CHAPTER - 1

Introduction

Once upon a time people would gather around the radio to listen to radio plays performed live by the actors, script in hand, sound effects made simultaneously. The time for live broadcast of plays has gone and the difficulties faced are overcome now. At present, the system of live-broadcast has been replaced by improved techniques of recording a radio play or programme prior to its broadcast through AIR station to reach the listeners. This has been made possible due to modern science, improved and sophisticated machineries, compact studios and facilities, use of computers, application of digital recording system, and availability of already recorded sound effects and so on.

Radio drama 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 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 that run for about 30-60 minutes each month on the state controlled AIR, the Prasar Bharati Corporation of India.

For the purpose of listening to a radio play or a programme, the listeners must possess a radio or radio-set without which everything would become meaningless. A radio play or an NPP is produced and broadcast over a radio.

No doubt, from its first tentative experiments and the early days of wireless, radio has expanded into an almost universal medium of mass communication. It leaps around the world on short waves linking the continents in a fraction of a second. It jumps to high satellites to put its footprint across a quarter of the globe. It brings that world to those who cannot read and helps maintain a contact for those who cannot see.

Radio is an extensive popular electronic audio medium with certain
peculiarities and characteristics of its own. Through Radio, broadcasters pour out thousands of words every minute in an effort to inform, educate and entertain, propagandise and persuade its listeners and target audiences to achieve certain pre-determined objects.

Radio is one of the mass media which speaks to millions in different ways. It allows a more tenous link with its user than that insisted upon by television or print. It diverts people from their problems and anxieties, providing relaxation and entertainment. It reduces feelings of loneliness creating a sense of companionship. Radio is cheap as compared to other media. It disseminates ideas. These may be radical, leading to new beliefs and values, so promoting diversity and change; or they may re-inforce traditional values so helping to maintain social order through the status quo.

The very characteristics of radio as an audio medium reflect one important thing that its programmes are so arranged and aired through different time slot determined by respective Radio Stations situated at different places in the country. To maintain unity and uniformity among the different broadcasting (b’casting) stations, its Directorate under Information & B’casting Ministry directs, controls and manages the whole affairs, under the name and style “Prasar Bharati”, the Broadcasting Corporation of India.

India, being a Federal State is comprised of several federating units or states having different languages and cultures of their own. In all the states of Indian Federation, there are Radio Stations which have aired programmes from their respective studios. These stations are mainly classified into Hindi speaking stations (zones) and Non-Hindi speaking stations. The programmes aired by stations of Hindi speaking zones are basically planned and produced in Hindi, the national language of India. Even in cases of stations belonging to Non-Hindi speaking zones, Hindi is playing a dominating role as an uniting force for enriching India’s cultural heritage and ensuring linguistic harmony as co-actor with other regional languages which are mutually helped by each other. This has been made possible through its
national programmes b’cast by almost all the Radio Stations throughout the territory of India and such programmes are in Hindi. Apart from popular Hindi Music, the NPPs have been introduced a few decade back and b’cast by the capital radio station situated in New Delhi and relayed by all the radio stations belonging to Hindi speaking zones on the same date and time and after it has been b’cast, the stations belonging to Non-Hindi speaking zones make the NPPs translated into their own regional languages and then b’cast accordingly. Therefore, the NPPs have its own implications and importance at the regional level as well as the national one.

The scope of the study

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 tastes 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 organised yearly for radio plays by the Directorate, the award winning plays of regional languages are b’cast 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 this aspect of radio plays and NPPs are not systematically studied till now, so far my knowledge is concerned, by this research work, 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 & broadcast.

This study will be of great help and useful to the prospective media researchers, broadcaster, producers and directors of radio plays, actors and actresses etc. engaged with radio 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.

**Statement of Objectives**

The study is proposed to be undertaken to achieve the following objectives:

1. To make an assessment of different characteristics of *radio* as an electronic audio medium.
2. To present some ideas about *radio* plays: its nature and scope.
3. To attempt a broad level discussion on contemporary *radio* Hindi national plays and present a brief account of it particularly from the year 1990 to 2000.
4. To assess the role played by these plays b’cast through *AIR* in entertaining listeners.
5. To assess the technical development in the history of contemporary *radio* Hindi national plays and its contribution to *radio* plays of regional languages.
6. To make an attempt to establish a correlation between *radio* plays of regional languages i.e. the regional versions (Assamese) and national plays.
7. To suggest measures to arouse awareness about utility and usefulness of NPPs.
8. To identify the areas and the role of NPPs in the context of *radio* Plays.

**Hypothesis**

Hypothesis is regarded as the backbone of any research work, and the research work is carried out to prove or disprove the hypothesis framed for this purpose. The following hypotheses are to be attempted to prove through this research works:

2. NPPs are a link to develop a correlation relationship between regional languages and national language i.e. Hindi.
3. NPPs are a great contribution to radio plays at national level and they communicate messages of unity and integrity of becoming one nation besides entertainment.

4. NPPs ensures unity of regions and language.

Methodology

Research methodology is a collective term for the structured process of conducting research. It is a systematized investigation which wants to provide new knowledge and information about the phenomenon or problems of a particular topic. There are different methodologies used in various types of research and the term is usually considered to include research design, data gathering and data analysis.

Neuman¹ explains that research falls into 3 (three) categories – exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. Explanatory research builds on findings from exploratory and descriptive studies. Since this study will ultimately break new ground, it could be considered as exploratory; however, as the findings will also build on existing knowledge of public broadcasting, and in respect of NPPs broadcast through national channel (analysis), it can also be defined as descriptive. Exploratory research tends to break ground while descriptive research clarifies existing data. For example, some aspects will be covered under descriptive research; because prior studies have indicated to some extent the attitudes of media persons towards production of NPPs. Similarly, few aspects are concerned with exploratory research; because the obstacle or obstacles affecting the use of public radio and techniques of production of radio plays and NPPs in India are unknown to the most common mass.

This being the reason, it becomes difficult though not impossible to follow a particular methodology while conducting the present research work. Therefore, a multi-method approach including exploratory, descriptive and explanatory with due emphasis on content analysis is used. This may actually be called a practice-led

¹ Neuman, W.L.: Social research methods (sixth ed.) 2006, P.-136
research to investigate the fictive space unfolded through the acoustic territory of the radio drama from the inside and that too, by imposing the dogma of the radio play. While uncovering the nature of radio drama or NPP and of production, two different modes of working — the artistic and the academic — have been taken into account for yielding valuable information and analysis. Because in action exists a specific kind of knowing, a tacit knowing that cannot be obtained through theoretical studies alone. When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in a practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and techniques, but constructs a new theory of the unique case.¹ To exemplify, reference may be had to how the producers have a particular ‘feel for’ the music or sound they mix or superimpose while producing a radio play or NPP. They make decisions in the moment based on this feel for their material and make adjustments according to the sounds they hear. Thus, they are reflecting-in-action. This reflection-in-action depends on the form and variance of practice. To such an extent, the practice — led research holds good, and found to be useful so far research on performing arts is concerned.

In the present study, apart from what has been mentioned above, the methodology to be followed during the research process would comprise of the following:

1. It would be a Historical Approach. Using this approach, a brief history of radio play and NPPs will be studied and presented.

2. It would be a comparative study of radio plays, such as, NPPs and regional language version of NPPs and regional languages plays particularly Assamese plays b’cast through AIR during period from 1990 to 2000.

3. Extensive use of library is resorted to gather information about substantive materials and theoretical values etc. on this subject.

4. The study will be doctrinal and analytical.

5. The study is mainly based on the secondary sources which are basically collected from radio NPPs scripts, books, research articles, journals, newspapers, electronic media and internet.

**Theoretical Structure and Conceptual Design**

Here an attempt will be made to establish the relation between the variables that have been mentioned in Hypothesis. Accordingly, the research work will concern with the exposition, criticism and appreciation of the present structure, theory and principles relating to radio plays and contemporary NPPs with regional taste and touch. While providing the theoretical structure and conceptual scheme, we may briefly refer to the assumptions, propositions and definitions that are of crucial importance in developing the explanatory frame-work of the study.

**Scientific method Approach**

Before embarking on the voyage of research, a few words on the methodological approach seem appropriate. Within the more experimental performing arts, there is an increasing interest in thinking and viewing artistic production in connection with the field of research. It is an international trend and has existed since the 80's, but was not pervasive until the 90's,¹ and in an Indian context, the term artistic research is still negotiable.

No doubt, the scientific method of practice-led research is still questioned as a viable way to obtain new knowledge of the performing arts. Terms such as practice-led research have been developed by creative practitioners, .... to explain, justify and promote their activities, and to argue – as forcefully as possible in an often unreceptive environment – that they are as important to the generation of knowledge

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¹ Excerpt from the online description of the seminar held at The Danish National School of Theatre and Contemporary Dance (DNST) in collaboration with the department of Theatre Science at the University of Copenhagen (UC) discussing the topic of a method linking the performing arts and the concept of research: [http://www.teaterskolen](http://www.teaterskolen).
as more theoretically, critically or empirically based research methods.¹

This scepticism might, according to professor of philosophy, Donald Schon, be attributed to the strong influence of what he calls the model of Technical Rationality. In his book *The Reflective Practitioner - How Professionals Think in Action*, Donal Schon planted the scientific seed that has grown into practice-led research, by introducing the concept of reflective practice. The need for this concept becomes clear after his analysis of the dominating view of professional knowledge that practice merely is a question of choosing the right means to an end. He reveals the hierarchical relationship of theory and practice:

“As one would expect from the hierarchical model of professional knowledge, research is institutionally separate from practice, connected to it by carefully defined relationships of exchange. Researchers are supposed to provide the basic and applied science from which to derive techniques for diagnosing and solving problems of practice. Practitioners are supposed to furnish researchers with problems for study and with tests of the utility of researchers results. The researcher’s role is distinct from, and usually considered superior to, the role of the practitioner.”²

In the humanities this description may seem a little of the mark, seeing as this is an academic discipline that study the human condition, and uses methods that are primarily analytical, critical and speculative distinguishing it from the empirical approach of natural sciences. It does not often solve concrete problems, but tries to find ways of describing and explaining its object of study. Though the object of study is somewhat different from medicine or law, it is argued that much the same is true of the humanities and of Theatre Science and Performing Arts like that of *radio* plays or NPPs.

Practice-led Research in the Creative Arts

The understanding of the model of Technical Rationality and the concept of reflection-in-action of Donald Schon is important for two reasons. The traditional prioritizing of theoretical knowledge explains the somewhat lukewarm reception of a method like practice-led research, the continued questioning of its merits and the continued effort by artist researchers to justify and defend it. The concept of reflection-in-action is also the precursor of practice-led research and the new view of the practitioner has been greeted warmly by the creative arts. The rise of practice-led research that we have seen the past two decades, points to a methodological gap in the sciences in general and the study of and research within the creative and performing arts in particular. This is due to the special kind of knowing within the creative and performing arts that is only accessed through working in an artistic process. The concept of reflection-in-action has branched out to a variety of research methods in the creative arts, but all with the same core: practice. A witness to the need for new methodological ways to approach the creative arts is found in the adaptation of practice-based research as an area of specific focus in radio plays including NPPs and their production process and techniques. In using the term practice-led research, we are referring both to the work of art as a form of research and to the creation of the work as generating research insights which might then be documented, theorized and generalised. As with all research it requires some form of research question or problem to work with, but the results is not necessarily in the form of a written academic text, but can come in the shape of a piece of art (performance, music, painting or a dramatic text) or documentation of an artwork. This is because some of the tacit knowledge hidden in the artistic practice can not be expressed by means of an academic work so easily. Most of the tacit knowledge of practice is unearthed by the element of surprise to one's expectations of a practice situation.

It is argued that when art is theorised, human understanding arises from a process of inquiry that involves creative action and critical reflection. There is an inherently transformative quality to the way we engage in art practice and this dynamic aspect is a unique quality of the changing systems of inquiry evident in the studio experience. The artist intuitively adopts the dual role of the researcher and the researched, and the process changes both perspective because creative and critical inquiry is a reflexive process.

Thus, so far the key elements of a practice-led research process in the creative arts are concerned, it is primarily to maintain a balanced combination of creative action and critical reflection. The artistic researcher must keep an open mind to whatever may emerge through creating during the process, and not let the work become dominated by a fixed research question or a hypothesis.

**Peculiarities of this study**

The study has certain special and unique features of its own, and is different from traditionally researched one. Being related to a topic of artistic nature and of performing arts, the methodology used becomes slightly deviated from the commonly used methodology; because the study involves certain unknown elements of practice-based / led experience supposed to be acquired out of tacit knowledge and assumed to have been possessed by the persons engaged in artistic works and creation as producers, directors and actors while producing the NPPs. Due consideration has also been given to the technical aspects involving production process and technique and of microphone position which are not yet fully theorised and studied as a part of any research work. Furthermore, the study also includes the role played by the audio medium, AIR through its broadcasting of radio plays or NPPs and its impact upon the listeners and the art of listening to a radio.

The unique features of the present study may be summed up point-wise as follows:

1. The study is original one and would act as an 'eye-opener' to the future research
works to be done in the field of this kind of creative and performing arts like radio plays or NPPs. The study is, in this sense, only a beginning, a path-opener and not an end.

2. To the best of knowledge of the present researcher, there is no systematic research done on this topic till today.

3. This research work is related to the study of radio plays – scripting and production techniques, on the basis of dramatic principles, and at the same time, to find out the real nature of radio Hindi NPPs on the basis of those principles.

4. The source of this research work is divided into two: Primary and Secondary. In the Primary sources, the important unprinted radio scripts of NPPs of representative nature b’cast during the period: 1990-2000 have been collected, considered or taken into account to carry out this research work as base. Under the Secondary sources are included different books having relevance with the topic, journals, airmnet etc. which are given in the Bibliography at the end of the present research work.

5. This research work is unique in a way the research methodology is used which is almost new in the field of creative arts and cultures while conducting such research work i.e. practice-led research method is being tried to use here for the first time in a systematic way besides using other traditional methodologies in combination.

6. This research work has made sufficient focus on the production techniques of radio plays and NPPs.

The Terminology / Terms Explained

Adaptation: Making a literary work - a play, novel, story or a poem - suitable for another medium like radio, TV or film.

Angle: A specific approach / bias.

Audio: Relating to hearing only, as opposed to both hearing and seeing together (VIDEO). A system for hearing through wireless / radio.
**Channel**: Band of frequency on which radio / TV programme is put out on the air.

**Chunk**: (Colloquial) A specific period of time at which a radio / TV programme goes on the air.

**Cue**: A signal for the successive programme on radio / TV.

**Dubbing**: Replacing, or adding to, the sound-track of a film or a magnetic tape.

**Editing**: Preparing a recorded tape (in respect of radio / TV), by putting together parts in a suitable sequence, by erasing or rearranging.

**F.M. Band**: A noise free—often stereophonic—frequency channel in modern radio station; F.M. meaning ‘Frequency Modulation’.

**Hardware**: Mechanical equipment necessary for broadcasts like studio, transmitter, microphone, machinery, etc. Opposite of ‘Software’.

**Input**: What is put in, or supplied, for a programme; data required / put in for a decision.

**Listener**: One who listens to a radio programme.

**Live Broadcast**: Broadcast which is not pre-recorded, made from the venue of the event / site itself, e.g. Sports Relay.

**Medium / Media**: Through which communication is made with the masses, e.g. newspaper, radio, T.V. – the last two are called ‘electronic media’.

**Megawatt / Kilowat (Station)**: A radio station’s area of broadcast measured through the power of its transmitter.

**Microphone**: Instrument for changing or enlarging sound waves into electrical current.

**Output**: Power, Energy, etc. produced, information produced from a computer, opposite of ‘Input’.
Prasar Bharati: The proposed Public Corporation under which AIR and Doordarshan are to be brought, as a result of a Parliamentary Act, passed in 1990, to give these two media more autonomy and to free them from Government control, redeeming a promise to the electorate made by the National Front and the Congress (I) Party.

Radio: Transmission of sound on electro-magnetic waves without a connective wire, invented by G. Marconi, an Italian electrical engineer in 1895.

Recording: In general, the term 'recording' can refer to two different things. It may refer to the carrier such as a given CD, a tape, a vinyl disc, a video disc, etc. In the context of this study, however, the term 'recording' refers to the 'sonic content' that is 'encoded' (digitally or analogically) on a given carrier. A recording thus lasts a given amount of time, with a beginning and an end.

Script: A written matter for broadcast.

Serial: A long play or film, broadcast in episodes.

Slot: (Colloq) Right or suitable place in a broadcast programme; the fixed time taken by such a programme.

Software: The content of a broadcast apart from its mechanical components/aids; opposite to 'Hardware'.

Sound Effect: Various sounds that accompany, or are added to a broadcast matter, as sound of storm or river in a radio play.

Stereo: Abbreviation of 'Stereophonic', meaning a recording/broadcast involving two separately placed loud-speakers, giving the effect of naturally distributed sound.

Transistor: Small electronic semi-conductor device used in radio sets instead of thermionic valves. The advantages of a transistor over a valve are that it is less bulky, it requires no heater current, and that the voltage at the collector need only be a few volts.
Transmitter: An apparatus, usually vertical, for sending sound-waves from a radio station.

Technology: Systematic application of know-how to practical tasks in industry.

Radio drama including NPPs is, thus, 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 a marginal space both in academia as well as outside it. In the words of Peter M. Lewis, “Radio is everybody’s private possession, yet nobody recognizes it in public”.¹ This lack of recognition, Lewis goes on to explain, is partly due to the deficiency of a theoretical language with which to relate radio to cultural discussions.

This implies that, 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.

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