

THE MASK AND VAISHNAVISM: A STUDY ON THE MASK MAKING TRADITION IN A VAISHNAVITE MONASTERY OF MAJULI ISLAND, ASSAM

Arifur Zaman

Abstract: The mask is a painted or engraved piece of an object generally worn over the face to disguise one's identity and to reveal another being. Mask transforms something from natural to cultural trait. Majuli, the river island district is the main Vaishnavite sheet of Assam which has a thought-provoking heritage of mask making. Majuli is the main abode of the Satra (the Vaishnavite monastery) institution of Assam's Vaishnavism that is not only the place of spreading of Vaishnavite religion but is the soul center of education, culture, and art in the life of the people of Majuli and Assam. Mask is an integral cultural trait of the satras of Majuli which is related to the Vaishnavite religion of Assam. Both the monastery (satra) and the mask have had a thought-provoking heritage since their inception. The Natun Chamaguri Satra is one of the major Vaishnavite monasteries of the Majuli islands and is a living embodiment of medieval Assamese heritage and culture. This satra is the main nerve center of the Vaishnavite mask-making and this heritage is still preserved in this esteemed monastery. It has had a tremendous impact on the socio-religious and cultural life of the people of Assam since its inception. Natun Chamaguri Satra has survived with all its dignity and influence with that pristine craft for more than three hundred years and this indigenous craft has been playing a major role in attracting tourists from different parts of the world since earlier times. In this present endeavour, an attempt has been made to discuss the different facets of the rich Vaishnavite mask culture of Majuli and also its potential to stand as one of the world's cultural heritage sites for mass tourism to this remote part of the land.

Keywords: Mask, Vaishnavism, heritage, Majuli, Natun Chamaguri Satra.

INTRODUCTION

Mask, a type of disguise, is commonly an object worn over or in front of the face to hide the identity of the wearer. The features of the mask not only conceal those of the wearer but also project the image of another personality or being. This dual function is a basic characteristic of the mask (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1991: 910). A mask is a painted or engraved piece of an object generally worn over the face to hide one's identity and to reveal another man, animal, mythological creature, etc. Hiding one's identity and revealing as another being is the inevitable feature of the mask. Conrad (1967: 253) said 'Perhaps the best known of all magically related primitive art forms are masks. These always mysterious, often wild, and ferocious-looking creations have captured the imagination of civilized men everywhere. The term mask may be defined in many ways and contextualized in as many also. Since time immemorial masks have been an integral part of human societies, especially in the ritual context. From a religious function of the mask to the related carnival one the wearer is allowed to transport themselves to the distant realm of fantasy,

Dr. Arifur Zaman, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam; Email: arifurzaman@gmail.com

expressed differently in varied traditional socio-cultural contexts (Malik, 2001: 50). Zaman (2015: 1) mentioned 'Masks are artificial faces worn for disguise, generally to assume and to frighten. They are often worn to conceal feelings and also as coverings to hide or protect the faces. They may be carved, moulded, or even woven objects, which are worn over the face or in the head. Sometimes a mask may also be life-sized'. Mask transforms something from natural aspects to that of culture. It is usually worn over or in front of the face; sometimes however a mask covers almost the whole body of the wearer. A mask hides the identity of a person and helps to reveal the identity of another being. 'If the face is masked it becomes another face. The body too becomes another body because it feels that a new being flows in from the mask. That 'being' seizes upon the body and transforms it so that there is no inconsistency between the new face and the new body. Thus masks act as an instrument of metamorphosis, especially when the mind is as impressionable as that of a primitive man' (Pani: 1986:1). These inevitable characteristics of hiding and revealing personalities and moods are indispensable to all the masks found in different parts of the world. Usually, masks are worn to express ferocity and other feelings which are not possible to express by human beings through bare faces. Masks are generally worn with a costume; sometimes such a costume is so complete that it covers the entire body of the wearer.

Monte (1969:9) writes ' The mask does not depict a single emotion at a particular time, it is not a portrait of a man who fears, who fights or who dies; it is a symbol of fear, war, and death '. Mask is a form of art. It is an aesthetic creation of man and it has a thought-provoking history of evolution. In human society, there are generally two specific features of masks. The morphological features of the mask are derived from natural forms. Masks that possess human features are known as anthropomorphic and those with animal features are known as theriomorphic. Some of the masks closely resemble real objects while some others are made on the basis of imagination. Usually, masks represent demons and deities, ancestors, animals, imagined figures, etc. Among the uses of masks socio-religious, festive, theatrical, funerary and commemorative, therapeutic, etc. are very common.

In each society, there is pristine permission and prohibition integral to facial expressions. In all cultures, keen attention has been paid to training the members about facial expression according to the context. Some of the facial expressions are taken as signs of vulgarity and bad manners of a person. The facial expressions tabooed in different environments of culture are also depicted through the masks made by the members of that society. This proves that masks are the medium through which one can express such feelings which do not have the social sanction. In most societies, tradition restricts the imagination of a mask maker, and he is not allowed to make a mask ignoring the pristine code. There are many tales about the harassment by demons and deities of the mask maker for creating a mask ignoring the traditional strictures. Moreover, such masks create displeasure amongst fellow

members of society. It should be noted that in almost all societies, mask making is a male job. In Assam, although it is not taboo for the woman, yet all the mask makers of the state are males only. A mask maker creates a mask within the traditional framework; the spectators of the society can explain every feature of a mask because they are also acquainted with the norms and values of the society. While wearing a mask, it is believed that the person feels the presence of the demon or deity who lives in the mask, in his body and heart. Some of the masks are greatly revered by the people and an only pious and good man is allowed to wear such masks. A paramount role of the mask is to provide the change of the age of the demon or the deity and to correlate it with the present time. The spectators of a particular society can easily identify the different masks, and the gestures and postures of the wearer because they are the bearers of the same culture. A mask can create pleasure and gaiety; however, most of the masks create fear, anguish, and death.

Masks have intricate existence in the socio-cultural matrix of different societies and have been used for different purposes, among which socio-religious uses are overwhelming. The universe of the mask is the world of imagination. In some of the backward societies and also in some comparatively progressive societies masks are mainly associated with ceremonies and festivals which have social and religious significance. Masks are also used with funerary rituals, to cure disease and ailments, infertility rights, and so on. The use of masks in performing arts like in-play dance drama, etc., is very common in a good number of societies. 'Different communities of the world with their varied cultural patterns offer a rich field of research on masks. However, social scientists have not shown any inclination in studying masks from the distant past. Scientific studies on masks are of very recent origin' (Zaman: 2015: 27). Initially, masks were studied as integral components of the material culture of different societies where masks have a conspicuous entity in the social, cultural, and religious life. Apart from its socio-cultural importance and its distribution, systematic studies on it are scanty and rare. Material cultures of various communities have attracted many scholars and in their studies, many of them have included masks as an important trait. In depth studies on mask in cross cultural perspectives have been conducted by scholars like Adam (1942), Dey and Irwin (1947), Underwood (1948), Elwin (1951; 1959; 1964; 1969), Trowell (1953), Dhaninivat and Yupho (1954), Boas (1955), Christensen (1955), Cordwell (1959), Khoker (1959; 1981; 1986; 1989), Neog (1959), Leuzinger (1960; 1967), McCune (1962), Coomaraswamy (1965), Bowra (1966), Devi (1966), Conrad (1967), Woldering (1967), Anand (1968), Kothari (1968; 1979), Leiris and Delange (1968), Osborne (1968), Pani (1968; 1969), Bondi et al. (1969), Biebuyck (1969), Monte (1969), Ambesi (1970), Duerden (1970), Sannes (1970), Singh (1970; 1971), Wassing's (1970), Laude (1971), Bhattacharyya (1972), Furer-Haimendorf (1972), Deo (1973), Bhavnani (1974), Chattopadhyay (1976; 1985), Delange (1974), Paine (1974), William (1974), Locke and Savill (1976), Gillison (1977; 1983),

Adams (1979), Gillon (1979), Pannikar (1979), Aubert (1980), Behague (1980), Brauen (1980), McDowell (1980), Kothari (1980), Vatsyayan (1980; 1987), Iteanu (1981), Bonnefoy (1981), Macdonald (1981), Emigh (1981), Ojo (1981), Banerji (1982), Piggott (1982), Ambrose (1983), Levi- Strauss's (1983), Nichol森 (1983), Roy (1984-85), Grund (1985a; 1985b), Saraf (1985), Keay (1986), Napier (1986), Pani (1986), Fenton (1987), Ions (1987), Bancroft-Hunt (1988), Massey and Massey (1989), Eyo (1990), Fagg (1990), Amartya's (1991), Aryan (1991), Burfank (1991), Campbell (1991), Gargi's (1991), Hersey (1991), Pal (1991), Baker (1992), Heppell (1992), Mark (1992), Miettinen (1992), Aryan (1993), Kerachache et al. (1993), Nooter (1993), Kerachache et al. (1993), Rajakaruna (1993), Venu (1993), Vidyarathi (1993), Feest (1994), Fischer (1994), Sen (1994), Sharer (1994), Warren and Tettoni (1994), Lechuga and Chole (1994), Mack (1994), Wyatt (1994), Ben-Amos (1995), Emigh (1996), Konishi (1997), Patnaik (1997), Chandavij and Pramualratna (1998), Chatterjee (1998), Pate (1998), Vergati (1999), Barbier (2000), Mask Tradition of India (2000), Goswami (2001), Mahanta (2001), Medhi (2003), Medhi and Zaman (2004), Medhi (2006; 2007), Zaman (2015), et.al. In this present endeavour an attempt has been made to study the Vaishnavite mask-making tradition of River Island Majuli with special references to the Natun Chamaguri Satra of Majuli, the stalwart, and main mask-making satra of Assam.

MAJULI ISLAND – THE STUDY AREA

Majuli is the embodiment of the socio-economic and cultural awakening of Assam and is known for the visit of Sankaradeva in the early sixteenth century. Majuli is a riverine island District situated in the upper reaches of the river Brahmaputra in upper Assam within the latitude of 26°45' North to 27°12' North and longitude of 93°39' East to 94°35' East, with a mean height of 84.5 meters above maximum sea level. Though due to the relentless erosion the area of Majuli has changed frequently, at present (2011 census) total area of the island is 340 sq ml. Majuli has a population of 1.6 lakh, the majority being tribal, with tremendous potential for spiritual and eco-tourism. In the sixteenth century, Sankaradeva took shelter in Majuli and spent a couple of years at Dhuvahat Belguri in west Majuli which was a place of historic and auspicious glory. Sankaradeva had established the first satra at Belguri of Majuli. In Majuli, he initiated his principal apostle Madhavadeva. During the heyday of Sankaradeva there were 65 *satras*, however, at present, there are only 22 *satras* which only four have a glorious tradition of mask making. These are: Alengi Narasinha Satra, Bihimpur Satra, Chamaguri Satra and Natun Chamaguri Satra. The Chamaguri Satra is situated at a distance of around 8 km. in the southern direction of Majuli Police Station. This satra was established by Chakrapani, the son of Sankaradeva's great-granddaughter Keshavapriya, in the year 1663. Segmentation of the satra is a well-known fact. In the year 1923, a section of the bards integral to the Chamaguri Satra bifurcated from the original satra and had established the

Natun Chamaguri Satra. Both the satras, Chamaguri and Natun Chamaguri, have resourced with the notable skill of mask making.

Majuli has a praiseworthy tradition of mask making. The primary occupation of the people of Majuli is agriculture and they are all bound to the wheel of agricultural works. The other works like basketry, boat making, domestication of animals, etc., are more or less obligated to them. Therefore, nobody intended wholeheartedly to obey the voice and to learn the skill of mask making. They also thought that they would get only a split from bamboo and a basket only from a bamboo grove. During that period baskets and such articles are not commodities for sale in the market. Hand fan (*bichani*), different type of baskets like *pachi*, *kharahi*, *tom*, etc. , are made by the persons who know the skill, and generally, such articles were taken by the co-villagers without giving any money to the maker. Owing to such a situation the people of Majuli had not shown any inclination towards learning the new craft.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The present research endeavour tries to examine the following:

- (i) The cultural significance of the mask;
- (ii) The mask-making process at the study area;
- (iii) The types of the mask at Majuli;
- (iv) The mask-making tradition;
- (v) The beliefs and customs associated with the mask;
- (vi) The status of mask makers.

Realizing the socio-cultural potentialities of mask, that living traditions of the satras of Majuli, this work has been undertaken for systematic study. This study is exploratory in nature and aims at examining this rich and long tradition of the mask, and certain other associated aspects of it. The basic ethnographic data on which the study is based was collected from the Natun Chamaguri Satra of Majuli, which is highly acclaimed by the people, academicians, and scholars. This present research is the result of nearly four years of empirical research work from mid- 2017 to mid-2021 at the Natun Chamaguri Satra. It was felt that the fieldwork confined in one satra may have certain shortcomings, and therefore, the Alengi Narasimha Satra, the Bihimpur Satra, and the Prachin Chamaguri Satra, which also have a praiseworthy tradition of mask making, are also taken into account. A schedule of intensive inquiries was taken up to learn about the mask-making process, the status of mask makers' uses of masks, etc., from selected informants. In addition to these schedules, the qualitative data have been collected through anthropological field methods, viz., non-participant and participant observation, unstructured interviews, case study method, etc. Moreover, this investigator has visited different houses of the Natun Chamaguri village, attended a good number of satra and household level ceremonies and festivals, took part in formal and informal level meetings, and had

ample opportunities to gather information through informal chats with the people.

Whenever necessary, the data obtained through one technique and/or from one informant was cross-checked through alternatives and/or other informants. To have a clear-cut idea of the tradition of masks at Majuli, most of the data have been collected at the aforesaid four *satras*, where mask making is a living tradition. The rest of the *satras* of Majuli, which do not have the tradition of mask making, however, use masks in ritualistic theatrical performances. Some of the *satras* which collect masks from the Natun Chamaguri Satra were also visited to know about the linkages of the study *satra* and the other *satras*. Some of the reputed scholars, artists, and academicians, are also interviewed to know about the tradition, potentiality, and continuity of mask making in the study area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Cultural Significance of Mask

Mask is an integral trait of each civilization of the world. The masks hold deep significance in the socio-cultural study of a community that has a tradition of mask making. In Assam also there is a rich heritage of masks and it is an indispensable element of the *satras*. 'A wave of a renaissance in the universe of religion and society swept over Assam during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Sankaradeva (1449-1569 AD) was the initiator of this movement known as the Neo-Vaishnava movement or bhakti movement. Sankaradeva propagated a form of Vaishnavism that was simpler and more accessible than the ritualistic Hinduism of that time. The doctrine propounded by Sankaradeva proved to be a great unifying force among the people of Assam irrespective of caste and creed. To preach Vaishnavism Sankaradeva established two types of a religious institution - *namghar* and *satra*. *Namghar* is a village-level institution while *satra* is the supreme institution of Assam's Vaishnavism. The term *satra* at the time did not convey the sense of a systematic institution which developed after the death of Sankaradeva' (Sarma: 1966:103). Literally, the term *satra* means *adhivesana* (assembly), *homa* or *jagyana* (sacred fire), or *nivasa* (abode). In Assam's context, the term refers to the supreme residential unit of Vaishnavism where the Guru and his disciples live to practice Vaishnavism. '*Namghars* and *satras* also acted as agencies of social control and in the course of time, these institutions have grown into cultural centers. In fact, the *satras* in contemporary times have given distinctive flavours of Assamese culture. The establishment of *satras*, each having a body of followers, with the emergence of distinct residential communities centering around them, have been a characteristic feature of the Vaishnavite movement found in full expression through such central institution as the *satras*' (Barua: 1994:21). Mask is a culture complex and a good number of elements are indispensably related to it in every society. The study of primitive art including masks has attracted many anthropologists and scholars from

various disciplines. In India, a good number of communities have the tradition of mask making, some of them use masks today for different purposes. However, archeological evidence of masks on this country is scanty. There is no prehistoric evidence to know about the past of the glorious tradition of masks in Assam.

Sankaradeva, the renowned saint of the 15th century, had initiated and propagated Vaishnavism in North-East India. In his venture, Majuli occupied an important place. Satra is not only a center for the propagation of religion but also an educational center to learn different skills indispensable for living in a community. Moreover, theatrical performances are integral to the religious activities of Assam's Vaishnavism. Srimanta Sankaradeva was a versatile genius, and he was famed to be adept in various skills like making of drum, mask, and other articles necessary for Vaishnavism and also maintenance of day-to-day life. It is believed that the great saint had innovated the technique of making masks from bamboo splits with varied types of expressions like fear, joy, sorrow, vigour, pride, happiness, etc. Cinha Yatra, (a dramatic performance with illustrations) conceived, prepared, and performed in 1468 AD by the Vaishnavite saint had proved to be a defining episode of history which sowed the seeds of the Assamese renaissance. For this grand musical, Sankaradeva innovated and created musical instruments like the *Khol*, *Taal*, in addition to the other creative accessories like masks, costumes, and props including paintings, etc. In this drama that Sankaradeva for the first time uses a wooden mask of Garuda (the mythological bird, the mount of Lord Vishnu). These Vaishnavite masks acted as the medium to present the events described in the Vaishnavite scriptures to the people with great precision, and thus they became instruments of recreation and religious teaching. Soon it developed as an important craft of the area and traveled across the barriers of time and space.

The Mask Making Process

Masks have been designed in innumerable varieties from a good number of materials available in the environment. Mask makers have shown great resourcefulness in selecting and combining the available materials in their surroundings. Among the materials used to make masks are bamboo, cane, clay, cloth, feather, fiber, fruit shell, leather, metal, paper, pith plant (Assamese: *Kunhila*, Botanical name: *Aeschynomene indica*), stone, shell, wood, etc., are very common. Usually, the masks are made from perishable materials which are rarely been preserved for centuries. Until the recent past, the craftsmen of Assam made masks from bamboo, clay, earthen pot, gourd shell, pith plant, sheath of areca nut leaf, wood, etc. Though wood and pith plant are also used, nowadays the mask makers of Assam, particularly mask makers of Majuli, usually make masks with the bamboo spilled covered with cotton cloth, clay, and cow dung. The craftsman who has to work with a stone or a wooden log has to make the mask within the size of the material. On the other hand, the craftsmen of Assam are in a better position, because they principally make masks with bamboo

spilt, which could be easily moulded to transform their ideas.

In the Assamese language, the equivalent term for ‘masks’ and ‘mask maker’ is ‘*mukha*’ and ‘*khanikar*’, respectively. To make a mask the craft man fetches a local variety of bamboo known as *jatibanh* (*Bambusa tulda Roxb*), which is neither immature nor very mature. Then with the help of a machete (*da*) the bamboo is cut into pieces of about 2 to 2.5 meters in length. These bamboo pieces are kept underwater in a pond or pool for a period of 5 to 7 days. The soaking of bamboo pieces in water prevent insect attack and provide more flexibility to the bamboo tubes. Then with the machete tubes are longitudinally divided into a few pieces from which splits are made with the help of a sharp knife (*katari*). These bamboo splits are woven in an open hexagonal patterns to make the base of the mask. ‘In hexagonal work the wefts instead of being horizontal and vertical are worked in three directions, forming in openwork hexagonal spaces in close work, six-pointed stars’ (A Committee of Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1954:273). The use of open hexagonal patterns as a basketry technique in Assam is very old. The mask makers referred to this as the Lakhimi sutra. Lakshmi or Lakshmi is the Hindu goddess of wealth and prosperity. Goddess Lakshmi is also known by the name Shri, which means ‘beauty’. A mask is an object of beauty and the epitome of aesthetic value. Moreover, throughout Assam paddy to be sown in the next year is preserved cautiously in a bamboo basket (*tom*), which is invariably weaved in open hexagonal pattern. Irrespective of caste and creed, the Assamese people respect paddy as one of the abodes of goddess Lakshmi. Among all the baskets integral to the paddy cultivation, only *tom* is weaved in open hexagonal pattern. Because the mask is weaved like the *tom* and a *tom* is believed to be the abode of goddess Lakshmi or Lakhimi, therefore, the weaving *sutra* (definition) of the mask is known as



Figure-1: The open hexagonal pattern



Figure-2: The mask makers engage in making base of the mask



Figure-3: The base of the mask is covered



Figure-4: The step of *chegara dia*, giving with the mixture of cotton cloth, clay the appearance of the mask and cowdung of calf

Lakhimi sutra The weaved base of a mask is covered with one or more pieces old cotton fabrics, which is wiped with a fluid of a special type of clay (*Kumarmati*) and water before covering the mask. Then a mixture is made with the cow dung of calves, clay, and water is applied over the mask a few times according to the requirement. In this step, features of the mask become prominent. This step is known as *chehera dia*, which means 'giving the appearance'. Then it is dried in the sunshine. Before completely drying, the mask is scrapped with a bamboo scraper (*karani*), which is followed by drying and colouring of the mask. Embellishments like hair, mustache, crown and required ornaments are finally added to a mask.

In old days the craftsmen used natural colours for the beautification of a mask which were extracted from various natural objects. Hengul (red colour) and haital (the yellow orpiment) are extracted from natural ores. The black colour is prepared from the ashes of the cooking pots or from the smoke of kerosene lamps, green colour is derived from crushing different leaves, and white colour is extracted from a kind of soil (*dhal mati*), generally found at a depth of 1 1/2 mt from the surface of the earth. Red colour is also derived from *achu gach / daru haridra* (*Morinda angustifolia Roxb*). The gum to attach hair and moustaches, etc., is prepared from the fruits of *kotkora* (*M. spinosa Roxb. ex Link*), *bihmana* (*Randia spinosa*), *bel* (*Aegle marmelos*), or *kendu* (*Diospyros embryopteris*), while hair and moustaches were generally prepared from water hyacinth, locally known as *pani meteka* (*Eichhornia crassipes*), or from jute fiber, locally known as marapat. Embellishment are prepared from tin-foil (*rang pata*) and coloured papers. Extraction of natural colour is very painstaking, time consuming, and strenuous process. Therefore, nowadays the craftsmen use colours available in the market. They also buy easily available different bright objects to prepare ornaments, etc. However, till today they generally prepare hair and moustaches from jute fiber although sometimes they use synthetic fibers also to make them. During the pre-independent period craftsmen kept colours in bamboo tubes of different sizes; small brushes were made from pigeons feathers or bamboo sticks by adding goat's hair as bristles; broad brushes were made by fixing jute fiber to bamboo sticks. Today the mask makers use synthetic brushes. However, till today each craftsman uses pristine broad brush made of jute fiber and bamboo stick.

The Types of Masks

There are two categories of mask: tangible or rigid; the mask made from different objects which are worn by a person and pliant mask - which is coloured over the body of a person. Tangible or rigid masks of Majuli are of three types: These are: *mukh mukha*, *cho mukha* and *lotokai* or *lotokari mukha*.



Figure-5: *Mukh mukha* of a demon



Figure-6: *Lotokai mukha* of Narasimha, the incarnation of lord Vishnu



Figure-7: *Cho mukha* of the demon king Ravana

Mukh mukha is worn over the face. *Cho mukha* is very big in size and covers almost the whole body of a person. Sometimes a *cho mukha* is made 2 to 5 metre in height above the waist of the wearer. The huge structure of such a mask portrays the aura of the character portrayed. It is pertinent to note here that in comparison to the huge structure of such masks, they are very light due to the raw materials used and the intricate manner of mask making. Due to its huge structure, *cho mukha* is generally tied to the body of the wearer with ropes. *Lotokai mukha* is akin to *cho mukha* except its small size. Due to its small size, the wearer can easily control it and therefore, *lotokai mukha* is not tied to the body of the wearer. *Lotokai mukha* is also known as *lotokari mukha*. A *cho mukha*, sometimes a *lotokai mukha* also, is a combination of a few easily separable parts.

The above-mentioned three types of masks which are rigid, made of ingredients like bamboo splits, cotton fabrics, clay, etc., have a separate existence even removed from the faces of the wearer. There is another kind of mask that cannot exist when removed from the face of the wearer, known as *ankita mukha* (pliant mask), which is also invariably prepared by the mask maker of the study area as informed by the stalwart mask maker of Majuli- Shri Hem Chandra Goswami. It is made of specialized stylized makeup or colouring of the faces of the wearer, which gives mask like appearance. Medhi (2015: V) rightly mentioned colouring performers' faces instead of covering them with masks is generally done to fulfill the necessities of dance and dramas. Such a painting is known as a pliant mask. Pani (1986: 37) said that pliant masks cannot exist when it is removed from the actor's face because the face is not only its foundation but also the integral part that imparts the pliancy to it ...even if considered as make-up, its theatrical function is the same as that of a mask- a device for imparting impersonality to an actor so that the spectator is discouraged to identify himself with the character of the drama for a more intense dramatic experience. It should be noted here that *ankiya bhaona*, i.e., the Vaishnavite one-act play, is integral to Assamese Vaishnavism. In the *ankiya bhaonas*, the victory of good over evil is depicted through the mythological stories taken from the Vaishnavite scriptures. Principally in the *ankiya bhaonas*, and also in different theatrical performances of the *satras* many characters of demon, serpent, incarnation, etc. are knitted. To express the features and feelings of such mythological characters mask are worn. Masks are also worn by some of the characters of *rasayatra* (frolic of Lord Krishna with the *gopis*, i.e., his consorts), invariably performed annually in each *satra*. Traditionally though the masks are made to depict only the mythological characters, nowadays those are also made to highlight the characters of modern drama, and also to use as decorative objects.



Figures -8 & 9: Noted mask maker Hem Chandra Goswami busy in painting the face of an actor akin to Jatayu (The mythological bird) before the commemoration of a Vaishnavite drama.

Mask making is a male job; however, the females are also not tabooed from making it. It is not a common skill and is practiced by only a few male members of the families integrally related to the satra management. The art of mask making and often their forms and functions are passed down through lineages (bamsa) or families (pariyal). Mask making is not taught but learned by the interested juniors from the seniors through the process of socialization. The skill is indispensably related to the satra organization, and no person outside a satra is known for making it, though there is no restriction in such pursuit. However, at present some of the youths of the Natun Chamaguri Satra have initiated this skill through an organization known as Sukumar Kalapeeth established by the expert mask maker Sri Hem Chandra Goswami.

The Mask Making Tradition of Majuli

In the simplest societies every individual can and does perform all the secular activities of his community, except so far as there may be artificial restraints of his so doing, and as a rule, he can make any of the implements he requires, but, even so, there are usually to be found men who are more expert than others. Thus in some societies, this expertness gives rise to special craftsmen, or certain men may in their spare time specialize in certain crafts. Where special craftsmen are found, it is necessary to make inquiries as to their status and how they are paid. Ironworkers in Africa may form a despised or Pariah class or they may have special privileges and positions. Canoe-builders, or other carpenters, may have a high social status. The craftsmen should be considered from economic, magical, religious, legendary and mythological points of view (A Committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland: 1954:222-223).

In Natun Chamaguri village, where the Natun Chamaguri satra is situated, not a single person practiced mask making as a primary occupation. All the mask makers belong to the Kayastha caste though the traditional occupation of Kayasthas is scribing. In the Census of India, Vol. III, Assam (1931:211), it is written. 'Caste in the Assam valley is not as elsewhere, chiefly a functional division. It is really a racial division and functional castes are very few' (cited in Cantlie, 1984:7). There is no caste in Assam, the members of which practice mask making as their traditional occupation. Like a mask maker, an idol maker is also referred to as khanikar by the Assamese people. The idol (murti) making is also not practiced by any Assamese caste as their traditional occupation. However, there are some people in Assam who have used the term khanikar as their surname. In old days their forefathers had expertise in idol making, principally from wood and clay.

'The identification of specific emotions and their facial expression has been and still is, the object of intense scientific scrutiny' (Bouissac, 2001:75). Every society has some sanctions and strictures regarding the facial expressions of its members. In Assamese society also there are pristine norms and values to regulate the facial muscles according to the different social contexts. The facial expressions which are not accepted in a society are also depicted through the masks. 'The mask does not depict a single emotion at a particular time, it is not a portrait of who fears, who fights, who dies; it is a symbol of fear, war, death' (Monte, 1967:9). Along with the ferocious-looking masks of different demons and deities of Chamaguri and Natun Chamaguri Satra, there are a few masks which give very calm and quiet appearances. The masks of mighty Ravana, Garuda (the mount of Vishnu), etc. emit mentionable peace, coyness, and amiability.

While moulding the faces of demoness Surpanakha (sister of Ravana), Narasimha (an incarnation of Vishnu), etc., the craftsman strictly abides by the description of the features given in the scriptures. That is why the mask of Narasimha (man-lion) closely resembles a horse than a lion. According to Roy (1984-85:58),

‘The faces with their varied types of expression fear, sorrow, etc. freeze to reflect the universal experiences that serve as a fountain of recreation: they also act as a medium to reckon the past events primarily related to legends. This travels across the barrier of time and space, although its effects are relative to time and space’.

The available masks of Natun Chamaguri Satra can easily spellbind the spectators with their craftsmanship and splendour. Mask making at this satra has attained the acme. The masks are generally made before a ritualistic theatrical performance and are used for a few successive years till these are not destroyed by the insects, weather, or other agencies. A slightly damaged old mask is repaired and coloured to use. No attempt has been taken in the satra to preserve the masks. These are kept in hanging from the walls of the satra or in the dwelling houses of the craftsmen. Nowadays the mask makers used to add a small quantity of kerosene to the paste of kumarmati for mask making. They opine that adding kerosene gives the mask a longer life because easily available kerosene acts as insecticide. The mask maker of Majuli also made some of the masks with movable parts which provide more effectiveness to the mask. The ornaments added to the head, horn, etc., of the masks in such a manner that the ornaments can move freely adding attractiveness to his creations. To make the masks lighter nowadays the craftsmen added more thermocol instead of adding more paste of kumarmati, etc., to a mask. Adding of thermocol made the mask lighter and the actors feel comfortable by wearing these masks. Besides the traditional mask, they also make small masks for the decoration of drawing rooms, motor cars, etc.

BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH MASK

Mask making tradition has been dispersed throughout the world ever since the early diffusion of Homo sapiens. Mask has intricate existence in the socio-religious matrix of different societies. Duerden (1970:19) writes: ‘Horton, in an article of Nigeria, has described how the Ekine Masqueraders stage a graduation ceremony. If a new member fails to carry out the steps correctly then his mask will be taken from him by a rival house of Masqueraders; those who have failed in this way have been known in the past to commit suicide. Among some communities, very strict procedures are involved in mask making. In Assam, the mask is treated as animates. Before performing a Vaishnavite one act play, masks are taken to the *namghar* or *satra* paying great reverence by lighting the earthen lamp (*chaki*), burning incense powder (*dhuna*), and incense sticks (*dhup*), playing the drum (*khol*), and cymbals (*tal*), and singing prayer (*nam*). After the ritual performance masks are kept in the storing place showing the same reverence. There are a good number of tales in different villages of Assam about the mishaps for breach of taboo in mask making and for not showing proper respect to the masks.

There are a good number of superstitions associated with masks. ‘What is more interesting is that these (masks) are considered to be living. This is evident from

the use of chaki (lamp) at night in front of the masks. There is a common belief that these rival masks may start quarreling if they are kept in the dark. ... Why do such beliefs continue? The people not related to rural cultural settings where these masks are used may take it as a matter of superstition, but it is a reality in the rural area where the boundary between the past and the present is a diffused one' (Roy; 1985: 59-60). The masks in Majuli are treated as living beings. It is also believed that the masks of ferocious demons and evil characters quarrel in darkness. To avoid such situations earthen lamps are lit and incense sticks and incense powder are burnt at dusk in front of such masks. In the Natun Chamaguri Satra some of the masks like the mask of Narasimha, Ravana, etc., are respected much more than the others. After the performance in a bhaona these are kept in a clean place and earthen lamps are lit and incense sticks are burnt every dusk in front of these. A worn-out mask of Narasimha, Ravana, etc., is immersed respectfully in the nearby river by playing Vaishnavite drum, cymbals, etc., by a group of devotees chanting a prayer. No doubt the masks of Assam have attracted many painters and poets to provide noteworthy dimensions to their creation. However, mask making does not provide economic viability to the mask makers. Therefore, people of new generation are not inclined towards making of this beautiful form of art as their principle vocation.



Figures- 10 & 11: People placed the mask of Narasimha in a carrying van burning incense powder (*dhuna*), and incense sticks (*dhup*), playing drum(*khol*), and cymbals(*tal*), and singing prayer (*nam*) before performing a Vaishnavite one act play.

THE STATUS OF MASK MAKERS

The Natun Chamaguri Satra is resourced with the art of famous mask making since its inception. The tradition of mask-making of the satra is carried out from the Prachin Chamaguri Satra wherefrom it is bifurcated. The spell-bounding ability in mask making of the forefathers of satradhikars of the Natun Chamaguri Satra like Tankeswara Deva Goswami , Moksheswara Deva , Raseswara Deva, Chaitanya Deva, Saisava Chandra Deva Goswami, et al. is still remembered. Till today some of the creations of those stalwarts are seen in the Prachin Chamaguri Satra. In the Natun

Chamaguri Satra also there are many stalwarts like Kamal Chandra Deva Goswami (satradhikar), Bhimakanta Deva Goswami (deka satradhikar), Bansidhar Deva Goswami, et al., who have remarkable reputations for their creations of beautiful masks. The Chamaguri Satra has a thought-provoking history of 236 years, and from that satra, the art of mask making is spread to different places. The late satradhikar of Natun Chamaguri Satra Sri Koshakanta Deva Goswami, Sri Umakanta Deva Goswami, Sri Phanidhar Goswami, deka satradhikar of Prachin Chamaguri Satra, and Jaychandra Goswami of the same satra, are some of the reputed persons whose names should be mentioned for their untiring devotion to add the eye catching value in mask making. Koshakanta Dev Goswami and his son Prasanna, grandson Rupam Goswami, are also mask makers of repute. Koshakanta Dev Goswami was adorned with artist pension by the Government of Assam. In the year 2003, he was wreath with the Sangeet Nataka Academy Award by the Government of India.

It has been already stated that Natun Chamaguri Satra is resourced with famous mask making since its inception. Late *satradhikar* (head of a satra, principle abbot) Rudrakanta Dev Goswami was a praiseworthy mask maker who added new aesthetic dimensions to the tradition of mask making, was acclaimed by the art critics for his spellbound ability in mask making.. He was a wreath with the artist pension in 1988 by the Government of Assam. All his three sons, late Dharmakanta. Hemchandra and Krishnakanta, grandson Dibyajyoti are stalwart mask makers. Now Krishnakanta worked as a faculty member of sculpture in the Government Art College of Assam. Hemchandra trained many groups of youth in and outside the state in the mask-making style of Assam. In 1980, Hemchandra had established an institute, viz., Sukumar Kalapeeth, in Chamaguri Village, to train the village youths in the art of mask making. The beautiful mask of the demon king Ravana made by the Late satradhikar Umakanta Dev Goswami is preserved in the State Museum of Assam.

Hem Chandra Goswami is an erudite mask maker known in the country and abroad for his thought-provoking ability, innovation, and skill. From his childhood, he was acquainted with the environment of *satra*, i.e., Vaishnavite monastery of Assam, where mask-making is an indispensable trait. Hem Chandra Goswami acquired this skill through the process of enculturation in the environment of his natal *satra* and became a strong catalyst in acceleration of this art form through his untiring devotion for the same. Many of the masks made by Hem Chandra Goswami are applauded by the art critic of the country and abroad for their attractive features, colour combination, expression, and aurora. He had attended a good number of workshops in different places of the country as the key instructor where he had presented our age-old tradition of mask making through bamboo splits. As a mask maker of repute, Hem Chandra Goswami plays a pivotal role in the acceleration of the pristine skill from local to the national and universal context. Masks prepared by him are at present installed and displayed at reputed institutions like Dibrugarh University, Tezpur University, Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra, Guwahati,

Vivekananda Institution, Guwahati, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, etc., and in the museum of abroad like America, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Israel, etc. In the year 2015 the Chief Curator of the British Museum Mr. T. Richard Blurton came to Majuli to discuss about the mask depicted in the Vrindavani Vastra preserved in the British Museum. He met Hem Chandra Goswami to know about the mask depicted in that heritage textile piece of Assam, stayed there for five days, and took back with him five masks, viz., masks of Kalinaga (the serpent demon), Garuda (the mythological bird, vehicle of Lord Vishnu), Putana (the sister of demon king Ravana), Bakasura (the demon, who looks like a stork) and Chakrabata (the demon of cyclone), which are now preserved in the British Museum. The masks were displayed in an exhibition entitled Krishna in the Garden of Assam which was held at the British Museum from January to August, 2016.

Hem Chandra Goswami is also a praiseworthy exponent of bhaona performed in the different places of India. He has been conferred with different prestigious awards for his expertise in mask making, which includes La Mezo Da Ananda Award: 2012, Damodara Deva National Award: 2014, Cultural Award conferred by DY-365, 2014, Doctor of Philosophy (Honoris Causa) by Gauhati University, 2017, Academic Encouragement award, by CSIR- North East Institute of Science and Technology, Jorhat, 2017, Conferred 2nd Position for taking part and displaying Vaishnavite mask performance of Assamin the parade on tableau on 69th Republic Day Celebration of India on 26th January, 2018, Silpa Mera Award, 2018, Luit Paria Jiban Sadhana Award, 2018, Sangeet Nataka Academy Award, 2019 etc., and felicitated by different organizations and institutions of the country. He had delivered lectures on the heritage of split bamboo mask in different institutions of the country like Dibrugarh University, Tezpur University, Vivekananda Kendra: Guwahati, Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre for the Arts; New Delhi, Visva-Bharati: Santiniketan, etc. He had established an art school in Majuli, viz., Sukumar Kalapeeth to teach the new generation about the heritage of mask making of this remote part of India. This untiring person is now busy in attending workshops, delivering lectures integral principally to this art form, and in teaching the students about paintings, mask making, and acquainting them to our praiseworthy tradition.

CONCLUSION

The Natun Chamaguri Satra of Majuli has a praiseworthy tradition of mask making whose aesthetic insinuation as well as the confession of the maker has attracted visitors from many parts of the world as an important object of cultural tourism. They also stand as one of the proud components of the cultural heritage of Assam as well as for the whole of the country which is considered as august and egotistical archetype of its master's work. It was the great Guru Sankaradeva, who had innovated the art of mask making from bamboo splits which are invariably used in

the Vaishnavite plays (*bhaona*) and dances (*satriya nritya*) performed in the satras (Vaishnavite monasteries) and *namghars* (village level Vaishnavite prayer house). The masks of Majuli have a thought provoking tradition. Many mask makers of this riverine island, particularly the mask makers of the Natun Chamaguri Satra, are the bearers of this splendid art form; many of them have also added new aesthetic dimensions to this age-old skill, and for that, although not economically, they are praised by the people in and outside of the state. This art form has attracted many people in and outside the island, but unfortunately, only a lesser number of persons have acquired this skill as principal economic pursuit because of the meager income from mask making. A mask maker is respected by the people for his ability. Till the recent past, a mask maker did not receive any remuneration for making masks except honour and prestige for his ability. His creations were taken by the people to perform religious theatrical performances without giving him any money. Now a mask maker earns nominal money for his skill; however it is not sufficient to maintain his livelihood, and therefore, he has to earn money doing another job and to satisfy his aesthetic urge, he makes masks.

In Vaishnavism of Assam, without the mask, some of the prescribed propitiations could not be conducted. Vaishnava cult of Assam is very rich in literature, and there are some scriptures which are adorned with colourful paintings. However, in those books, not a single figure is seen wearing a mask. We cannot ignore the indispensable relation of masks with Assam's Vaishnavism. Although there are many negative factors associated with the skill of mask making, yet due to its integral relation with Vaishnavism it will be practiced by the people of Assam, at least in the precincts of the satras.

The Natun Chamaguri Satra of Majuli, Assam though basically a Vaishnavite religious centre, at contemporary times it becomes a secular nerve centre of culture principally due to the multidimensional activities of the principal mask maker Hem Chandra Goswami. This satra is annually visited by a large number of tourists from different corners of our country and abroad to know about the salient features of masks made in the satra. Tourist from foreign countries has expressed their desire to learn about mask making in the institution under the guidance of Hem Chandra Goswami. It is important to note here that following the secular footsteps of the great saint Srimanta Sankaradeva, the door of Natun Chamaguri Satra under the able leadership of Hem Chandra Goswami is always open for any person who is willing to learn that praiseworthy skill irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. In the Sukumar Kalapeeth also the apprentice are coming from different ethnic and religious identities. If in the near future cultural tourism is developed in Majuli, Natun Chamaguri Satra will stand as archetype of prominent cultural nerve centre to learn about tradition of Vaishnavite mask where Hem Chandra Goswami should act as a key person.

References

- A Committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. (1954). *Notes and Quarries on Anthropology*. London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Adam, L. (1942). *Primitive Art*. New York: Penguin Books .
- Adams, E. (1979). *Art Treasure of Seoul*. Korea: Seoul International Tourist Publishing.
- Amatya, S. (1991). *Art and Culture of Nepal: An Attempt towards Preservation*. Jaipur: Nirala Publications.
- Ambesi , A. C. (1970). *Oceanic Art* . London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd.
- Ambrose , K. (1983). *Classical Dances and Costumes of India*. Revised by Ram Gopal. London: Adam and Charles Black.
- Anand , M. R. (1968). Chhau Dance-Andaman . *Marg* 22(1): 2-4.
- Anati, E. and A. F. Anati (2001). Mind man and mask in prehistoric art. In S.C.Malik (ed) *Mind Man and Mask*, Pp.107-109, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.
- Aryan, K.C. (1991). *Indian Folk Bronzes* . New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan .
- Aryan, S. (1993). *Crafts of Himachal Pradesh*. Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing.
- Aubert, L. (1980). The Swiss folkloric masks. *The World of Music* 22 (1): 53-68 .
- Baker, S. (Ed.).(1992). *Myths and Legends*. London: New Burlington Books.
- Bancroft-Hunt, N. (1988). *People of the Totem: The Indians of the Pacific Northwest*. London: Little Brown and Co.
- Banerji, P. (1982). *Aesthetics of Indian Folk-Dance*. New Delhi: Cosmos Publications.
- Barbier, J. P. (2000). Artifact and artifice: Remarks by a lucid, if not infallible. *Arts and Cultures*. No. 1: 150-170.
- Barua, D. K. (1994). Barpeta satra: An insight into its relations with the local community, *Bulletin of The Department of Anthropology. Gauhati University, VIII*: 20-30.
- Behague, G. (1980). South American Masked Dance: An Overview. *The World of Music* 22 (1), *Special Issue on Mask*: 23-25.
- Ben-Amos, P. G. (1995). *The Art of Benin*. London: British Museum Publication.
- Bhattacharyya , A. (1972). *Chhau Dance of Purulia* . Calcutta: Rabindra Bharati University .
- Bhavani, E. (1974). *Folk and Tribal Designs of India* . Taraporevala , X.
- Biebuyck, D. P. (1969). *Tradition and Creativity in Tribal Art*. Berkeley : University of California Press .
- Boas, F. (1955). *Primitive Art*. New York: Dover Publication INC.
- Bondi H. Alan Bullock, W. Gordon East , David Piper , and Bernard Williams .(1969). *Art Across the World*. London: Marshall Cavendish Books Ltd.
- Bonnefoy, Y. (Compiled). (1981). *Mythologies* , Vol. I. Translated by Gerald Honigsblum. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press .
- (Compiled). (1981). *Mythologies*, Vol. II. Translated by Gerald Honigsblum. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bouissac, P. 2001, Becoming a Mask: Facial Make-up and the Transformation of Identities, In S.C.Malik (ed) *Mind Man and Mask*, Pp. 73-80. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.
- Bowra , C. M. (1966). *Classical Greece*. Netherlands: Time- Life International.

- Brauen, M. (1980). *Feste in Ladakh*. Austria: Akademische Druck u Verlagsanstalt.
- Burfank, J. (1991). *Nepal*. Singapore: Times Books International.
- Campbell, J. (1991). *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*. Arkaná: Penguin Book.
- Cantlie, A. 1984. *The Assamese*. London and Dublin: Curzon Press Ltd.
- Chandavij, N. and Prompom Pramualratana. (1998). *Thai Puppets and Khon Masks*. London: Thames and Hedson.
- Chatterjee, G. (1998). Living heritage of mask. In *Discover India-II*. 7: 14-19.
- Chattopadhyay, K. (1976). *The Glory of Indian Handicrafts*. New Delhi: Indian Book Company.
- (1985). *Handicrafts of India*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Cultural Relations.
- Christensen, E. O. (1955). *Primitive Art*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co.
- Conrad, J. (1967). *The Many Worlds of Man*. London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd.
- Coomaraswamy, A. K. (1965). *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Cordwell, J. M. (1959). African art. In William R. Bascom, and Melville J. Herskovits (eds.) *Continuity and Change*, Pp 28-48. Chicago, Phoenix Books: The University of Chicago Press.
- Delange, J. (1974). *The Art and Peoples of Black Africa*. Translated by Carol F. Jopling, New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. XXVI.
- Deo, J. B. S. (1973). *Chhau: Mask Dance of Seraikela*, Cuttack.
- Devi, R. (1966). Festivals of the Goddess Bhagavati in Kerala. *Marg* 19(2): 46-48.
- Dey, B. and John I. (1947). The folk art of Bengal. *Marg* 1 (4): 45-54.
- Dhamija, R. (1966). Masks. *Marg* 20(I): 42.
- Dhanivat, K. B. B. and Dhanit Yupho (1954). *The Khon*. Bangkok: The National Culture Institute: 16 (Thailand Culture Series, No. II).
- Duerden, D. (1970). *African Art*. London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd.
- Elwin, V. (1951). *The Tribal Art of Middle India: A Personal Record*. London: Oxford University Press.
- (1959). Regional dances: Orissa-dormitory performance of the Murias. *Marg* 13 (I): 64-68.
- (1964). *A Philosophy for NEFA*. Shillong: Advisor to the Government of Assam.
- (1969). *The Art of North-East India*. Shillong: North-East Frontier Agency.
- Emigh, J. (1981). Masking and playing: Observations on masked performance in New Guinea. *The World of Music* 23 (3). Special Issue on Masks II: 5-21.
- Emigh, J. (1996). *Masked Performance: The Play of Self and Other in Ritual and Theatre*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; XVII.
- Eyo, E. (1990). *Two Thousand Years of Nigerian Art*. London: Ethnographica.
- Fagg, B. (1990). *Nok Terracottas*. London: Ethnographica.
- Feest, C. F. (1994). *Native Arts of North America*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Fenton, W. N. (1987). *The False Faces of the Iroquois*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Fischer, E. and Hans Himmelheber (1984). *The Arts of the Dan in West Africa*. Switzerland: Museum Rietberg Zurich.

- Fischer, J. (1994). *The Folk Art of Java*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; XV .
- Furer–Haimendorf, Christopher Von. (1972). *The Sherpas of Nepal: Buddhist Highlanders*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Gargi, B. (1991). *Folk Theatre of India*. Allahabad: Rupa and Co.; X.
- Gillison, G. (1977). Fertility rites and sorcery in a New Guinea village. *National Geographic* 152(1): 124-146.
- (1983). Living theatre in New Guinea's highlands. *National Geographic* 164 (No.2): 147-169.
- Gillon, W. (1979). *Collecting African Art*. London: Pub.
- Gohain, H. (2005). *Majulir Jilingani (The Gleams of Majuli)*. Guwahati: Banalata.
- Goswami, K. (2001). Majulir mukha silpar parampara aru carcha (Tradition and practice of mask at Majuli). In Prasanta Kr. Sarma (ed.). *Majuli*. Pp. 141-143. Jorhat: New Era Media Service.
- Grund, F. (1985). *Chhau Dance*. France: House of World Cultures: 133 (Art of India).
- (1985). *Dances Chhau*. France: Maison Des Cultures Du Monde: 133 (Arts De L'Inde)
- Heppell, M. (1992). *Masks of Kalimantan*. Melbourne: Indonesian Arts Society.
- Hersey, I. (1991). *Indonesian Primitive Art*. Singapore: Oxford University Press; xvii.
- Ions, V. (1987). *The World's Mythology*. England: Hamlyn.
- Iteanu, A. (1981). Masked plays in Oceania. *The World of Music* 23 (3); Special issue on Masks II : 26-33 .
- Keay, J. (1986). *Ladakh: Land of the Passes*. Germany: Wienand Verlag.
- Kerchache, J. Jean Lovis Paudral and Lucien Stephan (1993). *Art of Africa*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Khokar, M. (1959). Regional dances: Kerala. *Marg* 13 (I): 38-41 .
- (1981). Chaitra parva rituals- chhau dances. *Marg* 34(3): 74-87.
- (1986). *Tradition of Indian Classical Dance*, 3rd Ed. New Delhi: Clarion Books.
- (1989). Thiyan. *Sangeet Natak*, 94: 26-32.
- Konishi, M. A. (1997). Masks and performing arts: India and Japan. *Journal of Association for Indian Music Society*, 6: 43-55.
- Kothari, S. (1968). Chhau dances of Saraikella. *Marg* 22(I): 5-24.
- (1979). Kathakali: The sacred dance drama of Kerala. Pp. 81-91. In *Splendours of Kerala*. Bombay: Marg Publications.
- (1980). The use of masks in Indian Dances and dance-dramas. *The World of Music* 22(I), Special issue on Masks: 89-103.
- Laude, J. (1971). *The Art of Black Africa*. London: University of California Press.
- Lechuga, R. D. and Sayer Chloe (1994). *Mask Art of Mexico*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Leiris, M. and Jacqueline D. (1968). *African Art*. Translated by Michael Ross. London: Thames and Thedson.
- Leuzinger, E. (1960). *Africa: The Art of the Negro Peoples*. Translated by Ann E. Keep. London: Methuen.
- (1967). *The Art of Africa: The Art of the Negro People*. New York: Grestone Press.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. (1983). *The Way of the Mask (La Voie des Masques)*. Translated by Sylvia Modelski. London: University of Washington Press.

- Locke, E. and S. Savill (1976). Classical Greece and Rome, narrative outlines: Greece-Legends of the house of peoples. Pp. 180-186. In Mary Barker and Christopher Cook (eds.) *Pears Encyclopedia of Myths and Legends*, VI. London: Pelham Books.
- Macdonald, N. (1981). Masks in Kalimantan Timur. *The World of Music* 23 (3), Special issue on Mask, II: 52-56.
- Mack, J. (Ed.). (1994). *Masks: The Art of Expression*. London: British Museum.
- Mahanta, P. J. (2001). Viewing the world through the masks of Assam. In S.C. Malik (Ed.). *Rupa-Pratirupa: Mind Man and Mask*. Pp.171-175, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.
- Malik, S.C. (Ed.). (2001). *Rupa-Pratirupa: Mind Man and Mask*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.
- Maquet, J. (1972). *Africanity: The Cultural Unity of a Black Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mark, P. (1992). *The Wild Bull and The Sacred Forest: Form, Meaning and Change in Senegambian Initiation Masks*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press , XIII .
- Massey, R. and J. Massey (1989). *The Dances of India: A General Survey and Dancers' Guide*. London: Tricolour Books, XIX: 164.
- Mc Dowell, B. (1980). The Aztecs. *National Geographic*. 158 (No.6) : 704-752 .
- McCune, E. (1962). *The Arts of Korea: An Illustrated History*. P. 452. Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company.
- Medhi, B. K. (2003). Ajan udar satradhikarar sannidhyat. In *Dainik Asam* , Guwahati. Chandmari , 23rd June : 4.
- (2006). Mukha (mask). In Md. Taher (Ed.) *Viswakosh: Samaj aru Samskriti* (Encyclopedia: Society and Culture). Pp. 585-586. Jorhat: Assam Sahitya Sabha.
- (2007). Mukha sambandhe jatkinchit. *Nree Barta*. Dudhnoi. Anthropological Society of Dudhnoi College , Vol. I, No. 3: 49-50.
- Medhi, B. K. and A. Zaman (2004). Mask makers of a vaishnavite monastery of Assam. *The Journal of North-East India Council for Social Science Research*, Vol. 28, No. I: 4-8.
- Miettinen, J. O. (1992). *Classical Dance and Theatre in South-East Asia* . London: Oxford University Press , XX .
- Monte, F. (1969). *African Masks*. London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd.
- Napier, A. D. (1986). *Masks, Transformation and Paradox*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Neog, M. (1959). Regional Dances: Assam. *Marg* 13(I): 9-20.
- Nooter, M. H. (1993). *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals*. New York: The Museum for African Art.
- Ojo, J.R.O. (1981). Masked dances of the Yoruba peoples. *The World of Music* 23 (3). Special issue on Mask II : 37-48 .
- Osborne, H. (1968). *South American Mythology*. Middlesex: Paul Hamlyn.
- Paine, R. T. and A. Soper. (1974). *The Art and Architecture of Japan*. England: Penguin Books.
- Pal, P. (1991). *Art of the Himalayas : Treasures from Nepal and Tibet* . New York :Hudson Hills Press.
- Pande, B.M. (2001). Archaeology of masks: Indian evidence. In S.C.Malik (Ed) *Mind Man and Mask*. Pp. 110-122, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

- Pani , J. (1968). Chhau dances of Mayurbhanj. *Marg* 22(1): 30-45.
- (1969). Chhau : A comparative study of Sareikela and Mayurbhanj forms . *Sangeet Natak*, No. 13 (July-Sept.) : 35-45 .
- (1986). *World of other Faces: Indian Masks*. New Delhi: Publications Division.
- Pannikar, K. N. (1979). Ecstasy of the folk dance-the mystical rhythms of the village community. In *Spendours of Kerala*. Pp. 107-110. Bombay: Marg Publications.
- Pate, A. (1998). Devil dance masks of Sri Lanka. In *Arts of Asia*, 28(5): 85-95.
- Patnaik, D. N. (1997). The Chhau dance of Mayurbhanj: I. *Sangeet Natak*, No. 125-126: 19-30.
- Piggot, J. (1982). *Japanese Mythology*. India: The Standard Literature Co.
- Rajakaruna, D.A. (1993).The Classical Noh Theatre of Japan: An Indian Approach. *Sangeet Natak*, 108-109: 17-22.
- Roy, S. K. (1985). A Report on the mask preserved in the anthropological museum, Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University. *The Assam Academic Review*, Special Vol., No. 2: 57-65.
- Sannes, G. W. (1970). *African 'Primitives': Function and Form in African Masks and Figures*. Translated by Margaret King. London: Faber and Faber.
- Saraf, D. N. (1985). *Indian Crafts: Development and Potential*. 2nd Rev. Ed. Ghaziabad: Vikas Publishing House.
- Sarma, S.N. (1966). *The Neo-Vaishnavite Movement and Satra Institute of Assam*. Gauhati University: Guwahati.
- Sen, P. (1994). *Crafts of West Bengal*. Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing.
- Sharer, R. J. (1994). *The Ancient Maya*. 5th Ed. California: Standard University Press.
- Singh, M. (1970). *Himalayan Art* .Bombay: The Macmillan Company of India Ltd.
- (1971). *Himalayan Art: Wall-Painting and Sculpture in Ladakh , Lahual and Spiti , the Siwalik Ranges , Nepal , Sikkim and Bhutan*. London: Macmillan.
- The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (1991). Mask. Pp. 910-911. Philip W. Goetz, Editor in chief. Encyclopaedia Britanica, Inc. Chicago, Vol.7.
- Trowell , M. (1953). *Classical African Sculpture*. 2nd Ed. London: Faber and Faber .
- Underwood, L. (1948). *Masks of West Africa*. London: Alee Tiranti.
- Uppal , H. (1959). Regional dances: Bihar . *Marg*, 13 (1) : 26-30.
- Vatsyayan, K. (1980). *Traditional Indian Theatre: Multiple Streams*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
- (1987). *Traditions of Indian Folk Dance, 2nd revised Ed.* , New Delhi : Clarion Books.
- Venu, G. (1993). The mask-dances of Kerala. *Sangeet Natak*, 108-109 (April-Sept.) : 10-16.
- Vergati, A. (1999). *Gods and Masks of the Kathmandu Valley*. New Delhi: D. K. Print world.
- Vidyarthi, L. P. (1993). *Art and Culture of North-East India*. New Delhi: Publication Division.
- Warren, W. and L. I. Tettoni. (1994). *Arts and Crafts of Thailand*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Wassing, R. S. (1970). *The Art of Africa*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Williams, D. (1974). *Icon and Image: A study of Sacred and Secular forms of African Classical Art*. London: Allen Lane.
- Woldering, I. (1967). *Gods, Men and Pharaohs: The Glory of Egyptian Art*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Wyatt, G. (1994). *Spirit Faces: Contemporary Masks of the North West Coast*. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre.

Zaman, A. (2015). *The Tradition of mask in Indian Culture: An Anthropological Study of Majuli, Assam*. Bhopal: Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya.

