CHAPTER 4

MODERN ASSAMESE MOBILE THETARE
AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

4.1: INTRODUCTION

4.2: MOBILE THEATRE AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION
   4.2.1: OPINION BUILDING
   4.2.2: ROLE OF PLAYWRIGHTS

4.3: EDUTAINMENT FUNCTION

4.4: ENTERTAINMENT FUNCTION

4.5: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

4.6: UNITY AND FRATERNITY

4.7: CREATES AN ENVIRONMENT FOR PROMOTION OF THEATRE IN STATE

4.8: OPPORTUNITY FOR EMPLOYMENT
CHAPTER 4
MODERN ASSAMESE MOBILE THEATER AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

4.1: Introduction

The year 1963 is considered the golden year in the theatre history of Assam with the birth of ‘Nataraj Theatre’, the first Mobile Theatre party of Assam. Since its inception, Mobile Theatre of Assam has been playing a very important role as a medium of communication as well as entertainment among the people of Assam. Every play performed on stage of a Mobile Theatre has its impact upon the audiences. It is a place where one can receive education, entertainment and recreation simultaneously. As a medium of communication, the role of Assamese Mobile Theatre can be studied under following aspects.

4.2: Mobile Theatre as a Medium of Communication

Communication is a process of sending and receiving information. It is a process through which the communicator sends certain message to the receiver and at the same time the receiver gives his response to the communicator which is known as ‘feedback’. As a medium of communication Assamese Mobile Theatre perform the following functions.

4.2.1: Opinion Building

As a medium of communication, Assamese Mobile Theatre has been playing a very important role in building opinion among the mass. In communication process, the concept of opinion building is related with ‘Personal Influence Theory’ invented by the Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudel in the year 1948. According to this theory, the broad campaign or the performance done by mass media simply reinforce the initial
preference of the audiences, but it is the personal influence or interpersonal relation that can change the behavior or thought of the receiver. In relation to the opinion building function done by Mobile Theatre of Assam, it has seen that each and every Mobile Theatre party starts their journey from mid-August and continue it upto April. During this nine month journey they move different nook and corner of the state and perform their plays for three to four days as per contract in a particular place. The theatre groups construct their makeshift tent on an open field with seat capacity approximately for 2000 audiences. Thus, when Mobile Theatre parties perform a play on stage, it makes contact with all the audiences and ultimately builds an opinion among the viewers. In this regard the roles of playwrights are very significant because the Mobile Theatre as a medium of communication gives certain message to the audiences through the performance of a play. Here a brief discussion is made on the role of playwrights of Mobile Theatre of Assam.

4.2.2: Role of Playwrights

A playwright is considered as an essential part of every Mobile Theatre party. A playwright is the person upon which the success of a Mobile Theatre mostly depends on. The main task of a playwright is to prepare or write plays for a Mobile Theatre group. The director or the producer choose the characters and make all the necessary arrangements based on the story of a play written by the playwright. As a medium of communication all the plays of a Mobile Theatre gives some message to the society and here the role of playwright is always counted as most significant. Each and every play performed by theatre parties always brings some new information whether it is mythological, historical, political or social. Hence the role of playwright is very
important because all the arrangements like sound, lighting, costumes and settings are prepared according to the story of a play written by the playwright.

The tradition of writing novel Assamese plays was developed long back, just after the publication of *Ram Navami*, a play based on widow marriage written by Gunabhiram Baruah in 1857. But its entry into the wide field of Mobile Theatre was started in 1963, after the formation of ‘Nataraj Theatre’ by Achyut Lahkar in Pathsala. In the very first year of its inception, ‘Nataraj Theatre’ welcomed three Assamese playwrights, namely Natasurjya Phani Sarma, Atul Chandra Hazarika and Uttam Baruah to the field of Mobile Theatre in Assam. Phani Sarma’s *Bhogjara*, Atul Chandra Hazarika’s *Tikendrajeet* and Uttam Baruah’s *Jerengar Sati* were the plays performed by ‘Nataraj Theatre’ in its formation year which created a boom among the theatre loving audiences of our state. Since then various persons has been writing a number of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre which helped a lot in enriching the cultural scenario of Assam. Here a discussion is made on some prominent playwrights of Assam who have contributed a lot through their plays for the growth and development of Assamese Mobile Theatre, the biggest cultural industry of the state.

*Natasurjya Phani Sarma:*

Born in 1910 at Tezpur, Natasurjya Phani Sarma was a shining star in the theatrical world of Assam. He was an actor, playwright, film actor and producer. His father Molan Sarma was also an exponent of drama and a good actor of ‘Ban Stage’. The theatrical career of Phani Sarma started as a gatekeeper of the women’s gallery of the prestigious ‘Ban Stage’ situated at Tezpur. In 1928, he got the opportunity to act on the ‘Ban Stage’ for the first time in the role of Akbar in the drama *Rana Pratap*. That was the beginning of a new chapter in the life of Phani Sarma. He wrote a number of plays
for Assamese Mobile Theatre. *Bhogjara* that is ‘Ceremonial Jug’ was one of the last and best historical plays written by Phani Sarma in 1957. ‘Nataraj Theatre’ starts its journey with the performance of *Bhogjara* on October 2, 1963 which is a very remarkable day in the history of Mobile Theatre in Assam. Some of his other plays were *Naagpash, Kala Bazar, Kiya, Emuthi Chaoul* and *Chiraj*. But the play that brought Phani Sarma a great success among the mobile theatre spectators was *Chiraj*. This play may be considered as a revolt against the conservative thinking of so called aristocratic society of Assam. When the ‘Bhramyaman Mancha’ or Mobile Theatre movement started in Assam, it lost no time in throwing open its doors to Phani Sarma, who acted for it till his entire life. This legendary theatrical personality died in the year 1970.

**Atul Chandra Hazarika:**

Among the renowned playwrights of Assam, Atul Chandra Hazarika was a familiar one among the theatre lovers of Assam. He was known as a poet, dramatist, children story writer and translator. Hazarika came to the field of Assamese Mobile Theatre through his play *Tikendrajeet*; perform by ‘Nataraj Theatre’ in the first year of its formation in 1963. Throughout his entire life, Atul Chandra Hazarika wrote twenty eight numbers of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre. Some of his prominent plays were *Kanuj Kumari* (1933), *Nandadulal* (1935), *Champavati* (1935), *Chattrapati Shivaji* (1947) and *Tikendrajeet* (1959). In the first half of twentieth century, he earned immense popularity as a playwright among the people of Assam. His plays may be classified into three categories like, based on *puranic* episodes and anecdotes, historical events as well as miscellaneous topics. He was honoured with ‘Padmashree’ by government of India in 1971 and also a recipient of Sahitya Academy award as well. *Manchalekha* earned
him “Sahitya Academy Award” in 1969 which is a magnificent work that described
five hundred years of Assamese drama and theatre. This Assamese literate and
theatrical person died on June 7, 1986.

**Mahendra Borthakur:**

Mahendra Borthakur was a very well known playwright of Assam who has written a
number of popular plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre in his entire life. He was very
successful in representing various social issues through his plays performed by
Assamese Mobile Theatre on stage. His first play was *Simalu Chandan*, performed by
‘Abahawn Theatre’ in 1981. Some of his other plays are; *Saragurir Chapari, Mukhyamantri, Bilki Begum, Abatar, Goshani, Bali Gharar Alahi, Sahab Dada, Adhar Sila, Kurukshetra, Poja Gharar Raja, Bandini, Manuh, Samrat aru Sundari, Baliya Hati, Tez Loga Baat, Narak bandana, Ratir Jui, Poharar Cha, Hey Mahanagar, Sagaralai Bahudoor, Suruj, Karagarar Bagh, Mukahar Mukh, Abelir Rang, Ashanta Prahar, Man Mandakini, Othelo, Aair sakulo, Bagh Hazarika, Jivan Drver, Benhoor, Hemlet. Dainir Prem, Raja Harichandra, Bishnuprasad, Haladhiya Charai a Baodhan Khai, Tezal Ghora, Makarajaal, Aai Matite* etc. His play *Aai Matite* performed by
‘Abahawn Theatre’ in the year 1982 under the direction of Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia
was a very successful one. *Dadhishi* was another one performed by ‘Makunda Theatre’
in the year 1985, based on the struggle of a freedom fighter as well as patriot who fails
to enjoy the minimum liberty of his life. For the play *Mukhyamantri* performed by
‘Hengool Theatre’ in 1987, Mahendra Borthakur received the prestigious ‘Atul Chandra Hazarika Best Play Award’. This well known Assamese playwright passed
away on December 9, 2005, but his contribution to Assamese Mobile Theatre will
always remain alive among the theatre lovers of Assam.
**Achyut Lahkar:**

Born on July 9, 1931, at Bagana, a small village five kilometer away from Pathsala town, Achyut Lahkar was the father of modern Mobile Theatre popularly known as ‘Bhramyaman’ of Assam who gave the birth of first Mobile Theatre party in Assam in the year 1963. He founded ‘Nataraj Theatre’ at Pathsala in 1963 which performed different plays across Assam and in some other states of India over the last five decades which gave Assamese Mobile Theatre a new identity in entertainment industry of Assam, and that too in a state where film making continues to be a difficult proposition. “Lahkar had not only pioneered Mobile Theatre in Assam, but also worked hard to give it the dimension of a booming entertainment industry that provides employment to hundreds of actors, technicians, musicians and other people”, told by Pranjal Saikia in his demise on June 12, 2016.

Achyut Lahkar was a man of multifaceted qualities who at a same time worked as dramatist, actor, director and produce and staged numerous memorable plays on the Mobile Theatre stage. He also published and edited an illustrated magazine called ‘Deepawali’ in the year 1952 when he was studying in Calcutta. He was a recipient of ‘Kamal Kumari National Award’ for his outstanding contribution to the field of Assamese art and culture in the year 1997. The doyen of Assamese Mobile Theatre Achyut Lahkar passed away in his hometown at Pathsala on June 12, 2016 which is a huge loss to the state’s cultural landscape. During his life, Achyut Lahkar wrote a number of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre which were mostly performed by ‘Nataraj Theatre’ for a long time. Some of his plays are *Blackmoney, Dharani, Usha, Erina, Barsha ne Bahni, Alla Eswar, Ajaeya Vietnaam, Duliajan, Bandhu Hatyakari Bandhu, Ami Heno Manuh Nahay, Amercat Pootala, Adarshabadi Nari, Hamida, Noorjahan, Ekhan Prithivi, Sankardev, Nari Jagaran* etc.
Prafulla Bora:

Prafulla Bora is a very familiar name among the theatre loving audiences of Assam. ‘Assam Star Theatre’ established him as a successful playwright of Assamese Mobile Theatre. But the play made him popular in the wide field of Mobile Theatre of Assam was Kanchan Barua’s novel ‘Asimot Jar Heral Seema’ under the same title performed by ‘Kohinoor Theatre’ on stage in 1980. Prafulla Bora composed two hundred fifty three numbers of plays throughout his entire life including forty two plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre. In 1997, he received the prestigious ‘Sonit Gaurav Award’ for his immense contribution to the wide field of Assamese Mobile Theatre. Some of his prominent plays are; Sako, Devajani, Aparadhi Kon, Nartaki, Son Rup Hira, Porichay, Rupabati, Jivan Kahini, Tejimala, Alangkar, Ashirbad, Anurag, Aparadh, Maram Trishna, Mrityudevata, Abhisapta Aranya, Tapashya, Upaban, Niruddesh, Prithivi, Papi Devata, Mrityu, Akashi Ganga, Manthan, Surjya Tapashya, Kazirangar Bagh, Snehabandhan, Ratnadeep, Siyar, Ghar, anupama Mor, Maa Mati Manuh, Dharma Sakshi etc.

Ugra Mena:

Ugra Mena is one of the leading playwrights of Assamese Mobile Theatre. He is well known by the theatre loving audiences of Assam due to the uses of melodramatic qualities like horror, bloodshed, revenge, murder, ghost, dacoits etc. which are some common characteristics reflects through his plays. Some of his plays performed by various Mobile Theatre parties of Assam are; Nimati Kanya, Prashuram, Meghar Badal, Dashyurani Putuli Bai, Silabristi, Danbir Karna, Manimughda Ajagar, Bikramaditya, Meghnath Badh, Ajir Manuh, Tokar Golam, Dushasanar Raktapat, Aparadh, Nari Dashyu, Aranyar Baagh, Biplobi Chetana, Devatar Nirmali, Milan
Mala, Mandir Masjid, Ajagar, Ejak Bilati Kukur, Satabdir Paap etc. His play Milan Mala performed by ‘Makunda Theatre’ in 1985 caught the attention of all sections of people for the heart touching performance of Jibeswar Deka, one of the famous stage performer of Assam, who played the role of ‘Milan’ on stage.

**Bhaben Baruah:**

Another well known playwright of Assam who composed a number of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre and actively associated with the growth and development of this most enduring cultural medium of the state was Bhaben Baruah. He wrote a large number of plays which are performed by almost all the Mobile Theatre parties of Assam. In 1964, Bhaben Barua came under the influence of Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha, Dr. Bhupen Hazarika and Natasurjya Phani Sarma in ‘Purbajyoti Theatre’ at Hajo. After that he wrote various popular plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre. Some of his plays are; Seutir Sendur, Nayantara, Kanchanjangha, Kalangkini Nayika, Mahatirthat Marishali, Masmoria Chowali, Sagara Sako, Biplabi Gurudev, Mainamati, Champabati, Jai Maa Kamakhya, Pura Sonar Jilikani, Kashaikhana, Mukhagni, Atmasamparan, Dagabaj, Nimakh Haram, Bideshi Bowari, Gadhulir Sitajui, Damvik, Mallika, Kanaklata, Akou Ejon Lachit, Mohila Police, Tezar Jui, Bhiksha, Kabarar Kangkal, Kamakhya Namaj, Mahajuddhar Pisot and many others. One of his plays Bhai Bowari staged by ‘Bardoisila Theatre’ in 2005 received a huge support from the audiences from different parts of the state.10 To show the decreasing importance of ‘Dhulia’ culture of lower Assam, Barua wrote Ashusi Poojar Phool performed by ‘Abahawn Theatre’ in 1983, which was very popular in that year among the plays performed by different Mobile Theatre parties of Assam.
Mahesh Kalita:

Another well known playwright of Assam who has contributed a large number of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre is Mahesh Kalita. He has been associating with this cultural medium of the state for a long time. ‘Manchakonwar Theatre’, formed by Prabhat Bora in North Guwahati performed his first play on stage namely *Lanchita Jouvan* in 1976. One of the special characteristic of plays written by Mahesh Kalita is the presence of human nature for which the contemporary audiences accept it and get immense support. Some of the popular plays written by Mahesh Kalita are; *Miri Jiyari, Sabyasashi Bishnu Rabha, Banariya Phool, Deshar Matit Jui, Dalal, Daybadha, Baghjari, Janma Mrityu Bibah, Abakhyay, Banadashyu Birappan, Palashar Jui, Deolaga Hah, Adhikar, Swahid Kushal Konwar, Devata, Kagajar Bagh, Agneeopath, Puwati Tora, Tarzan, Matir Maram, Kapurush*, etc.

Hemanta Dutta:

Among the contemporary playwrights of Assam, Hemanta Dutta is a very familiar name among the people of Assam. He is one of the greatest living playwrights of Assam. Powerful imaginative qualities that are seen in most of the character of his plays give him a unique place among the theatre loving audiences of the state. As a playwright he occupies a very prestigious position in the wide field of Assamese Mobile Theatre. Some of his well known plays are; *Gangaputra Bhisma, Trishna, Rahumukti, Anarkali, Krantikal, Devi Manasha, Bhay, Senduriya Megh, Apon Manuh, Tez, Bandi, Ulanga Nachon, Jui, Mor Priyar Alingan, Ashur, Kait, Darmaha, Paap, Alop Maram Alop Ghrina, Sribatsa Sinta, Dhany Dhanya Kalikaal, Anuradhar Desh, Nabin Master, Devi Sanyasini, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Basundhara, Sri Madvagabat Geeta, Daag, Anuradahar Desh, Hiyat Premar Phool, Sapon Bhonga Jouvan, Premar
Thikana, Path, Mon, Atmasandhan, Eta Nasta Larar Galpa, Akakhor Dore Man, Mukti, Chakrabehu, etc. But the play which makes Hemnta Dutta more familiar not only in the state of Assam but in the other parts of world was the stage performance of James Cameron’s Hollywood blockbuster Titanic, staged by ‘Kohinoor Theatre’ in the year 1999.

Munin Baruah:

Born in 1947 at Khumtai in Golaghat district of Assam, Munin Baruah is one of the prominent film director as well as a famous name in the cultural world of Assam. Popularly known as ‘Bhaimon da’ he has contributed a lot to the Assamese Mobile Theatre industry. As a playwright he is one of the most successful people in the field of Assamese Mobile Theatre. Most of his plays may be placed under the category of realistic social play. He contributed more than fifty plays that are performed by various Mobile Theatre group of Assam. Some his popular plays are; Agyat Bash, Apriya, Hathat Edin, Niyara Fool, Sikari, Puwa Gadhuli, Rang, Rang Birang, Rodra Chaya, Adhinayak, Jaal, Golam, Mayamriga, Mantri Aru Manuh, Khalnayak, Surjyaputra Karna, Sasadhar, Ajat Satru, Mahajogyia, Maya, Nijanar Gaan, Pratipal Partikhyan, Agnimoy, Jon Bair Dare, Janma Janmantar, Ghar, Aghat, Sesh Bhaona, Sonmaina, Sinaki manuh Asinaki man, Bairi Bandhu, Asin Chinaki, Joy Porajay, Udgriran, Ausir Jon, Sapon Jen Ejak Barashun, Priyar Prem, Jodha, Koinar Poduli Uduli Muduli, Bih Aru Amrit, Khiriki etc.

Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia:

Born on February 20, 1932 at Nagaon town, Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia was one of the greatest literate of the state of Assam. He was the recipient of many literary awards including “Sahitya Academy” in the year 1976 and also recognized with the prestigious
‘Padmashree’ title. His active association with the Mobile Theatre of Assam gave it a new place in the cultural field of Assam. He wrote twenty four numbers of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre and each of his plays got much popularity among the theatre lovers of Assam. He entered to this wide field of mobile theatre in the year 1981 through his play *Ramdhenu* performed by ‘Abahawan Theatre’ on stage. Here it is very important to mention that, Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia wrote twenty four numbers of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre throughout his entire life. Dr. Saikia wrote twenty four numbers of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre and ‘Abahawan Theatre’, one of the leading Mobile Theatre parties of Assam performed his plays continuously for twenty four years without any pause. All the plays written by Dr. Saikia were performed by the two leading mobile theatre parties of Assam of present time namely ‘Abahawn Theatre’ and ‘Kohinoor Theatre’. His plays are; *Gahbar, Maharanya, Pandulipi, Andhakup, Bondisaal, Amrapali, Manikoot, Neelakantha, Bishkumbha, Amrit, Janmabhoomi, Deenabandhu, Pratibamba, Digambar, Gadhuli, Brindaban, Swargadwar, Paramananda, Samudra Manthan, Swarnajayanti, Ramyabhoomi, Barnamala, Satabdi, Aranyat Gadhuli, Subha Sangbad, Jonak Rati and Swarnajayanti.*

11 Bhabendra Nath Saikia’s contribution to the Assamese Mobile Theatre was unique in nature that only a few playwrights can be placed with him. Almost all of his plays deals with contemporary social problem and the characters of his plays depict all sections of people. The reason behind his success is his simple metaphorical as well as artistic presentation of whole thing. This great legend of Assam died in the year of 2003 at Guwahati which is a great loss for state of Assam.
Mahananda Sarma:

Among the popular playwrights of Assam, Mahananda Sarma is one who has contributed a large number of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre. He played the role as an actor, director as well as producer of Assamese Mobile Theatre. In the earlier stage of his career, Mahananda Sarma established himself as an actor and after that as a producer and at the last as a playwright. His attachment with Dr. Bhupen Hazarika in the year 1975 inspired Mahananda Sarma to join in ‘Binapani Theatre’ in Nalbari. Although he was a very popular actor in the beginning of his career but Mahananda Sarma could not continue it for a long time and came out from the profession of acting. After this he joined in ‘Suradevi Theatre’ as well as ‘Kohinoor Theatre’, as an actor. In 1978 Mahananda Sarma started ‘Aparupa Theatre’ in Pascim Chamata but it could not continue for a long time and came to close in 1989. However these experiences inside the theatre hall inspired him to write plays for Mobile Theatre. Some of his well known plays are *Dakhya Jagya*, *Sandhan*, *Maya Mriga*, *Padadhwani*, *Simarekha*, *Charitrahin*, *Akou Saraighat* etc.

Nagen Nath:

Nagen Nath is another significant playwright of Assamese Mobile Theatre. He started this carrier in the field of Asamese Mobile Theatre through his play *Setu Bandhan*. After this he wrote plenty of plays and became successful in occupying a prestigious position in the wide field of Mobile Theatre in Assam. A few of his plays are *Swami*, *Sahajatri*, *Mahajudhar Senapati*, *Banaria Manuh*, *Dashyu Rani Nayan Tara* and many others. In 1997 his play *Sri Krishnar Baikuntha Prayan* first staged by ‘Pallavi Theatre’ got immense popularity among the contemporary audiences.
Awatar Sing:

Although an engineer by profession, Awatar Singh earned his name as a popular playwright among the theatre lovers of Assam and contributed a number of plays for Assamese Mobile Theatre. The play *Ekhan Sagar Alekh Nadi* performed by ‘Makunda Theatre’ on stage in the year 1989 made him very popular among the theatre loving audiences of the state. Some of his other plays are, *Tez Loga Phool, Jiya Manuhar Samadhi, Mon Bagichar Gabharu, Bandini Pratima, Agni, Andha Devata, Banariya Chowali, Mandirar Jui, Khang, Mantra, Guru* etc.

Sebabrat Baruah:

In the year 1982, Sebabrat Baruah came to the field of Assamese Mobile Theatre as an actor through ‘Anirban Theatre’ formed by Subhash Choudhury in Pathsala. With the passes of time, besides playing his role as an actor, Sebabrat Baruah started his career as a playwright for Assamese Mobile Theatre. The play made him very popular among the people of Assam was *Balighar* where the technique of flashback was shown to reflect the exploitation done by upper classes of people on the lower class of society. Some of his other well known plays are, *Arundhatir Prem, Nastik, Desh Bulile Nalage Adesh, Nedekha Saku, Laat Sahabar Laaj, Maak Aru Maram, Saisabate Dhemalite, Joutuk, Mamatar Sithi, Sendoor, Senai, Agharir Ghar, Cornel Sahabar Sangshar, Garakhiya Larar Gaan, Eratir Eswar, Pabitra Paapi, Alingan, Dhumuha Pakhir Sadhu, Padatik, Asil, Ranabhoomi, Nakal Hira, Aghari Anjana, Dainosarar Atanka, Maya Mamata, Jivan Nadir Ghaat, Lagan Ukali Jai, Lajjita Premar Adhayi, Dakshajogya, Jonakat Andhar, Ganasatru, Kakadeutar Maram, Lady Diana, Mukutar Mala, Rup Arupar Khel, Pinjara, Path Upapath* etc.
Jiten Sarma:
Among the present playwrights of Assam, Jiten Sarma is a familiar person in the Assamese Mobile Theatre industry. In 1993, the performance of his play *Kaal Basundhara* staged by ‘Srimanta Sankardev Theatre’ established him as a popular playwright of Assam. The special feature of all the plays written by Jiten Sarma is that the theme of his plays are mainly based on contemporary social issues for which the audience get full interest from it. Some of his plays are; *Jwalamukhi, Matal Ghora, Ghatak, Haijek, Pretatmar Khang, Kaal Sandhya, Pratighat,* Nastachandra etc.

Abhijeet Bhattacharya:
Among the present playwright of Assam, Abhijeet Bhattacharya is the most familiar name in the field of Assamese Mobile Theatre industry. Born on December 26, 1973, he got a cultural environment in his home from his father Hem Bhattacharya. Abhijit Bhattacharya started his carrier as playwright through his play *Samiran Baruah Ahi Ase* performed by ‘Abahawan Theatre’ in 2000. After that without any pause, he composed a number of plays and most of them are well received by the audiences of Assam. Use of ‘gimmick’ is a remarkable feature of his play. Following are some plays which make this playwright more familiar among the theatre lovers of Assam are *AK 47, Milan Mala Ek Prem Kahini, Girip Garap Koina Ahise, Abuj Dara Asin Koina, Kabuliwalar Bideshi Kanya, Sunami, Nach Mayuri Nach, Mor Prem Tomar Sendoor, Saku, 1999 Matho Premar Babe, Professor Abinash, More Natur Koina, Kathgarat Satyranjan, Alingaan, Sayane Sapune Zubeen, Raktabidyt Pathak B.A, Chamak, Baa Baba Aru Babli, Astitwa, Maya Matuo Maya, Shanta Sista Dusta Chowali, Rangdhali Chowali Moi, Dara Haba Kon, Mama Bhagin, Kohinoor Nahai Mathu Eti Hira, Bhal Pao Buli Nakaba, Erabator Sur, Jed, Hiyar Epahi Golap, Devdas, Footpathor Romeo, DSP
Durga, Smakhan Jatra, Maa Kasam, Ramleela and some others. For the year 2016-2017, Abhijeet Bhattacharya writes a number of plays among these Tejya Putra (Theatre Surjya), Romanch (Brindaban Theatre), Mahatmar Sakupani (Rajtilak Theatre), Badmas Chowali (Sudarshan Theatre), Maa Kali (Abahawan Theatre), Kalangkini Nayika and Jiban Sangram (Rajashree Theatre) etc. which will be the chief attraction for Mobile Theatre parties of Assam.

**Mridul Chutia:**

Among the new generation playwrights of Assam, Mridul Chutia is a very popular name in the wide field of Mobile Theatre in Assam. Flashback is an important feature that is seen in almost all of his plays. Mridul Chutia is well known for portraying various social burning issues through his plays. Some of his well known plays are Astapath, Atmalipi, Prajanma, Mor Srdhar Hanuman, Bhagnabasesh, Antaheen etc. For the year 2016-2017, Mrdiul Chutia has written a play namely Sangibihin which will be the chief attraction of a newly formed Mobile Theatre of Assam that is ‘Siranjeeb Theatre’ under the leadership of Dulumani Das. Another play written by Mridul Chutia for the year 2016-2017 is Dara Gari which will be a chief attraction for ‘Hengool Theatre’ for this year.

**Champak Sarma:**

Champak Sarma started his career as an actor and got a unique position through his vigorous performance on stage. Within a short period of time he became very famous in the field of Assamese Mobile Theatre. As the time passes Champak Sarma started to write plays for Mobile Theatre and most of them became very popular among the audience. Some of his plays are Godfather, Prem Aru Priya, Tezal Haat, Sanghamitrar Biya, 15 August, Toi Koriba Lagiba Agnistan, Maram Enajari, Badnaam, Jabab,
Baaji, etc. In the same way Champak Sarma has written three numbers of plays for the session 2016-2017 namely Beera and Narasingha perform by ‘Rajmukut Theatre’ as well as Dahan on by ‘Rajashree Theatre’ on stage.

Besides all of these some other playwrights also composed plays on different topics and helped in free flow of the living stream of Mobile Theatre of Assam. Among this Kanauj Baishya, Arup Borthakur, Ramakanta Das, Dhrubajyoti Sarma, Chandra Moodai, Rudra Choudhury, Chandra Choudhury, Mami Bhatta, Indukalpa Hazariya, Kalpa Kumar Kakati, Karunakanta Baishya, Pradip Saikia, Babul Das, Krishna Roy, Munindra Nath Sarma, Haren Deka, Ratna Ojha, Arun Sarma, Atul Bordalai, Samarendra Barman, Roma Barman, Ananta Dutta, Krishna Bardalai, Padma Borkataki, Durgeswar Borthakur, Pabitra Kumar Deka, Pankaj Jyoti Bhuya, Sujit Singha, Ramapati Das, Phulen Barman, Hemen Sarma, Abdul Masjid, Bhabesh Baruah, Chakrdhar Deka, Dipak Tamuli, Debajit Sarma, Monoj Bhatta, Sonmani Dutta, Binod Bhagawati, Rajdeep, are significant.

The concept of Hypodermic or Magic Bullet is also seen in the activities of Mobile Theatre in Assam. According to this Hypodermic or Magic Bullet concept, mass media has a direct influence upon the society. Here, the messages are like magic bullet which directly influences the receivers. The Mobile Theatre of Assam, as a medium of communication has direct influence upon the audiences. In the makeshift theatre hall, mobile theatre parties through their play directly influences the audiences like magic bullet and hence after enjoying a show, most of the audience shows their satisfaction or dissatisfaction outside of a theatre hall.
4.3: Edutainment Function

In 1948, the term ‘edutainment’ was first coined by The Walt Disney Company to describe the ‘True Life Adventure Series’. The noun edutainment is a neologistic portmanteau used by Robert Heyman in 1973 while producing documentaries for the National Geographic Society. It was also used by Dr. Chris Daniels in 1975 to encapsulate the theme of his millennium projects which later known as ‘The Elysian World Project.’

Educational entertainment, also referred to edutainment is content designed to educate and entertain. It includes content that is primarily educational but has incidental entertainment value, and content that is mostly entertaining but contains educational value. This term has been used to disseminate information through various medium of communication such as Radio, Television, various types of performing arts like dance, song, drama etc.

For the last five decades, the ‘Bhramyaman’ theatre, as we call it, or the ‘carnival on wheels’ as people describe it, has been creating miracles with some ever-new topics on the stage. Even filmmakers think twice before venturing on the reel what they do effortlessly on the stage. The themes of these plays have, over the years, covered a wide range of subjects, including mythology, classic Greek tragedies, Shakespearean dramas, sci-fi of H. G. Wells, plays based on Assamese and other regional literature, to subjects like the Gaisal train tragedy.

Every year the entire mobile theatre group comes with a surprise package to amuse the audience. Besides popular themes of scripts, they are tremendously popular among millions of viewers in the state for their techno-savvy presentation, special effects, superior music and brilliant stage performance by artists. The Mobile Theatre groups
have not left any stone unturned to attract the audience. Many plays by different groups have also helped spread social messages, from terrorism to AIDS, through their productions.

Assamese Mobile Theatre is one of the most popular sources of edutainment among the general mass of Assam. If awareness campaign can be initiated through various plays performed by mobile theatre groups of Assam, it will be a very effective tool of communication.

As Mr. Ratan Lahkar, the producer of a leading theatre group ‘Kohinoor Theatre’, says, “The plays always have a message for the mass, even though it is wrapped in a package of entertaining gimmicks, we have a business to run and along with producing plays with social content, we have to make plays which pull crowds.” (Source: Interview).

We can use Assamese Mobile Theatre as a medium of edutainment. Awareness campaign can be initiated through the performance of various plays as well as ‘dance-drama’ done by mobile theatre parties which gives both information and entertainment at a same time. In 2007-2008, ‘Abahawn Theatre’ and ‘Kohinoor Theatre’ performed two dance dramas dealing with the theme on agricultural activities. This was of course a novel concept to choose dance drama as a means to create awareness among common mass.

An eye to changing interests has ensured that the Mobile Theatre genre does not lose its appeal to the young audience either. Cities draw as much crowds as the smaller venues. The Mobile Theatre groups are striking the right balance between entertainment and social content till now and the growing popularity of the plays even among the youngsters in urban areas proves that they are hitting the right chord.
4.4: Entertainment Function:

The most obvious of all media functions is that of entertainment. The newspaper devotes much space to cover the events of the day, gossip, humor, comic, sports, horoscopes, puzzles and general entertainment features. Television is primarily devoted to entertainment.\textsuperscript{13} As a medium of communication, Assamese Mobile Theatre has been playing a very important role as the source of entertainment among both rural as well as urban people. The entertainment function of Assamese Mobile Theatre is related with the ‘Uses and Gratification Theory’ of mass communication started by Katz in 1959. According to this theory mass media plays a very important role as the source of entertainment as well as leisure. In the same way, the basic concept behind this theory is that, the “gratification” or the rewards or satisfaction can be experienced by those only who use the media. Here, the Mobile Theatre of Assam is performing its role as a source of entertainment since its inception. At the same time this entertainment can be achieve by those only who enjoy a show perform by Mobile Theatre. Plays like Titanic, Mahabharat, Ramayan, Jurrasic Park, Lady Diana etc are some well known examples performed by Mobile Theatre parties of Assam which became successful to give entertainment among the people of Assam.

4.5: Social Responsibility

As a medium of communication, Mobile Theatre of Assam has been playing a very important role since for a long time in the growth and development of a society. This biggest cultural industry of the state plays an important role in formation of various social organizations in different parts of the state. Modern Assamese Mobile Theatre since its very beginning contributed a lot for the growth of such organizations in
different corners of Assam. It is well known that a theatre troop is being invited for the benefit of an organization by its members or well wishers. After the completion of four or three day show in a particular place, if any profit is earned it is being invested for the development of such organization of that place. In many cases the producers of mobile theatre donate certain amount of money at their own interest for the formation of such social organizations. In Assam, Mobile Theatre parties play an important role in formation of various schools and Colleges, Namghar, Public Auditorium, Clubs etc in different places. It is interesting to notice that ‘Nalbari Hari Mandir Committee’ invites around eleven theatre parties every year during ‘Nalbari Rash Mahotsav’ and earns huge amount of profit from it. Following are some organizations who earn profit by inviting Mobile Theatres are Pragjyotish Club, (Patacharkuchi), Nityananda Lakshmi Puja Samiti (Nityananda), Rup Konwar Kala Parishad (Chamata), Tihu Tigers Club (Tihu), Lions Club (Tihu), Barama Krira Santha (Nalbari) etc.

### 4.6: Unity and Fraternity

Although the chief goal of every Mobile Theatre is to successfully perform a play on stage and give some important message to its audience, at the same time it helps a lot in bringing the spirit of unity as well as fraternity among all the persons engaged with it. As we know that, in a Mobile Theatre party more than one hundred people work together coming from various places without any caste or religion. The workers whose main job is to make the make shift theatre hall, the technicians, the instrument players, the actors, the actresses, the dancers and all other peoples assigned with different duties never ignore their respective work and do all the needful at time for successful performance of a play. Thus each and every workers of a Mobile Theatre party work as a team and at the same time each and everyone depends upon one another for
successful performance of a play on stage. Again, for a particular year, the journey of a Mobile Theatre party starts from June and it continued upto April. During these nine months of time, all the workers of a Mobile Theatre troupe move different places altogether and performs its shows in various places of Assam. Hence an emotional bond is grown up among all the workers where each and everyone work as one family member. This actually brings a feeling of unity among all the workers of a Mobile Theatre group. In many cases it is seen that the workers of a Mobile Theatre choose their life partner within a troupe.

The audience of Mobile Theatre also comes from different background. For enjoying a show, a large number of audiences gather together in a common place with a same goal. It helps a lot in bringing a spirit of unity among the audiences coming from different sections of people. In the same way, after performing three or four day shows in a particular place a relationship grow up along with the local people of that place. Again, a Mobile Theatre party is invited by an organization or a committee or a club of a particular place for its performance. It ultimately makes a good relationship among the members of these organizations along with Mobile Theatre personalities. In this way Assamese Mobile Theatre plays an important role in bringing the spirit of unity and brotherhood among different sections of people under a common platform both in-house as well as outside the theatre hall.

4.7: Creates an Environment for Promotion of Theatre in State

Being a cultural organization, Assamese Mobile Theatre not only impact visual entertainment but also inspired local youths and creates an atmosphere for promotion as well as upliftment of theatrical environment in the state. In other words Assamese Mobile Theatre plays a significant role in enriching the cultural scenario in the state of
Assam. It is well known that Assamese Mobile Theatre performs different plays on stage by moving various places of Assam throughout the year. The theatre group construct their makeshift tent on an open field with seat capacity approximately for 2000 audiences.\textsuperscript{14} Hence when a Mobile Theatre party perform their shows on particular place it make a contact with more than twenty thousand people in four days show. As a result of this, a large number of local peoples from different remote areas of the state came in touch with the well known actors and actresses who worked with Mobile Theatre. It influences the local peoples from villages and remote areas to come forward and expose their efficiency in this field. Thus it helps a lot in bringing out the hidden talent of such peoples and in later period of time, some of these local people can make their carrier with this biggest cultural medium of the state. Again, Assamese Mobile Theatre influence as well as encourage a number of playwright to compose new plays. It is a very powerful platform through which a playwright can expose him or her and earn both name and fame among a large number of audiences as well as among the people of Assam as a whole. Thus, Assamese Mobile Theatre acts as a very powerful medium of entertainment and communication as well as played an important role in creating an environment for promotion of theatre in the state of Assam at a same time.

4.8: Opportunity for Employment

Assamese Mobile Theatre is the biggest cultural medium of the State. There is no such organization in other parts of the world where a large number of persons work together and move from one place to another for performing plays with all the essential requirements of dramatic performance. Achyut Lahkar, the father of modern Assamese Mobile Theatre mentioned that ensuring the financial security to all the workers associated with theatre activities was a chief cause behind the birth of Mobile Theatre
in Assam. People’s involvement in different departments of a Mobile Theatre parties varies between 70-80 to 100-150. Out of these 20-25 numbers are actors and actresses, 10-15 numbers are dancers and the remaining numbers of people are technicians, cook, carpenter, management people etc.

Mobile Theatre of Assam is not a small organization. As mentioned above it is a group of large number of peoples involve in various departments. Different departments of a Mobile Theatre groups are;

a. Direction of drama.

b. Decoration of stage.

c. Makeshift hall.

d. Sound and music.

e. Light.

f. Set and property.

g. Decoration and make up.

h. Green room.

i. Food.

j. Transportation.

k. Publicity.
Employment status in a Mobile Theatre group is shown below;

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl no</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Numbers of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>1 or more than one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Arranger</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Actress</td>
<td>5-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Dancers (Male and Female)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Helpers</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Instrumentalist</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Singers</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Directors- dance, drama and music</td>
<td>1 in each (generally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Playwrights</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Lyricist</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Drivers</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Narayan Baruah, Abahawan Theatre)

In Assam there are more than forty Mobile Theatre parties are actively running their journey at present time. More than one hundred persons including actors and actresses engaged themselves with a particular Mobile Theatre party as per contract. Hence almost four thousand peoples engaged themselves with Mobile Theatre for their livelihood. In this way Assamese Mobile Theatre is playing a very great role and stand as a very powerful platform in solving the unemployment problem of the State.
Notes and References:


8. Ibid. p 59.


13. Ibid. p 28.