CHAPTER - 2

Radio & Radio Plays - A Journey : Past & Present

Immediately after the advent of radio, it occupied a large share in the field of mass communication. It is because:

(i) The radio can be listened by an illiterate person having residence in even a remotest place.

(ii) One can do their everyday work along with the listening to the radio. In simple words, we can say that the listeners have no physical involvement with the media.

(iii) It can simultaneously be shared by so many people in a given place.

(iv) It is portable and one can easily carry to his/her work place.

This is how radio became the most popular and most powerful medium of mass communication.

Radio as a medium of mass communication possesses some interesting features, advantages as well as disadvantages. Let us discuss these aspects.

Features

(a) Radio is the earliest form of electronic media.

(b) It has large audiences.

(c) It has totally undifferentiated audience composition.

(d) Low unit cost to the consumer.

(e) Feedback

Advantages

(i) Radio is tangible. One can get the feeling that the radio is on.
(ii) Without straining our eyes, we can hear everything. *Radio* has only one side i.e. audio.

(iii) It is a portable medium; we can carry it easily.

(iv) We can get it anywhere in any language we would like to receive.

(v) Immediacy is also an important advantage of *radio*. It is the fastest and cheapest form of mass media.

(vi) *Radio* is termed as the intimate medium. Intimacy is one of its great advantages.

(vii) There is no language and literacy problem with this medium. Also, there is no problem on the electricity front also.

**Disadvantages**

(i) No visual provision as it is only an audio medium.

(ii) The programmes can’t be preserved like newspapers.

(iii) Technical faults may cause major disadvantages for this medium.

**Objectives of Radio**

(i) To provide information, education and wholesome entertainment for giving the benefit and happiness to large section of the people.

(ii) To maintain the unity of the country and the values of democracy according to the constitution.

(iii) To convey a balanced and fair flow of information of national, regional, local and international interest, including contrasting views.

(iv) To uphold the interests of the whole nation, the need for harmony and understanding within the country and ensuring that the programmes must be a sign of the varied elements that make up the amalgamated culture of India.

(v) To produce and transit varied programmes designed to awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich the people.
(vi) To create programmes relating to development activities in all their facets including extension works in agriculture, education, health and family welfare, science and technology.

(vii) To serve the rural, illiterate and deprived population for the special needs and interests of the young, social and cultural minorities, the tribal population and for those residing in border regions, backward or remote areas.

(viii) To promote social justice, national integration and fight combat exploitation, inequality and evils like untouchability etc.

**Characteristics of Radio**

From its first tentative experiments and early days of wireless, radio has expanded into an almost universal medium of 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 can not see.\(^1\)

Among all the mass communication tools, radio has a different type of influence on audience through its special characteristics. It has its own characteristics. To succeed in a high competitive market-place where television, life-style magazines, Mobile Phones, News papers, Computer, Cinema, Theatre, Video and CDs jostle for the attention of a media-conscious public, the radio producer must first understand the strengths and weaknesses of his medium. It is important to understand what these are if we are to make the most effective use of it. The characteristics of radio are:

(a) **Radio makes Pictures**

Radio is a blind audio electronic medium. It is the medium of sound only. It stimulates the imagination in the minds of the audience. As soon as he or she listens to a programme or a radio play or NPP, the listener attempts to visualise what he or

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she hears. It makes picture or an imagery of what is talked about in the minds of the listeners. The *radio* writer or commentator chooses his words so that they create the appropriate pictures in the listener’s mind, and by doing so, he makes his subject understood and also ensures that the occasion is memorable.

Such occasions are suitably created by playwrights of the NPPs. In this connection, only an example will be enough to realise the significance of the fact that *radio* creates a picture in the minds of the listeners. Thus –

**वानर:** मुझे एक मनुष्य बना दीजिए बाबा! चानर का शरीर लेकर जीना मेरे लिए और संभव नहीं है।

**साधुबाबा:** देखा पुरुष! सुन ली चानर की अभिलाषा? जिस मनुष्य के कारण इसने इतने दुःख झेले, वही मनुष्य बनना चाहता है।

**वानर:** मुझे निरंतर साधुबाबा! मुझे मालूम है कि आपके पास अत्यन्त शक्ति है। आपके लिए यह कोई बड़ी बात नहीं है। आप चाहेंगे तो बड़ी आसानी से मुझे एक मनुष्य बना सकते हैं।

After listening to the above dialogues, the listeners are compelled to think of such a situation in which the monkey who suffered a lot in the hands of men is making prayer before the *Sadhubaba* to make him a man too.

(b) *Radio speaks to millions*

*Radio* is one of the mass media. The very term broadcasting indicates wide scattering of the output covering every home, village, town, city and country within the range of the transmitter. Its potential for communication, therefore, is very great and mainly depends on programme relevance, excellence and creativity, operational competence, technical reliability, and consistency of the received signal.

(c) *Radio lacks space*

A newspaper has the problem of adjustment of space. For example, there is a limit to the contents that can be printed in the number of pages that the newspaper is

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1. अनाम : *radio* NPP script, P-3
made of. It is not possible to increase or the decrease the number of pages everyday. The established convention is that newspapers are of standard size and a standard number of pages. In case of radio, the limitation is that of time only. A news bulletin, for example, will have to be completed within the given time and aired at the specific time slot everyday. This also holds good in case of an NPP.

(d) The speed of Radio

Technically uncumbersome, the medium is enormously flexible and is often at its best in the totally immediate 'live' situation. No processing of film, no waiting for the presses. A report from a correspondent overseas, a listener talking on the phone, the radio car in the suburbs, a sports result from a local stadium, a concert from the capital, are all examples of the immediacy of radio. This ability to move about geographically generates its own excitement. This facility, of course, is long since regarded as a common place, for both television and radio. Pictures and sounds are bounced around the world, bringing any event anywhere to our immediate notice. Radio speeds up the dissemination of information so that everyone - the leaders and the led - knows of the same news event, the same political idea, declaration or threat. If knowledge is power, radio gives power to us all whether we exercise authority or not. That is to say, that the speed of radio is high. It has an immediacy which other media do not have to quite the same degree. Not only can it bring us today's news today, but today's news while it is happening.

(e) The simplicity of Radio

The basic unit comprises one person with a tape recorder or a laptop with accessories or a DR-100 recorder rather than a crew with camera, light and sound recorder. This makes it easier for the non-professional to take part, thereby creating a greater possibility for public access to the medium. And also for the broadcaster, radio's comparative simplicity means a flexibility in its scheduling. Items within programmes, or even whole programmes, can be dropped or be replaced at short notice by something more urgent.
(f) **Radio is Cheap**

Relative to the other media, radio is cheaper medium. Its capital cost and its running expenses are small both for the consumer (audience) and for the broadcaster.

(g) **No Geographical Location**

Radio has no boundary. Its signals clear mountain barriers and cross ocean deeps. It can bring together those separated by geography or nationality — it can help to close other distances of culture, learning or status. It has no territorial limits. It can also jump the barriers of illiteracy.

(h) **The transient nature of Radio**

It is a very ephemeral medium and if the listener is not in time for the news bulletin, it is gone and he has to wait for the next. Broadcasting imposes a strict discipline of having to be there at the right time. The transitory nature of the medium also means that the listener must not only hear the programme at the time of its broadcast, but must also understand it then. The impact and intelligibility of the spoken word should occur on hearing it—there is seldom a second chance. The producer must, therefore, strive for the utmost logic and order in the presentation of his ideas, and the use of clearly understood language.

(i) **Radio is Selective**

There is a different kind of responsibility on the broadcaster from that of the newspaper editor in that the radio producer selects exactly what is to be received by his consumer. In print, a large number of news stories, articles and other features are set out across several pages. Each one is headlined or identified in some way to make for easy selection. The reader scans the pages choosing to read those items which interest him— he is using his own judgement. With radio this is not possible. The selection process takes place in the studio and the listener is presented with a single thread of material, it is a linear medium. Choice of the listener exists only in the mental switching off which occurs during an item which fails to maintain his
interest, or where he tunes to another station. In this respect, a channel of radio (or television) is rather more autocratic than a newspaper.

More about Radio

Radio is a mass communication media through which a message can be sent to a large number of people at the same time. It is basically a technical instrument used to listen to programmes sent from a radio station. It works on the transmission of signals by modulation of electromagnetic waves. Electromagnetic radiation travels by means of oscillating electromagnetic fields that pass through the air and the vacuum of space. Information is carried by systematically changing (modulation) some property of the radiated waves, such as amplitude, frequencies or phase. When radio waves pass through an electrical conductor the oscillating field induces an alternating current in the conductor. This can be detected and transformed into sound or other signals that carry information.

Radio stations are financed in various ways including public licence, commercial advertising, government grant, private capital, public subscription or any of these methods in combination.

AIR is today fully owned, controlled, and run by the Central Government. But this is not what the founding fathers intended. Nehru believed that we should approximate as far as possible to the British model, the BBC; that is to say, it would be better if we had a semi-autonomous corporation under the Government, of course, with the policy controlled by the Government, otherwise not being conducted as a Government department but as a semi-autonomous corporation.1

The Chanda Committee on Broadcasting and Information Media said in its Report in April 1966 that it is not possible in the Indian context for a creative medium like broadcasting to flourish under a regime of departmental rules and regulations and therefore, recommended an 'institutional change' so that AIR can be liberated; and separate corporations for Akashvani and Doordarshan. In April

1. March 15, 1948, replying to a debate in the Constituent Assembly.
1970, four years later, the Indira Gandhi Government responded stating that the present is not an opportune time to consider the conversion of AIR into an autonomous corporation. However, with effect from April 1, 1976, Television was separated from AIR and constituted into a new body, Doordarshan.

The Verghese Committee in February 1978 called for the establishment of a ‘National Broadcasting Trust’ called Akash Bharati as an ‘autonomous and independent public service’. Accordingly, the Akash Bharati Bill, 1978 was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Janata Government though it had some reservations about it.

**Prasar Bharati**

*Prasar Bharati* stands for the Broadcasting Corporation of India (BCI). The Prasar Bharati Act provided a direction and pointer, which should govern the broadcasting policies.

The Prasar Bharati Bill of 1989 is largely based on the Verghese Report (1978). It favours the creation of a broadcasting corporation through an Act of Parliament. The Verghese Report clearly wanted broadcasting autonomy to be a part of the Indian constitution. This would be necessary to ensure that no future government would temper with the freedom and independence of the corporation. The bill manages to sneak in a representative of MIB as a part time governor. This is not the ‘full autonomy’ the Verghese Committee had in mind. The Bill became an Act in 1990 with approval by all political parties in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

The first step the ruling Congress Government took in response to the ‘invasion’ by cross-border satellite television was to set up the Varadam Committee (1991) to re-examine the Prasar Bharati Act of 1990. The Ram Vilas Paswan Committee was set up for this purpose in 1995. It submitted a 104 pages working paper with 46 recommendations on public and private electronic media, newspapers, news agencies and films. The Committee has hammered out consensus on National Media ‘Policy’. Some of the recommendations were incorporated in the Broadcasting Bill
introduced in Parliament in May, 1997. The Nitish Sengupta Committee was also constituted in 1996 to have another look at the Prasar Bharati Act and to suggest amendments. It submitted its report in August in the same year.

Under Section 12 (2), it was stated that the Broadcasting Corporation, envisaged under the Act would be functioning and be guided by the objectives which include:

1. Upholding the unity and integrity of the country and the values enshrined in the constitution.
2. Safeguarding the citizens’ rights to be informed freely and objectively on all matters of public interest.
3. Paying special attention to the field of education, literacy, agriculture, environment, health & family welfare and science & technology.
4. Providing adequate coverage to the diverse cultures and languages of the various regions.
5. Providing adequate coverage to sports and games so as to encourage healthy competition and the spirit of sportsmanship.
6. Providing appropriate programmes keeping in view the special needs of the youth.
7. Informing and stimulating the national consciousness in regard to the status and problems of women.
8. Promoting social justice.
9. Safeguarding the rights of the working classes and advancing their welfare.
10. Serving the rural and weaker sections and those residing in border regions, backward or remote areas.
11. Providing suitable programmes keeping in view the special needs of minorities and the tribal communities.
(12) Taking special steps to protect the interests of children, the blind and the handicapped.

(13) Promoting national integration by broadcasting in a manner that facilitates communication in the languages of India.

(14) Providing comprehensive broadcast coverage through the choice of appropriate technology and the best utilization of the broadcast frequencies available and ensuring high quality reception.

(15) Promoting research and development activities.

(16) Expanding broadcasting facilities by establishing additional channels of transmission at various levels etc.

The Prasar Bharati Bill remained a dead letter with the successive governments never being serious about autonomy for the official electronic media. However, the process is on and "functional Autonomy" for broadcasting has been assured. Independence for Indian broadcasting from Government control must thus remain a pipedream for years to come.

Broadcasting Policy

Both radio (All India Radio or Akashvani) and television (Doordarshan) in India are 'media units' of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. It is this same Ministry that is the official policy-making body for the broadcasting system today. The Minister is assisted by the Secretary, who is the senior-most civil servant, supported by a massive Secretariat divided into three wings (Broadcasting, Information, and Policy and Coordination), each under a Joint Secretary.

The Government's monopoly of broadcasting rests on Article 246 of the Indian Constitution which states that Parliament has 'exclusive' powers to make laws with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List 1 of the seventh schedule. Item 31 in this list includes 'posts and telegraphs, telephones, wireless, broadcasts and other
like forms of communication'. The Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 and the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1933 (which were drawn up during the British regime) continue to be in force, and to give the Government the legal right to a monopoly in broadcasting, besides the right to intercepts and to censor mail.

Current broadcasting policy is based on the AIR Code of 1970, which sets down that broadcasts on All India Radio will not permit:

1. criticism of friendly countries;
2. attack on religion or communities;
3. anything obscene or defamatory;
4. incitement to violence or anything against the maintenance of law and order;
5. anything amounting to contempt of court;
6. aspersions against the integrity of the President, Governors, and Judiciary;
7. attack on a political party by name;
8. hostile criticism of any State or the Centre; or
9. anything showing disrespect to the Constitution or advocating change in the Constitution by violence; but advocating change in a constitutional way should not be debarred.

The Definition of Plays: Indian & Western

Drama is the specific mode of fiction represented in performance. The term comes from a Greek word meaning 'action' (Classical Greek: ὁπόπα, drama) which is derived from the verb meaning "to do" or "to act" (Classical Greek: ὁπα, drao). The enactment of drama in theatre, performed by actors on a stage before an audience presupposes collaborative modes of production and a collective form of reception. The structure of dramatic texts, unlike other forms of literature, is directly influenced by this collaborative production and collective reception. The early modern tragedy Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and the classical Athenian tragedy Oedipus the King
(C. 429 BC E) by Sophocles are among the masterpieces of the art of drama. A modern example is *Long Day's Journey into Night* by Eugene O'Neil (1956).

The two masks associated with drama represent the traditional generic division between comedy and tragedy. They are symbols of the ancient Greek *Muses*, *Thalia* and *Melpomene*. *Thalia* was the *Muse* of comedy (the laughing face), while *Melpomene* was the *Muse* of tragedy (the weeping face). Considered as a genre of poetry in general, the dramatic mode has been contrasted with the epic and the lyrical modes ever since Aristotle's *Poetics* (C. 335 BCE)- the earliest work of dramatic theory.

The use of 'drama' in the narrow sense to designate a specific type of play dates from the 19th century. Drama in this sense refers to a play that is neither a comedy nor a tragedy - for example, Zola's *Therese Raquin* (1873) or Chekhov's *Ivanov* (1887). It is in this narrow sense that the film and television industry and film studies adopted to describe “drama” as a genre within their respective media. *Radio* drama has been used in both senses - originally transmitted in a live performance, it has also been used to describe the more high-brow and serious end of the dramatic output of *radio.*

Drama is often combined with music and dance: the drama is opera is generally sung throughout; musicals generally include both spoken dialogue and songs; and some forms of drama have incidental music or musical accompaniment underscoring the dialogue (Melodrama and Japanese *No*, for example). In certain periods of history (the ancient Roman and modern Romantic) some dramas have been written to be read rather than performed. In improvisation, the drama does not pre-exist the moment of performance; Performers devise a dramatic script spontaneously before an audience.

**Elements of Drama**

The dramatic form dates back to the time of Aristotle’s description of the

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2. Ibid
Greek tragedy and the concept of *mimesis*, which, roughly speaking, refers to the representation or imitation of the real world in art and literature. Here the ‘goal’ of the dramatic narration is to engage the audience in the story, immersing them in the fictive universe and have them respond emotionally to the increasing dramatic tension of the development of the plot. The driving force of the plot is in the case of the dramatic form the conflict of will of the main characters. One scene leads to another in a casual and linear progression of action, creating tension about what will happen with the leading characters and how the story will end, how the conflict in question will be solved.

Essential elements of drama are present in any play that one sees. As said earlier, Aristotle was the first to write about these essential elements, more than two thousand years ago. While ideas have changed slightly over the years, we still discuss Aristotle’s list when talking about what makes the best drama.

**Aristotle’s six elements of Drama**

Aristotle considered these six things to be essential to good drama.

**Plot**: This is what happens in the play. Plot refers to the action; the basic storyline of the play.

**Theme**: While plot refers to the action of the play, theme refers to the meaning of the play. Theme is the main idea or lesson to be learned from the play. In some cases, the theme of the play is obvious, other times it is quite subtle.

**Characters**: Characters are the people (sometimes animals or ideas) portrayed by the actors in the play. It is the characters who move the action, or plot of the play forward.

**Dialogue**: This refers to the words written by the playwright and spoken by the characters in the play. The dialogue helps move the action of the play along.

**Music/Rhythm**: While music is often featured in drama, in this case Aristotle was referring to the rhythm of the actor’s voices as they speak.
Spectacle: This refers to the visual elements of a play: Sets, costumes, special effects etc. Spectacle is everything that the audience sees as they watch the play.

In modern theatre, this list has changed slightly, although we will notice that many of the elements remain the same. The list of essential elements in modern theatre are:

1. Character  
2. Plot  
3. Theme  
4. Dialogue  
5. Convention
6. Genre  
7. Audience

The first four - character, plot, theme and dialogue remain the same, but the following additions are now also considered essential elements of drama.

Convention: These are techniques and methods used by the playwright and director to create the desired stylistic effect.

Genre: Genre refers to the type of play. Some examples of different genres include comedy, tragedy, mystery and historical play.

Audience: This is the group of people who watch the play. Many playwrights and actors consider the audience to be the most important element of drama, as all of the effort put into writing and producing a play is for the enjoyment of the audience.

Radio Play defined

Radio drama (or audio drama, audio play, radio play, radio theatre) is a dramatized, purely acoustic performance, broadcast on radio or published on audio media, such as Tape or CD. With no visual component, radio drama depends on dialogue, music and sound effects to help the listeners imagine the characters and story. It is auditory in the physical dimension, but equally powerful as a visual force in the psychological dimension.\(^1\)

The terms “audio drama” or “audio theatre” are sometimes used synonymously with radio drama with one possible distinction: audio drama or audio theatre may not necessarily be intended specifically for broadcast on radio. Audio drama, whether newly produced or OTR (old-time radio) classics, can be found on CDs, cassette, tapes, podcasts, webcasts and conventional broadcast radio. Thanks to advances in digital recording and Internet distribution, radio drama is experiencing a revival.

Elements of Radio Drama

In their text The Radio Drama Handbook, Richard J. Hand and Mary Traynor section the constituting parts of the radio drama into four sub-elements; words, sound, music and silence.\(^1\) This is the ‘vocabulary’ with which the fiction is communicated to the audience. The element of voice is, no doubt, subordinated to other elements like words and sound in a radio play or the NPPs. Thus, we have the following essential elements found to be present in any kind of radio plays.

Sound or Sound Effect

Sound can create and enforce both physical and mental spaces around us. Sound is the movement of particles, a mechanical wave of pressure transmitted through solids, liquids or gas. This means that hearing literally moves us. We ‘capture’ this movement in our ears and our bodies are affected by it. This perception of sound as being something that has to do with feeling, is reflected nicely in the radio plays including the NPPs.

The use of sound effect in radio drama including NPPs is vastly important. Without them the drama and the atmosphere that we need to make it work would have been lacking a crucial element. Sound effects play a vital part when vision is not part of the media product. Without vision, it is easy to confuse our audience if we don’t include the right sound effects at the right time. It has been observed through experience and allowing people to listen to the radio plays and when they

\(^1\) Richard J. Hand & Mary Traynor: The radio drama handbook. Audio drama in context and practice, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York, 2011, P-40
say they are confused, this indicates that more information and more precise sound effects need to be added.

In regards to the more technical details, sound in the radio drama serves different purposes and Hand & Traynor subdivides the sounds employed in a radio drama into three categories: sound effects, acoustics and perspective. Sound effects are "pre-recorded sounds, usually juxtaposed with dialogue, which signify an event". Acoustics indicates the nature of the space surrounding the characters - "the natural ambience of the environment", that is to say if the action takes place in a stuffy conference room or outside in a forest. Finally, perspective refers to the "spatial relationship between the characters within the drama: distance, close, left or right."²

Then these sound effects can be manipulated in different ways to create atmospheres supporting the fiction. The different sounds, therefore, also functions as a form of signifiers. The closing of a creaky door is not merely a sound effect

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1. अनाम : radio NPP script, P-23-24
implying that a door is being closed, and that the house in which the fiction unfolds is old, but it implies to the listener a creepy place and creates tension - of course not everyone will be affected in the same way or think the same about these sounds, but it is impressing how, within a culture, there seem to be accordance between us when it comes to how we perceive certain sounds.

**Voice**

Like sound effect, voice is the most obvious and key element of any radio drama. The importance of this elements make us aware that, if the quality of the voice is poor then the drama would lose its effect. This is why, when the playwrights write the script they try to make it sound as natural as they can.

**Music**

Music can move us physically and emotionally to an extent not seen in any other sensory stimulation. It possesses the same qualities as sound. Music can function as a *link* signalling the beginning or ending of a play, it can function as a ‘curtain fall’ in between scenes or, a musical theme can also create continuity and identity. Music can signal to us, if what we’re about to witness is a comedy or a tragedy, horror or lovestory. It is often used in the background of a radio play or an NPP, substantiating and evoking feelings or thoughts of a particular character - in that case we speak of ‘mood’ music. Music can serve an indexical function and occurs in the drama as it would if encountered in the world around us. Music used in this way is performed as an integrated part of the fictive universe.

Therefore, the listeners expect at least a theme tune or introduction tune of some kind to be added at the beginning to make it seem more like a real radio drama or an NPP.

**Silence**

The study has a strong focus on the effect of sound and voice on the listener, but an equally strong element of good radio fiction is silence – the absence of sound can say more than a thousand words. In English, there’s an expression that
speaks of a 'pregnant pause'; the silence carries something within itself. Like the silence right after a character plucks up courage and says 'I love you' the first time, followed by a gruelling silence. Thus, a silence is normally linked to a mood or an atmosphere - a tense silence in entering an abandoned building in the dark, a comical silence at the end of a wife asking her husband if her behind looks big in a certain outfit. This is a good example of how meaning arises not out of the individual element but the relation between the elements, as they present themselves to the listener and it is also between these constituting elements that the fiction is created. The radio drama in itself, however, is only a part of the fictitious space of the *radio play*; the fictional universe does not truly arise until it meets with the ear and mind of the willing listener. And listening is - as opposed to hearing - an active process. To refer oneself to someone else will lead to conversation even though the listener remains silent - silence speaks as it says many things. Speaking and listening is thus closely linked.

The use of silence in the NPPs like any *radio* drama, specially once with a genre of suspense / thriller is often found. In *radio* drama, generally we need no silence in the conversation between actors, except for comedic or other effect.

**An Overview : The Past and the Present**

*Radio* 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 are 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.
The National Programme of Plays is an important programme of radio. The first NPP Pratulla, a Bangla stage play by Girish Chandra Ghosh was broadcast in July 1956. Since then, the NPP is broadcast on every 4th Thursday of every month at 9.30 P.M. from all stations of AIR. The broadcast is in Hindi and its translation in all regional languages as well on the same day, date and time. Through this NPP, the national integrity, harmony and colours of unity in diversity are presented to its listeners.

The phenomenal growth achieved by All India Radio through decades has made it one of the largest media organizations in the world. Today AIR reaches out to 99.18% of the population spread over about 91.85% of the area through 262 broadcasting centres.1

All India Radio (AIR), officially known since 1956 as Akashvani (Devanagari: आकाशवाणी, Akashvani literally Sky's Voice) is the radio broadcaster of India and a division of Prasar Bharati. Established in 1930, it is the sister service of Prasar Bharati's Doordarshan, the national television broadcaster. All India Radio is one of the largest radio networks in the world. Its headquarters is at the Akashvani Bhavan in New Delhi. Akashvani Bhavan houses the drama section, the FM section and the National Service.

History

In British India, broadcasting began in July 1923 with programmes by the Radio Club of Bombay and other radio clubs. According to an agreement of 23rd July, 1927, the private Indian Broadcasting Company Ltd. (IBC) was authorised to operate two radio stations; the Bombay station began on 23rd July, 1927 and the Calcutta Station followed on 26th August 1927. On 1st March, 1930, however, the company went into liquidation. The government took over the broadcasting facilities, beginning the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS) on 1st April, 1930 (on an experimental basis for two years and permanently in May, 1932). On 8th June, 1936,
the ISBS was renamed All India Radio.\(^1\)

On 1st October, 1939 the External Service began with a broadcast in Pushtu; it was intended to counter radio propaganda from Germany directed to Afghanistan, Iran and the Arab nations. When India became independent in 1947, the AIR network had only six stations (in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Lucknow, and Tiruchi); the total number of radio sets at that time was about 2,75,000. On 3\(^{rd}\) October, 1957, the Vividh Bharati service was launched to compete with Radio Ceylon.

Television broadcasting began in Delhi in 1959 as part of AIR, but was split off from the radio network as Doordarshan on 1st April, 1976.\(^2\) FM broadcasting began on 23rd July, 1977 in Madras, and was expanded during the 1990s\(^3\)

The word Akashvani was coined by M.V. Gopalaswami after setting up the nation's first private radio station in his residence, “Vittal Vihar” (about 200 yards from AIR’s current location in Mysore) in 1936. Akashvani means “celestial announcement”, the word of Sanskrit origin, is often found in Hindu mythology. When the gods wished to say something, an akashvani occurred. As already stated, Akash means “sky” and Vani means “sound” or “message”.\(^4\) Thus, Akashvani seemed to be fit for use by a radio broadcaster and was later adopted as All India Radio’s on-air name after independence.

Central Drama Unit (CDU)

AIR’s Central Drama Unit is responsible for the national broadcast of plays. Playwrights and producers, such as Chiranjeet, Satyendra Sharat, Nirmala Agrawal and Danish Iqbal has been associated with the department. Plays produced by the CDU are translated and thereafter produced by regional stations. Since its inception in the 1960s, the unit has produced more than 1,500 plays, and the CDU is a repository of old scripts and productions. The National Programme of Plays is

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2. AIR Manual, Chapter 1 : History of All India Radio.
3. Ibid.
broadcast by the CDU of AIR the fourth Thursday of each month at 9.30 P.M. On the National Programme of Plays, the same play is produced in 22 Indian languages and broadcast at the same time by all regional and national network stations. The CDU also produces chain plays, half-hour dramas broadcast in succession by a chain of stations.

As India’s National Broadcaster and also the Premier Public Service Broadcaster, All India Radio (AIR) has been serving to inform, educate and entertain the masses since its inception, truly living up to its motto— Bahujan Hitaya : Bahujan Sukhaya. One of the largest broadcasting organisations in the world in terms of the number of languages of broadcast, the spectrum of socio-economic and cultural diversity it serves, AIR’s home service comprises 403 stations today located across the country, reaching nearly 92% of the country’s area and 99.19% of the total population. AIR originates programming in 23 languages and 146 dialects.

Radio play is a form of audio storytelling broadcast on radio. With no visual component, radio play depends on dialogues, music and sound effects to help the listener imagine the story.

The radio play in India is a exclusively twentieth century phenomenon. It mainly exists because of the need of new medium of communication. Its form and structure were determined by the constraints of that medium. In the 1940s, dramatic presentations were seriously considered as important components of radio entertainment programmes and the proper history of the radio play in India began.

Vividh Bharati - a service of All India Radio has a long running Hindi radio play / drama programme - Hawa Mahal.

A Brief History, Art and a National Character of Indian Radio Drama

It is a fact that drama is the most popular programme of All India Radio and despite the country-wide onslaught of TV serial, the radio plays continue to command maximum popularity in India. As such, it is relevant to have a look at the history, art and national character of Indian radio drama.
It is true that in India regular broadcasting started in 1927 and it is also true that broadcast of true radio-genic plays started in 1936, after almost a decade of technical experimentation and curiosity in the radio-studios and the minds of Indian playwrights. The question arises, as to why the emergence of a perfect radio-genic play took such a long time in India?

As we know, the scientific and technological progress during the first two decades of 20th century brought about a number of ‘miracles’ in the field of art and literature. Radio drama is one of those ‘miracles’, which completely changed the ancient concept about drama. Centuries ago, right from its birth, drama was accepted as a visual art and literary form. The invention of radio’s aural medium changed it into a dramatic form meant for the human ear only. Since this change was contrary to the time-honoured dramatic concept and tradition the old playwrights and the pundits of the literary as well as the theatrical world refused to accept a radio play as a true form of drama. They were not able to reconcile to the new concept that the object of a radio play is precisely the same as that implied in the writing of any form of fiction—the telling of a story. In a radio play the story is told in the dramatic form through the medium of the microphone, as opposed to the use of the printed page, the camera or the stage of a theatre hall. In other words, the microphone is the only communication-channel for a radio play. The perspective, action and movements in a radio play are entirely determined by the variation of distance from the microphone.

This new concept made clear that the technique of writing and producing a radio play was absolutely different from that of a stage-play. It has been aptly said that whereas in a stage-play image and word exist together, in a radio play image is created and brought before listener’s mental eye with the help of word. This difference can be best illustrated by taking the example of the sound-track of a film, which like a radio play consists of three kinds of sound i.e. word, instrumental music and sound effects. While sitting in a Cinema Hall, can we follow the story of the film and visualize its locales, sequences, situations, actions and characters by shutting our eyes and by just listening to the sound track? No. The reason is obvious.
In a film, the main and the primary thing is its visual part. The position of its soundtrack is just secondary and supplementary. But in a radio play, sound is the only medium to tell, unfold and present a story in the dramatised form. The writer and the producer of a radio play create all the visual part of the story with the help of instrumental music, sound-effects and word i.e. dialogue, which necessarily has added quality of narrative to conjure up visual symbols and to identify the sound effects. These three components of sound, especially the narrative dialogue, stimulate the imagination of each individual listener to create before his/her mind's eye all visual symbols of the play- the locales, objects, characters, their ages and physical looks, their traits and characteristics, their emotions and actions and their exits and entries. Thus, the radio play is brought to actual shape and life on the mental stage of the listener. The writer, producer and actor all use their skill, craftsman ship and art through the medium of the microphone to achieve the goal of involving the listener as the fourth participant in the final production of the play.

It may be mentioned that the art of narrative dialogue is not new to India. It is a part of the ancient oral art of telling stories in the court of Princes and the Chaupal of villagers at night. It also dates back to classical Sanskrit drama, which used to be presented without any stage-setting, scenery and property. A character on the stage used to describe to the audience the locale, atmosphere, the action and the objects, relating to a particular sequence of the Sanskrit play. As such it will not be wrong to say that radio drama is the sole inheritor of oral tradition in India.

Besides the oral narrative dialogue, a radio play has many other essential features, which clearly differentiate it from a stage-play. For example, a radio play is not bound by the unities of place and time and unnatural frames of acts and scenes. Like a short-story-write the writer of a radio play can range through space and time at will. He can probe into the intricate mysteries of the subconscious mind and present realms of fantasy convincingly. He can juxtapose the present with the past and the future. Brevity, clarity, flexibility and natural flow are the essential qualities of a radio play. Since the listener is at liberty to switch off the radio set whenever he/she likes, it is imperative that the opening of the story in a radio play should be
effective and gripping. It is also imperative to get the action moving without any delay, with marked element of suspense. Since the plot of a radio play is a focussed one and not panoramic, there is no scope for preambles, prologues, paddings and subplots. The success of a radio play lies in gripping the attention of the listener at once. Likewise the end should also be capable of leaving a lasting effect on listeners' mind. As a rule, the plot of a radio play should be planned and presented in such a way that it may, from beginning to end, sustain the interest of the listener, who is just using his ear and imaginative faculty to follow it. This fact entails the shorter length of a radio play. It also entails a lesser number of characters in order to facilitate their identification through the voices of actors. And one last thing and that is – structurally the script of a radio play is much closer to that of a modern short-story than to a stage-play. That is why, most of the successful Indian radio plays have been written by the writers of short-stories than by the writers of stage-plays. There are, of course, some technique-wise and length-wise similarities in a radio play and a one-act play; but it should be borne in mind that every one-act-play is not a radio play and every radio play is not one-act play.

This brief account of the essential features of radio drama is sufficient to explain as to why the emergence of a perfect radio-genis-play took about a decade in India. It was difficult for the writers and producers to forget the technique of the time honoured and tradition-bound visual stage-play and to learn and assimilate the new technique of writing and producing an aural radio play.

In the beginning radio-stations used to broadcast abridged scenes and comics from the full-length stage-plays of the Commercial Theatre of different Indian languages. Later came a period when Indian writers started copying or translating short English one-act-plays and B.B.C. radio plays into their respective Indian languages for broadcast from AIR stations. Those were the pioneers of Indian radio drama, who, after a lot of probing and experimentation, gradually learnt the art and technique of aural drama for radio first by copying B.B.C. plays and then by attempting original ones. And we can say with certainty that after 1936 (the year of the birth of All India Radio) the Indian radio drama progressed by leaps and bounds.
Quite a large number of plays were being written and produced in different Indian languages, which were not only radio-genic, but were of high literary merit also. In 1947, when India became free, All India Radio also was freed from the shackles of B.B.C. This freedom brought new life and national spirit to Indian radio drama and it became the true vehicle of Indian culture, thought and life of Indian people.

There is an important event in the history of Indian radio drama, which deserves special mention here. In 1962, when the freedom and integrity of independent India was endangered on account of the Chinese invasion, the Indian radio drama for the first time, performed the important task of boosting up the public morale by generating the right kind of patriotic fervour in the country. That is the period when a new category of purposeful documentary radio drama was born in India.

The most significant achievement in the field of Indian radio drama is the National Programme of Plays of All India Radio. This all India monthly programme was introduced in 1956 and during the course of the 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 languages, 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 literatures of all the regional languages, has proved to be a successful measure for the emotional and cultural integration at the national level.

Now, we see that after five decades of technical and thematic experimentation, the Indian radio drama has developed into a major dramatic form. It has attained the maturity of an independent art form and recognized status of majority listening programme of All India Radio. It has built up its literary forms, techniques, traditions, values, standards and a definite national character. With the spread of country-wide net-work of radio stations, it has shaped into a living theatre for the entertainment, enlightenment and aesthetic pleasure of millions of listeners at the level of both classes and masses. It is also gratifying to note that a number of Universities in
India have shed their old prejudices and apathy against radio drama, and are offering Ph. D degrees for research work on different aspects of radio drama. The Drama Departments of some of the major Universities have already included radio drama in their curriculum.

Besides its own progress since 1936, radio drama has been responsible for generating and stimulating modern dramatic literature in most of the Indian languages. As we know, the old classical drama in most of the Indian languages was confined to mythological and historical themes only. Credit goes, to a large extent, to All India Radio, which started using drama as a vehicle to deal with current social problems and to depict everyday life and contemporary reality. Most of such radio plays, after minor changes, become a part of the dramatic literature of Indian languages in the form of one-act plays. As such, there is a lot of substance in the belief that most of the writers of one-act plays of forties and fifties were the product of All India Radio. On the national level, All India Radio did another service to the literature of Indian languages. Their classical works, like full-length plays, novels, epics etc. which were confined to urban libraries and class-rooms, were communicated to the masses all over India through the broadcast of their dramatic adaptations.

Ever since its inceptation, All India Radio has been, directly or indirectly, helping and influencing Indian stage also. As we know, the advent of talkie in the thirties adversely affected the professional theatre of some major Indian languages. In some regions the old dramatic traditions were lost on account of a number of other reasons. To all these languages and regions, AIR stations provided a well-equipped aural-stage, which encouraged their dramatic works to reach large audience all over the country. During the last few decades, the technique of radio drama has also manifested its influence over the newly emerging modern urban theatre of different Indian languages. We find that most of the modern Indian stage-plays are being written in the form of a radio play, wherein flash-backs, flash forwards and music-effects are excessively used and unities of place and time are discarded in order to give natural flexibility to story-sequences.
The relationship between Indian radio drama and folk drama is much more substantial and purposeful. Ever since its inception, AIR has been playing a laudable role of preserving, popularising and encouraging Indian folk drama in all the regions through regular broadcasts in this age of industrialization, urbanisation and modernization. Also, during the development of Indian radio drama, when radio-writers found out that narrative was an essential part of a radio-genic play, they borrowed the age old convention of the narrator, known as Sutradhar, from folk drama, which had inherited it from the old classical Sanskrit drama. It is a fact that, besides narrative, there is a lot of structural similarity in the format of radio play and folk-play. Both the dramatic forms are free from the unities of place and time. In both the forms there is a fast unhindered movement of the story from one sequence to another and from one locale to another. None needs any physical property and setting. Both are intimate and close to the audience.

After having dealt with the history and different aspects of Indian radio drama, we may assess its power as an art. For this purpose three observations are worth quoting:

i) Sound had always had the power in all times and civilizations to move people deeply.

ii) The greatness of any art can be measured in terms of the number of people it moves, the depth to which it moves them and the length of time, that its influence is effective.

iii) In this age, radio is the only medium which can reach the largest audience at a time. One of the greatest advantages of radio is its emotional power. Because radio appeals more to the emotions than to intellect, it commands a powerful appeal, because of the psychological fact that emotional drives are stronger than intellectual ones.

All the three observations are more relevant to radio drama than to any other programme of AIR. They amply prove the greatness of the art of radio drama in a
democratic country like India. That is why, it has been found to be the most effective medium to communicate to the masses all over India. Also, it fulfils all the needs of short time speedy entertainment for the present-day fast moving human life, which has got very little time for rest and leisure. All this underlines the national importance of Indian radio drama in the realm of modern dramatic art and literature. It is the art for the people.

History of Radio Drama: An International Perspective

The Roman playwright Seneca has been claimed as a forerunner of radio drama, because his plays were performed by readers as sound plays, not by actors as stage plays; but in this respect Seneca had no significant successors until 20th century technology made possible the widespread dissemination of sound plays.¹

Radio drama traces its roots back to the 1880s. In 1881, the French engineer Clement Ader had filed a patent for “improvements of Telephone Equipment in Theatres” (Theatro Phone)². English-language radio drama seems to have started in the United States.³ A Rural Line on Education, a brief sketch specifically written for radio, aired on Pittsburgh’s KDKA in 1921, according to historian Bill Jacker.⁴ Newspaper accounts of the era report on a number of other drama experiments by America’s commercial radio stations, KYW broadcast a season of complete operas from Chicago starting in November, 1921.⁵ In February, 1922 entire Broadway musical comedies with the original casts aired from WJZ’s Newark Studios.⁶ Actors Grace George and Herbert Hayes performed an entire play from a San Francisco Station in the Summer of 1922.

³ Historian Alan Beck reports in The Invisible Play: B.B.C. Radio Drama 1922-1928 that “The first English experiment in radio drama took place in October 17, 1922, in Great Britain. But U.S. stations were broadcasting drama prior to this.
⁴ Bill Jaker, March 27, 1998, email post to the OTR Digest.
⁵ “Radi-Opera” November 17, 1921 Chicago Tribune.
An important turning point in radio drama came when Schenectady, New York’s WGY, after a successful tryout on August 3, 1922, began weekly studio broadcasts of full-length stage plays in September, 1922,\(^1\) using music, sound effects and a regular troupe of actors, The WGY Players, aware of this series, the director of Cincinnati’s WLW began regularly broadcasting one acts (as well as excerpts from longer works) in November.\(^2\) The success of these projects led to imitators at other stations. By the spring of 1923, original dramatic pieces written specially for radio were airing on stations in Cincinnati (When Love Wakens by WLW’s Fred Smith)\(^3\), Philadelphia (The Secret Wave by Clyde A Criswell)\(^4\) and Los Angeles (At Home over KHJ)\(^5\). That same year, WLW (in May) and WGY (in September) sponsored scripting contests, inviting listeners to create original plays to be performed by those stations’ dramatic troupes.\(^6\)

Another notable early radio drama, one of the first specially written for the medium in the UK, was A Comedy of Danger by Richard Hughes, broadcast by the BBC on January 15, 1924, about a group of people trapped in a Welsh Coal mine.\(^7\) One of the earliest and most influential French radio plays was the prize-winning “Maremoto” (“seaquake”), by Gabriel Germinet and Pierre Cusy, which presents a realistic account of a sinking ship before revealing that the characters are actually actors rehearsing for a broadcast. Translated and broadcast in Germany and England by 1925, the play was originally scheduled by Radio Paris to air on October 23, 1924, but was instead banned from French radio until 1937 because the government feared that the dramatic SOS messages would be mistaken for genuine distress signals.\(^8\)

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4. “WRITING RADIO PLAYS IS LATEST”, May 27, 1923 *Oakland (CA) Tribune*.
5. April 22, 1923 *Los Angeles Times* radio listings.
6. “Contests for Prize Radio Drama Opens September 1”, August 1923 *Washington Post*
In 1951, American writer and producer Arch Oboler suggested that Wyllis Cooper's *Lights Out* (1934-47) was the first true radio drama to make use of the unique qualities of radio: Radio Drama (as distinguished from theatre plays boiled down to kilocycle size) began at midnight, in the middle thirties, on one of the upper floors of Chicago's Merchandise Mart. The pappy was rotund written by the name of Wyllis Cooper.¹

Though the series is often remembered solely for its gruesome stories and sound effects, Cooper's scripts for *Lights Out* were well-written and offered innovations seldom heard in early radio dramas, including multiple first person narrators, stream of consciousness monologues and scripts that contrasted a duplicitious character's internal monologue and his spoken words.

The question of who was the first to write stream-of-consciousness drama for radio is a difficult one to answer. By 1930, Tyrone Guthrie had written plays for the BBC like *Matrimonial News* (which consists entirely of the thoughts of a shopgirl awaiting a blind date) and *The Flowers Are Not for You to Pick* (which takes place inside the mind of a drowning man). After they were publised in 1931, Guthrie's plays aired on the American networks. Around the same time, Guthrie himself also worked for the Canadian National Railway Radio network, producing plays written by Merrill Denison that used similar techniques. A 1940 article in *Variety* credited a 1932 NBC play, *Drink Deep* by Don Johnson, as the first stream-of-consciousness play written for American radio. The climax of Lawrence Holcomb's 1931 NBC play *Skyscraper* also uses a variation of the technique (so that the listener can hear the final thoughts and relieved memories of a man falling to his death from the title building).

In Britain, however, during the 1930s BBC programming tended to be more high brow, including the works of Shakespeare, classical Greek drama as well as the works of major modern playwrights, such as Checkov, Ibsen, Strindberg, and so forth. Novels and short stories were also frequently dramatised. In addition the

plays of contemporary writers and original plays were produced, with, for example, a broadcast of T.S. Eliot’s famous verse play *Murder in the Cathedral* in 1936. By 1930 the BBC was producing “twice as many plays as London’s West End” and were producing over 400 plays a year by the mid-1940s.

**The Theoretical aspects of Radio Hindi Plays**

*Radio* play is a play performed over the *radio*. In other words, it is a dramatic performance broadcast over the *radio*.

**Some horrible truths**

Most *radio* drama is very badly written. *Radio* drama is an endangered species. It has never taken a hold of mainstream programming on commercial radio in India. It is under threat within public *radio* services including BBC because of the pressure of monetarist ideology and the fact that authors and *radio* drama directors have been too complacent. IRDP is a significant oasis and continues to support the principle of the original play.

**Ground Rules**

i) **The Beginning**

The beginning should be attractive and meaningful and must create an environment for listening. It should establish the theme of the play. The beginning is everything. If this part of it does not work, the playwrights are ‘up shit creek without a paddle’. The listeners will desert the playwrights. They have failed. They do not exist as a dramatist.

ii) **The Moment of Arrival**

This is how the playwrights drop the listeners into the story. They don’t give them a warm bed with comfortable pillows and a hot water bottle. The background

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and sub-text of previous histories is better explored through revelation in dramatic action. So, they parachute their listener into a top dramatic moment and the climax. That would be premature. Here we find the moment to join the story and avoid the slow snail's explicatory route. We kick them into a high energy trip and whoosh them through the rapids.

iii) Structure

Here we set up struggle resolution. The playwrights can reverse this if the set-up is more dramatic and explosive than that of the resolution. We should regard the play as a series of phases.

iv) The Plot

This is the story with lots of twists and turns. The more the merrier, more listeners like good exciting plots. Without a good plot the playwrights are eating a souffle that has gone flat. They need plot, more and more plot. Let there be at least two story lines. Two subplots would be interesting. Attempt should be made to keep the plots linked logically within the same play. The best system is a major and minor storyline linked to one another, to get them to come together at the end.

v) Surprise or Curiosity

People are hungry for entertainment. If they want boredom they would be filling out their tax returns instead of listening to a radio play. People are to be made afraid of, and their curiosity be aroused but also excited.

vi) Character

The main character must have the sympathy of the audience. The audience has to identify with the main character. If this does not happen, the playwrights have created a failure.

vii) Conflict

Drama = conflict = audience. There has to be an emotional, financial, human,
moral, physical struggle, so the listeners can laugh or cry. Yes, the playwrights want their listeners to laugh or cry or laugh and cry. If they don’t, they should give it up.

viii) Polarities or Extremes

The art of storytelling is exploring the extreme limits of our psychological or physical existence. Here, attempt should be made to pitch one polarity against another.

ix) The Climax

Apology may be sought for the sexual metaphor. But there is something in this. The better sex has foreplay, development, sustained excitement, surprise and affection, may love followed by an explosion of ecstasy. Good \textit{radio} drama is not all that different. If the playwrights don’t use it, they lose it.

x) Dialogue

This is how we engage dramatically with the words. Characters inform, amuse, outrage, argue through the ebb and flow of dialogue. When we do, we talk and that is how great \textit{radio} plays like that of NPPs are made by talking in dramatic dialogue.

xi) Atmosphere/Ambience

This sets the emotional spirit of the play. It determines whether the listeners believe in the words that the actors have created. Words are not created by dramatic dialogue alone. There is attitude and atmosphere. This is determined by detail and relevant detail. It could be in a sound effect. It could be in the writing. It could be in the music. It could be in everything. But the result is that the fifth dimension of \textit{radio} writing - the imagination of the listener is stimulated to become a picture palace of the mind.

xii) Emotion

The playwrights have to generate an emotional response from the audience, preferably to the main character and also not so strongly in relation to the other characters. Emotion is equal to love, hate, admiration. One should never mind about the type of emotion created, but concentrate on whether it is there or not. Emotional
connection between the writing and the listener results in good radio drama.

xiii) Balance character and plot

The playwrights have to have both. They cannot trade. One can predominate over the other. Where they are balanced equally, it can only work if characterisation relates to plot development. If the main plot is character intensive, the playwrights should make sure that the minor plot is plot intensive.

xiv) Purpose

Crook's golden rule is that every word, every line, every scene must serve a dramatic purpose in terms of characterisation and plot development. Anything that does not have a dramatic purpose should be dropped.

xv) Tension and Humour

To stop the listener dropping off or switching off, it is essential to maintain the tension always and throw in the humour. Tension and humour, humour and tension, should be wisely balanced to catch listener's ears and attention. Let the emotional rhythm of the play danced on the listener's heart and mind. It is better to charm and alarm, alarm and charm. But they've got to be linked. The character uses humour to react to the tension in the scene or play. It is necessary atleast to keep one character who uses humour to deal with difficult situations and to make sure the humour is verbal. The character who uses humour should have a consistent sense of humour.

How to get the listener inside the world of Radio Play or NPP

Radio plays including NPPs are produced for the purpose of listening by the listeners. To listen to a radio implies a contact, both physiological and mental. When the listeners listen to a radio play, they allow themselves to be touched, and an interstice is created between the one speaking and the one listening, bridging the gap between them, and creating a joint acoustic space. In other words, a form of mental space is created in the act of listening to the radio play or NPP, in effect dissolving the distance between the sound-producing and the listening-partly
connecting them through performing voice and listening ear. Further more the listener will automatically try and complete the sensory impression with the other senses for making an appreciation of it.

For this, to get the listener inside the world of radio play or NPP, certain aspects need to be looked into while producing NPPs to attract or draw attention of the listener when radio gets switched on for listening to it. These aspects are:

(a) It is required to show sympathy or empathy with the main character.
(b) There should be a bloody good set-up.
(c) There should be a big, nasty antagonist or villain.
(d) The play should have great plot, great story and twist and turns.
(e) Crisis at the beginning is dramatic and it should have a great start.
(f) There should be emotional intensity and it should hit some high points.
(g) There should be escalating conflict so the structure climbs with tension and humour.
(h) It should strike the colours with detail so there’s an atmosphere, mood and ambience.
(i) It should modulate charm with alarm, humour with tension and tension with humour.
(j) There should be a surprise, or curiosity that’s what the playwrights do to the listener, through the plot.

The principle of developing scenes

A radio play or an NPP consists of different scenes, which is developed one after another. Therefore, while developing its scene, certain principles are generally followed:

1. It must start with an introduction.
2. There should be characters, goals and objectives.

3. Purpose of scene in overall plot must be specified.

4. One of the characters must be shown to have achieved a goal.

5. It should be linked to the next scene by introducing or pointing to location of next scene or presence of character in next scene.

The Principle of Character

1. Characters must be believable and recognisable.

2. They must have purpose within the plot.

3. Characters have to have function. Character has to be consistent with function.

4. Characters have to be intentional.

5. They should make their start with a stereotype to ensure rapid recognition, then twist the stereotype. They must stand with to challenge the homily that there is nothing new under the sun by making it new under the moon.

6. It is necessary to give each character a dominant physical or behavioural characteristic and make the dominant characteristic purposeful as well as to make it extreme.

7. The main character must be active.

8. The character's energy has to fight the urgency of the plot and the urgency of the plot makes the character more energetic.

The principle of Hero/Heroine

1. Listeners look up to main characters, want to admire them because we all want heroes or heroines in our lives. Life's eternal fantasy that transcendent people and transcendent moments conquer adversity.

2. If the playwrights are very clever they can transfer the hero from the obvious
to the humble and make great the inferior or character who has greater potential for human dignity.

3. Charisma. Characters need intensity and conviction. They may not be perfect but they are attractive.

4. Private moments are necessary for the characters when they drop their guards and allow us into their minds and hearts. It is necessary to make the listener privileged and use this moment for revelation.

5. The main character has to change and has to be changed by the plot.

6. There must have a main character and secondary characters. The main character changes. The secondary characters are probably more singular in their characteristics. The secondary characters are already committed. The main character is still weighing up the options.

7. There must have characters who are extreme in relation to each other. Characters that are different make drama.

Where are we now? The playwrights, the producers and the listeners clearly understand and realise their position to be here:

(a) The main character is in the middle of the story.

(b) Dominant characteristics have been used.

(c) The listener likes the main character.

(d) The listener cares what happens to the main characters.

(e) The listener hates the antagonist.

(f) The main character is developing.

Principles of Dialogue

(a) Dialogue must be a response to a situation, plot or action.

(b) Dialogue must be a response to each character in the scene.
(c) Dialogue must be comic relief.

(d) Dialogue must connect to the next scene.

(e) Dialogue must not be reflective, passive and neutral, but active, direct and emotional.

(f) Dialogue must be believable by being specific to the character’s background and emotional state.

(g) If dialogue is reacting to action or situation then it must be dramatic and poised on polarities. The goals of the characters in each scene should be different.

(h) Dialogue should be continuous. Tip., characters often take a tag by repeating the last word spoken by the first character.

(i) Dialogue must relate to function.

(j) It is advisable to mix direct with indirect between two characters because they have different goals.

(k) Humorous dialogue is not a character telling or simply telling a joke but a line or lines responding to the dramatic situation.

(l) Heightened dialogue vs. naturalistic dialogue. Heightened language is the language of the theatre, a high octane communication — poetic, Philosophical or in other words a charged expression of the playwright. It serves not only the development of the plot and character, but it also presents the view of the writer. It works well in radio. But there is now a tendency for more naturalism. Radio producers like to go out on location and explore realism. In these situations, the character must stick to natural dialogue.

**Principles Peculiar to Radio**

1. The inner existence.

2. The tension and conflict between the interior and exterior.

4. Easier to explore the real and the surreal and to delineate the line between the two.

5. Have to work in the fifth dimension... the energy of the listener’s imaginative participation.

6. The interior existence offers exploration of personal thoughts, fantasies, emotions and conflicts.

7. All levels of external conflict can be explored.

8. The precipitating event through plot has to threaten the inner life of the main character. This is the kick-off in radio drama.

9. The end or resolution in radio drama is more deeply rooted in the emotional equilibrium and insight of the main character. Changes are internal as well as external.

10. Time transposition and translocation are faster and more rapid and more complicated. Flashbacks and flashforwards are necessary for different ages.

11. Radio requires less rather than more characters. Characterisation needs to be strong and fascinating.

12. Maintain the focus of the main character and plot.

13. Economy of words underlines sub-textual surprise and engagement with the listener’s imagination.

14. Wit is verbal because language is so important that to be shown cleverness with words, energy with words, and humour with words. Wit is advanced by surprising the listener, being aggressive with the listener, being fast, short and clever with the listener.

15. Irony is Pathos and bathos. It is conflict between the inner life and outer action.¹

¹ www.irdp.co.uk
Importance of Radio Plays

A radio drama creates images in the mind that can furnish a much more vivid picture than can be produced by even the most sophisticated television production company. Radio drama, too, is an excellent way to learn the mechanics of editing, miking and mixing. Keith Richards describing radio drama quotes Donald Whinnie who says that the radio act comes out of silence vibrates in the void and in the mind and returns to silence. Radio enjoys the characteristic of being versatile, because of its ability to make rapid transitions in time and space between speech and unspoken thought. With radio drama the actor and the audience exist on different levels. Keith Richards adds that radio evokes rather than depicts an experience. The radio performance invades the listener's own solitude and recreates the illusion inside the listener's head. Radio Drama is, thus, a pale reflection of the legitimate stage, given that stage plays are to be seen and radio plays to be heard.

Radio is not a visual art form, as such it starts from silence and to this silence the writer must add through the use of sound effects all that is necessary to provide settings, periodic characters and everything else that is essential to present a dramatic story. Radio gives a tremendous opportunity for the playwright, the experimentalist and the creative artist to explore dimensions and ideas that are impossible in live theatre. Radio drama is a creative cultural activity.

Miriam Donath Skjorten says of cultural activities that they embrace an endless diversity which provides not only possibilities for differentiation but adds to the enrichment through the use of cultural activities. Since radio drama is also a cultural activity, if used in a creative and sensitive way, it will touch the mind and feelings in a deeper way than lectures and exercises. Skjorten agrees that this makes cultural activities very fit tools in supporting a process towards inclusion.

In Radio drama feelings, emotions and philosophies must be honest because the radio provides direct emotional communication between the writer and the

2. Ibid.
Radio drama is very economical and there is no room for padding, excessive exposition or description, unnecessary characters or superfluous sound effects. Radio drama is much shorter than stage or television drama. The reason for this is ingrained in the need to maintain a continuing listener interest. If this is not the case the listener switches off. It is for this reason that radio drama seems very appropriate for children. The excitement of listening to their voice on the radio is fascinating. The interest that this will generate from parents in the community knowing that their children produced such drama will be an added element of community participation in the educational needs of children.

The prime objective of a radio play is entertainment. Radio plays educate the community by sharing experience and creating a context for reflection and action. A radio play draws out participation and expression of popular concerns and analysis, overcoming people’s fears and rationalisations and building confidence and identity, stimulating discussions and a critical understanding of problems, contradictions and structures underlying everybody’s reality; clarifying the possibilities and strategies for action string peoples emotions and eventually mobilising them for action. Radio plays can, thus, be used to develop awareness of rural populations on the need for inclusion of children with special needs, using local media in the form of songs, dance and proverbs.

Radio drama is, therefore, suitable to be used as a medium of social change, conflict resolution, discussion on human rights, democracy and gender issues both in and outside the classroom. Radio drama gives voices to the voiceless. It is a medium for both children and adults.

Through drama, radio can reflect local identity and culture of the people, representing different groups and interests in the community with an inclusion of marginalised and minority groups.

Local language and cultural expressions are the raw material for radio plays.

1. Fraser, Colin & Estrada, Sonia Restrepo: Community Radio Handbook, UNESCO 2001, P-3
This in itself is a sure means of preserving our indigenous languages, which stand the risk of extinction due to globalisation. The people's language or a lingua franca would be the most appropriate language to be used in a community radio drama.

Having observed the potential of drama as a tool for social change and advocacy, it is, therefore, recommended the use of drama or role play in classrooms as a teaching method that will hold the interest of the children especially children with special needs such as those withdrawn from labour, those orphaned from HIV/AIDS, physically disabled, visually impaired, children who abuse drugs, street children, and mentally challenged children.

The Production of a Radio Play: The Stages and Techniques

Till now, it has been formed a concretised idea about a radio play. Radio drama, commonly known as radio play, is a dramatized, purely audio performance that is usually broadcast on radio, or circulated on audio media, for instance, Tape or CD. With no visual component, this performance relies on dialogue, music and sound effects so as to help the listener visualize the story and characters. Radio drama is a hybrid. Like theatre, words are crucial. Like film, scenes can cut rapidly from any place or time to another. Like prose fiction, we consume the product alone, hearing, 'with our minds' completing the physical images of people and places in our imagination from the merest suggestions.1

Radio plays that sound like theatre generally confine themselves to a few locations and try to tell the story entirely in dialogue. But sets, costumes and facial expressions are, of course, not visible on radio and non-verbal sub-text correspondingly hard to do. As a result the dialogue has more information to deal with. If it doesn't carry this extra burden lightly, the mike will pick it up and draw attention to every plodding line. So it's best to detect the problems in the script before that happens. Approach writing a radio drama much like we would a stage play. However, it is to keep in mind a few special considerations. Gathering and

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1. Harris, Mike: The Handbook of Creative Writing, edited by Steven Earnshow, Edinburgh University Press, 2007 (http://www.eup.ed.ac.uk)
interpreting information requires listeners to rely solely on their sense of hearing. For this reason, a radio drama must utilize sound to present characters, setting and events. Producing a radio drama requires deep exploration into the nuances of sound. If done well, a radio drama can be a very satisfying experience for listeners as they let their imaginations run wild and create unique visuals in their mind.

**Mechanism of Writing Radio Plays and Production Process: A few Hints**

Although elements such as plot, structure and characterisation are present in all other forms of drama, they differ in radio drama or NPPs.

**Structure**

Structure is the framework or skeleton on which the playwright’s artistic creation or play should be built. A good structure should have cohesion, should be balanced and should retain the listener’s interest.

**Plot**

Plot is the story line that determines the setting the characters and their relation to each other and the sequence of actions which keeps the play moving. A well made play has a beginning, middle and an ending in this order. This means that it is a play with a linear chronology and does not jump out of time with flash back and flash forward. The writer of a radio play or an NPP has to be concise even more so when the target audience is a particular class. In the play, the opening sequence must catch the ear either by music, sound effects and arresting words or by all three. It must have an impact and must hold the listeners’ attention. Scenes in radio drama must be very short. There must be causality in plot. There are usually subplots that carry the theme. The writer must ensure that subplots always intersect the plot, otherwise it may appear that the subplot has nothing to do with the story.

**Characters**

There should not be more than 5 or 6 characters in radio drama. Fewer characters in a play gives the listener the advantage of continuing identification.
Secondly the difficulty to provide enough dialogue for each character to keep them visible obliges the writer to limit the number of characters. Since conflict is the driving force of the plot, characters must be in conflict and there must be tension between them. This creates drama and advances the plot. Characters are established, differentiated or identified through the use of dialogue, voice and speech patterns.

**Narration**

Narration is the telling of the story and it differs from narrative which is the story. Narrators usually describe stage settings for plays for theatre audiences. *Radio* is not in reporting visual phenomena but in creating thereby simulating the mind of the listener through words and sound.

**First person narration**

With the first person narration one can either have internal monologues where by characters speak to themselves or soliloquy which focuses on the private thoughts of a character or the stream of consciousness which deals with fantasy, madness and hallucinations. Exposition and description is kept to its barest minimum in *radio* drama.

**Dialogue**

Dialogue must not be real and must be edited. In his book entitled *Writing Radio Drama*, Keith Richards¹ identifies some skills that are needed for good dialogue. He says finding a good ear is essential. A good writer needs to be sensitive to the different speech patterns of different people. He must take note of the way people pronounce their words, their interaction parterres, etc. The writer must be alert to the little subtleties and nuances of human speech. A good *radio* dramatist needs a good memory.

Without the visual element in *radio* drama the only way for the listener to tell whether a character is tall or short, fat or thin, beautiful or ugly, young or old, rich or poor, shy or gregarious, friendly or reserved is through the dialogue.

¹ Richards, Keith: *Writing Radio Drama*, 1991, P.-16
Sounds and Music

*Radio-*phonic, according to Keith Richards is the processing of natural or artificial sound to create special effects, ambience, backgrounds and music. *Radio* drama, therefore, has to be *radio-*phonically stimulating in order to be entertaining and intellectually challenging.

**Manual Effects**

These can be produced live during the recording of the script. For example, the opening or closing of doors, pouring of drinks, crockery and cutlery noises, telephone dialling, footsteps etc. Sets can be built to create a naturalistic environment, where actors can move around and make noises appropriate to the setting.

**Recorded Effects**

These are background sounds, such as, crowds in the market, cells, sporting grounds, railway stations etc.. Sounds of the wind, birds, sea, rain, thunder, planes, and trains can be taken from sound effect discs.

**The Play Production Process**

The play production process usually starts with the conception of the theme, which may be done through group discussions. The playwright may be imposed a theme or may decide to chose a theme that is relevant to his community. He develops the story line, scripts the play, and then auditions and casts. After several rehearsals the play will be ready for production and broadcast.

**Production Techniques of Radio Drama : Two methods of Production**

There are mainly two types of production methods, which are being used in producing an NPP or a *radio* play in the studio of a *AIR* station. The methods are—

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(a) ‘Rehearse-record’ method: For producing a radio play or NPP under this method, the following steps are generally followed:

* To divide the script into sequences.
* To rehearse a sequence.
* To record the sequence.
* To continue till the director/producer is satisfied with the takes.
* To proceed to the next sequence.

(b) ‘Rehearse all-then record’ method: This method includes the following steps:

* to rehearse all the script.
* to record all the script.

Selecting a cast for a radio play or NPP

Selecting a cast for a radio drama like NPP depends on many things as a producer, but of importance is the social nature of one’s cast. While auditioning cast, endeavour to select amongst the best performers, one that can easily socialize. This is because, in radio drama voicing, the actors do really “silly” things with voice usage and lack of familiarity/social-life would be a bottle neck as regards bringing out those emotions from the cast. In other words, down-to-earth persons are most needed and are prioritized.

Radio Drama Rehearsal - Tips and Patterns

In rehearsing with already selected cast be sure to have already gotten a venue that is quite conducive. Of importance about the venue is that the venue must not give too much reverb to the voices, else one would get a biased volume level and texture of the voices (except one would need this level of reverb in the real voicing) and he or she would see a clear contrast when they go for the actual voicing. Hence, it is necessary to avoid halls and tunnels, under bridges etc. and just to go for a
small room. I advise the actual voicing site / studio if he or she (i.e. the producer) has the resources. There are two different ways to rehearse / voice a radio drama.

**Method -1**

The characters doing the rehearsals as combined, that is, they both perform a scene voicing together, or

**Method - 2**

They rehearse / voice their lines in each scene individually, that is, they take their parts in each scene without hearing the follow up voices from the other actors.

Method-1 is the conventional way, but when one looks at the trend of happening now, he or she (i.e. the director / producer) would find that with method-2, there are some overcomeable bottle necks, but their final output is better.

Back to the techniques of rehearsing / voicing, with method-1, the producer would definitely get a natural feel, but certainty can’t be said about the quality of the individual voices. This means that characters voice might not meet up with the voice quality of other character’s even after series of rehearsals due to individual differences, also when he needs to apply SFX (i.e. sound effects) to a particular voice as in a phone conversation, he finds this method difficult. Overall this is a more conventional way of voicing radio dramas including NPPs.

For method-2, it has the advantages of the disadvantages of method -1. This means individual voices can be mixed differently on different mixing channels. This is more useful for a low budget voicing, where only one mic is used. The difficulty here is getting the actors to know the rehearsals on their own and in putting the voices of different characters together, the director / producer must be good enough to make the voices flow together, that is, no spaces where there need not be and where they are supposed to laugh, sneez, cry, etc. Let the actors do that voice sample just once so that it would be a uniform sound from that particular character for easy acquaintance by the audience and then fix this sample at the appropriate place.
Three Phases of Production

The production of a radio play or NPP is the actual process of recording and editing a radio programme. Proper studios, microphones and computers are required to record and edit the programme to make it ready for final broadcast. The production of an NPP like other radio plays passes through three different phases, which may be stated as follows:

1. Pre-Production

2. Production, and

3. Post-Production

1. Pre-Production

This stage first requires a radio drama script. Writing a radio drama script is very different than writing for other medium. Because the tools are limited - voices, sound effects and music; but the palette is limitless - the human imagination.

A good script is the heart of quality radio play or an NPP. In fact, it is the only thing that makes a radio play worth producing.

In this stage due emphasis is given on proper budgeting required for production of the play, booking of studio, auditioning of characters/actors or actresses and casting for the roles as per script preparation. This stage involves planning for everything.

2. Production

This stage involves producing the radio drama or NPP. Here's the hard part. The director/producer has got actors, a script and all, and only to produce the play in the studio. The producer is to perform the twin job as director also. This phase requires to perform the followings:

a) Recording

b) Directing and acting; and
c) Microphone positions.

There are basically 4 (four) methods of recording a radio drama:

i) Recorded in a Studio

The traditional way of recording a radio drama involves actors, one or more microphones, and a device that's either recording the dialogue or broadcasting it live as the actors are saying their lines.

ii) Recorded Live Before an Audience

This is perhaps the most complex form of recording because the producer needs to account for a variety of mics (upto 4 for the performers, 2 or more for sound effects, then the producer has got live music, perhaps and probably a computer for supplementary sound effects).

iii) Recorded Remotely

This is fantastically innovative new production method whereas producers collaborate with voice actors around the globe who record lines independently and then mix them together in post-production to create the final product.

iv) Recorded on Location

Here's adventure. Instead of recording in the confines of a studio, why not let the world become a studio. That's the principle of field recording - taking gear and actors with the producer somewhere and record the drama as if it were happening in that real-world situation.

3. Post Production

This phase involves:

i) Dialogue editing;

ii) Editing and mixing of music and sound effects.

iii) Hearing or listening to final product; and
Soundtrack for Audio Drama

Soundtrack as its popularity used are musical background already composed and produced by musicians. They are generally added to fill spaces in a movie or play including NPPs. This is the popular trend followed while producing radio plays.

A soundtrack is actually what conveys totally, the particular mood that one expects the audience to be in totality. By this, it is meant that if we have a romantic scene, we definitely would want this to have a romantic music background. This itself is what the audience expects to hear. However, a soundtrack for a romantic scene must not necessarily be the best blues / romance song of the decade, but sounds that correspond to even a blue mood i.e. it could be any sound that would relax the sensory nerve or better still, put them in a calm state.

Practice have shown that these sounds are not necessarily musicals by popular artiste, it could and more commonly be classical compositions by an orchestral, a simple symphony etc. not necessary the latest or previous HIT tracks. A simple Piano symphony can calm the nerve and hence be used as a soundtrack in a romantic scene.

A soundtrack is of utmost significance, as it puts the audience in the desired mood. Using popular soundtracks might need copyright bottle necks and also might not really soothe the desired impression.

Microphone Positions

One of the most important aspects and techniques of production of a radio play or NPP is the microphone positions. This is an important job to look into by the producer / director of the play. In other words, the quality of play produced largely depends upon the mic techniques or microphone positions used by the artists / actors or characters of the play while delivering their voices for it. This applies to the production of NPPs like other radio plays and hence, the production technique is not an exception to it.
Creating an illusion of place is largely a function of the physical shape and construction of the sound-proof studio; but the distance of the actors from the mic plays a major role. The ideal set-up for a radio drama in which actors must deal with place and movement is to suspend the mic from a boom, and group the actors around it. This protects the actors from tripping over wires and bumping into floor stands.

An omnidirectional mic is best, although bidirectional patterns can be used. A high degree of presence is usually felt to be a desirable attribute in radio drama, so a sensitive condenser mic might be a wise choice. So far microphone positions are concerned for production of an NPP like other radio plays, we may identify 5 (five) best positions to be used by the actors considering one important aspect to be maintained by them i.e. the distance from the mic from closest to “moves off” (furthest) while playing their parts. The microphone positions are stated below:

**Position - I : Closest to the microphone**

This means as close as possible. For using this position, it is warned that the actors should beware of blasting and popping. This position is best for delivering monologue and creating voices in the mind resulting interiorizing the voices in the mind. The voice in the mind and radio drama is very good at going inside the mind. This internal voice is more fully private and subjective.

**Best in Position-I at the microphone.**

i) From point of technique, it is best in a neutral acoustic as it’s the voice in the mind.

ii) This position provides enough scope to hear all the detail and colour of the voice.

iii) Scripting, if wisely done or prepared, this technique may be resorted to for letting the listener know secrets.

iv) It is a challenging technique for director and actor - and is well worth-doing.
Position - II : Intimate conversation

This means a step away from Position-I. Close-up.

Position - III : Conversation

This means standing far away enough from the microphone so that actors’ outstretched fist is levelled with it. Most radio drama dialogue including NPPs happens in Position-III.

It is to be mentioned here that shift from Position-III to Position-II, and back again demands technical acting skill. It must fit with the dialogue situation, the intimate climax of a scene, telling a secret, wanting to move to an objective.

Position - IV : Across the ‘room’

This implies that the actor sharing delivery of dialogues should position himself or herself to about 10 feet away from the microphone. Then he or she opens out the dialogue to a larger space + making an approach ‘through the door’ to characters in Position - III.

Position - V : ‘Moves off’

This means that the full teams i.e. the actors sharing dialogues in the play remain furthest off in the Studio, behind curtains, behind screen or OB.

It is to be noted that close up position makes some dialogue section more intimate. It is advisable to make use of an effective ‘close-up’ in the middle of a stretch of dialogue,

i) particularly when it is necessary to bring two characters (best with two) nearer to the microphone into Position-II for a ‘close-up shot’.

ii) to look for script that needs these Close-ups.

iii) to make use of an effective ‘Close-up’ near the end of a scene.

iv) to record the last phrase of the dialogue and make it intimate and closer to the audience, and a ‘Close-up’ delivery is desired.
Even in the middle of a scene, to enliven a situation in dramatic performance, we can bring the characters (best with two) into Position-II for longer conversation and then place them further away again, at Position-III.

**Benefit of Close-Up**

This prevents 'stand and deliver' acting. It enables the actors to more subtlety and variation into a dialogue scene which depends on the script that needs these Close-ups.

**OB- recording outside the Studio**

'OB' means 'outside broadcast', a technical term in the script. This type of recording takes place outside the studio. It gives more freedom and space of movement.

Thus, we find that both the radio and radio plays have their own history. The history of radio is longer than radio plays and the NPPs, being radio plays in Indian context and broadcast through national channel of AIR, started creating its history since 1960's. While radio, as an audio-medium has its own characteristics, merits and demerits, and its operation at AIR station involves technical process for producing its programmes including radio plays and also for broadcasting, the NPPs being radio plays are produced following certain basic principles of drama adapted to suit the medium with proper induction of voice, music and sound.