Hindi radio play or drama including NPPs is a genre that operates within the sociology of everyday life and yet it has received little academic attention. This is largely because it operates within the radio medium which has been allocated marginal space both in academia as well as outside it. Another reason for this is that the medium also suffers partly from the deficiency of a theoretical language with which to relate radio to cultural discussions.

Radio play is a dramatized, purely acoustic performance, broadcast on radio. With no visual component, it depends on dialogue, music and sound effects to help the listeners imagine the characters and the story. To broadcast a radio play or an NPP on radio, it must be technically produced and in that process, two different modes of working - the artistic and the academic, are involved. The task of uncovering the nature of a radio play or an NPP is very interesting one; but the process of producing such a radio play or NPP is even more interesting in which editing, mixing and super-imposing of music and sound effects of different kinds have to be done. By this way, a form of mental space is created in the act of listening to the radio play, in effect disolving the distance between the sound producing and the listening party connecting them through performing voice and listening ear. What kind of a fictious universe is created by the acoustic space developed by the radio play or NPPs? The present researcher has taken a keen interest to creatively and academically investigate and unfold this fictional space - its prerequisites and characteristics which ultimately prompted to undertake this study on radio play particularly the Hindi NPPs.

When radio was in its infancy a brief quarter century ago, its broadcasters were inexperienced and learned by 'doing'. But radio is now a highly recognized industry in its own right and it must meet the challenge of a modern world. It has become necessary for broadcasters to receive training and background.

Radio broadcasting is not just a business; it is also an art. It is the newest
means of mass communication and it is one of the most potent of present-day forces. It follows in the footsteps of the press and goes beyond it. It has become the Fifth Estate, a factor in the life of the world without which no one can reckon.

Radio is meant to listening to its programmes aired through studios of AIR stations by the target audiences who are entertained, educated and informed about different socio-cultural and political events and issues. Among the most entertaining radio programmes apart from popular music, radio plays including NPPs have been playing a great role mobilising and preserving language and cultural expressions at different levels.

The most significant achievement in the field of Indian radio drama is the National Programme of Plays (NPPs) of All India Radio. This all India monthly programme was introduced in 1956 and during the course of last five decades, it has given to radio drama a true all India character and national status. Once a month, on the 4th Thursday, an outstanding play, selected from one of the main Indian language, is translated in all the other regional languages of the country and simultaneously broadcast by all AIR stations in their respective regional languages. This national programme, aimed at the exchange and understanding of dramatic literature of all the regional languages, has proved to be a successful measure for the emotional and cultural integration at the national level.

Radio drama including NPPs in India has always been produced by the state broadcaster. Consequently, its production has been informed by ‘official’ discourse as opposed to popular discourse. Radio drama or the Hindi NPP is the longest running radio programme in different languages including our national language, Hindi in India. It is the programme that generally features one-act plays (though not exactly the same from technical point of view) that run for about 30-60 minutes each month on the state-controlled AIR, the Prasar Bharati, Broadcasting Corporation of India.

The National Programme of Plays, simply called national plays (NPPs), as the name indicates, are national in character and in its importance with a classic
mix and touch of regional varieties, dramatic taste and approach and have its own
predetermined aims and objectives and act as a big force of literary and cultural
harmony accelerated through the national language of the country in the field of
radio programme in general and in dramatic scenario in particular. Since the national
plays are selected from the best of radio plays of regional languages constitutionally
recognised and also through competition generally organized yearly for radio plays
by the Directorate under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the award
winning plays of regional languages are broadcast in the national language i.e. Hindi
version as NPPs. Therefore, the national plays provide much scope to know and
study the radio plays of different languages, its nature, trend and all the processes
of techniques and development. Since these aspects of radio plays and NPPs are
not systematically studied till now, the present researcher intends to take this
privilege to give a wide coverage of all its areas—regional as well as national including
production techniques and broadcast. This study will be of great help and useful to
the prospective media researchers, broadcasters, producers and directors of radio
plays, actors and actresses engaged with radio production activities and
performances as public broadcaster. Radio services being public utility services,
this study will also give new ideas in the minds of listeners, create new images with
a different look and view.

The research work is comprised of 8 (eight) Chapters which are specified as
follows:

Chapter-1: Introduction

Chapter-2: Radio & Radio Plays – A Journey: Past & Present

Chapter-3: Radio Plays and NPPs: Some Principles

Chapter-4: Contemporary Radio Hindi National Plays B’cast through AIR (1990-
2000)

Chapter-5: The Subject-matter of Radio NPPs.
Chapter-6: Contemporary Hindi Radio NPPs and Regional Radio Plays (Assamese): A Comparison.

Chapter-7: Contemporary NPPs and Its Future

Chapter-8: Conclusion.

Chapter-I makes a total layout of its aims and objectives, importance of the subject, reasons for its selection, its utility and scope, the research goal to be achieved, problems faced, explanation of technical terms used, setting of hypothesis besides the methodology to be followed which would help in achieving the desired inferences. Accordingly, this Chapter is prepared to deal with all such relevant aspects necessary for a research study.

Radio has some unique features as an electronic audio medium communicating to the listeners including those who are illiterates. No doubt, it is one of the important tools of mass communication involving some technical process transmitting varieties of programmes, messages and informations to the audiences with no immediate feedback. Chapter-2 has focussed on various characteristics of radio, its advantages and disadvantages, historical background of the industry and its journey to the present, the theoretical aspects of radio plays or NPPs, the techniques of production of radio plays including NPPs and the microphone positions for producing these plays. Ideas have also been given about sound or sound effects and music that are used in production of radio plays and NPPs.

From preparation of scripts of radio plays or NPPs to final production, a long journey is to be completed. The script-writer called radio playwright writes the scripts. Writing scripts of radio plays is a difficult job and the playwright should follow certain principles or consider many aspects and give emphasis on certain points; because radio plays or NPPs are meant only for voice acting to be performed by the characters playing the plays. The listeners are only to listen to it and form images created by sounds through mental eyes about the setting, subject-matter and environment. Therefore, the dialogues delivered by each character are so framed or
constructed to make it suitable for hearing only and no physical movement on the part of the characters is visible. The playwright should provide through scripts enough scope for sound effects and music not only to move the story forward, but also to make the occurrence of events clear to audiences so that they easily understand the sequences, the role of each character, time and place besides the message which the playwright wants to communicate. In Chapter-3, these aspects of radio plays and NPPs have been considered and explained.

In Chapter-4, a few contemporary radio Hindi national plays i.e. NPPs broadcast through AIR from 1990 to 2000 have been critically analysed in the light of principles of radio drama. The environments created, languages used and styles followed by these NPPs have also been discussed along with determination of their primary and secondary objectives.

In Chapter-5, an attempt has been made to classify the radio NPPs broadcast between 1990 to 2000 depending on their subject-matters and styles critically explaining different aspects relevant to the present-day socio-economic, political and cultural scenario and problems faced by the modern society. Here, attempt has also been made to present a few NPPs with a critical analysis and their techniques observed throughout the process to make an NPP ready for broadcast.

In Chapter-6, a comparison of contemporary Hindi radio NPPs with the regional versions and radio plays of regional language i.e. Assamese has been attempted and tried to find out similarities and differences in their approach and in contents and techniques examined in the light of theoretical concepts and practical perspectives.

The future of anything is uncertain and unpredictable and the same thing can be said about NPPs. It is very difficult to say at present whether NPPs will continue to exist in the long-run, If it exists, whether it will bear the same form or style or there may be some changes or whether they may be written or produced for a duration of 30 to 60 mts as they stand today? What are the expected possibilities? These questions stand before us as major one due to recent changes supposed to take
place in organizational set-up shaped in the form of Prasar Bharati, the Broadcasting Corporation of India, planned to run on commercial basis and earn revenues for its independent functioning. In other words, whether due to shift from Govt. control over the medium, there would be some changes in the policies and planning of programmes under the Prasar Bharati. Even if we take it for granted that NPPs would continue to exist in the new set-up, but it is likely that there may be some changes in their style and the drive may be different than that of the present one. In the Chapter-7, these aspects are critically examined and aimed at finding out new possibilities for their survival.

The Chapter-8, is the Conclusion. Here, a summary is given of facts and figures and also of observations made in the preceeding chapters and inferences are drawn on the basis of hypothesis already formed in Chapter-1 of this research study.

Radio play or drama depicts the reflection of life in all spheres from very vast field of India and the world. The variety of themes, such as social, historical, mythological, biographical, folk, abstract, science fictions and family melodrama; the quality of presentation and ability to create mental pictures through words, sound effects and music is called Radio drama.

Many stations of AIR broadcast plays in Hindi and their regional languages. Radio adaptation of classics, novels, short stories and stage plays are also some of the highlights of Radio broadcast. Besides original plays, a large number of AIR stations regularly broadcast family dramas with object of eradicating deep rooted social evils and blind beliefs prevailing in the society. Serials projecting current socio-economic issues are also broadcast on a regular basis.

No doubt, any research study on such topic like radio plays or NPPs has definitely certain limitations. First of all, radio lacks languages of its own. It speaks the words and dialogues of playwrights; and sounds and music as introduced by producers and directors. It can only be listening to. In other words, radio speaks what they desire to speak; how they like to speak and in what manner they want to
present their works, likes and dislikes with minimum limits of legal censor addressed to listeners who make switch on the radio to listen to it. The nature is broadly innovative and varies with changes in the model of technical rationality.

The present study is, no doubt, relevant to the field of electronic medium, its artistic performance like that of radio plays and NPPs. This is only a pillar of the foundation and there is further scope of development to be made subsequently by the successor researchers in time to come; because many aspects have not been studied here in details and kept almost unfinished and untouched considering restraints and obstacles appeared in the research work process. It is hoped that these limitations would be overcome in future by the successor researchers.