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An Aesthetical Study on the Unique Form, Utility and Structural Representation of Masks: With Special Reference to the *Vaisnavite* Monasteries of Assam

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Abstract:

The Mask culture is found in all over the world. The Mask culture of India is one of the most complex and interwoven cultures of the world. Based on different geographical locations, numerous races, languages, religious beliefs and rituals have equally contributed the social structure in creating the unique panorama of the art of Mask making. In North-east India, the Vaisnavite Monasteries or Satras of Assam are the exquisite socio-religious and cultural organizations established in the 16th century by the Vaisnavite Saint, Sankaradeva and the fraternity. The Satras became one of the most influential and revolutionized force in guiding the socio-religious and cultural domain of Assam. In Satra we find the aesthetic effects of the art of mask making derived from the forms and the disposition within the Indian culture. The art of mask making of Assam differs from other states of the India. The aesthetical facets of the unique representation, observation and analyze of the art of mask making of Assam creates interactive discourse among the varied ranges of aesthetic domains. The unique form, utility and representation of masks show the values of spiritual beliefs externally, but internally carry resistance to the elite art practices through its direct communications with the regional folk. Masks stands as a critique to the norms of the so-called cultural stereo types and intolerant abstract spiritual practices by making the art of Mask making and its performance beyond the structure of religion and enhance the act of benefaction towards humanism. The art of mask making of the Satras contributed a lot towards the socio-cultural, religious sphere and are worthy ancient cultural treasures which the Government must conserve and protect.

Keywords: mask, resistance, satra, Vaisnavite

1. Introduction

The Indian culture is anchored on diverge geographical realm, numerous races, languages, religious beliefs, ritual practices and elaborately accumulated social structure that have contributed in creating the unique prospect of visual narratives in miscellaneous art forms. Assam is located in the extreme frontier of the North-East India. The Himalayan ambit of Tibet and Bhutan covers up the northern zone along with Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Arunachal in the vicinage of Burma and of China on the eastern zone and the southern zone and of Bangladesh on the western zone. “Hinduism is the dominant religion in Assam. The three popular forms of Hinduism namely, Saivism, Saktism and Vaisnavism are prevalent here. Neo-Vaisnavism movement gained momentum in Assam in the 15th century” (Neog, 1998). Assam Vaisnavism is transcendent in nature surmounting the Vaisnavite cult persist and practiced throughout India. “It appears that Visnu is the most popular god of the Hindu Traid. Visnu in his various forms is not only worshipped in temples especially set up for him, but he also finds an important place in the Saiva and Sakta shrines” (Barua, 2011). The Vaisnavite monasteries of Assam known as Satra are a unique socio-religious and cultural organizations that are founded, aimed at and united for a definite determination for the welfare of the state. The Satras are established in the 16th century to carry the Bhakti ideals to the people at large, they are the heritage institutions of Assam, and form a radical revolutionized force of social change and in evolution and development of the state. This new religious cult “Ek-Saran-Hari_Naam Dharma” drew its teachings from the ancient Hindu Holy Scriptures focalize on Vaisnavism. (Borkakoti, 2005). This Bhakti cult never aimed to seek or concentrated on attaining Moksha or Nirvana but to dedicate oneself selflessly into Bhakti (Neog, 2011). The four basic principles of Assam Vaisnavism are Deva (Deity), Nama (the prayers), Bhakats (the devotees) and Guru (the mentor). The Satras institutions are unique institution with multidisciplinary socio-religious, cultural, art and architectural domain with its distinctive characteristics, specific organizational set up and ideological valor derived from the Bhakti movement (Borkakoti, 2005). “Vaisnavism has come into contact with the cultures of different societies in the course of its historical developments. In Assam it has faced with a definite culture, and therefore, in this State it has taken a special form” (Baruah, 2014).

1.1. Background of the Vaisnavite Monasteries or Satras of Assam

The Assamese culture is dated around more than two thousand years old with an acculturation of diverse and compiled up socio-cultural and religious population. Assamese culture is developed during the first millennium AD, under the great dynasties of *Pragjyotisha-Kamrupa*. “The modern name of the province, Assam, is actually of quite recent origin. It is connected with the Shan invaders who entered the Brahmaputra Valley in the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D., and who were known as Ahoms” (Barua, 2011). It is developed due to acculturation and immersion of different ethno-cultural groups under various socio-political systems in different periods of history (Gait, 2013). In the last part of 15th century, a socio-religious and cultural movement embroiled the entire Assamese society, under the leadership of the great *Vaisnavite* Saint, *Srimanta Sankardeva*. The *Vaisnavite* period in Assam, started in the last quarter of the 15th century and attained its supremacy during the 16th and 17th centuries (Datta, 2012). The concept of *Vaisnavism* and its ramifications is one of the prominent subject matter of the Hindu religious domain of India (Desai, 1973). *Vaisnavite* movement is a kind of Renaissance in Assam that re-created an era of socio-cultural domain, humanitarian in content and popular in form, in literature as well as in visual arts. The movement was circumstantial in nature and revolutionary in terms of its impingement. It is not established on rigid, abstract, cognitive excursive logic but it underscore to a greater extent on social reform, spiritual uplift and ethnic consolidation through a cosmopolitan modality of sacred conduct based on indigenous elements of the region. It was revolutionary in the sense that *Vaisnavism* in Assam meant not only a religious faith but a way of life (Borkakoti, 2005). To preach his new religion ‘*Eka Saran Hari Naam Dharma*’, *Sankardeva* travelled through the entire length and breadth of Assam and founded the *Vaisnavite* monasteries known as *Satras*, along with prayer hall or *Namghar* and that was the beginning of *Satra* institutions in Assam. The term *Satra* is derived from Sanskrit and it has two significations.

- “firstly in the sense of an alms-house or charitable institution and secondly in the sense of a sacrificial session lasting for several days or more. The latter sense is responsible in lending the nomenclature to the *Vaisnavite* institution of Assam...The fact that a sacrifice called *sattra* proceeded concurrently with the act of expounding the *Bhagavata* easily led people to think that *sattra* and an assembly of devotees listening to the exposition of the *Bhagavata* are identical” (Sarma, 2001).

The *Satras* preaches the *Vaisnavism*, one of the *Bhakti* cults of India in terms of its specific and innovative character that shared values of fraternity, equality, humanism and democracy to create an egalitarian civil society.

- “*Vaisnavism* ordinarily relates to Lord Vishnu. Single-minded devotion to Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu is the spirit of *Vaisnavism*. Devotion to the Lord may find expression in different forms. By and large there are nine ways of this devotional expression. They are *sravana* (hearing), *kirtana* (chanting), *smarana* (remembering), *archana* (prayer), *padasevana* (serving the golden feet of the Lord), *dashya* (sevility), *sakhittya* (friendship), *bandana* (praising) and *atmanivedana* (total surrender of self to the Lord). These nine expressions are described as *Nababidha Bhakti* (i.e., nine categories of devotion or *bhakti*). *Bhakti* may express itself in any of the nine forms” (Pathak, 2012).

The *Satras* solely believe of taking refuge with the one and only God, *Visnu*. The *Satra* organizations are accessible to all the individuals regarding birth, sex, religion, caste or creed. There are no rigid practices and concrete theocratic norms followed by the *Satra* and its fraternity. There is no Idol worship and sacrificial ritual in the *Satra* institutional domain (Neog, 1998).

- “These images are mental and not physical representations. It resembles the knowledge given to us in mental idols. *Vaisnavites* agree that the knowledge of God can adequately be represented through any idea. These ideas are expressed in words. They do not seek God in pure silence; their voice is not soundless” (Baruah, 2014)

2. Developments of the Various Art Forms at the Vaisnavite Monasteries

- The spiritual generation of the *Bhakti* movement led to up rise of the new faith “*Ek-Saran-Hari-Nam Dharma*” in the *Vaisnavite* Monasteries or *Satras* of Assam, rooted with the evolution and development of socio-cultural and spiritual blossoming in a new domain. “It should be noted that the *satras* work both as seats of religious learning and residential schools...Besides religious education and monastic practices, the *bhakats* are engaged in secular learning such as cultivation of arts and crafts. Since converts are drawn mainly from the villages, they naturally bring with them the skill and technique of their village crafts” (Barua, 2009).

It also cultivated and focused around the progression of the various facets of art forms along with architectural forms in the aesthetical sphere. In the development of the various art forms at the *Satras*, architectural development also got compiled with it. The aesthetical forms of art and architecture represented and reacted as the visual narratives of the *Satra* institutions. There are various facets of art forms developed and practiced in the *Satras*, notably the art of mask making, mask performance, manuscript paintings, wood carving, and many more. The unique art forms and with its exquisite detailed account in the *Satras* captivated and delighted the mind of the Kings, nobles, and devotees as well. In the art forms there are numerous stylistic features, unique motifs, highly decorative, precisely arrangement compositions, particularized characters, varied ranges of colour, secular and religious themes (Neog, 1998).

- “The western absolutism holds that absolutism is possible at the philosophical level only, not at the religious level. But *Vaisnavism* has proved that it is possible at the religious level also. It is more so in Assam *Vaisnavism* as in it we have the concept of *Brahman* (the western absolute) which comprises the content of God. Thus it has risen above the theistic religion and, therefore, it has the capability to welcome them to its fold” (Baruah, 2014).

Consequently, the art and architectural development begin in the *Satras* in order to preach *Vaisnavite* religious cults education and ethics. These religious institutions also acted as residential school for the learning and welfare of the common people. Among the varied art practices in the *Satra*, the art of mask making is most remarkable and it has acclaimed national as well as international acknowledgements. Presently in Assam the Mask Artistry is noteworthy in the following *Satras* namely *Khatpar Satra* of Sivasagar,

BagiAaiAlengi Satra of Titabar, *Natun Samaguri Satra* and *NarasimhaAlengi Satra* of Majuli. Out of these art forms, these *Satras*, *Khatpar Satra* and *Natun Samaguri Satra* holds much acknowledgements of carrying the hundred and hundred years old traditions of Assam's unique art of creating masks. The art of mask making of Assam differs in every sphere of its form, content, coherence, expression and consistency. These *Satras* has earned the credentials in both the national as well as in the international backgrounds by dint of the art of mask making and mask performance.

3. Evolutions and Development of Mask Culture in the Vaisnavite Monasteries

Mask culture is found in all over the world. The art of mask making is as old as the evolution and development of the human civilization. The masks hold a remarkable significance in the socio-cultural and religious domain. Since ancient times, mask and its uses are compiled, interrelated and are totally inseparable with the human civilization.

- “The circumstances under which masks were worn or exhibited- funerary bundles, deity impersonators, warriors, court entertainers, during ceremonies or displayed as tribute – combined religious and political significance. Pictorial conventions of representing masked persons that enable both the natural face and mask to be seen, the use of mouth masks, and the greater popularity of head- dresses and face paint, suggest they were meant to allude to the co-existence of multiple human, natural and supernatural qualities within the same body” (Shelton, 1996).

The art of masks hold deep significance in the socio-cultural cognitive and perspective since the primitive period masks were used as disguise in stalking prey, to ward off evils and to ensure a good harvest. Mask is an intact and intrinsically distinguishing feature of every civilization of world with its own way of conveying according to its tradition. It is believed the Masks possess supernatural power as well as metaphysical power. “Masks symbolised the complex coexistence of ‘faces’ possible in the human physiognomy” (Shelton, 1996). India is affluent in the elegant panorama of the art of mask making prevalent and practiced in its various provinces. Masks are also associated with different mask performances varying on the different regions, religions, culture, customs and beliefs. Mask is an exquisite form of art and a unique creation of man that traces its roots thought provoking history of evolution of the human kind. Masks are realistic expressions which are used in a natural form of camouflage. “Meaning and the communication of meaning, may derive from apparently prosaic materials and ordinary actions, yet outsiders may still perceive the mask as the central feature of ceremonialism” (King, 1996). It transforms the natural phenomenon to that of culture phenomenon. A mask can create each and every concerned emotion. Masks have complex existence in the socio-cultural as well as religious domain of different societies and have been used for different purposes. Masks used in the socio-religious ramifications are quite intricate. “Religious festivals a not frozen or static traditions. They have incorporated masquerades influenced by historical events and foreign beliefs” (Shelton, 1996) In the Northeastern part of India, i.e., Assam the art of creating mask or “*Mukha*” has evolved and developed at the *Satras* with the evolution and development of the *Vaisnavite* cult. The establishment of *Satras* at different places of the state led to the growth and development of the facets of various art forms (Neog, 1998). The *Satras* art of mask making is based on peculiar traditional Assamese domestic hub. However, the *Satras* creative art of mask making has developed with its own symbolism and icon with a twosome of religious discourses in the background, supported by its unique style, decorative details, different motifs and unique structural representation formed as a part of these discourses.

- “Shankardeva is the one who started this mask making tradition in Assam and popularizing their use in religious plays, dance and drama. The religion he preached ‘Ek-Saran-Hari-Naam Dharma’ at the *Satras* continues to flourish and sustain his legacy” (Borkakoti, 2005).

The universe of the mask associated with the *Satra* institutions is the world of imagination. Masks in the *Satra* are included in the ceremonies and festivals which have social and religious significance, and also are used in the plays of dance and drama. Masks in the *Satras* have been designed in innumerable varieties from a good number of materials available in the environment. The materials used such as bamboo, cow dung, potters mud (black clay), cane, wood, cotton cloth, natural dyes and natural gum from trees to create the masks (Neog, 1998). Masks are generally worn as a costume in the mask performance and the costume covers up the entire body of the performer. Masks in the *Satras* are mostly used for religious as well as ritualistic practices of the *Ankiya Naat* or *Mukha Bhaona*, the Neo-*Vaisnava* theatre (Neog, 1998). “Masks, like myths, use the illusion of metaphor/imagery as a primary way of expressing and examining ultimate mysteries inherent in the human conditions” (Bell, 2010).

3.1. Classification of the Vaisnavite Masks

The traditional mask makers still consider the metaphorical aspects of myth, either by consciously or subliminally as a way of evoking the inner spirit of mask. Masks have traced their existence since the very beginning of the mythology (Bell, 2010). “The elemental forces of our unconscious (subliminal) desires and fears found in masks and mythic stories are the basis of all art” (Bell, 2010). Based on the usability, the masks are classified into three classifications:

(i) *Mukh Mukha* (Figure 1) *Mukh Mukha* literally means “Face mask”. It covers the face along with the head.



Figure 1: Mukh Mukha (courtesy: Khatpar Satra, Sivasagar)

(ii) *Bor Mukha* (Figure 2 & 3) *Bor Mukha* literally means “Big Mask”. It covers the entire body or sometimes upper portion of the body. These masks are not at all flexible in character and there are no moveable parts included. They masks are opposite to *Lutukori Mukha*.



Figure 2: Bor Mukha (upper portion)
(courtesy: Natun Samaguri Satra, Majuli)



Figure 3: Bor Mukha (entire body)
(courtesy: Khatpar Satra, Sivasagar)

(iii) *Lutukori Mukha* (Figure 4), covers the full body of the performer and is very flexible in nature. Its body parts representing hands, beaks, eyes, jaws, wings, etc. are quite moveable.



Figure 4: Lutukori Mukha
(courtesy: Khatpar Satra, Sivasagar)

Masks in the *Satras* are mostly used for religious as well as ritualistic practices of the *Bhaona* or *AnkiyaNaat*, the *Vaisnavite* theatre. The traditional process of masks is to create it from natural ingredients provided by nature. “*Effigies and masks were probably in use in Assam, especially in popular dancing, prior to the introduction of the dramas by Sankaradeva.... Cihnyatra, produced by Sankaradeva and his companions, where mask was worn by Garuda, the vehicle of Visnu. The variety of masks that are used in Assamese bhawana, may be classified into three types, (i) those representing grotesque forms or hideous persons, such as Ravana, theking of the Raksasas; Kumbhakarna, his brother; Yama, the god of death; Hanuman, the lord of monkeys; (ii) secondly, the different animals Garuda, Kaliya-sepent, boar,monkeys, Jatayu-bird and such actors; (iii) lastly, the comic forms of the buffoons and the jesters*” (Barua, 2009). According to the character they are portrayed in different size, shape and colour. The *Bor Mukha* and *Lutukori Mukha* stand above 13 feet high and a *Mukh Mukha* generally stands 3 to 4 feet high. “*Future generations of mask makers and performance artists for stage and screen should take advantage of the collective wisdom of the ancestors which traditional mask makers manage to represent with such clarity*”(Bell, 2010).

3.1.1. The Traditional Process of Creatingthe *Vaisnavite* Masks

The *Vaisnavite Satras* of Assam holds the credit of carrying the years old Assamese traditional art of mask making and has attained the credentials in both the national as well as in the international levels by dint of mask making and mask performance. The traditional process of Assamese mask making requires the organic fundamental ingredients such as bamboo, cane, potters clay (sticky soil), handmade tools, *Gobar* (cow dung), cotton or jute cloth, natural dyes or synthetic enamel paints, etc. “*The creative process and techniques of traditional mask makers vividly remind us of how we have traditionally defined the essential theatre experience*” (Bell, 2010). There are various bamboo species found in Assam but only two kinds of bamboos namely *jati bah* and *bijuli bah* are used in the traditional mask making process. A bamboo shoot between the ages of two to three years is used to trim out thick strips. These thick trimmed out strips are called *Kathis*. In the primary stage, these thick trimmed out strips are precisely woven into a hexagonal pattern using six individual *kathis*. Then latter this pattern is continued to be woven, and after a laborious process of twisting and turning in a desired shape is accomplished with the three dimensional sculptural characteristics of the *hoja* or the skeleton of the mask. As the basement of mask is constituted with a three dimensional sculptural character of a bamboo skeleton, then the next step to proceed is to continue and cover the mask with small pieces of cotton cloth or jute cloth dipped in a solution of mud (potters clay) mixed with the accurate amount of water. This toilsome activity produced the skin on the bamboo skeleton. Then cow dung or *Gobar* is mixed with lime stone powder or kerosene (in order to prevent from fungus and other damaged issues) and again is entirely mixed to form a fine paste that is applied on the skin of the bamboo skeleton in order to clearly define the body parts or organs. The cow dung applied should be of a calf aged four to five years old totally feeding on grass. As a result of this, the produced cow dung creates a natural an adhesive and gets stickier in nature, which helps in better shaping the mask. Thus the basic layer of the mask is formed and then the facial characteristics are carefully shaped with the handmade tools prepared at the *Satras*. Then it is carefully semi dried in the sun and again worked on, finally to give it a finishing touch to the facial characteristics. Later on it is completely dried up and holes are made with a heated iron rode, in order to breadth through nose and to see through eyes. “*The traditional mask maker typically relies on training or inspiration handed down by earlier generations and can still perpetuate the ancient call of his community’s mask in its diverse forms*” (Bell, 2010). Once again, a second layer of cotton or jute cloth dipped in mud mixed with some water solution is applied to strengthen and captivate the strongly shaped facial characteristics with correct gestures. Finally giving a finishing touch with handmade tools and is dried in the sun and then painted well. In ancient times pure organic dyes are used, such as *Hengul* (red), *Haital* (yellow), *Khorimati*, etc. The Black colour is obtained by burning gourd shells and later on the utility of lamp black came into being. Extracting different colours was quite time consuming, that may take week to months. So, now-a-days synthetic enamel paints are used as they are easy to be obtained (Neog 2008). However, scarcity of natural ingredients is also one of the major causes to adopt synthetic enamel paints.

4. The Unique Form, Utility and Structural Representation of the *Vaisnavite* Masks or *Mukha*

The *Vaisnavite* Masks has a unique form, utility and an exquisite structural representation in the form of Mask performance or *Mukha Bhaona*. The Mask, which is generally an elegant form of craft become an important object of art in narrating the ideas of visual arts of the Mask performance. Mask or *Mukha* metamorphosed itself into an object of utility, ethnicity, sociological as well as a psychological factor. The evolution and origin of the representation of masks itself provokes the evolution of human being. Since the ancient times the masks transform the natural aspect into sociological aspect and in turn transforms into cultural aspect. The utility of masks can be classified into socio-religious sphere, theatrical performance, decorative realm, as well as festive and funerary purpose. The form and structural representation of masks covers a wide range of frame work compiling universal emotions. The form and utility of masks reflect an immense reaction, emotion and presents idea to the spectators while visualizing it in the structural representation of mask performance. It ensures the spectators of the reality of emotion. Masks in the *Satras* are mostly used for religious as well as ritualistic practices of the *Bhaona* (when performed by wearing masks known as *Mukha Bhaona*) or *Ankiya Naat*. Masks are generally worn as a costume in the mask performance and the costume covers up the entire body of the performer.

- “These are generally meant to represent such unusual appearances as the ten heads of Ravana, the four heads of Brahma, the bird-like face of Garuda, and so on. Ravana sometimes has to put on a large mask with ten heads and twenty or even a hundred hands. Other Raksasas, such as Subahu and Marica in the Rama-vijaya, put on similarly grotesque masks. In some monastic circles up till recent times, nobody without a masque could represent kings: and rows of ready-made masks with names attached to them were kept in store-rooms of *Satras*” (Neog, 1998). The three different categories of Masks are used

in the Mask performance. "To make them light in weight and make movements easy with them on, life-sizes or huge masks are made out of bamboo splinter-bars and cloth. The buffoons wear small masks prepared from clay, cloth, rough paper and bark of trees; bark of plaitain tree is also used to serve temporary purpose. Head-dress and upper masks, i.e. masks for head and face, are carved out of wood and of hard bark-sheet" (Barua, 2009).

The origin of the *Vaisnavite* theatre or *Bhaona* traces its roots since the creation of dramatic narratives of *Deodhani Nritya*, *Putala Nach* and *Oja-Pali* in ancient Assam (Barua, 2009). Among them *Oja-Pali* was the most popular and even today it prevails in Assam. *Oja-Pali* is an ancient folk performance of Assam where the *Oja* is the leader that narrates and *Palis* are the assistants that assists him. This art form has many similarities with the *Vaisnavite* Theatre or *Bhaona*. *Oja-Palis* performed with various narrative lyrical-rhythmic and dramatic interludes that depict the stories of the *Vaisnavite* Holy Scripture. "It is crystal clear that the major semi dramatic asset of Assamese folk culture which was taken by Sankardeva for the creation of his new theatre is the *Oja-Pali* function of Assam which was widely practiced during his time. It is once again repeated that this one is the main function through which the Saint got the inspiration for innovation of his theatre" (Bhuyan, 2014). Therefore, the *Vaisnavite* Saint organized the dramatic performance known as *Cihna-Yatra*, which later on developed into lyrical-rhythmic, dance and drama performance *Ankiya Naat* or *Bhaona*. He then transformed, metamorphosed and constituted this concept of *Oja-Pali* into an innovative and exquisite lyrical-rhythmic, dance and drama form of visual narrative in the *Ankiya Naat* or *Bhaona*. The plays of *Bhaona* are written with a mode of religious conduct and motive rather than secular entertainment. They are hosted in the prayer hall or the *Namghar*, facing the *Manikut*, where the main deity resides. The *Bhaonas* are infrequent held in auspicious occasions like *Jamnastami*, *Rasa-purnima*, *Dol-yatra*, *Nandotsava* and also on *Vaisnavite* Saints divine accounts. "Ankiya Naat is a generic term in Assamese and means dramatic compositions in a single act depicting the articles of *Vaisnava* faith" (Barua, 2009). The thematic review of *Mukha Bhaona* is mostly derived from the Holy Scripture. The characters in the performed in the *Mukha Bhaona* are limited; they are confined to certain limits. In *Mukha Bhaona*, the characters play at a rhythmic space from the very beginning to the end, with special *mudra*'s or gestures, following certain norms of appropriate dance step (Barua 2009). Another remarkable feature of *Mukha Bhaona* is the expressive lyrical nature that gives an overwhelming notion. "In these plays through a plethora of songs and verses the playwrights underline the message of the play with more of passion than of logic. Many situations and incidents are suggested by mere machinery of descriptive verses uttered by the *Sutradhar* instead of being represented through action and character" (Barua 2009).

Besides the performance part, the performers also have some special type of costumes. These costumes are preserved in the custody of *Khanikar* or painter in charge of creating these artifacts. He even prepares the different types of masks used in the performance. But earlier, natural dyes such as *Hengul*, *Haital*, *Khorimati* are used but now are reduced to enamel paints supplied in the market. He provides arrangements for the inevitable costumes required in different performances, also along with that he prepares necessary equipment's used in the performance by the actors such as sword, shield, bow, arrow, discs, spear etc (Barua, 2009).

5. Conclusion

The present research is based on both historical as well as observational research. The *Vaisnavite* renaissance concealed the socio-cultural as well as the spiritual domain. It has contributed a lot towards the prosperity of the Assamese society. The *Satra* and its art forms is the significant monumental colossal of socio-cultural and religious domain that should be treasured. The Government must make a detailed inspection and measures on the preservation and protection of these worthy ancient treasures. Along with the other art various forms of visual narratives it must be secularized. The art of mask making is confined to the walls of *Satra* culture. It is not academically explored and there are lots of aesthetical and philosophical realms of this art form that are yet to be acquired and explored. The art of mask making can be considered as an important form of medium that records, gathers data both of past and present, to its outmost level as a form of aesthetical visual narrative. Also, the aesthetical visual narratives performed by wearing mask shows the values of religious beliefs externally, but it carries an internal resistance to the elite art practices through its direct communication with the regional folk. The aesthetical study on the masks unique forms, utility and structural representations resists the hierarchical practices of mainstream arts and has challenged the occupation of galleries over the visual psyche of the common people. The intention of the aesthetical forms, its utility and structural representation is also to search in conventional medium against such stereotype, high/low art or classical art which is generally practiced in the urban culture. The traditional practice of masks stands as a critique to the norms of the so-called cultural stereo types and rigid spiritual facet by making performance beyond the structure of religion and enhance the benefaction of humanism. Above all, the visual narratives of masks are based on constituents of cultural aspects of the *Satra* organizations and therefore they should be conserved and protected.

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