Chapter VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary

In the present thesis island of Majuli, Art approaches of Majuli its origin, growth, with its historical, topographical, socio-cultural and religious background has been studied in the context of Neo-Vaisnavism and socio-cultural milieu of the state of Assam. Prime focus is given to the origin, growth, aesthetical, technical and analytical study of the illustrated manuscripts, Mask-making and wood carving; emerged and developed in the medieval period after the fifteenth century, parallel to the neo-Vaisnavite reformations in the Satras of Majuli. The raison d'être of the study is inspired by the phenomenon of the socio-cultural reformation and the religious ideology which became the stimulus to the indigenous artisans and gave a new dawn to the vivid Art forms, presented a diverse picture of Art and culture in Majuli. The purpose of the study is to render a systematic record and analysis on the above mentioned Art approaches of Majuli and its Art and Culture to comprehend the basic urge of creativity propagated in the society and for the prolific future of these art forms and the indigenous traditional artisans as well as the budding generation which is looking forward for a bright future as an artist in different genre. As both the art forms and the practising artists are surviving in cataclysm by means of recognition, remuneration and sustainability under the circumstances of changing scenario of economy, trends, modern technologies and mediums.

The first chapter introduces the historical, geographical, and socio-cultural background of Assam. Origin of the modern term ‘Assam’, engrosses a long journey 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’ can be traced as alternative names of the territory. Term ‘Asam’ has been throughout used to mean the Shan invaders were
designated by various terms, such as Āsam, Aśam, Asam. Assam has been situating the diverse racial sects and cultural concoction, Integrations and amalgamations, which have been proceeds through the centuries gradually. Society always cohered with the religion directly or indirectly which is more factual in the case of the social life of Assam and its vivid cultural, geographical, social and religious diversity. The art and culture has always been determined by the religion, and the progression of Bhakti movement persuades the religious and socio-cultural uplifting together with artistic and creative plethora of Assam. Majuli became a nerve-centre of Vaisnavism of Assam after the revered arrival and preaches of Saint Sankardeva. Progression and propagation of Neo-Vaisnavism in Assam imbued the whole historical, cultural and artistic background of the medieval epoch of Assam.

Study traced the cultural and artistic significance of Assam, Bhakti movement and expansion ofNeo-Vaisnavism in Assam, and introduces precisely Majuli as socio religious centre and its vivid art forms in the context. The study includes the statement of problem, objectives and scope of the study and limited to the medieval period mainly fifteenth century to present date and primarily covers the major art forms of Illustrated Manuscripts, Mask-making and Wood-carvings developed in the numerous Satra institutions of Majuli.

The methodology applied for the study is conducted by taking interviews with the individual artists, academicians, residents of Satras, Satradhikars (head of the Satra) and by observing the original Manuscripts, Masks from the place, different museums, institutions and existing Satras including Various books, Catalogues, Brochures, text and Visual materials. This is a descriptive type of research since Visit of the various surviving Satras and other local Artists of Majuli have been done along with proper documentation of photography and video. Review of literature of 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.
Chapter II discussed about the historical, geographical and social background of the Majuli, the study includes the formation of the island as having its own inherent features due to its topographical conditions, the island has been formed with change of course of the river Brahmaputra as well as its tributaries time to time, and creates an isolated water bounded populated zone. Further chapter highlights the derivation of the term Majuli, got this name in 16th century A.D according to the older chronicles (Buranji) of Assam, social structure of the island which consist diversity of castes and tribes. The study traced the life history and emergence of Sankardeva as a versatile figurine and reformer in the context of socio-religious background of Majuli, who gave a whole new dimension to Assamese life and culture. He rooted Vaisnavism in the land of Majuli through establishing the first Vaisnavite Satra at ‘Belaguri Dhuwahat’ moreover he accumulated with his foremost disciple Madhavadeva here and together propelled the new simpler form of Vaisnavism and initiated the socio-religious and cultural reformation of the place consequently large number of monastic Institutions and Satras has been developed in Majuli. This spiritual renaissance occurred alongside the most brilliant period of the Ahom dynasty of Assam in the late fifteenth century. The chapter discusses the philosophy of Neo-Vaisnavism, as ideals and objectives of the Neo-Vaisnavism lies in the thoughts of Sankardeva, where he seems to be more concerned about to put forward a simpler method of devotion and faith on the basis of Bhagawat-Purana. Chapter precisely emphasize the origin and growth of the Satriya culture, various art forms like literature, dramatics, manuscript painting, mask-making, wood carving and important festivals observed in the Satras of Majuli embedded with theatrical performances, classical Satriya dance and music in the context of Neo-Vaisnavism.

Third chapter emphasize the emergence of Satra institutions and the derivation of the particular terms Satra, Thān, or Namghar and their historical and socio-religious background. Satrās are the unique structure in Assam, of multi-dimensional socio-religious and cultural institutions, a place where Guru stays with devotees and preaches through congregational prayer, religious discourses,
sacred cultural manners, art and literature. Indeed it’s an institutionalization of socio-religious amity with sacred ideology of Neo-Vaisnavism. It developed and spread widely all over in Assam through Satra network and formation of samhatis (sub-sects). These samhatis or sub-sect laid by Damodardeva and Harideva called Brahma Samhati, Gopal Ata and Pursottama thakur founded respectively kala and Purusa Samhati and Mathura das Ata and Padma Ata made Nika Samhati. A Vaisnavite Satra of Assam generally constructed inside a square enclosure wall, varies according to its capacity and area with four openings or gateways the structural and architectural plan of the Satra institutions includes different components like Namghar (prayer hall), Manikuta (shrine), Hati (residential huts of monks), Bharal/Bhandar (store house) and Batcora (gatehouse, archway) with different categories and dignitaries as Satradhikar, bhagwati or Bhagati, pathak, sravani, Gayana-bayana, natuwa and Sutradhara, Pujari or Deori, Bharali, Likhak, Khanikar, Majumder, paldhariya etc; with their specific function. The most influential Satras of the eastern Assam established by Ahom royal patronage, situated in Majuli are Auniati Satra, Dakhinpat Satra, Garamur Satra are the monastic Satras. The significance of Satra institutions is undoubtedly immeasurable and conscientious not only in implementation of the ideology of Vaisnavism as well as to establish and reform the aspects of social and cultural life since centuries. These institutions enormously elevated the paradigms of society, education, ethics, literature, art and culture of Majuli and Assam since medieval period. The chapter analyse the role of major existing Satras, that of Auniati Satra, Garamur Satra Dakhinpat Satra, Kamlabari Satra, Samaguri Satra and Bengenati Satra of Majuli with their specific features, significance, and contribution in various disciplines of cultural, socio-religious and artistic progressions.

Chapter IV discuss about the derivation of the term manuscript and illustrated manuscripts, with origin and development of the manuscripts in Assam. The zenith of the visual and textual tradition in Assam was reached in the form of manuscripts, prepared in the post medieval period in the different languages such as Sanskrit, Assamese, Tai-Ahom, and Tibetan. Most of the
Ahom *buranjis* (chronicles of 13th to 19th century A.D) and Vaisnava literatures (16th to 19th century A.D) such as *kirtan-gosa, Nama-ghosa, Ankia-nat, Bhagwata* and others are written on *sanchi-pat* and *Tula-pat*. The study asserts method and materials of the Manuscript paintings, preparation of ink, pen and colours, methodology of preparing *Sanchi-pat*, which was made from the bark of the Agar tree (*Acuilaria Agallocha*) an easily material available and lasts adequately long though its need to be long patience and experience to prepare the *Sanchi-pat* for writing and painting as well. *Tula-pat* made from the two words where *Tula* means cotton and *pat* means leaf as it is made by processing the cotton pulp.

Further study discuss about the Origin and development of different schools of Manuscript painting prevailed in Assam as Tai-Ahom School, *Satriya* School, Darang School, *Garhgaon* School, with its specific features, important illustrated manuscripts, and stylistic analysis. Chapter also surveyed the practice and preservation in Majuli, *Satras* were converted into the library of the multitude manuscripts and most of these still having the collection, some of the prominent *Satras* like *Auniati* and *Dakhinpat Satra* of Majuli were earlier maintained the collection of thousands of manuscripts in their library. The study analyse characteristically and stylistically the illustrated Manuscript of *Ramayana: Sundarkanda* recovered from the *Bengena-ati Satra* of Majuli, dated 1715 A.D. as mentioned on it. The paintings of *Sundarakanda* appears a sequence of the tradition of *Satriya* School, the artist here followed the paradigms of the *Chitra-Bhagwata* in the means of pictorial composition, conventional use of proportion, flat or two dimensional perspective, angularity, minimal use of landscape, and linear manifestations of design. Most of the paintings are executed in brilliant primary colours with contrast to each other, and palette is confined up to the red, blue, yellow and green. Figures are filled by even and flat colours might be due to the imaginative and symbolic interpretation in spite of realistic and practical approach.

The fifth chapter elaborates the origin, background, function, terminology and development of Mask in the different spheres of the society in various places including the tradition of masks in India as many of the societies masks are the
integral part of the religious dances, theatrical performances, dramas, and other similar acts which carries the ethical, cultural, socio-religious and aesthetical values. Further study discusses the origin and development of tradition of Masks and Mask-making practices of Majuli. Masks represent the profound consequence in the socio-cultural milieu in community of the island, and manifestation of the integral essence and beliefs of the culture as it is the indispensable constituent of the Satriya theatrical performance and the Satras of Majuli. The study thoroughly traced the materials and methodology of the Mask-making practice of Majuli and different types of masks with reference to material, methodology, specific features, characteristics and process of mask-making with stylistic analysis. The masks of Majuli are broadly made of Bamboo, clay, dung, cloth, cotton, wood, and other available indigenous materials. Remarkably the basic technique and idea of weaving armature in different shape and size is unique itself, moreover the process of giving expressions ‘Chera dia’ through covering of cloth, fixing jute for hairs, kuhila plant for nails and teeth, colours and its application, is completely ingenious and fused with indigenous folk flavour.

Chapter VI emphasize the historical background and development of the Wood carving as an expression of art in various purpose, prevailed all over in India since the beginning of the Indus valley civilization, in the Harappa civilization, and in the Vedic literature enough description can be traced about the domestic, commercial and religious use of timbers including the instructions of proper and suitable deployment of wood for different purposes. Considerably Assam has always been a wooded state of India, and the tradition of woodcarvings of the region can be observed in temples, palaces, Satras, furniture, utensils, musical instruments and in sculptural art, wood has been used since the early medieval period to late medieval period in Assam to carve the icons, idols, reliefs, thrones, decorations of door and window facades and many others object of art in different cultures. Woodcarvings of the Satras were completely based upon the mythology, narrated in the religious scriptures as the Bhagawata-purana, Mahabharata, Ramayana and the others. In the Satras,
wood carving is primarily embedded to the prayer hall (Namghar), sanctum (Manikuta) and the gatehouse (Batchora). Indeed the sanctum and prayer hall of Satras is effectively and delicately embellished with the wood carvings. The major objects of wood carvings in Satra are the structure of Simhasanas (Throne), divine and semi divine idols and relief. The formation of the human figures, divine figures, semi- divine figures and anthropomorphic forms in wood carvings of Satriya style are generally static and frontal and in most of the cases the face is depicted in profile, but it has not been accordingly maintained in body and treated frontally. Human figures are made in round shape or anatomy has not been practically followed and appears to be more symbolic. Majority of these wood carvings are mainly seems to follow the indigenous folk style and appears conventional, forceful and dynamically alive. The panels are generally painted with gaudy colours where Krishna and divine figures are painted in mild blue colour and demons are painted in black or deep colours with red eyes, panels are surrounded with decorative floral or creeper designs and carving of these reliefs are conventional and stylized.

The seventh Chapter concludes the study. This chapter summarizes and highlights the research findings and suggests for the further research.
7.2 Conclusion

Majuli, a glorious island of Brahmaputra distinguished for its rich cultural heritage of numerous Satras, for this island has been recognized as the land of socio-religious and Vaisnavite reformation since sixteenth century. Srimanta Sankardeva the pioneering Vaisnavite reformer and Saint propagated the Neo-Vaisnavite movement through establishing the first Vaisnavite Satra at ‘Belaguri Dhuwahat’ in West Majuli and then large number of Satras has been developed in the island. These institutions opened the threshold of simpler, more accessible and less ritualistic form of Bhakti (devotion) compare to existed complex Hindu ritualistic religion. It was integrated with faith and devotion as there was no idol worship and rituals. “Single God and human kind” was the prime objective behind the whole ideology and the philosophy of Sankardeva’s Vaisnavism lies in the selfless devotion and salvation.

Lord Krishna in the form sacred Bhagwata has been honoured as the prime authority to attain the attribute of knowledge, wisdom and ultimate realization. As Sankardeva acknowledged the sravana (congregational listening) and kirtana (musical congregation) modes of Bhakti or devotion based upon the Bhagawata-Purana to extend the Bhakti cult in the populace for which Sankardeva, Madhavadeva and later pontiffs created plenty of literature. Moreover they distinctly composed enough number of songs, dramas, verses, recitations, prose and miscellaneous works in the context. As Sankardeva created Bargits (sacred song), narrations of Harishchandra-upakhyana, Rukmani-harana, and version of Bhagawata purana as his doctrine work Bhakti-ratnakara, Bhakti-pradipa, Nimi-nava siddhi-samvada, Anadi-patana including various kinds of plays namely kaliya-damana, Keli-Gopala, Vipra-Patni-Prasada, Parijata-Harana and Rama-Vijaya-nat in Sanskrit language as well as in brajwali dialect, known as Ankiya-nat or yatra. Madhavadeva also composed numerous of Bargits to depict the activities of Lord Krishna’s childhood pranks and different plays widely known as ‘Jhumura’ including number of dramas namely Chor-
dhara, Pimpara-Gchuwa, Bhumī-Lutowa, Bhojana-Vyavhara, Arjuna-Bhanjana, Brahma-mohana, Bhusna-harana, kotora-Khelowa and Rasajhumura and his magnum opus treatise Namaghosa. Undoubtedly all these works are adequate contribution to Assamese thinking and religious literature.

Neo-Vaisnavism was a multifaceted phenomenon based upon the epics, Puranas and Bhagawat-Gita, sprouted the religion of faith including literature, theatrical performances, and various arts like painting, music, dance, architecture and so on through numerous Satra institutions. Which changed the socio-religious perception of the society and moulded the whole cultural behaviour as a result Majuli has been cherishing the rich socio-religious and cultural life since the medieval periods, and the people of the land is entirely intermingled with the religion particularly neo-Vaisnavism. Almost all the customs, functions and festivals are coordinated by the Satras in which Palnam, Ras-lila, Janmastami, Barsik-Bhaona and Bihu are the popular ones simultaneously Majuli serving as a place of active institutes and learning centre of classical Satriya dance, music and art forms which developed in Satras and extremely nurtured the Assamese culture. Simultaneously provide a plethora of creativity for young disciples of the Satra and nourishing the future of budding generations of society. Around Sixty five of Satras were activated in the Majuli before the massive earthquake of 1950, but now they are left only around eight to ten and satisfying the religious and cultural urge of the society, though struggling with catastrophe of erosion and to manoeuvre with modernization.

Satras played an important role to cultivate the treasure of religious literature, education and several art forms. It is a remarkable contribution of Vaisnavism through the network of Satras and it would not be an erroneous to say that whatever the regarded classical Assamese religious literature is available today is the product of the institutions of Vaisnavism. Most of the Satras maintained Sanskrit ‘tols’ (traditional schools) and ushered the spiritual bonding of fellowship nurtured by the atmosphere of freedom, equality and integrity. Nevertheless art of manuscript painting, mask-making, wood carving, spiritual
music and many other crafts developed altogether in the Satras of Majuli and other places of the state. Satra is equally noteworthy for its architecture being a composite unit and a complete established Satra consists the different components like Namghar or Kirtanghar (prayer hall), Manikuta (shrine), Hati (huts), Bharal (store), and Batcora (gatehouse or archway).

It is observed through the study that the fundamental objective of the Satras was to spread the monotheistic Vaisnavism through involving the disciples, inducing ethical and devotional etiquettes among them and conducting the religious and cultural modules to incorporate the maximum populace. The Satra institutions acted as the guardian to the religious and cultural progression of the disciples and society, every Satra engage the representatives called ‘Medhis’ for different localities who continuously maintain contacts to elevate the moral and spiritual values among the society. Subsequently Satra institutions established social harmony, spirit of cooperation and spirituality through disseminating the learning of ancient scriptures amongst the society. Often Satra intervened in the cases related to the social matters and resolves the social and religious disagreements as the society faithfully regards the veracity of Satras.

The art of manuscript painting of Assam significantly marked its progression in the medieval period which undoubtedly rooted by the ideology of social and cultural reformation of Vaisnavism. As these paintings were not prejudiced by the palate contentment or shallow enjoyment thus the sole objective of the paintings is to convey the sacred themes of the epic and puranic lore. Most of these illustrated manuscripts of Satriya style represent the distinctive style of miniature painting developed in Assam, executed on Aloe bark (Sanchi-pat) and indigenously ginned cotton paper called Tula-pat. These manuscripts illustrations prominently practised on the rectangular format of the Satriya or royal manuscripts, Tai-Ahom Buddhist manuscripts and some other manuscripts of Hinduism including the less amount of cloth painting on muga silk. These manuscripts paintings can be divided into four main branches of Tai-Ahom School, Darang School, Ahom or Garhgaon School and the Satriya School.
The designs patterns of the *Chitra-Bhagawata* have been continued as traditional style by the painters of *Satriya* School is appears more indigenous in approach and developed under the various *Satras* and in direct response of Neo-*Vaisnavism* consequently basic theme of almost all the manuscripts paintings of *Satriya* school was life and events of Lord Krishna and the *Bhagawat Purana*. While Darang and *Garhgaon* School of Manuscript painting was patronized by the *Kochs* and *Ahoms* respectively. Darang School in style more or less persuaded by the *Satriya* School and emerged with more sophistication, as the illustration of ‘*Tirtha Kaumudi*’ and ‘*Anadi-patan*’ manuscripts. On the other hand Ahom School mainly executed the indigenous translation of Indian court styles or the combination of *Mughal*, *Rajasthani* and *Pahari* styles like Illustrations of ‘*Ananda–Lahari*’ and ‘*Gita–Govinda*’ with some original and secular works for instance ‘*Hastividyarnava*’ a delicate work of Sukumar barkath painted by significant artists namely Dilbar and Dosai invited from northern India. These styles profoundly flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

The art of manuscripts paintings developed in Majuli prominently depict the *Satriya* style of painting, thematically imbued with *Vaisnava* ideology, and moreover vitally intended to wide spread the themes of epics and *purans* through brilliant colours and interesting interpretations of characters, all these paintings are religious in motif and conventional in style and technique. The artists were more concerned to the narrations in spite of exposure of morphological and technical skills hence the paintings of *Satriya* manuscript embedded with angular convention, linear compositions, flat colours mainly yellow, green and red, and lack of perspective.

‘Ramayana: Sundarkanda’ an illustrated manuscript observed in the present study from *Bengenaati Satra* followed the similar trends and depicts that the solitary aim of the *Satriya* manuscripts is to illustrate the narrations of epics and *puranic* tales to convey the message of the emerging *Bhakti-cult* (Neo-*Vaisnavism*) in the form of illustration and vivid colours.

Majuli has been a renowned centre of rich heritage and unique tradition of masks or ‘*Mukha*’ basically created to be utilised in Vaisnavite theatrical
performances of *Bhaona*, incorporated by Sankardeva in the fifteenth century. Consequently these masks are made for almost all the characters narrated in the *Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Purans*. These masks having a unique essence of indigenous socio-religious culture represent the high inventiveness of the local materials and made in different variety and sizes from bamboo, wood, cloth, cow dung, jute and other indigenous materials. Masks of Majuli mainly divided into three categories of face mask, hanging mask and huge mask, variably permeates the particular techniques of mask making as these masks are light in weight and affable to put on during performance by the wearer, similarly persists the high aesthetic values as painted in vibrant colours as per the anthropomorphic, theriomorphic and mundane characters and posses the astonishing expressions. Due to masks, it became captivatingly possible to extensively explore the various features of interpreted characters through *Bhaona*, among the each every group of the society.

During the research it has been observed that masks are the indispensible device of the ‘*Bhaona*’ performances, the artisans who still prepare these masks are inmates of the *Satras* as Samaguri *Satra* of Majuli. The tradition of mask making is a hereditary skill passed down from father to son or mentor to disciples in the *Satras* of Majuli and still convincing the spiritual and creative urge of the artisans as well as the spectators beyond the age, gender, caste and social discrimination. Still these masks beside progression to their aesthetic sensibility, compelled to survive with day by day emerging modern trends of communication and gratification and need to be contrive with contemporary themes, materials, technique and credentials.

Wood carvings of Majuli specifically cultivated in the *Satras* to adorn the large interiors and exteriors of Namghar, Manikuta and other important portions of *Satra* including to portray and propagate the *puranic* and epical themes. Thus the subjects of these wood carvings are depicts the Vaisnavite religious iconography and mythology narrated in the religious scriptures and largely executed the Incarnated forms of Vishnu like Narasimha, Rama, Krishna as divine form, Garuda and Hanuman as semi-divine forms, celestial dancers and
worldly beings. These are carved in anthropomorphic, theriomorphic and in realistic style. Animal figures like lion, crocodile, tortoise, peacock, elephant and others are carved more flawlessly though these are stylized and articulated, flowers and vegetal motifs are used in adornment of the frames, on the window and door jambs, motifs of the lotus flower and scrumptious lotus bud with its creeper patterns is largely used in ornamentation of various components of Namghar and Satra.

The remarkable piece of wood carving in Satra is the multi tiered throne decorated with different animal motifs at the corners of each tier accordingly called simhasana (lion motif throne), mayurasana (peacock motif throne), Gajasana (elephant motif throne) and hamsasana (geese or swan motif throne) etc. intentional to pedestal the sacred manuscript of the Bhagawata-Purana as the main adorable object in the chamber on the top tier. Almost all the wood carving of the Majuli depicts the medieval socio cultural lifestyle as postures and gestures, attires, dwellings, utensils, ornaments and others according to its time and space which represent thoroughly the manners, outlook and customs of the artisans who created them. Remarkably the artists have not incorporated Radha as the beloved devotee of Krishna in their illustrations of Krishna-lila (exploits of Krishna) due to conventionality with neo-Vaisnavite ideology. Majority of these wood carvings mainly believed to delineate the schematic depiction of the theme rather a detailed morphological study of the subjects, followed the indigenous idioms and folk style which appears conventional though forceful and dynamically alive indeed seems committed to communicate the ideology of Neo-Vaisnavism and to adorn the Namghar, Manikuta and various components of the Satras.

The study finds that Satras has been the repositories and practising centres of all the Assamese classical dance, music and performing arts like Bhaona (ankiya-nat), Bargeet (celestial and religious songs), Paintings in the form of Murals, Panels, and Manuscripts, Mask-making and Wood carving. Moreover educational institutions of religious scriptures particularly Puranas, the
Bhagawata and epics, disseminated to everyone beyond caste, creed, and social status. On the other hand against the ideology of Sankardeva and Madhavadeva, major Satras of Majuli are following constantly the conventional protocols for maintenance of caste up to some extent, those regularized by the earlier pontiffs; for an instance all the Satradhikars (head of the Satra) belong to high order of Brahmins. Due to this and the changing political scenarios, Satras are slowly losing their position in the society.

Some of the inmates of Satras nowadays proceed for tour from the island to different places of India to demonstrate and tutoring the Satriya art and culture through workshop, seminars and classes conducted by the government and non government organisations. Even some of them are doing teaching job in institutions and different occasions like state level cultural festivals integrated with Satriya dance, music and performing arts and came across with city life and developing trends thus the inmates of Satras are inclined towards the urban culture. Consequently they have begun to think and searching for new ways of survival and lead themselves and their families in modern means of life. Naturally, material ambitions thus began to preside over their engagements and spirituality became subordinate to this aspiration.

Celibacy before the modern era was considerably a regarded way of life due to simple and devoted life to spirituality but the life style of Satra system, particularly monasticism and celibacy, have lost their popularity in the phase of growing consumerism and now the Satras standing on the edge of apprehension. In spite of that present circumstances are seeking for them to adapt a more liberal attitude towards the prevailing orthodox traditional systems to rejuvenate its schedules, modules, activities and educative system of their inmates.

As per the present survey of the study, in the major monastic Satras like Auniati, Dakhinpat, Garamur, and Kamalabari; the inmates are adopted in early stage of life when they are only five or seven years of age and comes from low or poor background, sometimes the parents who cannot look after properly and provide facilities and education to their child, handover them to Satras but the
present generation as it growing up in the environment of communication and information technologies. It is difficult and at the same time against the natural urges to confine them in the ideology and construed of ascetics and devotion as almost all the young inmates of Satras when asked whether they like to watch television, movies, use mobile phones, and to go schools, wants to wear the clothes of flowing trends in spite of traditional attire of a celibate like simple white waist cloth (dhuti) and chadar (shoulder cloth). Almost all of them responded silently or in a low sound that all these things are not good for us as we are not supposed to be like common man, we are expected to be high in thinking and simple in living. It may be the reality, but it is not factual as their responses are controlled and tuned according to the system and construed ideals of the Satra.

Satras being the medieval institutions were might be modern according to their contemporary circumstances at the time of inception. But almost became an out dated set up as they remain almost unchanging according to the present time and society. While the 21st century’s growing economy, industrialized and urbanised society is a challenge for these Satra institutions, where modernism is confronting the medievalism.

Factually the present standards, fundamentals and demands of the society are not accumulates today with the Satra system as per the time of cultural exchange, global economy, and frequently increasing modes of information and communication. Pitambardeva Goswami of Garamur Satra realized the changing fundamentals of the time and society. He took initiatives to adjust the Satra to the present situations, presented his agenda of reformation to transform the Satra from celibate to house holder system, abolition of caste system inside and outside the Satra for achieving social justice and cohesion, fortification of the rudimentary Hinduism by reformation and incorporation of women and their empowerment by encouraging widow marriage and prevention of child marriage and primarily exterminating all feudal and conventional Satra system but could not be implemented properly.
He admits that the conventional medieval system of caste differences, human bondage and dependence on their society, caste, and relatives which created patriarchal hierarchy and religious slavery are not regarded in the democratic 21st century where everyone is up to some extent aware of human rights and equal opportunity of education, information, justice, professions and earnings are available to all. Considerably it is not possible and similarly not adequate to control and uniform the life of individuals in artificial codes. Though this ideology was not in this form when initiated by Sankardeva, it was caused to social uplift and religious liberalism but later the system itself turned into complexity and became imprisonment of static ideology which nowhere meets the demands of present time and space. Therefore this important issue which may be inconsistent with Satra ideology nevertheless the study would like to highlight here that the Importance of celibacy in life, comparing the means of present time and space might be reconsidered or has to be comprehended more in the newer terms, as an inspiration for society towards naturalistic, disciplined and noble verve.

Similarly the same practices of art and culture are still going on in same traditional manner which may not be relevant to the present requisites of the recognition of artisans in society and the market we cannot forget the basic challenges of employment and livelihood of the artists and gradually increasing demands of the consumer trends.

Though it is noteworthy that DuttaDeva Goswami (1838-1904), head of the Auniati Satra was first among the other Satradhikars who purchased a printing press and published a newspaper (Asam Bilasinee) as early as 1872 A.D, it was the second newspaper in Assam and the first one to be published by an Assamese. He also learnt the western music and first who introduce violin in the Satriya music. But his intuition towards modernity confined there, he did not persuade the other contemporary aspects like abolition of caste system, empowerment and involvement of women in the Satriya art and culture and
amalgamation of marginal castes and tribes. Therefore Satra traditions are continuing with same conventional and medieval approach.

The Satras had mobilized the masses in building up the capacities and skills of the artists of various genres and responsible beings to take the responsibility of matters relating to the community life, thus proving that people’s participation is the pre-requisite for real development. Still the surviving Satras are playing a sincere role to inculcate values among the people of every age group of the society. But again it would be judicious to re-consider and amend the whole ideology and education system of the Satras as per the demands of contemporary socio-economy and rapidly changing society due to media, globalisation and other socio-economic and political factors. Since for the betterment and growth up-gradation is always obligatory, for sake of this Satras has to associate with modern modes of primary and higher education.

The Satras are in crucial conditions and surviving with lot of shortcomings, facing the scarcity of funds, recognition and proper arrangements moreover to compete with modern demands of society as these Satras are instigating centres of the various art forms so the study also suggests that some where the system of education, social welfare, and cultural curricula have become out dated or incompetent nowadays in practical terms. For which they have to be incorporated with modern institutes of fine arts, music and performing arts, so the apprentice painters, sculptors, and budding talents can be accustomed with the contemporary techniques over the foundation of traditional values, styles and treatments.

Nevertheless, most of the Satras in Majuli are struggling crucially with the continuous erosion and diminution of territories as per the earlier records the island was once around hundred sixty miles in length and sixty miles in breadth now remains half of that around seventy five kilometres in length and ten kilometres only in breadth due to that many of them are compelled to shift other places outside the Majuli.

The study feels that the Art and culture of the Majuli has a unique essence and needs to be modified, firstly it has to be taken under concern by the
Satra, state level as well as the national level administration and sought to take sincere steps to conserve and reform the dying and endangered heritage. The successful establishment of Satras Institution proves that it is possible and necessary to promote cultural values, and classical knowledge of scriptures through education, service and means of community communication through vivid mediums of art in society, which they have been assiduously did and still continuing. Satras are having the potential to mould a human society based on culture of self-reliance, tolerance, unity and integrity.

This researcher has visited almost all the major Satras of Majuli and observed the spiritual, harmonious, creative, fraternal, serene, moral and noble atmosphere. But the contribution of women is almost negligible, especially in the ascetic or udasin (adherent of celibacy) Satras; though they are playing equally important role in the every aspects of Human life preferably in art and crafts for an instance almost every woman of Majuli is well versed in weaving textile on indigenous looms, singing folk songs, dancing and other crafts like basketry, folk painting and playing some musical instruments. So, this must be considered and women of the society should be integrated with various cultural activities of the Satras including education and learning.

Interestingly different forms of art were brought into play in Nitya (every day schedule) like the ‘Prasangas’ (prayer sessions) and in the Naimittika (occasional observances) like Raslila, palnam Bhaona and other festivals organised by the Satras, in which inmates and villagers, including women, children, from different stratum and age group, though illiterate, recites and sings passages from the Guna-mala, Naam-ghosha and other religious texts. The mode of prayer in the Satras always involves singing and playing musical instruments. Villagers including women, practise to sing and play the instruments in the house hold Satras.

The Bhaona, One-act plays and other festivals organized regularly by Satra and village community, gave plenty of scope to the indigenous arts and crafts like costumes, painting, masks-making, wood carvings, decorations, dramatics and other talents of the common people. So study is also suggests
that art forms of Satras has to be reformed on different levels of techniques, themes, materials and their application according to contemporary trends. Satras must be rejuvenated as the education centre of various arts and crafts like pottery, music, costume designing, performance, painting, sculpture, and perceptibly mask-making, manuscript writing and painting in terms of calligraphy and painting, wood works in a creative and innovative vocations as per the contemporary standards which could nurture the skills of the artist and to uplift the level of art to meet the sustainable credentials and dealt with the present cause of society so the art and artists could get the appropriate recompense in every aspects.

7.3 Scope for future research:

Further research can be extended towards the comparative study of mask-making, manuscript or miniature paintings and wood carvings of the Satras or other institutions and places of Assam, with those from the other North-eastern states and other parts India. Subsequently, research can also be done on the various other art forms like basketry and cane craft, bell-metal craft, musical instruments, paintings and murals of the Satras; including textiles, theatrical performances, stage designing and costume designing which are still practised by the inmates of the Satra and villagers traditionally. The walls of the numerous Satras of Assam are colourfully painted and depict the visuals based upon the classical Sanskrit as well as the Vaisnavite scriptures. Weaving of ceremonial textiles and various indigenous decorative and functional articles used in the Satras are regularly practised. Hence, research works can be done in all the above aspects of art and culture of Majuli credited to their influence, relevance and contribution to different spheres of the society.

The Satras function as the residential Schools of traditional religious education, art and culture for young boys. So there is a need to adopt an all-inclusive beyond caste and gender, and progressive approach in educative curriculum and pedagogy of the Satras. There is also need to support and
encourage the younger generation of the place since their budding days along with creative people of various disciplines; concerning to their recognition, vocation and contribution to the society. The workshops, demonstrations and seminars should be conducted by the main stream and eminent artists, to revive and nurture these art forms of the Satras, which are still surviving, but dying gradually. The policy must be framed and public-private entrepreneurs should be incorporated to protect the cultural heritage as well as endorse and revitalize the education system including the cultural activities of the Satras. Accordingly Satras of Majuli have to be facilitated with latest equipments, instruments, library with latest books, and the internet. The Satras should be amalgamated with the modern educational institutions to expand the edification by cultural, traditional as well as in modern standards and credentials; which would be beneficiary for the disciples as well as the traditional artists to become successful in the present changeable and competitive environment.