

Assamese acting in new media: critical analysis

Heema Rani Borah

Research Scholar, Assamese Department
Dibrugarh University, Assam
Email - boraheema@gmail.com

Abstract: *New media is one of the fastest medium of communication developed in the era of science and technology in 21st century. These mediums categorised as new media have been playing a vital role in changing of Assamese society in three major ways - socially, culturally and through different linguistic approaches. In this researched article focus is put on how Assamese acting as parts of performing art form are getting published and promoted in new media. On the other hand, as part of acting Ankiyas (one act play) and Bhaonas in mother tongue, mobile theatres, feature films, serials, short films, VCDs, animation films etc. are been published and promoted through new media, but all of them are not receiving equal response from the audiences. Published in new media based on their respective styles and techniques these forms of art have both positive and negative sides to behold. To prepare this article 'Assamese acting in new media: a critical analysis' Wikipedia, Facebook and YouTube have been considered as areas of research. Critical method, analytical method and comparative method as well as sample selection method and observation method have been used to collect data.*

Key Words: *New media, Assamese Acting, Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube, like, comment, viewers, status, classical song.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Oral or written art forms find their audio visual appearances through performing arts. They could be seen or listen to in a certain form through dances, songs, instrumental sounds, acting etc. Performing art has very close connection with other three major parts of culture, such as folk literature, festivals and events and physical customs. Traditional oral literature gets life through performing art. Similarly various parts of social festivals and events are closely related to performing art. In Assamese culture we see performances like *Ojapali, Dhuliya-kaliya, Khuliya-bhaoriya, Bharigaan, Kushan gaan* etc. which are related to religious events. Songs and dances are performed during the practice of different rituals including the ones executed intending recovery from certain diseases, agricultural practices and reform related festivals as well. On the other hand it is noteworthy how various artefacts which are a part of physical custom are utilized while performing different art forms. Elements like *mukhashilpa* (art of making masks), variety of instruments, armaments, costumes, ornaments etc. help making performing art more appealing and entertaining. From this point of view performing art can be divided in three parts – a) songs, b) dance and c) drama.¹

In this study it has been analysed how Assamese acting as art forms are getting publicity and growth through new media, specifically through Wikipedia, Facebook and YouTube. While Assamese acting have been taken to the masses as complete form of performing art by Facebook and YouTube; Wikipedia is publishing information about a certain topic in written form. However, although Wikipedia provides a pool of information about certain acting form, common audiences always prefer to gain knowledge about them through audio-visual mediums. At this point of time it is a crucial aspect to analyse how new media, the latest addition of communication is helping Assamese culture to flourish, or whether the information related to them are getting proper attention in these mediums. In this discussion focus is kept on the aspects of performing art which are been published through new media as well as analysis in done on which platform they have been appearing in a more influential way for their viewers.

2. Objective of the study:

- To discuss Assamese Assamese Acting as a part of performing art of Assam that has been published and developed through new media.
- To analyse whether the resources related to Assamese Acting published through new media have been able to represent the thematic aspects with proper approach.
- To find out which new media is playing more vital role in publishing and promoting various aspects of Assamese acting and to study about its executive skills through which it is getting more influencing on its followers.

3. Research Methodology :

3.1 Collection of data

While preparing this researched article three kinds of sources have been used for collecting data – primary sources and secondary sources. Wikipedia, Facebook and YouTube are been selected for field study and these three are the primary sources. Data collected from these sources through participation and observation as a part of investigative method. On the other hand for study of subject matters published and promoted in new media some selected written texts and audio-visuals are taken as study materials.

3.2 Data analysis

Critical study is done to find out the utility, substance, obligation, appeal, acceptability, exclusivity etc. of the subject matters published and promoted in new media and decision is made on this basis. Through analytical method investigation is done on various theoretical aspects related to Assamese musical art and its elements are divided to prepare this article. This method is applied in regards of studying audiences' response as well. In this case listing method is also assisting to an extent. Through comparative method valuation of various new media, people's response towards a particular kind of it and their role and influence over publishing and promoting certain data is done.

4. Study area:

The aptitude of new media on the basis of task and technique is unique and extravagant. Keeping the enormity of this limitless area of study it is been restricted within two mediums only – a) Wikipedia, b) Facebook and c) YouTube - those represent new media and playing vital roles in publishing and promoting Assamese music in written, audio and visual forms.

4.1 Assamese acting in new media

Various resources about acting as a part of performing art have been published and stored in different divisions of new media. In this subchapter effort has been made to analyse those resources found in new media in written and performed states. This study includes acting related to *naat-bhaona*, plays, mobile theatres, feature films and VCDs from Assam.

4.2 Assamese acting in Wikipedia

As part of Assamese performing art discussions about *Ankiya naat-bhaona*, plays, mobile theatres can be found in Wikipedia. However, there is no such article that focuses only on acting as an art but many cover this area as a reference part of other related write-ups. Articles published in Wikipedia, such as 'Bhaona', 'Ankiya Naat', 'Baresohoriya Bhaona Mahotsav', 'Natak', 'Bhramyaman Theatre', 'Axomor Chalachitr'a etc. have mentioned about acting as a related topic but they have not discussed it thoroughly. Few aspects attached to acting such as, dance, entry, costumes, induction and history of plays and *bhaona*, stage, the overall journey of plays, auditorium, performed plays and artists, discussion about various films etc. are there in those articles.

4.3 Assamese acting in Facebook

Followed by *Ankiya naat-bhaona*, the incredible creation of Shrimanta Shankardeva, in later period *bhaona* in Assamese language has been developed. Both of these art forms are seem to be getting publicity through Facebook. Complete or partial recordings that are done while performing *bhaona* in some *naamghars*, stages or competitions are found in various pages, groups or personal accounts in Facebook. In the era of new media while the new generation have an ocean of choices for entertainment, *bhaona* has not lost its entreaty yet. On the other had it is actually reaching to a wider audience through the publicity attained from new media. Nevertheless, *bhaona* performed in mother tongue Assamese is getting more publicity in this case. Modern techniques, *gayon-bayon*,

costumes used now in the plays are helping to pull out more audiences. Some flaws while publishing videos in Facebook such as not mentioning names of the specific *bhaona*, its director, location and time of performance are commonly seen. Some videos did have lot of scopes to upgrade their overall quality.

Though not in high quantity, some of the mobile theatres are also published in Facebook. On the other hand other genres of plays such as one act play, street play etc. are not seen in Facebook. In case of mobile theatre, videos related to their advertisements, a complete drama performed on stage or dramas in parts are usually found in this platform. Special publicity about the status of mobile theatre is also getting place nowadays. Along with all the advertisements published in Facebook a written status, a sensational photograph or visual clip from the play, detail information about the play and artists working with it are seem to be attached with a purpose of getting increased number of audience. Publishing of a whole drama through Facebook has given audiences the opportunity to enjoy mobile theatre sitting at the comfort of their own home without any hassle of visiting to the actual performing set.

In terms of Assamese films, most videos published in Facebook are film promotions or trailers trying to grab audiences' attention. Effort is also made to promote the films by publishing various details about them like how much money a particular film has earned from its screening, what kind response is being received from audiences in the box office, what are the awards and recognition the film has got etc. Some interesting scenes of films are also shown sometimes. Be it film or VCD, people have a certain amount of interest towards these mediums of entertainment which is actually very common. Recently another new adaptation in Assamese film has come out which is known as 'short film'. Facebook is playing a vital role in promotion and development of Assamese short films. Some of them have been receiving tremendous response from viewers while some others are left far behind. Many people utilising this genre of films to showcase their acting talent. If observed carefully it would be noticed that short films based on romantic love stories have larger number of audience. Facebook is also helping Assamese serials in publicity and growth. Apparently two segments of Assamese serials are there – a) created and published one episode after another though Facebook only, b) re publishing the entertaining serials already telecasted through television channels.

The first one has been able to get better response from viewers in comparison to already broadcasted serials except one or two exceptions. Republishing of those same serials in YouTube as well may be a reason behind that lesser number of viewers. Animation film is another form adapted recently by the Assamese film world though it has yet to be able to reflect Assamese culture or society at large rather than presenting some Assamese characters in satirical way. No such style and techniques are visible in those animation films made with the help of some cartoon apps. But the most interesting fact is that the response these films are receiving from viewers is unprecedented. Here are the titles and viewers count of some videos published in Facebook – Do not miss: Shri shri Krishna Maharaas 'Keli Gopal' and Ankiya Bhaona 'Parijat Haran's some scenes of Shankari Nrityabhinoy (B'Tube, 5th December 2020, 1.3K Views), Panchjonya Shilpi Samaj, Lakhimpur's today's play – Bhargav Bijoy, Natarup – Dvenanda Deva Goswami, Auniati Satra Deka Satradhikar (Axomiya Bhaona Sanskriti: 7th November 2020), Abahan Theatre team's (Ma Kali) Complete drama with acting of Mridul Bhuya and Prastuti Parashar (Chandan Haloi, 8th April, 2019, 1K Views), Ratnakar Trailer (Advertisement, Aamis page, 4th October, 2019, 540K Views) Paio Herualu (Buddies, 27th November, 2019, 1.2 Views) etc.

4.4 Assamese acting in YouTube

YouTube is successfully reflecting Assamese acting as a form of art by giving wide publicity of every elements of it. All kinds of publicity have two more key purposes behind it – a) to develop one's own talent and b) to gain popularity among the viewers and subsequently based on that popularity to earn some financial benefits.

YouTube is now a prominent platform for publicity and growth of *Ankiya naat* and Assamese *Naat-bhaona*. The incredible creations of Shankardeva and Madhavdeva as well as the Assamese *naat-bhaonas* created by their successors have got special publicity through YouTube. Complete videos or parts of *Bhaonas* performed in various stages and *naamghars* or auditoriums of different religious places across Assam are been uploaded in YouTube. The YouTubers who upload such videos try to create attractive titles to get more audience. Sometimes some videos even appear with complete different titles from the original plays. Same theory applies to the cover photos as well. Sometimes it shows a picture of war scene that goes with the title used in the scrollbar as well. Video is also consists of that very war scene which is may be a part of the complete *Bhaona*. These are some techniques to entertain audience in a very short span of time and to give an idea of the entire show. Recently with modern influence many changes are been noticed in *Bhaona*. In case of *Ankiya Bhaona* the number of viewers is very limited which may be because of a) the language aspect, b) the performing style which is not similar to other performing arts as they have not adapted to new techniques as per demands of today's audiences, c) the video

quality uploaded in YouTube are not up to the mark, and d) most of the plays are incomplete; partial presentation cannot give audience a clear understanding of the story and so they cannot connect with the characters. For example – Ankiya Natak I Rukmini Haran I By the artists of Narayanpur I (Nirutpal Borah, 964 Views), Terrifying war II Brahma Bishnu, Shiva all are running away (Aximoya Sanskriti Bhaona, 11K Views), War Between Shri Barah and Hiranyaksh (700K Views), Shakuni Pratishodh II Complete Bhaona Part-1 II By artists of different districts of Assam (Apex Studio, 122K Views) etc.

Assamese one-act plays, complete plays from mobile theatres, feature films, short films and animation films are been published and preserved with various methods and techniques. Videos related to mobile theatres which are published through YouTube are indicating that the glory of mobile theatre has not faded yet. Moreover, such videos are exposing the talents of the artists and technicians working in mobile theatres in front of a larger audience. On the other hand people who are deprived of the opportunity of enjoying mobile theatre on stage are getting to relish it through recorded performances uploaded in YouTube. Another important fact is that the technicalities used in making of an Assamese film have been uplifted to the national benchmark. Contrary to the previous ways of promoting a film through hordings and radio or television advertisements now it can easily be promoted through new media – YouTube definitely plays a prominent role in this. Along with the advertisements of the films or plays of mobile theatres few interesting scenes, dialogues of actors – mostly the sensational ones are published in YouTube. Catchy statements like ‘the most fascinating dialogue’ are used in the scrollbar to attract viewers’ attention. Moreover, special titles are also used apart from the original one to make people curious about the videos. In case of one-act plays the number of viewers is relatively lesser than mobile theatres possibly because a) unlike mobile theatres one-act plays do not seem to have popular and well-known actors and b) low quality audio-visuals and lack of innovation in overall concept development.

The VCDs, another important adaptation of 21st century by Assamese film world are mostly *Bihu*-centric which are full of songs and dance performances. They have been able to establish a new tune and style in *Bihu* songs and dance. Newness has been brought by them both in terms of story and screenplay and the differentiating line between a film and VCD become blurred at many points for common people. Recently the trend of VCD seems to be vanished and a new concept has emerged as ‘short films’ in YouTube. These newest addition of films which is mainly released through YouTube has the ability to convey message to the society in a very short span of time. This is an important medium to earn popularity in a very low expenditure. As a promotional technique the YouTube link of a short film is shared through other social networking sites to make people aware about the film. On the other hand animation films are also being made based on Assamese fairy tales, folk tales, and stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata etc. some of them are made for children as well. Through some of these films moral values of Assamese culture and society are also been imparted. The films presented in the style of grandparents narrating stories to their grandchildren are able to attract every age group of people. These films available in YouTube use title and other details along with amusing pictures of the characters on cover page. Some such animation films are also published serially in episodes through YouTube. Sample of videos published in YouTube with their titles and viewers’ count.

5. CONCLUSION :

From the critical analysis on Assamese acting in new media we have come to the conclusions like –

- Only a few aspects about Assamese acting are found in Wikipedia which is not enough. One or two write-ups about performance of *Ankiya Bhaona* are there in Wikipedia. One cannot avail adequate information about mobile theatres, Assamese feature films, VCDs etc. from this medium. Available articles related to drama are mostly written with the literary point of view where performance or acting part seems to be missing.
- In Facebook some features of Assamese acting as an art form are been published that include videos of *Bhaona* (both performed in *ankiya* and mother tongue medium), parts of recorded visuals from mobile theatres, various VCDs, short films, Facebook’s own serials or already telecasted television serials, animation films etc. Promotional videos of Assamese films are also published through different Facebook pages, web portals etc. Audience response is quite satisfactory towards those videos. *Bhaona* performed in mother tongue is getting more popularity than *Ankiya bhaona*.
- Acting as an art is getting tremendous publicity through YouTube in Assam. *Ankiya bhaona* and following it the *Bhaona* performed in mother tongue – recorded performances of both are been published in YouTube either in complete forms or in parts. People find the *Bhaona* performed in mother tongue more appealing mainly for the language and various causes related to performance. As a component of publicity practices

unambiguous titles are used to grab audiences' attention. However, quality wise and also on the basis of performance these videos do have a lot of scope for improvisation.

- Other than *Bhaona* wide publicity of Assamese feature films, promotional trailer videos about different feature films, short films, serials already telecasted by television channels, Animation films etc. are seen in YouTube. YouTube has brought a revolutionary change in the art of Assamese acting giving it the opportunity to grow by showcasing it in front of the entire world. The publishing technique of YouTube is almost same for everyone. People get attracted by the cover photos attached to the videos those mention the title in Assamese or in English or sometimes in both the languages. People who upload videos seem to be applying various techniques to get a captivating title to attract audience.

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