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