

**'PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION OF MANUSCRIPTS IN
SATRAS: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MAJULI SATRAS'**

A

PROJECT REPORT

Submitted to

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PREFACE

The presents study is an attempt to highlight the Satras of Majuli, the world largest River Island of Assam. The Satra is a unique institution not of Assam alone, or that of India, it is a unique institution of the whole world in the sense of it being a multidimensional religio-culture organization, and its distinctive characteristics. With its early ideological strength derived from Sankardeva's bhakti religion, and democratic organization set up with the Namghar as the basic unit of its institutions structure, the Satra peopled by residential and celibate inmates from a different kind of social and cultural institution a place for religious practices, cultivation of art and literature, art, craft and painting, music and dance. The Satras are storehouse Manuscripts. The Satras of Majuli are preserving different rare and valuable manuscripts. Those manuscripts have still great role in Varishnavait society as well as in Assamese literature. The Satras of Majuli has also become the centre of the development of the classical Sanskrit and vernacular literature as the beginning of the region.

From the survey report, it has found that almost all the Satras of Majuli are preserved Manuscripts in their libraries or museums.

Chapter-I is introduction, its include history behind place name of Majuli, Satras of Majuli , Preservation of Manuscripts in Satras and their importance's, justification of the problems and statement of the topic, objectives and Methodology. Chapter –II deals with review of related literature and overview of socio-economic, cultural, and religious consciousness of Majuli Satras. Chapter –III deals with Status of Manuscripts collection: an overview. Chapter- IV discussed in Manuscripts collection of Assam. Chapter-V deals with Preservation and conservation of manuscripts in Majuli Satras.

Delimitation of the study, sample and statistics techniques used analysis. In the lastly, chapter-VI we made some interpretation and finding of results, recommendations and suggestions for further study.

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CHAPTER-I

1. Introduction

The world's largest river island, the holy place of *vaishnavite* religion and culture, place of assimilation of different races and tribes is Majuli. The Geographical location nature environment richness in archaeological wealth and biodiversity denote Majuli a unique identity. The island had a total area of 1250 square kilometers at the beginning of the 20th century, but having lost significantly to erosion it had an area of only 352 square kilometers in 2016. Majuli has shrunk as the river surrounding it has grown. However it is recognized by Guinness Book World Records as World's Largest River Island.

The island is formed by the Brahmaputra River in the south and the *Kherkhuti Xuti* an anabranch of the Brahmaputra, joined by the Subansiri River in the north. An administrative Majuli, the 400 square kilometer island on the Brahmaputra has become the first island district of India. This was one the Sarbananda Sonowal government in Assam, on the first cabinet meeting on May 24th, after coming to power with a thumping majority. In 08 September 2016 Majuli becoming the 33district of Assam. Garmur was the District Head Quarter. The island (Majuli district) has 194 villages with a population of over 1 lakh 56 thousand and a density of 300 individual per Square Kilometer.

It is a very difficult ascertains the period of its creation as sufficient and convincing record is not available to support the views in regard to its antiquity. However, on the basic of certain geographical evidence and literary accounts it may be presumed that Majuli took its island's shape at least before

the 13th century A.D. before Sukapha's arrival at the Brahmaputra Valley in the year 1228. Depending upon a popular legend Majuli's antiquity may be traced back to the days of the Mahabharata. It is believed that Lord Krishna when eloping with *Rukmini* from *kundilya* (Present Sadia) sojourned for a while in Majuli. Another chronicle upholds that Koch King *Naranarayana* sent his brother *chilarai* to extend his Kingdom toward upper Assam region.

Dr. D. Nath in his book "The Majuli Island, Society, Economy and Culture", described that Koch king *Naranarayana* had made his camp at Majuli and it was there at the camp, that he had received the tributes and presents from the Ahom King *Sukhanpha* alias *khora Raja* (1548-1563) who was detected in war. Another reference regarding the early existence of Majuli is found in '*Yogini Tantra*' that *chutiya king Ramchandra* founded his capital in *Ratanpur*, Majuli which was perhaps washed away by the Brahmaputra. An early Assamese chronicle also holds the view that during *Sukapha's* arrival at the mouth of *Dikhow* known as *Haboung*. The Bodo originated term '*Haboung*' signified a low-lying flood affected area, so we might believe that the geographical picture of the land indicated no other than Majuli, a part of which falls between the mouth of the *Dihing* and the *Dikhow*. Apart from such legendary beliefs and chronicler evidences, we have early historical references of the Majuli and its land area mentioned by historians and other biographers. King *Auranzeb's* biographer *MahmadKazim* during mid 17th century estimated Majuli's land area as 100 miles. A J Matal Mills recorded in 'Report on province of Assam' that Majuli island was extended to a land area of 2,82,165 Acres in 1863. In another reference of British writer B.C. Allen in his 'Provincial Gazetteer of India' published during 1901, mentioned that

Majuli total land area was around 185 sq. Miles and its population was 35,000 only. According to a British doctor John Peter Wade, the island was 160 Miles long and 60 Miles broad (1927).

However on the basis of some on the basis of some historical and literary references the historian agreed that the present Brahmaputra was flowing to the north of Majuli as pointed out by Sir Edward Gait. The Brahmaputra flowed down the course of what is now called the *Luit River*, along the north of the Majuli Island while the *Dihing* followed the present channel of the Brahmaputra to the south of it and after receiving the waters of the *Disang* and the *Dikhow* united with Brahmaputra at the western extremity.

An exponent historian on Majuli, Dr. D. Nath hold the view that the land mass now encircled by the Brahmaputra on the north and *Dihing*, *Dikhow* combined on the South took the shape of an island in its most embryonic form with the half dead mouth of the *Dihing* demarcating its eastern extremity. This historic event must have happened at least before the 13th Century A.D.

Presumably, the human habitation in Majuli Started from the period when the agrarian people were in search of conducive and fertile soil. Majuli's land mass was regularly inundated by floods spreading sediments to its soil which made it suitable for growing paddy, mustard, sugarcane, pulses, jute, garlic, potato and other essential crops and vegetables. Due to the dense reeds and creepers and the existence of innumerable *beels*, wetlands, inactive river channel and sparsely scattered population, the entire Majuli's land area did not come to the notice of the settlers. Most of these were occupied by wild birds and animals. As per the land survey records of 1950 the total habitable

landmass of 1246 sq. kms, has been reduced to its present century. Mysteriously the number of its population is increasing to more than 1.39 lakhs during the post independent decades in Majuli. The Brahmaputra, governs the life of the people in Majuli and its simultanencously provides bounties of nature to the inhabitants and very often desolates the island with massive devastations. The inhabitants somehow manage to subsist the economic upheaval and they become accustomed to the funs and furies of nature. There are Brahmins, *Kalitas*, *Misings*, *Nath*, *Kochas*, *Chutias*, *Ahom*, *Kaibartas*, *Mattaks*, *SonowalKacharies*, *Nepales* and *Bengalies* in Majuli living since time *immemorial*. Except the few govt employees most of the inhabitants depen upon collection for their living. The tribes like *Mising* and the *Deories* live in ‘*Chang Ghar*’ (platform on pillar) beside the *beels* (Water body) and wetlands. Their style of living is easily distinguishable. All the tribes living in Majuli have their separate rich cultural identities.

The parading beauty that envelopes the island all throughout, later turned into a pilgrimage since the advent of Srimanta Sankardeva, who had been joined by Madhavdeva, the chief apostle in Majuli’s *DhawahatBelaguri* at the early part of the 16th Century. Majuli began to excel from this historical event of communion (*Manikanchan Sanyog*) and Subsequently ushered in the spreading of *Neo-vaishnavism* across the entire island and the state of Assam. One of the milestone ways in which the Renaissance of *Neo-vaishnavism* proliferated to the different castes, was the establishment of Satra institutions and *Namghars*. These serve the purpose of disseminating the principles and devotional practices of *Neo-vaishnavism* among the people through which Sankardeva tried for an egalitarian casteless socio-cultural mosphere in north

coast Region of India. As inspired by this innovative style of social promotion under universal humanistic outlook, 64 satra institutions, the centre of excellence flourished in Majuli. Due to the land depletion caused by constant severe erosions of the Brahmaputra, only 22 satras are housed at present in Majuli. Ahom Kings also patronized a number of satras in Majuli and as such Majuli become the spiritual and cultural hub of Assam.

1.1 Legend and History behind Place-Names of Majuli:

Assam is a land, full of natural beauty, where the ascetics also desired to be born from the very inception. By touching the feet of the motherland and with the benediction, *kamdeva*, who was turned into ashes by *God Shiva*, received his form (*Rupa*). This *Kamrupa* of the remote past was divided into 'Four Pithas'- *Kamapitha*, *Swarnapitha*, *Ratnapitha* and *Saumarpitha*. The demarcation of the boundary of *Kamrupa* is mentioned in the '*Yoginitantra*'. In the bosom of this Kamrup of Assam the great river island Majuli occupied an important place in the history of *vaishnavite culture* and religion. It is stated that the *Chutia King Ratnapala* established his capital at *Ratnapur* of Majuli, but there is lack of historical information.

At present, Majuli is habitation of more than 1, 56,000 people, situated between 26⁰39' and 14⁰35' E longitude. E. Gait mentions- "*Lakhaw lies at what was then the confluence of the Dihing and the Brahmaputra. At the period in question, the latter river flowed down the course of what is now called the Lohit River along the North of the Majuli Island where the Dihing followed the present channel of the Brahmaputra to the South of it and Dichang and the Dikhow united with the Brahamaputra at its Western extremity. At a still earlier period the Dihing is believed to have flowed into*

the Brahmaputra, further east, according to native traditions the Dikhow had an independent course as far as Kajalimukh, part of which still survives in Majuli as the Tuni river and part in Nagaon as the Kalang.”

After a natural calamity in the 17th Century Majuli was created by the *Dihing* flowing into Brahmaputra in the east of Sivasagar dividing the river *Dikhow* into two tributaries. This two rivers were again merged into one in the Western side of Ahataguri and flowed like a single Naranarayana invaded Assam, its western proximity was *Dihing*. Dr. D Nath mentions that although the location of Majuli is like a *chapani*, its southern boundary was openly connected with land route. ‘*Tungkhungia Buranji*’ referred that two devastating floods had occurred one after another in between the gap of 3 days in 1691 and the whole state with the capital, *Gargaon* was overflowed. Although the period from 1691 to 1696 is important for the creation, yet the process was going on for a later period. Dr. J.P. Wade gives a detailed account of the geographical condition of the Third Division which he calls Majuli or the Great Island.

‘*Charitputhi*’ legends and local tradition refer that Majuli emerged before the coming of the Ahoms and the land was full of forests and wild animals. Records say that the great sage, Srimanta Sankardeva and madhavadeva met each other in *Dhuwahat Belaguri* of Majuli and stayed there for 14 years preaching *vaisnavism*.

At present the island consists of 248 villages (inhabited 194 and uninhabited 54) 435 L.P. School, 69 High School, 23 Non-provincialised Schools, 5 Degree Colleges, 2 Junior Colleges, 4 H.S. School, 1 ITI and 1 B.T.C. at Rawnapara. Total territorial extent is about 580 sq. kms. Muhamad

Qazim, the writer of the bibliography of Aurangzeb stated that the Territorial extent was about 100 miles (50 cross). Dr. J.P. Wade mentioned that its length was 160 miles and the breadth was 60 miles. The area was 2,82,165 acres.

The most significant and important cultural heartland of Majuli is Kamalabari and Garamur. When Madhavadeva was at Koch Behar, one of his disciples padma Ata was allowed to found a satra in Upper Assam and preach *vaishnavism* in *kalanibheti*, *pachatiabheti*, *Badulaghat*, *Mudoibheti* etc. by establishing satras. After a few years in Saka 1656, he founded Kamalabari Satra at the orange (Kamala) garden of Purusuttam Baruah of Bezboruah family of Sivasagar on the bank of the Tuni River. Purusuttam Boruah took initiative to established this Satra (*Pabitra Assam by Maheswar Neog, P-72; hemkosh, P-177*) so it is known as Kamalabari Satra.

Auniati Satra is situated about six kms. West of Kamalabari. During the reign of Jayadhvaj Singh when he completed a sacrifice at Goalpara, Niranjana pathak of the period of Misradev Gosain from Kuruabahi invited and placed him as Guru in 1575-76 Saka (1654 A.D.). The place was full of forest like 'Aunipan' and other trees. Clearing the jungle of 'Aunipan' the satra was founded there. So the satra is known as the 'Auniati Satra'. The four prominent royal patronized satras are Auniati, Dakshinpat, Garmur and Kuruabahi Satra. King Jayadhaj Sing donated lands and deciphered copper plates for the maintenance of the satra of Majuli. These satras received royal recognition as the centre of *Vaishnavite culture* and the place of the '*Etakia Mahanta*' from the time of the Ahom rule. *Vaishnava* received official recognition when Jayadhaj Sing enrolled himself as the disciple of Niranjana Babu, whom he established as the first *Gosain* of the great Auniati Satra. These

Mahanta included in the royal registrar were called '*Etakia Mahantas*' so Majuli is well known as the place of '*Etakia Mahanta*'.

Dakhinpat Satra is situated about 20 kms. east of Kamalabari. The name of Dakhinpat Satra has a history of its own. During the reign of Jayadhaj Singh in 1662 A.D. at the south of *patnagar (Rajkareng)* and the Brahmaputra another satra was founded there with Banamali Deva as *Satradhikar*. As it was situated on the southern side (Dakhinpat) of Gargaon and Bornodi during that period, it was known as Dakhinpat Satra. Banamali Deva worshipped that idol of Sri Jadavaraya, which was brought from *Srikhetra or Jagannath Khetra* (Orissa). The system is preserving up till now. According to *Gurucharit*, the Satra was on the northern side of the *Dihing* which was in same range with the Shiva Temple of Negheriting (Dergaon). While the Ahom King Jayadhaj Singh founded satras in Majuli, at the same time he constructed ramparts and excavated tanks in different parts of his kingdom. The tank, *Rawna Phukhuri* was also one of those benevolent activities of the kind. The area nearby the tank is known as Rawnapar located 10 kms east of Kamalabari.

Dhawachala is another important place about 18 kms. east of Kamalabari. According to legend and local tradition Dhawachala was constructed by Ahom King Pratap Singh. The king used this rampart for the capture of elephants and the hunting of deer and collection of gold through *Sonowals*. During the reign of Siva Singh, his wife Barraju Phuleswari Kunwari used this area to collect flowers from phulani and other areas of Majuli through *Malakars*, to worship God in the *Dols and Devalayas*. There was easy means of communication from Dhawachala to Gargaon.

Garamur Satra is 3 kms. north of kamalabari and District headquarter of Majuli. King pratap Singh, before his accession to the Ahom throne fell in love with *Lahdoi*, a beautiful Ahom Woman. Sri Sri Bonshigopaldeva established 'Garmur Satra'. This Garmur Satra played an important role in the sphere of vaishnavite culture and religion. However, Pitambardev, the former *Satradhikar* during the independence movement of India played a significant role and he could keep relation with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Now Garamur is the District headquarter of Majuli. It is believed that the name Jengraimukh is known from remote past. A prominent place inhabited by tribal people known as Mishing an ethnic group of Assam. The large number of bushes of '*SauraTree*' existence in this place. The bushes of '*Saura*' which means *Jengrai* in the *Mishing dialeet*, so the name is *Jengraimukh*. The area is rich in culture and education. Its located is about 28 kms. from Kamalabari.

Sankardeva established Majuli as the centre of *vaishnava culture* and religion and the Ahom Kings patronized the satras. Besides four prominent satras there are a large number of satras, e.g. Bhagpur, Bengennati, Alengi, Chamaguri, Natun Chamaguri or Grantar Satra, Karatipar Satra, Kherkatia Satra etc.

Now the *Satriya* dance hasreceived national recognition. This is also a great achievement of the *Vaishnavism* of Sankardeva and the Satras of Assam. This great river island Majuli consisting of a large number of Satras with its villages, always carries a beauteous, splendid *vaishnavite cultural* tradition for the salvation of human being. Due to acculturation of the subalterns, morality still exists here in Majuli. The inundation, the erosion and the increasing devastation of floods every year has extensively damaged the boundary of

island and the area is decreasing every year. It is sure that if we stay without protection and conservation, Majuli will very soon extinguish from the geographical map, and cultural heritage will get a setback.

A number of organizations like MIPADC, AJYCP, AASU of Majuli district and others have been interacting with the Government of India for its development and conservation. Even UNESCO had taken proposals for the declaration of Majuli as 'World Heritage'. The proposal was put in the UNESCO World Heritage session of 18th July to 14th July 2006 at Vilnius, the capital city of Lithuania. But it is matter of great regret that the State Government delayed in sending the necessary documents for the conservation of Majuli as a World Heritage. Due to this Majuli is deprived of getting a rightful place of World Heritage in the map of UNESCO.

1.2 Satras in Majuli:

Satras are institutional centers that are unique and special to the *Ekasarant* tradition. Satras are generally under the control of individual *adhikaras* (or *satra adhikaras*) though they can be grouped in to four different *Sanghaties* (order) *brahama*. *Purush*, *nika* and *kaal sanghaties*. The satras are established by Assam *Vaishnavite* monasteries for religious practices at the initiative of the Ahom King of Assam in the middle of the 17th century to propagate *neo-vaishnavism* Sankardeva is said to have established his first satra at Bardowa, his birth place and then in different places of Assam. The Belguri Satra, the first satra to be established in Majuli was named after the place where Sankardeva and Madhavadeva met for the first time. That meeting (*ManiKanchan Sanyog*) was followed by the establishment of satras and rising religious prominence of Majuli in Assam. The follower of Sankardeva and

Madhavadeva established Sixty four(64) satras in the sixteen and seventeenth centuries. Practicing and propagating *vaishnavism* as preached by them of the Sixty Four satras which were established there, only twenty two are in existence at present. The rest either been eroded away or have been shifted to other places. In term of functioning, satra resemble Buddhist monasteries where a number of in mates, called *bhaktas*, dedicate themselves to religion activities. There are three structures behind the overall picture of the satra. These are physical structure, spiritual structure and organizational structure. These structures are so interlinked with each other. In each Satra there is a *Satradhikar* or the head of the Satra and *deka satradhikar* or the deputy head of the Satra. Both these office-bearers reside within the Satra campus. A model Satra has a *namghar* or prayer hall, the *manikut* or the sanctum, and four *hati* sorrows of cottages (*baha*) for the in mates arranged in a rectumgulag or square form.

The main Satras of Majuli's are

- Dakhinpat Satra
- Auniati Satra
- Garamurh Satra
- Kamalabari Satra
- Bengenauti Satra
- Shamaguri Satra
- Elingi Satra
- Kuruwabahi Satra etc.

1.3 Preservation of Manuscripts:

Every satra has its own collection of manuscripts. The number range from ten to three hundred and fifty different satras and total of around four thousand manuscripts between them. Most of these are origin texts written by Sankardeva and Madhavadeva most popular themes are religion (mainly concerned with the worship of lord Krishna) medicine, astrology and zoology. Almost all manuscripts are written on *sachipat* or the bark of a tree.

The satras also house rare collection of illustrated manuscripts. The most important manuscripts preserved at the satras include *Hasti-vidyarnava* treatise on elephants (Auniati satra) illustrated *Bhagawat* and the *Nidana* a manuscript on etiology (Bengeneati satra), *Tantrasar*, a manuscript about rituals of worship, *charit-puthi* a biographical manuscript on saints and *purana*, Hindu scripture, *Nam-Mallika*, *Ratnawali*, a scripture written by Madhavabdeva and *Dasama* a scripture written by Sankardeva.

Manuscripts constitute a major element of cultural life of Assam writing or copying manuscript has been considering spiritual merit in satras and Buddhist monasteries of the land. These manuscripts are still in vogue these worshipped in *neo-vaishnavit* faith. Manuscripts making and their preservation used to have royal patronage for a considerable period of time. The manuscripts are scattered throughout the state in various Satras, *namghars*, Buddhist monasteries, museums and libraries is also in some households, a part from a few collections outside the state.

The materials being organic in nature high humidity, high temperature of the region. Lack of awareness and religious ethos relating to these makes the conservation of the manuscripts a challenging task. The region being prone to nature hazards like flood, earthquake etc too makes preserving these rare documents more challenging.

Many scholars have made broad-studies about the Majuli satras but the proposed study has remained in darkness. In national level, many scholars

made studies of the satras, SN. Sarma the “*Neo-Vaishnavit movement and the satrainstitution of Assam*” contents about *Neo-Vaishnavit* movement of Majuli Maheswar Neog-“*Early history of the vaishnava faith and movement in Assam*” is an important primary source for the reconstruction of the history of Satras and their *vaishnava* faith.

1.4 Printed manuscripts:

The story of printed manuscripts in Assam can be starter from Majuli. All though three earliest date manuscripts with printed folios has come from *Hajo* and *Burka* region in Rangiya sub-devision in the title of the *Bhagavatapurana*,vi(dated 1600 saka 1678 A.D.), the second one has come from purana Kamalabari satra (now in the possession of Natun Kamalabari satra). The Kamalabari satra manuscript is a transcript of the *Bhakti-Ratanavali*. Its folios, were painted in the saka year 1605(1683 A.D.) significantly, the *Gita-Govinda manuscript* is believed to have been rendered under the royal patronage of the Ahom monach, Rudra singha (1695-1713 A.D.) One of the other hand, the transcript of the *Ananda-Lahari* was illustrated with patronization received from the Ahom king Siva Singha(1713-1744 A.D.) and his first queen. Significantly, pandit Hem Chandra Goswami recovered the manuscripts copies of the illustrated treatise from Garamur Satra of Majuli. The provenance of all these manuscripts can be a attributed to the region of Majuli.

Bengenauti satra in Majuli has a record of at least two illustrated manuscripts in its possession. The folios of the Ramayana were paint in the Satra in 1715 A.D. The second manuscript of the Satra is a copy of the *Bhagavata-purana(Adi-dasama)* painted in the year 1804 A.D. A transcript of the *Anadi-patanawas* painted in precincts of purana Samaguri satra of Majuli. A reverse some movement of illustrated manuscripts from other parts of Assam to Majuli could be traced in the copy of the transcript of the *Hastividyanava* presently preserved in the library of Auniati Satra.

Several Satras of Majuli, were shifted to Lakhimpur and the south bank to get-ride of depredation of flood. Bar Elingi Satra, which shifted to Bangalmara near Narayanpur, has been in the possession of a transcript of the *Katha-Bhagavata* of a containing some exquisite paintings rendered in a style different from those of the Majuli manuscripts.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The research under the report has been undertaken the following objectives:

- a) To find out the real condition of Majuli Satras.
- b) To find out the Preservation of manuscripts in various Majuli Satras.
- c) To study the various stages of the culture, socio-economic, life style and religious consiousness of the people of Majuli Satras.
- d) To determine the nature and extent of their impact upon the society.To assess the cultural and religious resurgence as reflected in preservation of manuscript in Majuli Satras.

1.6 Methodology:

The research, were mainly based on field study and library works. Comparativeanalyses and interviews to synthesize the findings with personal cognition were also be taken in to account. The primary data were be collected though organization and house hold survey surrounding the residence of satras conducted with the help of schedules taking random sampling selecting difference Social groups distributed though the Satras. The primary source were supplemented by a studyof secondary sources consisting of published and un-published works of author throwing list upon the area under study. Manuscripts articles in Newspapers and Journals were utilization to carry out the study.

CHAPTER-II

Majuli Satras: An overview of Socio-Economic, Cultural and Religious Consciousness.

Literature review:

A literature review is an important part of research study where the existing literature on a particular study area, are searched and reviewed accordingly. This helps in gaining an insight of current knowledge as well as theoretical and methodological contribution to a particular area of study. These literature reviews are mainly based on the secondary sources available in different formats, and it does not state any new or original experimental work.

To review the literature on the study area based on the title ‘**Preservation and conservation of manuscripts in Satras: with special reference to Majuli Satras**’, both the print and digital resource has been covered. Literature is searched and analyzed within different phases covering the whole area of the study. The existing publications are reviewed and summarized mentioning their critical analysis reflecting on them. Review of these existing resources gives an outline of the present status of this research area and its future scope for development. A collection of resources representing different aspects of the study area has been scrutinized and documented in given below. The publications under each phase are arranged according to the date of publication.

2.1 An overview of Majuli Satra:

The Satra institution is a most innovative, sublime and truly democratic institution envisaged and created more than five hundred years ago by the great saint, social reformer and outstanding communicator, Sri Sankardeva. However, mainly because of a communication gap between Eastern India and

the rest of the country, there is almost a total eclipse of the life and teachings of this noble soul in the vast Indian religious literature and tradition. The communication gap is so alarming that in some of these writings by the great scholars. Sankardeva has even been mentioned as a disciple of *Chaitanya*! Only a few scholars like Theodore De Barry (sources of Indian Tradition), Dr V. Raghavan (The Great Integrators) and Dr R.K (Sankardeva: the founder of Assamese Vaishnavism) have put record straight and have mentioned Sankardeva as a forerunner of *Chaitanya*. Dr. R.K.Das Gupta has this to say : “If any great religious leader and poet has received much less attention than he deserves, he is Sankardeva (1449-1568), the founder of Assamese *Vaishnavism* and one of the finest writers of devotional verse in Indian Literature.”

There is, therefore, a crying need to enrich the treasure house of Indian religious beliefs and art and culture by incorporating into it, the noble philosophy of Sankardeva. The primary responsibility of achieving and Satra of Assam.

Sankardeva established the Satra to free his people from the worst from *Sakta tantricism* and to turn the searchlight on the faith that he propagated- the faith of worshipping the One. With the Satra as the nerve-centre of his faith, he succeeded in communicating his message through prayers, songs, dances, plays and paintings. In an age when the medium of mass communication was at its infancy, the instrument used by Sankardeva was mass communication at its best. It would perhaps be no exaggeration to say that Sankardeva was a pioneer communicator and the satra is one of the pioneer institutions in the world of mass communications.

The Satra could ensure such a strong communication with the soul that occasional political upheavals could cause no damage to the soiled foundation of the Satra. Describing the Satra as “the sheet anchor of the Assamese society”, renowned scholar Dr. Bani Kanta Kakati, in his book, *Mother Goddess Kamakhya* observes that “ They (satra) often shook to their foundations under the blast of the rulers’ fury, but stood erect again after the fury was spent.”

It is the organizational structure of the satra that makes it so strong and sustaining. To realize this, one has to go back to the origin of the word, ‘satra’. The word ‘satra’, has its origin in Sanskrit. In the *Rig Veda*, the word means “that which protects the good and the honest.” Satra also has some affinity with the Buddhist “*Samgha*.” If the Buddhist *Samghas* have the monks; the satras have the bhakatas. The Buddhist *Samghas* are democratic, so also the satras. The satra of Sankardeva knows no cast system, knows no distinction between the rich and poor. Yet another view point about the origin of the word satra is that the word can be traced to the word. ‘*sattra*’ found in the *Bhagavata purana*, which means a sacrificial session where the *Bhagavata purana* is recited and explained to the group of devotees. It is also to be noted that Damodaradeva, the founder of the satra at patbausi, Barpeta, appointed three *bhagavatis* to recite the *Bhagavata* in the satra.

Generally, the Satra is quadrangular in shape. Ach Satra has four structures- a *Naamghar*, a *Manikuta*, a *Batcora* and *Hatis*. The *Naamghar* is the prayer hall. The main activities of the Satra are performed here. *Manikuta* is the sanctum-sanctorum where the holy script and the valuables of the Satra are preserved. *Manikuta* means the house of jewels. *Batcora* or *Karapat*, a

small open house, is the entrance to the Satra. *Hatis* are rows of residential huts of the clerical devotees built around the *Manikuta* and *Naamghar*. The head of the Satra is the *Adhikara*. He is the trustee of the properties of Satra. In some Satra, the *Adhikara* is celibate; in some others, he is not. Again, in some Satras, the *Adhikara* and the *Deka Adhikara* are celibates but they remain the family. Yet again, there are Satras where the *Adhikara* and the *Deka Adhikara* are married but some of their devotees are celibates and some are not.

The *Deka Adhikara* is next to the *Adhikara* and in the absence of the *Adhikara*, he discharges the duties and the functions of the *Adhikara*. The devotees of the Satra are the *Bhakats*. They live within the campus of the Satra. *Sisyas* are devotees who do not hold any ecclesiastical office. They live outside the precincts of the Satra. The unmarried devotees who live inside the Satra are called the *Kevaliya bhakats*.

The original number of Satra in Majuli was 64; but the number has come down to 22 now. Of the remaining 42 Satra, some have been washed away by the mighty Brahmaputra and some shifted to places outside Majuli. Madarguri, Gajala, Barhari Pukhuri, Batmara, Purani Maati, Sonari, Puttamia, Chakala, Katani, Kaupatia, Daukachapori, Belsori and Bhagati, among other, were some of the Satra which have been obliterated.

It was in the year 1497 that amidst political turmoil, Sankardeva and his disciples decided to leave Bardowa and migrate to the northern bank and settled down at *Dhuwahata-Belaguri* in Majuli. It was here that Sankardeva met Madhavadeva, who later on became his chief apostle. Belaguri Satra, the first Satra of Majuli, has been eroded away by the river.

2.2 Some of the leading Satras of Majuli:

Majuli is the nerve centre of Satriya culture. Four combining forces of Brahma, Nika, Purusha and Kaal Sanhati of Mahapurushia dharma spread the religious advice among the people. The satras of Majuli of ancient and present are mentioned as below:--

- * Auniati Satra-
- * Dakhinpat Satra-
- * Garamur Satra-
- * Uttar Kamalabari Satra-
- * Natun Kamalabari Satra-
- * Bhogpor Satra-
- * Benganaati Satra-
- * Madhy Majuli-
- * Chamaguri Satra-
- * Natun Chamaguri Satra-
- * Dalani Chamaguri Satra-
- * Majuli Bor Alengi Satra-
- * Bor Alengi Balichapori Satra-
- * Alengi Modarguri Satra-
- * Dikhomukhia Bor Alengi Satra-
- * Moluwal Bor Alengi Satra-
- * Bor Alengi Bah Jengoni –
- * Alengi Tokoubari-
- * Alengi Narasingha-

- * Owa-
- * Bihimpur-
- * Adi Bhimpur-
- * Belesidhiya-
- * Adhar Mahara-
- * Ahataguri Bro-satra—
- * Sakala—
- * Dakhinpat Ashrami—
- * Puniya—
- * Sakopara—
- * Ananta Kalosia—
- * Garmur Saru—
- * Adi-Aiengi Satra—

2.2.1 Auniati Satra:

Source and place development of *Vaishnavite* culture of Assam, the Satras are the heart of Assamese society, Chief bearer of *Bhaktism*, this satra has made adorable contribution to the national unity. Auniati satra is one of the prominent satra among the satras taking an important role in Assamese social life a s centre of culture. The satra was established on 1653 at Auniati in Majuli by Ahom king Jayadhwaj Singha taking *Bhagawata pathak* (reader of *Bhagawata*) Niranjan Pathak from Kuruabahi satra. Analysis of formation of the word shows that Auni means betel leaf and *ati* means a higher place. It shows that it was established at a higher land where *aunipan* (a king of betel leaf) was available.

The deity of Auniati Satra, falling under *Brahma Sanghati*, is *govinda mahaprabhu*. Apart from the *Naamghar*, *Monikut*, *Gurugriha* (Residence of *Satradhikar*) from *hatis* of *bhakats*, treasury, store house of rice, *karapat*, and many other specific parts are there in the satra. Among them *Rongali Chora* (Auditorium), Museum, Guest House, Sanskrit Tol, Press, Open Auditorium are the prominent parts. *Satradhikar* is the head of the satra. All the works in the satra are done under his supervision. In absence of *Satradhikar*, *Dekasatradhikar* looks after the satra. Apart from *satradhikar* and *Dekasatradhikar*, there is another position in satra as *Govind puria*. Since its establishment sixteen *Adhikaras* have ascended the post *Satradhikar*. They are—

- Sri Sri Niranjan Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Keshab Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Ramchandra Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Haridev Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Pranahari Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Lakshminath Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Keshab Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Padmapani Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Lakshmiram Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Kushram Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Devadutta Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Kamal Chandra Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Lilakanta Dev Goswami

- Sri Sri Hemchandra Dev Goswami
- Sri Sri Bishnu Chandra Dev Goswami

The present *satradhikar* is Dr. Sri Sri Pitambor Dev Goswami.

All the *Adhikars* and *Bhakats* in the satra are celibacy. At present 400 *bhakats* are there in Auniati satra. In real sene the *bhakats* are the chief persons to manage the satra. The *satradhikar* choose people to manage the satra among the *bhakats* and *bhakats* also engage themselves in various works of maintaining the satra obeying the order of the *satradhikar*.

2.2.2 Religious festivals of Auniati Satra:

Everyday Chaudhya Prasanga(fourteen prasanga) take place in the satra. Apart from these fourteen prasangas some usual festivals are:-

- **Palnaam:** Achief festival of Auniati satra is palnaam. Every year this festival takes place from the 25th day of month of Kartik(the middle part of November) as per as the Assamese calendar is concerned. In this festival the devotees perform *Naam-Kritan* continuously in shifts. This holy festival makes an earnest endeavor to explore the values of the soul, which may bring about ultimate salvation. Irrespective of cast-creed or religion, everyone can join in it. It has been regarded as the symbol of brotherhood.
- **Raas-Leela:** Raas-Leela commences on the day of full moon day of the autumn season. The main objective of the celebration is to forge a link between the soul (Atma) and the Almighty(paramatma). In Auniati

satra the child-hood activities and the puberty stage of Lord Krishna are dramatically perfumed in Raas-Leela.

- **Janmastami:** Janmastami is observed in the month of Bhadra according to Assamese calendar. It is the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna.
- **Kati Bihu:** Another prominent festival observed in the satra is Kati Bihu. In the festival 21 pair of Akashbanti (earthen lamp on stand) are lighted.

Guru Tithi: Guru Tithi is one of the prominent festivals observed in the satra. Apart from the gurus including Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Damodardev, Bonsi Gopaldev, the tithies of preceeding *Satradhikars* also observed.

On the occasion of all the important festivals, bahona is presented. Dance is also practiced in the satra. The prominent dance from in Auniati satra are—*Natua, Apsara, Sutradhikar, Ozapali, Chali, Jhumura, Nadubhongi, Dasawatar, Mati Akhora, Krishna Gopi Nritya, Gayan-Bayan* etc. The treasury of song in satra is enriched with Gayan Geet, Gopal Bairagya Geet, Guru Bandana, Dev Bandana, *Nator major Geet* (Song in drama) etc. Some prominent *Naam or bhakti geet* (devotional song) prevailing in the satra are *Hiyanaam, Diha naam, Barigi Naam, Naam Mangal, Ghosha Mangal, RajMangal* etc. With all this Auniati Satra made aborable contribution to the cultural field of Assam. It has enriched our culture.

2.2.3 Cultural activities of the Satra:

The satra draws its lifeline from its total submission to God and leads a life of austere and rigorous routine. At the same time it leads the guidance in the moral, cultural, spiritual and social life of common mass. The main dances of the satra are *Natua, Apsora, Sutradhar, Ozha-pali(panchali), Chli, Zhumura, Raas-Nritya, Gayan-Bayan, Mati-Akhora and Sanskrit Dashavatar.*

Among the different forms of *Vaihanava music of Assam; Borgeet, Ankia-Geet* or song in drama, *Raja Ghoria Geet, Guruvandana, Gopal-Vairaga Geet* and still practiced in the satra. Moreover *Bhaona*(drama) in Assamese and *Ankia-Naat* in *Brajavali* language are practiced here.

2.2.4 Literary contribution of Auniati Satra:

The Auniati satra has contributed a remarkable share to the Assamese literature. The second Assamese Newspaper “Assam Bilashini” was published from this satra in the year 1871 under the stewardship of the late Satradhikar Sri Duttadev Goswami. In spite of the pitiable communication the Satradhikar brought a print machine from Calcutta to this remote island and christened it as the “Dharma prakash Yantra”. “ Assam Dipeeka(1776)” and “Assam Tara(1989-90)”, the two important magazines were published from this press. Now a day’s another quarterly magazine, “Sanskriti pallav” is being published from this satra.

The Satradhikars and devotees of this satra have penned down many dramas.

Other Literary Works:

<i>Name of publication</i>	Author/ Editor
<i>Sanaton Vaishnav Dharma.</i> <i>Dhamaaru Karma.</i> <i>Dharma Ki?</i>	Hem Ch. Dev Goswami
<i>Dharma Jyoti.</i>	Bishnu Ch. Dev Goswami
<i>Mohamoha Natak.</i> <i>Chinor Liziangot.</i> <i>Dakhin Bharator Tirtha Bhraman Ek Pavitra Avagahon.</i> <i>Alorita Hridayor Sabda (collection of poems).</i> <i>Natya Giti Tarangini.</i> <i>Bhagawat Darpan.</i> <i>Geeta Abhigyan.</i> <i>A Brief History of Auniati Satra.</i> <i>Asomor Naam Anusthan.</i> <i>Satriya Utsavar parichay aru Tatporjya.</i>	Dr. Pitambor Dev Goswami
<i>Adhunikatar Unnmesonot Sri Sri Auniati Satra.</i> <i>An Outline of Auniati Satra.</i>	Dr.Dambarudhar Nath.
<i>Dev Dutta Charita(Ed)</i>	Dr. Nogen Saikia.

<i>Asomar Satra Parichy.</i>	Siris Bhattacharya.
<i>Auniati Satrat Sangrakhita Prasin Granthasamuhar Bivaratmak Talika.</i>	Dilip Phukan.
<i>Auniati asttar Chaharar Etibritra. Auniati Sattar Naat Samikhya. Sattriya prashanga pranali.</i>	Kamal Dutta.
<i>Badya Abhigyan.</i>	Dr. Debajit Saikia.

2.2.5 Social Contribution

The satra donates for spreading education, relief material during natural calamities (like flood). A few such donations are mentioned here under:-

1. Majuli College, Kamalabari.
2. Majuli Auniati Hem Chandra High School.
3. Auniati High school.
4. Guwahati kamaldev High School.
5. Lilakantadev Sanskrit tol, Guwahati.
6. Auniati Kamaldev Chatuspathi.
7. Bishnudev College, Bahphola , Jorhat.
8. Auniati Hem Chandradev High Secondary School, Amguri.
9. Hem Chandra Goswami College, Nitaipukhuri.
10. Bishnudev High School, Majuli.
11. Bishnudev M.E.School, Majuli.

Moreover present satradhikar Dr. Pitambar Dev Goswami has organized “Santa Samaroh” in 2004, “ *Asom Naam Samaroh*” in 2010 and “*Asom Bhaona Samaroh*” in 2006,2008 and 2010 at *Monikanchan Rangakhetra* in Majuli.

2.3 Sri Sri Dhakhinpat Satra:

Under Ahom patronage of *Swargadeo* Jayadhwaja Singh, Banamalidev established Dakhinpat Satra in 1584. It is located in the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. The name “Dakhinpat” is derived from two words “dakhin” means south and “pat” means port. From this we can come to a conclusion that the Dakhinpat satra is situated in the south bank of the river Brahmaputra.

Dakhinpat satra belong to Brahma sanhati and its Bhakats lead bachelor’s life. It follows the ideals of Damodar Deva. The Idol of Lord Jadav Rai is worshiped here.

2.3.1 Omniscient esteem able *adhikars* of Sri Sri Dakhinpat satra

1. Sri Sri Bonamali Dev.
2. Sri Sri Ramdev Goswami.
3. Sri Sri Krishnadev Goswami.
4. Sri Sri Atmaramdev Goswami.
5. Sri Sri Kamdev Goswami.
6. Sri Sri Sahadev Goswami.
7. Sri Sri Bantidev Goswami.
8. Sri Sri Bishnudev Goswami.

9. Sri Sri Bibbhudev Goswami.
10. Sri Sri Basudev Goswami.
11. Sri Sri Subhadev Goswami.
12. Sri Sri Naradev Goswami.
13. Sri Sri Narayandev Goswami.
14. Sri Sri Haridev Goswami.
15. Sri Sri Ramanandadev Goswami.
16. Sri Sri Nanigopaldev Goswami is the present satradhikar.

2.3.2 Chief Festivals:

Rass-Leela: On the full moon day of *Kartik* or Aghon month, the *Rass* festival is celebrated. The *Rass-Leela* of Dakhinpat Satra is the oldest in Majuli . It is celebrated for three days. During the festival the Vridavan Chandra is worshiped in the Namghar premises.

Phalgutsav: On the full moon day of Phagun or Chaitra this function is performed. The celebration of this function lasts for three days. Besides Janmastarmi, Rath Yatra, Ekadashi, Bihu, Luxmi puja, Shiva Ratri, the Death anniversaries of past *Satradhikars* are also celebrated here.

Literary Contributions:

Author/Editor Name of the book

Banamali Dev	<i>Bor-naat</i>
Bishnu Chandra Goswami	<i>Krida Joga sar</i>
Subhadev Goswami (Brahma Vaivatra Puran)	<i>Sesh Darham Maya Khanda</i>
Basudev Goswami	<i>Rass-Leela</i>

Dhireswar sharmah	Bhismar Sara Sarya, <i>Parasuramar Matri Hatya.</i>
Ramanandadev Goswami	<i>Bhagiroti Gangasati Tulasi</i> Kathanika
Tankaswar Bhagawati	<i>Birbahu Badh</i>
Haridev Goswami	<i>Baman Bhikhya</i>
Nityananda Borpujari	<i>Karma Parva Ram Porajoy</i>
	<i>Brahmaputra Britanta</i>
Basudev Sharmah	<i>Bdakhinpat Satra</i>
Sirish Bhattacharjee	<i>Chari Rajsatrar Buronji,</i>
Keshob Phukan	<i>Bharat Bhramonr Tirtha Darshan</i>
Rupom Saikia	<i>Satrannoy, Jivan Charya.</i>

2.4 Sri Sri Bengenaati Satra:

Located at a distance of four kilometers towards east of Kamalabari, this satra was founded by the grandson of *sankardeva*'s step mother Murulidev in the year 1654. This Satra belongs to *purusha Sanhoti*.

Pholgutsav, Death anniversaries of past satradhikars, *Tithis* of Sankardev and Madhabdev, Janmastami, Rasotsav are celebrated with traditional pomp and fervor.

2.5 Sri sri Chamaguri Satra:

Chamaguri Satra located only twelve kilometers eastwards from Kamalabari. Chakrapanidev, son of Keshabpriya, daughter of purusuttam thakur and Niranjana gabhrugiri alias Petphala Ata (her husband) established

this Satra in the year 1663. Afterwards this satra was divided into another branch namely Notun Chamaguri satra which is now located near the market place of Rawanapar. The present satradhikar of this Satra is Sri Sri Koshakantadev Goswami who is the recipient of sangeet Natak Academy Award of 2003 for traditional art of Mask-making. Sri Hemchandra Goswami is also a well-known artist in the field of mask making. This Satra belongs to purusha sanhoti.

Death and birth anniversaries of Sankardev and Madhabdev, Janmastami, Rass-Leela are the primary festivals of this Satra.

2.6 Bhogpur Satra:

The bhogpur satra is situated about five kilometers eastwards from Kamalabari. It was established in the year 1528. Sri Sri Duttadev Goswami is the present Satradhikar of this Satra.

2.6.1 Religious Festivals: Birth and Death anniversaries of Sankardev, Madhadev and past Satradhikar s are the main functions of this Satra.

2.6.2 Dance: Chali, Jhumur, Naubbhangi, Sutradhar, Ozha-Pali and Bhortaal Nritya are the principal dance forms of this Satra.

2.6.3 Literary Contribution: The present Satradhikar Sri Sri Duttadev Goswami has pen down many books in different topics. These are-

1. *Adhyatmik Tatta Darpan*
2. *Gupta Muhini Bidya.*
3. *Shrimad Bhagwat Geeta.*
4. *Naamghosha Adhyatmik Tatta*
5. *Dugdha Voilla Mahageetamrit etc.*

2.7 Garamur Satra:

Garamur Satra was established under the Patronage of Ahom King Jayadhwaja Singha during 1653-1660. The Idol of Lord Bonshi-Gopal, Achyutananda and *Mohan-Murari* are worshipped here.

In this satras all are married except *Satradhikar* Bonsigopal is the chief deity to be worshipped of this satra under *Brahma Samhati*. Apart from this the idol of *Muhan Murari* and Achyutananda are also worshipped twelfth *Satradhikar* Pitambor Dev Goswami joined in freedom for struggle. In this satra the sequence of fourteen prasangas is also maintained. Although there are two satras named *Saru Satra* and *BorSatra*, they are not discussed separately.

Although the Satra at present is of married tradition (except the *Satradhikar*) it was celibacy before. It has been turned to married tradition during the day of Sri Sri Pitambor Dev Goswami that is since March 1915. In this Satra, there is a managing committee in the leadership of the *Satradhikar* and the *Satradhikar* disuses with committee whenever it is necessary.

The officials of the satra are- *Satradhikar*, *Borpujari*, *Pali pujari*, *Naam Logua*, *Borbayan*, *Namgharia*, *Deuri*, *Amutkar*, *Bhorali* etc. There are branches in the satra in purani gudam Nagaon, Phalguri, middle of north Guwahati, Kuliarbari and Tukulai Jorhat.

2.7.1 The succession of *Satradhikars*:

1. Joi Haridev-1660-1673
2. Lakshmi Narayan Dev-1673-1699
3. Jairam Dev-1699-1719

4. Boloram Dev-1719-1725
5. Hari Dev (frist)-1725-1731
6. Krishna Dev-1731-1754
7. Basudev-1754-1820
8. Raghudev1820-1954
9. Haridev(second)- 1854-1973
- 10.Bhadra Krishna Dev-1873-1884
- 11.Jagachandra Dev-1884-1907
- 12.Pitambor Dev-1907-1962
- 13.Krishnachandra Dev-1962-1984
- 14.Haridev(third)-1984 to present time.

2.7.2 Literary Contribution:

Garmur Satra is the rich in this field. Pitambor Dev Goswami has enriched the Assamese literature writing the book –Spokesmen of Sanaton Dharma, Dharna Siksha ,Samaj Raksha, Saran Vhajan, Asmia Lakimi Bhoral, Prohald Charitra,Ram Banavas, Judhisthiror Aswamed Yagya, Sunda- Upasunda, Laba-Kush, Bhagya Pariksha, Saptasuror Utpoti, Kobibhakta Haridas, Bolichlon, Ghosha-yatra, Sri Krishna Raas Leela etc. The young promising poet and novelist Sri Tarun Bora has written many books as as Bir Hanumanor Kahini, Bhishmo Biror Kanini, Mon Jetukar Rong.In the Same way Lakhindar Saikia’s the drama Simgha Garh Vijoy, Yaga Bichar by bKrishna Dutta, “taju Gna Naam” by Gunamani Nath etc, many philosophical books have enrichical books have enriched the stook of literature in the satra. “Bhakti prodeep” an Sri Krishna Lilamala is also a book published from this satra.

2.8 Owa Satra:

The satra is situated at Karala Gaon in Kamalabari circul in Majuli. The deity of the Satra of Brahmasamhati establiashed by Sri Sri Shyamrai and Gopal Bigroh (idol of gopal) sent by Bonsi Gopal Dev Keeping on it *Bhagawata* written in Sachipat. The satrs became Owa for founding it by cutting by wood *Owa-Tenga*(elephant apple). Apart from the regular worship of the idol, *Naam Kirtan*(prayer) religious teachings are also regulary taken place in the satra. The numbers of disciples in the satra are about 1 *lakh*.

2.8.1 Religious and cultural programs in Owa Satra:

Annual Paalnaam, Folgutsat(holi), tithis of late Satradhikars, tithies of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva, *janmastomi*, three *bihus*, *naam prasnga* in the month of *Bhadra* are the Principal festivals in the satra. Idol of Lord Vishnu, *brass doba, borkahi*(large dinner plate made of combination of eight metals), *Mayurrghanta*(bell), brass *Sarai, bhagjora, merdhari*(mat) of bamboo(400 years old) etc. things there in satra.

In the divested earthquake in 1950 a large area of cultivated land of this satra turned into waste land. Again from the flood in 1962 the economic condition of the satra gradually degraded. At that time most of the valuable properties of the satra were destroyed.

Sankarjyoti high School is situated near the Satra on its own land.

The succession of Satradhikars is like this—

1. Joy Hori Dev

2. Gopinath Dev
3. Porsuram Dev
4. Krishnakanta Dev
5. Krishnakuti Dev
6. Sambhunath Dev
7. Joy Dev
8. Jagannath Dev
9. Ram Dev
10. Jolodhar Dev
11. Thulodhar Dev
12. Keshab Chandra Dev
13. Kedar Chandra Dev
14. Bipin Chandra Dev
15. Sri Sarat Chandra Dev Goswami –Present Satradhikar.

The premise of the satra is not preserved. On the other hand a scientifically built room is necessary for preserving the ancient wealth scriptures on sachipat etc. This can be preserved with government aid.

2.9 Sri Sri Adi Bihimpur Satra:

Existence; with the direction of Chaturbhuj Thakur, grand son of Srimanta Sankardev, Govindra Ata established Sri Sri Bihimpur Satra on the east bank of Verek bil during the reign of King Pratap Singh in 1635.

It is said that at gate way of Govindra Ata's residence, there was a poison tree. Because of that poison three the place was named as Bisompur (Bish-posion), with time it become Biham or Bihimpur insrad Bishom.

At present with Government permitted land in the name of satra is 11 Bigha and 11 lucha and 60 Bigha of land its own this satra is situated between Bengena ati and potia. The idol of Vishnu is worshipped in the Sri Sri Adi Bihimpur Satra and it comes under purus Sanhati.

2.9.1 Books Preserved in this satra:

The Adi Bhimpur Satra has contributed to Assamese literature. A large number of books preserved in the satra, there are mention below :---

- Na-Ghosha by Sri Sri Purushuttam Thakur.
- Two Naam- Ghoshay Madhabdev.
- The Kritan by Sankardev.
- The Bhagawatam first candhra.
- The play Kaligopal.
- The play Sitahoron.
- Gunamala by Sri Sri Sankardev.
- Puthis of Mantras (altogether 41 puthis).

2.10 Kamalabari Satra:

Bodula Ata, one of the favourite deciple of Mahapurush Madhabdev had established this satra. His real name was Kamalakanta Ata. He got the name "Bodula" for being engaged in propagating the religion in lieu of Madhab Dev.

Many tales are found regarding the foundation the Satra. The tradition opinions are like this:---

1. Among the ten names of Bodula Padma ata, one is Kamalakanta. According to the name the name of the satra has become Kamalabari .
2. There was large orchard or oranges at the place where bodula Padma Ata founded the Satra; the name of the owner of which orchard was Kamala Mudoi. Therefore the name of satra was Kamalabari.
3. According to another mythology, while Sri Krishna was taking Rukmini away from Kundil, a kamal(lotus) flower was dropped at this place from the hair of Rukmini devi. There for the name of the satra become Kamalabari for being founder it at this place. With time the Satra established by Bodula Ata forked into two and one was named Uttar Kamalabari for being founder towards North(Uttar); the other one was called Natun (new) Kamalabari Satra for being founded newly separating from the original Satra established by Bodula Padma Ata. At present the Satradhikar of Uttar Kamalabari satra is Sri Janardan Dev Goswami and Natun Kamalabari satra is Narayan Chandra Goswami.

2.11 Uttar Kamalabari Satra:

In this satra altogether fourteen *prasangass* are observed in the morning afternoon and evening. In the morning *prasanga- Borgeet, Bhotima, Upodesh, Ghosha-Kirtan*, in afternoon *prasanga Aagpath, Seshpath* and *Upodesh* and in the evening *prasanga, Guru Bhotima, Borgeet, Khool-Taal prasanga* and *ghosha path* etc. take place.

2.11.1 Ancient Material:

- *More than three hundred books on Sachipat.*
- *Sofura (a tray on stand with a cover) of Sankardeva, where beetle nut was kept.*
- *Jopmala of Madhabdev.*
- *A pot where Bodula Padma Ata took his meal.*
- *Podsila.*
- *Kusha-Argha(a material used in the ritual of puja) used by Hari Atoi made of rhino.*
- *Jeri of Sankar-Madhab.*
- *Bhringar(a water pot) of Silver.*
- *Royal message from Purandar Sinha.*

2.11.2 Cultural programmers:

The *tithi*(death and birth anniversary) of *Mahhapurush* is observed for four days in the month of *Bhadra*, the prominent dances in the Satra are-*Ankia drama, Chali, Jhumura, Nadu bhongi,sutradhar, Natua, Ozapali* etc.

2.11.3 Contribution to literature and culture:

About five Bhakats from Uttar Kamalabari satra has received government pensions for artist. The magical perfumer of Khol. Paramananda Borgayan has received Sangeet Natak Academy national award. Many learners have been able to received C.C.R.T. scholarship being benefited through Kola

Krishti Sanga of Sri Sri Uttar Kamalabari Satra. The team of artists of the satra has received praise by performing dance, song and bhaona in national and international cultural programmes. The late *Satradhikar* Kamalakantra Dev Goswami has written “*Smriti Pustika*” and “*UttarKamalabari Itibritta*” Karuna Borah has written “*Kamalabari SatraSatriya Britya Prasanga*”, *Satriya Nritya Ruprekha*” etc. Present *Satradhikar* has tried to make the children of the country well-cultured by organizing “*Sisu-Sanskar Sibir*”(camp to culture the children) in 2006,07,08, and 09 accordingly. In July 2008, with the initiative of French writer Nadin Delpesh, a team of twelve artists of Uttar Kamalabari satra brought glory to Assam, by presenting the art and culture of the two preceptors Sankardeva and Madhabdeva in French and Portugal in a program of one month under the leadership of Bhabananda Borbayan and help of Dulal Borbayan.

2.12. Natun Kamalabari Satra:

The Natun Kamalabari Satra is one of the most culturally developed satra of Majuli. It is situated about two kilometers south-east of Kamalabari. *Satradhikar* Narayan Chandra Dev Goswami, one of the great scholars of Assamese literature is pride of Majuli who was awarded the Sankardeva Award by the government of Assam in 2004 and D.Lit. (Doctor of Literature) by Dibrugarh University in 2010 for his precious contribution towards Assamese literature. Moreover *Literary Pension* (2002), Makhan Duwara Smarak Award(2004), *Satra Ratna* (2005) were awarded to him, Under his patronization in 2009 and onwards ‘*Sodou Asom Ankia Bhaona Samaroh*’ has been organized every year.

2.12.1 Literary Contribution of Sri Sri Narayan Ch. Dev Goswami:

- *Satriya Sanskritir Swarnarekha (1984).*
- *Brajawali Bhassar Abhidhan (1990).*
- *Asomot Bhaona Parampora(1991).*
- *Kirtan-Ghosha aru Naamghsar Tattwarthar Samikha.(1996).*
- *Sankari Dharma Sanskritit Antarjal(1974).*
- *Damodar Devar Guru Kon?(1977).*
- *Asprisata Barjan(1967).*
- *Sri Sri Haridev (2005).*
- *Sankari Sahitya Samikhya.*
- *Satriya Nrityar Byakaran,*
- *Brajawali Bhashar Abhidhan Aru Byakaran 2nd part.*
- *Ankia Natar Asomia Bhangoni.*
- *Usha Anirudha(drama)*
- *Balmiki Ramayonor Podyanubad.*
- *Sanskrit slokar sankar Charitor Podyanubad.*

Edited Books:

- *Kirtanghoshha Aru Naamghoshha (Sanchi Patia Puthi Lipi)*
- *Kritanghosa Aru Naamghosa (Adhunik Lipi)*
- *Borgeet*
- *Shri Mod Bhagwat Puran*
- *Barakhun Ankia Naat.*

- *Phonsia Naat.*
- *Sankardevar Rasanavali.*
- Sachitra Ankawali.

Moreover, his valuable articles are being published in four parts, edited by Dr. Debajit Saikia.

2.12.2 Management system in the Satra:

The *Satradhikar* and *Vaushnavas* manage the satra with co-operation and discussion. On the other hand the satra is managed with *Guru Kar* from disciples, *Sewa pronam* from the visitors and monitory help from various sources.

The shift resources preserved in Natun Kamalabari Satra are the diner pot of Sri Sri Sankardeva, Sri Sri Madhabdeva and Bodula Podma Ata, engrafted with brass and silver donated by late Dinonath Bezbaruah, silver spoon, Tow (lkarge pot of copper) etc,

Altogether 215 books including all the Sachipat puthis of books written by the Mahapurush and books written in later phase are preserved here.

A picturised Bhakti Ratnawali book in ‘Yulapat’.

Dhula Mala Hastakshri (hand written) books preserved in the life time of Sankardeva.

Jopnala, costume etc.many related thing of Bodola padma Ata are present in the satra.In this Satra, the occasional festival is observed according to the tradition. Altogether fourteen prasangas take place including morning and evening. Tithi's of Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Bodula Paadma Ata, Raas festival, three bihus, the tithes of Ata-Atois are observed in a festive way. Under the programe of the Satra academic works take place in Majuli Satra College, Natun Kamalabari satra Sanskrit Tol and school. Music and Drama from this satra are presented of outside India. In 1975, with invitation from the president of India of that time late Phakkoruddin Ali Ahmed, Ram Vijoy drama by Sankardeva and dance and music was presented in Indonesia.

2.13 Sri Sri Satrajan Na-satra:

In 1671 with the initiative of the founder Satradhikar Krishna Atoi, Sri Sri Na-satra was established. Away from the District Head quqrter of Garamur and kmalabari near Morituni is Sri Sri Narayan Chandra Goswami.

Apart from the satradhikar, there is a managing committee for the improvement of internal infrastructure and management in the Satra.

2.13.1 Resources of the Satra:

Two scriptures on Sanchipat were written by the two *Gurus*-Sankardeva and Madhadeva.

Twelve sachipat puthis of later time.

Sixty dramas.

Land, Kirtanghar, Monikut, guesthouse, residence, cultivating land etc.

Service to the society is given preference following the ideology of the preceptors. It has contribution in bringing the tribal people to the main satire preventing their changing of religion.

The Satras of Majuli has structural plan centering its *Kirttanghar* or prayer hall. A satra establishment comprises of a Kirttanghar, the place of worship, a *batchora* or entrance, a *gosain chora* or residential cottage of Satradhikar and bhakat hati or lines of cottages for dwelling of the *bhakats* or devotees. Such lines of *hati* in satra are four and amidst the four diagonal line of *hati* the satra establishment is laid. Each satra is rich in both tangible and intangible heritage. Most of the satra has own museum. All the Satras has preserved various historical exhibitory ancient articles.

2.14 Heritage of satriya art of Majuli:

Boutique of nature, surrounded with the water of Brahmaputra, the centre of vibration of culture is Majuli. In undertone be a part of the environment with the sound of bird, spiritual environment with Rass-Pallnaam, Musical Ainitom and symphony of Khol-Taal, every year hundreds to thousands of devotees from the country and abroad come to Majuli creating a heavenly environment on the earth. Majulians are imparting the ray of culture to the devotees coming there to gather gems from the treasure house of culture. Having been brightened with that ray it has been established in the world

scenario. With cultural heritage, wonderful dance art, holy place of assimilations of various communities and tribes Majuli is the place of '*Atoka Mahanta*'.

Parallel to the Satra culture, production, practice and training of handcraft and cottage industry is also comes to notice. In making of *gosa, mortar, sarai, singhasana, fan of can, mask, bot making, mat from googol and coloring them with hengul-haital* are expressive of creative thinking of the artists. It will not be an exaggeration to comment that this is continues in the Satras, but keeping in view the limitation of the discussion, the discussion are made based on the Satras.

2.14.1 Art of Mask Making:

It is a tradition art in Majuli Chamaguri Satra. Kushabanta Dev Goswami of Majuli Chamagori Satra has brought glory to Majuli getting Sangeet-Natak Academy award by establishing the art of Mask Making in the national level. One expert artist of Satra Hemchandra Goswami has given a new dimension to this art though movement of face, eye etc. giving importance to modern technique.

Apart from Chamogori, some artist of Alengi original Satra, Bihimpur, Adi Bihimpur, Natun Kamalabari have continued the tradition of mask making. It is a matter to rejoice that many artists have been able to self-dependent through making of mask along with fulfilling the need of the theatres.

2.14.2 For made of can:

Fan made of cane in Auniati Satra and people in various part of the world have adorned Kamalabari Satra. The primary stand of the fan is made with the matured part of the cane. The sticks are made by cutting the matured can and having them dry in the sun. The small sticks are weaved with the help of a bamboo stick and giving the colour with *hengul-haital* the stand is made. Ten circles are connected to the loti. They are beautified with decorative items like cloth and other items. The demand of this type of decorative fans have been increased, it's value in international markets is about 1000 to 1500 Rupees. It come to know that the artist of Auniati Satr late Nabin Bayon presented Lord Mountbatten a hand fan in his honour while coming to Majuli in 1943. The same artist presented a fan made of ivory to Mahatma Gandhi. Whatever it is, from the post independent time the fan made of can has received royal status. Such a can fan has been also placed in London Museum.

2.14.3 Art of boat making:

Boat is the chief support for the people of Majuli trouble by flood specially in the rainy season. Realizing this, the people here think of boat before the arrival of rain. Therefore, there is demand of boat among the people of Majuli. However, because of the lack of people making boat, supply is less in comparison tom demand. On the other hand, increasing price of the wood has increased the price of boat. In between, many people have been making boat. Apart from Salmara village people making boat are available in the Auniati, Bhogpur, Kamalabari, Natun Kamalabari etc, Satra.

2.14.4 Bamboo and cane industry:

The decorative art of bamboo and cane made by inmates in the Satras attract the tourist. Wooden, *Sorai*, *Singhsana*, *Box of cane* etc. coloured with *Hengul-Haital* are prominent among these. Lakhiram Gayan, Krishna Bayan, Bishnu Saikia of Kamalabari Satra are appreciated by people to making culture costumes.

2.14.5 Making Sachipat and writing:

Old artist Budhindra Nath Borpathak of Auniati Satra is a prominent artist of making and writing on sachipat. He has already participated in many workshope of national level as a trainer on the topic of making Sachipat and process of writing on it. *Satradhikar* of Majuli Kamalabari Satra Sri Sri Naraya Goswami has inaugurated *Symontok Horon*(edited) having written in pasteurized form. Mahikanta Bor Bayan of Uttar Kamalabari Satra is giving importance on preservation of Sachipat in scientifically and writting of Sachipat. Ajit Neog, Bapu Pachoni, Utpal Mahanta,etc. of Bhugpur Satra have tried to preserve and write on *Sachipat* taking education in this field.

2.14.6 Making mat of Gogol:

Mat of Gogol is an essential thing in Satra; generally, there is no tradition of sitting on high seats in Satras. This type of mat is essential in serving guests, place of *Satradhikar* and cottage of *Bhakats*. This mat is made of cutting Gogol grass and binding them in a special way after drying in sun hit. This mat is made in every Satra in Majuli is very attractive and adorable.

In this way, the art and craft of the Satras display the enriched form of *Satriya culture* in one hand on the other, it helps the artists to be economically self-dependent.

CHAPTER-III

Status of Manuscript Collection: An Overview

3.1 Introduction

The cultural heritage has been spread from one generation to another through different mediums, and a manuscript is one of them. The manuscript carries out the cultural heritage of a country to its every nook and corner as well to the other parts of the world.

In every civilization, the tradition of writing is seen and therefore every such civilization has its own manuscript collection. India is not exceptional in this regard. India is a treasure house of valuable manuscript which reflects the richness of India cultural. In Assam also, the bark of *sanchipaata* trees was used as writing media; and the manuscript on *sanchipaata* and other medium are still preserved in various repositories.

3.1.1 Manuscript: Its meaning

Manuscripts are the explicit knowledge of our unknown ancestors. Etymologically, the word “manuscript” has been derived from the medieval Latin word ‘Manus’ that means ‘by hand’ and ‘*scriptus*’-written. Thus the Latin term ‘manuscripts’ means “ a document written with a person’s own hand”.

‘*Oxford dictionary of English*’ defines the term ‘manuscript’ as a book, document, or piece of music written by hand rather than typed or printed.”

The National Mission for Manuscripts, India defines, “A manuscript is a hand written composition on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf or any other material dating back at least seventy-five years that has significant, historical or aesthetic value.”

According to ‘Dictionary of Library and Information science; the manuscript is work of any kind (text, inscriptions, music score, map, etc.) written entirely by hand .

Wikipedia, the web based encyclopedia defines, “ A manuscript is any document written by hand, as opposed to being printed or reproduced in some other way before the arrival of printing, all documents and books were manuscripts.”

Before the invention of printing machine, all the written documents had to be both produced and reproduced by hand. Manuscripts, the handwritten documents are treated as the assets for a society. Manuscripts available in different forms reflect the background of the cultural heritage of a nation. It can be defined as the day of the human race, because it holds the history of a particular society and its socio-cultural activities. Writing materials play a very prominent role in the development of cultures. The manuscript preserves the history and culture of mankind, as well as it indicates the scripts, languages as well as the people are made of thinking. From the ancient time people used different medium such as day rock, metal plate, different parts of specific tree, skin of specific animal etc, to write on, where symbols, letters, numbers, etc. were inscribed or written with various kinds of punches, stylus, brush, pen etc.

The animal blood extract of fruits and naturally processed colours were mainly used as ink to write on the manuscript.

The manuscripts of the ancient or medieval period still have significance in the society. A manuscript, depending on its content matter, may be a holy relic and a prayer book for a priest, a primary source of information for a researcher, a rare artifact for the mass people and an archival item for an archivist. Library and information science professional tries to collect, document, preserve and disseminate the information regarding the manuscript collection for the benefit all categories of users.

3.1.2 Medium of manuscripts:

The beginning of a writing tradition brought a major change to the human civilization. Since the art of writing was discovered for the transmission and physical conservation of knowledge across time and space, various materials like rock, clay tablet, metal plates etc. were first used as a writing surface. Later these were replaced by softer and tenable parts of the trees such as birch bark, palm leaf etc. With the passage of time paper replaced all such materials and it has become an inseparable part of the society. Some of the mediums of manuscripts are discussed below. Though some are advocating regarding the ‘paperless society’ still it is in concept only.

(i) Stone or rock:

In early times, people used to engrave or inscribe some specific information of that time on the rocks, pillar or stone and the walls of caves

and temples which were expected to be permanent. On the polished and smooth surface of stone, a skilled artist first scribed the text with ink or dye which was then incised by an engraver using hammer and chisel. To lend beauty and grace to these inscriptions, margins were often left on all sides with auspicious religious symbols engraved at the top and bottom of the inscription. Stone is regarded as one of the oldest forms of writing material. In India also such stone engraved documents are found. The *Kurmashataka* in the *Prakrita* language written by the scholar-king Bhoja of Dhara (Malwa) is one of such examples.

(ii) Clay tablet and brick

Since 3100 B.C., the early tablet as written media was first used by the Sumerians of southern Babylonia; later this media became the general means of written communication throughout Mesopotamia and the entire ancient East. Though the clay tablet or bricks were not the common form of writing materials in India, in some temples it is seen. The evidence of using earthen pots and seals as writing material is also found. In India, a large number of such inscribed bricks have been unearthed from different places.

(iii) Papyrus

Papyrus made of the pith of papyrus plant that grows in the marshes and along riverbanks like the Nile. The thick reeds of the papyrus plant were peeled and then cut into thin and flat strips of about 40 cm long. The thin strips were laid out on boards overlapped to form sheets and were gently beaten with a wooden mallet; and the surface was polished with a pumice stone. When dried,

this became a flat and strong writing material which lasted for thousands of years if stored in dry and dark place. In ancient Egypt, around 3000 B.C., the papyrus was first used as writing material and was adopted all over the Mediterranean world, including Greece and Rome.

(iv) Bamboo and wooden strip

In early china, the bamboo and wooden strips were used as one of the prime writing surfaces. These strips were long and narrow in size and only a single column text was writing on each strip and then strips were bound together in sequence with thread. This material was used from the 1500 B.C.

(v) Wooden board

Wooden boards as the medium of writing had been in use in India mainly during the Buddhist age. These were known as *phalaks*.

Generally and were used by the school going children and for writing love letters. These boards were mainly made of sandalwood.

(vi) Parchment

The parchment and vellum are two different of writing surface used in the ancient period. Animal skins were also used for writing due to shortage of papyrus in Europe. This durable material was in use as early as the 300 B.C. The parchment was made of goatskin, which were prepared a smooth surface for writing. This parchment were reusable, and during the 7th to 9th centuries, some parchment manuscripts were scrubbed and scoured using milk and oat bran for rewriting and these recycled parchments and called palimpsests.

On the other hand, vellum was made of calfskin and most of the finer sorts of medieval manuscripts were written on vellum. These have significantly higher durability in moist climates.

(vii) **Birch sethe**

Birch sheets called *Bhurja patra* or *bhujapatra* in sanskrit are produced from the birch tree. The birch tree is mostly Himalayan in origin and is a moderate size tree growing in the Himalayan at a height of nearly 14000 feet. The inner bark of this tree is very flexible. To prepare them for writing, they were slowly dried, oil was applied to them and they were polished. These sheets are composed of several layers joined together with natural gum and woody knots. Thus, they were prepared fit for to write on with ink. The written leaves of the birch bark were then held together with a string through their middle portion, which was usually left unwritten. Compact book was than fastened to two wooden boards, which not only protected its leaves but also served as its get up. This was used as writing medium since 1st Century A.D., originated in Afghanistan. In India, from the 10th century A.D., birch-bark was used for writing purposes.

(viii) **Palm leaf**

Another writing material used in Sri Lanka, India, Tibet, and other parts of southern Asia is palm leaves. In India, this writing surface was mainly used in the southern part and in the states like West Bengal and Odisha. The process for preparing the palm leaves differed from place to place. But the basic method was same. Palm leaves were dried, boiled in water for a few hours, and

they dried and again polished with a stone or conch-shell. The leaves were cut to size, according to need, varied from 15 cm to 1 meter in length and 2 to 10 c.m.s in breadth. Sometimes, two or more leaves were stitched together to prepare a broader writing surface. Palm leaves used for writing are reported to be of two varieties i.e. *tala* and *sritala*. *Tala* leaf is thick and coarse and is difficult to handle. It does not absorb writing ink. *Sritala* leaf is thin, flexible, and beautiful and can be handled like a paper. In the palm leaves, the text was scratched into the surface, and then rubbed with dark colour to make the characters more distinct. The palm leaf possesses the inherent strength to withstand normal environmental effects for many years, even many centuries, if they are stored properly, but normal and the congenial environmental condition is difficult to maintain for these materials. From 200 A.D. palm leaf was used as a writing material and was in continuous use till the 19th century. In India, palm leaf was common writing media until the paper was introduced in the 13th century.

(ix) **Cloth**

In ancient India, cotton cloth (called *pata in Sanskrit*) was also used as one of the writing materials. The piece of cloth was covered with a thin layer of wheat or rice pulp and then polished with a conch-shell or a smooth stone after the same was dried. Thus, it became usable as writing material. Silk cloth was also used for writing materials.

(x) Paper

Paper was invented by the Chinese about 2000 years ago around in 105 A.D. The paper was first made of the fiber of the hemp plant or the inner bark of the *mulberry tree*. Later the Chinese used the fiber obtained from pounding rags, rope, or old fishing nets into a pulp. The early Chinese paper was too coarse for the in writing. Developed in china, the techniques of papermaking spread east via migrating Mongolians and ultimately to the Maya in Mexico, and west via Samarkand to Islamic lands and finally to Europe and America. Beside these, some kinds of metallic plats were used for writing purpose especially for some special and important incidents. The various types of plats are:

(xi)Gold plate

The gold plates were not used on a wide scale, because of its expensive nature, but in some cases, these were used for writing purposes. The important documents like moral maxim, royal letter and land-grants were written on this media.

(xii) Silver plate

Silver though cheaper than gold, is not used as a writing material in maximum number. Some official documents were inscribed on it.

(xiii) Copper plate

Copper was the most commonly used materials to write on in ancient and medieval India. The inscribed copper plate is known as tamrapatra or

tamrapata. For making them writable, these were hammered into various shapes and sizes. After the plates were prepared, an expert writer generally wrote on it the body of the text, which was then incised by an expert smith. Sometimes the letters were inscribed with a punch in the form of dotted lines. Sufficient margins were, however, always left in order to lend grace to the inscription.

(xiv) Brass, bronze

Brass and bronze were also used for writing purposes to some extent. The Archaeologists have discovered bronze tablets from ancient Roman archives that contain details about treaties and decrees.

(xv) Ink

In the manuscript writing, the naturally produced inks in different colours were used. For the text, the black coloured ink was normally used and the title was generally written in red colour. The carbon ink made of charcoal or lamp-black mixing with a gum was used in the ancient and eastern worlds in writing manuscripts until the 12th century. Another ink used since 12th century in iron-gall ink, which was mainly prepared using oak apple, a fruit grows on the oak tree. Gold and silver colour inks were used for making a manuscript deluxe one and to illustrate it.

3.1.3 Tools used in writing manuscripts:

In the ancient time, various tools were used for writing on different mediums. Reed stylus is a wiring tool used to inscribe into clay tablets. Such

very earliest writing on clay tablet are found in the area now known as Mesopotamia, which were writing around 3000 B.C. For the rock and other metals, different types and size of hammer, chisel, graver etc. were used to inscribe the script on it.

The tradition of writing developed very early in Asia, by 1200 B.C. or earlier. The people of this region used leaves and wood as writing media. The brush and pointed knife were used to write or inscribe on wood, bamboo and even flat animal bone. The inscribed writing was often filled in with ink afterwards, which made it more distinct.

By the 700 A.D. or earlier, the palm leaf was the most common writing medium widely used in Southeast Asia and India. A bronze made stylus, with a sharp point on one end for inscribing the letters and a flat blade on the other end for scraping the surface of the leaf smooth, was used to write on palm leaves. In India, especially in the northern part of India, brush was used as a writing tool.

For many centuries, Roman scribes used wooden tablets filled with wax. To write in the wax, Roman scribes used a stylus that was long and thin like a pen, but had a point on one end for writing, and a broad, flat area on the other end for erasing by smoothing the wax out.

For writing on papyrus, reed pen, a special pen was used. These pens were lengths of reed cut to a point on one end and slit to facilitate the movement of ink. They had to be repeatedly dipped in ink, but this worked well enough that very similar pens made from different materials were used

right up in to the 20th century, and are even used by some artists and calligraphers today.

Brush was also used as writing tools in the East, especially in China, where the paper was available early on. These brushes were thick, but tapered to a fine point and that is why the ancient Chinese writing is composed of sweeping strokes with both thick and thin lines.

To write on the parchment and vellum, a metal-tipped bone stylus or a thin piece of lead called a “plummet” was used to mark out faint guidelines. Various types of pens, including reed pens, and quill pens made from the flight feathers of large birds used for writing on this medium.

3.1.4 Damages of manuscripts and their causes:

All this manuscript collections available in various materials have the common goal, *i. e.* to carry and record human knowledge and thought. But for various reasons, these valuable manuscripts have been destroyed. Though deterioration is a continuous and natural process, there are some root causes behind this deterioration. The main causes of deterioration of the manuscript are of two kinds.

- (a) **Internal cause:** The internal deterioration is caused by the ingredients used for the physical composition of the material used in manuscript. The writing materials used in manuscripts are mainly of natural organic. These are lasting for a longperiod of time if these are kept in a normal and congenial environmental condition. But because

of the difficulties for maintaining such a condition, these materials automatically become fragile. If the material is of poor quality, the natural decay or will be faster.

- (b) **External cause** : The external deterioration of the writing materials is caused by the atmospheric condition, environmental pollution, and the damages by fungus and insects, heats, light etc. The cause of external deterioration of manuscript can be classified into various agents. These are..

(i) **Physical agent**

Naturally, the manuscripts are generally long lasting one, but it may be deteriorated under poor physical condition. The deteriorating factor like heat, light darkness, flood, fire etc. Increase the deterioration rate and damage the manuscripts completely. If the temperature of the storage area is increased or material is exposed to high temperature, these become yellow and brittle.

Light may be a factor of deterioration. Exposing the manuscript in the direct sunlight as well as excessive artificial light deteriorates the manuscripts.

Darkness or absence of light in storage area is also very harmful and dangerous for the manuscripts. It also hinders the growth of fungus and creates a condition for breeding of biological enemies.

Natural calamities like flood, fire by accident, earthquakes, etc. also other physical agents of deterioration of manuscripts.

(ii) Biological agent

Manuscripts are also deteriorated by various biological agents like fungus, bacteria, insect, etc, they destroy the manuscripts completely. The biological agents are the most harmful enemies and they cause maximum damage to the manuscripts collection of all kinds.

The microbiological agent like fungi and bacteria shortens the longevity of the manuscripts.

These are born in darkness on any organic material. Because of high relative humidity and high temperature they grow up in the manuscripts.

Another harmful enemy of the manuscripts is different common insects including silverfish, book lice, cockroach, etc. which are fond of darkness.

Mice and rats are also dangerous for the manuscripts because they bite and spoil it within a short period of time. Moreover the acid of their urine are also dangerous as it fades the ink of manuscripts.

(iii) Chemical agent

Chemical agent is another factor of damage and destructive condition of the manuscripts collection. Atmospheric pollution is the main cause of chemical deterioration of the manuscripts. The polluted air acts as deterioration agent under humidity and moisture.

Dust is carried over by air coming from any source. It settles down on the surface of the manuscripts, which is exposed to air, when it is mixed with high humidity and moisture. It is transformed to dirt. Dust and dirt discolour the pages of manuscripts and the dirt cannot be eliminated completely from the surface.

These are the main external causes because of which the deterioration of the manuscript may occur. Besides these three agents, there is also a fourth, which is known as the human agent. Though mentioned last it may be a dangerous agent to decay and damage the manuscripts.

(iv) Human factor

Human factor also stands as a cause of determination of the manuscript. Damage caused by human agent is more serious and dangerous. Man damages manuscript through negligence and mishandling. Moreover the superstitious beliefs of the common people lead to destroy various manuscripts. The present days materialistic mentality of the people does not give the proper value to the manuscripts; rather they treat the manuscript merely a piece of exhibition. The terrorist groups of different countries destroy a large number of valuable manuscripts in the name of their extremist activities. These are the different factors, which have destroyed the valuable manuscripts.

3.1.5 Manuscripts and their Conservation:

The manuscripts, which are available in different organization, are now in a very sensitive condition as they are touched by the hand of deterioration more or less. All the manuscripts of different medium of earlier years have faced ruins. These are decaying and perishing with the passage of time. Due to various above mentioned causes. Some manuscripts have already been completely damaged and some are being damaged, and they need special care. Now proper importance has been given on the conservation of these invaluable manuscripts from its further decay or deterioration.

Conservation of manuscripts means the systematic action on damaged or undamaged manuscripts for increasing their lifespan. It aims to keep the objects close for their original condition as far as possible. The main objective of manuscript conservation is to ensure the availability of information on manuscripts in usable form for as long as possible. It also implies the survival of the physical medium of the manuscript in its original form. But the conservation of the manuscripts in its original medium is sometime undesirable and occasionally impossible. Conservation of manuscripts is done through preventive and curative methods.

3.1.6 Preventive conservation:

The preventive conservation ensures reduced the deterioration rate of manuscripts and prolongs the usable life of a manuscript. The preventive conservation is known as preservation. It is generally applied to undamaged

manuscripts. It encompasses all the direct and indirect measures that keep them protected from various deteriorating factors. It mainly aims to reduce the future risk of deterioration. These activities are mainly designed for minimizing or controlling the physical, chemical, biological and other deterioration factors. For the preventive measure, the following steps can be taken.

(i) Proper storage area

The storage area of the manuscripts should follow all the disaster management norms. It should have all the provision for the protection against light, heat, moisture, dampness, insect, fire vandalism, flood and earthquake, etc.

(ii) Controlling of temperature and humidity

The control of heat and moisture is helpful to stop the decay of the manuscript and to increase their longevity. For keeping the manuscript safe, the temperature of the storage area should be in the range of 22-25o and relative humidity should be in range between 45-55%. Otherwise, the layer of birch bark may give way and palm leaves may curl up.

(iii) Controlling of light

Sufficient light should be there in the storage area, but the direct sunlight should be avoided to fall on the manuscripts. Heat should also be controlled in stack areas. Ultraviolet, light causes serious chemical deterioration of organic materials and should therefore be eliminated.

(iv) Air pollution

As a preventive measure, air pollution should be controlled by air filtration with the help of proper air conditioning system.

(v) Protection of dirt and dust

The manuscript should be kept free from dirt and dust. To remove the dust from all corner and racks, a vacuum cleaner should be used. The manuscript can be displayed in glass cabinets as it can keep the manuscript away from dust as well as direct sunlight.

(vi) Protection against insects and fungi

Manuscript on Birch bark is generally free from insects attack as it contains some natural preventive chemicals. But palm leaf and *sanchipat* are easily attacked by insect pests. As a preventive measure of manuscripts from bio-deterioration, the temperature and humidity should also be controlled. Natural as well as chemical substances can control insects and fungi.

Panri, a type of grass and *ghora bach*, an herb known as '*acorus calamus*', have been used for keeping the insects away from the manuscript collection. These preservatives are tied in cloth and kept among the manuscript bundles. *Neem* leaves also act as a good repellent for various kinds of insects. The use of dried green leaves and *neem* powder are found effective in protection of *sanchipat* and *tulapat* manuscripts from insects. Traditionally the lemon grass oil, citronella oil, turmeric powder

aswagandha leaves, dried ginger, sandal wood, etc, are also used to protect the manuscripts from insects and fungus.

The large varieties of chemicals are used as insecticides. Naphthalene is a strong insect repellent and is a cheap and readily available in a commercial firm.

3.1.7 Curative conservation:

Curative conservation is another aspect of conservation. This mainly acts for the restoration of damaged manuscripts. When the preventive measure fails to prevent the deterioration and damages of the manuscripts, the curative measures are taken into consideration. Curative conservation includes the direct act of cleaning, mending, repairing, lamination etc. Curative measure makes the damaged material reusable. Some of the curative measures used for the manuscript are discussed below.

(i)Cleaning of manuscripts

The old and brittle manuscript should be cleaned with much care and under some conditions. Cleaning can be done manually either with cotton scrub or with a soft brush. To clean the dust from a manuscript a solution of glycerin in water can be used on its ink.

(ii)Repairing of manuscripts

Hand repairing is another curative measure taken for the conservation of manuscripts. In mending the manuscripts by hand process, special types of table and tools are used in mending section. But before repairing these, the

quality of the ink used in preparation of the manuscripts should be checked. If the ink is permanent, then, the mender can apply ordinary water on the manuscript sheet and then keep a piece of chiffon on one side and the same process can be applied on the other sides of the leaves. In case of manuscripts with ordinary ink, foil and colonic are used as adhesives. In repairing the splits and broken edges appeared in the manuscript of palm leaf and birch bark, the extra sheets of palm leaf and birch bark can be used. Various types of tissue or thin “*sa*” paper are also used to repair such damages and holes appeared in such manuscripts. In some cases, the folios of age old birch bark or palm leaf manuscript are struck together, in that case for their separation, the sticking sheet may be soaked in hot paraffin liquid. In such ways of repairing the manuscript, the personnel engaged in this work must be well trained.

(iii) Fumigation

Fumigation is another curative measure mainly against insect that deteriorates manuscripts. Fumigation helps in destroying the insect and their eggs, which they lay in the holes created by them in the manuscripts. The fumigation chamber is also used for this purpose. Vacuum fumigation is another effective method of elimination of the dangerous insects of the manuscripts. But expert personnel should be engaged in this purpose; otherwise it may be harmful to the material and the staff both. Another method of killing the insect is keeping the manuscripts in the freezer under the temperature of minus 30c centigrade. This is the safest method of

killing the insects, but the manuscripts should be protected by polyethylene film during its stay in freezer.

(iv) Lamination

Lamination is one of the methods of curative conservation of manuscripts. Lamination is the technique where each folio of manuscript is taken in between two laminating agents and thus protecting it from all external enemies as well as makes it physically strong enough to preserve for a long time. For lamination generally the glassine paper is used for scaling on the manuscripts by means of heats and very high pressures. Lamination has been found to be the most economical method of repairing the brittle and damaged manuscripts. The laminated manuscripts cannot be attacked by pests, and are very stable and can be washed when dirty. The classical method of lamination is that of “*silking*” a process in which both sides of the manuscript are covered with fine silk by an adhesive.

Impact of information and communication technology on manuscript conservation

Now the modern science and technology has influenced on the conservation of the manuscript collection also. With the development in the field of science and technology, the following techniques are developed as the method of manuscript conservation.

(I) Microfilming of manuscripts

Microfilming is a well established technology for conservation of the document as well as the manuscripts. Microfilming is also a way of preserving the manuscript. Microfilm is a kind of film in which the picture of manuscripts or other document can be in micro size of a special type of camera. It is both impossible and undesirable to preserve everything in its original physical forms. Even if it were possible, it appears to be impractical. Microfilm is an alternative arrangement through which one can store a set of thousands of manuscripts in a small microfilm cabinet. (Singh, 2006’)

The British Library and other leading agencies also prefer on microfilming for preserving of their rare collection. (Jefcoate, 2003)

But sufficient care is attention should be paid in handling these microfilms. It is suggested to use clean white cotton gloves in using the same.

The storage area of microfilm should also be the proper one, excessive heat and humidity is harmful to film. Microfilm reader should be protected from dust. The air conditioner is the necessary factor of storage condition of microfilm.

(II) Digitization

Digitization means the process of converting analog item to digital one i.e. generally to binary code 0 and 1. This process is a standardized, organized and available scientific system, which can help in preserving and accessing the manuscripts as well as other documents. With specialized scanners,

manuscripts are converted into digital images and stored systematically for future reference. Before 1998, digital cameras were used for digitizing manuscripts. Digitization services can be provided both on site and off site, depending on the constraint. The quality of digital collection can be made available on the web and ensuring access; it could also be printed. For the digitization of manuscripts proper care should be taken. Regarding the process, Knoll(2000) states, “Digitization is not only data capture and easy access; it is rather a complex method that creates new independent documents, which have their own life. Once created, they have to be accessed and preserved over longer periods of time, because it is not possible to return again and again to capture the same items.”

For the digitization of manuscripts, generally the image files are created using scanner or digital camera; and in second process, scanned document is edited with OCR technology to identify each alphabetic letter or numeric digit, and each character is converted to an ASCII code. These files are then stored in different secondary storage devices. In case of manuscripts digitization, some basic points such as selection of software, hardware, file format, as well as selection of material, etc. are generally to be followed. (Ahmed,2009)

Digitization has also some limitations; moreover, the CD and DVDs used for storing the digital surrogate do not last for a long period of time. Now emphasis is given on microfilming of the digitized copies of manuscripts for their long term archiving.

Problems of conservation of manuscripts

There are different problems raised in the process of manuscript conservation. Some of these are mentioned below:

(i) Lack of trained manpower.

(ii) Lack of awareness about the importance of rare manuscripts among the custodians of such collection.

(iii) Religious and unillations letter.

(iv) Point availability as well as high cost of medicines and tools used in the preservation process of manuscripts.

(v) Lack of cooperation and coordination among the institutions having such manuscripts.

(vi) Lack of sufficient funding for maintenance and preservation of manuscripts.

3.2.1 Management of manuscripts:

Manuscript collection is generally treated as archival documents and is kept in a special separate section or archival section of the organization. The collections of manuscript of any institution are rare and valuable in nature. Therefore, the manuscript collection requires some extra measures from its acquisition to access. Management of manuscripts collection is a very vital aspect. This concept includes everything related to acquisition, accessioning, the systematic arrangement & maintenance of the manuscripts and its proper

usage. Descriptively speaking, management of the manuscripts deals with collection development, processing, maintenance and access to the collection to the respected users. The basic objective of management of manuscript is to make the collection available for continuing research use without hampering its conservation issues.

3.2.2 Acquisition of manuscripts:

Acquisition and collection development of manuscript is a very hard task. The repositories many mainly receive manuscripts in one of four ways, i.e. donation, transfer, loan and purchase. In most cases, repository builds the manuscript collection by collecting the manuscripts as a donation from a person or institutions. Sometimes the manuscripts are collected by surveying the surroundings of its locality. The repository publishes an advertisement making an arrival to the custodians of manuscripts.

3.2.3 Accessioning of manuscripts:

Accessioning means the process of assigning a particular number to particular manuscripts that indicates the item belong to a particular repository. The repository used different numbering systems according to their need some repositories used digit or letters, some use an alpha-numeric. Moreover, in some cases, the collection type, materials etc. are also mentioned in the accession numbers. Some repositories arrange or display their collection in accession number wise.

3.2.4 Classification of manuscripts:

The manuscripts are classified on different criteria such as writing materials, the subject matter, scripts, etc. Manuscripts are generally classified under broader subject areas.

In a paper “Cataloguing of Manuscripts”, Rana(2006) clarifies regarding the classification for manuscripts as, “It is interesting to note that while for books the Colon Classification and Dewey Decimal Classification system are used in libraries by subject and author, custodians adopt their own system for manuscripts, In prints and electronic from manuscripts can be arranged in alphabetical order according to subject, title, author, place, language and script. On the shelf, it can be organized by object and place.”

3.2.5 Cataloguing of manuscripts:

Cataloguing is one of the important areas of management of the manuscript collection. It helps in the systematic presentation of information for the users. The cataloguing of a particular library or a manuscripts repositories is known as a under where the collection is systematically reflected. It also guides the user to used one of the regarded document. The process of preparing the catalogue is as cataloguing, Its used manuscripts repository also. Manuscripts are catalogued for used systematic document. There are mainly four types of cataloguing used following for manuscript collection. These are -card index, accession catalogue, material catalogue and descriptive catalogue. The union catalogue of different repositories is also prepared. The catalogue of

manuscripts is not an easy task. It is chiefly the outcome of the laborious process of the scholar cataloguers. For the identification and authentication of the original form of a text, it becomes necessary for scholars to composite all the information about the alternative forms and various of a text.

The cataloguers faces different problems in the catalogue of the manuscripts. Some of major problems are :

- i. Uncertainty of authorship.
- ii. Linguistic and scriptural variation.
- iii. Loose leaf of manuscript.
- iv. Incomplete manuscript.
- v. Damaged folio.

But the experts prepare the catalogue of manuscripts with hard work so that the scholar and users of manuscript-catalogues can have the full benefit of such a catalogue. Different organizations prepare catalogue on the basis of the previous such catalogues.

3.2.6 Arranged of Manuscript:

Until the books, the manuscripts cannot be arranged on the shelves only according to their classification number. As the manuscripts are in different materials and very sensitive in physical condition, therefore their display is to be done according to the demand of the situation. Additionally, display is

done accession number wise, subject wise or material wise in the space specific.

3.2.7 Space planning for manuscripts:

As these collections consist of rare, unique and sometimes irreplaceable manuscripts, therefore proper attention should be paid to protect these from any destructive factor. The manuscript collection reveals the credibility and honor of the institution ; therefore , special security provision should be kept in mind.

- i. Steel racks should be used and these should be arranged away from walls.
- ii. The area where the manuscripts are kept should have the provision of modern instruments. Different instruments and machines should be used to prevent low humidity, high moisture, excessive heat, dirt, etc.
- iii. Suitable glass cases, shelves and boxes should be used in order to keep the rare manuscripts safe and far from touching insects, direct sunlight, dust and any other destroying phenomena.
- iv. Fire resistant materials should be used in the shelves, furniture, door, etc. so that during such accidents little damage occurs to the manuscript. Wooden racks/furniture are prone to catch fire easily.
- v. There should be provision of special instrument and machines for repairing their manuscript.
- vi, There should be the facility of photocopy, microfilming, digitization, etc. at that section so that the users can take maximum benefit through it.

Periodical inspection is essential to find out whether the adverse development is proper place in the archival repository/library or any given institution. The internal environment of the stack area is very important; therefore, continuous measuring the temperature, humidity and air quality, etc. is desirable.

3.2.8 Service to users:

The manuscript collection is organized and managed mainly for the benefit of the users. Manuscripts are generally most useful when they are available for use rather than stored in locked box. But along with their access, the physical preservation and protection of the manuscripts should also be taken care.

Now the manuscript repositories give importance on use and access to the manuscript as well as their preservation. Different repositories attached to library, museums, research organizations provide different services to the users, some of them are free and some are fee based. The manuscript section is generally used by a selected and special type of users. They are bonafide members of the parent institution, and some of them are outsiders, such user use the library for fixed period of time by taking written permission from the library authority. In case of giving a particular manuscript to the user, the physical condition, content and completeness of such manuscript should be checked both in the time of issue and return. These are allowed to use in the library premise only.

Some repositories do not allow the users to use and handle the original manuscripts due to their and fragile physical condition. The database of digitized manuscripts is a solution in this regard. Now different libraries sell the digitized version of their manuscripts stored in CD/DVDs.

3.2.9 Handling of manuscripts:

As manuscripts are antique documents on some earliest writing surfaces, they are very sensitive and are normally brittle. Therefore handling of manuscripts is also an important aspect of management of the manuscript collection. The folio of the manuscripts should be touched with clean and dry hand. These should not be lifted by the edges, as this can easily be broken. Folio of the manuscript should not be turned speedily. Such type of collection needs special ca and these should regularly be inspected.

3.2.10 Disaster management in Manuscript repository:

Disaster means an unforeseen and often sudden event that causes great damages, destruction and human suffering. These may be occurred due to natural causes like storms, cyclone, earthquake, landslide flood, volcano, etc., international disaster or vandalism and accidental disaster, which are also some of the factor that damaged the manuscripts time to time. Disaster management means all the activates that help in getting complete protection from the disaster and its related situations. As the manuscript-repositories are the place where rare and valuable hand written and single piece copies of documents are kept, the norms of disaster management should be followed in such places. Fire alarm, CCTV camera, etc. should be installed properly. A

disaster management plan should be implemented in each and every such manuscript repositories so that they can face such emergency situation and save their holdings.

3.2.11 Manpower:

Human resource means the manpower engaged in a particular organization or institutions. This is a total working force an institution on the basis of that the institution runs. Proper manpower development is also treated as an important aspect of management. The people engaged in the repositories should be well trained as their job responsibilities are high. People engaged in handling and conservation constitutes a responsibility to the personnel engaged for these purposes. Even the longevity of a particular manuscript depends on the personal engaged in preservation or management of such collections to a great extent. Therefore the personnel should be properly trained so that they can realize their duties for managing the past records of human civilization. Moreover, training on identifying and reading the script and language used in the manuscripts is another area where proper emphasis should be given. For this manpower development, different centers like National Archives of India, National Library, Open University, department of library and information science, etc. are taking the responsibility. In India, the National Mission for Manuscripts regularly conducts various programmes like seminar, workshop, Lecture programmed on conservation and other aspect of management of manuscript and its studies. Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library offers a one (1) year P G Course in Oriental Librarianship and Manuscriptology to produce well-trained manpower to manage any oriental library, which is a basic

requirement for the manuscript management. Panjab Digital Library is another institution that provides training on digitization of manuscripts and other documents like book, newspaper, etc.

CHAPTER-IV

Manuscripts Collection in Assam:

In ancient Assam, the manuscripts were written under the patronage of the kings as well as the Satras. In ancient Assam, the bark of Agar was used as writing medium, popularly known as Sanchipat and the Satras are the major custodians of Sanchipatia puthis, i.e., manuscripts written on Sanchipat. Two words, i.e., Satra and Sanchipat are associated with the manuscripts collection in Assam. Besides the Satras, these manuscripts are mainly preserved in temples, madrasas, monasteries, museums, libraries and archives, etc.

Edward A. Gait in his book “History of Assam” describes about the manuscripts collection in the Ahom period. Gait (1906/2004) writes, “When the Ahoms invaded Assam at the beginning of the 13th century, they were already in possession of a written character and a literature of their own. The use of paper was unknown, and they employed instead strips of the Sasi tree. In an article, written in Assamese, “Satriya Chitrakala” (Art of Satra), Das.... (1963) mentions the use of different media such as Sanchipat, Tulapat, even Muga cloth as writing materials of the manuscripts collection in Assam. Illustration is another characteristic of Assamese manuscripts and the ‘Sachitra Bhagabata’ preserved at Bali Satra in Nagaon district is the oldest of its kind as he states in his articles.

In his article “The art of manuscript preservation and illumination’, Neog (1965) gives a description of the Assamese manuscripts. The author mentions about the patronage of the Ahom Kings, the Koch rulers of Kooch

Behar and Darrang and Buddhist in the preparation of the manuscripts in Assam.

In Assam, the tradition of writing manuscripts on Sanchipat is believed to have started from the 7th century. In the book 'Ancient Treasure of Assam through Assam Museum', Choudhury and Das (1948) state that the Sanchi bark was as early as in the 7th century AD. "Kumar Bhaskar Varman, the ruler of Kamrup of the 7th century AD, a friend and ally of Harsha of Kanauj, presented two volumes of five writings with leaves made from Sanchi bark and the hue of the ripe cucumbers."

In an Assamese article, 'British Juktarajyat Asomiya Purani Haate Likha Puthi aru Nisiddha Chopa Puthir Sangrakshan' (Assamese rare manuscripts and banned printed books preserved in the United Kingdom), Buragohain (1992) mentions about her personal experiences of coming across some rare Assamese manuscript as well as banned Assamese books preserved in the India office Library and Record school of oriented and African studies and the British Library in the United Kingdom.

Choudhury (1995-96) in his paper 'Assam school of manuscript painting: The heritage of Vaisnave culture of Assam', explains about the manuscripts, especially illustrated manuscripts of Assam. Regarding the value of this manuscript, the author mentions, "The paintings which are depicted as illustrations in old manuscripts have all the qualities to occupy an important place in the art of history of India." But due to the conservative thoughts of the Satras, the British administrators and scholars may not be attracted by these

manuscript collections. “The era of the study of the manuscripts painting was heralded by the publication of the Descriptive catalogue of Assamese manuscripts in 1930 by the Calcutta University. This book was edited by Hemchandra Goswami”.

Since time immemorial, ancient Assam or Kamarupa, is the part of Indian Hindu civilization and culture. The scholastic works like Kalikapurana and Yoginitantara were written in this part of India. The manuscript is one such media through which Indian civilization has been transmitted from one to another generation time to time. In ancient Assam, manuscripts were written on the bark of Agar which is popularly known as Sanchipat.

In ‘Harsa-charit; written by Ban Bhatt, the prominent of the 7th century mentioned that king Bhaskaravarman, the ruler of Kamarupa had an innate love for books and libraries. Once he presented a collection of manuscripts and some blank folio to his friend Harshavardhana, the king of Kanauj, along with different other items as gifts. These manuscripts were written on the bark of Agaru, which was locally called Sanchipat.

The Ahom ruled in Assam since the early 13th century for long 600 years. During that Ahom period, a number of manuscripts were written in three dialects, i.e., Ahom, Aiton Khamti, and Phake and the common language is known as the Tai language. The Sanchipat is the principal writing media during that period. The Tai manuscripts can be classified into two broad groups on the basis of their contents, i.e., manuscripts dealing with religion and manuscripts dealing with other than religious subjects.

The Ahom religious manuscript narrates mainly about the religious beliefs and customs of the Ahoms and the Buddhists. A number of Buddhist illustrated manuscripts were written during those periods, which were mainly on Tulapat. They were mainly in the Tai language. The Buddha's figure is a special feature in the Buddhist illustrated manuscript collection of Assam. One of the earliest illustrated manuscripts in the Ahom language is Phung Chin, dated 1473 AD (Choudhury & Das, 1984).

The Ahom manuscripts are known as 'Ahom Puthi' and are treated as sacred and they were kept by the Ahom priest known as Mohan, Bailung and Deodhani, and possibly they are the only people who are capable of reading and understanding the Ahom language used in these manuscripts.

The non-religious manuscripts include the area like buranji, legend, dictionaries, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, ritual, etc. These manuscripts were developed under the aegis of the ruler class of the ancient Assam. One such manuscript is 'Hasti-vidyasnara' which was compiled in 1734 AD under the aegis of king Siva Singh and queen Ambika Devi. This illustrated manuscript on elephants was compiled by Sukumar Barkaith and illustrations were done by two court painters – Dilbar and Dosai. Ghora-Nidan is another specimen of Assamese manuscripts prepared by Kaviraj Chakravarty. This work was done under the aegis of King Rudra Singh in 1696-1714 AD. For their proper conservation, the manuscripts were kept in a separate room known as Gandhiya Bharal attached to the palace of the Ahom kings under the charge of high official named Gandhiya Bharal. These two terms represent the modern days archive and archival officer.

Regarding the patronage of the ruler class and opulence of such manuscript collection of Ahom age, “The intellectual and artistic inclination of the period found expression in numerous manuscripts produced with much artistic and orthographic ability and calligraphic skill. The production of a manuscripts are a laborious process involving much leisure and money and only royal munificence made possible production of a large number of manuscripts. Each manuscript produced in the royal court is to this day a priceless treasure of art for its calligraphy; for the materials used for writing on and for the valuable information contained.”

In the editorial of *Kriti Rakshana*, a bi-monthly publication of National Mission for Manuscripts, the Editor Mrinmoy Chakraborty (2012) writes about the significance of Assamese manuscripts and the tradition of writing Chronicles (*buraji*) in the Ahom period. He mentions, “Assam is the only region in India, which had a rich tradition of history writing. *Buranjjs*, as they are called, contain historical account of the Ahom rule in Assam starting from 1228 AD. Kalhan’s manuscripts of early 12th century are older one.

A large number of these Ahom manuscripts are scattered in the villages and Buddhists monasteries of upper Assam without proper care and conservation. Many of such collections are stored in the ceiling of residence and due to superstitious belief, the manuscripts are not used. The owner of these manuscripts are not aware of their importance, as Dr Girin Phukan (2012) states, “Here manuscripts are available with those sections of the people who neither can afford to take care of them, nor are aware of the importance of the rare documents which bear the testimony of the long six

hundred years rule of the Ahom”. Unfortunately, some of such manuscripts are either burnt or thrown into the river after the death of the custodian of such collection. Moreover, custodians used to sell their manuscripts to the foreign scholars for some amount of money. Still, a number of rare and valuable Tai manuscripts written on Sanchipat are in the Tai village and Buddhist monasteries of upper Assam. As the Tai language is of South-eastern origin, the scholars from Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, etc. where this language is studied, regularly come to this part for accessing these manuscripts.

The Koch king Maharaj Naranarayan employed eminent scholars and poets to translate the Bhagavata, the Puranas, and the Mahabharata into Assamese, and to compile treatises on arithmetic, astronomy and grammar. The Prayogoratnamala Vyakarana was written by Purosottama Bhattacharyya Vidyavagisa in 1569AD in the direct patronage of King Maharaja Naranarayan. In the middle of the 15th century, Srimanta Sankardeva and his disciple Srimanta Madhabdeva initiated Vaishnava Renaissance in Assam. The neo- Vaishnavism is credited for the establishment of Satras and Namghar in Assam. Srimanta Sankardeva and Srimanta Madhabdeva along with other disciples wrote different dramas, Bargeet, Geet, poems, etc.

Dr. Satyadranath Sarma (1999) states the status of the Assamese manuscript as “Due to natural calamities, political upheaval and a host of such other reasons, a large number of Assamese manuscripts have irrevocably been lost. Some Assamese manuscripts are still lying unnetted in smoky ceting of ancient families here and there in the land. Many such manuscripts are also kept by the authorities of Satras and Namghars”.

Even today, most of the Satras of Assam are full of different rare and valuable manuscripts. These manuscripts still have a great role in the Vaishnava Society as well as in the Assamese literature which are now treated as the cultural heritage of the nation. Mainly the Satras of Barpeta and Majuli have become store house of such original Vaishnava manuscripts written by the Mahapurusha and their ancestors Ata Purusha. In the Satras, these manuscripts are worshipped and these are recited as a part of daily prayer. Even in the Madhupur Satra in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal, the manuscripts on the Vaishnava faith are preserved. This is the place where Vaishnava saint Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardev spent his last days of life.

From ancient period, Assam is marked as the land of tantra-mantra by the other part of the country. The manuscripts related to tantra-mantra are called Mantra Puthi, which are still preserved. Mayong in Morigaon district is famous for the writing manuscripts on Sanchi pat. On the Barak valley, a number of manuscripts written in Bengali, Merilt (Marapani), Sanskrit, Sytheti Nagari are found.

Assam is proud of those two manuscripts, i.e., Chitra Bhagabata and Ratnamala Byakaram, written on Sanchipat which have been selected as the National Treasure of India by the Government of India and both of them are now scientifically preserved in the archive of KKH Library, Gauhati University, Assam. Moreover, other two manuscripts from this library, i.e., Lava-Kusha Yuddha and Chitra Bhagawata were displayed at the World Book Fair 2006-2007 held in Frankfurt, Germany.

At present, in Assam, various repositories are there where the rare and valuable manuscripts are preserved. Some of them are religious institutions and some organisations are social, academic and research-based organisation. Besides the religious institutions, Gauhati University, Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies (DHAS), Guwahati, Institutions of Tai Studies and research, State Museum and different district museums, are the major repositories of the manuscript collection of Assam.

A number of manuscripts from Assam origin are preserved in various repositories in other States of India as well as abroad.

A catalogue of 138 Assamese manuscripts preserved in the North Bengal State Library at Cooch Behar had been compiled by Sjt. Pratap Chandra Goswami, which was published in the Assam Sahitya Sabha Patrika (Voll II) in 1928. At present, North Bengal State Library at Cooch Behar district possesses a number of 228 manuscripts in Bengali Assamese and Sanskrit; and out of them 29 are Assamese manuscripts.

The Ascatic society library, Kolkata also preserves 12 Assamese manuscripts in their manuscript collection “Catalogus Catalagrum at Assamese manuscripts”, compiled by Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee has been published by their society in 1989.

In countries like Bangladesh and United Kingdom, some Assamese manuscripts have been preserved. The Dhaka University Library and the British museum, London also possess Assamese manuscript along with their other manuscripts (Ali, 2005).

In British Library, 14 Assamese manuscripts, including two illustrated manuscripts are preserved. The India Office Library& Record and the school of Oriental & Afritic Studies are other repositories in the UK, where 4 and 5 number of Assamese manuscripts are scientifically preserved in each repository respectively (Buragahain, 1992).

In 1924, the British Library Publishing Division published the “Catalogue of the Bengali and Assamese Manuscripts in the India Office” was edited by J.F.----- which indicates the availability of Assamese manuscripts in the UK.

4.1 Writing medium used in manuscripts in Assam

From the ancient period in Assam, different writing surfaces were used for manuscripts. In Fogoni Tantra, a 16th century text from Assam mentioned the use of earth, barks and leaves of trees, gold, copper, silver as writing materials. The principal writing materials used in these manuscripts are generally Sanchipat and Tulapat.

(a) Sanchipat

The Sanchipat is a writing medium of ancient Assam, which is made from the bark of Sanchi tree or aloe tree; the biological name is Aquilarina Agalloch. This tree is available in the forest of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. The bark of this tree is very ruff but inside is very soft and plain. To make them useable, preparation for Sanchipat entails a laborious process. Sir

Edward Gait (1906) describes the process of making Sanchipat in an appendix in his famous book 'History of Assam as

“A tree is selected of about 15 or 16 years growth and 30 to 35 inches in girth measured about 4 feet from the ground. From this the bark is removed in strips of a breadth. These strips are rolled up separately with the inner or white part of the bark outside and green part inside and dried in the sun for several days. They are then rubbed by hand on a board or by some other hard substance so as to facilitate the removal of the outer or scaly portion of the bark. After this they are exposed to the dew for one night. Next morning outer layer of the bark is carefully removed and the bark proper is cut into pieces of a convenient size 9 to 27 inches long and 3 to 18 inches broad. These are cut into cold water for about an hour, and the alkali is extracted, after which the surface is next rubbed in and the bark is dyed yellow by means of yellow arsenic. This is followed again by 'sun drying' after which the strips are rubbed as smooth as marble. The process is now complete, and the strips are ready for use.”

In the places like Majuli and Nagoan, the preparation of Sanchipat in the traditional way has still been practiced. These are mainly used in repairing the earlier manuscripts.

(b) Tulapat

Another writing material of ancient Assam is Tulapat. They were made by ginning, felting and pressing cotton (tula) into sheets. It was also widely used, but was not as enduring as Sanchipat. This was used for inferior manuscripts, letters private documents and for official orders.

(c) Other Writing Materials

Besides these Sanchipat and Tulapat, the tamrapat (the metal plate) is found in Assam which is mainly on treaty on the donation of land to the various religious places like Satra, Math Mandir by the king and Jamindar of that time. Other writing materials such as bamboo alrips, palm leaves (Tulapat), birch sheets, keteki pat, muga cloth, etc. were also used in ancient Assam (Talukdar, 2004).

Even the skin of deer was used as writing surface in the ancient period by the Missing Community. There is the evidence of using Muga cloth as writing media in Assam (Bhattacharya, 2014).

4. 2 Ink used in manuscripts in Assam

The main characteristics of the ink used in these manuscripts are its persistence to glassy and slppey surface. The ink that was used in old manuscripts was made from peculiar ingredient which is known to men of the olden generation. Ink used in those days was in bright and deep colour. It is also waterproof and does not fade even after a long exposure. The five hundred years old manuscripts can be read in bare eyes. The Assamese ink was the product of the distillation of Silikha (*Terminalia citrina*). A few fruits of this variety are kept in water in an earthen bowl for a few days. The bowl is then exposed to dew for several nights, with a non-porous basin below it. The water, which turns black by this time, percolates through the form of deep black ink. Some people add iron and iron sulphate and others put in the blood of a specific fish known as Kuchiya. The ink was called sometimes mahi and

sometimes meila and the inkpot was commonly known as mahipatra or mahikupika. Red ink, which was mainly used for aligning margins, was called alaktaraga. It was made of a solution of lead in water with resin or some time silky substance. In some highly expensive manuscripts meant for the wealthy patrons, the gold or silver inks were used for writing or designing on it. To express fidelity or determination in the absence of rate it was used on very rare occasions. In painting Sanchipat puthis, hengul and haital were used as paint. These two things, i.e., yellow and violate colours are mainly used for decorative purpose.

4.3 Writing Tools

For writing on the medium like Sanchipat, Tulapat, the people used variety of tools which were known by general term lekhami. It included all the writing tools such as pen, stylus, brush, etc. made of reed or wood, metal and hair or fibre respectively. The pen was called varnaka or varnika, the brush was known as mahi or tulika and thus the stylus as salaka.

4.4 Script and Calligraphy

Calligraphic elegance is an important aspect of manuscripts of Assam. Three distinct types of Assamese scripts have been seen in Assamese manuscripts. These are (a) Gangaiyan (b) Bamunia (c) Kaithali or Lakhari. Besides Assamese, manuscripts in Sanskrit, Bengali, Tai languages and scripts are found in Assam. The calligraphers of Assamese manuscripts were expert in their field. The author generally dictated their thought contents and the calligraphers scripted it on manuscripts. Sometimes, they were hired from

other parts of the country. Dilbor and Dosai were such two well-known calligraphers hired for preparing the illustrated Hastividya puthi written by Sukumar Barkaith during the Ahom dynasty. Though women were banned from different social activities that time, in Assam the evidence of woman calligraphers is also found. Lady Sabhaneswari was one of such calligraphers (Bhattacharya, 2014).

4.5 Size

The Sanchipat manuscript was of various dimensions and thickness. Generally, the highly revered classics and scriptures, and the manuscripts which were prepared, especially for the king and his nobles, were written on those Sanchipat measuring more or less six inches by two feet in size.

Some manuscripts are very miniature in size. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan (1926) mentions about such as Ahom manuscript on Mantra with 60 leaves each measuring 1.5 inches by 3 inches only. Some manuscripts were written on a long sheet of Sanchi bark of 8 feet long and 6 inches broad which are folded in the shape of a small square booklet. In the Cultural Museum of Koliabor college of Nagaon district of Assam, a miniature Sanchi manuscript containing of 17 folios is preserved which size is about 7 cm length and 3 cm in breadth (Mahanta, 2006).

4.6 Manuscripts in Assam

There are some physical characteristics at the manuscripts of Sanchipat. Each of the manuscripts has some bare pages in the first and last part which are

called beti or beni. In this page in some cases, the name of the author, times, etc. was written. They were also used to record changes of ownership or other important events in the life of the owner or his family.

In the beginning pages, Ganeshaya Namah or Sri Krishnaya Namah is written and the termination of a book is indicated by the word Samapta.

Most of these manuscripts except the Buranji and the Ankia Nats were written in verse. Illustrated manuscripts are called Lata kata puthi. Generally, the author does not execute painting. They left space in the body of the manuscripts and the professional painters painted the necessary decorations and pictures later.

Most of the manuscripts are wrapped up in a piece of red or yellow cloth enclosed in a wooden box. These boxes were again coloured or painted the picture being generally appropriate to the subject matter of the book itself.

In many cases, the manuscripts at different dimensions and thickness have a hole at the centre of each folio, known as navi-randha. It is essential for knitting all the folios of a puthi with a thick rope. This navi-randhas are commonly decorated with a variety of colours. Two thicker folios are used as cover at the both sides of the body at the puthis. Further, two wooden pieces were also as cover. The manuscripts are wrapped up in a piece of cloth. The manuscripts sacred to Manasha Devi, the goddess of snakes, were wrapped in cobra-skins.

The bibliography details such as name of author, calligrapher, period, subject, etc. are mainly written on the first or the last folio of these manuscripts, which are normally infected by the insects as well as fungus first. These create a problem in identifying or documenting the manuscripts properly.

4.7 Documentation of Manuscripts in Assam

Documentation of manuscripts is very challenging work. The cataloguers of manuscripts face various problems as mentioned earlier. For the systematic study of the manuscript collection of particular proper documentation is a basic criterion. Therefore, the cataloguers try to prepare and error free catalogue of manuscripts by overcoming those problems. In Assam also, for the proper documentation of manuscripts, various efforts were taken from last two hundred years.

Rev. Nathan Brown took the first initiative to collect the manuscripts in Assam as a part of American Baptist Mission's project for the improvement of Assamese literature between the years 1814-1860 and he collected 18 manuscripts.

In 1895, Sir Edward Albert Gait made an investigation on these manuscripts, especially those of a historical characters; report of which was recorded in the 'progress of historical research in Assam', published in 1897.

In 1912, another serious attempt was taken by Sir Archdale Earle, then chief Commissioner of Assam. He deputed Sjt. Hemchandra Goswami to

collect the manuscripts available in different areas of Assam. This effort was successful to some extent and the collected manuscripts were deposited in the premise of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti.

‘Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts’ prepared by Hemchandra Goswami was the result of this effort. This catalogue in book form was published by Calcutta University on behalf of the Government of Assam in 1930, where 156 Assamese and 77 Sanskrit manuscripts have been catalogued. This catalogue has been reprinted in 2009 by DHAS with the financial assistance from the National Archives of India.

The Sadou Assam Gramya Puthibharal Sanstha, Nagaon conducted a survey of old and rare manuscripts available in Nagaon and Morigaon districts of Assam published a report ‘A Catalogue of Manuscripts’ where 193 manuscripts are catalogued.

In 2012, a project titled ‘Catalogue of Manuscripts of Assam’ has been completed by prof. Malini Gosawami of Gauhati University, which was financed and published by the Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, Art & Culture (ABILAC), Assam. This catalogue covered 1154 manuscripts which are arranged under 11 subject heads.

Some leading repositories have published the catalogue of their own manuscript collection.

In 1961, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam (DHAS), Guwahati published out a catalogue of their Sanskrit manuscript

collection under the title ‘A Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts at the DHAS’ which was compiled by Dr. Pratab Chandra Choudhury. A descriptive catalogue of manuscripts: Preserved at Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti, is one of such published catalogue compiled and edited by Dharmeswar Chutia in 1983. This catalogue includes 203 manuscripts preserved at Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti, Guwahati and arranged them subject wise.

Dr. Naren Kalita compiled a catalogue named ‘A Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts Preserved at the Library of the Srimanta Sankardeva Research Institute’, which was published by that Research Institute situated at Batadrawa of Nagaon district, in 1990.

Professor Santyendranath Sarma edited the ‘Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscript’ where 502 manuscripts have been catalogued and these are preserved in the archive of Krishna Kanta Handiqui Library of Gauhati University. This catalogue was published by the university in 1999.

In 2000, catalogue of Ahom and other Tai manuscripts in Department of Sanskrit and Ancient Studies has been compiled and edited by Dr. J.N. Phukan and Heme Buragohain.

The Satras of Assam mainly in Barpeta and Majuli, are the treasure house of rare manuscripts mainly Neo-Vaishnavism. The manuscripts available in some of these Satras are also documented and included in different books mainly written in Assamese.

The manuscripts available in Patbausi Satra, Barpeta have been listed in details in a book ‘Jagatguru Srimanta Sankardev than, Patbausi Satra’ published in 2002. In this book, author Banamali Mishra included 14 Sanchipat manuscripts and some of these manuscripts are claimed as original handwritten works of Srimanta Sankardev.

Auniati Satra of Majuli has a rich collection of manuscripts and a list of 147 manuscripts was prepared by Jayanta Pathak and was brought out under the title ‘Kasturi’ in 2010.

“Dakshinpat Satra Puthi” (manuscripts of Dakshinpat Satra), by Mr. Sishir Kumar Bhattacharya is another such publication where 196 titles from the manuscript collection of Dakshinpat Satra of Majuli have been catalogued. This book was published in 2014. These above mentioned initiatives indicate that the scholars of Assam try to prepare catalogues of the Assamese manuscripts during different times.

4.7.1 National Archives of India and Assam

Nation Archives of India provides financial assistance to various governmental as well as non-governmental libraries, archives, museums and other governmental and non-governmental organisations for preserving rare and old documents, manuscripts and books deposited in such repositories. In Assam, the State Archives is working as nodal agency through which such repositories and individuals (custodians of manuscripts, rare books, etc.) can submit their applications with the schemes seeking financial assistance National Archives of India. The State-level screening committee of the Assam

State Archives recommends the selected schemes to the National Archives of India for such assistance.

The State Archives also receives financial assistance from this national body in the ratio of 75:25 of central and State Government share. For the financial year 2015-15, five proposals from Assam have been accepted by this agency with total grant of Rs. 11, 75,000.00.

4.7.2 IGNCA and Assam

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) has been working for the conservation of manuscript in Assam. The Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra, Guwahati has been serving as a nodal agency for the IGNCA for conservation, restoration, documentation and digitisation of manuscripts since 2008. A temporary laboratory has been set up there till 2015; the IGNCA conserved and digitised 5,403 rare manuscripts at the DHAS and the SSK. Total manuscripts preserved at the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti were also digitised by this centre. The catalogue of manuscripts of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti has been uploaded on the website and the digital copy of the same can be accessed through the IGNCA's intranet.

Moreover, the IGNCA has listed seven manuscript repository of Assam where they conducted survey. These are: (1) Narayani Handiqui Historical Institute (Dept. of Historical and Antiquarian Studies) (2) Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti (3) Gauhati University (4) Pragjyotishpur Sanskrit Vidyapith (5) Purva Bharati (6) Nalbari Sanskrit College (7) Kamarupa Sanskrit Sanjivani Sabha.

4.7.3 National Mission for Manuscripts and Assam

Government of India has taken a national mission under the Ministry of Culture, known as National Mission for Manuscripts which has been working for the scientific management of the manuscripts scattered in every nook and corner of the nation since 2003. This apex body in the nation has been working in different States for the documentation and conservation of manuscripts. In Assam also, this mission has taken various initiatives for the manuscripts through its Manuscripts Resource Centre (MRC) and Manuscript Conservation Centre (MCC). The National Manuscripts Mission carries out various programmes on conservation of manuscripts, training programmes and workshops, lecture programmes in Assam. Moreover, the Mission with the technical assistance from NRLC established a special field laboratory for conservation of manuscripts at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra.

4.7.4 Manuscripts Resource Centres (MRCs) in Assam

In Assam, the Mission has recognised the following organisations as Manuscripts Resource Centres.

List of MRC in Assam

Sl. No	Name	Address
1.	B.C. Gupta Memorial Library	Guru Charan College Silchar, Dist. Cachar, Assam, PIN-788004
2.	Institute of Tai Studies and Research	Moranhat, Dist.Sibsagar, Assam, PIN-785670
3.	Krishna Kanta Handiqui Library	Gauhati University, Guwahati, Dist.Kamrup (M), Assam, PIN-781014

4.7.5 Manuscripts Conservation Centres (MCCs) in Assam:

Moreover for the conservation of the Manuscript collection of the State and to make their documentation, the Mission has established two conservation centres in the State. These are:

List of MCC in Assam

Sl. No	Name	Address
1.	B.C. Gupta Memorial Library	Guru Charan College Silchar, Dist. Cachar, Assam, PIN-788004
2.	Srimanta Sankardev Kalashetra, Guwahati	Dist. Kamrup (M), Assam, PIN- 781037
3.	Krishna Kanta Handiqui Library	Gauhati University, Guwahati, Dist.Kamrup (M), Assam, PIN- 781014

Moreover, the Mission has selected one Manuscript Partner Centre (MPC) and 39 Manuscript Conservation Partner Centres (MCPC) in Assam. Asom Kalaguru Kristi Mondir Bodha Samaj, located at Bongaon of Majuli of Jorhat district is the only NMM recognised MPC in the State. The NMM recognised 39 MCPC of the State is enclosed in the Annexure I.

The various activities of National Mission for Manuscripts in Assam have been arranged by these three organizations as follows:

I. Krishna Kanta Handiqui (KKH) Library

Krishna Kanta Handiqui (KKH) Library is the central library of the Gauhati University Library. It has a might collection of books, bound

periodicals, thesis and dissertations, reports, maps, bulletins, etc. Its total number of volumes of books is near about 2, 69,300. The library is a unique one with the KK Handiqui collections which were donated by the family of the first Vice-Chancellor of the University Prof. Krishna Kanta Handiqui. This collection is full of 7593 different valuable books written in different languages. Archival Cell is another important section of the KKH Library, which is mainly working for the conservation of different valuable manuscripts. Now it has about 4500 valuable manuscripts written on Sanchipat, Tulapat and paper. These manuscripts have been preserved in the manuscript section of Archival Cell of the library. In Assam KKH Library has been working as Manuscript Resource Centre (MRC) and Manuscript Conservation Centre (MCC) from the very beginning of the National Manuscript Mission. KKH Library has organised 96 awareness organisation and 6095 manuscripts have been conserved through preventive as well as curative conservation till 2016. The Library under the Mission conducted a survey in 25 districts over 1324 institutions and private collections and documented 26,021 manuscripts in the bibliography electronic data base till March 2015.

II. B.C. Gupta Memorial Library

The Guru Charan College, established in 1935 is a leading higher educational institute in Silchar, the southern part of Assam. The National Mission for Manuscripts started the Manuscript Resource Centre and Manuscript Conservation Centre at BC Gupta Memorial Library of this college in October, 2005. This centre has so far conducted 199 surveys covering 31

institutions and 168 individual collections in seven districts and documented 3,032 manuscripts till March 31, 2015. These manuscripts are different subjects like Ayurveda, Tantra-Mantra, Jyotisha, Puja vidhi, etc. out of which most are found in Archaic Bengali script.

III. Institute of Tai Studies and Research

In 2010, National Mission for Manuscripts established another Manuscript Resource Centre at the Institute of Tai Studies and Research, Moranhat, Assam. A number of rare and valuable Tai manuscripts are scattered and identified in the villages and Buddhist Monasteries of upper Assam. This centre mainly aims to conserve these manuscripts and retrieves knowledge contain therein. Till March, 2014, this centre surveyed and documented more than 5980 manuscripts. In April, 2014, this Institute has organised a workshop on preventive conservation of manuscripts in collaboration with the NMM where 38 participants had participated. Besides these three, in the ‘Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra’, Guwahati, the Mission has set up digitization laboratory, where a number of manuscripts of different repositories of Assam have already been digitised. Sankardev Kalakshetra digitised all the manuscripts of various Majuli Satras.

4.8 Manuscript in Assam and Endangered Achieves Programme

The Endangered Achieves Programme <www.eap.bl.uk>has been initiated by the British Library with the basic aim ‘to contribute to the preservation of archival material that is in danger of destruction, neglect or physical deterioration world-wide. Under this programme, individual research

is awarded financial grants on the basis of their project proposal with the basic objective to identify the archival collections and their preservation for future use. This programme emphasises in keeping original materials and the master digital copies in their country of origin, while a digital surrogate will be deposited at the British Library for their scholarly access. Moreover, this programme encourages for the professional training or archival collection management, digitisation, etc. for the local staff associated with the project proposal. A diverse collection of manuscripts all over the world have been preserved, documented and digitised for their long term access under this programme.

Presently, Assam has been associated with this international project. In 2010, Dr. Stephen Morey, a Faculty of Humanities and Social Science Centre for research on Linguistic Diversity, Trobe University, Australia has been awarded a Major Project titled as “Documenting Conservation and Archiving the Tai Ahom Manuscripts of Assam” under this EAP. This project aims to photocopying and cataloguing the written heritage of the mighty Ahom kingdom which will ultimately be archived in the British Library. This is a very positive sign for manuscript collection of Assam as approximately 500 Ahom manuscripts (20,000 folios) will be digitised under this project and made them accessible worldwide via internet (Mazumder, 2014).

4.9 Summing up

The manuscript is a medium through which the art and culture of our past civilisation are transmitted to the present. These manuscripts are

preserved in different libraries, academic institutions, museums, religious institutions of different corner of the globe and these are treated as the non-book materials. The manuscripts available in different forms reflect the background of the cultural heritage of a nation. Due to different factors manuscripts are now in a very vulnerable condition. In India also there are a large number of manuscripts in different museums, libraries, religious institutions and in private collection. These manuscripts preserved in India or other parts of the globe, are tried to preserved and make them accessible as far as possible. Different institutions have appointed experts for this purpose as longevity and usability of manuscripts is mainly dependent on their proper conservation and management. Government of India has started a nationwide mission called the National Mission for Manuscripts, which has been working as an apex body in India for conservation, and management of the manuscripts scattered in every nook and corner of the country. In Assam, a number of manuscripts are persevered in different organizations, which can be broadly categorized into two categories, i.e. religious organization, and non-religious organizations.

CHAPTER-V

Preparation and Preservation of Manuscripts in Majuli:

Manuscripts preparation is the integral part of the tradition of Assam and regarded as an art since the *pre-Sankarite periods*, whereas the growth of this art got the impetus with the expansion of the *Neo-Vaisnavism* in 16th century. As the art played a vital role to propagate and spread the ideology of Sankardeva and became the prominent model of the communication itself. Thus, each *Satra* institution had some of the expert inmates to prepare and preserve the copies of the manuscripts. Nevertheless being the active study centers of the *Vaisnavism* and the classical scriptures including the epics, the *Satras* of Majuli has also become the centre of the development of the classical Sanskrit and vernacular literature as of the very beginning of their origin. Soon by the time *Satras* had been converted into the library of the multitude manuscripts and most of these still having the huge collection, some of the prominent *Satras* like *Auniati* and *Dakhinpat Satra* of Majuli were earlier maintained the collection of thousands of manuscripts in their library (Nath: 2009). The *Satras*, were produced the manuscripts in Assamese as well as in Sanskrit scholars like Sankardeva, Madhavdeva, Ananta kandali and Ram Saraswati were equally proficient in the Sanskrit and produced numbers of works, still some of the *Satras* for instance *Auniati Satra* preserving the collection of Sanskrit manuscripts like *Bhagavata-Cantos IX, VII-IX, Kumar Sambhav, Mahapuja Vidhi, Jyotish-Muktwali, Gopal Sahasra nam, Bhakti Kavya* and *Sri Hastamuktavali* with a translation of Assamese prose. According to Dr. Nath the preparation and preservation of the manuscripts was

once the respectable job inside and outside the *Satras*, which was not only provided the vocation to many of the people but broaden the literature, knowledge, art and culture among the society. It was due to popularity of this craft that despite immeasurable investment of hard labour and time numerous of Manuscripts had been produced and these manuscripts on tribute extra ordinarily towards the cultivation of Assamese and Sanskrit literature in pre-modern era, but due to predominance of the modern technology preparing and preserving them in Majuli and other places has been no longer in practice today. This shows that any culture however much paying it away to one that holds superior

5.1 Study of Illustrated Ramayana: *Sundarakanda* Manuscript:

The Significant illustrated Manuscript of Ramayana *Sundarkanda* is recovered from the *Bengenaati Satra* of Majuli by Pandit Hemchandra Goswami for preservation in the library of kamrup Anusandhan Samiti, Guwahati, according to the date mentioned in the manuscript its belongs to 1715 A.D and the illustrations represents the early phase styles of Satriya school of painting. Narrations and illustrations of the manuscript are based upon a section of *Sundarkanda* from the epic of Ramayana, where *sampati* a mythical bird was telling *Angada* (King of the monkey army) and the other conquerors of the *Sugriva's* (chief of monkey army) camp that Ravana abducted Sita and kept her in *Lanka* (palace of Ravana) then *Angada* with his company of conquerors processed to south sea along its north coast, where they accumulated followed by a discussion to search a audacious person who could jump over the enormous sea in one stride to reach Lanka and search out Sita. But nobody amongst them possesses the capability to jump the sea to

arrive Lanka. By the time, they made a consensus that only Hanuman (a valiant monkey deity) could do it (plate-4.36). Consequently, Jamavanta (a mythical elderly bear deity) made *Hanuman* to memorize his past glory and powers, and by recalling his past Hanuman realized his powers and assured to all the leaders that he would accomplish mission and proceed to Lanka, after arriving the Lanka Hanuman observed the entire city of *Lanka* in this course he came across with city life of the people and saw every nook and corner of his Palace and Lanka and found that inhabitant *Raksas* (demons) were engaged in different acts as well as

reading Vedas, Ravana had abducted many women from different places and engaged in sexual activities and amusement with them. Later he saw *Asoka-Vana* (Palace-garden of *Lanka*) and at last he found Sita, guarded by many demons under the giant tree. In the mean time, Ravana arrived at the place with his main consort and wife Mandodari and tried to convince Sita to surrender herself to him. However, she refused to submit herself, due to this Ravana became annoyed and ordered the subordinate demons to frighten and convince Sita for Surrender. Hanuman was observing all this by hiding himself behind the leaves of the tree and the demons involved themselves to convince Sita to surrender by applying all the means but no use at last in the night they all became hopeless, tired, and slept. Hanuman got the opportunity to come out from the tree and to introduce himself to Sita. In order to introduce himself he delivered a particular ring to her marked with the name of Rama and assured her to be relieved within no time. Sita, gave a sweet fruit to Hanuman with affection, as he requested her to give something to eat as he felt too hungry. After eating the fruit Hanuman found it very delicious and became eager to

have more, but he advised by Sita that the fruit is available in the garden but protected by numerous demons then Hanuman disguise himself as a Brahmin. Took, permission from the keeper of the garden to have one fruit but he picked many fruits from the garden and this lead a fight between him and the demon guards, as a result hanuman killed and wounded many of the demons, within no time Ravana got the report of the incident and sent many other audacious demons to arrest hanuman but they also killed. Finally Indrajit elder son of the Ravana imprisoned Hanuman in a noose called *naga-pas*, and brought him in prison to the Ravana, as he wanted to kill him but his brother Vibhishana advised him not to kill so the Ravana ordered his men to set Hanuman's tail on fire and abscond him free, as a result aggravated Hanuman burnt the Palace and city of the *Lanka* with his flaming tail and created havoc, after accomplished his mission Hanuman jumped into the sea and put out his tail from fire then he returned successfully back to Kishkindha and reported about Sita and all the incident to Rama, Angada, Sugriva and all others. After this all the camp of Rama including the army of Angada, Sugriva, and other marched to the Lanka to fight with Ravana and rescue Sita (plate-4.42). (Kalita: 2001)

5.2 Stylistic Analysis of Illustrated Ramayana- *Sundarkanda* Manuscript

5.2.1 Basic features: The paintings of *Sundarakanda* appears to be a sequence of the tradition of *Satriya School*, the artist here followed the paradigms of the *Chitra- Bhagawata* in the means of pictorial composition, conventional use of proportion, flat or two dimensional perspective, angularity, minimal use of landscape, linear manifestations of design, specifically repetition of the figures but interestingly placement of different characters,

probably to break the monotony of the linear composition and symbolic hierarchal representations of the characters is remarkable. Beside some of the minute changes in the manner of application and draughtsman ship which varied artist to artist in the tradition.

5.2.2 Colour chiaroscuro: Almost in all the paintings brilliant primary colours has been used with contrast to each other, and palette is confined up to the red, blue, yellow and green. Artist did not attempt to represent the perspective, mass, volume, grades, texture and chiaroscuro with the colours. Even flat colours fill the objects and figures. This might be due to the imaginative and symbolic interpretation in spite of realistic and practical approach. But artist, achieved the success to represent the colour symbolism and balance, he comes forward from dark to light scheme gradually as green in the background, blue in the sky and water, then red and yellow applied in the foreground figures according to their importance specially in the outdoor prospects, whereas opposite to this if he has used blue, black and green in the foreground or in front figures he plumped for yellow and red in the background for an instance demons and Ravana painted in dark shades of blue and black then artist applied light green or red in the background. In most of the illustrations red is prominent in the background. Interestingly white and yellow has been used very sensibly in the costumes, arches or other places, which creates balance to the contrast of the colours. Outlines of the figures and objects painted in black.

5.2.3 Architecture:

Artist of these paintings is not much concerned to depict the architectural designs and all the details, architectures which represented here are confined to the basic rectangular shapes and there are no articulations in the shapes and design. Simplicity of the architectural designs might be occurs due to the less consciousness of the perspective representation or probably most of the *Satriya* painters belongs to the simple and remote background thus it is much complicated to them to imagine and depict the variations, complexity and dimensions of the architectural designs. Though this is the common aspect of the *Satriya* School, but artist closely tried to symbolically represent the variation among the different architectures.

5.2.4 Landscape:

The natural and pictorial objects like hills, mountains, fields and sky are not concerned much in the illustrations though out of requirement hills and plains are painted in the wave like blocks with flat colours and each block imposed one above other, by differentiating them broad outlines. Objects are depicted without following any perspective thus the effect of distance is not appeared in the illustration sky is also painted in flat blue colour except some chromatic variation here and there, clouds are imposed on the blue flat sky or made by few wavy and spiracle lines of white colour with brush. Similarly water is bounded in a box and basket which shape confined up to the square, rectangular and horizontal in flat colours and the waves depicted through the rhythmic lines, due to this it seems very minimal and up to some extent it resembles to the abstract form. Field and plains painted in flat green shade

where trees, leaves and flowers are painted in a folk manner and rendered in flat colour patches. Some aquatic animal like the fishes, alligator, tortoise and other appears characteristically folk and decorative.

5.2.5 Figures:

As different elements and proportions has been used in the paintings of this manuscripts. It seems that all the illustrations were not accomplished by the same artist some of the figures are adequate, where two or three are disappointing and incomplete also, the manuscript unfortunately found in burnt condition and not preserved properly. However, considering the main characters the figures can be kept in three categories as figures of deities like Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita. Figures of Demons like Ravana, Bibishana, Asura, raksasis and the anthropomorphic forms like Hunuman, Sugriva, Angada, Jambuvana, figures of first category like Rama and lakshmana are depicted in generous moderate and elite gesture, anatomy of these figures are triangular, chest are broad and compare to waist. Eyes are broad and seem parquetry under the lifted arched eyebrows, hair styles of these figures are interesting and peculiar which makes spiracle pattern from forehead to behind the neck, Face of Sita is always calm and graceful. The figures of Demons are interesting in some cases long tongue is coming out of the mouth and painted as of snake, monstrous and horrible with bulky and heavy anatomy with broad chest and shoulders carrying weapons, almost all such figures coloured deep blue or similar to black, figure of Ravana is attractive and spread up in the

composition with ten heads and around fifteen arms and hands which appears horrifying. The anthropomorphic figures are more close to the animal figures as the character of Hanumana, Sugriva, Angada, and others looks like as monkeys of different weight and volume which are not detailed, hairs of the body imposed with marks of the brush, animal figures are ordinary elephants and horses are not as practical as in *Hastividya*. Some of these figures of *Sundarakanda* expresses some meanings through the symbolic gestures of hands which is similar to the other Satriya school Paintings like *Chitra-Bhagawata* and *Anadipatana*, moreover the paintings towards second half of the manuscripts, figures became more mature and better with less folk elements which shows that some of learning or novice artists also practised their hands.

5.2.6 Costumes:

Figures of the male deities are wearing a long cloth on the shoulders over the neck and *dhoti* (lower garment) wrapped on both of the legs separately with *kamarbandh* (a cloth tied over the waist). Some of the noble figures worn *Mughlai-pagdi* (Turban) and *mukutas* (crowns) whereas the figures of demons are only in dhotis; Ravana is bejewelled with some ornaments. Female figures like Sita wearing a blouse above the waist portion and a sari over it, anthropomorphic figures are painted without clothes though in some of the cases like Jambuvana, Sugriva, Nala, Nila and Bali wearing the dhoti and crown. Paintings of the Ramayana-Sundarkanda besides the folk and conventional treatments certainly demonstrate the effort and talent of the artist as he successfully used the each n every possibilities of the lines to individualize the characters through the outlines and linear texture to represent

the rhythm, motion, force and dimensions of the object and that of within the limited colour palette. Artist remarkably used his imagination according to the text and made live all the characters allegorically on the surface, which perceived the par excellence to express the extract of the words.

5.2.7 Conclusion:

The art of manuscript illustration or miniature painting of Assam significantly marked its progression in the medieval period which undoubtedly rooted by the ideology of social and cultural reformation of Vaisnavism. As these paintings were not prejudiced by the palate contentment or shallow enjoyment thus the sole objective of the paintings is to convey the sacred themes of the epic and puranic lore. Most of these illustrated manuscripts of Satriya style represent the distinctive style developed in Assam in the form of miniature painting are executed on Aloe bark (*Sanchi-pat*) and indigenously ginned cotton paper called *Tula-pat*. The art of paintings in Assam are mainly available in the form of manuscripts illustrations and prominently practised on the rectangular format of the Satriya or royal manuscripts, Tai-Ahom Buddhist manuscripts and some other manuscripts of Hinduism including the less amount of cloth painting on *muga-silk*. These manuscripts paintings can be divided into three main categories of Tai-Ahom school, Ahom School or Garhgaon School and the Satriya School. The designs patterns of the *Chitra-Bhavata* have been continued as traditional style by the painters of Satriya School is appears more indigenous in approach and developed under the sacred Vaisnavite environment of the various *Satras* and in direct response of Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankardeva consequently the theme of almost all of Satriya school was life and events of Lord Krishna and the Bhagawat

Purana. While the Darang and Garhgaon School of Manuscript painting was patronized by the Kochs and Ahoms respectively. Darang School in style more or less persuaded or related to the Satriya School and emerged with more sophistication as in the illustration of *Tirtha-Kaumudi* and *Anadi-patan* manuscripts. On the other hand Ahom School mainly executed the translation works like Illustrations *Ananda -Lahari* and *Gita- Govinda* and some original secular works like *Hastividyarnava* (painted by imported artists from northern India Dilbar and Dosai). The manuscript paintings patronized by the court represents the progressive combination of Rajasthani, Moghal, and indigenous style which profoundly flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The art of manuscripts paintings developed in Majuli prominently depict the Satriya style of painting in presentation and thematically imbued with Vaisnava cult, moreover vitally contributed to wide spread the themes of Neo-Vaisnavism through brilliant colours and interesting interpretations of characters, all these manuscripts are conventional in style and techniques and religious in motif. The artists were more concerned to the narrations in spite of exposure of their visual and technical accomplishment hence the paintings of Satriya manuscript embedded with angular convention, linear compositions, flat colours mainly yellow, green and red, and lack of perspective.

Illustrated Ramayan: *Sundarkanda* manuscript observed in the present study from *Bengenaati Satra* followed the similar trends and reveals that the solitary aim of the Assamese miniature paintings indeed Satriya manuscripts is to illustrate the narrations of epics and *puranic* tales to convey the message of the emerging *Bhakti-cult* (Neo-Vaisnavism) in the form of line and vivid colours, which entrenched by the Sankardeva in sixteenth

century. Simultaneously these manuscripts contributed extensively to usher the education and learning, literature and fine art including culture and socio-religious harmony among the society for centuries.

CHAPTER -VI

Finding, Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Summary

Satra and Majuli are the two terms equivalent to the obverse and reverse of coin. Indeed, Majuli is understood in terms of its Satras. Its society, culture and even its economy are largely to be viewed in the context of its being a land of the *Vaishnava* monasteries called Satra.

The idea of Satra as a kind of religious asylum and center of religious activities was first conceived by Sankardeva (1449-1568), the great socio-religious reformer of 15th -16th century of Assam. The Satras, however, remained an idea in its most embryonic form and did not develop into a class of organized social and religious institution during the life times of this great *Vaishnava* reformer. Even the one which he established at Belaguri Dhuwahat in the post-Bardowa times within the territory covered later on by the island called Majuli, was only a centre for religious discourses and proselytisation, and not an organized institution.

Satras grew abundantly as a class of socio-religious institution in the 17th century after the death of Sankardeva. It is estimated that at one time their number raised up to twelve hundred all over the state. Audrey Cantlie estimated its number in 1969 to be some six hundred and fifty out of which more than twenty Satras were in Majuli Island. Established mostly by the Ahom kings in the middle of the 17th century, all the Satras still claim to have governed the socio-religious atmosphere in the island, which is otherwise also

very distinguished, by its geographical isolation, and being cut off from the mainland Assam. Its relevant here to mention that the society of Majuli at present is a mixture of different population groups consisting of castes and tribes as it was centuries back. This admixture has been noticed, since the days of the Ahom kings who made it a policy to specify and isolate the island for the abode of the Satras and for the people belonging to the high casts when it was already the home land of a few communities, such as Kochs, the yogis (also called Katani or Nath), the chutiyas, the Kacharis, the Deuris, The Ahims, the Kaivartas, the Hadis. During the 19th century it experienced the influx of the Misings, another Mongoloid tribe, from the suvansiri valley in the north who now form the most extensive of the tribal inhabitants of the land. During the last two hundred years especially after Independence, a large number of people of Marwari, Bengali and Bihari communities from other parts of India have come to the island. While trying to understand the Satra-society relationship one will have to keep this aspect of population pattern in view.

Satras in Majuli are of two types: *udasin* and *girhi* or *grihasthi Satra*. A Satra with celibate devotees (called *udasin bhakat*) living in cloisters of houses within a large campus with the married, or celibate pontiff (called *adhikar*) as the head; and a Satra with house-holding inmates (called *grihi* or *grihasthi bhakat*) with the married *adikar* at the top is a *grihasthali Satra*. *Grihasthali Satras* look more like a village than a secluded religious center. Adhar, Elengi or owa is such a Satra. The Garmur Satra, however, is a mixture of the two types, with the celibate pontiff at the top and the family-holding inmates at the

bottom. But, like the Auniati, Dakhinpat, Kamalabari was also a monastic Satra till the early twenties of the last century.

The *Neo-Vaishnavit* movement led by Sankardeva of which the Satra institution is a legacy, preached the ideal of cast equality at least in the religious plan and opposed untouchability. Naturally, society of Majuli was a fertile field for the *Vaishnava* reformers to work and realize their ideas. Records, however, point to the otherwise . Field surveys have revealed that caste was, and still is, an aspect of consideration for the Satras, of course, in varied degree. Knowledge about this institution, the degree of *Brahmanization* is greatest proportion of Brahman disciples. The *adikars* are also, with a few exceptions, Brahman. Caste distinctions among the disciples in respect of seating and commensality are carefully maintaince in the Satra Name House.

Manuscripts have no alternative. In most cases, if a user requires a particular manuscript he/she has to contact or visit the repository in person. For the management of manuscripts different levels in India as well as Assam a huge number of manuscripts are persevering in various repositories. In satras of Majuli also preserved and conserved various manuscripts. Auanati, Garmur, Kamalabari and Chamaguri satras are preserved various manuscripts. The sankardev kalakhetra of Guwahati conserved and preserved the all the manuscripts of Majuli satras in scientific way. The handing of manuscripts is a very sensitive task as most of them are old and are fragile in nature. Therefore emphasis in given on digitization of manuscripts for their World-wide accessibility without deteriorating their physical condition. Digitization of the

manuscripts means the conversion of manuscripts to digital format, which helps both the custodians and users in different ways. A number of digitization programmes, has been initiated across the country. Most of the large scale digitization initiatives are aimed at preserving and providing access to these resources of knowledge and cultural heritage of India. In Assam, also the N N M and the I G N C A. have imitated digitization of manuscripts.

A database of manuscripts in Assam is very much essential for scientific and systematic study of manuscripts, but no such database has been created in Assam till date. The proposed outline for creating a manuscripts database of Assam will certainly be helpful in this regard. This will mayimage the usage of manuscript which are scattered in aiffereni repositories in satras of Majuli (and Assam) as well as other states of North Eastern Region without proper use.

Finding:-

This study is based on the 4 objective which have already be mention in the chapter 1 and the finding of the study help in fulfilled these objectives accordingly. The objectives I,II,III and IV have been discussed in chapter IV to fulfill the objectives in a common plan for designing the manuscripts collection of Assam as well as Majuli satras, has been included in chapter 5 details of the finding are shown below.

Objectives I: To find out, the real condition of Majuli satras.

Finding

In the story, it is found that Majuli is the place of *vaishnavit* culture. It is ornamented with the complete wealth of satria culture foundation of which laid by Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhabdev. Satras, not only a religious institution, it is a place of cultural and social awakening. A satra acquires the complete form with the Satradhikar, Deka satradhikar, Bhakats, four hatis (residence of the bhakats) Namghar, monikut, stor house and batchara.

At present movements Majuli, which has been deprived of the receiving the recognition of world heritage site come under the threat of devastating flood in many a times. In absence of scientifically constructed spar on both the side of Majuli, only on their geographical volume has remained, with in the number of satras also decreased and many satras of Majuli were shifted the other side of the river Brahmaputra.

Objectives II: To find out the preservation of manuscripts and the medium of the manuscripts in Assam and various satras in Majuli.

Finding

In the study, it is found that manuscripts of Assam and Satras of Majuli are in different medium, such as *Sanchipat, tulapat, bamboo strip, cloth, paper, folies* and even *gold manuscript* are also identified. Every Satra has its own collections of manuscripts. In different Satras of Majuli around four thousand of manuscripts, Most of this are origin text written by Sankardeva and Madhavadeva. Manuscripts are most popular themes are religion (mainly concerned with the worship of Lord Krishna), medicine, astrology and zoology. The Satras of Majuli also house of rare collection of illustrated

manuscripts. The most important manuscripts preserved at the Satras include *Hasti-Vidayanava*, illustrated *Bhagawat* and the *Nidana*.

Objectives III: To study the various stages of the culture, socio-economic and religious consciousness of the people of Majuli Satras.

Finding

Satras grew abundantly as a class of Socio-religious institution in the 17th century after the death of Sankardeva. The mainstream society of the island consisting of the higher echelons is directly associated with the Satra-in both their formation and functioning. Satras being centers of cultural activities including music and dance, it is no wonder to note that till a few decades ago when performing art was not much commercialization, it was purely contained to the high cast people alone. Impact of the Satras is note in the life-styles of the inhabitants of the island, in the food and dress habits of the people, in their speech and behaviors. All their moral and spiritual life, it is interesting to note that a man from the Island is easily distinguished by other due to their own and indigenous style of living. The whole year is an agenda of cultural activities for the Satras of Majuli are performing *Bhaona*, *Ras-leela*, *Paal-naam*, etc is a part of their culture.

It is interesting that life-styles of a celibate inmate was acne considered an ideal imitation for any gentleman of the society; and in Satras of Majuli one would still come across persons in the attire of a celibate inmate with *dhoti*, *chadar* (scarf), *gamocha* (Assamese traditional towel), *chandani* (vermilion) and *long twisted hair*.

Objectives: IV To find out the preservation of manuscripts in Majuli Satras.

Finding:

Manuscripts preparation is the integral part of the tradition of Assam regarded as an art since the *pre-sankarite* periods. As the art played a vital role to propagate and spread the ideology of Sankardeva and Madhavadeva, and it become the prominent model of the communication. Thus, each Satra institutions had some of the expert inmates to prepare and preserve the copies of the manuscripts. The Satras of Majuli has also become the centre of the development of the classical Sanskrit and vernacular literature as of the very beginning of their origin. Some of the prominent Satras, like Auniati and Dakhipat Satra of Majuli were earlier maintains the collection of thousands of manuscripts in their library. The Satras were produced the manuscripts in Assamese as well as Sanskrit scholars.

Recommendations:

The basis of the study, the following recommendations have been offered only in following aspects, manpower in the repositories attached to religious organization cannot be professional and semi professional staff. Numbers of professional or semi-professional staff are engager as a worker's of preservation and conservation of manuscripts of Majuli Satras.

Management aspect of manuscripts designing of database and application of Google site are use in preservation and conservation of manuscripts.

Conclusion:

Preservation and conservation of manuscripts in satras of Majuli is a very vast area of study as a large numbers of rare manuscripts are still stored in darkroom of various religious organizations of Majuli and in the personal custody of various priests and *pandit* in Assam. Conservation of manuscripts in Majuli Satras is still a sensitive issue, especially in the religious institutions; therefore, some repositories are excluded from this study. This study is the beginning of such application and it can be used in large scale depending upon the size of the population i.e. number of manuscripts and repositories. Manuscripts of Satras to make searchable, retrievable and accessible, online throughout the globe with a minimize information technology, infrastructure and minimum technological skills. The manuscripts of satras will maximize the utilization and dissemination of these rare collections of knowledge written in various languages and scripts.

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PLATE 5.1 PRESERVATION OF MANUSCRIPT IN UTTAR KAMLABARI SATRA



PLATE 5.2 PRACTICING MANUSCRIPTS (BHAGWATA X) OF AUNIATI SATRA



PLATE 5.3 SINGHASAN IN MANIKUT AT AUNIATI SATRA, MAJULI



PLATE 5.4 MUKHA SILPA AT SAMOGURI SATRA, MAJULI



PLATE 5.5 WOODEN BOX IN PRESERVATION SYSTEM AT DAKHINPAT SATRA, MAJULI



PLATE 5.6 ENTRI GATE TO GARMUR SATRA, MAJULI



PLATE 5.7 COTAGE OF BHAKATS IN UTTAR KAMALABARI SATRA, MAJULI

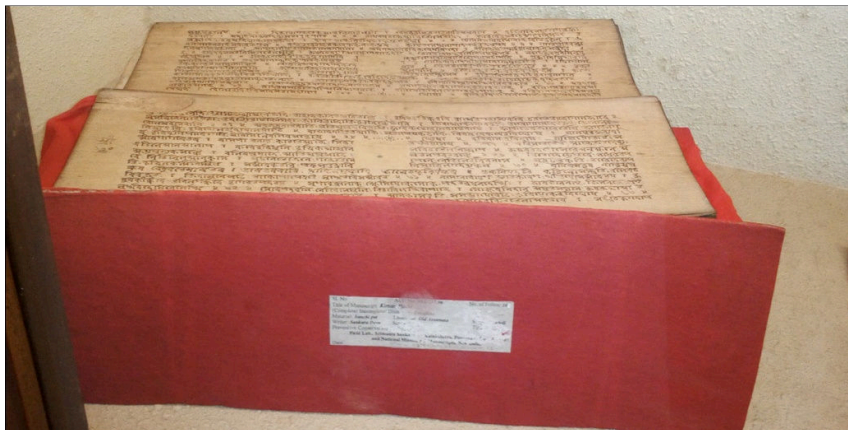


PLATE 5.8 PRESERVATION OF MANUSCRIPT IN SANKARDEV KALAKHETRA
