



Prospects of Cultural Tourism in Majuli District of Assam and its Socio-Cultural Impact

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Abstract-

Tourism is an industry, which brings the world together, leads to enrichment of knowledge, exchange of culture and fostering international understanding. Majuli is enriched with numerous attractive diverse cultural resources, which is spread over different areas of the district. It is one of the premier places of the Sattriya culture. In every year a large number of tourists came to Majuli to see Sattras and its Sattriya culture. Micro analysis has been made on the basis of primary data collected from four main Sattras of Majuli viz. Uttar Kamalabari Satra, Auniati Satra, Samaguri Satra and Dakhyinpat Satra. From these four cultural rich places 25 people has been selected randomly from each satra's including tourists and local people involved in cultural activities of the sattras. Finally, 100 people have been surveyed. A structured schedule has been used to collect the necessary information regarding the study. In this study, explorative, historical and analytical methods of research have been used.

Key Words: Cultural tourism, Prospects, Socio-Cultural impact, Majuli.

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I. Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries which can be considered as a measure for development of different places. Generally, Tourism may define as a short term movement of peoples from their original places to other for various purposes. Depending upon of the purposes, there are various forms of tourism viz. cultural tourism, religious tourism, eco-tourism, village tourism, agricultural tourism etc. Cultural tourism is an important part of tourism industry which usually concerned with a country or region's culture, art, architecture, religion, historical background of the place and the people and all other elements that helped shape their way of living. It allows tourists to be immersed in local culture related activities like rituals and festivals. It can be define as a tours of historic sites, cities,

architectural sites, typical religious foods, local music, festivals and cultural performances and all other practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills which recognize the communities and individuals as a part of their cultural heritage. Now a days, cultural tourism is being recognised as an important driver of economic growth and sources of alternative livelihoods and employment in culturally rich areas.

Majuli is one of the premier places of the Sattriya culture. Every year a large number of tourists came to Majuli to see Sattras and its Sattriya culture. Majuli is a popular district of Assam for its hospitality and holds the prestigious recognition of being the largest river island in the world. Originally it was spread over an area of 1250sq km. But due to erosion, its size has reduced gradually. Today it covers a total area of 421.65sq km. From



15th century of Assamese Civilization, Majuli played a vital role in cultural aspects. Every village of Majuli has a 'Namghar' where people host all the important events, festivals, meetings and prayer. Along with this there are 22 Satras in Majuli viz. Auniati Satra, Kamalabari Satra, Uttar Kamalabari Satra, Garmur Satra, Dakhyinpat Satra, Samaguri Satra etc. Satras are the pioneer product of Neo-Vashnavism movement. Sankardeva, the father of Assamese culture and a saint of this movement established the first Satra of Majuli in 15th Century and gradually it becomes a centre of 'Satriya Culture'. For this premier Vaishnavite culture, every year a large number of tourists come to Majuli with the purpose to see the culture of the place.

This paper makes an attempt to explore the potentialities of cultural tourism in Majuli which will help the tourists to visit Majuli to meet their cultural desire. It may help the world's researchers' community to introduce with a unique cultural activity performed only in Majuli district of Assam. It may help to economic and socio-cultural development of the place in near future.

II. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are-

1. To explore the potentialities of cultural tourism in Majuli district of Assam.
2. To find out the socio-cultural impact of cultural tourism on the district.

III. Database and Methodology

The information regarding the present study has been collected from both primary and secondary data. The main sources of secondary data are the book, journal, magazine, data published by department of tourism govt. of Assam, economic survey of Assam etc. Since the study area is Majuli district of Assam, primary data has been collected from four main Satras of Majuli viz. Uttar Kamalabari Satra, Auniati Satra, Samaguri Satra and Dakhyinpat Satra. From those four cultural rich places 25 people has been selected randomly from each satra's including tourists and local people involved in cultural activities of the satras. Finally, 100 people have been surveyed. A structured

schedule has been used to collect the necessary information regarding the study. In this study, explorative, historical and analytical methods of research have been used.

IV. Discussion and Findings

A. Prospects of Cultural tourism in Majuli

All the Satras and Namghara's of Vashnavite culture specially celebrated some festivals and cultural activities in Majuli which attracts tourists from various places of Assam and abroad to Majuli. Some of these festivals are-

a. Rashlila: The festival is celebrated in Rash - Purnima in the Hindu month Kartik (usually 22-24th of November) every year almost in each Satras and villages. It is a creative performing art basically display the life of Lord Krishna. From the birth of him it shows his tending the cows at Gokul with his friends, his killing of demons viz. Putona, Aghashur, Bokashur etc. and his maternal uncle Kansha and finally his colourful dance and play with the Gopis. Acting, dialogue and sound effect of this Lila are awesome. It needed various musical instrument, songs, music, art facts, masks and painting to perform the Rashlila. It attracts tourists from entire Assam and abroad.

b. Paal Nam: At the end of autumn people celebrate Paal-Nam simultaneously in every Satra. It is a religious festival of Vaishnavism. Some satras performs Bhownas at that time. Bhowna is a performing art of Vashnavite culture.

c. Janmastami: People celebrated this festival in "Astomi Tithi" of Hindu month of "Vado". Along with entire Assam, inhabitant of Majuli beliefs this day as the birth day of Lord Krishna. In all the Namghar and Satras, people celebrated this day joyfully. They hosted this with Naam-Kirtan in whole night. Aayoti's (women counterpart of Naam performers) make a doll of Lord Krishna from cloths and alluring this like a little baby.

Besides these, birth and death date of the saints of Vaishnavism viz. Sankardeva and Madhavdeva etc. Along with these festivals most of the Satras keep themselves engaged in creating a holy atmosphere with the help of writings spiritual songs and books, plays etc.

They regularly perform some activities like Naam- Prasang, Charit-path, singing of Bargeet, Geeta-path, Bhagawat-path etc. Some other important cultural activities like Art, Music, Dance, Gayan-Bayan, Mati-Akhora, Naduvangy, Chali Dance, Natua Dance and Mridanga-Oja Pali are exercised in almost every satras of the destination.

A large number of Missing community people are there in the District. Along with this community, Majuli is an inhabitant of various ethnic tribes and groups like Deori, Kasari etc. having their own cultural heritage. Each of these tribes possesses some unique features in its socio-cultural life including customs, religious belief, language, culture, way-of-life, festivals, food habits, songs and dances which are different from others. Most of these people have their own socio-cultural and religious festivals. Songs and dances, display of colourful dresses, tasting of innumerable varieties of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes mark these festivals.

Along with these Vashnavite Festivals, like all other destinations of Assam, peoples of Majuli celebrated some other festivals also. Some important festivals are-

i. Bihu: Bihu is the main folk culture of Assam. It is a part of the agrarian culture of Assam. There are three Bihus-Rongali, Kongali and Bhogali which are celebrated serially in the Hindu month of Boisakh, Kartik and Magha. Rongali is the festival of joy and colours of life. The main purpose of Kongali bihu is to lightening candles in agriculture field. They beliefs that it may save their agree fields from insects. The Bhogali bihu is the festival of eating. People make "Meji" and pray to "Agni Devota" (Lord of fire).

ii. Ali-aye Ligang: Misingtribel people of Majuli celebrate this festival at the first wedness day of Hindu month "falgun". It is the folk culture of this tribe. There are very much rituals related to this festival. Basically it is related to agricultural development. Peoples perform "Gumrag Dance" with the music of "Aoinitom".

Although the main occupation of the area is agriculture, some skilful industries also help to grow the socio- economic condition of Majuli.

These industries also enrich the cultural aspects of the land. Few such cultures are—

- a. **Pottery Making:** In Chinatali and Salmara areas of the land, Kumar Kalita(MOBC) communities involves in pottery making. They make some items like Tekeli, Kalaha, Udhan, Mothia, Nadia, flower tab, Gossa, Anwa-Tekeli etc. As a raw material for these they use some special types of mud known as Kumar- Mati and fire woods. These items of material culture can attract tourists to Majuli.
- b. **Mask Making:** The Samaguri Satra is famous for mask making culture. This can be a brilliant exposure to the tourists from India and abroad. They make masks of some spiritual characters like Hanuman, Jamvowanto, Rawanaetc. These masks are basically used in Bhaonas to make the characters lively. Kayastha Community of the surrounding areas of this Satra involves in this culture.
- c. **Handloom and Weaving:** Almost 90%of tribal women involves in weaving and handloom culture. Non-tribal women also expertise in this culture. The artistic uniqueness, sense of colour mixing in Chadar-Mekhela, Gero, Ribigaseng, Gamosa, Mirizim etc. can attracts tourists from India and abroad.
- d. **Boat Making:** As a flood prone area, Boats are the special item of communication of the land during flood season. The Kumar Kalita Community of Salmara, Bhakats of Kamalabari and Auniati Satra, Mising people of Borgoya are very expert in this skill. Although it is the demand of the land, if it can expand as the item for entertainment, it will attract tourists from various destinations to some extend.



and mats from Tora, Patidoi, Cane etc. and some handicrafts also. It can fulfil their needs of livelihood and can attract tourists also.

B. Socio-Cultural Impact

The term socio-cultural impacts refers to changes of local people's everyday experiences, as well as to their values, way of life and intellectual and artistic products. Here we can find out some of socio-cultural impact made by cultural tourism in Majuli. These are—

- a. **Cultural Exchange:** Cultural tourism increases the interaction between local residents and tourists. Because of this exchange of cultural products and customs may occur. In Majuli, as the outcome of cultural tourism, various foreigners come to the place to learn performing Satriya culture (like- Borgeet, Vouna etc.) and people from Majuli also goes to various foreign tour to perform Satriya culture. A team of Satriya dancer and actors of Uttar Kamalabari Satra went to French to perform 'vouna' in 2018.
- b. **Preservation of cultural Heritage:** The growing industry of cultural tourism in Majuli makes aware the local people and the state and central government to preserve the cultural heritages of the district. In the result of this, Majuli was short listed in the World's Heritages Site (WHS) 'Tentative List' under the cultural category, at the 28th Annual session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC), held at Suzhou, China.
- c. **Economic Development:** Cultural tourism helps to improve the local economy. It increases the demand for historical and cultural exhibition at the place which is a good sign for economic development of the destination. Employment opportunity and the growing market of cultural goods and fooding and loading

business makes the place economically sound and the result of this, the standard of living of the residents is improving. Today, the handloom industry of Majuli is world famous.

- d. **Enhancing Communication:** As a part to facilitate the tourists from abroad, the communication facility of the place is developing. Although, Majuli is a river island and every year the floods of river Brahmaputra affect the place, the communication facility of the place is developing in a very fast manner.

In lieu of these positive impacts, there are some negative impacts too. Because of the growing demand of the tourists, local craftsman have make changes in design of their products to being them more limelight with the new customers taste. It losses the uniqueness and authentication of the products. The crime rates of the place also increasing. In spite of this some negative changes of values and customs and lifestyle also occurs.

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V. Conclusion

The unique Satriya culture of the place, various industries like mask making, handloom, pottery making and the festivals celebrated by various ethnic groups of the place can attracts tourists easily. Although there are some problems also, proper planning and implementation of the plans can creates Majuli as a vibrant place for cultural tourism.

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