

‘LYRICIST TO THE AIRWAVES: A CRITICAL STUDY OF INDIRA BORO’S ESSAY ‘MY JOURNEY TO ALL INDIA RADIO, GUWAHATI.’

Abstract:

Indira Boro plays an important role in the existence of literature and culture in Bodo community at present through her involvement in poetry, prose, folk tale, translation, lyrics and radio broadcasting. In her autobiographical essay ‘My Journey to All India Radio, Guwahati’, published in Raithaihala (Jothai Bidang), Volume IV (2024), she shares her personal journey in the long association with the All India Radio (AIR), especially AIR Guwahati. The essay follows her journey from rapturous radio listener to lyricist and then on to a full-fledged radio participant. In this study, Boro's evolution as a lyricist is explored, her family and cultural context, her working relationship with radio and the role of radio in creating space for Bodo literature and culture are discussed in a critical manner. Her story shows how radio served as more than just a source of entertainment: it was a cultural shaping force that fostered the creativity of literary artists and gave regional writers and artists an outlet. The study also examines the role Boro's personal memories play in documenting elements of Bodo broadcasting history and the role that individual creativity, cultural identity and electronic media play in each other. Her voyage eventually represents the metamorphosis of listener to creator, with her lyrics, voice and literary work becoming part of the cultural space that had inspired her since her childhood.

Keywords:

Lyricist, All India Radio, Bodo song, radio broadcasting, cultural expression, autobiography

Introduction:

Radio has been a great help in the development and spread of regional languages, literature and music, as well as the cultural traditions in India. Radio was one of the more available ways to communicate prior to the advent of television and digital outlets, especially in rural areas. It

brought news, songs, drama, poetry and discussions, and even some education to the ordinary homes and established a cultural link between the broadcaster, writer, performers and listeners. Radio was a significant, public voice for writers and artists from the regional linguistic communities. It is possible that literary compositions which would never be available in print or in manuscript could be made available to a much larger public by broadcasting. Songs were especially significant in that they were an integral amalgamation of language, literature and music, providing a vehicle of literary expression through performance. An autobiographical essay by Indira Boro titled 'My Journey to All India Radio, Guwahati' for Raithaihala (Jothai Bidang), Volume IV, 2024, provides an important personal narrative about this connection between literature and broadcasting. The essay traces her childhood interest in radio and her evolution as a lyricist and how she got involved in various activities of All India Radio, Guwahati. Boro's story is significant because it is a personal experience of a creative process. Her career with radio started as a hobby. It started with a listening experience. Born into a rural society where radio was a vital source of communication and entertainment, her inner attraction to the AIR Guwahati's voices, songs and announcements was strong. Gradually, listening generated aspiration. Though her heart was first set on becoming a singer, she was drawn along with context towards writing lyrics. This move would be a turning point in her literary career. What became of the radio that she used to listen to as a member of the audience is now her own creative medium. In this paper, therefore, the focus is not only on the personal memoirs but on the process of literary formation and participation in the process of culture of 'My Journey to All India Radio, Guwahati'. A special focus is on Boro's emergence as a lyricist, her association with AIR Guwahati and the broader implications of radio in promoting the literary and cultural expression of the Bodos.

Objectives of the Study:

This paper attempts to throw light on the process of Indira Boro's evolution from a zealous listener of the radio to a celebrated lyricist for All India Radio, Guwahati. It aims to investigate the effects of her childhood, family and cultural surroundings on the development of her creative personality. The study also delves into how radio broadcasting has influenced her songwriting and served as a space for her to perform her music publicly. The other aim is an analysis of the representation of aspiration, perseverance and creative development, which is autobiographical in 'My Journey to All India Radio, Guwahati'. The paper also attempts to get an insight into the significance of radio in the Bodo language and culture in the wake of Boro's personal experience.

Methodology:

The study is qualitative and text analytical. The autobiographical essay, 'My Journey to All India Radio, Guwahati' written by Indira Boro' in Raithaihala (Jothai Bidang) Volume IV (2024) is used as the main text. The paper delves deeply into Boro's memories of her childhood, family life, listening to radio, writing songs, being acknowledged as a lyricist and her involvement with AIR Guwahati and AIR Kokrajhar. A biographical method is also used, since the essay itself is the reconstruction of the creative process from the memory of the author. It is important to bear this in mind when considering the study, which focuses mainly on Boro's autobiographical testimony, and how this relates to literary creativity and broadcasting.

Childhood and the Formation of a Creative Mind:

Indira Boro's creative roots lay in her childhood experiences. Family influence is important to her in her autobiographical narrative, in terms of both encouragement of education and self-development. The important influence of her father emerges. Boro is proud of his social engagement and dedication to education and community development. She also remembers how her parents encouraged their children in the education even in the economic and geographical challenges of rural life. Her childhood surroundings were also a major influence on her culture. Her father set up programmes to promote education among the villagers. These programmes comprised of poetry recitation, storytelling, singing and other cultural activities. Such experiences brought out the young Boro to a world where literature and oral expression and music were in harmony. Her family were involved in singing and musical and cultural activities. This atmosphere helped create an early sensitivity towards literary and musical expression. The significance of these childhood experiences is that Boro's eventual career as a lyricist did not just materialize one day. Grew up in a culture that respected education, community involvement, music and verbal expression. Her subsequent work in radio work can thus be interpreted as a continuation of the cultural experiences she had enjoyed in her formative years.

Radio as an Early Source of Inspiration:

One of the most striking features in Boro's autobiography is her description of listening to radio. She remembers a time when TV was not available in her rural environment, when Radio was a big source of information, knowledge and entertainment. Gradually she came to listen to the radio more often. She recalls waiting for the programme and the melodic music and voices of

the presenter. All this interest shows the emotional strength which radio had for the listeners of that time. Radio was much more than a technology for Boro. It invented a realm of songwriters, announcers, writers and artists. It seems that songs were especially influential on her when they were announced. The usual format of announcing a song, the singer and the writer caught her interest in the creative talent of those behind the broadcast. This was an important experience in shaping her future aspiration. By listening, she started to picture herself as playing a role in the cultural world of All India Radio. Gradually the listener began to desire to be a Creator.

From Aspiring Singer to Lyricist:

One of the highlights of Boro's personal story in her autobiographical essay is her shift from being a singer to a lyricist. Her familiarization with radio singers' naturally led her to consider singing. But she says, 'But I couldn't do it on that time, as it were situations. She didn't give up on radio and music, but found another way to participate. During her studies in Class IX, she still paid attention to the announcements of new songs of Bodo programme. Around this time, she came up with the notion that if she couldn't be a singer, then she could be a lyricist. This choice is important to note of her creative personality; that she is one who adapts. She was unable to pursue one creative path, but it was not her aspiration that came to an end. It gave her a new source of creativity. The change from singer to lyricist also represents her evolution towards literary creation. A lyricist is a person who writes the words for a song. The lyricist conveys emotions, experiences, cultural values, and ideas in words that later become an aspect of the music. Boro's move is thus more than just a change of roles in art. It is the start of her literary career and her relationship to broadcasting.

Beginning of Her Journey as a Lyricist:

Boro dates the onset of her serious songwriting as beginning around 1984 when she took her matriculation exam. Upon completion of the exam she used the time she had to write songs. She went on to write and put together several compositions for All India Radio, Guwahati. According to her account, the songs submitted to AIR had to be evaluated first before a writer would be recognized as a lyricist. The process was very important as it demonstrates that enthusiasm alone was not enough; it was necessary to be creative and disciplined and induce institutional recognition for entry into radio broadcasting. Boro was required to write, submit her compositions and wait for their evaluation. She remembers that she was using small exercise

books for her songs and had to send her compositions via the channels to AIR Guwahati. She kept these activities mostly a secret from her family. The episode is a sign of determination and independence. When it came to writing, she didn't wait for the audience to notice it before she kept on creating. The writing process became an ongoing creative endeavor. Her development as a lyricist then came as a result of her persistence. The process started with private composition, then shifted to institutional evaluation before finally going to public broadcasting.

The first Broadcast: A Turning Point:

One of the most moving scenes in Boro's story is when she hears one of her songs played over the radio. She sets the time of the event at 1985. During her college days, she stayed with her aunt, and heard a radio announcement saying the song was hers. Her aunt, who was unaware of her songwriting endeavors, was amazed and thrilled. The moment was not only a change from private to public authorship for Boro, but it also marked the beginning of his new career as a public artist. Prior to this, songwriting was mostly a solo venture. Her words reached the public cultural sphere through broadcasting. Her name had been announced especially. The lyricist is usually discovered by the listener via the singer's voice, but it is a sign of the literary effort required to understand that as the listener discovers the lyricist, they also discover the song. The broadcast thus endowed Boro with a new identity. She was no longer just a songwriter who wrote songs in isolation, but now a lyricist whose songs could be heard by radio listeners. She's been bolstered by her aunt's support after the broadcast, further boosting her creative confidence. It can be seen as one of the turning points in Boro's development towards a long-term association with All India Radio.

All India Radio and Development of Her Creative Identity:

The more Boro's relationship with AIR grew, the more she got involved in writing lyrics. She started writing poetry and entered into other radio work. From her personal account it is clear that AIR offered the context for the exchange of literary and artistic forms. Songs, poems, announcements, drama and discussions were not separate elements, but were part of a greater cultural space. Boro was able to learn to be a multidimensional creative person in this environment. Her writing of lyrics was an effective beginning but radio slowly allowed her to be involved as poet, announcer, performer and writer. That makes the role of AIR in her life more significant than just playing individual songs. It gave her the chance to interact with other artists,

musicians and writers, as well as to experience the institutional culture. Her experience highlights the ways in which radio can help develop a writer, by giving him or her exposure, recognition, and opportunities to experiment with creativity.

Indira Boro as a Casual Announcer:

Another significant milestone in Boro's association with AIR Guwahati started in 1993. She was interviewed by casual announcers who worked along with the Bodo programme and then she received training. One of the things that stands out in her story is the fact that she recalled herself being the only one in her training batch to be a female. This observation gives an additional dimension to her broadcasting experience. She was given her first chance to make an announcement on 20 May 1993. She recalls the date as a memorable event in her life. The switch to announcing is a big change. In her role as a lyricist she had been heard in the songs of singers. In her position as an announcer, she was physically present as herself for listeners. So, her broadcasting career was combined with two aspects of expression – writing and voice. She still does the job as casual presenter and tells about her dedication to the job. Her insights focus not on monetary gain but on a commitment to her role as a cultural and creative ambassador of radio, highlighting her dedication to the medium.

Interaction with the Cultural World of Broadcasting:

During her time at AIR, Boro met many cultural figures, artists and writers. An auto-biographical essay that recalls the music, literature and broadcasting experiences of Assamese and Bodo people with people. These past memories provide another key role for the radio station: it served as a forum for creative individuals from other disciplines to come together. This type of setting may broaden a writer's and lyricist's cultural exposure for an emerging artist. He was introduced to the collaborative aspect of broadcasting when he interacted with singers, musicians, actors, announcers and writers. Radio production is seldom a solo effort. The lyric can be authored by one person, set to music by another, sung by a singer, and finally, passed in the technical and organizational system of the station. The experiences Boro then shares demonstrate how individual creativity enters into the realm of collective cultural production.

Participation in Radio Drama and Other Programmes:

Boro's creative collaboration with AIR went beyond just songwriting and announcing. She also includes opportunities to perform in radio drama and background singing. This participation shows her versatility with regard to her association with broadcasting. Radio drama is a blend of literary writing, dialogue, voice acting, music and sound. She would have been introduced to another type of literary performance if it had been a programme to which she had been participating. The radio station was a place for ongoing creative learning, as evidenced by her involvement in various programmes. An individual might enter via one art activity, find and engage in multiple art activities. Boro's diversification reinforced a literary/performative relationship she felt during her formative years.

Lyrics, Integration and Cultural Responsibility:

A significant part of Boro's story is the invitation to compose a song related to integration for a programme for a Bodo festival. She recalls responding by writing two songs. The episode shows that radio songwriting can have social and cultural responsibilities. Lyrics created for institutional or public programs are not only a private expression of emotion but can also convey ideas about community, unity and collective identity. Her memory of the next selection process also suggests that there are institutional decisions in the making when broadcasting. Even though the writer may love the piece of creative writing, it may not be chosen to be transmitted. This is a valuable experience in terms of the connection between creativity and institutional broadcasting. The lyricist writes the text, but his/her role as such is self-contained and the decision to incorporate such text into a specific programme remains with the broadcaster.

The 50th Anniversary of AIR Guwahati and Boro's Lyrics:

The essay received one of the greatest acknowledgements of Boro's songwriting when it was used in the programme marking the fiftieth anniversary of All India Radio, Guwahati, in 1997. She says that she was asked to write songs for the celebration, and she wrote two songs. One of them was subsequently set to music and performed as a group song. This episode is important as a symbolic one from her journey. As a kid, Boro had been keenly listening to AIR Guwahati and wished to be linked to the world of the radio. Several years later she was asked to provide lyrics for the same institution's anniversary celebration. As an audience member, she became a commissioned lyricist, reflecting how her creative identity developed. As presented in her autobiographical narration, the anniversary composition highlights the AIR Guwahati in

terms of hope, inspiration, culture and continuity. These ideas indicate the emotional significance she put into the institution. Her lyrics are not radio as a machine for hearing sounds. AIR is presented as a cultural organisation that is able to convey the old and new cultural messages to listeners. The anniversary song, then, not only celebrates the institution, but it also reflects Boro's relationship with it.

Bodo Language and Cultural Expression through Radio:

Boro's story also allows for reflection on the part of radio in the linguistic and cultural expression of the Bodos. The programmes she talks about opened doors to listeners for Bodo songs, voices, literary works and cultural exchanges. It was possible to spread the cultural content beyond the actual place of its production, therefore. The presence of a broadcasting institution in a language community has cultural value for the community. It makes public the language and offers a means of expression to writers, lyricists, singers and speakers. It is in this context that Boro's work as lyricist has to be comprehended. Her songwriting entered into a wider system of language, music, performance and audience. Radio also linked the traditional culture to electronic communication. Experiential-based songs and other forms could be relayed via broadcasting technology and listened to over a greater geographical distance. As a result, Boro's self-portrayal is an indirect account of an important relationship between Bodo cultural expression and modern media.

A Woman's Voice in Broadcasting:

Boro's story is also important as a story about women's involvement in literary and broadcasting activities. In particular, her memory of the only woman in her casual-announcer training class in 1993 stands out. Her essay does not directly express this as a fight against gender discrimination, but the fact that she was there shows that the women were actively engaged in Bodo broadcasting. Boro was not only a singer or performer, he was a lyricist, writer and announcer. These positions included ideas, writing and speaking in public. The trajectory of her career, thus, becomes an important chapter in the history of the creative involvement of women in the literature of Bodo. Her journey is a woman moving into a public cultural space, first via her writing, then via her own voice. This shift from writing songs for oneself to performing them in public is thus significant not only as an individual accomplishment, but as an illustration of women's cultural participation.

From AIR Guwahati to AIR Kokrajhar:

Boro says that she was a casual announcer in the Bodo programme of AIR Guwahati between 1993 and 2000. In March 2000 she joined Guwahati University Kokrajhar Campus and her regular announcing work became difficult. This was not the end of her radio career though. Her story reflects her ongoing connection with AIR Kokrajhar through her writing, speaking and engagement as an expert. This is proof that her relationship with broadcasting became a more permanent cultural involvement than a short-term professional practice. She composed on various themes and for various events: festivals, seasons, social events and women's events. As an author of radio texts, her writing therefore branched out from lyrics into cultural and social prose. It is significant in terms of the development of Boro as a writer. Initially, she came to radio via music and songs, and then began using it as a way of communicating on a much broader spectrum of literary, cultural and social topics.

Broadcast Writing to Printed Literature:

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Boro's story is the connection between radio writing and Boro's later print journalism. According to her, her book *Harim and Boro Culture* (2017) has been compiled from different articles she had written for musical features at AIR Kokrajhar. This represents a movement from electronic broadcasting to print culture. Material originally created for listeners was subsequently preserved for readers. Such a change of career shows that radio writing doesn't have to be a short-term career. Printed compositions are then more of a literary reality. As for Boro, the process also reveals the practice of her creative work as being linked. Writing lyrics, writing for radio, talking about culture, writing books are various phases of a literary career. Therefore, her work with AIR had a dual impact – on her broadcasts and on her literary work.

Journey as a Metaphor of Creative Development:

The term 'journey' used in the title of 'My Journey to All India Radio, Guwahati' is very significant. At the most basic level, it is Boro's individual connection to AIR. On a deeper level, though, it's a progression of her artistic identity. She starts her journey as a child, through the ears. It then goes through the process of aspiration, songwriting, submission, recognition, announcing and ongoing cultural participation. These stages are all contributing to her identity. The transition can thus be seen as a sequence of: **Listener-Aspirant-Songwriter-**

Recognized Lyricist-Announcer-Radio Writer-Cultural Contributor. This development is one of the best-defined structural aspect of her own life story. It also shows that there are countless pathways for building a creative career. Boro's development took place gradually through family influence, personal interest, repeated writing, institutional opportunities and continued dedication. The metaphor of journey is thus an effective one for capturing movement and growth.

Autobiography and Cultural Memory:

'My Journey to All India Radio, Guwahati' is not just a story of Indira Boro but also keeps the memories of Bodo broadcasting alive. Auto-biographical writing tells about history from a personal point of view. Institutional documents can easily capture dates, programme plans and administrative details, while personal narrative can capture emotions, aspirations, relationships and life experiences. Boro recalls waiting for radio programmes, listening to the announcers, hearing their name for the first time, attending training sessions, making announcements and meeting artists. These memories add the human face to broadcasting's past. Her essay in this sense is a cultural memory. It documents information concerning the experience of listening to radio on the ground and the listener who became part of the radio broadcasting institution. It also documents the part played by the support and encouragement of family members, as well as cultural programmes and personal determination. Such autobiographical narration is useful for researchers of Bodo literature and culture as it relates literary history to the personal experience.

Major Findings:

The study shows that Indira Boro's growth process as a lyricist is deeply linked to her childhood surroundings and constant listening to radio. Her family's love of education, music and cultural activity provided an important foundation for her creative development. The study also reveals that radio was a part of her life and not a passive one. Listening – aspiration – then, encouragement – became a creator herself. She's a creative individual who's adapted to becoming a lyricist from an aspiring singer. The decision not to go into singing did not result in her disillusionment of music but she channelled her creativity into songwriting. AIR Guwahati then gave her a public podium for her lyrics, and helped shape her creative persona. Her first broadcast in the mid-1980s represented a pivotal change in her status as a private writer to an author of public works. She extended this identity as a casual announcer, so that her voice was incorporated into the broadcast medium. The study also notes that Boro's career in radio did not start and stop

with song lyrics but also included poetry, drama, articles, talks and cultural programmes. Her career is thus an example of the mingling of literature, music and broadcasting. Last but not least, her own essay is also an autobiographical account and left behind remainders of her personal memory of the history of Bodo broadcasting, as well as the contribution of radio in the dissemination of Bodo language and culture.

Conclusion:

The autobiography, 'My Journey to All India Radio, Guwahati', written by Indira Boro and published in Raithaihala (Jothai Bidang), Volume IV (2024), is an important narrative of creative development, literary ambition and cultural involvement. The story is about Boro's personal experiences, but it also offers a telling insight into the radio broadcast and Bodo literary-cultural expression. Her first step is to listen. She was fascinated by the voices, music and songs passed through All India Radio as a young girl living in the rural areas. After many years of hearing, a thirst developed to be a part of that culture. Though her initial idea was to be a singer, she was drawn by circumstances to a different career, lyric writing. This shift proved to be the key one. She started composing songs, submitted them to consideration and eventually heard her song played on the same medium that inspired her. This experience changed her from listener to a creator. She then went on to explore other avenues of her creative expression as a lyricist, casual announcer, actor in radio dramas and writer. AIR Guwahati was not only a broadcast station but a place of literary development, artistic engagement and cultural engagement for her. One of the most significant contributions to the fiftieth anniversary celebration of AIR Guwahati in 1997 is highly symbolic. The young listener who aspired to an association with radio became a lyricist invited to write for the establishment. This relationship is continued with AIR Kokrajhar, which was founded by her. She was a journalist and through articles, cultural discussions and other programmes she maintained her literary and cultural voice on radio. The essay is thus important on two intertwined fronts. On an individual level, it details Indira Boro's growth as a lyricist and broadcaster. It is also cultural in nature in that it helps to remember the role of radio in Bodo literature and culture. Her journey proves that broadcasting has more to offer than the dissemination of creative works: it can stimulate creativity, discover writers, offer recognition and make individual creative activity part of a wider linguistic community. Therefore, it is a significant moment in Indira Boro's literary life when she switches roles from a dedicated radio listener to a lyricist and a broadcaster. AIR Guwahati ultimately was a turning point in her life in

her own narration. Her ongoing involvement in the Guwahati and Kokrajhar centres further solidifies the bond between writer and radio and establishes it as a cultural relationship.

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