1.1 BACKGROUND

Art in any form has always been an imperative and integral reflection of each and every community and its identity, since the time began. The early marks made by the human in dark caves as a delight or dejection, as a fear, as an excitement, as a scream, as a silence and certainly as devotion. Art is not merely a thought and expression, language and communication, idea and vision; nonetheless it’s a record of history, perpetuation of culture, and an autobiography which reflects cultural values, beliefs, and identity. The creation of art is a collective activity such as dance, theatre, and choir all required a group of artist and most importantly the spectators. It always endows with an opportunity to come together and sharing experiences, therefore it is coherently attached with the cultural and social life of any society, and society cannot be detached from the religion directly or indirectly which is more factual in case of social life of India and its vivid cultural, geographical, social and religious diversity. The Art and culture has always been derived and driven by the religion and in Assam also the Neo-Vaisnavism, progression of Bhakti Movement of India, persuaded the artistic and creative pursuit of the island of Majuli, which became a nerve-centre of Vaisnavism of Assam after the revered arrival and preaches of Saint Srimanta Sankerdeva, personification of Saint Sankardeva and Phenomenon of Neo-Vaisnavism in Assam imbued the whole historical and cultural background of the medieval epoch of Assam.

Assam lies in the eastern extension of the sub Himalayan zone consisting of haughty mountainous terrains and moderately high hills, interspersed with plateaus and river-fed valleys. It has a great diversity in terms of physical features, such as natural vista, flora and fauna, soil fertility, weather conditions, and so on making for corresponding diversity in the concrete cultures of the inhabitants. The origin of the modern term ‘Assam’ engrosses a long
journey. The particular area lies between Latitude 25°43´and 26°53´ north and longitude 90°39´ and 92°11´east, mentioned as ‘Kamrupa’ and ‘Pragjyotishpura’ in the earlier available literary sources like Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas, Kamrupa kingdom was mentioned as Pragjyotishpura, In classical Sanskrit literature both the terms “Pragjyotisa and Kamrupa” occurs as Alternative names of the territory. The origin of the name Kamrupa is associated with Kamakhya. The words Kamrupa and kamakhya is probably derived from an Austric formation, such as kamoï (demon) in old Komer; Kamoit (devil) in cham; Kamet (corpse) in khas; komui (grave) or komuoch (corpse) in Santali vernaculars. The word Kamarupa is derived from the formation like kamru or kamrut, the name of a lesser divinity in Santali. (District Gazzetteers: 1990)

Behind the derivation of the word Assam, there are distinct opinions and interpretation of different scholars. According to some scholars the name was derived from a Bodo formation ‘Ha-com’ which means low land. Bodos, the Tibeto-Burman people, who came to this land prior to Ahoms. (Choudhury: 1959) According to Griersion, the word originated from the Siamese word ‘Shan’, which became a Burmese dialect ‘sham’, and Sham later has been pronounced as ‘Asham’, which means land of Monks. Edward Gait interprets that the term Assam was first applied to the Shan invaders by the local people in the sense of ‘the unequal’ or ‘the peerless’. (Gait: 1925) As per the S.K Bhuyan, the much appropriate name of this land – ‘Assam’, seems to be closely related with ‘Ahoms’ the Tai invaders. After the incursions of Ahoms, the land got its name ‘Asam’ (Assam). (Bhuyan: 1990)

Subsequently the Assamese chronicles and biographies (Buranjis & Caritas) are the important and relevant sources of Assam’s history, in which, we can generally find that the terms Āsām, Ācām, are used to perpetually denote to the ‘Tāi-Ahom invaders. In the Satsari Assam Buranji (a chronicle ‘satsari’ by name), it is said that the local Brahmins and the Morāns (community) called them Āhom (Aśam), which means unequal to others. In Darrang rajvamsavali, a chronicle of the Koch kings by ‘Suryyakhari Daivajna’, composed in sixteenth century A.D, the word ‘Asam’ has been all throughout used to mean the Shan
invaders were designated by various terms, such as Āsam, Aṣam, Asam: In the ‘Kamrupar Buranji’, a chronicle of much later date, the term Acam was used to refer to the Shan Invaders. (Kakati, 1941)

Considerably it can be mentioned that, the name Āhom (Assam) became prevalent by the entry of the Shan invaders or Ahoms to this land and gradually it came to be used as the designation of the whole land ruled by these people. In Modern times the term Āsam (English Assam) used to designate the land and the people living within the land are called Asamiā (Assamese in English).

Assamese culture is a synthesis of the social and political movements that have been occurred from time to time, the conquests and defeats, the invasions and migrations, the records of sculptures and architectures, the evolution of the tradition, arts and Religions of the people, and so on. The social system of the Assamese community reveals influences of the Indian Varnashrama (Caste model), the political ideals of Assam kings seems parallel to the pan Indian polity, the cultivation of the vivid art forms largely reveals the influence of Indian aesthetic standards, the language itself is a ‘Sanskritik’ (Sanskrit based) language and the old inscriptions proves, the acceptance of Sanskrit as the court language; even the land system bears traces of Indian land system. Simultaneously culture of Assam has its own distinct features. For instance, in spite of the apparent adherence to the Varnashrama or Caste systems, Assamese society does not admit much of caste rigidity and there have been evidence of priests even from the non Brahmin castes. It is mainly due to, that Assam has always been the confluence of races, and the fusion of cultures, which has been sanctioned not only by miscegenation but by the political necessity.

Assam has been situating the diverse racial sects and cultural concoction, Integrations and amalgamations, which have been proceeds through the centuries gradually, but it certainly making Assamese life and culture in a distinct typical strain as the great multifaceted pattern with unified Indian ways of life and culture. Since the beginning of the 13th century, the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa was slowly undergoing a process of disintegration. The whole of Assam, from the
eastern-most Dikkarvasni region to the river Karatoya in the west, disintegrated into several kingdoms, some of which did not survive more than a few decades. The easternmost territories of Assam, ruled by the line of Chutiya Kings and to the west, the Chutiya kingdom laid the Ahom principality. Further west, there was the Kachari kingdom to the south of the river Brahmaputra and it was probably extended to not less than halfway across the modern Nagaon district. On the both sides of the Brahmaputra and to the west of the Kachari kingdom of southern Assam and Chutiya Kingdom of the North-east, there were number of land chieftains known as ‘Bhuyans’. (J.A Vas: 1911) The western part of the Assam comprising the modern districts of Kamrup, Goalpara and parts of Cooch-Behar was ruled by a few dynasties during the course of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries and the kingdom was known as ‘Kamatarajya’. By the end of the fifteenth century A.D, however, a new power of ‘Kochs’, under the leadership of Bishwa Simha, emerged as the dominant political power in Western Assam. Constant friction and conflict for supremacy amongst the above powers was the order of the day, which severely affected the political conditions of the region. Subsequently the political instability brought out a chaotic condition in the religious sphere also in medieval era. (Barua: 1984)

1.1.1 THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ART HERITAGE IN ASSAM

Assam is a very much integral part of India and clutched with cultural indigenous diversity. Its culture similarly constitutes an essential ingredient of the composite pan Indian culture. But precisely due to its location, the region has served as a corridor for the migration of human groups as well as cultural cascade both from the Indian mainland to the west and the neighbouring lands in the north and east. Thus the corresponding elements can be easily trace out from the cultural heritage of this region, with China, Tibet, Myanmar, and even lands still further away in the south-east Asian countries; and such elements have been smoothly and naturally integrated into the local cultural comprise. This
agreeable combination of the indigenous and the exotic external trends has helped the place to making its significant cultural treasure.

Since the very early ages North-east has been the home of the kirātas or indo-Mongoloids. In fact, the Indo-Mongoloids strain is predominant even today also, in the racial and cultural composite of the region. At the same time, scholars have distinguished many features that are of Austral and Dravidian Affiliation simultaneously with the Aryan ethnicities, which have been constantly penetrated, particularly in the plains of Assam (Plate-1.1). It has been the dominant presence of Aryan Hindu modes and ethnicity since early times, within Hinduism, again Saivism, Saktism, and Vaishnavism have been influential in different times, and to different degrees. However, later in the fifteenth century, Neo-Vaisnavism has been laid down in deep crux of the Assamese society by a pioneering Saint Sankardeva and cultivated the highly refined and sophisticated lifestyles and artistic forms. The Satras of Assam have been the active hub of the unique cultural model with multiple ramifications of religious, ethical, social, and artistic venture since more than five centuries.

There is the living presence of Buddhism among the number of Tribal communities of the region. For example, the Monpas, Sherdukpen, and some other groups are followers of ‘Mahayana’ Buddhism of the lamaistic order and number of small groups of Tai affiliation who profess the ‘Hinayana’ Buddhism of Theravada order. There is also a small Assamese Sikh community who are Sikh by faith but very much Assamese by culture and the Muslims started making their appearance in the medieval times, while their constituent have gradually multiplied, large segment of them have merged into the local socio-cultural milieu (B.Dutta:2012). Christianity, which came to these parts in the first half of the nineteenth century or in colonial period, spread quickly, particularly among the tribes of hill area of Assam.

The region is well-known for its delicately turned out bamboo and cane articles and equally remarkable in the textiles produced by different communities in their indigenous looms. Specimens of the sophisticated architecture and sculptures are marked in different parts of the region in various states of ruins.
and conservations. But the religious architecture and sculpture of the region grade special attention. Similarly, in the field of various Art forms like Music, Dance and Theatre, are closely connected with the extensive past. As the temple ruins of Deo-Parbat as well as the architectural ruins of Tezpur, plenty of dancing figures have been recovered. In the inscription of Vanamala (9th century) reference has been made to the existence of female dancers in the temples. In the medieval period Satras (Neo-Vaisnavite Monasteries) have also emerged as the synonym of the school of Classical dance and theatre in Assam, which is entirely religious in motive. Several types of classical dance namely sutradhara-nritya, natuwa-nac, rasa-nritya, cali-nac and krishna-nac are specially mentioned. The ‘Oja-pali’ dance has been performed generally on the occasions of the worship of the snake goddess Manasa has been in vogue from the pre-Sankarite period. (Medhi: 1950)

The Dramatic performance known as ‘Bhaona’ introduced by Sankardeva became increasingly popular with the progress of time, the prevalence of songs and dance is a marked feature of the Bhaona performance. Even the actors enter and move on the stage with rhythmic pace. The decorations and accessories which creatively utilized in the Bhaona performances like costumes, make-up, stage-designing and Masks are also the merit attractions. Masks illustrates the vivid relevant appearances to the actors, playing the part of Deities, Asuras, Raksasas,(Demons) Monkeys, birds, reptiles etc. those acts by attiring masks of various types in bhaona performances. Finely carved and chiselled wood deities like incarnations of Vishnu, Narayana, Vasudeva and various flora and fauna images adorns the shrines and interiors of the Satras.

The art of painting observed in painted ceilings and walls of Namghar (Prayer hall) and Manikuta (Shrine) of the Satras give ample of evidences of artistic faculty of Assamese Artisans. Medieval biographies of religious saints and the Satra chronicles provides descriptions of Namaghars having painted ceilings and walls where the stories from the epics and purans were portrayed and painted with various decorations and designs. The art of book illustration by means of miniatures and ‘Manuscript painting’ was nurtured in the Satras as well
as in the royal courts of Rudra Simha (1696-1714) and Siva Simha descendant of Gadadhar Simha (Plate 1.2) through distinct schools and styles of paintings. (Chatterjee: 1970)

1.1.2 BHAKTI-MOVEMENT AND NEO-VAISNAVISM IN ASSAM

The *Vaishnava Bhakti* movement encompassed almost whole of the India and thus regarded as a renaissance in the socio-religious life of the Indian populace by propounding in broad-spectrum, got momentum by the Saint Ramanujacharya in eleventh century on the basis of the older devotional cult of *Alvars* of Tamil land. The movement gradually extended to other parts of India through the efforts of Nimbarka (11th century), Madhvacharya (13th century), Kabir (15th century) Chaitanya, Namdev (15-16th century) and other saints. The school of *Vaisnavism* founded by the above reformers might differ in philosophical niceties and outward religious observances, but the fundamental basis of these schools of *Vaisnavism* did not differ very much. The impact of Islam was became jeopardy in those periods, to the long-standing Hinduism which impelled the thinkers and reformers of Hindu society to evolve a simpler and liberal faith that would be acceptable to all adequately. The *Bhakti* cult so long confined mainly to South India was admirably suited to play the role of the much needed religion of the time (Bhandarker: 1913). It was accepted with certain modifications by reformers of different regions and within an appreciable limit of time and amalgamated in the whole of India along the similar motives, that divine grace could be achieved through devotion which was open to all classes and castes, the movement dole out with the principle of birth, which primarily determined access to salvation through knowledge and atonement. To that extent the movement initiated substantial changes in its value system and egalitarianism of relationship and structural changes in the socio-religious sphere of the Indian society as well as in the Assam in a very distinct approach.

Neo-Vaisnavism in Assam did not only mean a religious faith, but a way of life. It affected the social, cultural and religious spheres as it brought a change in perspectives of life, divinity and society. Neo-Vaisnavism stands out among the
different Bhakti cults of India in terms of its unique and innovative character, which found distinct gesture in the succession, to create a democratic civil society based on the shared values of fraternity, equity, humanism and democracy. This new creed of faith started by Srimanta Sankardeva is formally known as ‘Eka-Sarana-Nam-Dharma’. Sankardeva preached devotion to a single God, Lord Krishna or Vishnu, (Eka Sarana) who can be worshiped solely by uttering his various names. Srimanta Sankardeva basically considered the sravana and kirtana modes of bhakti or devotion as prescribed by the Bhagavata-Purana for propagation. These were accessible to all, the highest and lowest, men and women alike, irrespective of birth, caste or status and no rigid theocratic laws were to be followed by the devotees and idol worship did not primarily featured in Srimanta Sankardeva's system. The Radha-Krishna cult is not acknowledged in this system of Vaisnavism, or any Shakti (energy represented in a form of mother goddess) in spite of that Lord Vishnu and his incarnations have been recognised. (Borkakoti: 2005)

The four fundamental elements of Neo-Vaishnavism are (i) God, (ii) Guru (the religious preceptor) (iii) The fraternity of Bhakats (devotees) and (iv) Nam (God’s chant); of the different attitudes of bhakti, Srimanta Sankardeva advocated dasya or servitude to God. Eka-Sarana-Nam-Dharma is also known as Mahapurushia Dharma, after Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva, who founded it. The soubriquet ‘Mahapurusha’, in Assam Vaishnavism, refers to the Supreme Being (Narayana-Visnu-Krishna) and it is actually for this reason that Sankaradeva’s religion is known as Mahapurushia. The Neo-Vaishnavite movement commenced in Assam in the first decade of the 16th century and reached its peak towards the middle of the 17th century. It started on a missionary note by working towards the uplift of the backward classes and minimization of the rigours of caste distinctions. The marginal groups including the so-called untouchables and backward classes and tribes were taken into the new fraternity. (Neog: 1965)
1.1.3 MAJULI AS A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CENTRE

Majuli, a subdivision of the Jorhat district in Assam, situated between Latitudes 26°-25´ and 27°-12´ North and longitudes 93°-39´ and 94°-35´ East is recognized as one of the largest river islands in the world and flourished after the sacred arrival and preaches of Srimanta Sankardeva and distinguished as the Nerve-centre of the Neo-Vaisnavite cult. Srimanta Sankardeva is one of the greatest exponents of Bakti cult in Assam born in the middle of the fifteenth century at ‘Bardowa’ in the district of Nagaon, Assam. He was deeply versed in Sanskrit lore and priory conceived the idea of propagating the religion of love and devotion as preached in the Bhagwata Purana, amongst the people of Assam, in the consequent he translated a large number of Standard Sanskrit religious epics and scriptures into melodic Assamese vernacular and thereby vastly enriched the Assamese culture and literature in the 15th century. He lived at Bardowa till 1530 A.D and then migrated to the Majuli. The Neo-Vaisnavism contributed much to the Assamese Society and culture. It tried to remove discrimination from the society and brought constructive changes to establish the cultural Harmony.

At the other end of the religious spectrum, there were the bulk of the indigenous Tribal population who followed their indigenous Tribal faiths. Bringing all these diverse communities and martial sections under a systemized religious code and conduct of life and to provide a mode of worship, which would be simpler and at the same time accessible to all the communities was the necessitate of the Time.(Sarma: 1989)

The earliest attempts to bring the backward tribes, castes and classes into the fold of Vaishnavism was made by Srimanta Sankardeva himself who accepted, Govinda a common man from the Garo tribe; Paramananda belonging to the Miri (Mishing) tribe; Narahari, an Ahom man; Narottama belonging to the Naga community; Jayarama, a Bhutiya person and Candsai, a Muslim as his disciples. They all took part in the bhaona performances (religious plays) and when required acted as guides to analyze the essence of Eka Sarana Nam Dharma. One of his popular works, Kirtana-ghosa, Srimanta Sankardeva proclaims that:
Nahi bhakatita jati-ajati vicara
(There is naught consideration of caste variation in Bhakti)

Thus, people from all castes and streams of life were received by Srimanta Sankardeva as disciples; and they could even profess as teachers in his Vaishnava Order. A democratic outlook permeates the entire teachings and practices of the Neo-Vaishnavite faith in Assam. One side, God has been brought down from the metaphysical heights to the reach of the ordinary people; and on the other side the status of human being, indeed whole society, has been elevated by insisting on the relation of God and soul. (Rajguru: 1988)

Majuli in the fifteenth century presented a different picture of diverse shades and grades of culture. The majority of the people belonged to the non-Aryan tribes having distinct manners, customs and religious beliefs. Those who professed Hinduism loosely adhered to Vaishnavism and Saivism. Saktism bordering on extreme Tantricism was also widely prevalent. The followers of these cults were all found indulging in eerie practices like animal and sometimes even human sacrifices, magical rites, enchantments and the similar. It was based on the philosophy of palate and sensual pleasures. The economically backward classes and the socially subjugated become the victims of such wraithlike practices.

At the other end of the religious spectrum, there was bulk of the indigenous Tribal population who followed their indigenous Tribal faiths. Bringing all these diverse communities and warring sections under a systemized religious code and conduct of life and to provide the masses with a mode of worship which would be simpler and at the same time accessible to all the communities was the pressing need of the time, which recognized and materialized by Sankardeva. Simultaneously all the religious and mythological soul transformed and represented through various forms of Art like Bhaona, (Assamese Theatre), kirtan (Musical prayers), Painting Manuscripts, Wood Carvings and establishing Satras, Namghars and religious Architectures. (Nath: 2009)
1.1.4 MAJULI AND NEO-VAISNAVISM IN THE CONTEXT OF VIVID ART FORMS

The island Majuli came into prominence in the 16th century with the arrival of Sankardeva and propagation of Neo—Vaisnavism, a new form of Vaisnavism. Sankardeva’s Vaisnavism was simpler, more accessible and less ritualistic than the complex Hindu Religion. It was rooted in faith and prayer. There was no idol worship, rituals and sacrifice, instead a dance and drama form of Bhaona and Ankiya-nat based upon the Bhagwat Gita, interpreted by Sankardeva to all pilgrimage to easily and interestingly convey the message of ideology among the society. Majuli, became the asylum of the vivid and various art forms like Bhaona (Theatrical performance) folk culture, music and dance forms, handicraft, pottery; ethnicity, sacred Satra Architecture, Mask-making, Wood-carvings and paintings (ILLustrated manuscripts) etc. which are typically based on the religious and Vaisnavite ideology, to serve and uplift the common society, just apart from contemptible and palate entertainment. (Nath: 2009, pp- 91)

The Island located 1,100 km away from the origin of 2.880 km long Brahmaputra River, and had an area of 1,256 sq.km in 1991, but unfortunately due to continuous soil erosion, it remains approximately 875 sq.km today. The island has nurtured Vaisnavite culture since centuries. It is also a venture of biodiversity, both flora and fauna. Majuli is famous as one of the world’s biggest river island, nestles in the lap of the mighty Brahmaputra. (Wade: 1927). Its face uplifted to the limitless frontiers of the blue sky, feet perpetually embraces by the lapping waters of the holy Brahmaputra and the sights stretched up to the distant hills. The flamboyant and the tranquil atmosphere of the island relates the intimate companionship of the soul with the natural elements, and the river provided the backdrop for the historic “Mani kanchan Sanjog” (combination of gold and gem) between Assam’s two pioneer Vaisnavite saints Sankardeva and his disciple Madhavadeva in the late fifteenth century. After the meeting of these great minds and the subsequent establishment of Satras, the island (Majuli)
emerged as the crowning glory of the Vaisnavite culture in multi-dimensional and vibrant facets.

The Satra, or Vaisnavite Monastery, is an institution which was established by Sankardeva and Madhavadeva. Over the centuries, it has become intimately connected with the Assamese life and culture, from Majuli to Koch Behar the Satras institutions moulded the social landscape of Assam and the entire state, integrated into religious harmony. Satra played a vital role in shaping the religious and cultural history of the Assam and North-East from the sixteenth century. It is mainly an assiduous task for shaping and stabilizing Assamese society for the last five hundred years, and administering the spiritual and cultural urge of the people. Sankardeva, as per the Buranji’s (Assamese chronicles) established his first Satra at Bardowa-Nagaon, at his birth place, and then at different centres as he had to move from one place to another to constructively muster the social, cultural and religious spheres. He rooted Vaisnavism in the land of Majuli through establishing the first Vaisnavite institution or ‘Satra’ at Belaguri Dhuwahat and later large number of monastic Institutions and Satras has been developed in Majuli which cultivated the art and culture of the place. (Barpujari: 1990)

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Majuli has been the cultural capital and the cradle of Assamese traditions for the past five hundred years. The Satra set up preserves antiques like manuscripts, utensils, jewellery and other substance of cultural significance. The movement of Neo-Vaisnavism was a great event in the context of North-East India and Majuli, became the asylum of the vivid and various art forms like Bhaona (Theatrical performance) as folk culture, music and dance forms, handicraft, pottery; ethnicity, sacred Satriya Architecture, Mask-making, Wood-carvings and paintings (Illustrated manuscripts) etc. which are typically based on the religious and Vaisnavite ideology, to serve and uplift the common society, just
apart from contemptible and palate entertainment. The purpose of the study is inspired by the phenomenon of the cultural reformation and how the religious ideology became the driving motivation to the indigenous artisans which gave a new dawn to the vivid Art forms of Majuli and presented a diverse picture of different shades of Art and culture and emerged as the key inspiration of Neo-Vaisnavite reformations in the fifteenth century.

- The prominent rationale of the study is to analyse the Art approaches of Majuli and its Art and Culture to comprehend the basic urge of creativity propagated in the society.
- To find out the background and the notion who played their significant role to develop and shape the art forms of Majuli.
- How Vaisnavite culture came to the Majuli and how it got intermingled with society and the culture.
- What were the changes occurred in the indigenous practices of Visual Arts as a part of the community practices and rituals.
- What were the concepts and ideas to set up the Satras and Monasteries?
- How the Satra institutions played a significant role to the craftsmen and the artisans of the Majuli.
- What were the core subject contents of the art forms and how it resemble and coerce with each other and recognized by the Neo-Vaisnavism.
- Predominantly it is worth needed to analyse the aesthetics, technique and processes followed by the artisans in the Mask-making, Wood-carving and Illustrated Manuscript.
1.3 OBJECTIVES

- To make a comprehensive analysis of Art and culture of Majuli as an island and its monasteries.
- To study the socio-cultural environment of Majuli in the contemporary prospects and its development. And also the changes occurring with respect to the present time and space.
- To study and explore the indigenous manifestation of Art, Rituals and living practices of the inhabitants of Majuli.
- To understand, how the religious reformation played a significant role in Majuli and worked as a key inspiration for the visual representation?
- The prime objective of the research is to explore and analyse the three Art forms Illustrated Manuscripts, Wood carvings, and Mask Making of Majuli.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study would be focused to the social and cultural reformation of the Majuli and how the Ideology influenced the artisans to produce their thoughts through different modes of the art forms of Mask making, Wood – Carving and Illustrated Manuscripts.

The study would be concerned to cover the process, technique, purpose and appropriation of these art approaches of the medieval period and their continuation in the present time.

As preferably scope of the study, regarding the research work is to focus on three major Art forms of Majuli-- Illustrated Manuscripts, Mask- Making and
Wood-carvings. To examine the three ‘Art forms’, their immense creativity and pioneering role which may not be similar to other Masks, Illustrated Manuscripts, and wood carvings, Also the available information and data of the related area.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

The study would be limited to the medieval period mainly fifteenth century to present date and will only cover the Art and culture of Majuli in the context of main art forms of Illustrated Manuscripts, Mask-making and Wood-carvings.

The major example in this case will be the existing Satras (Neo-Vaisnavite Monasteries) of Majuli. But the result may not be same and applicable to the other Vaisnavite Monasteries of Assam. Similarly focus of the study will not be on the Masks, Wood-Carvings and Illustrated Manuscripts of the whole Assam and the other places of India.

1.6 DATA & METHODOLOGY

The Data sets include both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are the original Manuscripts, Masks from the place, existing Satras and the Monasteries, Various Books, Catalogue, Brochures, text and Visual material of respective authors and artists. Secondary sources are the books, journals, reviews, Internet etc. In this study the original work of art and sculptures and carvings from the artisans and Satras will be taken as special consideration.

The methodology applied for the study was conducted by taking interviews with the individual artists, academicians, residents of Satras, Satradhikars (Head of Satra) and scholars and by visiting the actual sites to collect the necessary information, visuals, study through internet etc. This is a descriptive type of research. Since the study is focused on the above mentioned three art forms of Majuli, Visit of the various Institutional Monasteries and surviving Satras and
other local Artists of Majuli have been done along with proper documentation with photography as well as video.

1.7 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The entire literature available for the present study is divided into three broad areas- History of Indian art and culture, History, Art, and Culture of Assam as well as Majuli, and the miscellaneous studies relevant to the present study.

1.7.1 HISTORY OF INDIAN ART AND CULTURE

This part of literature review highlights the secondary source with focused upon the History of Indian Art, and Culture.

Martin (1838) The History, Antiquities, Topography, and statistics of Eastern India is and outstanding note on the Behar, Shahbad, Bhagalpur, gorackpoor, Dinajpoor, puraniya, rongopoor, and Assam provides the worth full information about the above mentioned states and the subdivision under the British reign along with the historical development of culture.

Taylor (1892) The origin of the Aryans Deals with the Prehistoric races of Europe, Neolithic Culture, The Aryan Race, and the evolution of the Aryan speech including the Mythology and culture has been taken forward by the Aryans, author has done the remarkable work on subject along with diagrams and illustrations.

Macdonell (1900) History of Indian Literature highlights the literary traditions of India through the examples of Sanskrit authorities and manuscripts and claims the study of Ayurveda or medicine, concerning both human beings and animals, was widespread. In ancient India the beginnings of the science goes back to remote antiquity. In the Atharva Veda and the Kausitai Sutra, for instance, we have mention of medicinal herbs and healing art. In Assam the two important manuscripts of a later period, dealing with animal diseases are ‘Ghoranidana’ of sagarkahari and ‘Hastividadarnava’ of Sukumara.
Buhler (1904) Indian Palaeography a monumental work by the author on history culture and archaeology covers the long period of Indian history of 350 B.C to 1300 A.D.

Muller (1919) ‘The Six Systems of Indian philosophy’ is an pioneering work on Indian philosophy, the author presented the notes he accumulated over the years regarding the Vedas, Vedanta, Samkhya, yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisesika, Nirmaya including Vada, jalpa, Vitanda, Hetvabhasa, jati, Chala, Nigrahasthana, and the growth of philosophical thought and the systems of Indian philosophy. It is a more general comprehensive account of these six systems in which philosophical thought of India has found its full realization, and an incredible anecdote on Indian tradition of thinking.

Brown (1920) The Heritage of India “INDIAN PAINTING” is an exceptional anecdote on Indian art specially painting, describes the History of Indian Painting from early period, Buddhist period, Medieval period, Mogul Period, Raj-put Period, and Modern Period progressively in part I, part II gives a detail description of Indian Painting about Buddhist Frescos, Moghal Miniatures, Raj-put Paintings including Material and Technique, and claims Indian painting is an anonymous art. This specially applies to the Buddhist and Raj-put works. Buddhist and Raj-put painting were symbolic in signifying the spiritual life of India; the dominant note of both was religion, and the chief feature was mysticism. The tradition has been traced in some Assamese illustrated manuscripts.

Havel (1920) described the various aspects of Indian art including ideology and objectives of Indian art. Author treats the whole work from the philosophical point of view. The author in his first chapter carefully examines the origin of Indian art started from Vedic period. Moreover, in this volume, it throws light on some important essays which are the development of the divine ideal, philosophical concept of the evolution of the Universe, feminine beauty reflected through
different examples of visual presentations, historical developments of Indian art. The essay has been presented in lucid and expressive manner documented with bibliography and images.

Coomaraswamy (1926) Catalogue of the Indian collections in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and collection of the miniature paintings of Raj put school is a Worth full source.

Coomaraswamy (1927) History of Indian and Indonesian Art range over the Indian literature, music, dance, and Vedic literature as well as art and became the standard text in the field presents the view on the relationship of art to life, traditional art and ideological parallels between the arts of the east and the pre-Renaissance West. He concerned with the meaning of art within a tradition culture and with examining the religious and philosophical beliefs. He determines the origin and evolution of a particular artistic style. He also highlighted the Islamic and far-eastern studies, provides the outstanding resource to understand the meanings and aesthetics of Indian art and culture.

Wolsely (1937) describes the history and culture of the India, the period of Mughals and British in India. The volume is a collection of chronologically arranged biographies included with revenue, administration, architecture art and culture and the political units, provides the information about the changes and activities of the Mughals and the British sovereign.

Aurobindo (1953) The magnum opus work of Sri Aurobindo highlighted the Foundation of Indian culture comprises, Under a single connection Title, The series of articles that appeared in the ARYA, as “Is India Civilised”, “A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture”, “A Defence of Indian Culture” Elaborately interpret and describes about the Religion and Spirituality, Indian Art, Literature and Polity.

Khandalawala (1958) Claims the main school can be broadly divided into four main streams as 1.Mughal, 2.Deccani, 3.Rajasthani 4.Pahari apart from these main schools there were some other important styles like Mysore Miniatures, the Maratha Manuscript Pages etc. Each of the main Schools also has sub-Schools with distinct features that make them unique. They offer not only an interesting insight into the life and times of the Indian royal, but are also a delight for the art lover, as one can virtually gets to see the evolution of art styles across centuries and the manner in which various schools influenced one and another, With a comprehensive account on Indian element, style and subject of the painting with distinct features.

Zimmer (1972) discuss in a comprehensive studies on the myths and symbols of Indian art and civilisation. It is a good informative essay which lights on the development of deferent mythologies surrounding the whole ancient Indian art. These mythologies are interestingly described regarding the different deities of Indian ideology with different religious motifs, which are inscribed in the Indian temple architectures.

Gupte (1972) highlights the Indian iconographies of the Hindu, Buddhist, and the Jain. The work gives introductory information about all the major visual connotation of the religious expression. It is described about the symbols of iconography, their different gestures and the backgrounds explained by through the images.
Basham (1975) A Cultural History of India is a remarkable edition of comprehensive survey of Indian culture, Covering aspects as religion, Philosophy, social organization, literature, art, architecture, music and science, also includes a section dealing with the influence of Indian civilization on the rest of the world, as well as details of the political history of the region to provide a chronological summary.

Kramrisch (1976) The Hindu Temple is the detailed and scientific study of the temple art, architecture and culture particularly the Dravidian temple art and architecture, she wrote ample on the Indian tradition of iconography and sculpture, useful to document to describe the art and architecture.

Craven (1976) In his The Concise history of Indian Art survey covers the visual expression from the ancient civilization to medieval era and golden era of Indian art among the work discussed are the Buddhist Stupa at Sanchi, The cave Shrines of Elephanta, The exceptional Temples of Khajuraho, The classic Bronze figures of Hindu gods and Rulers, The Mughal art and architecture and the marvellous miniature of Rajasthani and Pahari School.

Bannerji (1981) focused on the genesis and development of the art belongs to Bengal and Bihar during the medieval period. The art is mentioned as an Eastern Indian school of Medieval Art which flourished in the eastern part of India during the Pala period. The author also discus about the art and culture of the region related to the other religions like Buddhism Jainism and Brahmanism.

Huntington (1985) The Art of Ancient India is an outstanding portrayal of ancient India’s highest intellectual and technical achievement, it supplies a complete summary of a resource for their own deeper investigation into Indic Art; gives a broad introduction to the development of Indian art, the survey covers the phase of Buddhist, Hindu and the Jain art.
Sivaramamurti (1985) The Art of India monumental work on Indian art from the prehistoric era to the golden ages of Indian art describes almost all the spheres of Indian art and culture. And emphasize the epigraphy and numismatics, sculptures and paintings along with the aesthetic heritage of India flourished under the Hindu dynasties.

Aiyangar (1988) Stone Age in India the publication deals with the ancient part of history of India, an important document to go through the ancient and pre-historic art and culture of India.

Srivastava (1990) Discuss about the traditional art and craft of India, its relation to native culture and faiths, but not focused on Satriya art forms developed in Assam and the north-east India.

Bhattcharya (1999) Medieval Bhakti Movement In India, the publication covers the various aspects of the changing aspects and meanings of religion and movement, through Guru Nanak’s Theology, Concept of god and movement, Bhakti movement in the context of Jainism, Nature and roots of Islamic Bhakti movement, Bhakti cults and Movements in Gujarat, Influence of Islam and Sufism, The Dasa-Bhakti of Alvars, Vaisnavism in Orissa, Sankardeva and Assam Vaisnavism, including contribution of Aniruddhadeva of Assam, Chaitanya and Vaisnavism in Bengal, Provides the details about the medieval socio-religious culture.

Meyer (2005) presents an elaborate and detailed discussion of rasa aesthetics, in the context of pure consciousness, elucidating that rasa is an aesthetic experience consisting in the co-existence of pure consciousness with the mind, the intellect and the emotions, hence beauty is understood as the highest delight in Indian aesthetics, Which combines art, ethics aesthetics, and spirituality into an overarching frame work of purushartha, individual ethics. There are several ways to understand the four limbs of Purusartha, Dharma, Artha, Kama and
Moksha the individual liberation is the goal. Art in this sense is not the goal or the end, but only the means, which provides the understanding of the ways in which the moksha is realised.

Dhamija (2005) Indian Folk Arts and Crafts gives an account on folk and traditional art and craft on India, and highlights the textiles, pottery and terracotta, woodwork, Metal ware Stone carving, A worth recourse to get information about the art and craft of remote and native areas.

Vatsayayana (2006) The Squares and Circles of the Indian Arts –symbolizes the thesis that these two primeval forms are also the two primeval symbols for the transcendent and immanent aspects of the ultimate reality. The Indian Art owes their depth, Vibrancy, power continuity or continuous renewal and spiritual direction to the balance, utilization and union of these two forms, and what they symbolize. Introduction leads into a chapter on speculative thought, the Ritual of the Yajna, the Natyashastra, the Vastu- Purusa, the Silpa – Panjara and the Sangita – Purusa to the conclusion.

Bingham (2007) discuss the headlines of the art, architecture, music and includes a section dealing with the influence of Indian civilization on the rest of the world, as well as jewellery and other small scale indigenous crafts of the native region to provide a summary.

Iraqi (2009) Bhakti Movement in Medieval India brings into focus the picture of Medieval Indian society in different ways, relationship between the state and Hindus, the mutual understanding between members of the two communities, different trends of Bhakti thought and movement and the interaction between the thoughts and practices of different Sufi orders and Bhakti cults. It also provides the development Nirguna aspect of Bhakti Movement with its aim and objectives.
Singh (2009) discuss about the culture and civilization of North east and specially concerns to the tribal sculptures and iconography in of north east, usually cultivated in India as an style utilitarian cum religious n magical value in the form of wood works and stone works the early medieval sculpture has been also emphasized.

Yarrow (2010) presents and essay on Indian theatre and performances as a major site of reappraisal and renewal both in culture of India and in the world of performance, presents a picture of traditional and contemporary theatre and examines its processes and practices.

Sengupta (2012) provides the brief information about the Indian feature of Classical, Rajasthani and moghal school of art and folk elements in scroll painting of Bengal, he also establish the connection between the scroll painting and the vernacular trends

Chauhan (2012) discuss about the social disciplines of Vedic Hindu Varnashrama model and different Samsakras as per the Vedic cults. He also include notes about the brahmcharya or celibacy, and says Samvartan samsakara (end of student ship) this sacrament was performed at the close of the celibacy period and it marked termination of the student life. Grahayasutras regarded Brahmccharya as a long Sacrifice.

1.7.2 HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE OF ASSAM

This part of literature review highlights the secondary source with importance to History, Art and Cultural genesis and evolution of the Assam as well as Majuli.

John M, Cosh (1837) Topography of Assam Discuss about Brahmaputra River and valley, the intercourse between Assam and Bengal is almost properly maintained by water. There is a free communication between the Brahmaputra
and the Ganges and boats of the largest burden pass by different inosculated out of the one into the other throughout the year. So the cultural exchange between the different other parts of mainland was common.

Dalton (1851) Notes on the “Mahapurshiyas” a sect of Vaisnavism of Assam. Journal of the Asiatic Society highlight the figurine of Srimanta Sankardeva, Madhavdeva and the contemporary and successive saints of the Neo-Vaisnavite cult.

B.C Allen (1905) District Gazetteer of Kamrupa is the record of the art effects and the folk chronicles Buranjis and the other preservative works done by the department, provides the important information about the art and culture and related geography of the place.

Hunter (1918) In A statistical accounts of Assam provides the data about the topography of the state and the various statistics, is helpful to understand the region precisely.

Gait Sir Edward (1925) provides a detailed analysis on the history and culture of Assam in ‘A History of Assam’.

H. Goswami (1930) Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts has been brought into light with the images of the original folios of the Manuscripts along with the translation of the scripts, the publication provides the valuable information about the painting and the tradition of the illustrated manuscripts patronized by courts and nurtured under the satriya cult.

Nath (1938) provides the information about the political, socio-cultural and religious background of the medieval period, pala’s and discusses the Daharmapala may have been a different person. We have more than one Dharmapala in our chronicles. The pala rulers flourished at a time when Vajrayana made a great strong hold in the land.
Hutton (1941) Discuss about the Ancient History of the human race with the Stone Age, and says no definite evidence has been discovered till now, about Stone Age people of Assam. Some caves in the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills (Meghalaya), Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills (now Dima Hasao) with traces of rudimentary paintings and Carvings were discovered.

Majumdar (1944) ‘In Hindu colonies in the Far-East’ has discussed the Thai states to the west and south of Yunan and to the east of the mountain ranges which border on the Manipur and Assam had colonies of Hindus or had settlements of Hindus in large numbers, played an important role to mould the Vaisnavite culture and also some of them are became the active painters Khanikars later who learned the technique of painting from the Rajasthani and Pahari schools.

Dutta Barua (1949) has observed the illuminated manuscripts retrieved in bad condition from the Majuli and published in the original colour form, the folios presents the visuals of the Bhagwata and discussed about subject matter, gesture, background of compositions and the technique.

P.C. Choudhury (1959) The History of Civilisation of the people of Assam to the twelfth centaury A.D discussed about the early history of the state, the traditional origin of the kamrupa and its epigraphs that the word Kamrupa is a Sanskritisation form of some earlier formation, is proved by other sources as Buddhist caryas, the Hari-Gauri Samvada, and the Muslim sources like the Tabaqat-e-Nasiri and the Riyas-us-Salation.

Neog (1962) A classical work of the Satra tradition: The Guru-Carita- Katha, Glimpses of Vaisnava Heritage of Assam, is an important work and discuss about Namghar activities and religious manuscripts but not concerned about visual and aesthetical aspects of illustrated manuscripts.
Neog (1965) Early History of The Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Assam Sankardeva and his times’ is an resourceful thesis of the Assamese culture, religion and arts, and thoroughly discussed about the life history, deeds, and development of Neo-Vaisnavism, Satras and their activities.

Bezbaroa (1964) Discuss about the dimensions of the life of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavadeva, and their deeds for the social, religious, and the development of the Satra network. It provides the vital information for the study.

B.N Puri (1968) gave a brief note on the historical background of the Assam, its kingdom administration in the Studies in ‘Early History and Administration in Assam’.

Barua (1969) describes the traditional and communal integration centres of the Assam, the heart, of all villages is the Namghar, where villagers episodically gather to sing and pray. It is usually the temple of the village. After the rituals are complete, members decide on issues concerning the village such as auctioning of fishing rights, what to do with money raised, and other topics of significance to the community, Vaisnava Satras were founded by Sankardeva, The father of Assamese culture. In fifteenth century Sankardeva took shelter in Majuli and spent a couple of 5-6 years at Belguri (In west Majuli,) which was a place of glory for the historic and auspicious; Manikanchan Sanjog between Sankardeva and Madhavadeva this was the first ‘Satra’ in Majuli. But he has not discussed about the artistic expression and approaches of the reformation which had been played an auspicious role to broadcast the thought and motto of the movement.

Chatterjee (1970) discussed about the history and civilization of Assam in ‘The Place of Assam in the History of Civilization of India’ it is important to understand the position of Assam as Indian context in discussion of the Assamese culture says The Dravidian, The Mongoloid, The Aryan races were the original inhabitants of the plains of Assam. The interfusion of the first two races evolved a
type, which aptly called the Monglo-Dravidian and developed a form of culture in shaping the later socio cultural environment.

W. Robinson (1975) A Descriptive Account of Assam is a useful publication and describes the history, geography, culture and traditional back ground of Assam and its people. Also an important study provides the historical and cultural account on Assam. He has not much discussed about techniques and aesthetics of the art effects emerged in Neo-Vaisnavite cult of medieval period.

P.C.Choudhury (1976) discusses credibility of manuscript painting tradition in Assam in the introduction of the publication of ‘Hastividyarnava’, a painted manuscript on elephant-lore. He provides important information of the treatise as its paintings done by Dilbar and Dosai in royal Ahom court during 1734 A.D.

Hicklin (1978) describes the wood engraving technique with detail notes of Thomas Bewick in the book Bewick Wood Engraving. For instance, how wood engraving would become popularize in the perfect hands of an artist with delicate mastery of various figural execution. And which will be more beneficial for the research in terms of study of both techniques and aesthetics aspect but has not discussed about the Art works of the region.

Sastri (1981) In The Kamrupa school of Dharma Sastras, with particular Notice of ‘Pitambara siddhanta Vagisa’ Has discussed about the religious environment of the kamarupa with reference to sanskritism and Vaisnavism is an important work to understand the religious atmosphere and the changing scenario of the medieval period.

Gupta (1982) discussed about the art of Medieval Assam. Author has been touched near about all the branches of art work of Assam through his essay. He provides small essays on painting, architecture, potteries, terracotta, including some minor art of Assam. But he does not any detailed study on the three major Art forms focused in the study.
Sastri & Choudhuri (1983) the edition of the *Ananda –Lahari*, (illuminated manuscripts) has been published by the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti, provides the important information about the Art of illustrated manuscripts and the present study.

Mills A.J (1984) prepared the report on Assam, and discussed about political, social, cultural status of Assam it is important for the study to look back inside the history of Assam and its culture.

Cantlie (1984) The Assamese is an important treatise to understand the culture of Assam and its people he has provided the information regarding behaviour, cultivation, food culture, language, literature, festivals music and Arts with the development and historical background but it gives limited information about the Neo-Vaisnavite reformation and the related activities and artefacts of Majuli.

Vatsyayana & Neog (1986) edition of the Assamese ‘*Gita-Govinda*’ (illustrated Manuscripts) has been published by the Publication board, Assam, also and precious document to understand the tradition of writing and painting the manuscripts.

Lekharu (1987) ‘*Katha -Guru- Carita*’ provides the brief account on Sankardeva and his life said Sankardeva composed lyrics in *Brajabali* during travels in Northern India and also composed number of other treatise to cultivate the Art and culture among the people, provides and information about the period of Sankardeva.

Sarma(1987) Madhavadeva and His Work; Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, describe about the *Madhavadeva* (foremost disciple of Sankardeva), his life and the literary and poetic works he has done, provide the information about relations of Sankardeva and Madhavadeva and their meetings in Majuli and further processions.
Neog (1988) Contribution of Sankaradeva’s movement to the Culture and Civilization of India, discussed about the struggle of Vaisnavism verses Christianity among the period, there were the Christian missionaries in tribal areas of Assam which were involved in promotions of the Christianity, and this was also a hazard for the Sankardeva’s neo-Vaisnavism.

Nath (1988) Discuss in ‘Socio-cultural Background of Assam’ with a strong ground about the religions like Saivism and Tantricism, it is a common assumption that till the advent of the Neo- Vaisnavite Saint Sankardeva, Assam did not have any trace of the Vasudeva cult. It is pointed out that Mahabhutivarman was mentioned as a Parama Bhagavata in a rock inscription dated 554 A.D.

Gradamer (1988) mentioned that there had been sixty five Satras growing up for propagation of ethics and socio-cultural ideals. But at present there are only twenty two Satras in Majuli. The other had to been shifted to other safer places due to devastation of flood and erosion. And these Satras played a significant role to reform the society and the culture due to various activities like bhaona and kirtan. But there was no description given about the visual and technical aspects of these Satras.

Hicklin (1988) describes the wood carvings techniques with detail note. For instance, how wood carving became popularize in the Namghars and other Satras of Assam and north-eastern shrines in the perfect hands of an artists with delicate mastery of various figural execution. Which will be more beneficial for the research in terms of study both techniques and aesthetics aspect of Nineteenth century wood carving scenario in Majuli and Assam. But here we could not find detail description about the art works, of their techniques, aesthetic values, significance, and contribution to spread the message of ideology.
Coudhury (1988) focuses in his essay on Assam-Bengal relation since the earliest times to the twelfth century A.D. the author particularly emphasis upon the comprehensive studies between mentioned these states. His essay reflects the varied aspects of both these regions. The author analysis his essay as narrative, descriptively, interpretatively and concluded historical and cultural aspects. The chapter provides the information about sculptural school of Assam and Bengal.

Goswami (1989), discussed about the various tribal dialects and languages of the state such as Bodo, Karbi, Dimasa, Tiwa, Tai, Mishing, Rabha, etc. have enriched this language. Since ancient times the dialects of the state have been enriching the Assamese language and have made it a synthetic one. “It was enriched in the past during the rule of Barahi-Kachari, Kamata, and Koch and Ahom kings. Therefore, it is clear to everybody living in the hills and the plains. This could give new dignity to all - the Kiratas, Kacharis, the Khasis, Garos, the Miris, and the Kankas, who remain outside the pale of Hinduism - to declare their dignified positions. Arabic and Persian words are another noteworthy addition to the Assamese language. Both Sankardeva and Ajan Fakir were particularly sensitive to spreading the message of Bhakti through the medium of art, language, dance, drama, and music. He has not discussed about the art which nourished through all these performances and the cultural activities. But not about the Art effects.

Dasgupta (1989) discussed art and crafts of Assam and also frontier region of India from 13th to 19th century before it succumbed to British Imperialism, in the perspectives of both art history and anthropology. Significantly the publication is the result of author’s post doctoral researches, though silent about mentioned three art forms of Assam.

Nath.D (1989) Deals with the political and the socio-cultural scenario of land. He highlights the significance of the Koch dynasty of the medieval which has given
support to the Neo-Vaisnavism and the important role in the evolution of the art and culture of the period.

Sarma (1989) Daksinapat Satra is an important publication on one the existing and active Monastery of the Majuli, provides the needful information about the Satra routine and the activities along with thorough the discussion of the history and the background of the place and Satra, but he has not deeply analysed the mentioned art forms.

Kalyan Dasgupta (1990) Wood Carvings of Eastern India briefly discussed about the wooden sculptures of Assam, it has been claimed that there has been similarity in style and details (subject) between the terracotta panels, the wooden panels, the base relief and the miniature paintings in the Satra idioms. Besides the Satras there are some private chapels (Gosainghar) in Assam noted for the wood carvings. It is a useful account on the wood carvings of the Bardowa Than and Satriya cult.

Gangoly (1990) Rag and Raginis highlights the music dance and performance activities of the Assam and provides the information about the Satriya dance and music, not discuss about the masks which closely related to the Bhaona (theatrical performances).

Kakoti (1990) discusses the development of the religion, rituals language and related cults, has speculate that Naraka of Mithila was the first man who let in the stream of Aryanisation into the land (Mother Goddess Kamakhya). In fact, in the early history of Kamarupa, Narakasur holds a mysterious position. The writer also discussed about the Art and Craft of Ancient Assam but it not provides the information the Satriya Art forms of medieval period.

Kakati (1990) Assamese, Its Formation and Development, provides a information about the development of the Assamese language simultaneously discussed about some of the manuscripts and the tradition of manuscript writing but has not
been discussed about the painting part of the Manuscripts and the other art forms.

Chatterjee S.K (1991), ‘The place of Assam in History and Civilization of India’, Guwahati University discussed about the historical background and civilization of Assam he also mentioned about the political and social status of the state.

Barpujari H.K (1992) Comprehensive History of Assam provides the inclusive information about the ancient and medieval past.

Sarma S.N (1992) discussed about the religious cults among the society of Assam. Visnavism, Saivism, Saktism were prevailed in that period, tantrism with ill practices was also prevailed in the Socio-religious life of the Assamese Hindus.

Sarma (1992) In Neo-Vaisnavite Movement and the Satra Institution of Assam, has discussed precisely about the Vaisnavite monasteries of Assam, Satras were propagation of Monotheistic Vaisnavism, Initiation of disciples, provision of ethico-devotional codes and rules of conduct for neophytes and holding religious festivals. But not much deeply discussed about the Art forms developed in the Monasteries of Majuli and Assam.

Dasgupta (1992) discussed art and crafts of Assam and also frontier region of India from 13th to 19th century before it succumbed to British Imperialism, in the perspectives of both art history and anthropology. Significantly the publication is the result of author's post doctoral researches, though he has not gone through the detailed study of the Manuscripts and the Wood carvings and related Art works of the region in the terms of aesthetic values of the and about the significant role in the scenario of Assam.

Barpujari (1993) The noted historian, points out that The Neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam was backed by a strong literary upsurge which found expression in the translation of the epics and the Puranas, the adaptation of the
Puranic episodes in the form of independent Kavyas, devotional works explaining the types and modes of devotion, lyrics (bargeets), dramas and biographies of Vaishnava saints. In its practical sense the text could now open up to a community of readers and listeners, who have contributed their share in re-reception of the concrete dimension of meaning with sole emphasis on Sravana and kirtana. The holy books in Sanskrit could be now easily accessible to the Sudras and Women, but it came to them in the medium of their own vernacular language that could safeguard the distinctive ethos of this composite society that has its own distinctive identity. But we could not find here the study and importance of illustrated paintings in these manuscripts or epics which had been playing an important role similar to the text.

Choudhury (1993) the edited version of the Hasti-vidyarnava and other manuscripts of history and antiquarian department (the important and legenddy piece of works by the Vaisnavite Artists) has been brought into light with the images of the original folios of the Manuscripts along with the translation of the scripts, the publication provides the valuable information about the painting and the tradition of the illustrated manuscripts patronized by courts and nurtured under the Satriya cult,

Barua B.K (1993) Assamese Language and the Early Assamese Literature writes Koch kings were liberal patrons of the arts and learning. By which we can get the idea about the royal patronage of art, and discussed about the art and culture of the period and the literary part of the Assamese language, is an important work to understand the literary culture of Vaisnavite period but does not provide information about the mentioned art forms.

Ahmed (1994) has analysed the history, politics, art and culture of the place. He considered upon the various the art forms in different chapters like terracotta, painting architecture etc. And provide the information about the history and culture from the ancient times to the end of the Ahom rule.
Rajguru (1996) Medieval Assamese Society given a descriptive account on the medieval history and society of Assam particularly twelfth century A.D to nineteenth century A.D further he has thoroughly discussed about various aspects political, historical, administrative of the social cluster and the culture along with the medieval changes due to Neo-Vaisnavism. But he has included the Mask-making and wood carving practices of Assam.

Kalita.N (1996) has given an important note on the basic characteristics of manuscript painting of Assam. He discusses about the two types of manuscripts paintings which are the Satriya style and the Ahom style of painting. He includes paintings are narrative and figurative and some where abstract features can traced in representation of heavenly subjects, he also discuss about the gesture and the perspective of the illustrations.

Bhuyan (1997) Assamese Literature, Ancient and Modern and Preface of Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts; Studies in the literature of Assam is an informative source for Assamese literary works and the manuscripts but has not deeply discussed about the aesthetics and visual part of the manuscripts.

Chaliha (1998) discussed about the Genesis of Neo-Vaisnavism and its expansion with reference to Srimanta Sankaradeva, but he has not discussed about the three Art forms as aesthetical aspect.

R.M. Nath. (1998) in his impressive work, The Background of Assamese Culture, has made an attempt to do justice to a difficult subject. Mr. Nath is an engineer by profession and historian and archaeologist by inclination. His outlook is historical and, for the earliest portion of his narrative, he has had to fall back upon hypothetical ground. He starts with the early Austric (Austro-Asiatic) settlers of the land and has tried to connect several extant groups of the present population with certain names found elsewhere in India.
Das (1998), has profoundly discuss about the Bhakti-Movement India and its influence in Assam he also analysed the Neo-Vaisnavite movement in Assam but it is not focused upon the Art forms developed in Satra culture.

Roy (1999) Edition of Ratnavali provides the information about the manuscripts tradition in Assam and sets the connection between the Sanskrit and regional works it is also an important work to understand the writing practices in Assam.

Choudhury R.D (2001) discusses credibility of manuscript painting tradition in Assam in the introduction of the publication of Manuscripts of kamrup anusandhan Samiti painted manuscript on preserved by the department. He provides important information of the manuscript as its paintings done by the Satriya artists. Which will be useful resource for the study but he has not mentioned the detailed procedure and values regarding the manuscripts in the sense of visual Art form.

Dutta H.N (2001) has discussed about the land and language of the people of Brahmaputra valley, it’s important regarding the cultural and lingual context but not cover the medieval Neo-Vaisnavite culture and Art forms of the Majuli and Assam.

Barua (2002) has discussed about the noble thoughts of Srimanta Sankardeva being a reformer, further he analyse the sociological aspects of Neo-Vaisnavism, which is an important anecdote of the period to understand the phenomenon of Neo-Vaisnavism in ‘A Philosophical and Sociological Examination of Assam Vaisnavism’.

Borkakoti (2003) In Saint Srimanta Sankardeva, elaborates about the multi-access life of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavadeva and their deeds for the social, religious, and the cultural spheres. It provides the vital information for the study.
Rajkhowa (2003) has discussed about the Srimanta Sankaradeva and His life, Preaching and Practices. But has not much discussed about the Art and craft developed under the Satras of Assam and Majuli.

Chakrabarty (2003) Bhakti Movement and Srimanta Sankaradeva, Mahapurusa Jyoti, mentioned about the Bhakti movement, persona and the ideology of Sankardeva it is important to understand the about Srimanta Sankardeva and how he initiated the Neo-Vaishnavism cult.

Tripathi.S (2003), Medieval Assam: The Neo-Vaishnavite Movement and Sri Sankaradeva: His role in National Integration is an informative treatise on medieval history of Assam and elaborately discuss about the Neo-Vaisnavism but it is not analyses the art forms which has developed in Satras of Majuli, it briefly discussed about the culture and activities of Satras nevertheless not much concerned about the aesthetical value of visual artefacts of Majuli.

Bhattachary (2004) has mentioned that the Manuscriptology of ancient Assam is a subject of deep thought, the manifold aspect of which manifested in varied ways throwing a definite light on the ancient Art n Craft and rich traditions of preparing and compiling manuscripts in Assam, in infinite numbers apart from antiquarian value, these invaluable works also equally reflect and aspect of science, which is highly speculative. Because, this art craft has the use of most local and indigenous raw materials both for writing and preparing other materials needed for compiling the manuscripts. The painting materials of the manuscripts of Assam possess individuality with their outstanding characteristics and the process of preparing them needed a very minute and careful observation.

B. Hazarika. (2005) Madhavadeva, His Life, Art and Thought, has been briefly discussed about the sacred meet of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavadeva in Majuli, this has been noted as ‘Manikanchan Sanjog’ further he also discussed
about the thoughts and deeds of Madhavadeva and his contributions in Neo-
Vaisnavism.

Das. Jugal (2005) Discussed about the mask making tradition and other cultural
activities of the place and written, Masks owe their origin to the tribal culture of
the state. Being used by the tribes of Assam during Bhaonas and theatres, these
masks of Assam are mainly made up of wood, bamboo and thatch. From the
tribal arena, the masks are seen today in almost every home of Assam as a
decorative showpiece. In the ancient periods folklores and folk shows were the
major sources of entertainment for the local people of Assam. While performing
in a theatre or any such cultural activity, the artists used to put on a mask on their
faces which resembled the specific character the performer was playing. With
various shades of bright hues, the masks, made up by the local artisans, add
immense credibility to the role which and artists is personifying. Apart from
bamboo and wood, terracotta and pith are also used for making colourful and
long-lasting masks. Apart from the mythological purposes he has given an
account of visual values of these masks but not covered the other Art forms.

Borkakoti (2005) briefs that Srimanta Sankardeva initiated a form of painting with
for his drama cina-jatra (Theatrical-processions) where he drew the imaginary
pictures of heaven to use the backdrops, The figures he illustrated in the
manuscripts drawn in an angular pattern. This provides important information and
shows the interests of the preacher himself which probably largely influence the
artisans.

Phukan (2006) discusses in his introductory piece about Ahom & other Tai
manuscripts in Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies which is perhaps
vital study on manuscript painting genre in Assam and its link with South Asian
art traditions really needful for research.

Bhuyan (2007) In Socio-cultural and Political Role of the Namghar in Assam, has
been discussed the cultural, social and political contribution of the Satras.
Moreover discussed the relation of Satras with kings and the royal courts, which is quite helpful to understand the existence and position of the Satras.

Kalita (2008) asserts clearly about multi-facet of art heritage of Assam, through synthesis and mingling toward an original inherent creativity in people’s mind for various art discourses. His writing on our ancient and Art traditions really needful for the research.

Hazarika (2008) mentioned that there was relationship between the authoritative texts like the Gita and the Bhagavata, as these texts could open up new possibilities and could become the source of several religious movements each different from the other. There are numerous commentaries of these texts and Sankaradeva himself used Tattva Dipika, Bhagavata Bhavartha Dipika, Bhava Prakasika, among many other commentaries. Sankaradeva rendered about eight books of the Bhagavata including the last four. He also rendered the Ramayana Uttara- Kanda, but it was never a mere literal translation word to word. Ramananda, an early biographer of Sankaradeva, makes a categorical statement:-

\[
\begin{align*}
Tini \ skandha \ c\ddot{a}i & / \ bic\ddot{a}riy\ddot{a} \ p\ddot{a}i \\
\text{ekaskandhe sehi kath\ddot{a}} & \\
B\acute{a}caka-bani\ddot{a} & / \ \text{sad\ddot{a}gare jena} \\
\text{eka th\ddot{a}i kari tath\ddot{a}} & 
\end{align*}
\]

“What is to be found by searching as many as three skandhas (cantos) has been put in one Skandha just as the most skillful merchant would gather (select gems) together”. In this manner, this Bhakti centric concrete dimension of meaning has added distinct flavour to the notion of “textual authority”. Here he has not provided any information about the relation of the painted visuals, illustrations and other forms of visual approaches of art which is as significant, even much more to be discussed as it created interest among the common society.

Sen (2008) writes about some thematic source and observation about the early Bengal, scroll and manuscript paintings like Pott-chitra and miniatures. This can
be beneficial for the critical comparison and case study for the research. But the writing has no information about the counterpart, neighbourhood Assam during ancient and medieval period.

Kalita (2009) asserts clearly about multi-facet of art heritage of Assam, through synthesis and mingling toward an original inherent creativity in people’s mind for various art discourses. His writing on our ancient and Art traditions really needful for the research.

Nath.D (2009) The Majuli Island Society, Economy, and Culture writes about The Majuli Island of the Brahmaputra, which distinguishes itself both geographically and culturally. Says-As a matter of fact, I began with an ordinary article on its historical geography and social formation in the Post-Graduate journal of Dibrugarh University, perhaps the next specific writing on the island after Benudhar Sarma’s ‘Luitar Sonta’, Two important factors attracted me towards the study of the island’s history-one , its integrated society shaped by geography and religion; and two, its distinguished culture formed and designed by the Satras to which , so many people of the state are attached. In the publication author covered the Society, Economy, and administration of the Satras of Majuli, and Cultural life which is undoubtedly an vital recourse for the study nevertheless it is only highlight the introductory part of the tradition of illustrated manuscripts, silent on the Mask-making process and Wood-carving practices and the technical and visual aspects as an art form.

Nath.D (2012) ‘Satra Society and Culture’ thoroughly discuss about the Garamur Satra of Majuli, it precious document particularly on the Garamur Satra and provide detailed information about the administration, social contributions cultural activities and the routine of the Satra, but it not covers the artistic and visual connotations.

1.7.3 Miscellaneous studies

Pemberton (1835) in the report on eastern frontier of British India, discussed about the history, geography, polity, and other statics of Assam including the
neighbouring countries, but didn’t put forward anything about the art and culture of Assam and Majuli.

Robinson (1841) has provided a descriptive account of Assam, discussed about the topography, society, tribes, occupation, cultivation if culture and other information about the land but not mentioned anything about the Satriya culture and the art forms developed under it.

Mackenzie (1884) in the report on eastern frontier of British India, discussed about the history, about the Alamgirnamah, and provides the translations of it, but didn’t put forward anything about the cultural history.

Goswami (1930) brought in light the descriptive catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts of Vaisnavite cult, but has not discussed on the other artefacts of the place and period.

Khandalawala (1958) describes that Pahari painting is the product of small attire maintained by Hills Rajas and nobles. Likewise Garhgaon painting was patronised by the Ahom kings and their acquaintances, the Rajas of Darrang district. Expert miniaturists could find adequate remuneration for their skill only in royal courts. Moreover, the idea of displaying royal art treasures in public museum was distant to the Raj-put princes or even to their Moghul Overlords. Thus in a sense Pahari painting is a patrician and court Art. In a like manner Garhgaon Painting remained unfamiliar to the great masses of Assam. But the author has not provided any information about the other art forms.

Hamilton (1963) emphasized on account of Assam, discussed about the topography, society, tribes, occupation, cultivation if culture and other information about the land but not mentioned anything about the Satriya culture and the art forms developed under it.
Skelton (1959) describes the *Geeta Govinda* manuscript and analyse that Human figures and superhuman beings in anthropomorphic forms are all Characteristics of the Vaisnavite School of painting. Human figures in Geeta-Goivinda manuscript as appears taller since they are smaller when compared to those in the *Nagaon Bhagwata*. Angularity is diminished to a great deal. The postures are not so calculated and jerky as is customary with early Satriya Miniature, but did not mentioned about the other art forms.

Gangadhar (1964) discussed about the *Mahapurush Srimat Dharmacharyya pitambara deva Goswamin*, his life deeds and Vaisnavism, but not discussed anything about the cultural aspects of Majuli.

Neog (1972) discuss about the Ahom School of painting and claims that these group of paintings are the example of court art, for it developed and flourished during the golden age of Ahom history under the House of Tun-khung. It's very natural and background sounded a break with the existing Satriya School due to the former’s concern with contemporary and temporal aspects of the life in 18th century Assam which seems to be established as a new form sect of painting under the patronage of Ahoms.

Deva (1979) elaborates the records of intimate relations of Assam with his western Neighbours. The influence of *shubhankara Kavi’s Hastamuktavali* and *Sangitadamodara* and similar works in the art circles of Assam speaks for itself. From carita literature it is known that Bengal type sankirtana used to be sung by certain sections of Vaisnavas of Assam in Madhavadeva’s time. In fact Bengal Vaisnava elements have also found their way into the music and drama repertories of the Satra circles. The advent of Muslims from the west also had its impact in the artistic field as exemplified by the music and dance form associated with zikirs and jaris.
Bhattacharjee (1986) on the folksongs and festival of Assam describes that Apart from the popular Bihu songs called bihu-nam or bihu-git there are various other classes of folk songs like ai-nam, gosai-nam, gopini-nam, sadasivar nam, etc. have been in vogue in different parts of state. A very interesting class is represented by zikirs and Jaris which are Islamic devotional songs cast in the Neo-Vaisnava literary and Musical mould. But the author is not concerned with the other form of arts.

Dutta (1990) Describes regarding the theatrical presentations and performance, says apart from the highly refined and sophisticated art forms developed in the Neo-Vaisnava culture, the Oja-pali form continued to be influential and was freely made use of within the Neo-Vaisnava circles of the other art forms popular during the time, he includes puppetry is also have been a popular entertainment as there are references to both glove-puppets (daru-putula) and shadow –puppets (chaya-putula), here the author has not concerned about the other Satriya art forms.

Ghosh (1992) emphasized on Satriya Theatre and describes the ankiya-nat of Assam represented by the works of Srimanta Sankardeva and his followers, is a type of drama which may be easily mistaken for folk-play of not very early date. But after a careful examination of its different features it appears to be the artefact of a form of drama which in all probability existed in India in the prehistoric period of this art. The similarity of the Ankiya nat with the classical Sanskrit drama, as well as its differences form the view, is remarkable. But the author is not concerned about the three art forms of Vaisnavite cult.

Singh (2000) presents and essay on the cultural changes in India in the context of medieval era to contemporary period Covering aspects as religion, social organization, literature, and also includes a section dealing with the influence of Indian civilization on the rest of the world, as well as details of the political history
of the region to provide a chronological summary, but has not discuss about the art forms.

Allen & Gait (2001) discussed about the land and the people in gazetteer of Eastern Bengal and North East India in a reprint edition from Guwahati, but we can’t find the information about the cultural background of the place.

Kenneth (2003) has described the socio-religious reforms and Bhakti movements progressed under the British Raj, covers changing aspects and meanings of religion and movement, through Guru Nanak's Theology, Concept of god and movement, Bhakti movement in the context of Jainism, Nature and roots of Islamic Bhakti movement, Bhakti cults and Movements in Gujarat, Influence of Islam and Sufism, The Dasa-Bhatti of Alvars, Sankardeva and Assam Vaisnavism, including contribution of Aniruddhadeva of Assam, Chaitanya and Vaisnavism in Bengal, Provides the details about the medieval socio-religious culture, But has not focused on the arts.

Phuknan & Kumar (2004) emphasized on the Auniati Satra of Satra of Majuli and discuss about the Manuscripts traditional and the explanatory chronicles (records) of the Satra, but has not discussed anything about the Art activities of this Satra and other Sartras of Majuli and their activities in the different field of arts and performances.

Marshell (2005) discuss the socio-cultural and religious activities in society of eighteenth century concerned to the major changes in field the religious moderation and thought process towards harmony and integrity driven by the intellectuals of related to the different sects, culture, polity and socio-religious environment of the period. Its and important source of information for polity religion culture and society, but has not discussed about the Satriya culture and Neo-Vaisnavism of Assam including the art forms developed in patronage of Sartras of Majuli.
Madan (2006) discuss about the religions existed and flourished in India highlights the Indian iconographies of the Hindu, Buddhist, and the Jain. The work gives introductory information about the major connotation of the religious expression. It is described about the symbols of iconography, their different gestures and the backgrounds explained by through the images.

Alavi & Seema (2007) emphasized upon the debates in society of eighteenth century concerned to polity and socio-religious environment of the period. Its an important source of information for polity religion culture and society, but has not discussed much about the arts.

Singam & Fitzgerald (2011) discussed about the art culture and the socio religious environment of India, it provides deep information about the aesthetics caught up in various art forms of India through separate sections on art religion society and people.

Parkar (2011) discuss about the aesthetic values occupied in various Art of India he concentrates upon the basic fundamentals of aesthetics like Rasas and six limbs of art and aesthetics, followed by the artisans in Indian art. Provide an important data to understand the core of beauty in Indian art.

Website (2008) www ‘a tribute to srimanta sankar deva’ is entirely dedicated to the life of Sankardeva and the history of Satriya cultures, it provides a preliminary information about the Neo-Vaisnavism, Satra, and its activities including the authors worked on the topic.

Website (2011) Assam government provides the introductory information about the Srimanta Sankardeva and his life, Neo-Vaisnavism propagated by him in medieval period and the Satriya culture of Assam. But not deeply discuss about the three art forms of Assam and Majuli, concerned in the present study.
Website (2012) Assam year book 2008 highlights the major participation and works of the foreign officers viz. Cutter, Brown, and Bronson including Edward Gait, John Berry white and Charles Alexander Bruce who had revered their service for Assam during the colonial period and carried out their literary work almost all the aspects. But the website does not include the information about the Art and culture and the three arts forms of Majuli.

Wikipedia (2013) provides the important introductory information about the Historical, Geographical, description about the North-East region of India and Assam. The website gives the introductory notes on the art & culture, land and the people, but it is not thoroughly discuss about the three art forms of mask-making, illustrated manuscripts, and wood carvings of Assam as well as Majuli.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

The thesis has divided into seven chapters. The first chapter presents an introduction to the topic simultaneously discuss about the crux of multidimensional factors like historical, geographical, political, social, religious, philosophical and of course the appearance of enlighten personality of Srimanta Sankardeva, In the persuasion of all around expansion of the art and culture of the Assam and particularly the island Majuli, which remains no stone unturned to cherish the Neo-Vaisnavism and the vivid art forms. The motive of the study is to search the answer and to identify the core which mobilized the artisans of the place in the phenomenon of creative quest and to analyse the aesthetical, technical and stylistic progressions of the Illustrated Manuscripts, Mask-making and Wood carvings. The introductory chapter focuses upon the general information, derivation of the term Assam and preface of the history, polity, art and culture of medieval Assam, which was also known as Kamrupa or Kamata due to Kamakhya and Ahom in Tai-ahom ages and ruled by many other dynasties prominently by the Varman, Pala, Koch and Ahom dynasty. The chapter is also focused upon the cultural-reformations and social changes
occurred in the medieval period in Assam and Majuli in the influence and wave of the *Bhakti* movement swell up all over the India since the midst of the fifteenth century onwards and presented the dissimilar picture of Assam in the various aspects including Art and culture. The chapters also includes the statement of problem, objectives of the study, scope of the study, limitation, data and Methodology, review of the literature and organisation of the thesis.

The second chapter presents the comprehensive overview on the historical geographical and cultural specifications of the land and the people, genesis and development of the society in addition to the socio-religious background of Majuli. The study highlights the emergence of Saint Srimanta Sankardeva as consequent, the place has been the cultural capital of Assamese civilization since the fifteenth century and Institutionalization of *Neo-Vaisnavism* gave a threshold to the socio-religious culture of the place. Further the chapter discuss about the origin and growth of various art forms patronized under the sacred ambiance of the Neo-Vaisnavite *Satras* like classical *satriya* music and dance forms, *Bhaona, Ankia –nat, Oja-pali*, establishment of *Satras, Namghars*, Religious architecture and more precisely the sophisticated art of painting Manuscripts, Mask-making, and Wood-carvings of the island Majuli. The research work will also include how the religious reformation played a significant role and worked as a driving mechanism for the development of visual connotations and communication of the ideology through these Visual aids in the Majuli and nearby places.

The third chapter gives an inclusive Introduction to the Neo-Vaisnavite Monasteries and describes the derivation of the term *Satra, Thans or Namghar*, as these institutions of Neo-Vaisnavite cult are basically religious in origin and plays a vital role in shaping the religious and cultural scenario of the Majuli and Assam. The study further keenly concentrates upon the ideology, objectives, origin and the growth of these institutions. Moreover the chapter also includes the statistics and information about the existing and active *Satras* (Monasteries) of Majuli and their architecture, administration, practice and schedule, functions and contributions, occasions and festivals, residents and celibacy, their activities and
life, specialties and shortcomings, art and artisans, disciples and education, discipline and significance, prospect and possibilities in respect to the socio-cultural aspects of present time and space. The most influential and affluent Satras of Majuli at eastern Assam are Auniati, Dakhinpat, Garmur and Kuruwabahi (popularly known as Cari-Satras), Samaguri and Kamalabari. The study will also include the survey of the various active and existing Satras of Majuli, for the assessment and review its growth, expansion, importance, discipline and the customs through the ages and its appropriation, Significance in various art forms and socio-cultural aspects, importance and possibilities in the upsurge of forth coming generations.

The fourth chapter discussed about the tradition of Manuscripts in Assam and more methodically of the Majuli, The Traditional paintings of Assam are the source of knowledge and wisdom has not been only served as a mode of communication to transcend the massage of the religious ideology but persuade to the inspiration of creative quest and art appraisal for numerous of artisans and art lovers across the place, country and abroad and regarded for their consummate succeed and outstanding strokes of mastery of painting. Illustrated Manuscripts have become the Identity and integral part of the prosperous Assamese culture and the heritage of art to uniform the sprinkled social assemblies since the medieval periods of Srimanta Sankardeva. The study is also tracing the origin and development, function and significance of illustrated manuscripts, are assumed to have been developed to depict the mythological tales among the socio-religious sphere. The most prominent among these illustrated manuscripts are “Chitra Bhagavata”, “Hastividyaranva”, “Anandi-Patan”, “Anand-lehari” etc. Though there are a number of Assamese scripts and the masterpieces of art have been collected from various parts of the state as it has been a long tradition of manuscript illustration almost in whole Assam and they have been replicated in numerous numbers in various Satras and courts of the Assam and produced in the form of books on Sanci-pat and Tula-pat, the study is mainly focused on the illustrated manuscripts of the Majuli and the Satras of the Majuli, those are involved in the cultivation of this art since their
long background as well as the study also covers the technique, methodology, subject-matter, characteristic and styles and aesthetic values of these Illustrated manuscripts, along with the analytical study of the some of the prominent illustrated manuscripts of the Majuli.

The fifth chapter discussed about the Mask making practice of Majuli, Assam. The focal points of the chapter is to introduce the historical background, origin, development, variety, technique and materials, evolution, significance and contribution of Masks as an Art form, it is an aesthetic creation of man and it is intermingled with history culture and the society of Assam, as Masks are the inherent faces which are used as a form of deception as well to represent the intrinsic feelings and formidable personalities stridently. Further the chapter concentrates upon the analytical study of masks in the prospects of contemporary aspects and possibilities in future to persuade as an art form by forth coming generations and the Satras of Majuli, those are involved with the mask making practises as Masks have convoluted existence in the socio-cultural matrix of different societies and have been used for different purposes, among which socio-religious uses are overwhelming as in Bhaona (Vaisnavite theatrical performance) of Majuli and Other places of Assam.

The sixth chapter highlights upon the Wood carving of Assam and more precisely Majuli, the Art of wood carving is closely associated to Satras and played spectacular role to adorn the Interiors as well as the exteriors and represent the theme of Neo Vaisnavism through various forms, nevertheless wood carvings of Majuli established as a significant art form to depict the Neo-Vaisnavite narrations and portrays the icons and idols in sculptural form. The chapter also presents an introduction to the Art of Wood Carving its origin and development, its technique, material and subject matter. Wood carving in Assam mainly developed in sixteenth century with the establishment of Satra architecture and flourished up to the eighteenth century, particularly to the concern and patronage of the Satras. Assam has always remained one of the most forested states of the country, and the variety of wood and timber available
here have formed a part of the people’s culture and economy. The indigenous people of Assam are well versed with timber, consequently woodcraft naturally flourished here astonishingly. The study also includes the analysis of the various examples of Wood craft has been procured as decorative panels from the royal Ahom palaces, the ‘guru asana’ (pedestal of the lords), Articles, reliefs and sculptures in vivid forms from the Vaisnavite monasteries, were delicately carved on wood, and present Wood carving practises of the existing and active Satras of Majuli along with significance, aesthetic value and involved artisans their deeds and the future as an art form.

The seventh chapter concludes the study and summarizes the research. It also highlights the research findings and suggest the further research, as art forms are the expressions of socio-religious Culture, and the Ideology influenced the artisans to produce their thoughts through different mediums, admitting of various interpretations in the context of India and Assam of the medieval era, the consent of opinion seems to indicate that it generally transcends the biological individual and interacts with the mass of learned and transmitted habits, techniques, ideas, values and the behaviour they induce in a particular social manoeuvre. Culture not only comprehends what is obvious, that is the Arts and Crafts, oral and written literatures and ongoing trends, but also the oriented intrinsic customs and traditions, rites and rituals which together foster a certain social pattern and a certain outlook among the people living in that pattern. The concluding part summarizes the study and highlights the research findings and suggests the further research, is not merely a destination; nevertheless it’s an continuous process towards reveal, reform and reconsideration of the heritage of the Art and culture of the Majuli In the context of contemporary prospects of global time and space.
Plate 1.1 Map of Ahom Dynasty, Assam

Plate 1.2 Map of Assam, Period of Gadadhar Simha (16th century)
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