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**PAPER-DSC 1B TM-RC-2016 TOURISM RESOURCES OF ASSAM**

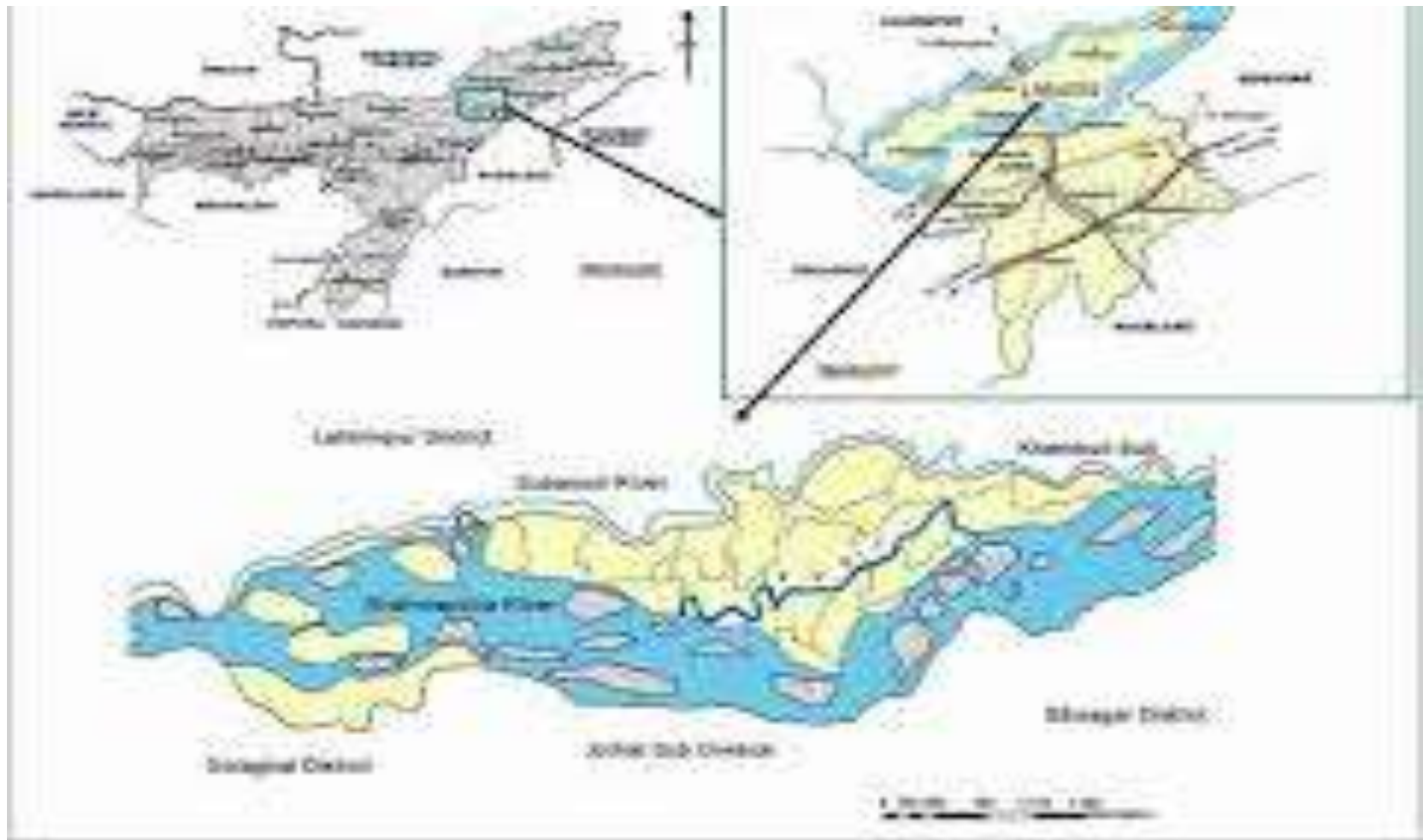
**UNIT-IV)-CULTURAL AND ADVENTURETOURISM RESOURCES OF  
ASSAM**

**TOPIC-MAJULI AS ACULTURAL TOURISM HUB**

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# MAJULI: AN INTRODUCTION

- Majuli is one of the largest inhabited river island in the world.
- It was located within the Jorhat district of Assam and also served as a sub-division of it.
- But, recently, in 2016, Majuli became the first island in the Brahmaputra River to be made a district in India.
- The river island is the rich treasure house of Neo-Vaishnavite culture and tradition of the state.
- It is also a hub of ethnic tradition and variety of the state.



**Fig-1 – A Map of Majuli depicting within the map of Assam**

## Geographical Significance

- Majuli had an area of 880 square kms at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but having lost significantly to erosion it covers 352 sqkm as at 2014.
- Majuli has shrunk as the river surrounding it has grown; Majuli is currently listed as the world's largest river island in the Guinness Book of the World Records.
- The island is formed by the Brahmaputra River in the South and the Kherkutia Xuti a branch of the Brahmaputra joined by the Subansiri River in the North.
- Basically, the formation of Majuli had been caused due to course changes by the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries.
- Majuli island is accessible by ferries from the city of Jorhat with Nemati Ghat.
- The island is about 300-400km east from the state's largest city-Guwahati.

## Majuli: Significance of the term

- The term, Majuli was used for the first time by Dr. J. P. Wade during the last decade of eighteenth century.
- Before that it had been called as *Majal*.
- According to Sahityacharya Atul Chandra Hazarika, the term 'Majuli' has been generalized as the 'Granary of Mother Lakshmi'.
- The name of Majuli contains two meaningful words 'Ma' and 'Juli', where 'Ma' means 'Lakshmi'(the goddess of prosperity) and 'Juli' denotes 'Granary'.

# Cultural Landscape of Majuli and its Potentiality of Cultural Tourism

- The cultural Landscape of Majuli is wonderfully adorned with the various cultural items and forms of the Satra institutions.
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- The performing arts like the various forms of Satriya Nritya (Satriya Dance), Ankiya Nat or Bhaona (One Act Play), Borgeet, Gayan-Bayan have been practiced traditionally in the Satras from generation to generation.
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- Some performing arts are performed in different religious occasions, festivals, rituals, ceremonies and functions.
- Majuli has been continuing to keep and maintain the all characteristics to be attained the position of cultural capital and primary features of the base of Assamese civilization for last five and six hundred years.
- All communities living in Majuli have been deeply influenced by Vaishnaite Satra institution. Naamghar(Prayer Hall) is the central place of almost all villages of Majuli.
- In these Naamghars where the villagers unitedly worship and pray to God Vishnu or Lord Krishna through Sravana-Kirtana(the way of prayer in Neo-Vaisnavite religious sect founded by Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva).
- Naamghar is not only the religious institution but also a public, cultural, social institute where various problems and issues of the village are discussed and monitored with resolving the problems democratically as well as decisions are made for social welfare.

# Satras of Majuli

- Satras of Majuli have great historical and important cultural significance.
- Badula Padma Ata, one of the chief disciple of Mahapurush Madhavdeva, established the Kamalabari Satra in the year 1673, according to the advice of his guru Madhavdeva.
- The Satra belongs to the *Nika Samhati* order of Satra Samhati system.

Uttar-Kamalabari Satra has earned glory and fame not only for Majuli but also for Assam as a whole through performing and presenting the Satriya dance, music and Bhaona in different places of India and even in foreign countries by its artists.
- Among the religious festivals, the death anniversaries of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankadeva and SriSri Madhavdeva are celebrated with four days religious programs during the Assamese month of *Bhada*( co-incident with August/September).
- Besides these, *Palnaam*, *Ras-Leela*, *Phalgutsav*, *Janmasthami*, *Guru-Kirtana* are different rituals and festivals have been organized with spiritual flavor.
- Traditional performing arts like Ankiya Nat(Bhaona), Satriya dances comprising *Chali*, *Jhumura*, *Nadu-Bhangi*, *Bar-Praveshar Nach*, *Sutradhar* and *Natua Oja-Pali* are mainly performed in the Uttar-Kamalabari Satra.
- The Natun Kamalabari Satra organizes and celebrates similar festivals as is done in the Uttar-Kamalabari Satra.
- But the exceptional case here is the *Barsik Bhaona Sabah* or *Bar Sabah*(great congregation).

# PHOTOGRAPHS DEPICTING VARIOUS VIEWS OF THE SATRAS OF MAJULI

**Fig 1-Main Gateway of Uttar-Kamalabari Satra**



**Fig 2-Main Gateway of Dakhinpat Satra**





# **SATRAS OF MAJULI AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

- Besides Uttar –Kamalabari and Natun kamalabri, the Auniati Satra is belonged to the Brahma Samhati order of Samhati System.
- Auniati Satra is famous for palnaam, Apsara dance, ancient Assamese arts and crafts like Utensils, ornaments and jewelleryes and other handicrafts.
- Benegenaati has followed the Nika Samhati order of Samhati System and it is the centre of ancient artifacts and practice of the dance, music and drama.
- Chamaguri Satra is belonged to Purusha Samhati and it has been bearing the legacy for its mask-making crafts.
- The Bargeet, Mati Akhara, Jhumura Dance, Chali Dance, Natua Dance, Nadubhangi Dance, Sutradhari Dance, Oja-Pali, Satriya Krishna Nritya and Dashavatar are performed and practiced in various Satras of Majuli and it is the excellent centre for practising these performing arts.
- Satras of Majuli have been reserved those cultural heritages which were introduced by Saint Sankardeva and Madhavdeva.
- S, Majuli must attain the status of Cultural World Heritage Site.

# CULTURAL HERITAGE OF MAJULI

- Cultural heritage and folk artifacts of Majuli like traditional and royal weapons, utensils, jewellerys and also culturally and traditionally important other objects have been conserved in the Satras of Majuli.
- The potters of Majuli prepare different clay utensils like those prepared by the ancient artisans of Harrappa civilizations.
- The arts of handloom-textiles also earn international fame through excellent artistry made by the tribal communities of Majuli.
- The mask-making craft of Samaguri Satra and ornamental boat of Kamalabari Satra are famous worldwide.
- 'Rasleela' the three day long religious festival is celebrated in Majuli island very colourfully.
- All people of Majuli participate in this festival. In Rasleela festival, Lord Krishna plays Rasleela with Gopinis(the femal devotees).
- A large number of visitors and even tourists from abroad gather here to enjoy Rasleela in the Rasleela festival.



**Fig-3 A Front view of the Gateway of Garmur Satra**

**A VIEW OF THE VARIOUS TYPES OF MASKS CRAFT OF  
CHAMAGURI SATRA AND SATRIYA DANCE PRACTICED BY  
MONKS OF UTTAR KAMALABARI SATRA**



# PEOPLE OF MAJULI

- Majority of the inhabitants of Majuli are the people belonging to tribal folk mainly Mising, Deuri and Sonowal Kachari the original inhabitant of Majuli migrated here from Arunachal Pradesh centuries ago.
- Apart from them, the Deoris and Sonowal Kacharis are also the original inhabitants of Majuli who entered into languages spoken here Assamese, Mising and Deori.
- The island has twenty three villages with a population of 1, 53,000 with a density of 300 per sqkm.
- The only mode of association to the outside world is through a ferry service which operates only twice a day.
- Despite inherent drawbacks faced by the people of Majuli, modernization has touched this island with the setting up of medical centers, educational institutions and concrete houses which have eliminated the traditional construction with bamboo and mud.

# **MAJULI: PROBLEMS AND POTENTIALITY AS A CULTURAL TOURISM HUB**

- There is tremendous potentiality of Majuli for promoting as well as developing cultural tourism hub. But infrastructural underdevelopment is the main constraint against the development of Majuli as a cultural tourism hub.
- The most serious problem of Majuli is the flood and erosion for which it has not been still able to earn recognition of World Heritage Site. So the Government must take scientific measures to save the island from the natural calamities.
- The proper campaigning of Neo-Vaishnavite culture of the ethnic communities has not been done through publicity and infrastructural development.
- So, it is seen that the recognition of world Heritage site status must have provided to protect, preserve and sustain the religio-cultural heritage and unique and traditional life style of the ethnic communities as well as natural scenic beauty.
- It is really true that there are socio-cultural organizations, local bodies and institutions, Non-Government Organizations(NGO), Majuli Island Protection and Development Council(MIPADC), Majuli Cultural Landscape Management Authority(MCLMA) and several other organizations working for its protection, preservation and development as well as creation of awareness among the people of Majuli and Assam regarding World Heritage Sites status.
- So, the UNESCO is yet to recognize the status of World Heritage Site for Majuli.

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- For the promotion and development of Cultural Tourism or making it as a cultural tourism hub, it is very necessary to get the status of Cultural World Heritage Sites of a particular place, the protection and conservation of its Outstanding Universal Value is prime essential.
- In the case of Majuli, the Outstanding Universal Value of it is certainly the Vaishnavite Satra Institution and Satriya culture and the protection, preservation and conservation with keeping and maintaining its authentic traditional value.
- The Systematic presentation of the ethnic lifestyle and showcasing various cultural components of the Satras and others.
- Publicity of ethnic and Satriya culture through different electronic and print media in national and international level .
- Necessity of both attain the status of Cultural WHS and Promotion and development of Cultural tourism.



**Changghar –the traditional dormitory of the Misings  
of Majuli**

***THE END***