

Identification of Design Elements in Naamghar of Assam

Thesis submission in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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April, 2019



Dedicated to my family

DECLARATION

“I, Charu Monga, declare that the PhD thesis “**Identification of Design Elements in Naamghar of Assam**” contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”.

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY

This thesis entitled “Identification of Design Elements in Naamghars of Assam” submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati has been carried out under my supervision and is a bonified work of Ms. Charu Monga.

I confirm that this thesis is an original work of Ms. Charu Monga except where due acknowledgement has been made and has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any academic award within or outside this institution.

I also confirm that Ms. Charu Monga has fulfilled all the mandatory requirements as per the rules and regulations necessary for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati.

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ABSTRACT

Design is considered as a creative human activity and envelops all aspects of social life. Religious places howsoever simple, complex, small or gigantic they may be, are also benefited by the creative human urge. Design have a complex mutual relation with the social setup and changes. In this context the design and architecture of religious places of Naamghar (in Assam) at different periods of history had been transformed by design. The study looks at this significant relation between design elements of Naamghars and changes over time. The change in the religious expression from Brahminical to simpler and more simpler form of Bhakti or Naam was a phenomenon spread over large part of North India as also eastern part of the country. The bhakti movement represented by Nanak, Meera Bai, Kabir, Ramkrishna, Sufis and other saints to name a few was a distinctly different pattern of religious belief and specific in contrast to the Brahminical style and faith during the medieval period in India.

There are a large number of Naamghars in active existence in Assam. The participation of society continued to be substantial irrespective of major changes in terms of social, political & economic dimensions. Naamghar as a movement may also be viewed in the context of religious changes taking place in the country particularly in Northern and Eastern part. Moving away from the Vedic design style, the religious practice during the later Mughal evolved bhakti & Sufi movement pioneered by Nanak, Meera Bai, Ramkrishna, Surdas and Khusro.

Naamghars were introduced in Assam by the Vaisnavite Saint Srimanta Shankardeva (1449-1568) between 15th and 16th century AD. Shankardeva was a great social reformer. He initiated new ideas and it gave a fresh turn to new faiths, which in certain part of the country took the shape of a revolution. Under the corrupting influence of power, wealth and the ritualism that had to some extent taken over on the Hinduism and the ruling classes of the Hindu society, various mal-practices were committed in the name of the religion, which violated the social structure. These factors impelled the Hindu thinkers and reformers of the day to evolve a simpler and liberal faith that would be acceptable to all alike. These sequences of movements came to be like a Vaishanava Bhakti movement. It brought a renaissance in the social & religious life of the people. It was open to all classes, caste and religion. The motivation behind the movement is to bring everyone into the same level and promote equality.

The word “Naamghar” consist of two words called “Naam” means “Name” and “Ghar” means “House”; is a place of congregational worship and other activities

associated with the Ekasarana religion of Assamese society. Naamghar is a movement associated with the basic building blocks of Assamese society. It's not only a place of worship but also a central meeting point where all the people discuss about the issues related to their society. Naamghars function in the society is intense as they are the meeting points of congregations, as well as theatre of dramatic performances like bhawona, raas lila and many others. The Naamghar are also called Kirtanghar. They are the central core structure of Satras of Assam (monasteries of the Eksarana religion). One can find them spread across Assam in every village. These are widespread in Assam and one can find more than a single Naamghar in a village, which signifies many congregational communities. This is also reflected in the simple design structure of Naamghar.

This research explores the layers of cultural re-construction of design elements, which brings people of Assam together. The Naamghar tradition has been taken as a case study for the above.

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LIST OF GLOSSERY

<i>Ahom Kingdom</i>	It was a kingdom in the Brahmaputra valley in Assam
<i>Ankiya Nats / Bhaona</i>	One act play performance popular within the masses with themes of <i>Bhagavata-purana</i> and <i>Ramayana</i>
<i>Ankiya plays</i>	Chihna Yatra, Patni Prasada, Kaliya Damana, Keli Gopala, Rukmini Harana, Parijat Harana, Janma Yatra, Gopi Uddhava Sambhda, Kangsa Badha and Sri Rama Vijaya are traditional plays in Assam
<i>Apsara performance</i>	Play and performance in Satra of Assam
<i>Am-talar hati/ Kewaliya hati</i>	Houses of Devotees in Satra
<i>Ashoka phul</i>	It is a flower and has a symbolic association with Madhavdeva
<i>Adhikar</i>	A boy from a Gosain family of Assam
<i>Altar</i>	A flat topped block used as a religious ritual
<i>Agni gad</i>	Lamp-brackets used in <i>Bhaona</i> . It is also decorated with foliage.
<i>Ananta</i>	The mythical serpent king
<i>Abja-ja/ abja-yoni</i>	<i>Lotus-born</i>
<i>Anant sajja</i>	Vakhunth Dham
<i>Amahi-ghar</i>	Uppermost tier with a wooden box
<i>Ankiya Nat</i>	Form of religious theatre created by Srimanta Shankardev
<i>Athiti Griha</i>	Dormitory type guesthouse inside the complex where people can stay
<i>Akhay Banti</i>	It was found that there is a 500 years old eathern lamp named ‘Akhay Banti’ (earth lamp) lightening inside the Bhaj garh in Satra
<i>Bhaj Ghar</i>	It’s a room where Manikut is kept in Naamghar and Satra
<i>Bhiti</i>	The house
<i>Boot-horse</i>	Chick-pea
<i>Bahar Nritya</i>	A type of dance form
<i>Bali-chanda</i>	Mica
<i>Bhagavanta</i>	Supreme Being or Mahapurusa who manifests himself as Visnu or Krishna; it also represents the Guru, his message as well as the highest truth propounded by him
<i>Bilaniyar</i>	Distributor of the Prasad
<i>Bota</i>	A utensil and its been used to keep paan
<i>Kah</i>	Musical instrument
<i>Bhagavata-Purana</i>	Holy book on Hindu religion
<i>Bhakats</i>	Devotees
<i>Borgeets/ Bargits</i>	Devotional hymns heralding a new classical school of music
<i>Brajawali</i>	An artificial mixture of Braj and Assamese
<i>Brahma</i>	God
<i>Bortop</i>	Canons
<i>Batsora</i>	Front gate of Satra or Naamghar
<i>Bayan</i>	They play Khol, taal during the Bhaona performance
<i>Bhortal</i>	Musical Instrument
<i>Bhagawata-griha</i>	House of God

<i>Pathak, medhi, rajmedhi, bar-medhi, sajtula and pacani</i>	Various functionaries were employed under the head of the Satra to run the respective branches and departments
<i>Bodo tribe</i>	The tribe known for earlier settlers of Assam
<i>Bhakti-Ratnavali</i>	Book by Madhavdev
<i>Bhaona</i>	The unique performance creation by Srimanta Shankardev
<i>Bajali pargana</i>	A group of villages or a subdivision of a district in India
<i>Bali-canda</i>	Mica
<i>Bardowa</i>	First Satra by Srimanta Shankardev
<i>Bota</i>	Bamboo basket
<i>Bilaniyar</i>	Distributor of the Prasad
<i>Bhagavata Purana</i>	It is one of the eight great puranas composed in sanskrit
<i>Bhakats</i>	Devotees
<i>Bhor taal</i>	Drums with two sides. A kind of musical instrument and <i>it is</i> originated from Bhutan
<i>Batchara</i>	Entrance of Satra
<i>Burha</i>	Old
<i>Chandratap</i>	An ornamental cloth to cover the Manikut from top side
<i>Cooch-Bihar</i>	During the British Raj Cooch Behar was the seat of the princely state of Koch Bihar, ruled by the Koch dynasty of Assam
<i>Chutiya kingdom</i>	It was a state established by one of the Chutiya chieftains named Birpal in 1187 CE in the area of Assam
<i>Cymbals</i>	Musical instruments used in prayer and made up of bell metal
<i>Candsai</i>	He was a muslim disciple of Srimanta Shankardev
<i>Chinha-yatra</i>	Epoch-making drama in Assamese tradition
<i>Chaitya Halls</i>	Shrine or prayer hall
<i>Cari-siddhas</i>	The four wise men
<i>Cereki</i>	Spinning wheel
<i>Chinha-Yatra</i>	First drama of Sankaradeva
<i>Chandrataap</i>	The Shrine also has a decorative cloth canopy hung from four corners called <i>Chandrataap</i>
<i>Doul</i>	Holi festival
<i>Dasam, Kirtan Ghosa, Bhakti Ratnavali and Namgosa</i>	Holy texts in Satra and Naamghar
<i>Dohaar sari</i>	<i>Chorus singers</i>
<i>Deva</i>	God
<i>Dakshin dwar</i>	<i>South gate</i>
<i>Dalan</i>	<i>Dalan is considered the main entry</i>
<i>Dhan-Bharali</i>	Naamghar store-keeper
<i>Dhoba/ Doba</i>	Kettle-drum and a musical instrument
<i>Dakshin</i>	South

<i>Dohaar sari or Chorus singers row</i>	Seatings along the row of pillars facing north are all given to the senior devout in the village. It is known as Dohaar sari or Chorus singers row.
<i>Dharma</i>	Religion
<i>Deus or Deuris</i>	Those who serve food in Naamghar after the prayer
<i>Deka-adhikar</i>	Junior chief in the Satra
<i>Deva</i>	God
<i>Dasya</i>	Servitude towards God
<i>Dikkaravasini</i>	Region in eastern side of Assam
<i>Devagriha</i>	Abode of the Gods
<i>Diya</i>	Light
<i>Dohaar sari or Chorus singers</i>	Seatings along the row of pillars facing North are all given to the senior devout in the village. It is known as <i>Dohaar sari</i> or <i>Chorus singers</i> row.
<i>Dasham, Kirtanghosa, Bhaktiratnavali</i>	Holy books in Naamghar
<i>Dhaan-Bharali</i>	Store-keeper other officers of the Naamghar.
<i>Dvarapals/ Dwarapalaka</i>	Gatekeepers
<i>Dashavatar</i>	Ten incarnations of Vishnu
<i>Dakshinhati Batchara</i>	Entry gate from South side of the Satra
<i>Dalan</i>	Main entry gate in Satra
<i>Deka Satriya</i>	Junior Chief
<i>Eta colour</i>	Brick colour
<i>Eka-Sarana-Naam-Dharma</i>	Eka-Sarana means Shelter in 'One', who can be worshiped solely by uttering his various names (Naam) through religion (Dharma)
<i>Ekora reed</i>	A particular type of slender leaved plant of the grass family found in marshy ground in Assam
<i>Gohain-Kapoor</i>	The Guru asana or thapona is draped over and decked out with a richly woven piece of textile known as Gohain-Kapoor
<i>Garuda</i>	It is a legendry man with wings and king of birds in Hindu mythology. It is also the vehicle mount of God Vishnu. It is generally the protector with power to swiftly go anywhere, ever watchful and enemy of serpent.
<i>Gosa</i>	Diya with incense stick stand
<i>Garo</i>	It is a tribe in Assam
<i>Govinda/ Narayana</i>	Another name of Lord Krishna
<i>Goalpara</i>	It is a district in Assam
<i>Gopaldeva</i>	Name of disciple of Madhavdeva
<i>Guru</i>	The religious preceptor
<i>Gong</i>	Musical instrument
<i>Gayana-Bayana</i>	Singers and instrumentalists or drummers of shankri music
<i>Gandharava Gayana</i>	Singing event in Satra or Naamghar

<i>Ghacha</i>	Stand
<i>Gayan</i>	The singers
<i>Gamochas</i>	A small piece of hand weaved white cloth with primary borders in red colour
<i>Guru</i>	Spiritual teacher in Hinduism
<i>Gabled hall</i>	Rectangular portion of a wall between the edges of intersecting roof pitches
<i>Guru-asana</i>	The Guru Asana, literally the Seat of the Guru is a seven-tiered, triangular, wooden throne adorned by the tortoise-elephant-lion motif and other decorative woodwork.
<i>Gohain–Kapoor</i>	Richly woven piece of textile
<i>Guru Granth-Sahib</i>	Sikh religion Guru Granth-Sahib is the object of worship in Gurudwara
<i>Gayan- bayans</i>	Cymbal players and Drummers
<i>Gosains</i>	Sattradhikars
<i>Gunamala</i>	In Naamghar there is no idol, instead there is ‘Gunamala’ kept in the thapana. It has preachings of Shrimata Shakardeva and his belief was that there is only one supreme god. (there is only one dharma of Vishnu and its avatars).
<i>Garbhagriha</i>	It is the sanctum sanctorum, the innermost sanctum of a Hindu temple where resides the murti (idol or icon) of the primary deity of the temple.
<i>Ghai Bharal</i>	It is been used to keep expensive ornaments (gold and silver) and also to keep valuables of Satra also mustard oil storage in a tank and important books
<i>Gada</i>	<i>Mace</i>
<i>Harsha</i>	Goose
<i>Hansa</i>	Bird stands for wisdom
<i>Hari Jaan</i>	Cannel
<i>Hati</i>	Row of houses in Satra
<i>Hengul-haital</i>	Colour for colouring wooden instruments
<i>Hanuman</i>	It’s ardent devotee of lord Rama and a mythical creature resembling monkey. It is also a mythological Vaishnava devotee
<i>Hinduism</i>	Indian religion of dharma or way of life
<i>Hatis</i>	Houses for monks in Satra
<i>Jayarama</i>	It is a person from Bhutiya community
<i>Jay Vijay</i>	The gatekeepers of the abode of Vishnu known as Vaikuntha
<i>Jambuvan, Prahalad, Udhab, Vidur and Mojiya</i>	Wooden sculpture carved on the door
<i>Jagmohan ghar</i>	Part of a space in the Satra
<i>Kamrup</i>	Ancient kingdom of Assam
<i>Kachari kingdom</i>	It was a powerful kingdom ruled by Dimasa kings on the Indian subcontinent located in the region of Assam
<i>Krishna lila/Raas lila</i>	Story of Krishna (the God) life is been depicted through a performance.
<i>Kharimati</i>	It’s a type of chalk

<i>Kundraksha-jaala</i>	Wooden beaded lattice work on the windows of Naamghar
<i>Kamata rajya</i>	It was a parallel state in Assam during the time of 13 th and 16 th century
<i>Kirtan Ghosha/ Ghoxa</i>	Collection of poetic works depicting writings and composed songs of Srimanta Sankardev meant for community singing in the Ekasarana religion
<i>Kavyas</i>	Style of classical Sanskrit poetry
<i>Khangaliphaga</i>	The jacket worn on the upper part of the body from Tiwa tribe
<i>Khanikar</i>	Storyteller
<i>Kala</i>	Black
<i>Karbi, Mising, Bodo</i>	Tribes in Assam
<i>Kevaliya bhakat</i>	The celibate devotees in Satra
<i>Karpat</i>	Assamese Satra consisting of square enclosed walls with four openings or gateways
<i>Kharimati</i>	Chalk
<i>Kirtan/ Kirtans</i>	Prayer sessions or hymns
<i>Khataniar</i>	Treasurer collects the subscriptions and the Naamghar
<i>Kath</i>	Seating mats woven from rice straw are hung neatly on the walls when not in use
<i>Khol</i>	Two-sided drums made by a ‘Kachari’ artisan from the ‘Kapili valley’
<i>Katha- Guru-Charit</i>	Comprehensive biography of the Vaisnavite Saint of Assam
Kordoi tenga	The posts are chamfered or fluted into polygonal or circular shapes and crowned by carved capitals resembling the lotus or the fruit called by the Assamese kordoi tenga (Averrhoa carambola)
Karani/ karnadika	A small wooden open trunk resting on four legs, each adorned with carvings of floral designs or figures of birds like parrots used as a wardrobe in the household or for keeping sacred articles like rosaries, scriptures or even deities in the Naamghar and Manikutas
<i>Khataniar</i>	Treasurer
<i>Kath</i>	Seating mats woven from rice straw are hung neatly on the walls when not in use. It is called Kath.
<i>Karani/ karnadika</i>	A small wooden open trunk resting on four legs, each adorned with carvings of floral designs or figures of birds like parrots used as a wardrobe in the household or for keeping sacred articles like rosaries, scriptures or even deities in the Naamghars and Manikutas
<i>Kaumodaki gada</i>	Mace
<i>Khorahi</i>	Utencil and it is been used for keeping nirmali flowers.
<i>Kamal</i>	Lotus flower
<i>Kirtans</i>	Hymns
<i>Kalash</i>	Metal pot
<i>Khols</i>	<i>Khols</i> are typically prepared with baked clay in Naamghar and used as a musical instrument.
<i>Kirtan Ghosa/ Ghoxa</i>	Collection of poetic works

<i>Kalia Daman</i>	Scene of Krishna fighting with Snake (Naga) assumed the weight of the whole universe, and danced on the naga's heads, beating time with his feet
<i>Kumaras</i>	The four sagas (rishis) who roam the universe as children from the puranic texts of Hinduism
<i>Kirtan Ghar</i>	Main prayer hall in Naamghar
<i>Kaila Thakur</i>	Lord Krishna
<i>Khatkhati</i>	The bank of Hari Jaan Cannel
<i>Kewalia Bhakat</i>	Celibate devotees
<i>Kaila Thakur idol</i>	Krishna
<i>Lai khuta</i>	Two parallel rows of pillars usually run along the length, with the north-east most pillar, called the <i>lai khuta</i>
<i>Lata-phul</i>	Creeper flower
<i>Lakhmi</i>	Wife of Vishnu
<i>Laikhuta/ phulcoti</i>	North Eastern pillar in the Naamghar
<i>Manikut/ Jewel's hut/ Gurusana</i>	It is the place that represents the worship and Guru's seat in Naamghar. It is also a seven tier structure, wooden throne adorned by hybrid animal motif and scarlet red colour.
<i>Mukha</i>	Face masks used during traditional performance
<i>Madhavdeba</i>	First deciple of Srimanta Shankardev
<i>Murang-ghar/ Deka Chang</i>	It is the sitting room in Naga tradition
<i>Mridanga</i>	Musical instrument
<i>Maregan</i>	A type of Oja-pali
<i>Murang-Ghar</i>	Community bachelor boys home in Satra
<i>Medhi, Bujandar Bayan, Namgharia, Bilonia,</i>	Some of the officials in the organization of Naamghar in Assam
<i>Mah-saul</i>	The fruit and soaked green lentil offerings that are distributed after a service are almost always prepared at several homes, who are eligible to participate in food-serving.
<i>Mahapurusa</i>	Supreme Being
<i>Manjira</i>	Small cymbals
<i>Magars</i>	Crocodile
<i>Maati Akhora</i>	A posture performance in Majuli
<i>Mung</i>	Pulse
<i>Manjira</i>	Small cymbals
<i>Makoe</i>	Shuttle of a handloom
<i>Mach</i>	Fish
<i>Mayura</i>	Peacock
<i>Moksha</i>	Salvation

<i>Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narsimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna (Balarama) or (Buddha) and Kalki.</i>	Ten incarnations of God
<i>Madhab Sarover</i>	A place where Srimanta Madhabdev use to take bath with other <i>bhakats</i>
<i>Math</i>	First monastery made by Srimanta Shankardev and the area of Math was later constructed into residential place of Srimanta Madhavdeva with architectural style of Ahom kingdom.
<i>Mathor Sotal</i>	Open space in front of Math is known as ‘Mathor Sotal’
<i>Nahati Batchara</i>	Entry gate from west side of the Satra
<i>Naam loguwa</i>	The leader of the chant is called <i>Nam Lagowa</i>
<i>Nam Kirttana</i>	Nam-Prasanga/ the prayer-services/ Naam
<i>Naam prasanga</i>	Prayer by taking the name of God
<i>Naam acharya/ Naam logova</i>	Naam leader
<i>Naam acharya or Naamlogova</i>	The Naam leader
<i>Nayak mukha</i>	Balak krishna
<i>Naamghariya</i>	Keeper of the Naamghar
<i>Nagaon</i>	It is a district in Assam
<i>Naamghar/Kirtanghar/ Rangiyal-ghar</i>	A community prayer hall where people of Assam come together to recite the name of God.
<i>Naam Ghosha</i>	It is a Vaishnavite scripture of verses in praise of Lord Krishna written by Madhabdev in Assamese
<i>Naam</i>	Name
<i>Neo-Vaishnavism</i>	It’s a religious movement devoted to Ekasarana Dharma influenced two medieval kingdoms Koch and the Ahom’s
<i>Narahari</i>	It is a person from Ahom Kingdom
<i>Narottama</i>	It is a person from Naga community
<i>Nagas</i>	People from Naga community
<i>Naam kirtan</i>	Prayer by singing the devotional songs written by Srimanta Shankardev in Naamghar
<i>Nika</i>	A part of Sanhatis Satra
<i>Nagara</i>	Musical Instrument
<i>Naam-Prasanga</i>	Prayer in Naamghar
<i>Naamghariya</i>	Person is the Keeper of the Naamghar who cleans, sweeps, lights the lamps and maintains the Naamghar
<i>Oja-pali</i>	Performance by a team of performers
<i>Oresa Barnana</i>	Holy pilgrimage of Shankardev to Puri
<i>Paramananda</i>	Name of the person belonging to Miri (Mishing) tribe who became a Vaishnavite

<i>Prasad</i>	Religious eatable substance of food that is offered during prayer as a blessing from God
<i>Phulcoti</i>	Beams of Naamghars
<i>Puthi</i>	It's a book with sacred writings and scriptures
<i>Puranas</i>	Ancient Indian texts depicting narratives about the history of the Universe from creation to destruction
<i>Pat Chang</i>	It's a section where some religious and administrative special meetings are been conducted and it is 5 feet above from the ground
<i>Pragjyotisha</i>	<i>Pragjyotisha</i> was a mythological kingdom that later came to be associated with the historical Kamarupa. Assam was earlier known as Pragjyotisha
<i>Pat-dvar</i>	Main gateway
<i>Puthi</i>	Sacred manuscripts are hand-written on the bark of the Aguru-trees
<i>Paalor sari</i>	Line of chorus singers
<i>Prasanga</i>	Communal prayer
<i>Pathak</i>	Reader
<i>Polis/ Kathalis</i>	Open space in between two main posts
<i>Pat</i>	Part
<i>Padma</i>	Lotus flower
<i>Panchajanya shankha</i>	Conch
<i>Puthi chitra</i>	Illustrative scriptures
<i>Paalor sari</i>	Chorus singers
<i>Purusha</i>	Men
<i>Paalnaam</i>	Festival where Krishna is been taken out in a palki from the Satra
<i>Parvati</i>	Wicker-work frames (parvati) at the ridges and edges of the roof of the Naamghar
<i>Pat-dvar</i>	Main gateway
<i>Pandal</i>	Shades
<i>Puthi</i>	Sacred manuscripts
<i>Pathak</i>	Who reads the scriptures in Naamghar
<i>Paleng/Palang</i>	Bed
<i>Piras</i>	Stools with low height
<i>Pratham dwar/ Dalam</i>	Main gate of Naamghar
<i>Radha Krishna</i>	Names of Indian Gods
<i>Rangpata</i>	Tin foils
<i>Ripe bilva</i>	Wood apple
<i>Rasa and Bhava</i>	Bhava is the state of mind and Rasa is the aesthetic flavour that results from the Bhava
<i>Rangiyal phul</i>	It is a flower and had association with Srimata Shankardev
<i>Ranga Mancha</i>	It's a place where cultural activities and performance is practiced and performed in the Satra premises.
<i>Rangpata</i>	Tin foils
<i>Ripe bilva</i>	Wood apple fruits

<i>Rangali or rangiyal-ghar</i>	The kirtanghar thus presented a magnificent and colourful view and was therefore called rangali or rangiyal-ghar
<i>Ram</i>	Hindu god
<i>Satra</i>	Monasteries of the Ekasarana religion in Assam.
<i>Sattra</i>	Same as Satra which is used in this thesis, some authors/ old books writes likes Sattra
<i>Srimanta Sankardeva</i>	Vaisnav Saint of Assamese polymath. A scholar, poet, social-religious reformer, playwright and figure of importance in the cultural and religious history of Assam
<i>Saivism/ Shaivism</i>	Hindu religion devoted to Lord Shiva
<i>Sarvana</i>	Modes of bhakti (devotion)
<i>Shakti</i>	Power
<i>Satriya</i>	It is Indian classical dance-drama performance of Krishna in the Vaishnavism monasteries of Assam
<i>Shankari School</i>	It's a place where training of particular dance, painting and other art forms is been given in Assamese tradition.
<i>Srimad bhagwat gita</i>	Scripture in Sanskrit in Hindu epic Mahabharata
<i>Sarai/ Horai/ Xorai</i>	Offering tray with the stand at the bottom
<i>Sutradhara</i>	He recites the slokas, sings and explains the Bhaona performance on the stage.
<i>Sanchi paat</i>	Leaves of the Sanchi tree also known as Agar or Aquilaria
<i>Samhatis</i>	Oldest ancient texts in vedas consisting of hymns, mantras and prayers
<i>Sarengdar</i>	String instrument
<i>Sankari</i>	Lord Vishnu in the Bhagavata and his adherents are often called Sankari
<i>Sattriya Nritya</i>	It's a major classical dance in Assamese tradition
<i>Sonwal Kachari</i>	An indigenous Assamese community belong to Sino Tibetan
<i>Sabha-griha, Rangialghar, Guru-griha Atithisala, Dhan-bharal, Caul-bharal library, Patchang</i>	Different sections in Assamese Satra
<i>Singhasana</i>	The main guru's place where the sacred book is kept in Naamghar
<i>Singhsana/ Thapona</i>	The wooden Pyramid shaped throne for the object of worship (Holy Books) kept at the Eastern end.
<i>Sarengdhar</i>	Stringed instruments bowl made out of baked earth
<i>Silakutis</i>	Craftsmanship in stone work
<i>Sarais</i>	Trays
<i>Singha</i>	Lion
<i>Singha duar</i>	Lions gate situated in the Naamghar
<i>Saptam dwar</i>	Main door
<i>Shankha</i>	Conch

<i>Sudarshan chakra</i>	<i>Spinning disk like weapon or disk of auspicious vision</i>
<i>Serpent Shesha</i>	Serpent means snake and Shesha is said to hold all the planets of the universe on his hoods and constantly sing the glories of the God Vishnu from all his mouth.
<i>Shastra Adhyayan</i>	Holy book reading place
<i>Satria</i>	Music school
<i>Sabha Ghar</i>	A place where community bhakat conduct meetings
<i>Sanchipat</i>	The wooden columns are also draped with colourful woven textiles known as Sanchipat
<i>Sarengdhar</i>	Stringed instruments like sarengdhar, (bowl made out of baked earth), tokori, etc.
<i>Silakutis</i>	Craftsmanship
<i>Sudarshana Chakra</i>	Discus
<i>Shakti prateek</i>	Power
<i>Tantrism</i>	Set of ritualistic practices
<i>Tembuani</i>	Place in Berdowa, Assam
<i>Than</i>	Satra structure created by Srimanta Shankardeva in Assam
<i>Thapana</i>	A seven-tiered wooden throne in Naamghar or seat
<i>Tulsi</i>	Type of plant
<i>Tulapat</i>	Some books are written on paper made from silk-cotton called <i>tulapat</i>
<i>Thoga</i>	The Scriptural texts are placed on a stand called <i>Thoga</i>
<i>Thagi/ lectum</i>	Another beautiful carved object
<i>Taal</i>	Musical instruments
<i>Tulsi Kuta</i>	Long wooden pillars
<i>Thiti</i>	Death anniversary of Srimanta Shankardeva
<i>Udanto singha/ Naama Singha/Naamv\ghar rokheyas</i>	Particular kind of flying lion, which has been the symbol of Ahom kingdom and represents a mythical creature that is used as a metaphor for showcasing the might of the Supreme Hindu deity <i>Lord Vishnu</i>
<i>Uttar Hati Batchara</i>	Entry gate from North side of the Satra
<i>Uttar Dwaar</i>	<i>North gate</i>
<i>Vaishnavism</i>	Major traditions within Hinduism devoted to Vishnu (Supreme deity)
<i>Vishnu</i>	The supreme of all Gods and creator of the universe
<i>Vaikuntha samasara</i>	Heaven
<i>Vaikunth Dham/ Anant Sajja</i>	Where the god or Vishnu lives and <i>place of eternal bliss</i>
<i>Vishnu</i>	The preserver god
<i>Vishnu puran</i>	Holy text in Hinduism
<i>Vaikunthas</i>	The celestial abode of lord Vishnu
<i>Vedas</i>	Religious tests in ancient India
<i>Vrindavani vastra</i>	Drae woven by Assamese weavers under the guidance of Srimanta Shankardev depicting childhood activities of Lord Krishna

<i>Viharas</i>	A Buddhist monastery
<i>Verandah</i>	Open area or gallery
<i>Vaikuntha Samasara</i>	Like Heaven
<i>Xorai</i>	It's an offering tray with stand and cover to hold prasada and it is made of brass metal.



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MG	Main gate
O	Outer structure of building
MD	Main door
M	Manikut
P	Pillars
WN	Wall and Narratives
HD	Hall division
C	Chandratap
J	Jali work
D	Dash avatar
MI	Musical instruments
U	Utensils
S	Symbols
K	Krishna
FP	Flowers and plants
BA	Birds and animals
L	Lamp stand
NU	Naamghar Urban
NSU	Naamghar Semi Urban
NR	Naamghar Rural

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2. Monga, C. & Das, A. K. (2018). Namghar: Aesthetics and Identity of Social Cultural Institutional Architecture in Assam, India. (Y. H. Chiu, Ed.) *EOIJ* , 2577 - 2953.
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6. Monga, C., & Das, A. K. (2017). Cultural Construction: Design Aesthetics, Semiotics and Semantics Associated with Masks in Namghar—The Study of Its Design Aspects in the Island of Majuli, India. (A. Chakrabarti, & D. Chakrabarti , Eds.) *ICoRD 2017: Research into Design for Communities* , 2, 763-778.
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CHAPTER 1
Preface

Chapter 1: Preface

1.1 Introduction: Vaishnavism and Naamghar of Assam

Comprehension of religious faith and associated activity of institutions and its development is complex. Consequently, the elements have to be seen in the web of relation. For instance, the design of a religious place is not merely an exercise in architecture but it has to be reflected in the religious faith. Religion is a dynamic social activity having multiple paths. The relation to the faith as also the intended desired change in society goes together. The design elements may change with the changes in religious belief and so the changes in intricate elements and style ingredients available. There may be underlying continuity rooted in religious belief but its design expression may change differently over a period of time.

1.2 Research Context

Rapid modernization taking place in the 21st century especially in developing countries like India having multiple religious faiths has seen major changes in social, economic and environmental aspects. With these rapid changes, a major concern and challenge is to retain identity of socio-cultural institutions found in India. Design details of architecture and items used in these institutions with religious/social significance are hence, an important feature, which reveals the indigenous identity of these institutions. This study, focuses on understanding and documenting the identity of a social-cultural institution associated with Vaishnavism known as “*Naamghar*” found in Assam so that the essence of it as identity of Vaishnavism can be institutionalized to facilitate translating it for *Naamghar* to be established in future. It focuses on three major aspects of indigenous identity of *Naamghar* (Fig. 1.1):

- a. Visual design details of the exterior and interior of a *Naamghar*,
- b. Relation of design details with Vaishnava faith and
- c. Spatial and temporal evolution of *Naamghar*.

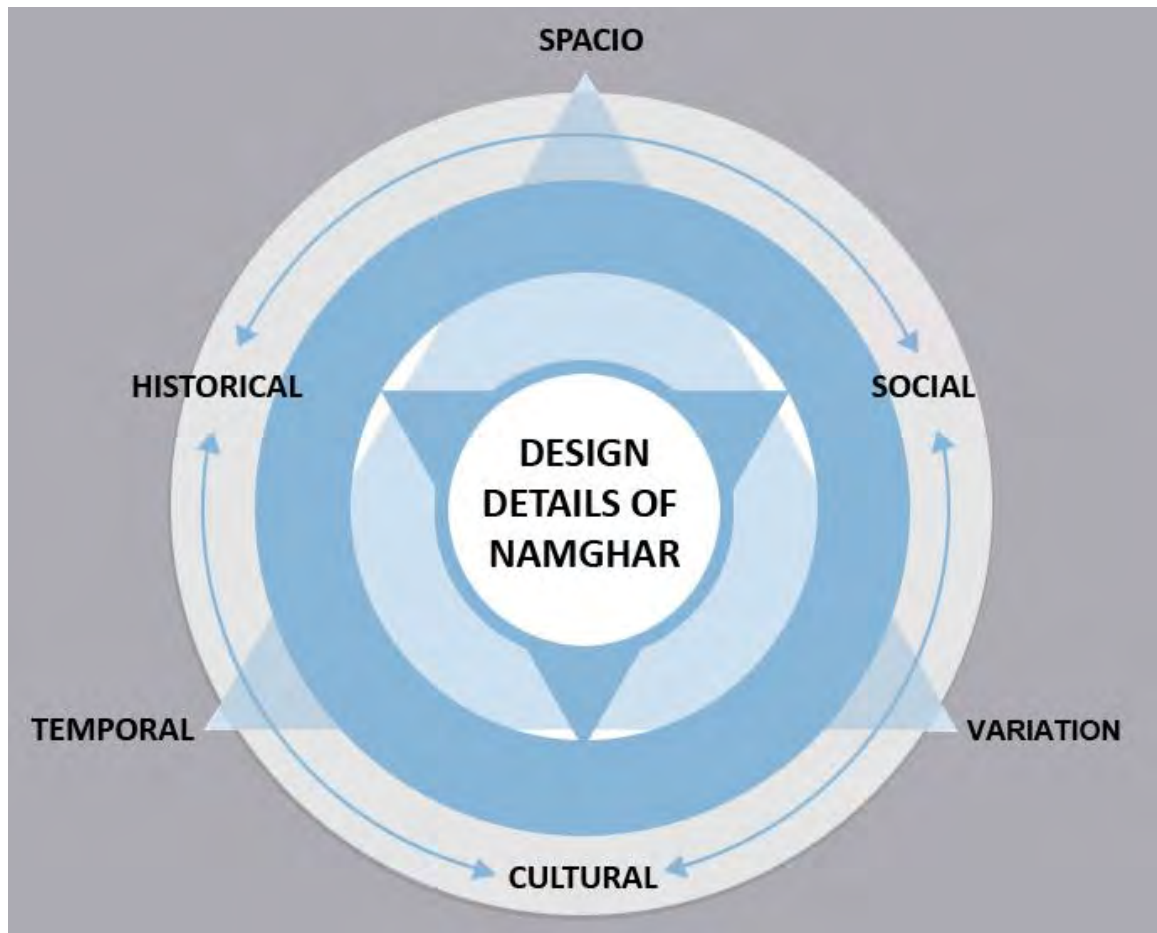


Fig. 1.1 Schematic diagram of key aspects related to design elements of *Naamghar*

1.2.1 Visual design details of the exterior and interior of a *Naamghar*: These refer to the architectural design elements and also any additional details referring to relief work, floral designs, ornamentation patterns etc.

i) Architectural design details deals with the harmonious roofed structure with an apsidal or conical façade, the cross beams, posts and horizontal placement of wooden beams, the position of *Rangiyal-ghar*, window-beaded lattice work (*kundraksha-jaala*), gaps between the windows, edges and ridges formation and their placement, *virtual division of space* between the pairs of the main pillars as compartments or rooms without any wall or curtain, placement of varandas, lighting and air circulation inside and around the *Naamghar*. Use of extended pandals or shades, shedding coloured lights in the dim interior (also to be kept in mind), the weather conditions, gable type roof structure on residential huts, decorated arches, domes and various characters. Carvings are some of the architectural details which needs special mention. Design of main entrance to the premise

of *Naamghar*, main door to *Naamghar* etc. are other architectural elements having enormous significance to its identity.

ii) Colour: From the beginning, colour played a significant role, like roof was formed by spreading red dyes, the colour of the *Manikut* (also called *Guruasana*)- a wooden throne adorned by hybrid animal motif, scarlet red colour of *Chandratap* (an ornamental cloth on top of *Manikut*), various other colours of the narratives on the walls of *Naamghar* and doors.

iii) Material: It includes the contribution of simple and locally available materials used in *Naamghar* like wood, bamboo, thatch, brass, clay etc. and how it has been changing as the society changed. Previously the walls were made using bamboo and wood, which is now transformed into cemented walls and thatch of roofs has been replaced with corrugated Galvanized Sheet. Natural materials were extensively used in *Naamghar* for decoration like chalk (*kharimati*) and mica along with glue, wooden carvings of *Garuda*, *Hanuman*, *Krishna lila*, birds and animals. Also carvings of tortoise-elephant-lion and other decorative wood work has been changing with some modifications. Door and wall panels, brass metal stands (*Gosa*) holding the *diya* (oil lamps), bamboo baskets, *Xorai* (to hold *prasad*) etc. were made using variety of material in them.

1.2.2 Relation of design details with Vaishnava sect: Vaishnavism was initiated in Assam in 15th century by Srimata Shankardeva and his disciple Madhavdeva. Due to this religious movement the initiation of cultural ecosystems like *Satras* and *Naamghars* had emerged. In these systems various performing arts, dances, arts and crafts like *mukha* (mask) making and *puthi* (book with sacred writings and scriptures) etc. were developed. In Vaishnavism, the central aspect is *Satra* where religious and socio-cultural activities took place. In the central part of *Satra* lies *Naamghar*, which is at the heart of a village connecting people by offering platform for integrating religious, cultural and social values. *Naamghar* became one of the most important public places for people to assemble after the daily rituals are over. Important discussions related to the village or community such as utilization of money raised from the various activities from the community, auctioning of fishing rights of common assets and agricultural practices/productivity were held. Thus *Satra/Naamghar* became identity of the Vaishnavism and its design elements acquired important place in the Vaishnavism.

1.2.3 Spatial and temporal evolution of Naamghar: *Naamghar* have evolved over a period of time. The basic philosophy of the *Naamghar* remains same but the change has taken place in terms of architectural design etc. Over a period of time due to non-availability of traditionally used material and skilled manpower for those materials has led to various transformation. Similarly, in recent times due to shortage of space in the cities, the size of the *Naamghar* had been modified. Busy lifestyle of the new generation has changed many things in the *Naamghar*. The architectural richness of *Naamghar* that stood testimony to its spirit is also losing out due to the growing impact of industrialized construction techniques; and changing pattern of construction workers with poor awareness regarding identity that the place should have is another important aspect. This poor awareness of identity of *Naamghar* amongst construction workers can be attributed to present situation where the construction workers are migrant workers from different cultural background. They implement/execute what is best known to them from their cultural background. Thus where migrant workers with Muslim background are engaged for construction of *Naamghar*, it is found to be influenced by Muslim architecture. Thus *Naamghar* is evolving in terms of its architecture over space and time.

When it comes to Majuli, land erosion due to flood is also one significant problem, since the island is on the bank of the river Brahmaputra and due to that massive physical loss has been taking place. With this situation, some *Satras* have been shifted out of their original location and this changing of location is leading to shifting of cultural connect of *Naamghar* with the society.

1.3 Research justification

Present day architecture may be seen as advocating global homogeneity, thereby dissolving the indigenous distinctiveness that imparted the identity and beauty to a place in a way. Cities have almost lost their spirit and have become soul less. It has become urgent need of the hour to identify the indigenous distinctiveness and qualities that forms the spirit of the place like *Naamghar*. Once, the intended research and analysis of its findings are in place, aim is to provide revival/remedial techniques of these qualities through architectural attributes and thereby uphold the cultural richness of *Naamghar*. Also with the emergence of new *Naamghars* in new settlements both in urban and rural areas, it is the need of the hour to decode the design of these structures as compared to the traditional once to facilitate proper identity for the upcoming new *Naamghars*.

The lack of evidence-based research and visual documentation of *Naamghar* in the urbanizing Assam and its fragmented areas in city forms forces the newly constructed *Naamghar* to not only change its architectural design but also to rethink the decision making process during the planning of the concepts. Methods of governance and guidelines became the need of the growing population, which needed to be focused by *Naamghar* and Government. The social acceptability of the community, cultural and architectural understanding need to be on a similar level. The magnitude with which present urban *Naamghar* are emerging and new ones being established in Assam, there is a strong need to prepare the guidelines in urban areas for the upcoming *Naamghar* with strong visual documentation in a systematic way to maintain a unique identity for *Naamghar*.

1.4 Research Gap

Lack of systematic visual data on *Naamghar*: As mentioned earlier over a long period of development of *Naamghar*, a number of them had undergone changes over time. Hence, there is unavailability of reliable visual data, which was unavailable.

Design Details: The lack of data availability and changes over time is one major research gap as an important query of the study is social linkages. The data was either partial or missing regarding precise relations.

Design: As a number of *Naamghar* under study have undergone major changes and continuity is also missing. It was a challenge for the research study to reconstruct the various relations and design elements and details.

External influence: The influence of varied groups and tribes in relation to institution of *Naamghar* is significant yet in systematic manner. This may be due to a number of reasons particularly changes of material changes over time. The study had to fulfil those research gaps to the extent possible.

Hence, following aspects were found to be lacking in particular:

- Systematic visual data on *Naamghar*.
- Design details of elements/assets of different *Naamghar* and their linkages with social, cultural and historical aspects.
- Research from spatio-temporal perspective in context of design.

- Systematic study on influence of external tribes etc. on elements/assets of different *Naamghar*.
- Study of variation in design elements of various *Naamghar*.

1.5 Research questions

The study has a complex issue at hand involving the inter-relation between the society and *Naamghar*; changes in its social expression with the religious belief and design elements. The study involves unfolding - the functional as also denotation of meaning through appropriate methodology. The research questions have been identified into the following four major categories. Also the study has been designed in a very systematic manner by planning an intensive interview schedule and various appropriate design experiments to extract required relevant data. Initial effort was to categorize questions in four categories as mentioned below:

A. Location/Foundation

- **When was *Naamghar* established? And who established it?**
 - i. Who were the founders?
 - ii. What was the vision of the group?
 - iii. What is the perceived relation between *Naamghar* & Society?

B. Physical structure and design elements

- **Details of the present physical structure (structure, pillars, walls, roof, space division and various design elements associated with the above (observation of research and discussions)).**
 - i. How is the space organized in the *Naamghar*? (As narrated by people in *Naamghar*)
 - ii. Was the physical structure modified at any time? What were the reasons for modifications (natural causes, desire of people or subtle factors?).
 - iii. What are the most significant design elements that gives the place an identity of a *Naamghar*.
 - iv. Future plans for *Naamghar*.

C. Religious organization

- **How various groups are formed (groups of caretakers, *Satradhikaris* etc.)**
 - i. How the change happened? Is it linked to other *Naamghars*? Do one visit other *Naamghars* or persons from other *Naamghars* visits here?
- **How does the religious organization sustain themselves (donation from devotees, patrons etc.)**
 - i. What part of funds is available for the maintenance of the *Naamghar*? Is it adequate?
 - ii. How much additional funds are required for the sustainability?

D. Relation with society

- **The occasions when people visit the *Naamghar* (daily, weekly, special occasions)**
 - i. What are the special occasions?
 - ii. To what extent are authorities of *Naamghar* satisfied with the contribution by the society for its sustenance?
 - iii. Has the *Naamghar* helped the society in any other ways other than religious aspects say at the time of natural calamity like flood, drought etc. or providing yearly guidance in the life of the devotees?
 - iv. How does society help the *Naamghar*? (like through donation, organizing special occasions, physical reconstruction of the *Naamghar*, contributing towards other *Naamghar*)
 - v. What are the changes that took place in physical and organizational structure of the *Naamghar* over time? What were the timeline for the changes?
 - vi. Future plans for *Naamghar* (like social upliftment)

1.6 Problem Statement

A study of the changes particularly with reference to socio religious and design elements as the institution of *Naamghar* evolved over time and expended by being established over various areas becomes significant. The *Naamghar* integrated a diversity of social groups as also led to cohesion so important for social existence. The design of *Naamghar* also underwent changes with its expansion.

It is consequently significant to study in detail of how the institution of *Naamghar* evolved over spatio-temporal changes, relations to society as also changes in design elements particularly.

The study is titled as: **The essence of *Naamghar* that evolved from *Vaishnavite* culture of Assam as a socio-religious institution over space and time is being lost in case of newly established *Naamghars* in absence of proper Identification of various design elements that are essential to be incorporated in it to retain its identity.**

1.7 Research Aim and objectives of the present study:

1.7.1 Aim: The research aims to: Identify the Design Elements in *Naamghars* of Assam in order to facilitate incorporation of these in *Naamghar* to be established in future to retain its identity as socio-cultural institutions as evolved from Vaishnavism propagated by Srimanta Shankardeva and maintain its continuity.

Above aim can be divided into sub-aim as given below:

- Identification and study of the basic structural element of *Naamghar*.
- Identification of Critical factors influencing changes in structural elements of *Naamghar* and their corresponding types.
- To investigate the changes in design elements of *Naamghar* over space and time and social dimension.

1.7.2 Objectives: To achieve the above aims, the specific objectives of this research is to:

- a) Explore and study the design elements of *Naamghar* over a period of time and track the changes and design details to enhance the design directions for upcoming *Naamghar*.
- b) Understand the levels of these changes, through study of the modification of *Naamghar* located in Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban areas and how the social and cultural aspect contributed in the level of variations in the *Naamghar* establish recently.
- c) Understand the mutual inter-relations among various religious, social and design elements. It is expected that there is same continuity in the apparent change. One of the major aim of the research is to identify this continuity.

- d) To identify the extent and nature of modification, which has happened over a period of time and whether these modifications has in any way influenced the identity of the place.

1.8 Method Used

Broadly the historical approach and interpretative approach was chosen as the appropriate method for the study. The movement of *Naamghar* started at a particular time in history and developed in various dimensions including religious, architectural, cultural and social relations. In a number of situations the relations were didactic. As the study needed comprehensive approach with denotative meaning, the method used is descriptive and interpretative.

Since large numbers of *Naamghars* are in existence in Assam, the study of all these were not possible in limited time span of doctoral research. So case study approach was undertaken. While conducting case study of the *Naamghars* in Assam, it was divided into three broad parts:

- To identify the key design elements, which are essential to be there in the *Naamghar*.
- To observe through the study of Architectural characteristics of *Naamghar* in Assam and identify the characters that gives the identity to the place.
- To identify the extent and nature of modification which has happened over a period and whether these modifications has in any way influenced the identity of the place.

1.9 Overview of Research Flow

Fig. 1.2 is the Schematic Diagram of the planned overall Research flow:

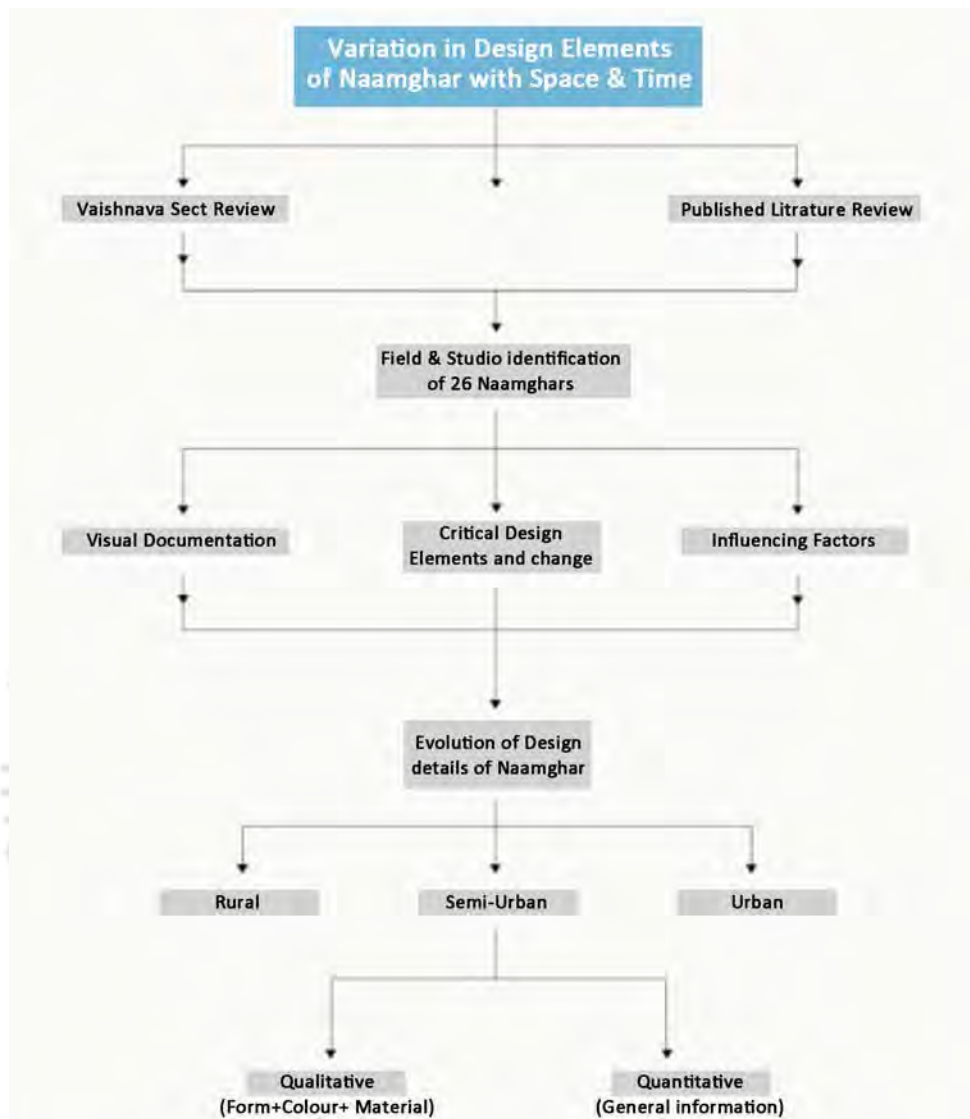


Fig. 1.2 Overview of research flow (Aims and objectives at top followed by major conclusions)

1.10 Research Strategy

In consideration with the major issues and research objectives, an integration of field survey, questionnaire, studio analysis (with image processing tools) and literature review was adopted (Fig. 1.3). Literature review conducted to design the overall strategy is shown in Table 1.1. Basic visual data collected through Field survey and questionnaire. After data collection, the data sampled and segregated for carrying data analysis. Image processing tools such as Image J and K-Means (machine learning algorithm) used for analysis for visuals data. This was particularly to identify scale and color. Various

materials used in *Naamghar* was identified directly using visual observation and through interviews. The pilot data analysis also helped to develop questionnaires for subsequent visits to *Naamghar*.

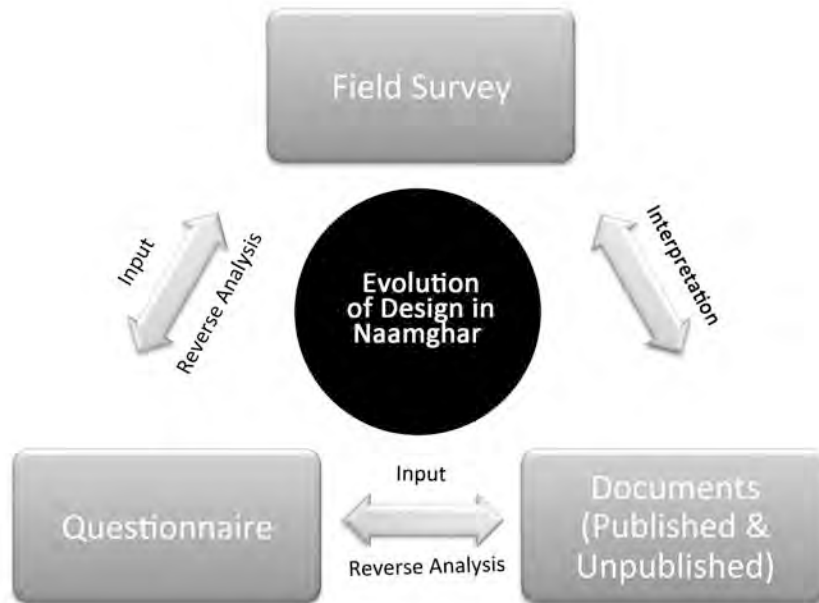


Fig. 1.3: Research strategy chart

Table 1.1 Research Strategy

1	2	3	4
Preliminary Study	Selection of Case Studies	Data Collection & Analysis	Findings & Interpretation
Define the research problem			
Review of the existing literature on <i>Naamghar</i> (cultural, social and chronological) and understand the relation between them.	Conducting archival study (history of <i>Vaishnavite</i> tradition and changes over time in Assam. Role of Srimanta Shankardeva in building the <i>Naamghar</i> .		
	Findings from prior studies done using various mediums particularly (Visit,		

	library work, ethnographic narration, and resources available on the Internet etc.)		
	Conducting an overview study of present <i>Naamghar</i> of Assam in rural and urban locations.		
Developing primary analytical and conceptual framework between cultural and historical understanding of <i>Naamghar</i> .			
Developing research strategy to analyse the relation between historical and present design elements of <i>Naamghar</i> .			
Identification of parameters for the study of design elements in <i>Naamghar</i> in rural, semi-urban and urban areas.			
Identification of preliminary indicators for the parameters (for the study and pilot testing).			
	<p>Conducting a study of socio-temporal context and overall structure of the <i>Naamghar</i>. Its location and population around it to identify the current scenario.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying the inspirational 	<p>Collecting Data:</p> <p>i). Literature review- Interview schedule was prepared with qualitative and quantitative methods.</p> <p>ii). Qualitative: Semi-structured</p>	<p>i. Translating the findings into a proposed set of design parameters for upcoming <i>Naamghar</i>.</p> <p>ii. Spatio-temporal changes will be identified and</p>

	<p>source of <i>Naamghar</i> and <i>Satras</i> within India and South East Asia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying similar architectural case studies Identifying the relationships with various tribes of North East India. Identifying case study areas for the study of selected parameters (qualitative and quantitative study). 	<p>and focus group interviews and non-participant observation.</p> <p>iii). The questionnaires will be prepared for various stakeholders; a pilot survey conducted using the questionnaire prior to administering it. This will lead to significant collateral evidence.</p> <p>iv). Quantitative: Mapping, measurements, identification, documentation with images and video were done. Voice recording, participatory approach analysis were used.</p>	<p>recommendations will be proposed from the design point of view.</p> <p>iii) Identification of elements which continue irrespective of the change.</p> <p>iv) Interpreting the changes in terms of elements of social relations and design.</p>
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The study of findings and their analysis will lead to an understanding of various facets of the institution of *Naamghar*. The use of varied design elements will lead to culturally recreating the *Naamghar* in a structured physical background.

1.11 Analysis/Inference

On the basis of the field visit and interviews, the study will attempt to analyze the basic elements related to *Naamghar* design and social relations. Particularly the study will focus on the following:

- The study of findings and their analysis will lead to an understanding of various facets of the Institution of *Naamghar*.
- The use of varied design elements will lead to culture re-creating of the *Naamghar*.

1.12 Checking and Validation

Structured interview was prepared for various stakeholders; the same was prepared for a pilot study before finalizing and administering them. This led to significant collateral evidences.

The data collected from field survey (visual and measurements on ground; interviews about specific questions such as personal data of respondents, year of establishment of the *Naamghar* etc.) were analyzed using various tools. The data collected in the form of visual and statistics is then analyzed in context of four main elements of design i.e., size (scale, proportion), form, colour and material. The data analyzed was compared with that of existing literature to identify differences and similarities and also state new findings. The key outcomes are expected to include the documentation of design elements of architectural elements of *Naamghar* as well as its variability with space and time. For visual analysis, tools such as Image J (Software manual; Rasband, 2011) and K-means algorithm (A Machine learning algorithm for pattern recognition in colors; Linde et al., 1980) was used, while for statistical analysis, Microsoft excel (2011) was utilized. Color palette consisting of various color lists with their proportion was identified in color analysis. The dimensions of design elements was identified for scale analysis. For form analysis, the shape of various design elements such as gate, palki, doors, pillars were identified. Data on physical material was mainly obtained from visual observation. The data related to general information of *Naamghar* was obtained through questionnaire. The entire data was interpreted together to understand the variations in design elements with respect to time and space.

In order to identify the essential elements of *Naamghar* the technique of card sorting was used. This involved showing multiple images of different parts and elements of *Naamghar*. This was done with four category of users. First, the internal people like *Satraadhikar*; second, the *Bhakats* and visitors; third, with local shop keepers and craftsmen around the *Naamghar* and forth with architects and policy makers of the *Naamghar*. The activity involved was arranging the images in the Typical to A-Typical in order to identify the essential elements of design of *Naamghar*.

1.13 Scope and limitations

1.13.1 Limitation of this research

- i. The holistic data for older *Naamghar* (in order of 100 years of age and above) are not available and details of these could neither be acquired fully from interviews. Hence, particularly the information related to very old *Naamghar* are limited and questionnaire method was applied extensively to gather information of past as far as possible.
- ii. Many *Naamghars* have already vanished and many of them have been modified and shifted. Because of that, it was difficult to collect the exact data with visual reference of the old *Naamghar*.
- iii. Some respondents (current caretakers) are not very experienced regarding establishment of *Naamghar*; therefore, the views especially on evolution of *Naamghar* over time from them may not have fully captured the desired data.

1.13.2 Future scope of study/ Sugestions for further study:

The study involves 26 *Naamghars* spread over different areas of Assam. The study was also focused on *Naamghars*' major social connections and design elements. However there are differences in *Naamghar* located in a *Satra* and a lone *Naamghar* in a village. It is suggested that a future study in this area can take up still larger number of *Naamghars* and other aspects like economic relations and inter relation with other religion.

1.14 Research contribution and expected outcomes

This research is an attempt to find essential design elements related to *Naamghar*, its design and social relations. The methodology is deeper than just observing the physical structure of *Naamghar* and will include interview schedules and capturing images, carrying out observations etc. The following outcomes are expected:

- Changes in *Naamghar* over spatio temporal dimention.
- Social relations with *Naamghar* with the changes involved.
- Study of various design elements with gradation of changes.
- Identifying the continuity regarding the changes of *Naamghar* and its social connections.
- Systematic visual data for *Naamghar* for future re-innovation or reconstruction purposes.

- Improved understanding of design details of *Naamghar* considering spatio-temporal factors.

1.15 Outline of the thesis report

The thesis is divided into 6 chapters and various topics covered under each chapter is as under:

Chapter 1 is Introduction chapter on Vaishnavism and *Naamghar* of Assam followed by Research Context, Research Justification, Problem statement, Research Gaps, Aim and Objectives of the research, Research Methodology adopted, Research Strategy, Analysis and Inferences from the research, Scopes and limitations of the research, Research contribution and expected outcomes, and Structure of the Thesis.

Chapter 2 is Literature review on the research area and covers various aspects of *Vaishnavism* as propagated by Srimanta Sankardeva, *Satra* Institutions and *Naamghar* along with various religious, cultural, architectural and design aspects related with *Satra* and *Naamghar*.

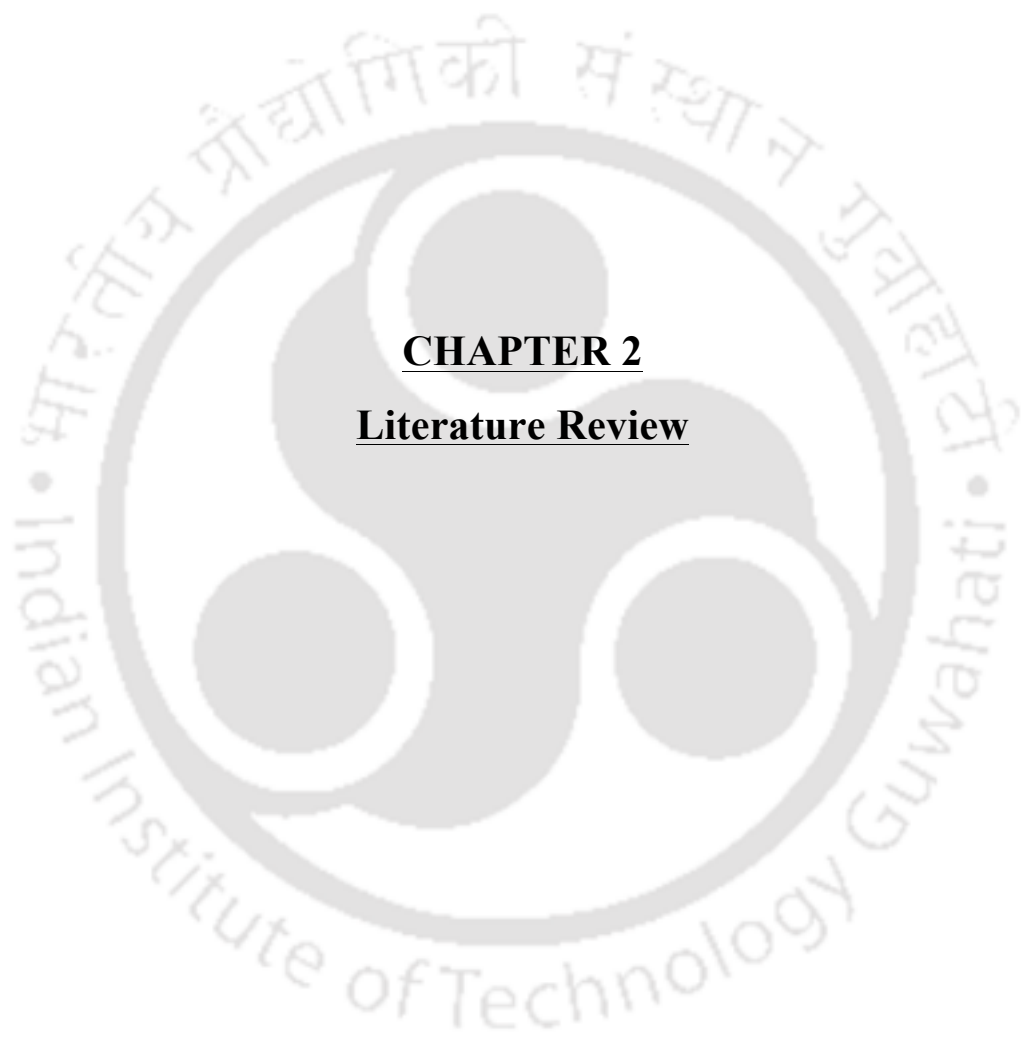
Chapter 3 covers Research Methodology adopted in the research and various techniques and tools used in the research.

Chapter 4 details various data collected during the research.

Chapter 5 deals with analysis of Data and its interpretations.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter of the thesis. Findings from the research, conclusions drawn from the research and recommendations based on the research is covered in this chapter.

In addition to the above, there are various Annexures and References place at the end of the chapters to complement the research work.



CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Chapter 2: *Satra and Naamghar of Assam*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is mainly literature reviews and provides an overview of *Satra* and *Naamghar* in Assam and its historical linkages associated with *Vaishnavite* tradition. Evolution of *Satra* and *Naamghar* and its associated cultural dimensions has been covered in this chapter. In Assam there are around 655 *Satras* and *Naamghars*, some are in Majuli and others are spread across Assam. The researcher has attempted to understand the strong traditions of *Satra* and *Naamghar* in Assam and unfold various underlined aspects. Attempt is also to understand various cultural, religious aspects associated with traditional *Satra* and *Naamghar* from the perspectives of design elements.

The Literature review was done by keeping in mind various studies from historical, social, cultural and design perspectives. Culture occupies an important place in any society and Assam has a long cultural tradition; however, the modern developments have affected the lifestyle and the importance culture plays in it. The traditions in terms of religious institutions like *Satra* and *Naamghar* continue to occupy an important place despite the changes in society. These can be considered to have a cultural strength of their own. The present study attempts to explore the design details of the *Naamghar* spread over wide area of Assam. The spatial-temporal development and changes will also form an important aspect of the study. The study will focus on the design elements in the *Naamghar* as they evolved and changed during various period of time and place. This study proposes to serve the purpose of making these findings available to a wider spectrum of design researchers working in this area.

The schematic diagram below (Fig. 2.1) illustrates various elements involved in the research from different perspectives like historical point of view, cultural, social, design, and study of *Vaishnavite* tradition to understand various dimensions associated with the *Naamghar*.

Naamghar in Assam was introduced by the *Vaishnavite* Saint Srimanta Sankardeva between 15th and 16th century AD. Srimanta Sankardeva was a great social reformer. He initiated new ideas and it gave birth to a new religious practices nurturing simple believable faiths by the people.

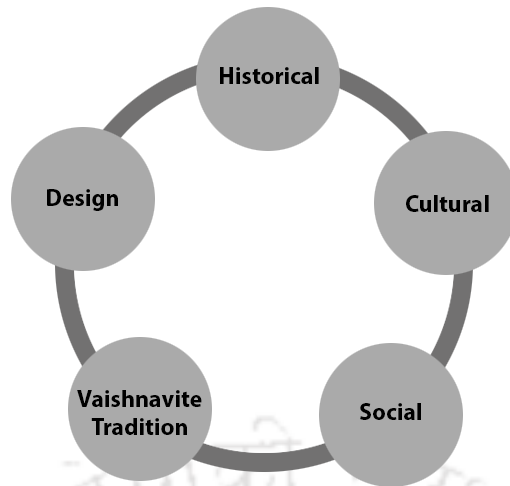


Fig. 2.1: Different perspectives of study (Diagram: Researcher)

It was considered that during the mediaeval period, the ruling classes dominated the society's structure for a long time through dominance of power, wealth and ritualism (Urban, H. B., 2001) and had suppressed other communities of Hinduism. Various mal-practices were committed against population having faith in different religious practices. These situations compelled the Hindu scholars to evolve a manageable and liberal faith that would be more appropriate. These sequences of movements came to be like Vaishnavite Bhakti movement. This brought a renaissance in the socio-religious life of the people and was welcomed by various sections of classes, castes and religions. Behind this movement, there was motivation to bring everyone to equal level and give birth to equality.

Naamghar is an institution associated with the basic building blocks of Assamese society. It's not only a place of worship but also a central meeting point where all the people discuss about the issues related to their society. *Naamghar* function in the society as the meeting points of congregations, as well as theatre of dramatic performances like *Bhawona*, *Raas lila* and many other cultural activities. The *Naamghar* is also called as *Kirtanghar*. These are the central core structure of *Satra* of Assam (monasteries of the *Eka Sarana* religion). Also one can find these wide spread across Assam in almost every village. One can find more than a single *Naamghar* in some of the villages, which signifies many congregational communities (Bhattacharjee, 2006)

This research explores the layers of cultural re-construction of design elements, which brings people of Assam together. Here the *Naamghar* tradition has been taken as a case study for the above. The word '*Naamghar*' consist of two Assamese words, '*Naam*'

meaning ‘Name’ and ‘*Ghar*’ meaning ‘House’. Thus it is a place of congregational worship associated with the *Eka Sarana* religious traditions of Assam.

2.2 History of the Region: Assam

2.2.1 Historical linkages and political changes:

From the beginning of the 13th century, the ancient kingdom of Kamrup was going through a process of disintegration (Nath, 1989). There were various tribes, which were residing in different regions of Assam. They were not very much connected with each other. The ancient kingdom of Kamrup was under deterioration and going through many unpredictable changes. The whole Assam from Dikkaravasini region in eastern side to Karatoya River in the west fragmented into various small kingdoms (Fig.2.2). Although some of these kingdoms were not able to survive for a long time, there were several kingdoms, one of which was Chutiya kingdom in eastern most track of Assam. The west side of Chutiya kingdom was covered by Ahoms and Kachari kingdom. In the western side of Assam were erstwhile districts of Kamrup, Goalpara and Coch-Bihar of Bengal (Fig. 2.3). These were part of *Kamata* rajya (Kingdom) during 14th and 15th century. Towards south side of the river Brahmaputra lies Nagaon. Further during that time with the leadership of Bishwa Simha, who was in strong political power, *Kochs* emerged in the Western part of Assam (Neog, 1998). Maheswar Neog in his work has documented the development of various regions of Assam over time and also drew a parallel between the evolution of the Caritas and the ‘expression of *Vaishnava* order over the three states of Assam, Kamarupa and *Koch-Bihar*.



Fig.2.2: Koch and Ahom in 16th Cent. A.D (Image: Wikipedia)

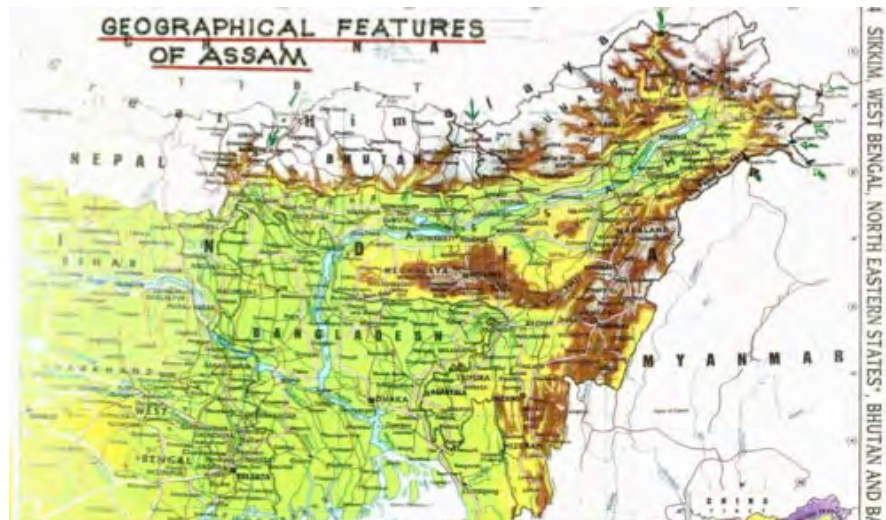


Fig.2.3: Geographical features of North Eastern states of India (Image: Wikipedia)

There were political un-stability and conflict as various powers in the region was trying to achieve supremacy over various other powers and giving rise to political conflicts. This un-stability brought up the political chaos. There were many distinguished tribes in the region following different faiths, beliefs and traditions. Also with this, in the society there were many other backward classes. Some of them were indigenous population who were following their own beliefs.

Assam in the 15th century showed a very distinguished picture of faiths with didactic shades and variations in culture, as most of the population belonged to non-Aryan tribes with distinct customs and beliefs. Communities who believed on Hinduism moved partially towards *Vaishnavism* and *Saivism* bordering on extreme *Tantrism* (Neog, 1998) were also increasing. The followers of these beliefs were into various malpractices like animal sacrifice or sometime even human sacrifice, magical spells etc. Because of all this malpractices, communities were getting involved into such disturbing practices. On the other end of the religious spectrum was the tribal population who were following their own indigenous faiths (Neog, 1998).

2.3 Neo-Vaishnavite Movement in Assam: Preaching of Srimanta Sankardeva

The *Neo-Vaishnavism* movement in Assam begun in the 15th century. Emergence of the social reformer, Srimanta Sankardeva (Fig.2.4) had taken place during the same time. He was born in present Nagaon district of Assam in the *Ahin* month of

Sakabda 1371, (September-October, 1449 AD) at Tembuani (Bordowa) in Assam (Bhuyan, 2008). He was a multifaceted genius spiritual leader, a prolific writer and a master playwright and composer. He created the foundation of the Assamese culture and shaped the new religion, '*Eka Sarana Naam Dharma*' bringing refreshed values and social synthesis, which helped in bridging the gaps among various communities.

When Srimanta Sankardeva was born in Assam during the fifteenth century, the Northeast India was known for different ethnic groups. Those ethnic groups were *Karbi, Ahom, Chutiya, Naga, Kuki, Luchai, Manipuri Meitei, Mising, Khasi, Jaintia, Barahi, Moran, Matak, Deuri, Bodo, Koch, Mech, Garo, Rabha, Tiwa, Dimasa, Kachari, Tipra, Hajang, Adi, Khamti, Dafala, Sherdukpen, Misimi, Monpa* and different castes such as *Brahmana, Kalita, Kayastha, Kaivarta, Daivajnya, Kumar, Bonia*, etc. Out of these tribes, and castes, *Bodo, Koch, Mech, Garo, Rabha, Tiwa, Dimasa, Tipra and Kachari* have anthropological and linguistic similarities. There was also influence from Tibeto Mongolian side as many tribes came from there. With so many varied and diverse communities, many critical situations of frictions were taking place in the region. Under this condition, a mode of worship for masses, which would be simple and at the same time accessible to all was required and constituted the pressing need of the time (Bhuyan, 2008).



Fig. 2.4: Srimanta Sankardeva (Indianetzone, 2015)

'*Eka Sarana Naam Dharma*' started by Srimanta Sankardeva focused on the belief of single God, 'Lord Krishna-Vishnu'. *Eka Sarana* means 'Surrender to One' – Single Almighty, who can be worshiped solely by uttering his various names (Naam). Maheshwar

Neog (Neog, 1998) in his work, '*The Contribution of the Srimanta Sankardeva Movement to the Culture and Civilization of India*' mentions that Srimanta Sankardeva propagated that God can be reached through *Kirtan* and *Sarvana* modes of bhakti (devotion) to be sufficient, as mentioned in the *Bhagavad-Purana*. This philosophy of worship was acceptable to the people from all community irrespective of births, caste, creed and status in the society from highest to lowest levels of men and women alike and there were no hard and fast rules to be followed by the devotees. Srimanta Sankardeva did not approve the concept of worship of idol as a form of God. The cult of *Radha Krishna* is not acknowledged in the Vaishnavism, nor the form of Shakti of Lord Vishnu to be recognized. The book, '*Srimanta Sankardeva and Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam*' describes in detail, emergence and growth of Vaishnavism and major changes and also mentions that there was no distinction in regards of caste when the devotee is praying to God. This was also written in Srimanta Sankardeva's famous work, *Kirtan-Ghosa* (Bhuyan, 2008). In one of the quote in *Kirtan Ghosha*, Srimanta Sankardeva says:

Nāhi bhakatita jāti-ajāti vicāra

There is no difference in Caste and Creed in Devotion (Worship)

- Kirtan Ghosa

2.3.1 Features of Neo-Vaishnavite Movement:

It is mentioned in '*Srimanta Sankardeva and Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam*' that Neo-Vaishnavism has four fundamental elements:

- I. God
- II. *Guru* (the religious preceptor)
- III. Devotees (The fraternity of *Bhakats*)
- IV. *Naam*

The religion propagated by Srimanta Sankardeva, '*Eka Sarana Nama Dharma*' is also known after Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva as *Mahapurusha Dharma*, advocating towards *dasya* or servitude towards God. It refers to the highest and the supreme (Mahapurusha) being '*Narayana-Vishnu-Krishna*' (Bhuyan, 2008).

2.3.2 Social dimensions of Neo-Vaishnavism propagated by Srimanta Sankardeva:

Vaishnavism propagated by Srimanta Sankardeva went beyond religion as known in its traditional sense to a kind of socio-cultural renaissance in the region of Assam. Impact of Srimanta Sankardeva on the society and culture is immense. The new genre of philosophy, music, art and other forms were propagated. He authored plays, hymns, songs, philosophical treasures etc. The various dimensions of his personality are highly commendable. A novel and acceptable style was created for Assamese people. Srimanta Sankardeva developed a whole gamut of cultural activities. He composed devotional songs came to be known as *Borgeets* (devotional hymns heralding a new classical school of music), *Ankiya Nats* or *Bhaona* (one act play performance popular within the masses with themes of *Bhagavad-Purana* and *Ramayana*), *Satriya* dance (Fig 2.5) as modes of conveying the principles of '*Eka Sarana Naam Dharma*', devotion towards Lord Krishna - Vishnu based on spirit of equality and humanism, found concrete manifestation in the institution of the *Naamghar* (Bhuyan, 2008). He developed a new school of painting, music and dance. The school of painting was called as '*Sankari School*' of painting. He initiated the new thought of epoch-making drama, *Ankiya Nats* with first one being '*Chinha-yatra*' (enacted in 1468 AD) at Tembuani at Bordowa in Assam (Neog, 2006). It was the first play in any modern Indian language. This drama started with new era of cultural history of India. Others plays are *Patni Prasada*, *Kaliya Damana*, *Keli Gopala*, *Rukmini Harana*, *Parijat Harana*, *Janma Yatra*, *Gopi Uddhava Sambhda*, *Kangsa Badha* and *Sri Rama Vijaya* (Borkakoti, 2006). In his plays he highlighted the glory of Lord Krishna and eventual victory of the Krishna-devotees (Fig.2.8). The importance of truth has also been highlighted.

It was a regional drama movement in medieval India. Srimanta Sankardeva depicts seven *Vaikunthas* (the celestial abode of lord Vishnu) in scrolls, which were used as backdrops. It was the first play in the world, which was using drop-scenes (Borkakoti, 2006).

The saint litterateur helped the drama movement grow in India. Srimanta Sankardeva wanted that everyone should understand the plays; so most of his plays were in Assamese language of that period and he used the *Brajāvali*, (an artificial mixture of Braj and Assamese) (Bhuyan, 2008), in his plays. Songs were in *Brajāvali*. He focused upon the importance of community singing and praise of Krishna by depicting his stories in a singing format. *Kirtan Ghosha* can be seen in every house and *Naamghar* of Assam.

People sit together and sing the *Naam* from *Kirtan Ghosha* with supporting instruments to bring a dramatic effect in his songs and dramas (Sinha, 2012).



Fig. 2.5: *Satriya* dance in Vaishnava monasteries Majuli (Image: Wikipedia, 2016)



Fig. 2.6: A posture of *Maati Akhora* in Majuli (Image: Wikipedia, 2016)

The Vaishnavas introduced many new festivals and saints' days in their calendar, and these doubtless, widened the scope for dramatic performances and recreations for the mind and spirit of the worry-ridden common man (Fig.2.6 & 2.7).



Fig. 2.7: *Bahar Nritya* (Image: Wikipedia, 2016)



Fig. 2.8: *Rass lila* at Dakhinpat *Satra* (Image: Wikipedia, 2016)

Another noteworthy aspect was that although he took ingredients from different *Kavyas* and scriptures like *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Srimad Bhagwat Gita* and different other Sanskrit scriptures, he developed a number of original compositions. So when his plays were enacted and the songs were sung, his hymns were chanted, people from different tribes like *Boro*, *Mishing* and many tribal people received the very feeling of oneness and they easily got connected to the Srimanta Sankardeva's movement. His plays were different from Sanskrit plays (Richmond, 1974). He repeatedly said in his writings that one should not torture and sacrifice any creature, because that creature in turn tortures the other

world. This concept confers equality upon all creatures, not only among human beings. He was not merely a religious leader but very strongly an educationist in his own inimitable way (Bhuyan, 2008).

His plays were global as people from all the age group from child to elderly were part of it. He had compiled two hundred forty *Borgeets* (devotional songs), which were later taken by one of his devotees for memorizing and in a mishap the book of songs were burnt. With this Srimanta Sankardeva was very upset. So, later Madhavdeva revived around one hundred ninety one *Borgeets*. Some of them were the combined compositions of Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva also translated many kandas (parts/chapters) of the epic Ramayana. Madhavdeva also authored a book name '*Naamghosha*'. Madhavdeva later requested Srimanta Sankardeva to write *Kirtanghosha* book, where devotee can find the '*Eka Sharana Nama Dharma*' and also get help in learning the philosophy and devotion.

2.3.3 Emergence of social reforms:

In 15th century, the *Neo-Vaishnavite* movement had started and reached its climax towards the middle of the 17th century. It all started with the cut down of malpractices taking place in the society and led to upliftment of the people, classes and minimization of caste practice and the belief towards backwardness in the society and included tribes into the fold of *Vaishnavism*.

Srimanta Sankardeva advised his disciples to consider all creatures as manifestations of God and wrote:

Kirata Kachari Khasi Garo Miri
Yavana Kanka Gowala
Asama Muluka Dhoba je Turuka
Kubacha Mlechcha Chandala
(Bhagavad/2/53) - Kirtan Ghosa

Meaning: The *Bodos*, the *Kacharis*, the *Khasis*, the *Garos*, the *Misings*, the Muslims, the cow-rearers, the launderers, the untouchables, the pyre-lighters are all in the land of Assam. Thus acceptance of the tribal people in the '*Eka Sarana Nama Dharma*' was not a strategic maneuver by Srimanta Sankardeva, but a sincere effort to bind the people together. So the '*Eka Sarana Nama Dharma*' became a tool for social integration in the

Brahmaputra valley. Neo-Vaishnavism movement became the mass movement as it was connecting people from various tribes like *Nagas, Kochs, Kachari, Chutiyas* etc. who were called untouchables and lower caste were now able to take the new creed of Vaishnavism. They could take part in the cultural activities taking place in the Assamese villages. In his writing '*Early history of the Vaishnava faith and movement in Assam*' (Neog, 1965)

The devotees or fraternity of *Bhakats* following the preaching of Srimanta Sankardeva consisted of people belonging to various tribes like *Govinda* from *Garo* tribe; *Paramananda* from *Miri* tribe (Mishing); *Narahari* from Ahom; *Narottama* from Naga community; *Jayarama* from *Bhutiya* community and *Candsai* a Muslim disciple. Gopaldeva who came from the Ahom kingdom was a disciple of Madhavdeva. He also later created many *Satra* in different parts of the Brahmaputra valley.

Nowadays Bhutan is considered outside the North Eastern region of India. But Bhutan was considered as part of this region in the medieval period due to cultural and economic ties. The people of Bhutan maintained close cultural relationship with the people of the North East. A Bhutiya person, named Jayananda took the '*Eka Sarana Nama Dharma*'. He was a Mahout for elephant. No other name of Bhutiya devotee is found on record. But it is known that both Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva accepted many Bhutiya people in the '*Eka Sarana Nama Dharma*' fold. The move also became popular among the Ahom people.

At the same time movement brought the cultural upliftment of the people from various tribes. Srimanta Sankardeva's disciples were spreading his teachings. A democratic outlook transforming the practices in Assam. On the other side people believed on reaching towards the God's acceptable form and this was bringing down the metaphysical heights to the reach of the ordinary people. With this the status of human being was elevated by this connect of God and soul (Neog, 1998).

When this whole movement had started, it faced lot of difficulty and hardship from opponents and from the state. The whole religious reform came up with Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva and his disciple Mahapurusha Madhavdeva. It was difficult to take a stand but later when the difference crop up between *Kochs Kings* of western Assam and *Ahom Monarchs* with regard to the Neo-Vaishnavism, the state had to acknowledge it by starting of the 18th century. By this time Neo-Vaishnavism got established in the Brahmaputra valley area with a huge mass followers (Bhuyan, 2008).

2.4 Introduction of *Satra* Institution and design forms:

The most famous feature of Vaishnavism in Assam is *Satra* and Srimanta Sankardeva was the father of Assamese culture. The *Satras* are unique institutions with multidisciplinary socio-religious and architectural domain with its distinctive characteristics (Borkakoti, 2005). “*The Satras also served as centers of literary production and mainly of religious type*”(Neog, 1998). Nilanjana Gogoi (Gogoi, 2016) presented very detailed description on architectural components of typical *Satra* or *Naamghar*. “*There are various art forms practiced in the Satra, notably the art of wood carving, manuscript writing, paintings and mask making performance*”. The unique architectural forms and details of the *Satra* created lot of interest in minds of the kings, nobles, and devotees as well (Neog, 1998). Numerous stylish features, unique motifs, highly decorative, varied ranges of colour, secular and religious themes, precise arrangement, compositions and particular characters can be observed in architectural forms of typical *Naamghar*. “*The organic body of Satra is composed of several essential elements based on the environmental sphere, religious realm and materials availability which unite to form the basic structure*” (Gogoi, 2016).

From architectural point of view, the design of the *Satra* institution has been also influenced by various external (or foreign) tribes culture, who had travelled from different parts such as Bhutan, Thailand, Mongolia, and other parts of East Asia (Guha,1984). The movement of people (Bhagawati, 2002) from different neighboring parts around Assam influenced many changes in *Satra*. Assamese culture is developed under the great dynasties of *Pragjyotisha-Kamrupa*, during the first millennium AD. “*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 of different ethno-cultural groups under various socio political systems in different periods of history*” (Gait, 2013).

It can be observed that the multi-dimensional institution (i.e., *Naamghar*) was inspired from *Murang-ghar* or *Deka Chang*, which was actually originated from Nagaland Tribe (Bhuyan, 2008). The most important pillar in *Naamghar* has its roots in Ahom, which is the main language of Tai people of Ahom kingdom (Dutta, 2011). The uses of *Garuda* motifs, an auspicious, guarding and destroyer of pride are very common in monuments in South East Asian countries, especially Mongolian culture (Mahanta, 2007).

Similarly, *Mukha Bhaona* (mask plays), *Ankiya naat* has its origin in South East Asian countries. *Gong* is a musical instrument, which also has its roots in South East Asian countries such as Thailand, Myanmar and also China. Some similarities with the Buddhist monasteries or *Viharas* (Neog, 1998) can be found in terms of architectural aspect. “*The arrangement of Satra as described above often evokes comparison with the Buddhist monasteries or Viharas with the provision of monk’s dwelling. But the influence of two other types of religious institutions, more than Buddhist Viharas, seems to have gone deep into the origin of Assam’s Satra. Those are the great Vaishnava shrine, the Jagannatha temple, Puri being the chief amongst them, and secondly, the residential institutions of various monastic communities of India, chiefly those of the schools of Sankaracharya and Ramananda. It is, however to be noted that the Vaishnava establishments of Assam are generally called Satra, and not Maths. This name seems to have taken from the Bhagavad-Purana, where it occurs in numerous places*” (Neog, 2004).

2.4.1 Neo-Vaishnavite movement and emergence of *Satra*:

Assamese identity got culminated as a result of Vaishnavite movement. *Satras* are the institutions where one can connect single-mindedly with the God in synchronization with devotees and *Bhakats* under the guidance of Guru (teacher). *Satras* became popular and came into existence with its propagated religious belief within a century of its inception. These are in a central network even though function as decentralized monasteries.

Srimanta Sankardeva made first *Naamghar* at Tembuani, Bordowa, which is his birthplace. This *Naamghar* was just a hall (a place for prayer) and devotees use to stay in the houses around it which are within the compound and perform the *Naam Kirtan* together with others. There was no concept of idol or physical form of god in the *Naamghar*; instead a book mostly Bhagavad (symbolizing god) was kept. Most of the cultural activities and performances used to take place in the *Naamghar* only.

The large part of Neo-Vaishnavite movement by Srimanta Sankardeva happened in western part of the Brahmaputra valley and after his demise, the place was patronized by his disciple Madhavdeva (Bhuyan, A. 2008). Later Madhavdeva sent 12 disciples of Srimanta Sankardeva to different parts of Assam for spreading his preaching (*Eka Sarana Nama Dharma*). This has resulted into emergence of *Samhatis* (Table 2.1) of *Satra* (i) *Purusha*, (ii) *Nika*, (iii) *Kala* and (iv) *Brahma* (Nath, 2014).

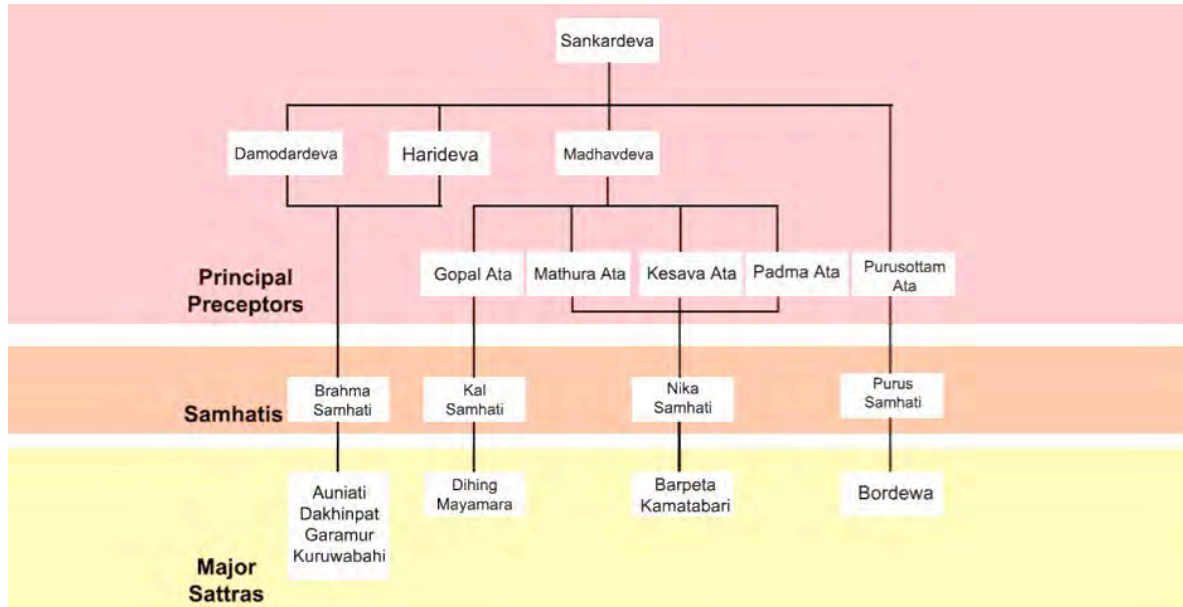


Table 2.1: Flow chart showing Sankardeva and founders of the sub-sects (Borkakoti, 2006)

2.4.2 Understanding Satra:

Satras are huge monasteries, which contributed towards the growth of Neo-Vaishnavism. There are around 862 *Satras/Naamghars* in Assam. *Satras* are the hub of many cultures, art forms, center of educational practices etc. Srimanta Sankardeva founded the first *Satra* in 15th century in Majuli and 65 more *Satras* came up to spread his preaching and have the socio-cultural connect in the society. Due to heavy rain, annual flood and increasing flow of the river Brahmaputra, the island of Majuli started deteriorating and erosion started in an unprecedented way. Out of the total 65 *Satras* only 22 *Satras* remained in Majuli and rest of them were shifted to other safe places (Chowdhury, Dutta, 2014).

Some of the significant, existing *Satra* in Assam are *Dakshinpat Satra*, *Garamur Satra*, *Auniati Satra*, *Kamalabari Satra*, *Bengenati Satra*, *Samaguri Satra*, *Batadrawa Satra* and *Barpeta Satra*. Banamalidev founded ‘*Dakshinpat Satra*’ famous for *Raasutsava* also called *Raas leela*. During the festival time *Dakshinpat* is filled with people. Lakshmikantadeva founded ‘*Garamur Satra*’ and some of the most ancient weapons are preserved here like “*Bortop*” (canons). This *Satra* also celebrates *Raas leela* festival (Das, 2013). ‘*Auniati Satra*’ was founded by Niranjan Pathakdeva and it is very famous for ‘*Paalnaam*’ and Apsara performance; also it has most ancient utensils, jewelry and handicrafts. Another *Satra* named ‘*Kamalabari Satra*’ was founded by Bedulapadma and it is famous as a center of art, culture, literature and classical studies. ‘*Bengenati Satra*’ was

founded by grandson of Srimanta Sankardeva named Muraridev of Sankardeva's stepmother and it's very famous for cultural antiques; also a center of performing art. Ahom king, Swargadeo Gadadhar Singha's royal robes made of gold and golden umbrella are preserved here. 'Samaguri *Satra*' is another *Satra* famous for mask making crafts. 'Batadrawa *Satra*' is in Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva's birthplace and a central place of Vaishnava art and culture in Nagaon, Assam. 'Barpeta *Satra*' established by Madhavdeva 500 years back and Sankardeva stayed here for eight years and written best literature. He later gave the responsibility of this *Satra* to his disciple Sri Sri Mathura Das Burha Ata (1490-1596 AD), who had taken as the in charge and became the first *satria* of Barpeta *Satra*. It was on Burha's shoulder and he systematized the administration of the *Satra*, which later flourished the Barpeta region (Das, 2013). The *Satra* is a huge structure and it has many buildings from the main *Naamghar* to *hatis* (houses for monks), theatre area etc. The front gate is called 'Batsora' and then comes the *Kirtanghar* where all the *Naam Prasang* takes place. The house was built with locally available raw material supported with big pillars. *The wood carving was one of the significant fields which evolved in the direct response to the movement and the Bhakti cult began to flourish as an essential element of art of the people. The local artisans created aesthetic and stylistic variation in the medium of wood and represented various narratives on the walls of Satra (Gogoi. N, 2016).* In the 'Bhajghar' a lamp depicting bhakti is burning since last 500 years also called *Akhay banti* and it's a very important part of this *Satra* (Bhuyan, 2012).

2.4.3 Integration of dance forms in *Satra*

Srimanta Sankardeva created the composite Assamese culture with ingredients from all ethnic groups. This system was also derived from indigenous tradition of Srimanta Sankardeva. Srimanta Sankardeva also had ready images and ingredients to use as materials in his performing arts, be it dance or music. The ethnic groups of the Brahmaputra valley are very rich in different performing arts. He used some of the ethnic ingredients in constructing his performing art forms. There are many dance forms, which are practiced in the institutions of *Satra*. The tradition of Indian classical dance was actually derived from Assam. The dance form of Srimanta Sankardeva is now known as both *Sankari dance* and *Satriya dance*. The name *Sankari* dance is based on the belief that the first creator of this dance was Srimanta Sankardeva. On the other hand, the name *Satriya* dance is based on the belief that mostly the *Satra* institution, which was founded

by the saint, preserved the dance form. The *Sankari* and *Satriya dances* were developed for the first time in the *Ankiya Nat* or *Sankari plays* (Bhuyan, (2008).

On one side, Srimanta Sankardeva incorporated his songs in the *Ankiya Nat* and this resulted in the songs (of *Ankiya plays*) rendered by a group of *Gayana-Bayana* (singers and instrumentalists or drummers of *Sankari* music). “*The Sonowal Kachari tribe of Assam had their own Gayana-Bayana, which was also derived from the same tradition, who were known as Gandharava Gayana and played using the drum Mridanga, where Srimanta Shankaradeva replaced the Mridanga with Khol*” (Barthakur, 2003). Thus the *Sankari Gayana* is an improved version. He also incorporated new rhythms as well as hand and foot movements. Many of the hand and foot movements of *Sankari* dance form were taken from the ethnic dances of Assam. *Karbi, Mising, Bodo* tribes etc. contributed in plenty to the creation of *Sankari* dance form. For instance, the *Hai-re, Pallava, Maire*, and hand-posture of *Sankari* or *Satriya* dance was derived from the Mishing community dance practices. These postures are not found in the classical Indian dances. The costumes used by the artists in *Sankari* dances were of indigenous origins and specialty. The dress of the Oja or leader in the Oja-pali dance is similar to that of *Sutradhara* to a great extent (Gogoi, 2016). The headgear worn by the *Sutradhara* came from the Jaintia tribe. The jacket worn on the upper part of the body came from the *Khangaliphaga* of the *Tiwa* tribe. In case of *Ankiya plays*, the presentation by the ‘*Sutradhara*’ resemble the presentation by the ‘*Sutradhara*’ of the *Maregan*, a type of ‘*Oja-pali*’ prevalent among the ‘*Rabha*’ tribe, to a great extent. The *Sankari/Satriya* dance tradition was later also passed on to Manipur in the late eighteenth century, where from it was further passed on to Bengal. Thus this style became popular over a wide region (Barthakur, 2003).

There is also tribal influence in the masks worn by some characters of the *Ankiya* plays. Many tribes like ‘*Khamti*’, ‘*Bhutiya*’, and others have been using masks since long ago. There is use of masks in the South East Asian countries since ancient times and it propagated to Eastern part of Assam as the tribes travelled from one part to another. The mask became so popular that it became a practice at one point of time to use mask for all characters in some *Ankiya* plays. Such enactment of *Ankiya* play is called ‘*Mukha Bhaona*’. Over the period of time the ‘*Sankari*’ culture thus became the first ever-common culture of Assam. It helped in mitigating inter state conflicts too and it acted as a bonding agent for nation building. The influence of instruments like *Doba* and *Xorai* (*Xorai* in Assamese language and used to keep raw fruits, *Maah-Prasad* as offering) were used during various performances.

2.4.4 Integrating tribal Art forms:

The incorporation of tribal elements in the '*Eka Sarana Nama Dharma*' is a noteworthy aspect of this order. The most important element among these is the '*Kirtanghar*' or '*Naamghar*'. The concept of this multi-dimensional institution was earlier known as '*Devagriha*' was taken by Srimanta Sankardeva from the Missing tribe's institution '*Murang-ghar*' or '*Deka Chang*'.

The Naga people also have this institution. It is been said that Sankardeva had in mind the '*Murang-ghar*' while designing of the '*Kirtanghar*'. The length and breadth of '*Murang-ghar*' are 40-45 feet and 20 feet respectively, which are approximately the dimension of '*Kirtan-ghar*' too. The practice of calling one of the pillars of the '*Kirtanghar*' as '*Lai-Khuta*' came from the Ahom tradition. The word Lai is of Ahom origin, which is the main language of Tai people of Ahom kingdom. In addition to this, tunes in *prasanga* (music of *Naam Kirtan*) came from the Ahom tradition. With that the practice of calling *Jai* (glory) at the end of the *Naam prasanga* or *Bhagavad* reading also came from Ahom kingdom (Doty, 2015).

The concept of *flying lion* carved on the altar '*Guru Asana*' is of 'Mongolian' origin with an Ahom influence. Similarly the *Bhortal* came from 'Bhutan' (earlier it was called Bhot-tal). The *Nagara* instrument is the contribution of the 'Tiwa' tribe of Assam; there is similarity of *Ludang-Khram* with the instrument 'Khol' devised by Srimanta Sankardeva. The saint had innovated the 'Khol', which he got made by a 'Kachari' artisan from the 'Kapili valley'. The *Sarengdar*, another instrument used during the days of Srimanta Sankardeva was a contribution of *Bodo* tribe. So, the entire '*Eka Sarana Nama Dharma*' reverberates with innumerable tribal heritages. Thus Srimanta Sankardeva made '*Sankari*' culture a meeting place of all the castes, tribes and sub-tribes of North East India. Moreover his contribution in the creation of a common Assamese culture is commendable.

2.4.5 Structure of Satra:

Satra created by Sankardeva are known as '*Than*'. These propagated the philosophy of '*Ek Sarana Nama Dharma*' (Borkakoti, 2006). In 1468 AD the first '*Than*' at Bordowa were established. It is considered as the first *Satra* in the history. When it was established there was only a big hall as a community prayer center and it was called '*Kirtanghar*' (Sarma, 1990). There was another part, in which residential quarters of devotees also called '*Hati*' (huts for monks) was present. It was added later in 1509 AD.

There were four units of '*Hati*' in all four directions. Afterwards '*Manikut*' and '*Karapat*' were added in the '*Than*' and '*Satra*'. These components were not there from the beginning, at the time of Srimanta Sankardeva. He planned the *Satra* from an architectural point of view as he showed his architectural abilities. He made '*Kirtanghar*' and '*Than*' by using locally available inexpensive materials like *bamboo*, *wood*, *Ekora reed*, *thatch* etc. for the construction of the '*Than*'. Because of this the cost became cheaper and everyone could afford it and make it with indigenous materials, which were easily available. '*Naamghar*' belonged to people and as it was made with such abundantly available material so people were able to connect with it, as it did not require any patronage to construct a '*Kirtanghar*' (Azad, 2012).

Not just the architecture of *Naamghar* but also other design elements of *Naamghar* has some similarity with other tribe's houses. Like there was a similarity with '*Murang-Ghar*' of the ethnic group in the state (Das, 2012). '*Than*' and '*Satra*' was made to unite the different ethnic groups from various tribes who had belief on their own religion and Srimanta Sankardeva had used the design elements from these ethnic groups so that they were able to connect it with '*Satra*' and '*Than*'. He advised his devotees to work while chanting the name of God. *Satra* was an ideal place and model for community living where they can come and discuss their ideas and issues and has been comprised of people from all walks of life.

2.4.6 Art and Artisans in Satra

Than and *Satra* were also the hub for many art related activities like weaving, mask making, making of *sanchi* leaves (Fig. 2.9) for writing, making of eco-friendly dyes by residents of *Than* and *Satra* called *hengul-haital*. Artisans used them to prepare clothes for *Ankiya* plays in *Satra*. These dyes were organic in nature and not at all harmful for the environment. Organic substances like indigo were used to retain its properties. These had also been used in *Satra* for writing on '*sanchi paat*' (leaf). The tribal farmers, Muslim weavers, scholars etc. were engaged to stay and work together and many artisans and devotees lived within the campus. They used to make the commodities or offerings required by the devotees. In a way the concept of Sri Aurobindo in Auroville had already been used by Srimanta Sankardeva in Assam. *Than* and *Satra* were considered as self-sustainable as these were self-sufficient, being integrated in their system. Artisans were also illustrating and painting the stories. This tradition was started during the time of Srimanta Sankardeva but during the Ahom kingdom it started patronizing the skills. There

were other illustrative paintings the artisans used to make and decorate the ‘Satra’ and ‘Than’ with sculptures, so that when devotees enter the *Satra* they can learn from those visualizations (Phuken, 2017).



Fig. 2.9: Manuscripts of Boorgeet in Dakshinpat Satra at Majuli (Majuli Cultural Landscape Management Authority, 2017)



Fig. 2.10: Vrindavani Vastra (Vogelsang, 2016)

‘Vrindavani vastra’ (Fig. 2.10) was woven and made on the spot by Mathuradasa and other weavers in front of Srimanta Sankardeva at Barpeta where the *Rangiyal ghar* was built. It has been mentioned that from very early stages of establishing *Naamghar*, illustrative paintings, sculpture and scenes from stories of Krishna were painted and engraved in *Naamghar* (Neog, 1998).

Over the period of time art flourished and ‘Khanikar’ (storyteller) in *Satra* gained their importance by painting and sculpting the seat of the altar; sculpting the illustrative carving in wood with stories of Krishna on the walls of *Naamghar* and *Kirtanghar*. This also bought them a certain amount of money for living. Such artisans were also involved in handicrafts making like *diya* stand, *Xorai* etc. to be associated with the God and to earn some form of livelihood (Gogoi, 2016)

There were different types of musical instruments, which the artisans use to make like *doba*, *khol* etc. For this purpose carpenters, blacksmiths, pottery makers etc. used to be involved with the *Satra* and *Than*. They also used to make many things with bamboo and cane for the construction of the *Satra*. Srimanta Sankardeva also adopted and used these material because it was easily available in Assam and they were quite eco-friendly, inexpensive and affordable for the locals (Bhuyan, 2008).

After demise of Srimanta Sankardeva, these *Satra* and *Than* were taken over by Ahom kingdom and they started patronizing these institutions, with effect of which *Satra* started losing its essence of self-sustainability and it went into power driven centres. As *Satra* and *Than* were tax free and with enormous wealth, Ahom king had started taking its advantage. *Satra* were the centre of creativity and vocational education like making of handicrafts, preparation of *sanchi-pat*, leaves for writing, mask and crafts making with bamboo, making illustrative manuscripts etc. and were part of artisans’ daily life. Hence, all these craftsmen got affected by these changes (Borkakoti, 2003).

2.4.7 The organization and the revenue of the Satra:

Srimanta Sankardeva is quoted as saying: ‘He who has not taken a guru, cannot enter into my religion.’ This goes back to Jadavananda who is the founder of one of the *Satra*. In *Satra* where the ‘*Satradhikar*’ is celibate, a boy from a *Gohain* family is ‘*Adhikar*’. Thus the present *Adhikars* of Auniati, Dakshinpat and Garamur all come from the Kuruwabahi family. In Barpeta and one or two *Satras* in western Assam, the *adhikari* is chosen by the *Bhakats*. The successor-designate is called the ‘young *adhikari*’ (*deka adhikari*).

When the *Satradhikar* feels his death is approaching, he calls the young *adhikari* to him and places on his head the ‘chaplet’ (*dhop*) of office. Today all ‘*Satradhikaris*’ come from the *Satra* families. The initiate surrenders himself to each of the four principles in turn, taking a few steps and saying three times, ‘I take shelter in Guru’, ‘I take shelter in God’, ‘I take shelter in Naam’, ‘I take shelter in the Devotee’.

Location of few prominent Satras are given in the Table 2.2

Sl. No.	Name of Satra	Location	District	Latitude & Longitude
1	Barpeta	Barpeta	Barpeta	26.3178° N, 91.0113° E
2	Auniati	Majuli	Jorhat	26°56' 20.39" N 94°07' 35.36" E
3	Natun Kamalabari	Majuli	Jorhat	26°56' 13.42" N 94°09' 34.37" E
4	Dakhinpat	Majuli	Jorhat	26°55' 1.18" N 94°16' 12.16" E
5	Uttar Kamalabari	Majuli	Jorhat	26°57' 22.22" N 94°10' 38.78" E
6	Bhogpur	Majuli	Jorhat	26°57' 17.85" N 94°12' 37.95" E
7	Kamalabari	Titabor	Jorhat	26°31' 52.82" N 94°12' 11.92" E
8	Dhuahat Belguri	Narayanpur	Lakhimpur	26°57' 39.00" N 93°51' 46.38" E
9	Badala	Narayanpur	Lakhimpur	26°57' 22.86" N 93°51' 29.90" E
10	Madhya Majuli Kamalabari	Majuli	Jorhat	26°58' 31.53" N 94°12' 18.72" E
11	Jorabari	Janji	Sivasagar	26°50' 35" N 94°30' 40.54" E
12	Isvar Hati	Sualkuchi	Kamrup	26°10' 15.27" N 91°33' 55.09" E
13	Jinkata Rajahua Satra	Jinkata	Dhubri	26°15' 27.37" N 80°46' 10.56" E

Table 2.2: Location of *Satras* showing various Satra place, district and direction

The *Satra* derives its income from two main sources:

(1) *Satra* land: the majority of *Satras* are in possession of revenue free (lakheraj) land settled on them by the Ahom kings. For instance revenue free land belonging to few *Satras* are: Garamur 331 acres, Dakshinpat 7939 acres, Auniati 9322 acres and Kamalabari 6485 acres (Assam district Gazetteers, 1967).

(2) Contribution from disciples.

2.4.8 Physical system of *Satra*:

The *Vaishnava Satra* (Fig. 2. 11) of Assam is having four enclosed wall structure with opening from all four sides called '*Karpas*' (Gate). At the center of the *Satra* (Fig. 2.12) is

the *Naamghar* (an assembly hall), which is a large hall supported by two rows of pillars.



Fig. 2.11: Beloguri Satra in Assam

The east side opens into the *Manikut* (Fig. 2.13) (literary house of jewels) or *Bhaj Ghar*, where the sacred book representing *Krishna* is kept on a seven-tiered wooden throne (*Thapana*) and the *Satra* images and other paraphernalia are kept. The environment inside the great hall is one of simplicity and peace.

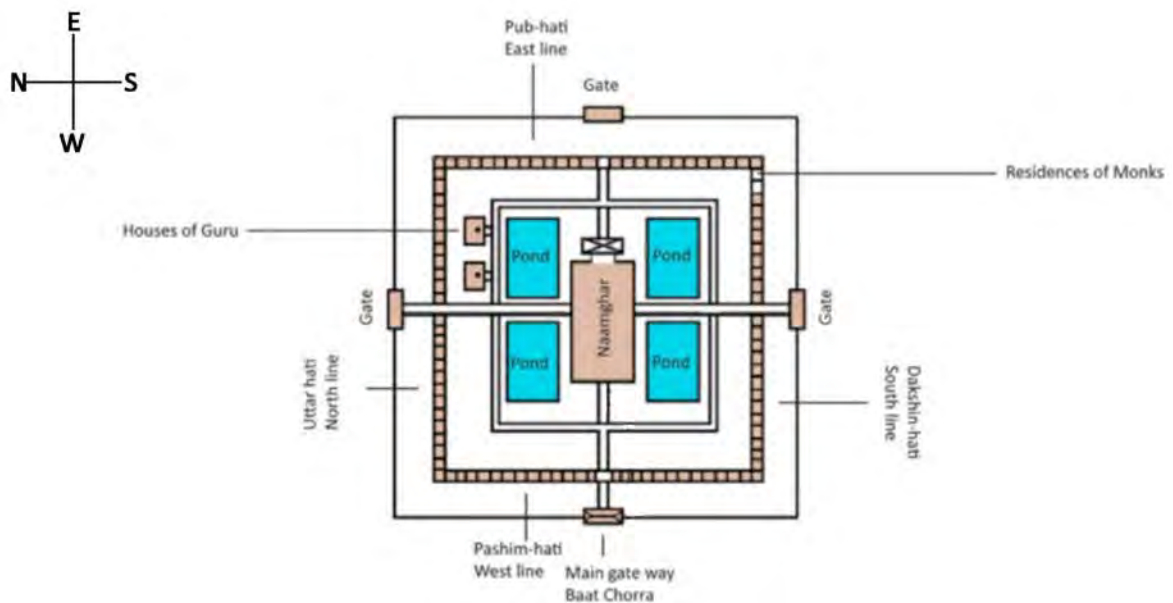


Fig.2.12: Typical Plan view of *Satra* (Figure: Researcher)



Fig. 2.13: Beloguri Satra in Assam (Abhijna Museum, 2013)

In the quadrangle surrounding the *Naamghar* has four rows of huts or four elongated residential housing for monks (called *hati*) for the accommodation of *Satradhikari* and the *Kevaliya Bhakats* (celibate monks, who have renounced the world) living inside the *Satra*. The four houses have different size based on the person who is staying in it. *Satradhikari* or *Satriya* have the bigger space as compared to *deka adhikar* or *deka satriya* and principal office-bearers of the establishment. The house of the *Satradhikar* is on the east side near to the great store houses for rice, money, gur (jaggery from Sugarcane), salt, areca nut etc. contributed by the disciples. The *Satra* is surrounded by a palisade with a gatehouse in the east wall. Round about stretch of lands belongs to the *Satra*.

In some *Satra* all the four rows of residences were not present. In one of the chief monasteries of Assam, namely the ‘*Barpeta Satra*’, there are only two such rows, the northern being called *Aam Talar Hati* (residences under the mango tree), and the southern being called *Kewaliya Hati* (celibates’ residences), or *Bar Baha* (residences of the Elders’, *budha-bhakat*); the celibate deputy *satriya* lives in a hut in front of the latter’s barrack. The different stores of *Satra* property like those of rice, salt, molasses, coins etc., are also generally located close to the quarter of the monks for purposes safety (Bhushan, 2005).

Satra themselves have shifted their location from time to time, especially during the Burmese invasion, and disciples may also migrate to other village. The 161 houses in ‘*Panbari Satra*’ belong to 17 different *Satras*. There are three *Satras* with more than seven

houses in Panbari: 'Auniti Satra' with 60 houses, 'Bengenati' with 44 houses and 'Dakshinpat' with 15 houses.

2.4.9 Changes in design of Satra:

The inspiration for *Satra* had also said to be taken from Buddhist *Viharas* and *Jagannatha temple* at Puri in Orissa (Neog, 1998). There were no permanent structures in the Vaishnava *Satra* of a date earlier than the eighteenth century. No stones or bricks were employed in the construction of the *Naamghar* and residences. These were from the earliest times made of wood and bamboo and covered above with *thatch*. Two reasons may be assigned for this: the temporary nature of the stay of the originators of the order in each center due to the unsettled times; and Second, any house with room enough for all the monks and other disciples to sit together was considered sufficient for a prayer house. In the earliest years of the history of Assam Vaishnavism, the saint and their followers had mostly to depend upon themselves for the construction of their huts and the *Naamghar*.

Carpentry is an easy craft for acquisition, and the monks themselves could raise a prayer-hall and a set of residential quarters magnificent and splendor. These structures had from time to time to be re-build, and they were also subject to ravages of fire and storm. The three relic-shrines (math) of Barpeta, Sundaridiya and Patbausi *Satra*, dating from the eighteenth century, are the only structures of a permanent nature coming down to us from the past (Sarma, 2013). Traditionally the pillars of *Naamghar* were made of wood and the roof covered with thatch, but today *Naamghars* are usually constructed with bricks and corrugated galvanized iron sheets for roofs. These more permanent structures withstand the storms and have greater strength.

The culture of *Satras* is almost a living tradition carried out by Srimanta Sankardeva but during his lifetime it took the initial shape. After his death Madhavdeva got the responsibility of *Satra* community and with Damodardeva he worked on the second phase of the *Satra* institution of a permanent nature. The architecture of *Satra* got its shape from Srimanta Sankardeva and his disciple Madhavdeva only. *Naamghar* came up with prayer hall and a *wooden throne* (Singhasana) containing sacred scriptures. In the middle of the 17th century *Satra* institution was able to establish itself. And over the time the royal authority Ahom king had accepted the Neo-Vaishnavism. The social strata of *Satra* had become important for keeping together the society from different sections and tribal communities and to retain the peace in the society. In 16th and 17th century (1650-1800) only *Satras* were built properly and got its credit when the disciples wanted to come closer

to the Neo-Vaishnavite religion. It was the time when proper growth of the *Satra* tradition happened and branch *Satra* emerged (Guha, 1983)

One of the things, which were always common was the *Kirtanghar* or in today's context *Naamghar*, which has evolved since the time of Srimanta Sankardeva. Over the period of time as *Naamghar* spread, it became the part of almost every village of Assam. It became a community place where all the tribes from different communities can come and find oneness with the neighboring communities. *Satra* in Assam were not only a place of culture, craft, dance and music but it is a big space for religious literatures (Sarma, 1976).

However, rapid urbanization in Assam has to lead to changes in lifestyle and socio-cultural and economic aspects of larger sections of society in Assam (Indolia, 2012; Acharjee, 2013). This changing culture might influence the development of *Naamghar* in terms of socio-cultural activities and also architectural elements' design. The *Satra* architectural contributions towards the socio-cultural values are worthy ancient treasures, which must be preserved and protected. Scholars had discussed briefly on evolution of architectural form of *Satra* and *Naamghar* (Neog, 1998; Gogoi, 2016) "*The Satra in the new areas were equipped with some integral parts like the Bhagawata-griha, sabha-griha, rangialghar, guru-griha atithisala, dhan-bharal, caul-bharal library, patchang, math, and other structures wherever necessary, and the functionaries like the Bhagowati, pathak, medhi, rajmedhi, bar-medhi, sajatula and pacani were employed under the head of the Satra to run the respective branches and department*" (Borah, 2012). *They also pointed out differences in various Satra, however, without any visual reporting and hence in depth interpretation of art was not documented.*

2.4.10 Connecting people and communities:

Satra as an Institution had a symbolic value connected to different tribal, Hindu, Muslim communities of Assam and *Satra* became very famous in reaching out to people from different strata. The most notable step taken by Satra Mahasabha in Assam is the *Bhaona* performance (literally means 'building bridges'). The performance has been organized with greater fervor since 2003, bringing together different ethnic groups and tribal communities together for the festival.

It is worth noting that the cultural performance of *bhaona* in the *Satra* have helped in evolving the *Satriya* dance and its status of being a classical dance form. It is a deep rooted dance performance associated with the *Satra* and Neo-Vaishnavite movement in

Assam. Performers come together and perform dance, plays and spread the literature about the tradition.

2.5 Naamghar: A Brief Understanding

2.5.1 Origin of *Naamghar*:

Naamghar is social-cultural institutions that came into existence as a consequence of Vaishnava Bhakti movement, which emerged after inequality, suppression of lower class and malpractices in Hinduism reached its peak in 15th Century (Neog, 1998). *Naamghar* literary meaning ‘the house of names (of God)’, is a community prayer hall where the Vaishnavite Hindus of Assam recite the name of God. In Assamese language, ‘*Naam*’ means ‘prayer by taking the name of God’ and ‘*Ghar*’ means ‘House’. Hence, it is called *Naamghar*. These were introduced in Assam by the Vaishnavite Saint Srimanta Sankardeva between 14th and 15th century AD. He established the first *Naamghar* at Bordowa in Nagaon district.

The Vaishnavite movement aimed to bring everyone at the same level and gave birth to equality. During that period, *Naamghar* were essential structures, which are basic building blocks of Assamese society. It is not only a place of worship but also a central meeting point, where all the people discussed about the issues related to their society. *Naamghar* also called *Kirtanghar* functioned as meeting points of congregations, as well as theatre of dramatic performances like *Bhoana*, *Raas lila* and many others (Neog, 1998).

The *Naamghar* in the grass root level setup in the village community has its cultural roots attached to it. It is in the nucleus of every village setting in Assam. In eastern side of the *Naamghar* encloses the shrine (*Manikut*) having pyramid like structure platform. *An oil lamp burns (aksaya banti) steadily in front of it to evoke the belief and bhakti and it's symbolic of light of faith and reminiscent sessions of the sagas of Naimisaranya. It's been lit by Madhava in front of the guru asana, when the rangiyal ghar was inaugurated, was ever to be kept burning and never to be allowed to extinguish* (Neog, 1985).

The *Naamghar* in the village communities were managed in a democratic setting. The design of the *Naamghar* is made in such a way that people can enter from any side and take part in the congregational practices. Srimanta Sankardeva designed it with well-planned thought process and made it without walls or further modification with half walls with two rows of pillars because he wanted people should be able to take part in *Naam*

Kirtan not just from inside but from outside also. It is been made of thatch roof and wooden structure (or tin roof in modern ones). This has a great significance in people's life because it shows the equality. *Naamghar* has been designed in such a way that it gives a look that its open to everyone and every caste, tribe or creed and religion etc. and it erases the artificial lines of division among the people and language barrier.

Some of the officials of *Naamghar* are *Medhi*, *Bujandar*, *Bayan*, *Naamgharia*, *Bilonia*, etc. They are held in high esteem and are respected by the people. A *Naamghar* is not only a place of worship, but is also a center of learning, an institution for imparting education, a community hall where people gather to discuss their social problems, a training center of arts and crafts and above all, a center of unity of the society. *Naamghar* are also used for cultural activities associated a social congregation like *Bhaona* (drama) and dances (Neog, 1998).

2.5.2 Structure and position in *Naamghar*

The *Naamghar* is a place of worship, a prayer hall, a community hall made by Srimanta Sankardeva, the great poet saint of Assam. The *Naamghar* is usually a rectangular building with a gable, gablet or a hip roof raised on pillars the length of which is aligned in the East-West direction (Fig. 2.14 & Fig. 2.15). The traditional thatch roof has been replaced in the late 20th century by corrugated tin sheets, and the timber or bamboo pillars by concrete ones. This hall usually has an outer wall, with the main entrance at the west end. There is a *verandah* around the outer wall with windows and minor entrances on the north and south sides. Two parallel rows of pillars usually run along the length, with the north east most pillar, called the *Lai Khuta*, which name has its roots in Tai language (which is the main language of Ahom people) of Ahom kingdom (Dutta, 2011), carrying special significance. The floor is traditionally mud, replaced in recent times by concrete.

The East end of the hall does not in general have doors and windows, though very often it leads to an independent room called *Manikut* (the jewel hut), also called *bhajghar* in western Assam, with its own roof. It houses idols representing the worship of God, or a *Guru-Asana* (the Guru's seat). It is fully walled, with either no windows or small ones and also function as a repository of important articles. This room is a later addition to the basic *Naamghar* structure.

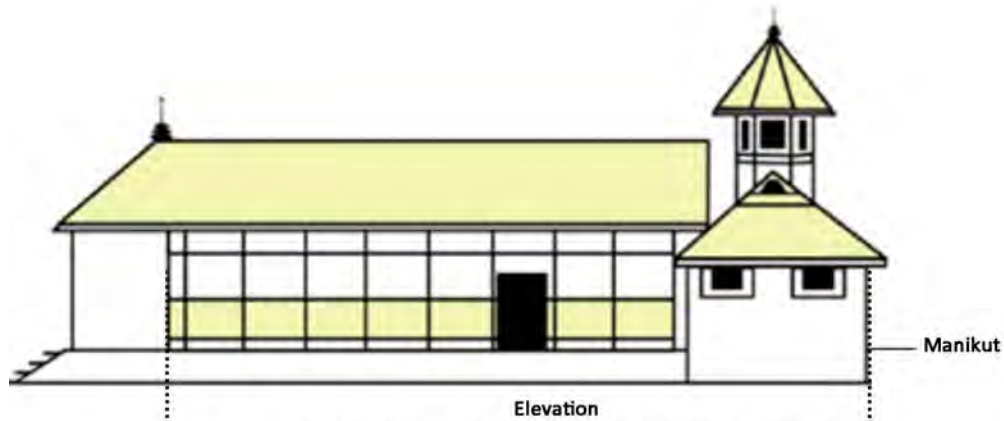


Fig.2.14: Typical Side view of Naamghar (Figure: Researcher)

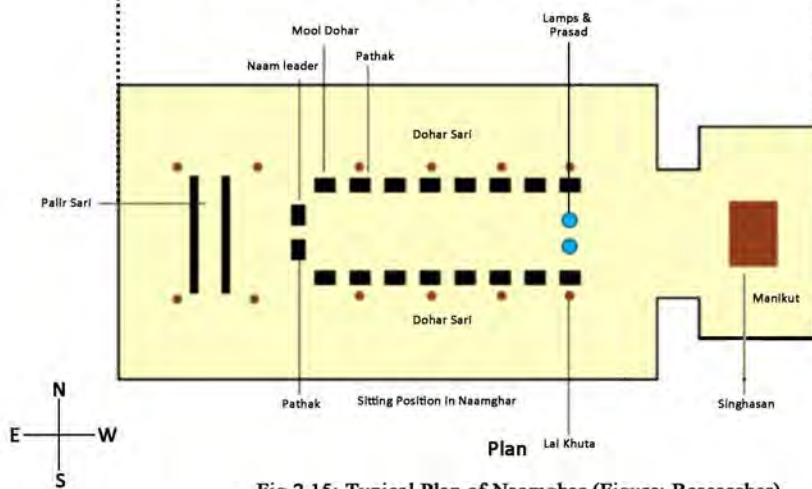


Fig.2.15: Typical Plan of Naamghar (Figure: Researcher)

2.5.3 Importance of Sitting position and other elements in Naamghar:

Over the period of time *Naamghar* became the central place for prayer and reciting the name of God also called *Naam-Prasanga*. In *Naamghar* the *Singhasana* is most respected. All the rituals, sitting position of devotees and other activities are focused towards the seven tier wooden throne structure, in which the holy book '*Kirtan Ghosha*', '*Naamghosha*' and '*Bhakti-Ratnavali*' is kept. *Kirtan Ghosha* had been composed by Srimanta Sankardeva with his first disciple Madhavdeva. *Manikut* is been covered by a canopy called *Chandratap* and the wooden shrine is covered by hand woven red cloth (*Gohain Kapor*) mostly contributed by devotees and *bhakats* of the villages. A long brass metal lamp is kept in front of the wooden shrine (it's also called *Akhyoy Banti*). *Naamghar* has fixed time for prayer and to gather people or to give an indication to devotees that the prayer is starting a musical instrument called *Doba* (drum) is been used. It is fixed clay drum and sounded twice in a day during starting and finishing of the prayer. *Naamghar* has various sizes depends on the population of the particular village (Bhuyan, 2008).

Primarily used as a prayer hall according to the *Eka Sarana* traditions, devotees sit in rows not facing the east but north and south facing each other that emphasizes the *bhakats* (the worshiper, or the congregation), which is one of the four realms of the religion. The region between the two north and south group is highly sanctimonious and is never treaded on, except for cleaning. The prayers are led by the leader called *Naam loguwa*, who sits at the end of the central region facing the sanctum sanctorum.

Satradhikar usually sits against the *Lai Khuta*, whereas the *deka-adhikar*, the *bhakatas*, the musicians and other devotees are all pre-determined. The use of space is a formal one and ordered. The hall also contains idols of mythical figures like *Garuda* and *Hanuman* and they are mythological Vaishnava devotees, that face east nears the western end or north and south near the eastern end. The floor is made of concrete now, which was traditionally made of mud in ancient *Naamghar*. The devotees usually sit along the length of outer wall (Gogoi, 2016).

2.5.4 Rituals and Functions

i) Prayer:

Srimanta Sankardeva had written many *Borgeets* and it's been composed by Madhavdeva and sung in *Naamghar during the prayer*.

ii) Secular activities:

In addition to regular *Naam Prashang*, *Naamghars* are also used for educational, political, cultural and developmental activities and discussions undertaken in a democratic manner.

2.5.5 The Offering:

Naamghars rarely have facility for service in the manner one sees in temples elsewhere in India. Therefore there were no kitchens/pantries associated with *Naamghars* although this may be changing. The *Prasad* consisting of *mah-saul* (*soaked green lentil-rice*), various fruits fruit offerings that are distributed after a service are almost always prepared at several homes, who are eligible to participate in *prasad*-serving. Those who serve *prasad* are called *deus* or *deuris* and are selected based on their standing in the community and religious knowledge and competence. This too is a privileged position.

2.5.6 Contribution to Society:

The *Naamghar* is a living institution and for over 500 years, its impact on Assamese society and culture has been tremendous. It diffused a high degree of enlightenment among the masses of the people. It should be noted that Vaishnavism in Assam is a religion as well as an institution, and even today, it exercises a very high and significant influence on the social and communal life of the Assamese people. The doors of the *Naamghar* are open to all, no matter what caste or gender one belongs to.

2.5.7 Naamghar as village parliaments:

The *Naamghar* is like a “village parliament” where people come together to solve their disputes. People associated with the *Naamghar* take collective decisions like constructing of something new or renovation of the older structures. It’s a place where people come together and solve the issues happening in their communities to settle the matters (Bhuyan, 2008).

The general body of the *Naamghar* consist of people from the village community itself and more precisely the elders in the community from each house are directly involved with the committee. *Naamghar* is like a decentralized system and decision making body lies with the Assamese community. In the society *Naamghar* act as a village court and consists of around 90 members. It is worth noting that Srimanta Sankardeva initiated the Neo-Vaishnavite tradition to holistically bring together humanistic philosophy, music, theatre, art and other cultural activities to bring the best out in the system for the betterment of the society. He had contributed immensely in the making of Assamese culture by bringing the various fragmented communities together under one safe roof of belief and confidence. It bought peace, good will, self-help, mutual respect and social justice in the lives of people.

2.5.8 Cultural Centre:

Both the *Satra* and the *Naamghar* led to the creation and development of drama, music and the stage performance. These three are the most powerful instruments for popularizing culture as they appeal to nearly everyone. *Naamghars* are also used for cultural activities associated a social congregation, enactment of *Bhaona* (drama) performance (Fig. 2.16) at various occasions and dances. *Satras* are structures representing Vaishnavism tradition, which is culturally precious with various forms of dance, music, handloom and crafts. One of the preciousness associated with these *Satras* is the Majuli’s

Mask making tradition. Samaguri Satra is specialized in making these traditional masks. Three types of masks that are traditionally made by craftsmen in Majuli are 1) *Mukh Mukh* (face masks); 2) *Lotokai Mukha* (face masks but allow movement of lips, eyes, hands etc. shown in Fig. 2.16); 3) *Cho Mukh* (whole body mask). Cow dung being a light material is used for making these masks. The height of these masks can be from 2 to 5 meter high and the performer can wear it above the waist. This huge structure of masks helps to display and enhance the aura of the certain character. The huge masks are generally tied up to the body of the performer with ropes. This helps to keep mask intact during the performance when artists flexibility moves there body. Sometimes artists make these masks in separateable parts also experiment in adding rubber band for mouth movement, use of various fabrics and materials to make the body of the mask. As the requirement of the play goes these craftsmen are capable to add or subtract the materials in the body of the masks. (Monga & Das, 2017). 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).



Fig. 2.16: Bhawona performance in Samaguri Satra in Majuli, Assam



Fig.2.17: Bhaona performance in Naamghar

The *Ankiya Nats*, which are full of music and dance, are acted even today in the *Naamghar*, and the entire village assembles to see on the stage stories from the great works like the ‘Bhagavad’, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which dealt with the deepest problems of human life and religion. Everyone from a small child to the elder one takes part in the *Bhaona* performance and there is no differentiation been made in caste and classes. This performance brings everyone on the same platform. The village community people collectively contribute towards the events to make it a success.

Assam also has a tradition of handicrafts since ages and handicraft industry had flourished around Naamghar, which use to play a huge role during *Bhaona* performances (Fig. 2.17 and Fig. 2.18) for making, masks, stitching cloths and making other crafts from bamboo etc. Therefore, *Naamghar* had contributed immensely for the socio-cultural development of Assamese villages (Bora, 2016).



Fig. 2.18: *Bhaona* performance in *Naamghar* (Sonowal, 2017)

2.6 Structure of Naamghar:

As mentioned earlier, the village *Naamghar* is mainly a large hall built upon two rows of very stout and high pillars. Most often it has an East-west orientation. This big hall is used as a place of congregation for prayers, called *Naam*. It is said to have a similarity to *Chaitya Hills* of the Buddhists. Another view is that the shape is more related to early Orissa Temple style. It does have a striking similarity to temples in Orissa, which was prevalent in the early period. It may be remembered that Srimanta Sankardeva had travelled extensively in Orissa during his first Pilgrimage in the 15th century. Thus it is seen that *Satra* and *Naamghar* were adopted more from the living Hindu traditions of culture of the fifteenth century India, rather than ‘Buddhist’ structures which according to records were already dead around the 12th century, some even being converted to Hindu temples.

2.6.1 Architecture of Naamghar:

The Vaishnavite monasteries apostles (gurus to live with their disciples) brought a new wave of sculpture of wood carvings and architecture of wood and bamboo structures through the *Naamghar* and *Manikut* (the prayer house and the sanctum sanctorum). It is often a surprise that Srimanta Sankardeva who had visited almost all the famous Hindu

temples all over the country and had seen the beautiful and massive temples all over the country and massive temple architectures of brick and stone in different parts of the country chose only a two-roofed simpler structure (Fig. 2.19) with an apsidal or conical façade.



Fig. 2.19: Naamghar in *Barpeta Satra* (online sivasagar, 2018)

Sankardeva and the later Vaishnava apostles did not prefer constructing permanent structures of *Naamghar* and residencies possibly due to unfavorable surroundings and other exigencies. And the basic simplicity connected with their faith must have also prompted them to avoid gorgeous structures either in the *Naamghar* or in the residence. Later too, the Vaishnava preachers did not built permanent structure for a *Naamghar* or even for the residential quarters of the monks in any of the *Satra* and hence no structure is available at present earlier than the 18th century.

Furthermore, in the earlier years, Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva or their immediate followers had mostly to depend upon themselves for all works including the construction of *Naamghar* or huts for living. They never asked for any royal favour even when they could have, for constructing a brick or stone *Naamghar*. Wood and bamboo being abundant and carpentry an easy craft for acquisition, the devotees and monks themselves most of the time could construct *Kirtanghars* or residential huts with magnificent artistry. The fact that a similar wood and bamboo structure could be built by the devotees and monks through community being more or less an expert, may contribute his expertise in the completion of the work, was only possibly one of the reasons which inspired Sankardeva to choose such a simple architecture for the *Naamghar*.



Fig. 2.20: Manikut in Bharali Namghar at Jakhlabandha (All resource, 2018)

The *Kirtanghar* or the *Naamghar* is the most distinctive feat of Vaishnavite architecture. It is huge structure, the roof is supported on huge wooden pillars and the great floor space is entirely bare save for one or two lecterns on which the sacred writings are reposing. Perpendicular to the main hall of the *Naamghar* is constructed another smaller hall (its length is commonly equal to the breadth of the *Naamghar*). This small hall known as jewels hut having the *Manikut* (Fig. 2.20) is the sanctum sanctorum. While this hall, like the *main hall* also is normally a two sloped gabled structure in central and upper Assam. But the *Manikut* in Kamrup, Nalbari and Barpeta districts including those of the Barpeta group of *Satras* are mostly known as *Bhajghars*, which are barrel vaulted (*hastiprastha*) with drooping ends so much so that the side ends of the Barpeta *Satra Bhajghar* come almost to the ground. A remarkable feature of the construction of the Barpeta *Satra* is the seven terraces in between the low ceiling and the central part of the roof. These terraces are meant to contain the rare properties and implements not ordinarily required.



Fig. 2.21: Wooden pillars in Sutra of Majuli (Tales from the Northeast of India, 2015)

In addition to the two colonnades of large wooden pillars (Fig. 2.21) supporting the big hall, two columns of shorter and thinner posts (wooden or bamboo) are placed at the side which are joined within by a third semi circularly placed row if there is an apsidal facade or by a straight row if the façade is conical with a simple roof. The space between the main pillars and the second row of posts provides the aisles and sometimes the verandahs also. Every pair of the large pairs supported with a strong and straight timber beam. Each beam in its turn held three other upright posts (the middle one being the longest) thus helping to form a ridge at the top. The pillars, the beams and also the upright posts are often carved or painted with colourful floral designs and mythical animal figures. Most of the roofs of the earlier *Naamghar* in large numbers of *Satras* were covered with thatch.

The *Katha-Guru-Carita* (Sarma, 2017) gives a vivid description of the construction of the Barpeta *Satra Kirtanghar*. Madhavdeva agreed to construct the Barpeta *Kirtanghar* as desired by Narayana Thakura, the arrangements were made by the devotees. “Timber was obtained from the very site selected for the temple. *Parbatiya Krushna Rama Karikar* and *Vibhisana*- these three of Madhavdeva’s disciples offered their service as carpenters. They also built a *simhasana* or holy throne for the *Kirtanghar*. Bamboos were brought from *Bajali pargana*. The stronger ones were split and whose culm were kept under water for some time in order to give them durability and were then dyed red. The posts, the cross beams and the horizontal poles along the whole length of the house were set. The red dyed culm were then spread over to form the roof, which was covered with thatch all over and with wicker-work frames (*parvati*) at the ridges and edges. Walls were then set up with bamboo and wood, windows (*kundraksajala*) being left in proper places. The posts and walls were studded with mica (*bali-chanda*) and tin foils (*rang pata*). The adhesive substance used for sticking these glittering objects was obtained from ripe *bilva* (wood apple) fruits. Chalk (*kharimati*) was used for decorating the posts and walls. *Vibhisana* and Krishna, the carpenters made floral designs (*lata-phul*) on the main gateway (*pat-dvar*) and two wooden representations of *Jay* and *Vijaya*, the gatekeepers of *Vaikuntha*. The *Kirtanghar* thus presented a magnificent and colourful view and was therefore called *rangali* or ‘*Rangiyal ghar*’.

What Srimanta Sankardeva conceived in the planning of the *Naamghar* was a large and open space with free air flowing from outside where people can sit and take part in the congregational prayer sessions (*Kirtan*), perform *Bhaona* (theatrical performances) which again could be enjoyed freely by people sitting and standing outside the *Naamghar*

premises. Dividing space between the pairs of the main pillars as compartments or rooms without any wall or curtain in between is also a significant aspect of the *Naamghar* architecture.” There are also grilling’s or temporary walls made of cane and bamboo in many of the *Satra Naamghar* hung or attached around the outer periphery of the aisles or *verandahs*. They act like extended *pandal* or shades and are easily removable when there is a *Bhaona* performance or any festive occasion to accommodate hundreds of people outside the main hall. In devising the architecture of the *Naamghar*, Srimanta Sankardeva was quite possibly inspired by the two roofed, gabled hall type residential huts of many of the tribal people of Assam, which also provide an open and airy space and elevated it to the level of a rich temple architecture.

Over the period of time the *Naamghar* have undergone substantial change like the wooden pillars and thatched roofs have given way to concrete pillars and iron sheets in most of the *Satra* and village *Naamghar*. Each *Manikut* and the main halls of many *Naamghar* are now constructed with gorgeous domes in the pattern of common Hindu temples. The lion carved on wood, which once decorated the arches are now substituted with common lion figures in concrete structures. Even the principal *Satra* like Bordowa and Barpeta also have not been able to retain many of such significant traditional traits of original Vaishnavite sculpture and architecture.

2.7 Design Elements of Naamghar

The *Naamghar* is usually a rectangular building with a gable, gablet or a hip roof raised on pillars the length of which is aligned in the east-west direction. The traditional thatch roof has been replaced in the late 20th century by corrugated tin sheets, and the timber or bamboo pillars by concrete ones. This hall usually has an outer wall (not mandatory), with the main entrance at the west end. There is a verandah around the outer wall, with windows and minor entrances on the north and south sides.

Two parallel rows of pillars usually run along the length, with the Northeast most pillar, called the *Lai Khuta*, carrying special significance. The hall might contain idols of mythical figures like *Garuda*, *Hanuman*, etc. that are mythological Vaishnava devotees, that face east near the western end or north and south near the eastern end. The floor is traditionally mud, replaced in recent times by concrete.

2.7.1 Layout

The *Naamghar* is a large open hall for the purpose of offering mass prayer. Originally constructed with bamboo, reeds and thatch, the *Naamghar* is even a humble structure without any outward show or ostentation. It has gabled roofs, the western facade being apsidal. A *Naamghar* of the ancient type (the modern *Naamghar* is simply an open rectangular hall) consists of a nave and side aisles with rows of wooden pillars separating the nave from the aisles. The size of the *Naamghar* may vary according to the number of *bhakats* or disciples it has to accommodate.

2.7.2 Manikut

The East end of the hall does not in general have doors and windows, though very often it leads to an independent room called *Manikut* (literally: the jewel hut), also called *bhajghar* in western Assam, with its own roof. It houses idols representing the worshipful God, or a *Guru-Asana* (the guru's seat). It is fully walled, with either no windows or small ones and also function as a repository of important articles. This room is a later addition to the basic *Naamghar* structure.

The actual shrine where the sacred scripture is kept is called *Manikut*. It is a smaller structure than the *Naamghar* and is generally attached to the latter adjoining the eastern end. In addition to the sacred scripture, all the precious things dedicated to the deity are kept in the *Manikut*.

2.7.3 Guru Asana

The sacred scripture is placed on the '*Guru Asana*'. The *Guru Asana*, literally the Seat of the Guru is a seven-tiered, triangular, wooden throne adorned by the tortoise-elephant-lion motif and other decorative woodwork. Idol worship is absent in a *Naamghar* and no idol is worshipped, even that of Krishna, in any form. The only object of veneration being the sacred text placed on the top-most tier of the *Guru Asana*. The scripture is the *vangmay* image of the Lord; it represents *Bhagavanta*, the Supreme Being or *Mahapurusa* who manifests himself as Vishnu or Krishna; it also represents the Guru, his message as well as the highest truth propounded by him.

All activities inside of the *Naamghar* are directed towards the *Singhsana*, the wooden Pyramid-shaped throne for the object of worship (Holy Books) kept at the Eastern end. The wooden shrine, also called The '*Guru-Asana*' or '*Thapona*' is draped over and decked out with a richly woven piece of textile known as '*Gohain-Kapor*'. The village

women weave these intricately woven cotton textiles. *Guru-Asana* can be three, five or seven tiered. The symbolism, as told by the scholars is that of Seven Vaikunthas, or Heavens. The tiers are carved at the four corners with tortoise, elephant and winged-lion motif. The top of the wooden throne holds a shrine, which has sacred books, composed by Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. These include the *Dasham*, *Kirtanghosa*, *Bhakti Ratnavali* and *Namghosa*. Sankardeva gave highest importance to the formless universal self. It is represented not by any idols – but by holy books.

The sacred manuscripts, (called *Puthi*) are hand-written on the bark of the *Agaru trees*. The shrine also has a decorative cloth canopy hung from four corners called ‘*Chandrataap*’. Some books are written on paper made from silk-cotton called *Tulapat*. These are inferior to *Sanchipat*. A similar feature is in Sikh religion, where the *Guru Granth-Sahib* is the object of worship.

2.7.4 Naam-Prasanga



Fig. 2.22: Kirtan Ghosa (Madhavdeva)

In this ordered set-up, the devotees perform *Naam Kirtan* or the prayer-services, on a regular basis. The service itself is referred to as *Naam-Prasanga* or simply, ‘*Naam*’ and the leader of the chant is called *Naam Lagowa*. The seating arrangement in the *Naamghar*, with the congregation in two facing rows in front of the *Guru Asana*, is such that when the congregation bow down in worship to God, they are at the same time bowing down in worship to one another. The verses sung during the service consist of strings of the many names of God. First, verses from Madhavadeva’s *Naam Ghosa* are recited, followed by *Kirtanas* (Fig. 2.22) from Srimanta Sankardeva’s *Kirtan Ghosa*.

2.7.5 Significance of North-Eastern Pillar:

The first pillar in the North-East corner next to the *Singhasana* (altar) is an important place and it is offered to the senior-most of the members of the *Naamghar*. This place is offered to a dignitary when he visits *Naamghar* (e.g. a *Satradhikar*). It is said that Madhavdeva had invited a Muslim to lay the foundation of the *Naamghar* in the North East pillar.

“Seats along the row of pillars facing north are all given to the senior devout in the village. It is known as *Dohaar sari* or *Chorus singers*” row. The seats directly opposite the altar- the round of the U, is meant for the *Naam acharya* or *Naam logova*- literally, the *Naam leader*. On his side is the reader or the *Pathak* of the Scriptures or *Kirtans* (Hymns). In the same line are the musician’s i.e. *Gayan-bayans*, (cymbal players and drummers) and behind them are the chorus singers (*paalor sari*). On the northern stem of the U are places for the *Bhakats* (monks of the *Naamghar*) and the *Bilaniyar* (distributor of the Prasad).”

2.7.6 The Prasad:

The Prasaad generally consists of soaked green gram, horse-gram, and soaked rice along with bananas and other seasonal fruits and vegetables. While distributing the soaked grams, it is mixed with salt, fresh ginger bits and coconut pieces. After the prasanga, the Prasada is mixed and distributed by the *Bilaniar* (distributor) in banana-leaf plates or bowls made from banana stem. The treasurer (*Khataniar*) who collects the subscriptions and the *Naamghar* store-keeper (*Dhaan-Bharali*) are the other officers of the *Naamghar*. “All the office –bearers are democratically elected from amongst the villagers and are all voluntary. The only paid person is the Keeper of the *Naamghar* (*Naamghariya*), who cleans, sweeps, lights the lamps and maintains the *Naamghar*. Sometimes, houses do it by rotation. Status in the *Naamghar* is based on age and piety. Status in the village is based on wealth and influence” (Sarma, 2017).

2.7.7 Windows, lamps and stand:

The stands for holding the oil lamps are planned as in the form of large trees ranging in height from two to six feet. The central shaft has a broad base and branches hold many tiny earthen lamps, shedding a dim mystic glow in the dark, high structure. Brass metal lamps are also lit at prayer time in front of the *Guru Asana*, the top of which holds the sacred books composed by Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva.

Xorai are Receptacles or a raised tray to hold *Prasad* and offerings. They were made of brass or wood, called *Bota* or just a bamboo basket, depending on the economic conditions of the community. The *Pathak* (reader) has a lamp to read the scriptures. The Scriptural texts are placed on a stand called '*Thoga*'.

Seating mats woven from rice straw are hung neatly on the walls when not in use. It is called *Kath*. It was Madhavdeva who first made a *Kath* as a gift for his Guru. He also set the trend for embellishments of *Naamghar*.

2.7.8 Musical Instruments:

Srimanta Sankardeva had set the method of prayers in such a manner that it had to include singing, and playing on musical instruments. It was a part of the proceedings in the *Naamghar* that at first the big *Doba* or Kettle-drum is beaten in a rhythmic manner to gather the people together.



Fig. 2.23: Doba in Naamghar (Biswas, 2012)

Then for the singing, the different musical instruments are played upon. It was very attractive for the villagers to participate in these audio-visual events. They took pride in excelling at playing the instruments. There is place in the *Naamghar* to keep the *Khols* (two-sided drums). The drum, made of baked clay, is typical of *Naamghar* music. Large cymbals called the *Bhor-taal*, (perhaps originating from Bhutan) are another very characteristic of *Naamghar* music. The deep sounds of the *Gong* found place in *Naamghar* too. *Manjira* (small cymbals) are also used and kept in the *Naamghar*. Stringed

instruments like sarengdhar (bowl made out of baked earth), *tokori*, etc. were more an individual's accompaniment. Such instruments are mentioned in *Katha-Guru-Charit*. *Kamalpriya*, niece of Sankardeva is described as playing one such instrument as she sang a *Borgeet*.

i) **Doba :**

Doba is an instrument related to religious life of the Assamese People (Fig. 2.23). In almost all religious institutions such as, *Naamghar*, *Satra*, ancient temples etc. *Doba* is played. In every *Naamghar* of rural Assam, one will invariably find a *Doba*. The elegant sound of *Doba* played at a definite time every day, creates a holy ambience in the villages, and reminds people of the time as well. It is difficult to estimate since when the *Doba* is played in Assam, however, it may be assured of that it is an ancient musical instrument. Though the usage are different, some people believe that *Doba* is a modified form of ancient Communication drums. The larger than life, heavy sound of *Doba* attracts everyone's attention easily. *Doba* has a particular significance in the life of rural people. *Doba* played at the *Naamghar*, implies arrival of the evening and time to be back home. *Doba* is not generally accompanied with any music instrument. *Doba* is rather considered as a auspicious function to start the *Naam kirtan*. It has been played only at definite time and for definite purpose.

2.7.9 Art and Craft of Naamghar:

In Barpeta, while constructing one of the initial Prayer halls, Madhavdeva initiated the varieties of art. The Pillars, the Singhasan of the Kirtanghar, the wooden images of *Garuda* and *Hanuman*, the beams and uprights supporting the roof were carved beautifully as per his instructions and wooden doors and wall-panels were painted with themes from the Bhagavad Purana. The ten incarnations of Vishnu form the common theme in most *Naamghar* for paintings inside the door-panels. This later became the norm for village *Naamghar* too.

2.7.10 Carved Roof Truss and Carved Singhasana

It was in Barpeta *Naamghar* that Madhavdeva covered the side walls with '*Kundraksha-Jaala*' perhaps meaning wooden beaded lattice-work. It is mentioned further in the *Katha-Guru-Charit* that the openings had coloured mica sheets, shedding colored light in the dim interior. It was like the stained glass of Gothic Churches. Other

Vaishnavite Shrines in India like Srinath ji have painted backdrops to the shrines. In Assam, although according to records, Srimanta Sankardeva did create painted backdrops for his first drama (*Chinha-Yatra*), the feature was not adopted in *Naamghars*, perhaps due to the humid weather conditions in the region.

2.7.11 Wood Carving, Metal Work, Bamboo and Clay work

Vaishnavite artisans or the *khanikars* showed remarkable achievement in case of wood carving. Virtually the whole panorama of Vaishnavite sculpture and architecture predominantly consisted of bamboo and wood works. Bamboo and wood being abundantly available in Assam, have been a part and parcel of Assamese folklore. The country which had earlier a tradition of chiseled buildings and temples lost good craftsmanship (*silakutis*) in stone work. Having his eyes on the local resources of the land and the popular mood, and with a view to utilizing all kinds rudiments of art as well as the expertise of the people of the community in their respective fields through spontaneous and participative efforts, Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, the great artist-thinkers preferred wood, bamboo and cane to stone or brick for all kinds of accessories essential for daily *Satra* rituals and other performances. And each of such accessories was modelled or carved as a beautiful piece of art or sculpture. Thus wood-carving (along with bamboo work) or wooden sculpture has become extremely popular an artifice taken up by the *khanikar* not only in the *Satra* but also in every walk of domestic and social life. The result was that, thousands of art objects were carved in wood in the *Satra*, village *Naamghar* and residences also.

A. Majid in his famous monograph on wood carving of Assam remarks: “There is frequently carving on the beams and cross beams of *Naamghar*, which are covered with figures of deities and conventional flowers and creepers. In some *Naamghar* the posts are chamfered or fluted into polygonal or circular shapes and crowned by carved capitals resembling the lotus or the fruit called by the Assamese *kordoi tenga* (Averrhoa carambola)”

It is believed that every individual of the *Vaishnavite* society surrounding a *Satra* or the *Satra* where he is initiated, should contribute his might in whichever way he can, to share piety. And thus a collective consciousness was created among the *khanikars* to decorate the *Satras* and the *Naamghar* so as to make it look like Heaven (*Vaikuntha Samasara*) at least with a piece of work of their own hands. As a result of such a consciousness working vigorously in the popular mind, most of the *Satras* and even many of the village’s *Naamghars* with the gifts of painted manuscripts, or other manuscripts,

wooden sculptures and other bamboo, cane and metal art objects became museums of art and sculpture.

The wood carvings in which the *Satra* flourished mostly include arches, door frames, holy thrones of lions, *Garuda* and peacocks, icons of Vishnu and his various incarnations, images of Krishna and panels of his childhood playfulness, floral designs carved on posts, beams of Naamghar (*Lai Khuta, phulcoti*), *Xorai* or trays, *thaga* or lecturns etc. Besides these, the images of deities, standing figures of *dwarapals* (gate keepers) kneeling figures with folded hands like *Garuda, Hanuman, Jay Vijaya, Chari-siddhas* (the four wise men) adorn in the entrance of the *Naamghar* or *Manikut* of the *Satra*.

Garuda being the charger of Lord Vishnu is always held in regard by the Assamese Vaishnava. He could perhaps be interpreted as the symbol of the selfless devotion and extreme humility as inherent in Assam Vaishnavism. *Garuda* is carved (as half vulture and half man, having either a long bill or a sharp nose, two wings, two hands and two legs with peculiar shaped feet, which to some extent resemble the talons of a bird). In addition to exhibiting him at the entrance, he also figures on the right of the *Simhasana* with a conch in his right hand and a half-devoured serpent on the left, and sometimes he is shown with the image of Vishnu seating on him.

On the other hand *Hanuman*, the giant monkey who assisted Rama in invading Lanka and rescuing Sita is represented almost like a man, with a tail and a face generally painted”, or with a monkey motif. Likewise *Jay* and *Vijay*, attendants of Vishnu are also held in great veneration by the Assamese Vaishnava, are ‘shown as wearing carved crowns on the head and rosaries round their necks. They are sometimes painted black or dark blue. These two figures are sometimes carved in deep relief on the entrance door.

The mythical serpent king *Ananta*, who is ridden by Vishnu and regarded as the animal on which the world rests, also finds a prominent place inside the *Naamghar*. Besides these mythical figures, there are also carved animal figures of lions, tigers, monkeys, birds and horses etc. which are exhibited as decorative pieces appearing in the relief panels. Mention must also be made of another beautiful carved object i.e. the *thagi* or *lectum*. “The pedestal is formed by a turtle, a peacock, an elephant and a lion, one above the other in the order named, surmounted by a staff which supports the desk. In some *thogi* the peacock is omitted.” (Attribute to Sankaradeva, 2008)

Though the spirit and ethos of Assamese Vaishnavism was the inspiration behind the flourishing of such a craft tradition, the style of these art objects extended to secular

works also. Such works include figures tiger hunting, elephant fight, horse fight and buffalo fight in Bardowa *Satra*, human figures and floral decorations and figures of animals. The Majuli *Gohains* have boats, the prows of which terminate in elaborately carved *magars* (Crocodiles/Alligators), Moreover, carved articles of furniture such as the *paleng* (bed), and the *salpira* being bedsteads also were decorated with floral designs. *Piras* were (low stools – a very common furniture in every Assamese house hold), *bar-pera* (a big wooden chest in the bedrooms of the houses used for keeping ornaments, brass and bell metal utensils).

Karani (karnadika- a small wooden open trunk resting on four legs, each adorned with carvings of floral designs or figures of birds like parrots used as a wardrobe in the household or for keeping sacred articles like rosaries, scriptures or even deities in the *Naamghar* and *Manikuts*), are also carved with similar designs. Similarly spinning, weaving and embroidering implements like shuttle (*makoe*), pully (*nachoni*), spinning wheel (*cereki, yatara*) etc. are also generally ornamented with foliage, floral and animal carvings. Carving was even extended for producing scenic beauty or effects in the spectacular parts of the *Bhaona* performances in Assam.

The lamp-brackets used at the beginning of a *Bhaona* is also decorated with foliage. The wooden *Simhasanas* (in some *Satra* inlaid with copper, gold and silver) consisting of one to seven tiers with four to thirty two lions, standing on elephants, painted and decorated with various designs is the most exquisite and classical work of Vaishnavite art combining painting, sculpture as well as architecture in its total design. But it is at the same time a very common work adorning every *Naamghar* and *Manikut* of every *Satra* or village. As mentioned earlier, in some of the village *Naamghar* and domestic chapels, figures of *Garuda* or elephants are also found. The holy throne is covered at the uppermost tier with a wooden box (*amahi-ghar*) with an opening towards the front side and the upper and being pointed towards the top sacred scriptures like the ‘Bhagavad’ as the object of supreme veneration symbolizing the deity is kept inside the box.

The *simhasanas* of a bigger size with beautiful carvings, ornamentations and painting of floral design, figures of Vishnu’s incarnations in an imposing phenomenon in a *Naamghar Manikut* attracting attention of everybody who passes by it. It is difficult to describe the Photograph, which inspired Srimanta Sankardeva to devise this wonderful work of art as the seat of religious prayer and devotion. But it is perhaps not difficult to imagine that Srimanta Sankardeva made it a matter of more significance than installing a

simple idol of Lord Vishnu or Krishna in order to infuse into the popular mind the vision that the religious pursuit is also a pursuit of art.

Another very common but artistic object is the *Xorai (sarabha)* or an elevated tray. This tray with a carved stand is made of both wood and brass-metal. The popular use of *Xorai* through the last centuries is today extended to all social and religious occasions of the Assamese people.

One is continuously integrated with classicist philosophy of Indian religion. One more distinctive feature of the Satriya wood carving is the presence of the figures of flying lion, magara or sea monster with the head of a crocodile and the tail of a fish in addition to *Garuda*, mayura (peacock) and *hansa* (swan)- Among these the flying lion, the magara and even the *Garuda* remind us of the dragon like figure common with the Mongoloid art tradition.

The flying lion and the magara symbolize greatness and energy, the *Garuda* and the mayura both being snake hunters symbolises the destroyers of pride whereas the *hansa* stands for wisdom. Thus all of them finally are revelations of various facets of omnipotent God. By using the magara in the door frames and the arches a tremendous photograph of energy has been harnessed to rhythm and artistic beauty which again inspires in the realization of *rasa* and *bhava*. It may be remembered that the *magara* is found to be profiled in Vaishnavite literature always due to its artistic form and beauty. Primitive simplicity of folk art both in terms of material and style is revealed in the flat profiles of the face and nose of the figures with fat and heavy body structures. In the *simhhasana* the lion is always found as the killer of the elephant, which symbolises the idea of sin being destroyed by *Naama* (name of God).

2.8 Review of related literature:

A review of the existing literature that many scholars have already traced the role of *Satra* and *Naamghar* in India specially Assam from the ancient times to the present day and its impact on the society. The study covers a wide canvas of social political, architectural and design elements of emergence and changes in North East of the country particularly Assam. The researcher has drawn upon number of references from books and journals also other researches for the purpose of this study. There is particularly priority of studies regarding to design aspects of Naamghar, which form an integral and important part of the scenerio.

These authors have researched in various aspects in developing a perspective on the growth of *Naamghar* as a socio political movement in a diverse society. Religious, historical emergence of Neo-Vaishnavite movement in some detail has been elaborated. They have also provided textual details of architectural design and crafts associated dance, music and other cultural aspects in different *Satras* and *Naamghars* but are without supporting visuals of these details. Their writings also provides insights how an attempt was made to integrate them through the wider appeal of *Naamghar*. The detailed study of the various aspects of research are to be conducted by field study and development of the techniques for analysis of design elements and social aspects needs an exploration.





CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the research method appropriate for the study of *Naamghar* in Assam. The research methodology for an area needs to be in consonance with the aim and objectives of the research. The researcher explored the relevant research methods to develop the appropriate methodology for the study.

The present research area involves web of inter-relations involving layers of meaning in the field of social, religious and design domain. As a result, methodology has to be appropriate for each area as well as understanding inter-relationship between other factors. This was also essential to unfold not only the semantic but also semiotic and connotative meaning involved. As such the research strategy has been planned followed by conducting a systematic research.

To elicit responses from members of *Naamghars* and society, technique of group discussion was used. A schedule of themes was identified. The group discussion was organized by members of the group. The purpose was to get response to the questions of the themes. The supplementary questions were asked depending upon the responses. It was initiated to encourage responses and elicit them; also not to direct or limit the responses. In case of any difference of opinion the members were requested to respond individually and others having different views were also given opportunity to provide their views. Points of agreement or disagreement were noted. The attempt was to cover all the themes of the study. The group discussion was considered to be particularly useful for social issues and multiple role of *Naamghar* plays.

3.2 Research strategy planning

As presented in research strategy (Fig. 3.1), the methodology for data collection includes a comprehensive multiple set of visual survey at field and questionnaire (both at field and in studio level). For data analysis, softwares such as photoshop and illustrator were adopted. The description of each method is provided in later sections. Literature review analysis is presented followed first by image processing of visual survey and then by design of questionnaires.

Figure 3.1 presents flow chart illustrating the research strategy adopted for achieving desired objectives. The research strategy flow chart illustrates step by step integration of literature review, analysis, field survey; data generated using field survey/questionnaire, as well as final analysis of data (form, color and material). As observed from the figure 3.1, Literature review and its analysis in context of social, cultural and historical significance

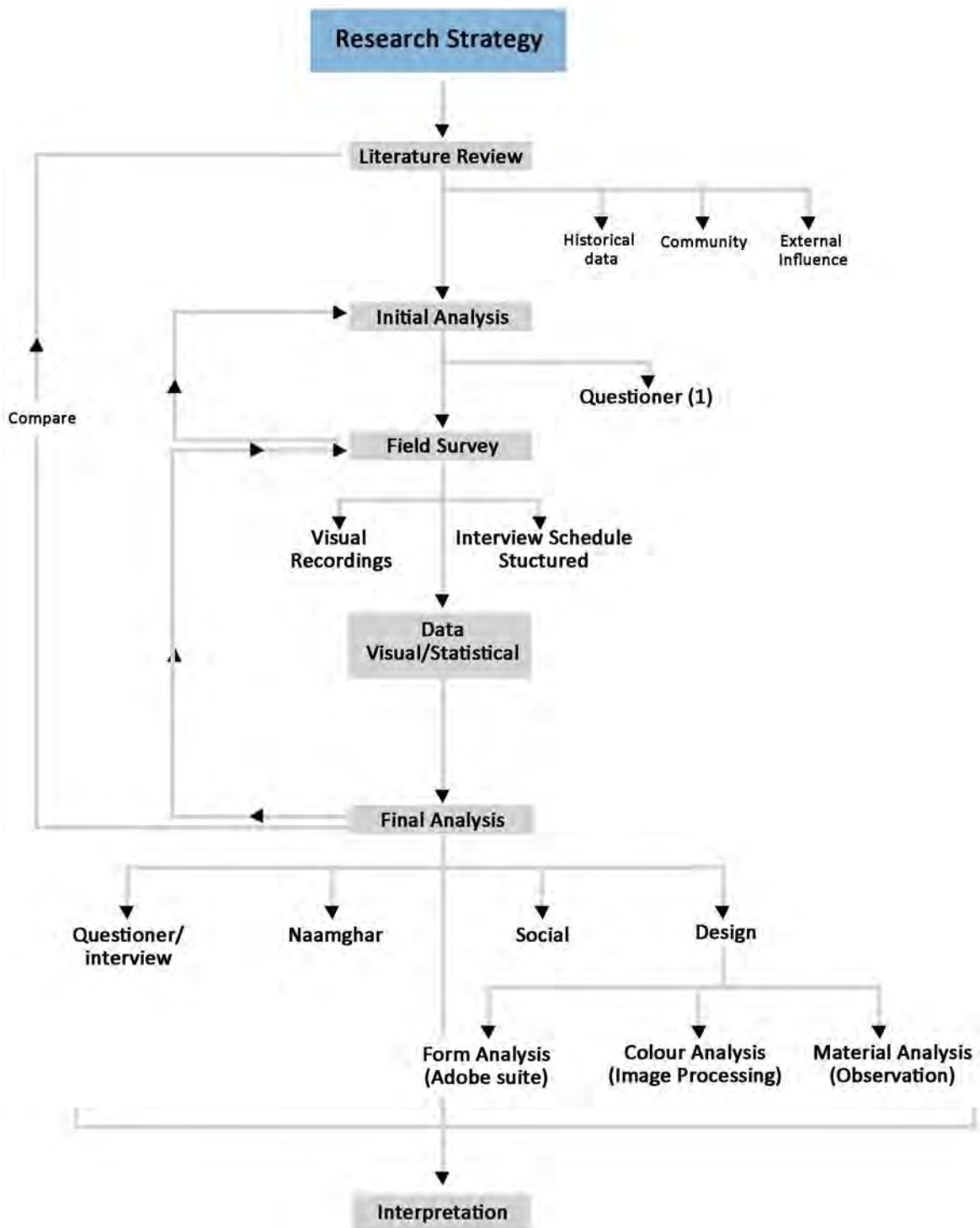


Fig. 3.1: Flow chart illustrating research strategy in step by step manner

forms the basis on which entire strategy has been built. Based on this, first set of research tool (a questionnaire) and field survey was planned followed by analysis of the data. The initial data analysis from field survey (visual) and data from questionnaire along with the literature review analysis then forms the basis of second more comprehensive field survey and questionnaires.

This iterative process gives an evolution of field survey and questionnaire for investigation. After the final visit, the data collected in form of visual and historical details is then analyzed in context of main elements of *Naamghar*, social aspects, design i.e., scale, material, form and color. The data analyzed is compared with that of existing literature to identify differences and similarities and also state new findings.

3.3 Field visual survey

On the basis of research strategy initially, step have been taken in marking the locations of *Naamghar* in Assam. Figure 3.2 presents the map showing the positions of *Naamghar* that were selected for field investigation. As seen from the map, the *Naamghar* seems to be widespread across Assam, with most of them located in and around Guwahati. Also, interestingly, the *Naamghar* appear to lie close to the Brahmaputra River, since during that period prime mode of transportation was by river and not road, which was not developed much.

In total, field investigation of 26 *Naamghars* in Assam was conducted (list is given in Annexure II). *Naamghars* were selected purposefully so as to cover all three regions such as Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban region. In addition, they were also selected based on their chronological history of establishment. The intention was to cover *Naamghars* that covers range of establishment from 600 years old to 3 years old. This helped to provide a broader overview of the variations in design elements that were taking place in both spatial and temporal aspects. The strategy adapted for field investigation of *Naamghar* was also purposefully prioritized from oldest *Naamghar* (Barpeta) to older (Sualkuchi) and recent *Naamghar* (Zoo road). Implementing the strategy mentioned in Fig. 3.1 helped to provide desired feedback on expected contrasting variation in design elements of *Naamghar*. Based on this strategy, visits to other *Naamghars* were planned and executed. Once the data has been collected, sampling has been done with the help of card sorting and segregation process.

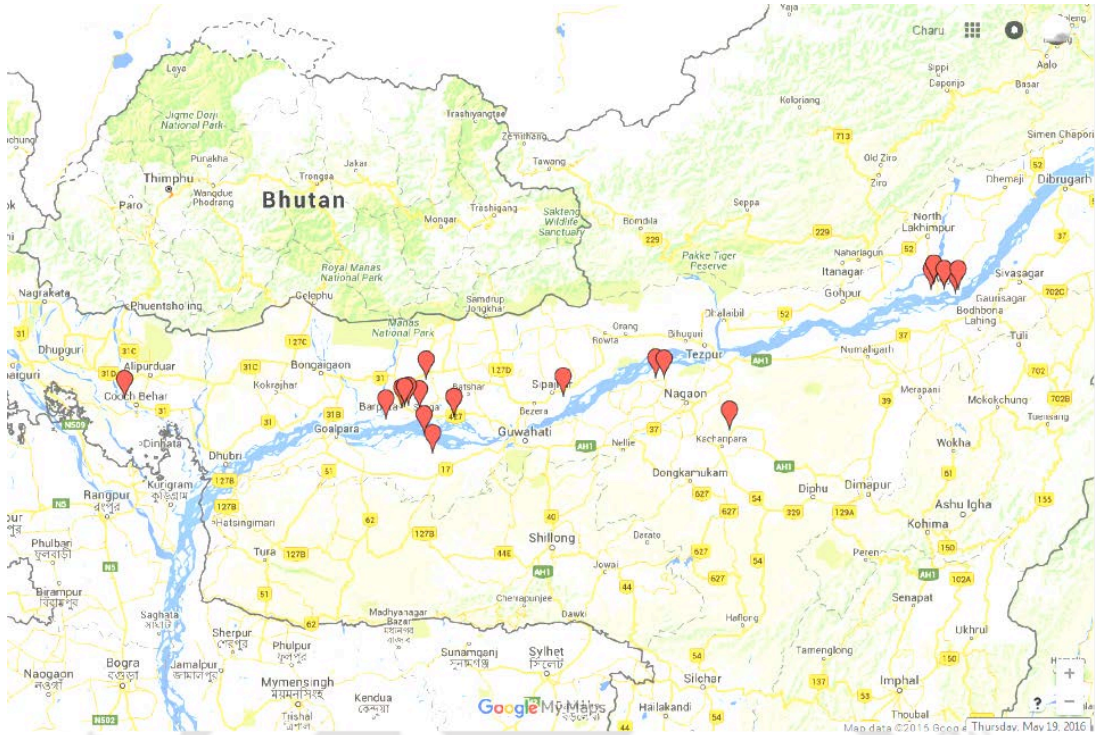


Fig. 3.2 Map showing positions of Naamghar that were investigated in this study

During first visit to each *Naamghar*, visual survey was conducted using high-resolution cameras to capture exterior as well as interior design elements of *Naamghar*. Fig. 3.3 (a) DSLR Nikon camera and Fig. 3.3 (b) Go Pro camera was used. DSLR allows capturing of still images and videos during interviews and also activities in Naamghar and with Go Pro camera 360 degree views of (interior and exterior) surroundings were captured. Simultaneously, during the first field visit, instant interviews were held to get basic information of *Naamghar* and its design elements.

Images were compared and visually analyzed to identify and compare the forms and aesthetics of key design (exterior and interior) elements of *Naamghar*. Different forms of elements were then discussed with references from literature.



Fig. 3.3 (a)



Fig. 3.3 (b)

Fig. 3.3: Camera used for visual field survey (a) Nikon 750D and (b) Go Pro Hero 4

This process was iterated at least 2-3 times (multiple visits) for each *Naamghar* with more detailed versions of questionnaire (refer to Fig. 3.4 and 3.5) to get insights into *Naamghar*. The data collected from field visual survey include photographs, videos, voice recordings and also basic qualitative information (Name, age, location, households, *Satradhikari* associated etc.) related to *Naamghar*. The photographs were then analysed to obtain information related to scale (dimensions). They were also analysed to capture color palettes and other design elements.

3.4 Design of research tool (questionnaire):

In addition to field survey for capturing visual data, the questionnaire was designed and modified at multiple stages (i.e., three stages) on the basis of feedback in the initial visits and discussion with experts in the field.

The methodology proposed by Boynton, P. M., & Greenhalgh, T. (2004) for questionnaire was adopted. Fig. 3.4 illustrates the overview of strategy adopted for questionnaire at different stages of research. In the first stage, it was mainly a general questionnaire, which was designed based on literature review analysis. This included question for collecting different types of data from wider range of respondents (President, Vice-President; *Satradhikari* and *Bhakats*) in a short time and also conduct chronological comparisons.

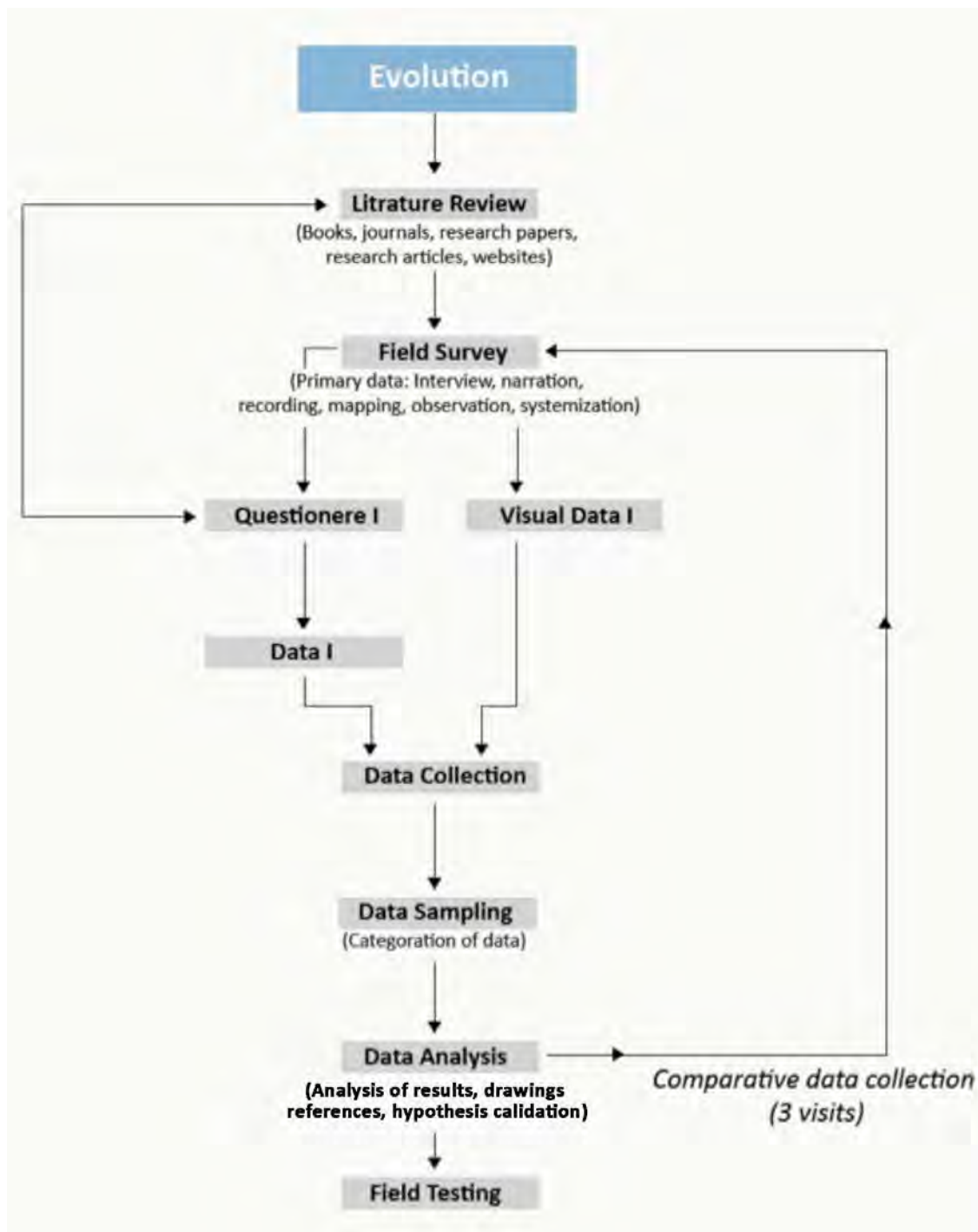


Fig. 3.4 Overview of Strategy adopted for questionnaire

Whereas, in second and third stage, the interview schedule (with successive questionnaires) were designed based on subsequent analysis of data collected from first and second field survey respectively. The questionnaires (second set as shown in Fig. 3.5) were designed based on the initial findings from first field visit and also basic information from literature review (Refer to Appendix-1).

Sampling preparation plan



Fig. 3.5 Evolution of questionnaire during research

In the first phase, previous studies were comprehensively referred for measurement tools of variables of interests. The general questionnaire (Refer to Appendix-1) was prepared, where questions related to name, location, age, households etc. was incorporated.

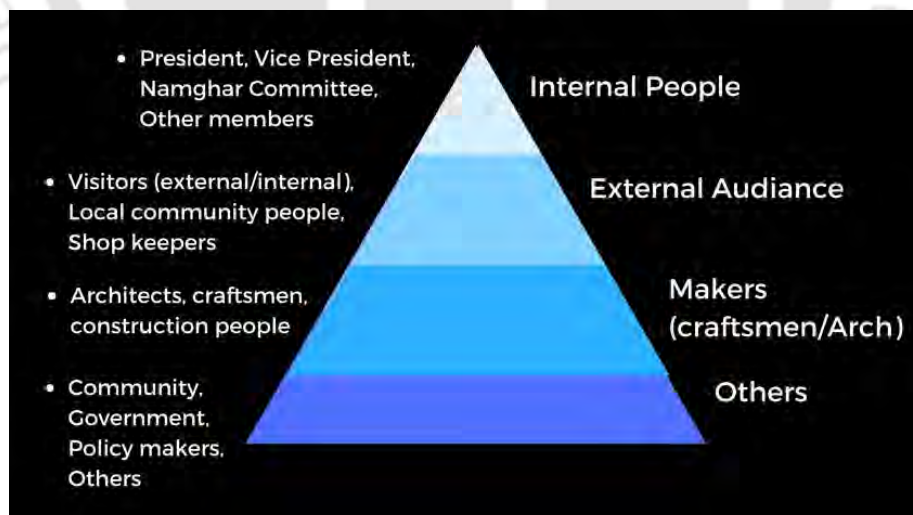


Fig 3.6: Various stakeholders for interviews and focused group discussions

This was followed by in-depth interviews and semi structured group discussions with several people at decision making positions (such as President, Vice president, *Satradhikari*) in *Naamghar*, Fig. 3.6. Second set of questionnaire was prepared, where

specific information related to design elements details (outer gate, pillars, door, floral elements such as lotus etc) was enquired, Fig. 3.5. After considering the input from interviews and focus group discussions, the questionnaire was prepared for the pilot testing. Final set of questionnaires were then used for collecting data in the final field visits to each of these *Naamghars*. The samples of such questionnaires and tabulated data are shown in Appendix-1. The collected data from literature review analysis, field visual survey as well as questionnaires was analysed in order to unfold semiotic and connotative significance.

3.5 Validation of research tool

Structured interview schedules were prepared for various stakeholders; the same was given a trial before administering them. This led to significant collateral evidences. Later on the basis of card sorting method decisions were further validated.

3.6 Research methodology choices

Largely the historical approach was chosen as the appropriate method for the study. The movement of *Naamghar* started at a particular time in history and development in various dimensions including religious, design, cultural and social relations have emerged. In a number of situations the relations were didactic. As such the method used is also descriptive and interpretive. Below are the details of methods found suitable and identified for the research.

i) Categorization theory:

One of the methodology which was considered relevant was used by Athavankar, U. (1989) in the study of “Categorization...Natural Language and Design”. He mentions that structured categorization can lead to concepts and with that visual information can be controlled. It has been adapted from the work of William Labov, “The boundaries of words and their meaning” a linguist, illustrates this effectively. Labov’s study demonstrates the relationship between the variations in product form and in conceptual meaning. Linguistic subjects were randomly presented and on the basis of users choices data was categorized. In the principles of categorization (Rosch. E, 1978), clearly demonstrates that instead of categorizing objects into large numbers of finite discrimination and tightly organized concepts, it is better to let the mind automatically

select the cognitively optimal economical option of neglecting the infinite differences among objects to behaviorally and cognitively usable proportions. The categorization process treats non-identical objects as equivalent, when differences are irrelevant to the human response. It will be pertinent to point out that the different layers of meaning are identified in his study. A similar structure is found relevant for the research problem here. On the basis of explorations of belongingness, the need to respond to function, environment and culture requires that most manufactured products simultaneously belong to more than one system of categorization. For instance, the concept of belongingness acquires additional complexity when product forms are also required to respond to specific sub-cultures. This is where alternative culture of charting the taxonomic structure show new exploration possibilities.

For the present study charting the taxonomical structure and categorization of elements has been identified and adopted to further segregate the collected data of Assamese *Naamghar*. It has been divided into ‘Exterior’ (main gate, outer gate) and ‘Interior’ (hall, *Manikut*) level in the ‘Super-Ordinate level’ of *Naamghar* and further classified into ‘Basic level’ like motif, pillar, gate and floor, hall pillar, roof etc. Further its been classified into ‘Sub-Ordinate level’ (shapes, signs, carvings, jali work, instruments etc.). It is presented in Fig. 3.7.

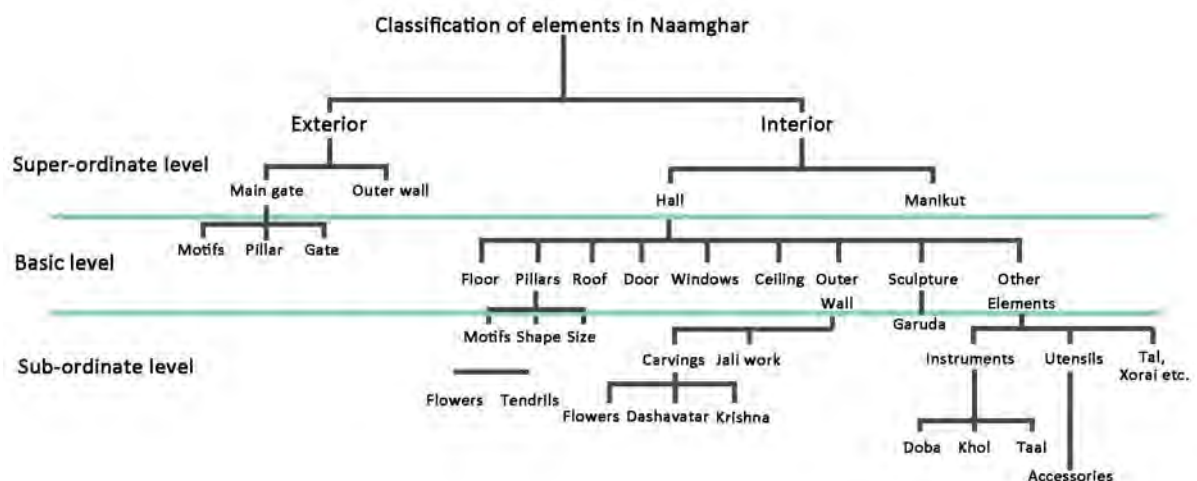


Fig. 3.7: Categorization of elements of Naamghar

(Adopted from Athavankar, Uday A. 1989)

(“Categorization...Natural Language and Design” Design Issues)

This study also covers the analysis of the design elements of *Naamghar* considering the theory of sign, which deals with signifier and signified (Saussurean

model). In context of architectural design elements mentioned by Levy (Levy, 1979) expression and context. This is unfolding objects ‘Connotative’ meaning like shape, size, structure (area, height), material and colour and in context of ‘Denotative’ form and value are found suitable for the analysis of *Naamghar* data across the decade.

ii) Significance of Design elements- Card Sorting

The technique of card sorting method found suitable to cull-out the Typical from the A-typical rating in order to bring out the significance of design elements. This technique requires the users to arrange the pictorial cards of *Naamghar* elements in present context (for instance, main gate and main door here) in a sequence of essentiality.

Focus group interviews were conducted and the pictorial cards were given numeral coding to elicit and analyze the responses regarding degree of being ‘Typical’ as distinguished from ‘A-Typical’. The sample size taken was 26 *Naamghars* and the study had been conducted with 263 numbers of respondents from various sections (Fig. 3.6). Two examples of pictorial data arrangement from Typical towards A-typical is given below (Fig. 3.8).

To distinguish from Typical to A-Typical of Main gate (Pratham dwar)

Main gate			
Typical			
	SU9(MG10)	SU17(MG13)	SU9((MG11)
Not so Typical			
	R6(MG21)	U20(MG2)	

Fuzzy Boundary			
	SU10(MG12)	R13(MG18)	R11(MG22)
Not so A-Typical			
	R15(MG20)	R8(MG9)	R2(MG14)
A-Typical			
	R18(MG1)	SU26(MG4)	U25(MG7)

Fig. 3.8: Typical to A- Typical rating of Naamghar Main gate suggested by respondents

For the Naamghars main gate (also called *Dalam*) the typical ones are no.10, 13 and 11 as numbered in the picture (this structure came from Ahom kingdom and it is more similar to *Xorai*) has been chosen in a highest category. The respondents have given many reasons for choosing these particular gates as it has many things like *Udanto singha* (particular kind of flying lion, which has been the symbol of Ahom kingdom and represents a mythical creature that is used as a metaphor for showcasing the might of the Supreme Hindu deity *Lord Vishnu*) on top of the gate. Also respondents mentioned that gate is an extension of *Thapana* in a symbolic manner, same *bhakat* with *taal* and *khool* (musical instruments) in their hands on the gate representing welcoming of the visitors. Respondents said that on the gate something in relevance to supreme (*Vishnu*) has to be there in form of *Thapana* or *Vishnu* avatar itself. *Xorai* with *Bhagwat* and *Gamosa* has been used to give respect as a symbol of Assamese culture. Also it is auspicious and has

been used in the main gate. Gate no. 21 has Tibetan influence over it, which is not so typical to the respondents.

Second preference has been given to gate no 21 and 2 (coding can be referred in Appendix-2) in which some of the elements are present like singha (lion) and *Jay Vijay* but *singha* is not the exactly *udantu singha* (flying lion). Also image no. 14 has influence of Mohammedan architecture.







For the Main Gate (pratham dwar) preference has been given to the following by the respondents. It is been said that the following things has to be present in the Main gate of *Naamghar*:

- a) ***Udantu Singha/ Naama Singha (flying lion)*** denotes *bhakti* also called *Naamghar rokheyas* i.e. the protectors of the *Naamghar*. It is believed by the people that the lion protects the *Naamghar*. One can see that the lion has been used as a mythical creature at the top of the main *Naamghar* gate as a metaphor for showcasing the might of the supreme Hindu deity lord *Vishnu*. The essence of *Vaisnavism* is in the worship of lord *Vishnu*. Just like the *Garuda* is shown as insurmountable force and a humanoid bird, possesses extraordinary martial prowess. In the *Singhasana*, the lion is always depicted as a dominant to the elephant. It symbolizes the idea of sin being destroyed by the name of God (Mahanta, 2007). Similar inferences can be drawn for the *Singha duar*.
- b) **Bhakat with Bhor-taal and Khols** (drums with two sides): *Khols* are typically prepared with baked clay in *Naamghar* and used as a musical instrument. *Bhor-taal* (originated from Bhutan). It is been carved on the main gate to welcome the visitors with music and hymns. The plays and songs bring the spiritual entertainment for the people.
- c) ***Xorai with Bhagwat and Gamosa*** representing auspicious and respect to the supreme.
- d) **Shape of dome structure:** Mahapurusha Srimanta Shankardeva has spent good number of years in Orisha the details of which are found in the “Oresa Barnana” (holy pilgrimage of Shankardev to Puri) section of “*Kirtan Ghosa*”. He was greatly influenced by Hindu deity Lord Jagannath and the teachings of *bhakti* movement. He was inspired by architecture of the Jagannath temple, Puri and the *Singhaduar* (Lions gate) situated in the temple premises; also the structure represents *Xorai*, which is a symbol of respect.

e) There is a **crown on the top of the gate** with semi hemi-spherical shape. This symbol is also been used in the *bhaona* performance and it represents the crown.

The A-Typical ones (no.1, 4 and 7) were identified for the following reasons: The respondents mentioned that the main gate should not look like a house gate; also there is no symbolic elements present which represents the *Naamghar*. The lion, which has been used, is also not *Udantu singha* and different *singha* has been used. Hence, the respondents choose them as A-Typical.

From Typical to A-typical Main door of *Naamghar* (*Saptam dwar*):

Main Door			
Typical			
	R15(MG9)	SU9(MG10)	R2(MG11)
Not so Typical			
	U21(MG3)	SU1(MG13)	
Fuzzy Boundary			
	U25(MG7)		

Not so A-Typical			
	SU19(MG8)		
A-Typical			
	U24(MG5)	SU26(MG4)	

Fig. 3.9 Typical to A- Typical rating of Naamghar Main door suggested by respondents

The same procedure was followed to elicit responses regarding main door of the *Naamghar*, also called *Saptam dwar*. The typical cards number was 10 and 11. These have been chosen in the highest category. The respondents have given many reasons for choosing these particular doors as these has many depictions of *Dashavatara*, which represents Vishnu and its ten primary avatars (incarnations), the Hindu god of preservation. With these representations visitors and *bhakats* instantly connects with the power of God and its presence on earth. However, most draw from the following set of figures, omitting at least one of those listed in parentheses: *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Narsimha*, *Vamana*, *Parashurama*, *Rama*, *Krishna (Balarama) or (Buddha) and Kalki*. All of them are Vishnu Avatars. The stories of all Vishnu's incarnations inspire the *bhakats* and visitors. Respondents also mentioned that *Jay Vijay* present on right and left side of the door is important. Also on top of the main door presence of *Vaikunth Dham* (Anant Sajja), where the God or *Vishnu* lives has to be there as it represents the supreme of all "*Vishnu*" (the preserver God) which means he protects the earth from being destroyed and keeps it going and he has come to earth with its ten forms.



Fig. 3.10: Presence of Vaikunth Dham (Anant sajja) on the main door of Naamghar

Vishnu is most famous forms of *Rama* and *Krishna*. Vishnu's wife *Lakshmi* was the Hindu goddess of luck and fortune. *Vishnu* is usually shown with light blue skin and four arms. He holds a lotus, mace (*gada*), conch (*shankha*) and *Sudarshan chakra* in each of four hands. Presence of peacock on the top of the door is a symbol of Sri Krishna. The whole main door should give the aura of Vishnu's stories/ narratives. Respondents also said that traditional influence is required on the main door.

Second preference has been given to door no. 3 and 13, which again has Vishnu and *Dashavatar* but not in clarity as well as the carvings are minimal. Later the respondents has chosen A-typical doors as 5 and 4 which does not have any of the symbols or *Dashavatar* in any form.

For the Main door (*saptam dwar*) the respondents preferences are the following:

- a) ***Dashavatar* on main door:** It denotes the stories of *Vishnu* avatars with its incarnations. There are total ten of them, which are *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Narsimha*, *Bamana*, *Parshuram*, *Hariram*, *Baraha*, *Sri Ram*, *Buddha* and *Kalki*. Respondents also said that *Dashavatar* did good for the earth and that has to be represented on the doors.
- b) ***Vaikuntha* (Unnat sajja/ *Vaikuntha dham*):** In Hinduism, Vishnu is the preserver and supreme of all. So its position is on the top of the main door, where the main dham should be represented. In Hindu iconography, Vishnu is usually depicted as having a dark, or pale blue complexion and having four arms. He holds a lotus flower in his lower left hand, mace in his lower right hand, conch (*shanka*) in his upper left hand and

the *Sudarshan chakra* in his upper right hand. A traditional depiction is *Vishnu* reclining on the coils of the serpent *shesha* accompanied by his consort *Lakshmi* as he "dreams the universe into reality" (Fred S. Kleiner, 2007). It shows the story of *Vishnu puran*. It says all the religion is one and the supreme that is *Vishnu* and others are its avatar.

- c) **Jay Vijay:** They are the two gatekeepers of the abode of *Vishnu* known as *Vaikuntha* (meaning *place of eternal bliss*) (Sukumari, 1998, Maehle, 2012). There is a story that once *Vishnu* was resting and *Kumaras* appear to meet *Vishnu* so *Jay Vijay* stopped them by saying that *Vishnu* is resting and he can't meet anyone. On this *Kumaras* replied *Jay* and *Vijay* that *Vishnu* is available for his devotees any time, and cursed both the keepers *Jay* and *Vijay*. Suddenly *Vishnu* appeared and asked *Kumaras* to undo the curse but the curse was not reversible. Instead, he gives *Jay* and *Vijay* two options. The first option is to take seven births on Earth as a devotee of *Vishnu*, while the second is to take three births as his enemy. After serving either of these sentences, they can re-attain their stature at *Vaikuntha* and be with him permanently. *Jay* and *Vijay* cannot bear the thought of staying away from *Vishnu* for seven lives. As a result, they choose to be born three times on Earth even though it would have to be as enemies of *Vishnu*.
- d) **Arch on the main door:** Polylobed arch of the pediment and the upper curve has influence from *Bhaona* performance (traditional Assamese play).
- e) **Motifs:** It depicts the elements of nature like flowers and plants and it is taken from '*Rangiyal flower*' and '*Ashoka flower*' which has a symbolic association with *Madhavdeva*.

3.7 Tools for analysis of identified design elements

Naamghar shows the diversity and extensive visual culture manifested by it. One can understand the rootedness of visual culture through entering into the *Naamghars* of Assam. Over the decades *Naamghars* have been one of the major contributor for *Vaisnavism*. It has design elements to make the visitors feel special (*bhakti* towards God) about *Naamghars*. Unfolding visual elements in the *Naamghar* plays an important role in connotation of various aspects of the *Naamghar*. It has evolved under influence of various factors like socio- cultural context, historical and spatio-temporal. The impact of these developments can be seen in terms of design elements used in context of *Naamghars*.

Human being always try to interpret things as per their understanding and background knowledge. One can't take reality for granted and define it objectively. Semiotics teaches one that reality is a system of signs. Studying semiotic can help to be more aware of reality as a construction and of the roles played by everyone in constructing it. Semiotics theory has been elaborated by Cropley, D. H. (1998) and found suitable for dissecting the meaning in the context of this research.

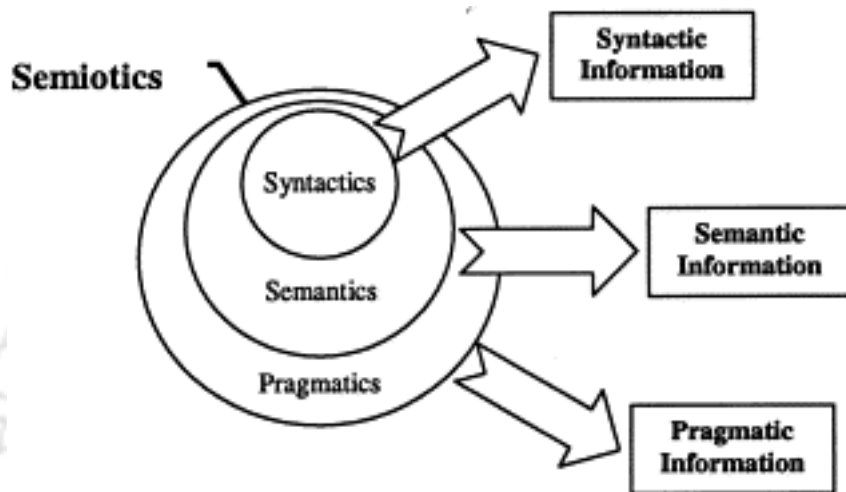


Fig. 3.11: Towards formulating a semiotic theory of measurement of information: Fundamental concepts and measurement theory (Cropley, D. H.,1998)

For analyzing the design elements in *Naamghar*, Semiotic (The intended meaning) approach has been adopted from Barthian's theory of visual identification. Barthian's idea is to identify the layer of meaning associated with elements connected with the visual semiotics. The first layer denotes the layer of *Denotation*, which gives an idea about with who and what is being represented? Below are few examples presented by the researcher representing *Xorai* and *Gamosa*.

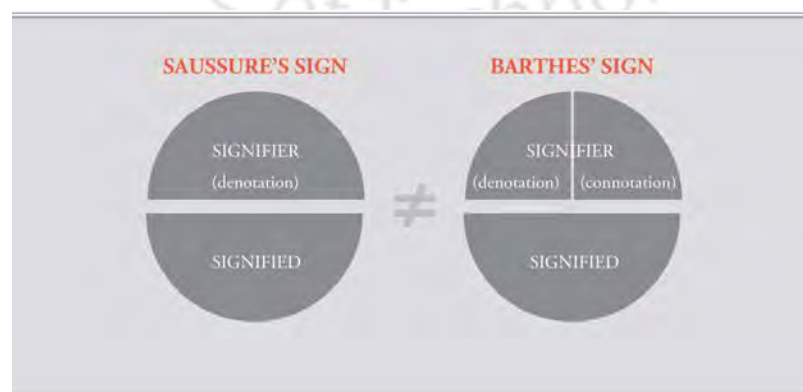


Fig. 3.12: Semiotics models by two thinkers

Semiotics is a study of signs and according to Saussurean model; the sign is the whole that results from the association of signifier and the signified. This relationship is called ‘signification’ and the value conferred by a sign depends on its relationship with other sign within the system. The meaning making and perception of *Naamghar* elements depends on relationship generated by different components of the *Naamghar* elements. Design elements in 26 *Naamghars* are analyzed separately by syntactic, semantic and pragmatic approach.

i) Syntactic Approach:

Syntactic is a study of relationship among sign in formal structure. It is useful to understand structural relationship among the parts of sign. This section utilizes the syntactic principle to see the relationship of *Naamghar* elements with respect to its positioning.

In case of Xorai 🏺 : Object and its position

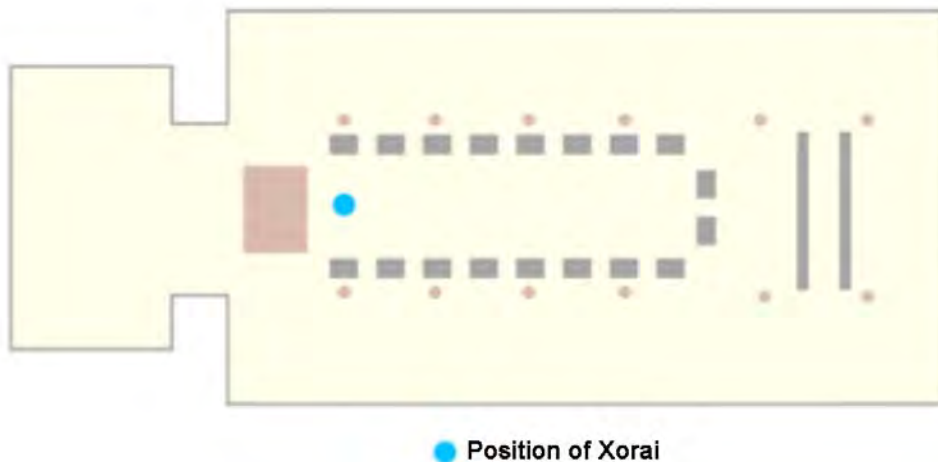


Fig. 3.13: Position of the Xorai in Naamghar

ii) Semantic Approach:

Semantics is a study of meaning created by sign in a system, where they interact with other signs. This approach has been used to analyze *Naamghar* elements to see how effective is the different design elements in overall meaning in relationship with *Naamghar* and genre wise element’s classification.



Object	Meaning
 <p>(a)</p>	<p>Xorai</p>
 <p>(b)</p>	<p>Gamosa</p>

Fig. 3.14: (a) Xorai and (b) Gamosa

iii) Semiotic and connotative Interpretation:

The methodology involves mainly semiotic and connotative interpretation of data gathered in extensive field study using visual techniques as well as literature review on *Naamghar*. For instance the main *Naamghar* (Barpeta), which is one of the oldest institution, most likely to be preserved was selected for investigation along with other *Naamghars*. In this context it will be noteworthy to consider the Saussurean dyadic model of sign in Fig. 3.15

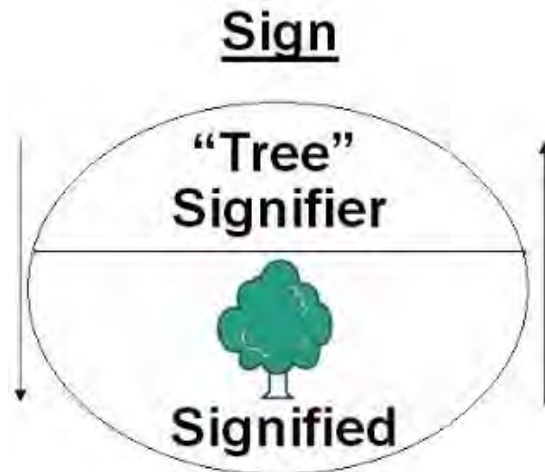


Fig. 3.15: Concept of Signifier and Signified

iii a). Structure and meaning making

Individual elements act as building block of an object (*Xorai* with *Gamosa*, betel nut etc. together) where its form, placement and dimension plays an important role in communication of object matter (composition). Considering from the Barthes's visual semiotics point of view, his denotation of individual elements is an unproblematic issue (Fig. 3.16).

Language	Signifier	Signified		
	Sign (Sense) SIGNIFIER (FORM)		SIGNIFIED (CONCEPT)	MYTH
	SIGN (SIGNIFICATION)			

Fig. 3.16: Structural analysis Barthes (2009)

Knowing the written language ensures each viewer to understand the actual meaning of object. But the connotative meaning of the object gets generated through understanding of the message which is hidden somewhere in the form and structure of the object.

This does not mean that denotation is entirely up to the beholder. This also depends upon the context (Leeuwen, 2001). This could be further illustrated by taking examples of two objects used in *Naamghar* namely the main gate and the main door, which has been discussed in this context previously.

Saussurean model of sign found suitable to understand the elements associated with signifier and significance hence to understand the 'signification'. In the case of design

elements its expression (signifier) and context (signified), which is analyzed and further explored into shape, size, structure, material and colour in case of ‘expression’ and in case of ‘context’ its form (which is symmetrical, Asymmetrical) and value.

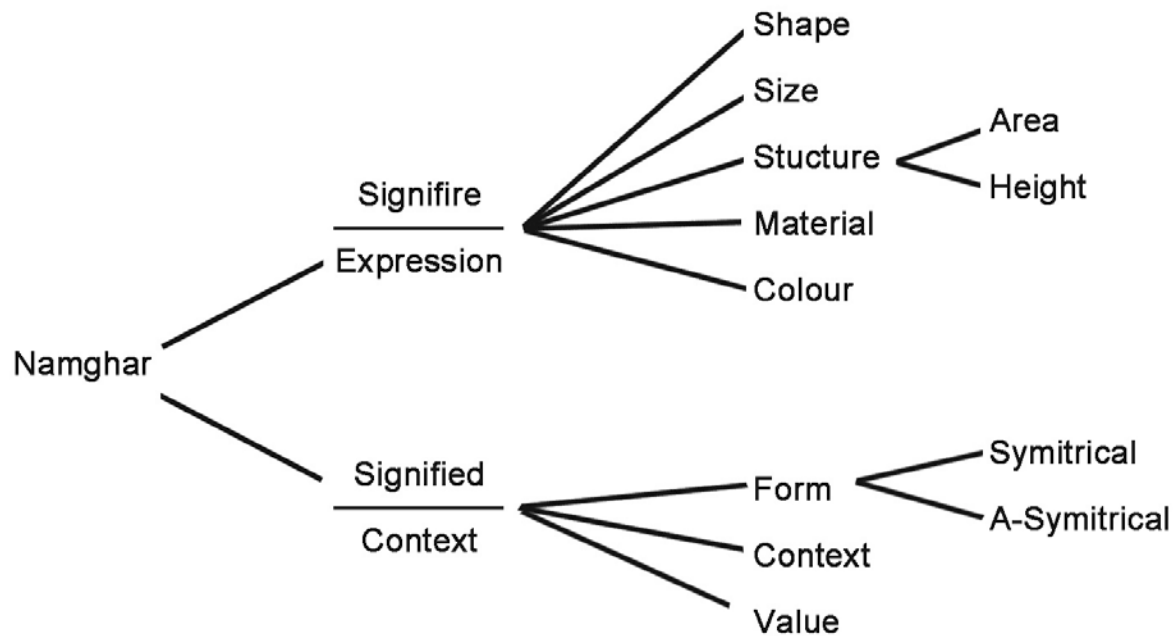


Fig. 3.17: Structural diagram of **Semiotic** elements in Naamghar

Semiotic elements structure adapted from Saussurean model of sign found suitable for the research on *Naamghar*.

iii b). Connotation and Denotation:

For viewers who know the language of the elements/objects, it's easier to convey the object and its meaning. For those who know the language or who are already associated with *Naamghar*, it is very easy to tell about the object or the elements associated with it but what other meaning the producer is expressing with the help of objects design has specified is something, which requires more efforts to decode the meaning hidden inside.

The connotation of meaning and conversion of design elements in *Naamghar* varies on these values and associations created by different components of the elements of *Naamghars*. For analyzing the design elements in *Naamghar* Semiotic approach has been adopted from Barthian's theory of visual identification. His idea is to identify the layer of meaning associated with elements connected with the visual semiotics. The first layer denotes the layer of Denotation, which gives an idea about with who and what is being represented? Here are few examples is been represented of *Xorai* and *Gamosa*.



Object	Denotation (Who/what is being represented)
 <p>(a)</p>	<p>What: Xorai (name)</p> <p>Form: Its a metal object which is having a half cylindrical and semi-sphere on top shape.</p> <p>Function: It is been used as an offering utensil or tray for prasad (devotional offering of food) and other items placed in front of the <i>Thapana (Naamghar)</i> for soliciting blessings by the lord and is used while performing respectful offerings.</p>
 <p>(b)</p>	<p>What: <i>Gamosa</i></p> <p>Form: A hand woven white cloth with design woven with white and red colour thread.</p> <p>Function: It is used as a gesture of respect and its very auspicious and represents the Assamese identity and culture.</p>

Fig. 3.18: Denotation and Connotation meaning of (a) Xorai and (b) Gamosa

The other layer which represents its meaning is Connotation, which enquire about the value and idea expressed through what is been represented and through the way in which it is been is represented (Leeuwen 2001).

Denotation (Who/what is being represented)	Connotation (value/idea expressed)
<p>Who: <i>Xorai</i> (name)</p> <p>Form: It's a metal object which is having a half cylindrical and semi-hemisphere on top shape.</p>	<p>(i) Its a manufactured bell-metal article and an object of higher respect and is used as a container-medium while presenting respectful offerings.</p> <p>(ii) It is also been used as offering plate or tray in which food or prasad can be offered in front of the Altar (<i>Naamghar</i>) for blessing by the God.</p>
<p>Who: <i>Gamosa</i></p> <p>Form: A hand weaved yarn white cloth with design weaved with red colour thread.</p>	<p>(i) It represents social status,</p> <p>(ii) It also represents an act of purification and respect.</p>

For viewers who know the language or who are already associated with *Naamghar*, it is very easy to tell about the object or the elements associated with these *Naamghar* elements but what other meaning the producer is expressing with the help of design of the objects has specified is something, which requires more efforts to decode the hidden meaning inside. It will be noteworthy to consider the Saussurean dyadic model of sign in Fig. 3.15.

For a researcher it is essential to have second-order understanding to provide appropriate sign so that viewer would be able to decode the meaning and understanding behind what is been denoted (Krippendorff, 2006). In the same way a second level understanding is required by the viewer to decipher the associated or symbolic meaning behind what is been characterized or represented. At this point second order understanding is required in the appreciation that, when the viewer will look at the different elements of *Naamghar* for instance on the *Manikut* with its actual meaning, they should be able to decode the message intended by the maker (here a craftsmen and artist) of the *Manikut*. In many possibilities or time, maker would present the *Manikut* with some sign to understand those hidden meaning. Also their meanings were suggested by society, which leads to understanding of the object (here *Manikut*). For example the role of *Manikut* in the *Naamghar* setting have been used to give the symbolic meaning, like seven stairs represents the seven levels to reach *moksha* (salvation) or to the supreme, which is God and with that representation of *Vishnu* Avatars (symbolic incarnations). Hence, this approach of bringing the meaning out of the context is been used everywhere in the study to analyze the elements of *Naamghar* and decode the meaning behind the object or image to bring out the result.

iv). Pragmatics:

Pragmatics is study of relationship between signs and sign-using agents. Here context contributes to the meaning and interpretation of particular design. This approach helps to see the display position, display technology and use of *Naamghar* elements.



Object	Pragmatics
 <p>(a) Xorai</p>	<p>Function: It has been used as an offering plate or tray for <i>prasad</i> (edible offering) and other items placed in front of the Altar (<i>Naamghar</i>) soliciting blessings by the lord and is used while performing respectful offerings.</p> <p>Process: One has to open it from the top side and distribute the <i>prasad</i> to the devotees.</p>
 <p>(b) Gamosa</p>	<p>Function: Its used as a gesture of respect and it is considered very auspicious. It represents the Assamese identity and culture.</p> <p>Process: It is kept in a foldable manner on top of the <i>Xorai</i> and presented to God.</p>

Fig. 3.19: Pragmatic meaning of (a) Xorai and (b) Gamosa

3.8 Group Discussion:



Fig. 3.20: Card sorting with respondents in Satra

Focus group discussion was conducted to understand the respondent's viewpoint. The respondents were divided into group of five and numerical coded pictorial cards were shown to respondents in three different sections. Firstly, the pictorial images of

Naamghars in rural settings. Secondly, *Naamghars* in semi-urban settings and thirdly, *Naamghars* in Urban settings. The respondents selected the cards by talking to each other and conforming the location and traditional-ness of the *Naamghar* (Fig. 3.20). The focus group interviews were done with community people, *Satradhikari*, nearby shopkeepers, visitors, *bhakats* etc. from system, cultural and design point of view. It is also been done with educated and illiterate respondents. Sample size of the *Naamghar* was 26 and total 263 numbers of respondents have participated in the interview and focus group discussions. There the researcher noted responses with observation technique like making notes during the interviews.

3.8 Summary:

As mentioned above the complexity of the elements involved in the study were deciphered using a number of techniques viz. questionnaire, data characterization, semantic, denotation, connotation and card sorting analysis.

Various techniques mentioned above were essential in order to unfold the meaning of various elements related to social, religious and design aspects. The methodology has been illustrated in each case by selecting appropriate examples. It was found from this study that though there are distinctive differences in physical forms of interior (pillars, praying or discussion hall, ceilings, windows, Jail works) and exterior elements (presence of animal/creatures as guards, gate forms, rooftop) in these *Naamghars*, the symbolism and significance of these elements are very important and integrated in Assamese culture and in the life of people of Assam.

The semiotic approach has been adopted, which unfolds the significance and layer of meaning and it brings out deeper understanding of the symbolic value attached to the elements in *Naamghar*. It also gives a deep understanding towards the design dimensions because of which the identity has been adapted and survived till now. For instance the significance of *Dashavatar*, *Jay Vijay*, *Garuda*, various flowers and animals etc. on different positions depicts the identity of that place or in this case narratives associated with *Naamghar*. A systematic approach for card sorting by Athavankar has been adopted for giving the collected data a typical rating by coding the cards. Connotation method seems fit to analyze the gathered data.



CHAPTER 4

Data Collection

Chapter 4: Data Collection

4.1 Overview

The study was planned to explore various aspects of the *Naamghars* in Assam including the social aspects. *Naamghar* was a unique creation of Srimanta Sankardeva, the great poet saint of Assam. There are various elements related to tangible structure and organization of *Naamghars*. The major objective (focus) was on design elements that give identity to the *Naamghar*. The spatio-temporal dimensions were also kept in view. As a result the changes were noticed. Various design elements were studied starting from origin of *Naamghar* and its initial design to currently constructed *Naamghars* both from architectural structure, materials used, aesthetics, and details of design elements in main gate, on walls, doors and elements involved in social and religious rituals performed in *Naamghar*.

For this purpose questionnaire and interview schedules were prepared. Extensive visit and interaction with different prominent individuals and groups were done. The tools were initially tried out to finalize these, as no such tools were available. The photographic equipment was used wherever possible to capture information for the purpose. The technique of card sorting was used to identify significant elements of *Naamghars* as in any social or religious study.

The meaning of the elements is not apparent but there are connotative and denotative layer of meanings. Therefore the tools of study were developed and used in such a way as to decode such meaning. The data collected for the study is presented in later part of this chapter.

4.2 Rationale for identifying *Naamghars* (as Urban, Semi Urban and Rural)

The village *Naamghar* is at the grass-root of the Assamese Culture. It can be said that the *Naamghar* is related to Assamese Culture as the Sun is related to dawn. The traditional *Naamghar* presents a lovely picture. The swaying green trees, the small thatch hut is built with three sides having half walls. The fourth side- the East wall, encloses a small shrine containing a wooden pyramidal platform with a book on top and draped with a woven white cloth. An oil-lamp burns steadily in front of it. The *Naamghar* lies at the

nucleus of the Assamese village. It is the congregational prayer hall. It is at the same time the centerpiece of the village. Every Assamese village, even today, has a *Naamghar*, sometimes more than one. “Anyone who cares to know Assam and her people soon discovers that everything we call Assamese is rooted in the soil that was prepared more than five centuries ago by the great saint Srimanta Sankardeva”. ‘Along the River Brahmaputra and its numerous tributaries, along the green valley stretching wide up to the foothills of the Himalayas, one’s eyes are feasted on the pomp of cultivated nature. The village *Naamghar* presents a lovely picture in the Assamese country side. A small thatch house with half walls on three sides, supported on two rows of wooden pillars.’

However with urbanisation taking place in this part of the world too, *Naamghars* are being constructed at both urban and semi-urban areas too. In most cases these are relatively new ones and many characteristics has changed from area of land, architectural design, materials used for building new *Naamghars*. In many cases even for old ones, many details has been changed like conversion of mud floors to cemented ones, application of synthetic paints etc.

The broad criteria used for identification and inclusion of *Naamghar* in this study were geographical location, population of the settlement, nearby markets and time of establishment. Out of a large numbers of *Naamghars*, a limited numbers were studied, the selection of which was decision of the researcher and for that total of 26 *Naamghars* were considered. These represent Rural, Semi-urban and Urban. It was found that, most of the *Naamghars* are located on the banks of some river.

Table below is the list of *Satra/Naamghar* identified for data collection.

S No.	Code	Name of <i>Satra/Naamghar</i>	Age
Rural			
1.	R2	<i>Barpeta Satra Naamghar</i>	600
2.	R3	<i>Auniati Satra, Majuli</i>	600
3.	R4	<i>Batadrawa Satra, Majuli</i>	600
4.	R6	<i>Kamlabari Satra, Majuli</i>	600
5.	R7	<i>Patbaushi Satra, Berpeta, Assam</i>	549
6.	R8	<i>Bordoa Satra, Kamargaon</i>	519
7.	R11	<i>Samaguri Satra, Majuli</i>	437
8.	R13	<i>Garumurh Satra, Majuli</i>	440
9.	R14	<i>Chakrashila Namaghar, Deshmukh village</i>	400

10.	R15	<i>Bangshi Gopal, Hajo Pakhmela Naamghar</i>	300
11.	R18	<i>Sarbogh Gorakhia Gosain Than</i>	100
Semi Urban			
12.	SU1	<i>Dhekiakhowa Bor Naamghar, Jorhat</i>	639
13.	SU5	<i>Dakshinapat Satra, Eastern Assam, Majuli</i>	600
14.	SU9	<i>Sundridaya Satra</i>	500
15.	SU10	<i>Sri Athkhelia Naamghar, Majuli</i>	500
16.	SU12	<i>Khataras Satra, Darrang, Assam</i>	446
17.	SU16	<i>Borbheti Than, Jorhat</i>	239
18.	SU17	<i>Auniti Satra, North Guwahati</i>	102
19.	SU19	<i>Hati Satra, Ramdiyar Namghar, Sualkuchi village</i>	75
20.	SU26	<i>Akasi Path Naamghar</i>	16
Urban			
21.	U20	<i>Srimanta Shankardev Kala Kristi Kendra</i>	48
22.	U21	<i>Nizarpar Naamghar, Guwahati</i>	55
23.	U22	<i>Sarbojanin Naamghar, Guwahati</i>	44
24.	U23	<i>Dehing Satra, North Guwahati</i>	38
25.	U24	<i>Naamghar path, Guwahati</i>	20
26.	U25	<i>Zoo road Naamghar, Guwahati</i>	18

Table: 4.1: *Naamghar, Satra, Than* and other places were selected for data gathering

4.3 Study of the areas and various buildings inside *Satra* Premises:

4.3.1 Case study of *Barpeta Satra*

The initial data collection was mostly on the basis of visits, broad field observation and use of still photography and video recording using digital cameras.

There are various sections in a *Satra* and every section has its own importance. Following are broad details based on case study of *Barpeta Satra*:

a) *Satra* Premises:



Fig. 4.1: *Barpeta Satra Nahati Batchara* (Photograph: Researcher)

There are total of three primary entrances in the *Satra* (fig. 4.1) also called 3 *Batchara* (Entrance of *Satra*), called (i) *Nahati Batchara* (Entry gate from West side), (ii) *Uttar Hati Batchara* (Entry gate from North side) and (iii) *Dakshinhati Batchara* (Entry gate from South side). There is no entrance from the East side of the *Satra* as it has water source also called *Hari Jaan* or a canal. The whole complex is covered by walls. As a mark of respect to the *Satra* no vehicle is allowed inside the entrance or a vehicle to drive in front of the entrance with passengers/visitors in it except the driver and all others are supposed to get down from the vehicle and walk. This is applicable for the local residents as well as tourists. One can read the sign boards written in Assamese or Hindi, so that everyone can understand it. The main entry gate is also called *Dalan* being constructed in bricks and concrete.

b) Main Complex: (Surrounded by 7 feet high wall and 3 entry gate): The core of the main *Satra* is the *Kirtan Ghar* also called *Naamghar*.



Fig. 4.2: Naamghar at Barpeta Satra in Assam (Photograph: Researcher)

i) *Kirtan Ghar* (Main prayer hall) fig. 4.2: It is located in the core center of the *Satra*. As one enters inside near the main west gate, one can find two long wooden pillars called '*Tulsi Khuta*', supporting the main building. At the end of the *Naamghar* there are three *Guru Aasans* also called *Manikut*. They are associated with the name of *Sri Sankardeva*, *Madhabdeva* and *Mathura Das Burha Ata*. The *Manikut* is covered with big *Gamosa* and traditionally made earthen lamps are placed near the *Manikut*. Behind the

Guru Asana, there are two chairs placed in east corner for *Burha* (old) *Satriya* and *Deka Satriya*. Where they can carry out their day to day activities. Before the *Guru Asana* there are seven 'Bar Sarais' or *Xorai* (it's a bell metal utensil for keeping food) placed in front of the *Guru*. One can see sculpture of *Hanuman* and *Garuda* inside the *Kirtan ghar* and no idol worship (God or Goddesses) takes place in *Kirtan ghar*. On the outer wall of *Kirtan ghar* pictorial visualizations with descriptions of *Bhagavata* and *Purana* (on the North and South side) are sculpted and painted. On the west side *Dashavatara* of *Vishnu* is depicted.



Fig. 4.3 (a): Exterior of *Naamghar* (South side) in Barpeta *Satra* (Photograph: Researcher)



Fig. 4.3 (b): Exterior part of *Naamghar* (South West) at Barpeta *Satra* (Photograph: Researcher)

ii) **Bhaj Ghar** (fig. 4.4): It's a room where *Manikut* is kept. From the roof it is having a curve with bend structure as compared with the other part of *Kirtan ghar*, which are just bend kind of structure. *Bhaj Ghar* is having two sections (i) *Ghai Bharal* and (ii) *Manikut* area. *Ghai Bharal* area is been used to keep expensive ornaments (gold and silver) and also to keep valuables of *Satra*, mustard oil storage in a tank and important books. The second part where *Manikut* is kept having the section where *Kaila Thakur*, which is lord *Krishna* and *Rukmini* are kept. It is established in the eastern side of *Kirtan ghar*. It was found that there is 500 years old earthen lamp named '*Akhay Banti*' (eternal lamp) lightening inside the *Bhaj ghar* (Its in *Dakshinapat Satra*, Majuli).



Fig. 4.4 Bhaj ghar of *Naamghar* (South East) in *Barpeta Satra* (Photograph: Researcher)

(c) **Pat Chang**: The design and architecture style of *pat chang* is different than *Kirtan ghar*. It is made up of wood and now in modern setting its been replaced by concrete. It's almost parallel to *Bhaj ghar* (*Naamghar*) and 8 feet away from the *Kirtan ghar*. It's a section where some religious and administrative special meetings are been conducted and it is 5 feet above from the ground.

(d) **Khatkhati (The bank of Hari Jaan Canal):** Steps on the bank of the canal (Fig. 4.5) leading to the water on the east side of the *Satra* complex is called *Khatkhati*. The steps was made with stones and goes till water body.



Fig. 4.5: *Khatkhati* (Hari Jaan canal) in *Barpeta Satra* (Photograph: Researcher)

The canal was once converted into a *Madhab Sarover* (lake) where Srimanta Madhabdev use to take bath with other *bhakats* although it was later again converted into a canal. A Statue of *Krishna*, sculpted as a child in *Kalia Daman* has been placed in the center of the *Sarovar/canal*.

(e) **Math:** The area of Math (fig. 4.6) was later constructed into residential place of Srimanta Madhavdeva with architectural style of Ahom kingdom. Important religious

activities are conducted in front of the *Math* and open space in front of *Math* is known as '*Mathor Sotal*'. No one says anything wrong or lie in front of the *Math* and it has been believed by the people.



Fig.4.6: *Math* in Barpeta Naamghar (Photograph: Researcher)

(f) **Sri Ram Ata's Bhiti:** Srimanta Shankardeva's disciple *Sri Ram Ata* house (also called as *Bhiti*) was established in front of Madhavdeva's (*Math*). They have constructed a well and it is said that it has pure water, which can be used in the *Satras* other works.

(g) **Burha Ata's Bhiti:** There is a small house built on the North-East side of the *Satra* where *Mathura Das Burha Ata* stayed in *Barpeta Satra*.

(h) **Badula Padma Ata Bhithi:** In between the *Athiti Griha* and *Bhagawat Griha* a small house was made, where the best disciple of Srimanta Shankardeva lived and it is situated in South side of the *Satra*.

(i) **Bhagawat Griha:** There is an L shaped open house in the southern side of the *Kirtan ghar* in open space without walls, where every evening *Shashtra Adhyayan* (holy book reading place) is been recited and devotees can listen to *Bhagawat*. This is known as *Bhagawat Griha*.

(j) **Atithi Griha:** There is a dormitory type guesthouse inside the complex where devotees can stay when they visit the *Satra*. *Satra* normally provide the grocery to cook for any visitor/ devotee who come there to stay and the devotees can prepare their meal themselves during their stay.

(k) **Satria Music School:** *Satra* has been fostering cultural education and practices in terms of music and *Satria* dance. The music school is in East-South corner of the canal (*Jaan*). The training in *Sankari* culture is provided here to the interested learners.

(l) **Sabha Ghar:** In the North-West side of the *Kirtan Ghar* the *Sabha Ghar* is located, where community *Bhakat* (especially *Samoh Bhakat*) conduct meetings. *Jagamohan Griha* is another small house near *Sabha Ghar*.

(m) **Doul (fig. 4.7):** During the time of *Doul* (Holi festival) *Kaila Thakur idol* is kept here in North-West (near entry gate) corner. It has a unique design of seven stairs, which depicts that after crossing the seven steps one can reach to the God in heaven.



Fig.4.7: *Doul* at *Barpeta Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

(n) **Ranga Mancha:** It is a place where cultural activities and performance is practiced and performed in the *Satra* premises (fig. 4.8). There were no boundaries around the *ranga mancha* but over the period of time it has been covered up.



Fig.4.8: *Rang Mancha* in *Barpeta Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

(o) **Mathura Das Burha Ata Library:** One can find *Shankari* books, literature and cultural material in the library inside *Satra* office complex (fig. 4.9) and is managed by *Kewalia Bhakat's* managing committee.



Fig. 4.9: *Mathura Das Burha Ata Library*

4.3.2 Architecture of *Naamghar*: A visual Tour

“The *Kirtanghar* or the *Naamghar* is the most distinctive feat of *Vaishnavite* architecture. It is huge structure, the roof of which is supported on huge wooden pillars and the grand floor space is entirely bare save for one or two lecterns on which the sacred writings are written. Perpendicular to the main hall of the *Naamghar* is constructed another smaller hall (its length is commonly equal to the breadth of the *Naamghar*). This small hall known as the *Manikut* is the sanctum sanctorum. While this hall, like the main hall also is normally a two sloped gabled structure in central and upper Assam, the *Manikut* of *Kamrup*, *Nalbari* and *Barpeta* districts including those of the *Barpeta* group of *Satras* are mostly known as *Bhajghars*, which are barrel vaulted with drooping ends (fig. 4.4)

A remarkable feature of the construction of the *Barpeta Satra* is the seven terraces in between the low ceiling and the central part of the roof (fig. 4.9). These terraces are meant to contain the rare properties and implements not ordinarily required. In addition to

the two colonnades of large wooden pillars supporting the big hall, two columns of shorter and thinner posts (wooden or bamboo) (fig. 4.10) are placed at the side which are joined within by a third semi circularly placed row if there is an apsidal facade or by a straight row if the façade is conical with a simple roof.



Fig.4.10: Interior of Barpeta *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)



Fig. 4.11: Interior of *Naamghar* in Barpeta *Satra* (Photograph: Researcher)

The space between the main pillars and the second row of posts provides the aisles and sometimes the *verandas* also (fig. 4.12). Most of the roofs of the earlier *Naamghars* in most of the *Satras* were covered with thatch. Every pair of the large pairs supported a strong and strait timber beam. Each beam in its turn held three other upright posts (the middle one being the longest) thus helping to form a ridge at the top (fig. 4.11). The pillars, the beams and also the upside posts are often carved or painted with colourful floral designs and mythical animal figures.



Fig. 4.12: *Verandas* in interior of *Naamghar* in *Barpeta Satra*, Assam

The *Katha-Guru-Carita* gives a vivid description of the construction of the *Barpeta Satra Kirtanghar*. As Madhavdeva agreed to construct the *Barpeta Kirtanghar* as desired by *Narayana Thakura*, the arrangements were made by the devotees. “Timber was obtained from the very site selected for the temple. *Parbatiya Krishna*, *Rama Karikar* and *Vibhisana*- these three of Madhavdeva’s disciples offered their service as carpenters. They also built a *Singhasana* or holy throne for the *Kirtanghar*. Bamboos were brought from *Bajali parganas*. The stronger ones were split and whose culms were kept under water for sometime in order to give them durability and were then dyed red. The posts, the cross

beams and the horizontal poles along the whole length of the house were set. The red dyed culms were then spread over to form the roof, which was covered with thatch all over and with wicker-work frames (*parvati*) at the ridges and edges. Walls were then set up with bamboo and wood, windows (*kundraksa jala*) being left in proper places. The posts and walls were studded with mica (*bali-chanda*) and tin foils (*rangpata*). The adhesive substance used for sticking these glittering objects was obtained from ripe *bilva* (wood apple) fruits. Chalk (*kharimati*) was used for decorating the posts and walls. *Vibhisana* and *Krishna*, the carpenters made floral designs (*lata-phul*) on the main gateway (*pat-dvar*) and two wooden representations of *Jay* and *Vijaya*, the gatekeepers of *Vaikuntha*. The *Kirtanghar* thus presented a magnificent and colourful view and was therefore called *rangali* or *rangiyal ghar*.

What Shankardeva conceived in the planning of the *Naamghar* was a large and open space with free air flowing from outside, where people can sit and take part in the congregational prayer sessions (*kirtan*), perform *bhaona* (theatrical performances) which again could be enjoyed freely by people sitting and standing outside the *Naamghar* premises. Dividing space between the pairs of the main pillars as compartments or rooms without any wall or curtain in between is also a significant aspect of the *Naamghar* architecture.” There are also temporary walls made of cane and bamboo in many of the *Satras/Naamghars* hung or attached around the outer periphery of the aisles or *verandas*. They act like extended *pandal* or shades and are easily removable when there is a *bhaona* performance or any festive occasion to accommodate hundreds of people outside the main hall. In devising the architecture of the *Naamghar* Sankardeva was quite possibly inspired by the two roofed, gabled hall type residential huts of many of the tribal people of Assam which also provide an open and airy space and elevated it to the level of a rich temple architecture.

Over the period of time the *Naamghars* have undergone substantial change like - the wooden pillars and thatched roofs have given way to concrete pillars and corrugated galvanized sheets in most of the *Satras* and village *Naamghars*. Each *Manikutas* and the main halls of many *Naamghars* are now constructed with gorgeous domes in the pattern of common Hindu temples. The maneless lion carved on wood, which once decorated the arches, are now substituted with common lion figures in concrete structures. Even the principal *Satras* like *Barpeta* also have not been able to retain many of such significant traditional traits of *Vaishnavite* sculpture and architecture.

4.4 Design Elements of *Naamghar*: Visual Data collection from selected *Satra/Naamghar*

After gaining insights from initial visual data collection at *Barpeta Satra*, second stage of research was visual data collection from identified *Satras* and *Naamghar*. This was done specifically for the following aspects/elements:

- a. Layout of *Naamghar* and Hall division
- b. *Manikut* (*Thapana* or *Guru Asana*)
- c. *Naam-Prasanga*
- d. Seating in the *Naamghar*
- e. Significance of North-Eastern Pillar
- f. The *Prasad*
- g. Utensils
- h. Lamps and scriptural stand
- i. Musical Instruments
- j. Art and Craft of *Naamghar*
- k. Main Gate
- l. Outer structure of the building
- m. Main Door
- n. *Palki*
- o. *Chandratap*
- p. Pillars
- q. Wall and narratives
- r. Windows
- s. *Dashavatar*
- t. *Krishna*
- u. Jali work
- v. Flowers and plants
- w. Birds and animals

4.4.1 Layout

The *Naamghar* is a large open hall for the purpose of offering mass prayer. Originally constructed with bamboo, reeds and thatch. The traditional thatch roof has been replaced in the late 20th century by corrugated galvanized sheets, and the timber or

bamboo pillars by concrete ones. The floor is traditionally mud, replaced in recent times by concrete. Even then *Naamghar* is still now a humble structure without any outward show or ostentation.

The traditional *Naamghar* is usually a rectangular building with a gable roofs, goblet or a hip roof raised on pillars (fig. 4.13) the length of which is aligned in the East-West direction. And the western facade being apsidal. This hall usually has an outer wall, with the main entrance at the west end. There is a *verandah* around the outer wall, with windows and minor entrances on the north and south sides. Two parallel rows of pillars usually run along the length (fig. 4.14, Fig. 4.16), with the Northeast most pillar called the *lai khuta*, carrying special significance. The hall might contain idols of mythical figures like *Garuda*, *Hanuman*, etc (fig. 4.15) that are mythological *Vaishnava* devotees, which face east near the western end or north and south near the eastern end.



Fig. 4.13: *Ramdiyar Naamghar* in *Sualkuchi* Village (Photograph: Researcher)

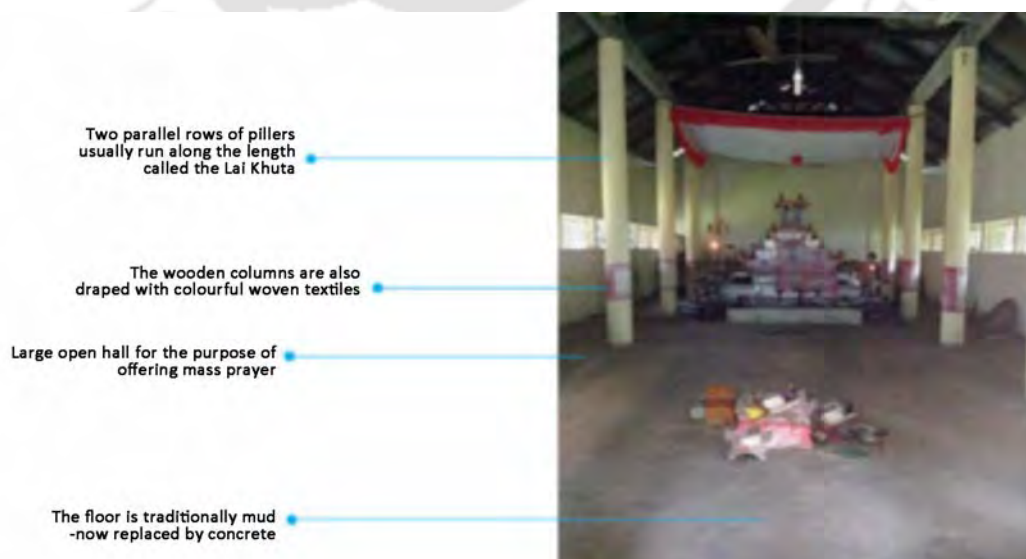


Fig. 4.14: Interior of *Bangshi Gopal Naamghar* at *Hajo Pakhamela* village (Photograph: Researcher)



Fig. 4.15 (a): Wooden crafted *Garuda* in *Naamghar* in *Barpeta Satra* (Photograph: Researcher)



Fig. 4.15 (b): A village *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

A *Naamghar* of the ancient type (the *modern Naamghar* is simply an open rectangular hall) consists of a nave and side aisles with rows of wooden pillars separating the nave from the aisles (Fig. 4.16). The size of the *Naamghar* may vary according to the number of *bhakats* or disciples it has to accommodate.

4.4.2 Manikut (Thapana or Guru Asana)



Fig.4.16: *Guru Asana* in *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

The eastern end of the hall does not in general have doors and windows, though very often it leads to an independent room called *Manikut* (fig. 4.16) (literally: the jewel hut), also called *bhajghar* in western Assam, with its own roof. It houses idols representing the worshipful God, or a *Guru-Asana* (the *Guru's* seat). It is fully walled, with either no windows or small ones and also function as a repository of important articles. This room is a later addition to the basic *Naamghar* structure.

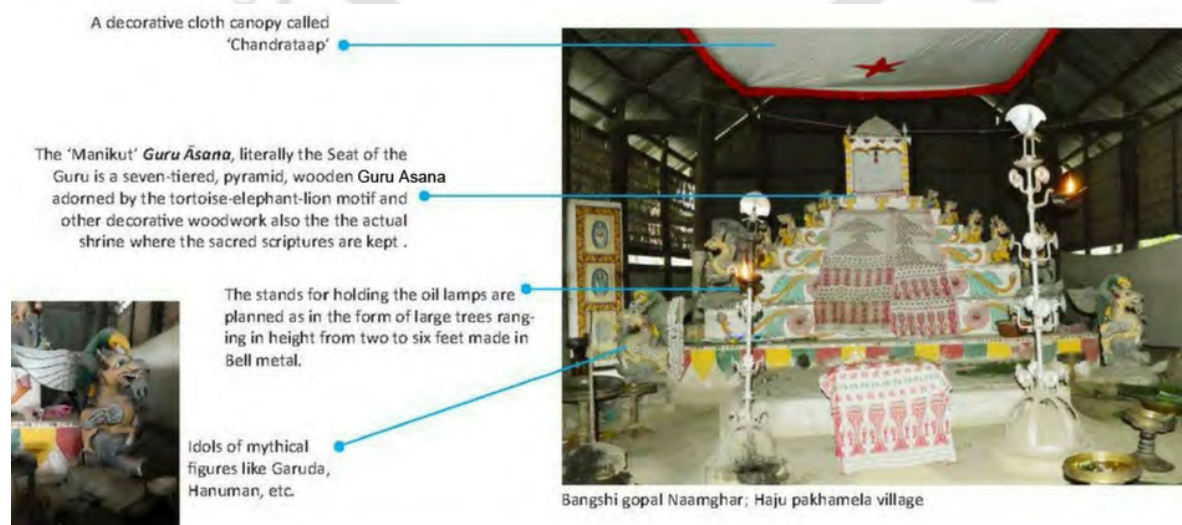


Fig. 4.17: *Manikut* in *Bangshi Gopal Naamghar* at *Haju pakhamela* village (Photograph: Researcher)

The actual shrine where the sacred scripture is kept is called *Manikut*. It is a smaller structure than the *Naamghar* and is generally attached to the latter adjoining the eastern end. In addition to the sacred scripture, all the precious things dedicated to the deity are kept in the *Manikut*.

The sacred scripture is placed on the *Guru Asana* (fig.4.17). The *Guru Asana*, literally the Seat of the *Guru* is a seven-tiered, triangular, wooden throne adorned by the tortoise-elephant-lion motif (fig. 4.18) and other decorative wood work. Idol worship is absent in a *Naamghar* and no idol is worshipped, even that of *Krishna* in any form. The only object of veneration being the sacred text placed on the top-most tier of the *Guru Asana*. The scripture represents *Bhagavanta*, the Supreme Being or *Mahapurusa* who manifests himself as *Vishnu* or *Krishna*; it also represents the *Guru*, his message as well as the highest truth propounded by him.

All activities inside of the *Naamghar* are directed towards the *Singsana* (fig. 2.17), the wooden Pyramid shaped throne for the object of worship (Holy Books) kept at the Eastern end. The wooden shrine, also called The *Guru Asana* or *thapana* is draped over and decked out with a richly woven piece of textile known as *Gohain Kapoor*. The village women weave these intricately woven cotton textiles. *Guru Asana* can be three, five or seven tiered. The symbolism, as told by the seniors is that of Seven *Vaikunthas* or Heavens. The tiers are carved at the four corners with tortoise, elephant and winged-lion motif (fig. 4.28).



Fig. 4.18: Tortoise, elephant and winged-lion motif at *Guru Asana* in *Naamghar*
(Photograph: Researcher)

The top of the wooden throne holds a shrine (Thapana), fig. 4.19, which has sacred books, composed by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva.



Fig. 4.19: *Thapana* in *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

These include the *Dasam*, *Kirtan Ghosa*, *Bhakti Ratnavali* and *Naamgosa*. Sankardeva gave highest importance to the formless universal self. It is represented not by any idols but by holy books.

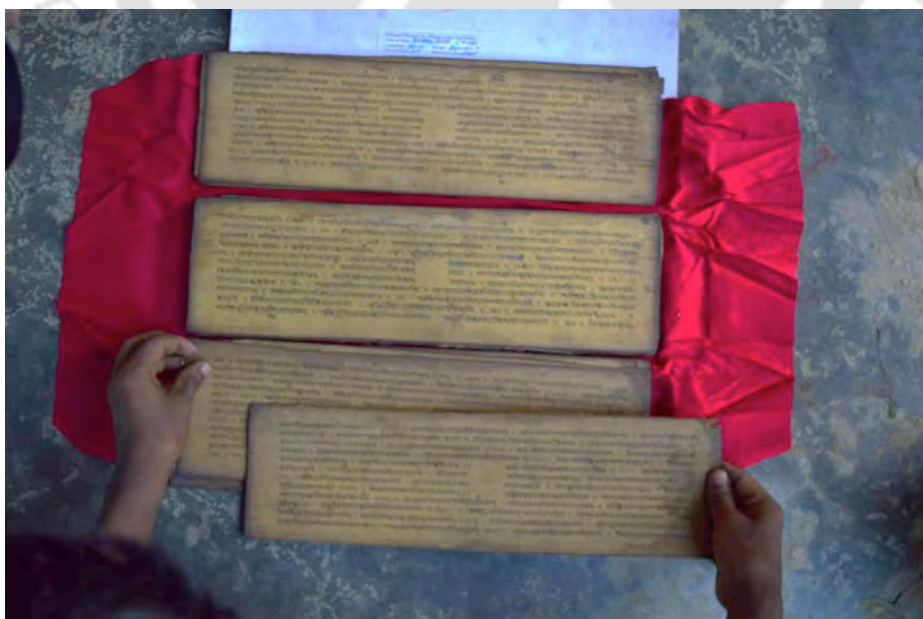


Fig. 4.20: Manuscripts in *Hajo Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)



Fig. 4.21: Manuscripts in *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

The sacred manuscripts, (called *Puthi*) are hand-written (fig. 4.20 and fig 4.21) on the bark of the *Aguru-trees*. The *Guru Asana* also has a decorative cloth canopy hung from four corners called '*Chandrataap*'. The wooden columns are also draped with colourful woven textiles known as *Sanchipat*. Some books are written on paper made from silk-cotton called *Tulapat*. These are inferior to *Sanchipat*. A similar feature is in Sikh religion, where the *Guru Granth-Sahib* is worship.

4.4.3 *Naam-Prasanga*

In this ordered set-up, the devotees perform *Naam Kirtan* or the prayer services, on a regular basis. The service itself is referred to as *Naam Prasanga* (Fig. 4.22) or simply, '*Naam*' and the leader of the chant is called *Naam Laguwa*. The seating arrangement in the *Naamghar*, with the congregation in two facing rows in front of the *Guru Asana*, is such that when the congregation bow down in worship to God, they are at the same time bowing down in worship to one another.



Fig.4.22: *Naam prasang* in *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

The verses sung during the service consist of strings of the many names of God. First, verses from Madhavdeva's *Naam Ghosa* are recited, followed by *Kirtan* from Sankardeva's *Kirtan Ghosa* (fig. 4.23).



Fig. 4.23: Rituals and functions on 1st day of celebration of *Doul Mahotsav* in *Barpeta Satra*
(Photograph: Researcher)

4.4.4 Seating in the *Naamghar*



Fig.4.24: *Naam Kirtan* at *Samaguri Satra*, Majuli (Photograph: Researcher)

The Seating in the *Naamghar* during a *Prasanga* (prayer gathering) (Fig. 4.24) follows an established pattern'. A minimum of eight persons are required to conduct a *Naam prasanga*.' All the devouts are seated forming a U-shaped pattern with the open end facing the *Altar*.

4.4.5 Significance of North-Eastern Pillar

The first pillar in the North-East corner next to the *Singhasana (Altar)* is an important place and it is offered to the senior-most of the members of the *Naamghar*. This place is offered to a dignitary when he visits *Naamghar* (eg. a *Satraadhikar*). "Seatings along the row of pillars facing north are all given to the senior devout in the village. It is known as *Dohaar sari* or Chorus singers" row. The seats directly opposite the *altar*- the round of the U, is meant for the *Naam acharya* or *Naam loguwa*- literally, the *Naam leader*. On his side is the reader or the *Pathak* of the Scriptures or *Kirtans* (Hymns). In the same line are the musicians i.e. *Gayan- bayans*, (cymbal players and drummers) and behind them are the chorus –singers (*paalor sari*). On the Northern stem of the U are places for the *Bhakats* (monks of the *Naamghar*) and the *Bilaniyar* (distributor of the *Prasad*)."

4.4.6 The *Prasad*

The offering or *prasad* is looked on as devotion objectified. In the preparation of the offering, the ingredients are offered in fours or multiples of four- four handfuls of (uncooked) rice, four handfuls of pulse, four or eight slices of coconut etc. and the following words uttered for each: *Guru, Deva, Nama, Bhakata*.

The *Prasad* generally consists of soaked green gram, horse-gram, and soaked rice along with bananas and other seasonal fruits and vegetables (fig.4.25). While distributing the soaked grams, it is mixed with salt, fresh ginger bits and coconut pieces. After the *prasanga*, the *Prasada* is mixed and distributed by the *Bilaniar* (distributor) in banana-leaf plates or bowls made from banana stem. The treasurer (*Khataniar*) who collects the subscriptions and the *Naamghar* store-keeper (*Dhan-Bharali*) are the other officers of the *Naamghar*. "All the office –bearers are democratically elected from amongst the villagers and are all voluntary. The only paid person is the keeper of the *Naamghar (Naamghariya)*, who cleans, sweeps, lights the lamps and maintains the *Naamghar*. Sometimes, houses do it by rotation. Status in the *Naamghar* is based on age and piety. Status in the village is based on wealth and influence."



Fig.4.25: *Prasad* offered on a *Xorai*, placed over banana leaf (Photograph: Researcher)



Fig. 4.26: *Prasad* in the Naam kirtan (Photograph: Researcher)

The offering or *Prasad* is looked on as devotion objectified. *Prasad* is always offered on a *Xorai* where various items are placed on top of a banana leaf. *Xorai* are receptacles or a raised tray to hold *Prasad* and offerings. They were made of brass or wood. Also sometimes they use just bamboo basket depending on the economic conditions of the community. There are seven elements of *Prasad*: Soaked rice, pulse (*Mung*), *Boot* (horse or chicken pea), ginger, coconut, various fruits, salt etc. *Prasad* is normally served on a piece of banana leaf (fig. 4.26).

4.4.7 Utensil

Another very common but artistic object is the *Xorai* (*sarabha*) or an elevated tray (Fig. 4.27). This way with a carved stand is made of bot wood and brass-metal. The popular use of *Xorai* through the last centuries is today extended to all social and religious occasions of the Assamese.



Fig.4.27: *Xorai* (Photograph: Researcher)

4.4.8 Lamps and scriptural stand

The stands for holding the oil lamps (Fig. 4.28) are designed as in the form of large trees ranging in height from two to six feet. The central shaft has a broad base and branches holding many tiny earthen lamps, shedding a dim mystic glow in the dark. Bell metal lamps are also lit at prayer time in front of the *Guru Asana*.



Fig.4.28: Oil lamps in *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)



Fig. 4.29: Gita on *Thoga* (Photograph: Researcher)

The *Pathak* (reader) has a lamp to read the scriptures. There are sacred books scriptural texts composed by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. The scriptural texts are placed on a stand called '*Thoga*' (fig. 4.29).

Seating mats woven from rice straw are hung neatly on the walls when not in use. It is called *Kath*. It was Madhavdeva who first made a *Kath* as a gift for his *Guru*. He also set the trend for embellishments of *Naamghar*.

4.4.9 Musical Instruments

i) Doba: Sankardeva had set the method of prayers in such a manner that it had to include singing, and playing on musical instruments. It was a part of the proceedings in the *Naamghar* that at first the big *Dhoba* or *Kettle-drum* (fig. 4.30) is beaten in a rhythmic manner to gather the people together. *Doba* is an instrument related to religious life of the Assamese People. In almost all religious institutions such as *Naamghar*, the *Satras*, ancient temples etc. *Doba* is played. In every *Naamghar* of rural Assam, one will

invariably find a *Doba*. The elegant sound of *Doba* played at a definite time every day, creates a gentle and holy ambience in the villages and reminds people of the time as well. It is difficult to estimate since when the *Doba* is played in Assam; however, it may be assured of that it is an ancient musical instrument. Though the usages are different, some people believe that *Doba* is a modified form of ancient Communication drums. The larger than life, heavy sound of *Doba* attracts everyone's attention easily. *Doba* has a particular significance on the life of rural people. *Doba* played at the *Naamghar*, implies arrival of the evening and time to be back home.

Doba is not generally accompanied with any music. Playing *Doba* is rather considered as an auspicious function. Generally in *Naamghars*, *Satras* and temples, *Doba* is played only at definite time and for definite purpose.



Fig.4.30: *Doba* or Kettle-drum (Photograph: Researcher)

ii) *Khol*: For the singing different musical instruments are played upon. It was very attractive for the villagers to participate in these audio-visual events. They took pride in excelling at playing the instruments. There is place in the *Naamghar* to keep the *Khols* (two-sided drums), fig. 4.31. The drum, made of baked clay, is typical of *Naamghar* music.



Fig.4.31: Drums in Naamghar called Khol (Photograph: Researcher)

iii) *Bhor-taal*: Large cymbals called the *Bhor-taal*, Fig. 4.32 (perhaps originating from Bhutan) are another very characteristic of *Naamghar* music. The deep sounds of the *Gong* found place in *Naamghar* too. *Manjira* (small cymbals) are also used and kept in the *Naamghar*. Stringed instruments like *sarengdhar*, (bowl made out of baked earth), *tokori*, etc. were more an individual's accompaniment. Such instruments are mentioned in *Katha-Guru-Charit*. *Kamalpriya*, niece of Sankardeva is described as playing one such instrument as she sang a *Borgeet*.



Fig. 4.32: Bhor-Taal instrument (Photograph: Researcher)

4.4.10 Art and Craft of *Naamghar*

i) Wood Carving, Bamboo, Clay and Metal work

Having his eyes on the resources of the land and the popular mood, and with a view to utilizing all kinds rudiments of art as well as the expertise of the people of the community in their respective fields through spontaneous and participative efforts, Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, the great artist-thinkers preferred wood, bamboo and cane to stone or brick for all kinds of accessories essential for daily *Satras* rituals and other performance. Bamboo and wood being abundantly available in Assam, have been a part and parcel of Assamese folklore. The country which had earlier a tradition of chiseled buildings and temples lost good craftsmanship (*silakutis*) in stone work. Each of such accessories required in *Satra/Naamghar* was modelled or carved as a beautiful piece of art or sculpture. Thus wood-carving (along with bamboo work) or wooden sculpture had become extremely popular an artifice taken up by the *Vaishnava* artisans or *khanikar* who showed remarkable achievement in wood carving not only in the *Satras* but also in every walk of domestic and social life. The result was that, thousands of art objects were carved in wood (Fig. 4.33) in the *Satras*, village *Naamghars* and residences also. Virtually the whole panorama of *Vaishnavite* sculpture and architecture predominantly consisted of bamboo and woodworks. The practice of wood works are practiced even today in *Satras*, (fig. 4.33).



Fig.4.33: Wood carving on the Naamghar door and walls (Photograph: Researcher)



Fig. 4.34: Artistic work and artisans in Satra of Majuli Island (Photograph: Researcher)

It was in the *Naamghar* at *Barpeta* that Madhavdeva covered the side walls with '*Kundraksha jaala*' perhaps meaning wooden beaded lattice-work. It is mentioned further in the *Katha- Guru-Charit* that the openings had coloured mica sheets, shedding colored light in the dim interior. It was like the stained glass of Gothic Churches. Other *Vaishnavite* shrines in India like Sri Nath ji have painted backdrops to the shrines. In Assam, although according to records, Sankardeva did create painted backdrops for his first drama (*Chinha-Yatra*), the feature was not adopted in *Naamghars*, perhaps due to the humid weather conditions in the region.

Later part of the *Vaishnava* art and crafts involved metal works as well as cement mortal to create ornamentation in *Naamghar* (fig. 4.35).



Fig. 4.35: Metal and Cement mortar relief work in *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

(ii) Carved Roof Truss, Carved *Singhasana*

In *Barpeta* while constructing one of the initial Prayer halls, Madhavdeva initiated the varieties of art. The Pillars, the *Singhasana* of the *Kirtanghar*, the wooden images of *Garuda* and *Hanuman*, the beams and uprights supporting the roof were carved beautifully as per his instructions and wooden doors and wall-panels were painted with themes from the *Bhagawat Purana*. The ten incarnations of *Vishnu* form the common theme in most *Naamghars* for paintings inside the door-panels. This later became the norm for village *Naamghars* too.

“There is frequent carving on the beams and cross beams of *Naamghars*, which are covered with figures of deities and conventional flowers and creepers (fig. 4.36). In some *Naamghars* the posts are chamfered or fluted into polygonal or circular shapes and crowned by carved capitals resembling the lotus or the fruit called by the Assamese *kordoi tenga* (*Averrhoa carambola*)”.

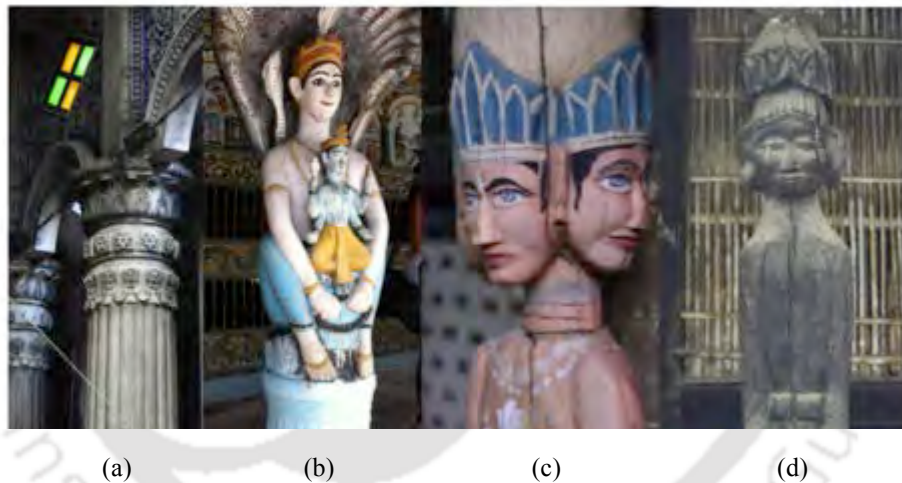


Fig. 4.36: Wooden pillars in *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

It is believed that every individual of the *Vaishnavite* society surrounding a *Satra* or the *Satra* where he is initiated, should contribute his might in whichever way he can, to share piety. And thus a collective consciousness was created among the *Khanikars* to decorate the *Satras* and the *Naamghar* so as to make it look like Heaven (*Vaikuntha samasara*) at least with a piece of work of their own hands. As a result of such a consciousness working vigorously in the popular mind most of the *Satras* and even many of the village's *Naamghars* with the gifts of painted manuscripts, or other manuscripts, wooden sculptures and other bamboo, cane and metal art objects became museums of art and sculpture.

The wood carvings in which the *Satras* flourished mostly include arches, door frames (Fig. 4.37), holy thrones of lions, *Garuda* and peacocks, icons of *Vishnu* and his various incarnations, images of *Krishna* and panels of his childhood playfulness, floral designs carved on posts, beams of *Naamghars* (*lai khuta*, *phulcoti*), *Xorais* or trays, *thoga* or lecterns etc.



Fig. 4.37: Variety of doors in *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

Besides these, the images of deities, standing figures of *dwarapals* (gate keepers) kneeling figures with folded hands like *Garuda*, *Hanuman*, *Jay Vijaya*, *Chari-siddhas* (the four wise men) *adom* in the entrance of the *Naamghars* or Manikutas of the *Satras*. *Garuda* being the carrier of Lord *Vishnu* is always held in regard by the Assamese *Vaishnavas*. He could perhaps be interpreted as the symbol of the selfless devotion and extreme humility as inherent in Assam's *Vaishnavism*. *Garuda* is carved (as half vulture and half man, having either a long bill or a sharp nose, two wings, two hands and two legs with peculiar shaped feet which to some extent resemble the talons of a bird), In addition to exhibiting him at the entrance he also figures on the right of the *Simhasana* with a conch in his right hand and a half-devoured serpent on the left, and sometimes he is shown with the image of *Vishnu* seating on him. On the other hand *Hanuman*, the giant monkey who assisted *Rama* in invading Lanka and rescuing *Sita* is represented almost like a man. Likewise *Jay* and *Vijaya* and attendants of *Vishnu* who are also held in great veneration by the Assamese *Vaishnavas*, are shown as wearing carved crowns on the head and rosaries round their necks. They are sometimes painted black or dark blue. These two figures are sometimes carved in deep relief on the entrance door.

The mythical serpent king *Ananta*, who is ridden by *Vishnu* and regarded as the animal on which the world rests, also finds a prominent place inside the *Naamghars*. Besides these mythical figures, there are also carved animal figures of lions, tigers, monkeys, birds, and horses etc. which are exhibited as decorative pieces appearing in the

relief panels. Mention must also be made of another beautiful carved object i.e. the *thogi* or lectern. “The pedestal is formed by a turtle, a peacock, an elephant and a lion, one above the other in the order named, surmounted by a staff which supports the desk. In some *thogis* the peacock is omitted.”

Through the spirit and ethos of Assam *Vaishnavism* was the inspiration behind the flourishing of such a craft tradition, the style of these art objects extended to secular works also. Such works include figures tiger hunting, elephant fight, horse fight and buffalo fight in *Bardowa Satra*, human figures and floral decorations and figures of animals. The Majuli *Gosains* have boats, the prows of which terminate in elaborately carved *magars*. Moreover, carved articles of furniture such as the *paleng*, and the *salpira* being bedsteads also were decorated with floral designs. *Piras* were (low stools – a very common furniture in every Assamese house hold), *Barpeta* (a big wooden chest in the bedrooms of the houses used for keeping ornaments, brass and bell metal utensils, bamboo baskets filled with cloths etc.)

Karani (*karnadika*- a small wooden open trunk resting on four legs, each adorned with carvings of floral designs or figures of birds like parrots used as a wardrobe in the household or for keeping sacred articles like rosaries, scriptures or even deities in the *Naamghars* and *Manikutas*), are also carved with similar designs. Similarly spinning, weaving and embroidering implements like shuttle (*makoe*), pulley (*nachanee*), spinning wheel (*cereki*) etc. are also generally ornamented with foliage, floral and animal carvings. Carving was even extended for producing scenic beauty or effects in the spectacular parts of the *bhaona* performances in Assam.

The *agni gad* or lamp-brackets used at the beginning of a *bhaona* is also decorated with foliage. The wooden *simhasanas* (in some *Satras* they are inlaid with copper, gold and silver) consisting of one to seven tiers with four to thirty two mane less lions, standing on elephants, painted and decorated with various designs is the most exquisite and classical work of *Vaishnavite* art combining painting, sculpture as well as architecture in its total design. But it is at the same time a very common work adorning every *Naamghar* and *Manikuta* of every *Satra* or village. The holy throne (*Manikut*) is covered at the uppermost tier with a wooden box (*amahi-ghar*) with an opening towards the front side and the upper end being pointed towards the top sacred scriptures like the *Bhagawat* as the object of supreme veneration symbolizing the deity is kept inside the box.

A *Simhasanas* of a bigger size with beautiful carvings (Fig. 4.38), ornamentations and painting of floral design, figures of *Vishnu's* incarnations in an imposing phenomenon in a *Naamghar Manikut* attracting attention of everybody who passes by it.



Fig.4.38: Seven level Manikut in Barpeta Naamghar (Photograph: Researcher)

It is difficult to describe the source, which inspired Sankardeva to devise this wonderful work of art as the seat of religious prayer and devotion. But it is perhaps not difficult to imagine that Sankardeva made it a matter of more significance than installing a simple idol of Lord *Vishnu* or *Krishna* in order to infuse into the popular mind the vision that the religious pursuit is also a pursuit of art.

One is continuously integrated with classicist philosophy of Indian religion one more distinctive feature of the *satriya* wood carving is the presence of the figures of flying lion, *magara* or sea monster with the head of a crocodile and the tail of a fish in addition to *Garuda*, *mayura* (peacock) and *harsha* (goose) about which we have already mentioned. Among these the flying lion, the *magara* and even the *Garuda* remind us of the dragon like figure common with the *Garuda* remind us of the dragon like figure with the Mongoloid art tradition.

The flying lion and the *magara* symbolize greatness and energy, the *Garuda* and the *mayura* both being snake hunters symbolise the destroyers of pride whereas the *hansa* stands for wisdom. Thus all of them finally are revelations of various facets of omnipotent God. By using the *magara* in the door frames and the arches a tremendous source of energy has been harnessed to rhythm and artistic beauty which again inspires in the realization of *rasa* and *bhava*. It may be remembered that the *magara* is found to be

profiled in *Vaishnavite* literature always due to its artistic form and beauty. Primitive simplicity of folk art both in terms of material and style is revealed in the flat profiles of the face and nose of the figures with fat and heavy body structures.

In the *simhhasana* the mane less lion is always found as the killer of the elephant, which symbolises the idea of sin being destroyed by *Nama* (Name of God).

4.5 Study of overall *Naamghar* structure at various locations:

The researcher has studied *Satras* and *Naamghars* by observation, interviews, secondary research, by identifying and drawing the illustration on the locations to understand the architecture and design in more detail. Here the researcher is discussing about various *Satras* and *Naamghars* in Majuli island and how its been structured. Barpeta Satra (fig. 4.39) is one of the oldest existing structures created by Madhavdev (1505 AD). Its having length of 120 *hat* (180ft/55m) and width 60 *hat* (90ft/27.40m) equal to the size of *Vrindavani Vastra*, which is the oldest illustrated cloth available till date and stories related to *Krishna* is been narrated over it.

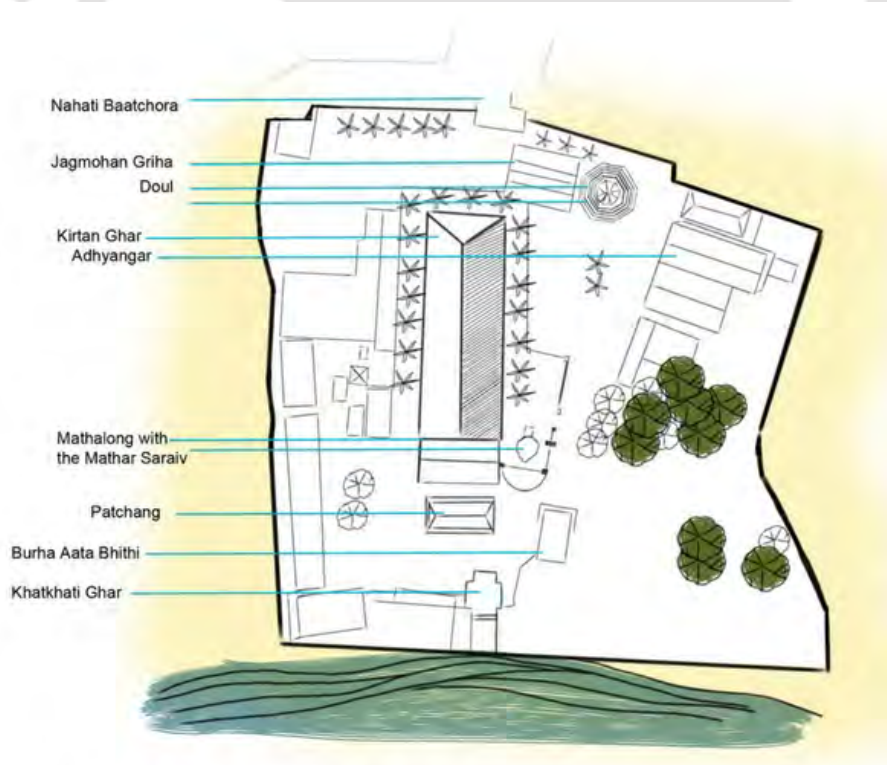


Fig. 4.39: Plan of *Barpeta*: Oldest *Satra* Heritage in Assam (Illustration: Researcher)

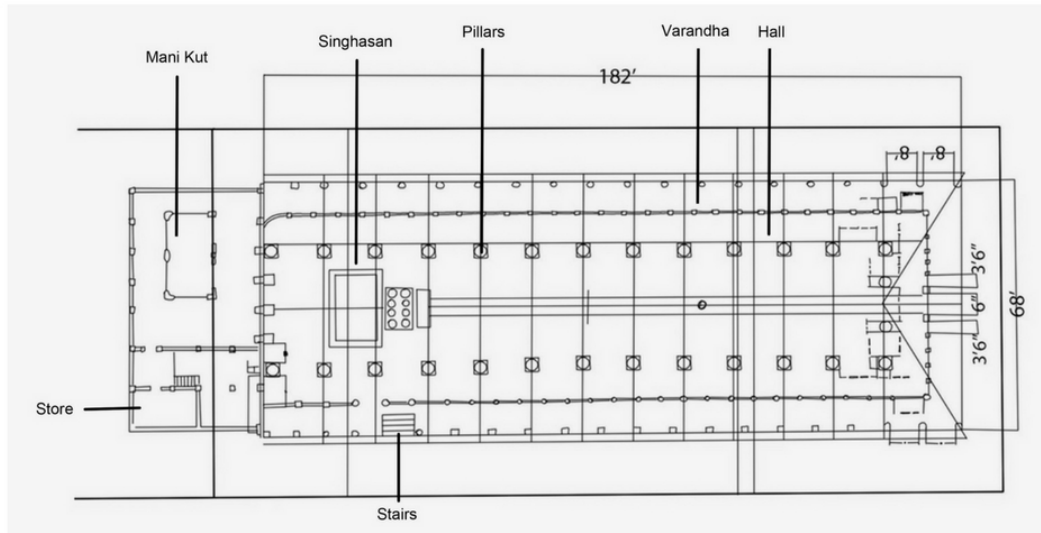


Fig 4.40: Plan of *Naamghar: Kirtan Ghar* sitting & Roof top plan (Illustration: Researcher)

In the core of the *Naamghar Manikut* lies, valuable ornaments of gold and silver are kept in this area (Fig. 4.40). Some representative statues are also kept here. The *Bhaj ghar* (Fig. 4.41) is established in the east side of *Kirtan ghar* in the North-South position.



Fig. 4.41: *Bhaj Ghar* (Illustration: Researcher)

As like *Batchara*, there are three entry gate to enter main complex, i.e. *Uttar Dwaar* (north gate), *Dakshin Dwaar* (South gate) and *Dalan* (on West gate). *Dalan* is considered the main entry (fig. 4.42)



Fig. 4.42: Gate of *Satra* (Illustration: Researcher)

Naamghar is the main focal point of the community with regard with day to day functioning as also crucial events, a center of learning, an institution for imparting education, a community hall, a training center of arts and crafts. In fig. 4.43 one can see the main *Naamghar* prayer hall, which is also called *Kirtan ghar*. It has triangular arch with multi piece structure with eight pillars lying in support. Having a gable roof so that ventilation of air can happen.



Fig. 4.43: *Kirtan Ghar* or main prayer hall or *Naamghar* (Illustration: Researcher)

In April 2010, first time that women made their entry into the *Naamghar*. The Governor of State of Assam, J B Patnaik took 20 women with him into the *Satra* said to be the first time in its history and performed some traditional rituals. The women were garlanded with leaves of the holy *tulsi* in *Patbausi*, *Sundaridiya* and *Barpeta Satra*.

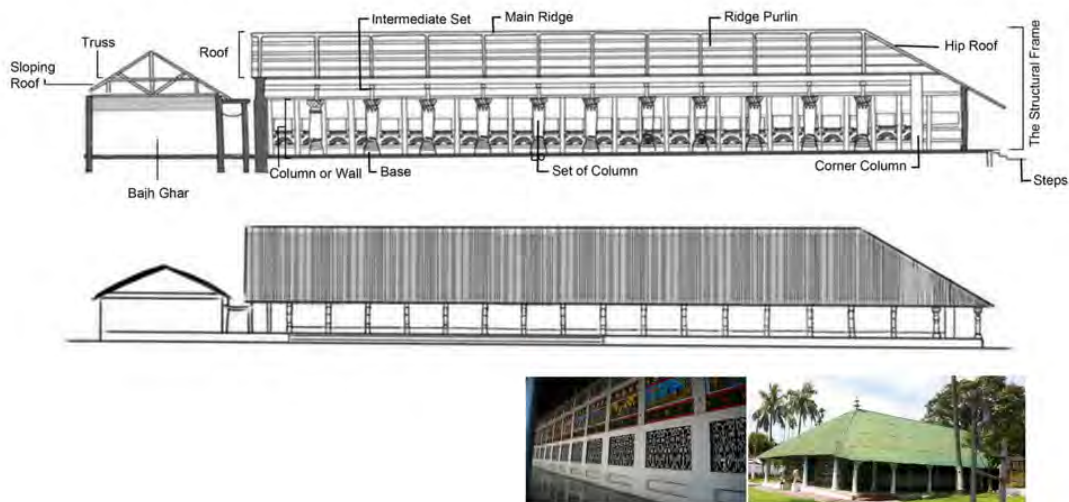


Fig. 4.44: Side view of *Naamghar* (Illustration: Researcher)

In Fig. 4.44 one can see the side view of the *Naamghar* walls. Walls of the *Naamghar* or *Kirtan ghar* were set up with bamboo and wooden also called *Kundraksa jala* being left in the proper places. In the beginning of the structural frame one has to climb the three steps. There are set of columns like corner column, middle column supported by half open walls covered with jali structure all over the walls. In the last there is *bajh ghar* with sloping roof kind of structure. On the base of the walls jali work has been carved so that one can also sit outside and hear the sound of the *Naam Kirtan* happening inside.

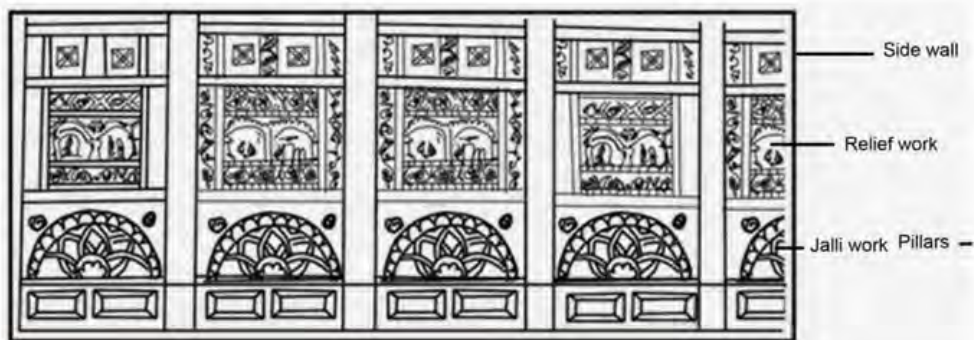


Fig. 4.45: Carvings in Kirtan Ghar (Illustration: Researcher)

Three external sides of '*Kirtan Ghar*' are covered up with description from '*Bhagawata*' and '*Purana*' (North and South). In West side there is description of '*Dashavatara*' of *Vishnu*. In conformity with the "*Vrindavani vastra*" (Fig.4.46), the interior of the *Kirtan ghar* has been divided into 13 numbers of '*polis*' or '*Kathalis*' (open space in between two main posts).

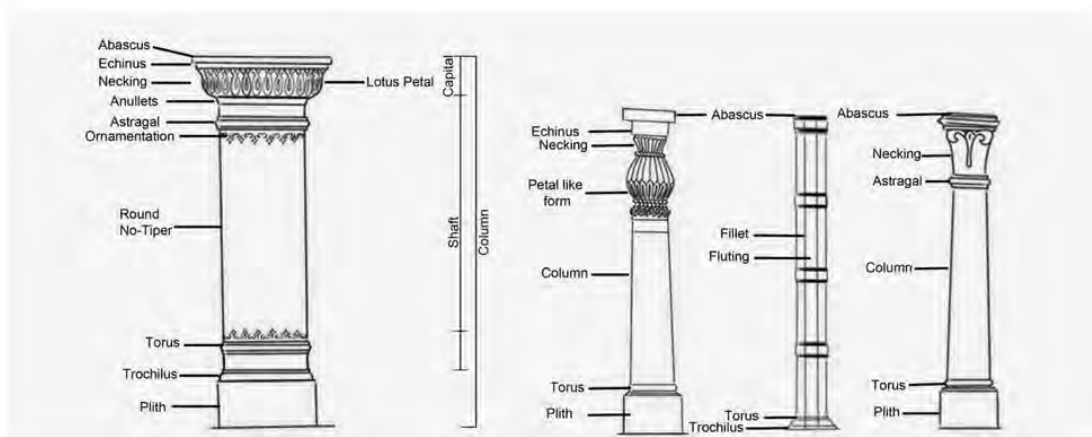


Fig. 4.46: Kirtan Ghar Pillars (Illustration: Researcher)

There are many variations in pillars in terms of its design, volume and height but one thing is common in every pillar is its association with *Vishnu* related elements. Like in some places lotus like form is been used in neckling or torus (fig. 4.46).

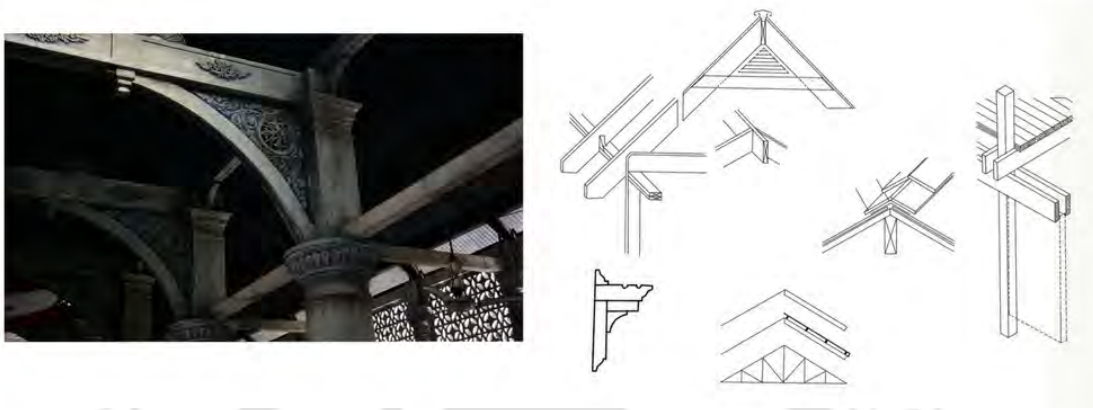


Fig. 4.47: Construction details (Illustration: Researcher)

Step foundation is used in the building and its 8 feet deep. The beam runs along the whole structure, connecting the columns. Tin sheets, coloured glasses were from British time (200 yrs ago). It used to be made of timber and straw but presently building is made with RCC stone columns.

Auniati Satra (Fig. 4.47) is one of the oldest and largest *Satra* in Majuli founded by Satradhikar Nirnanjan Deb Goswami in 1653. 14 prayers are offered called '*Soidho Prasanga Naam*'. Here it's been noted that women are not allowed in *garbha griha* after 4 in the evening.

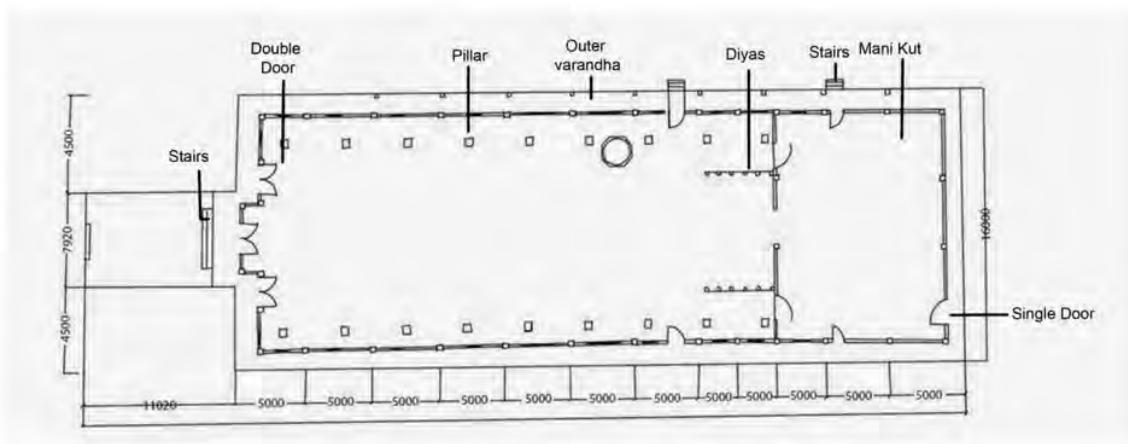


Fig. 4.48: *Auniati Satra* of Majuli Floor Plan (Illustration: Researcher)

The *Naamghar* is the epicenter of the *Satra* and it faces towards the Eastern side, surrounded by four ponds. Inside the *Naamghar*, sitting position is also very well defined.

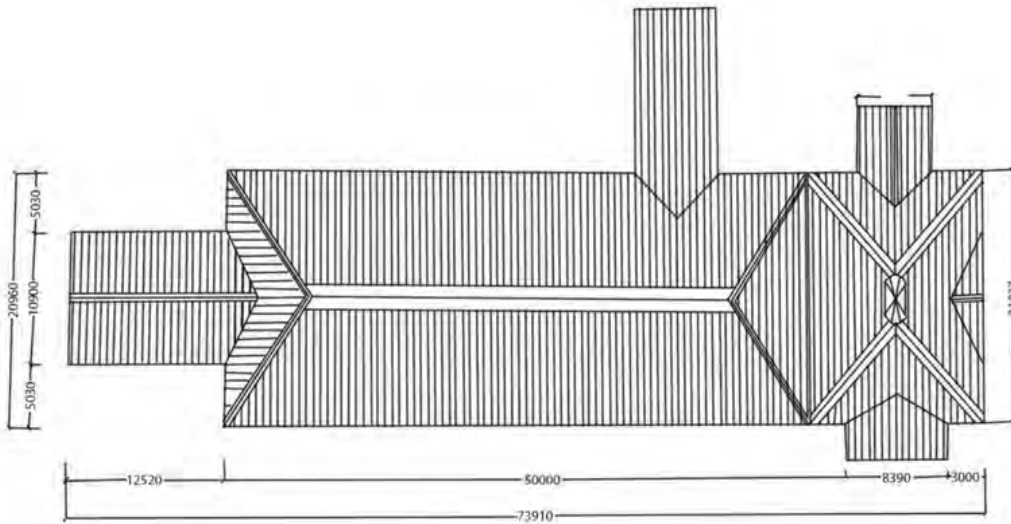


Fig. 4.49: *Auniti Satra* of Majuli Top view (Illustration: Researcher)

Dakshinpat Satra in Majuli has massive landscape, green areas, water bodies and housing blocks. The site is very traditionally built. *Dakshinpat* being derived from two words “*Dakshin*’ meaning ‘South’ and ‘*Pat*’ meaning ‘Part’ (fig. 4.50).

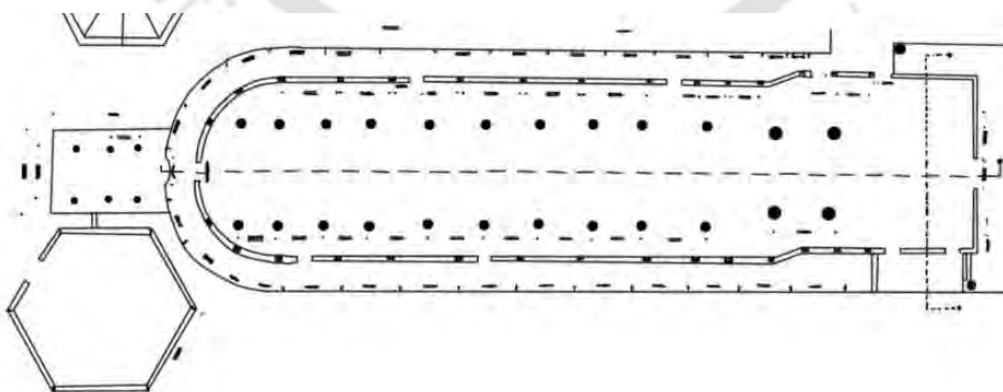


Fig. 4.50: *Dakshinpat* of Majuli Sitting view (Illustration: Researcher)

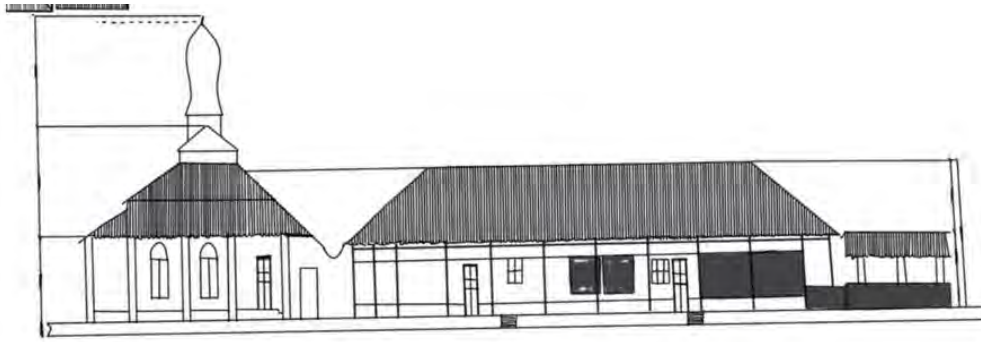


Fig. 4.51: *Dakshinpat* of Majuli Side view (Illustration: Researcher)

The construction are made of local material like mud, bamboo along with tin for roofing and concrete posts to hold the bamboo fenced walls.

4.6 Tools for analyzing data

In the first phase, previous studies were comprehensively referred for measurement tools of variables of interests. The general questionnaire (Refer to appendix I) was prepared, where questions related to name, location (urban, semi-urban, rural), age, households etc. was enquired. This will be followed by in-depth interviews and group discussions with several people of influential positions (such as President, Vice president, *Satradhikari*) in *Naamghar*. Second set of questionnaire was prepared, where specific information related to design elements details (outer gate, pillars, door, floral elements such as lotus etc) was enquired. After considering the input from interviews and focus group discussions, the questionnaire was prepared for the pilot testing. Final set of questionnaires was then used to collect data in the final field visits to each of these *Naamghars*. The samples of such questionnaires and tabulated data are shown in appendix I. The collected data from literature review analysis, field visual survey as well as questionnaires was analysed using various tools, which are discussed in following section.

4.6.1 Evolution of questionnaire during research by Interviews of respondent

1. General queries:

i) Age of respondents during interview

The variation in age of respondents (*satradhikari*, *bhakats* etc.) that were interviewed during field survey to different *Naamghars* is been observed; the age varies from as low as 30 years (*Akasipath Naamghar*) to 85 years (*Srimanta Shankradev Kala Kriti Kendra*). Most of them were found between 55 years and 16 years old respectively. It

is worth noting that around half of the respondents were above 55 and around half of them below 55 years. It is also worth noting that for minimum and maximum age, the *Naamghars* are located in urban area. However, more than the age, their experience (time spent) in that particular *Naamghar* is more important parameter that can influence their views. In addition to age, their experience also matters. The average experience is around 17 years, which they have spent in their respective *Naamghars*. This shows that the experience of persons staying in *Naamghar* is not for a very long duration.

ii) Variation of age and experience of respondents from different *Naamghar* in reference to age of *Naamghar*

Interviews with persons staying there are not reasonably sufficient to provide comprehensive views on *Naamghar*. The experience varies for as low as 1 year to upto 50 years. This indicates that the survey questionnaire will be comprehensive in considering views from both freshers and experienced in terms of *Naamghar*. One such case was respondent of 30 years of age in *Akasipath Naamghar*. He specifically discussed about the concern of reducing importance of *Naamghar* and also role of youth in maintaining it. He also mentioned about future plan in renovating *Naamghar* and also about generation of funds. However, the interpretation with respect to actual age of *Naamghar* would be of high relevance. According to the respondents there is a variation in the age of *Naamghar*. This shows that for case of *Nizarapar Naamghar* (respondent age is 75 years and experience is 50 years) and also for *Akasipath Namghar* (respondent age is 76 years and experience is 55) to some extent, the respondents age are more similar to age of *Naamghar* and their experience. This is meaningful for understanding the evolution in design elements of *Naamghar* over period of time.

iii) Gender variation among respondents from different *Naamghars*

As compared to these two, for case of rural *Naamghar* (i.e., *Sarbhog Naamghar*) and also urban (*Sarbajanin Naamghar*), the contrast is much higher. The comparative variation in age and experience are important to interpret the results from the interview. When comparing gender variation among respondents, it was found that the committee was highly dominated by males around 89% as compared to females, which is just 11%. However, this was different for one particular *Naamghar* (*Akasipath Naamghar*), where it was found from interview that the committee is formed of women. Also, very interestingly; it was also found from the interview that most of the visitors (members) are now women especially in urban *Naamghars* (*Srimanta Kala krishi Kendra* and *Nizarapar Naamghar*) as compared to mixed in case of rural *Naamghars*. This may be because with

changing lifestyle, men in urban areas are mostly busy with earning household income or do service jobs somewhere else. In that case, women participation appears to increase tremendously in urban *Naamghars*. Therefore, an integrated approach including interview and questionnaire is required for as compared to rural better understanding of functions in *Naamghar*.

2. Physical structure (Design)

i) Comparison of total area of *Naamghar* as well as decision makers (*Naamghar* Committee) with age for different *Naamghar*.

The study in variation of total area of *Naamghar* and also decision makers to corresponding *Naamghars* with year of establishment. It was found that with increase in historical establishment, time, the total area of *Naamghar* as well as its corresponding decision maker decreases. The area is reduced from total 324 m² to around 150 m² over period of 1000 years. This is also consistent with the trend of urbanization, where space is reducing. At the same time, the decision makers seem to change from 90 to almost 4 people in a committee. This shows that with time and also space (urban and rural), the decision makers reduce sharply. This is because one of the fundamental aspects of *Naamghar* in village (rural) was to hold meetings and take important decisions related to village. However, with increasing urbanization trend in space, living style and income, the concept of social meetings have been reduced. The *Naamghar*, which once used to be called Mini Parliament by Mahatma Gandhi appears to significantly reducing its uniqueness of being social gathering institution for binding people of different tribes together.

ii. Comparison of variation in area of gate and area of *Manikut* with time between different *Naamghars*.

Exploring the variation of total area of *Naamghar* and also decision makers to corresponding *Naamghars* with year of establishment. It can be observed that area for gate appears to decrease but at a much smaller rate than that of total area of *Naamghar*. Here, it's worth noting that the area for gate refers to the main entrance of the gate.

To clearly understand this, it can be seen from the images captured from field based visual survey below [fig. 4.52 (a) and (b)] that the entrance in older *Naamghars* [fig. 4.52 (a)] are multiple instead of single main entrance at the front for *Naamghars* as located in recently constructed *Naamghars* [fig. 4.52 (b) and (c)]. The possible reason for such difference as found from interviews was (1) lack of sufficient space and (2) lack of

sufficient funding. The gate for recently constructed *Naamghars* in urban are usually plain and simple as compared to those with older *Naamghars*, which are adorned with characters from *Vaisnava* sect (*Bhakats, Xorai, Narsimha*) etc. with jali work on grilled gates.

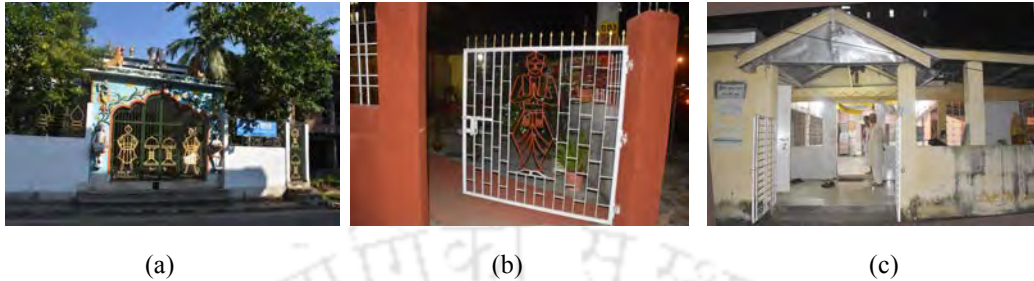


Fig. 4.52: Outer gate of *Naamghar* in (a) *Nizarapar Naamghar* (urban; 55 years old) (b) *Naamghar path* (urban; 20 years old) and (c) *Akasipath Naamghar* (urban; 30 years old)

iii. Comparison of variation in *Manikut* with time between different *Naamghars*.

On the other hand, when volume occupied by *Manikut* is compared, it was found that the size of *Manikut* is also appeared to decrease at a faster rate as compared to the rural *Naamghar*.



Fig. 4.53: Overview of *Manikut* a) *Nizarapar Naamghar* (urban; 55 years old) (b) *Naamghar path* (urban; 20 years old) and (c) *Akasipath Naamghar* (urban; 30 years old)

To clearly understand this, images captured from field visual survey [fig. 4.53 (a), (b) and (c)]. It can be inferred from figures that for older *Naamghar* [fig. 4.53 (a)], the *Manikut* size is much higher (7-tier) and also adorned with more relief work, whereas for *Manikut* in (b) and (c) the size (3-tier) appears to reduce drastically. The size of *Manikut* for (b) is smaller than that of (c) and also seen in fig. 4.53. The reduction in size of *Manikut* also could be due to lack of space, funding and also lack of people visiting thr *Naamghar* and also due to increasing trend of keeping miniature versions of *Manikut* [Fig.4.53 (b)] at different places. The above findings are consistent to the overall decreasing size and scale of *Naamghar* and other elements.

iv. Variation of Area of prayer hall and area of *Manikut* (*Manikut* area/total area of prayer hall) with year of establishment.

The variation in area of hall and also corresponding *Manikut* area with year of establishment of *Naamghar* has been compared (fig. 4.54). The hall size for offering prayers varies from around 50 m² to 80 m². Unlike in case of total area of *Naamghar*, there is no clear definitive trend with year of establishment. However, there is an overall size reduction of *Manikut* in prayer hall. As compared to this, the area varies from as low as 7.7% to 20% of the size of prayer hall. This percentage is also appearing to reduce overall with time. This seems to suggest that due to smaller or miniature versions of *Manikut* available in market it is now being more frequently used.



Fig. 4.54: Square plain pillar at *Akasipath Naamghar* (Illustration: Researcher)

v. Variation of Area of prayer hall and Normalized area of *Manikut* (*Manikut* area/total area of prayer hall) with year of establishment as compared with the size of the pillar.

For understanding the size of pillar, the area of pillar was also normalized with that of size of prayer hall. The normalized pillar area (%) is found to lie close to that of normalized *Manikut* area. It is found to generally reduce with time and for latest two *Naamghars*, pillars were found to vanish. This is a clear shift towards modern architect, where there is a tendency to maximize space by eliminating pillars from the hall. The pillar (*Lai Khutta*), which once carried significance is no longer present in recent *Naamghars*. Also, the pillars are found to be plain and simple without any decorative relief work or

carving in *Naamghars* of recent times and urban location. Fig. 4.54 showing square shaped pillar at *Akasipath Naamghar* (urban) indicate the same.

4.6.2. Data Mapping

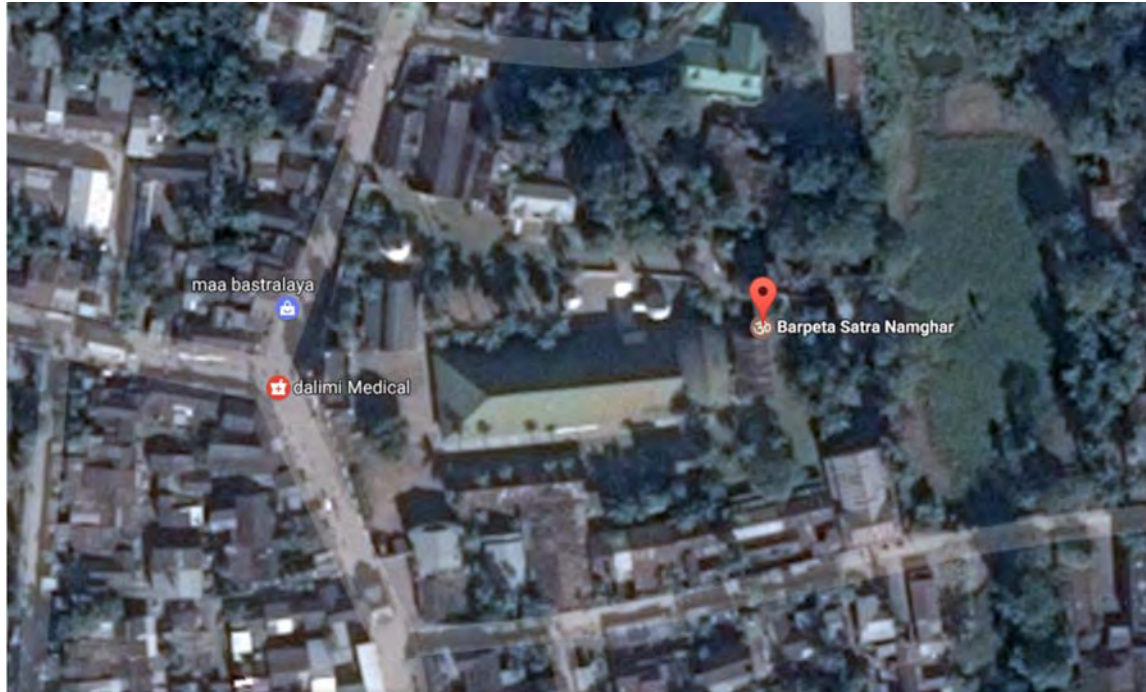


Fig. 4.55: Google map of *Barpeta Satra*

Data has been collected from the field visit to around 26 *Naamghars* with the help of interview schedules and focus group discussions. A set of cards (fig. 4.55) was shown to respondents for the identification of the elements associated with *Naamghars*. These visual cards were shown to four categories of people. Firstly, *Naamghar* decision makers, *Satradhikari* and *Bhakats*. Secondly, policy makers, architects and thirdly, craftsmen and designers and fourthly other people associated with *Naamghars* like visitors and shopkeepers staying around *Satras* and *Naamghars*. Further segregating the data has been done and structuring has been initiated to understand the *Naamghar* in more in-depth way.

During the structured categorization and card sorting a pattern has emerged and researcher can see the modifications happened over the period of time (fig. 4.56- fig. 4.57).

i) Mapping of field visual content

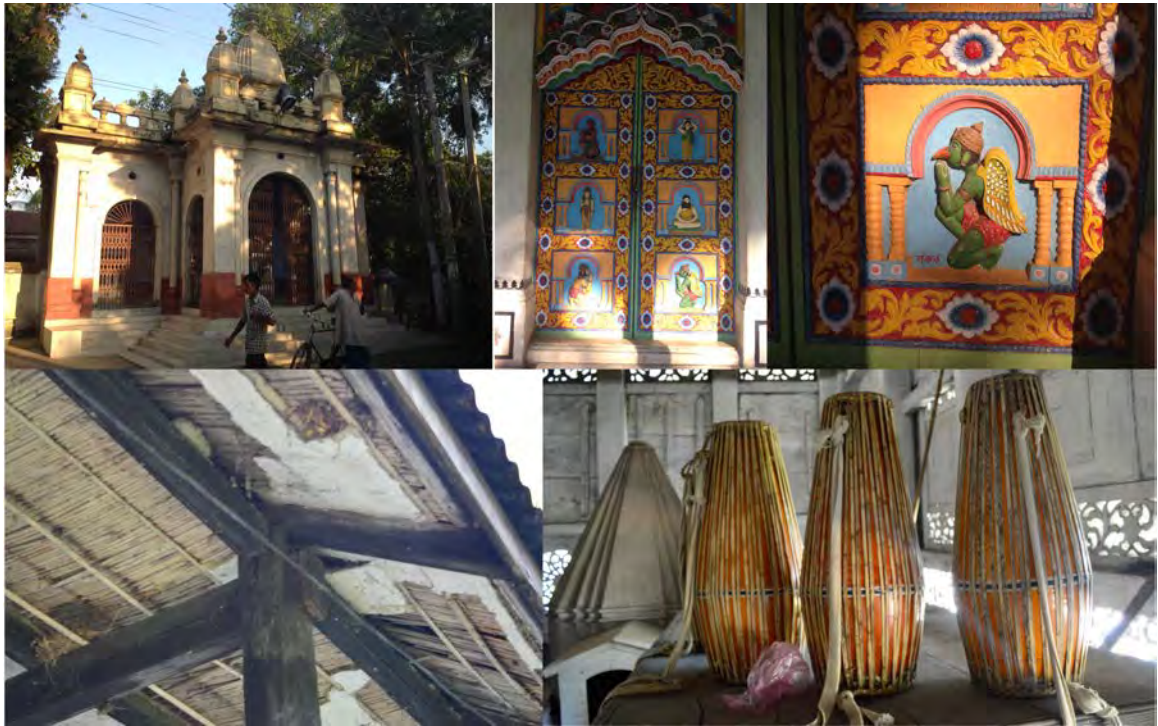


Fig. 4.56: Mapping of 26 *Naamghar* and *Satra* (Illustration: Researcher)

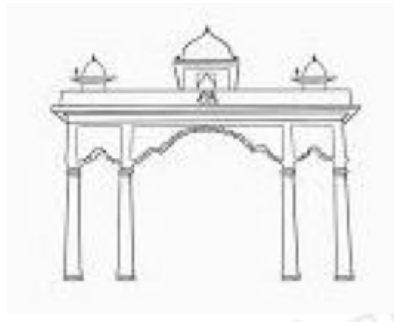


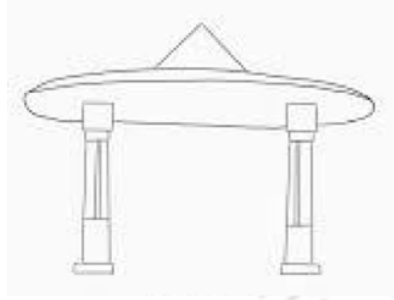




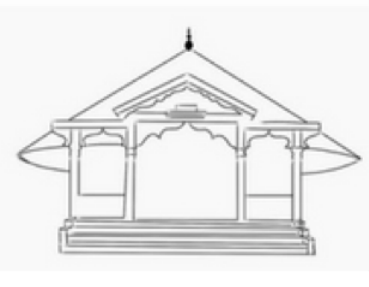
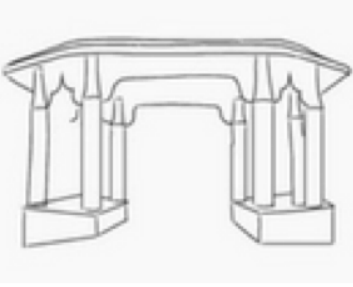


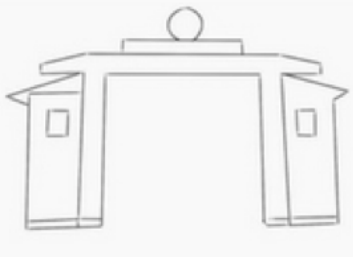
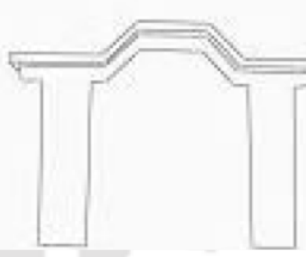
Fig. 4.57: Google map of *Berpeta Satra* (Illustration: Researcher)

4.6.3 Form study

The researcher has categorized the data and with the emergence of the pattern the *Naamghars* has been divided into three parts 1) Rural, 2) Semi Urban and 3) Urban. Its been also done on the basis of other parameters like population and area covered. In this section, the form of the key elements of *Naamghar* was identified. Following subsections contains the details of such forms along with description. Illustrated form of each element has been identified clearly and detailed out.

i) Main Gate

Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban
		
<p>a) Sarbhog Medhipara Gorakhia Than</p> <p>The main door and side door arches are poly lobed (trilobed mainly) with main door has longer middle arch length as compared to uniform arch length for side doors for each lobe. The pediment is flat. (main entrance and two side entrances)</p>	<p>g) Sunderdeya Satra Naamghar</p> <p>(Semi-circular arch with archivolts; Additional Dome of parabolic shapes are present at the top of entrance). <i>Shikhara</i> has form of <i>chakra</i> at the gate.</p>	<p>m) Akasi Path Naamghar</p> <p>Flat arch with triangular pediment. Only one main entrance is present.</p>
		
<p>b) Barpeta Naamghar</p> <p>Canopy with conical shape – The pediment resembles the traditional <i>Japi</i> of Assam.</p>	<p>h) Auniati Satra Majuli</p> <p>Flat arch with polylobed pediment over top of arch.</p>	<p>n) Zoo Road Naamghar</p> <p>The gate arch is of semi-hexagonal shape with a pediment shape of semi-hexagonal. The dome is of triangular and only one main entrance.</p>

		
<p>e) Garamur Satra Majuli Segmental arch with triangular pediment with two side entrances . <i>Shikhara</i> at top of pediment.</p>	<p>i) Athkhelia Naamghar Majuli One main entrance and two side entrances. Flat arch at main entrance and angular arch at side entrances. The pediment is flat at main entrance and has slope at side entrance.</p>	<p>o) Nizarapar Naamghar The arch of gate resembles that of Polylobed arch (six lobes) with no dome and flat pediment . Only one main entrance.</p>
		
<p>d) Uttar Kamlabari Satra Majuli Polylobed arch with angular pediment. No dome, no <i>shikhara</i> as well as no archivolt.</p>	<p>j) Dakhinpath Satra Majuli Flat arch with rectangular pediment. Two side windows at sides. Circular <i>shikhara</i> at top of pediment.</p>	<p>p) Srimanta Shankradeva Kala Krishi Kendra The gate arch is of semi-hexagonal shape with no pediment and dome Only one main entrance.</p>


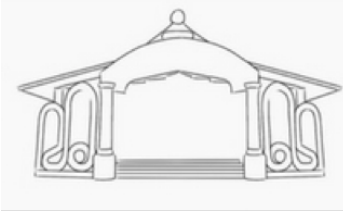

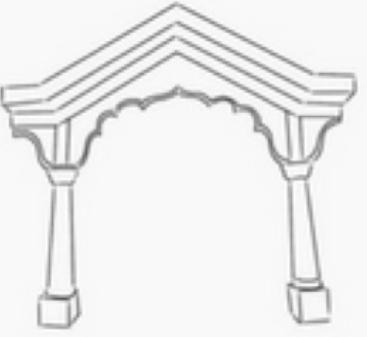

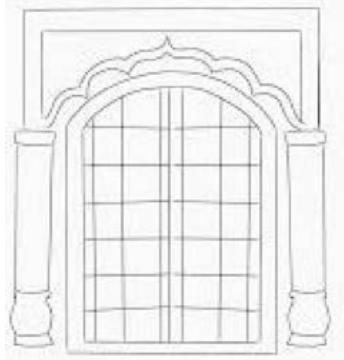
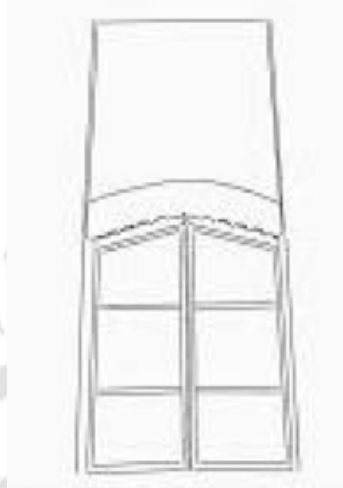


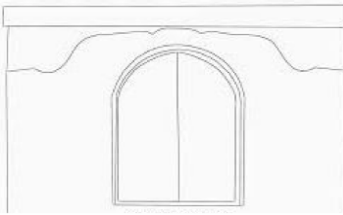
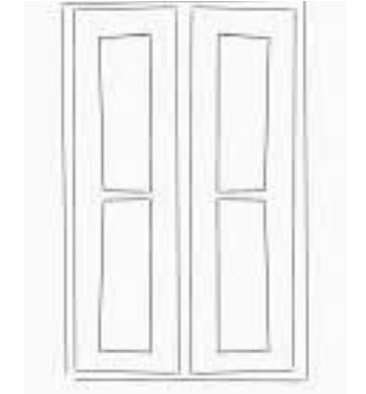

		
<p>e) Auniati Satra Majuli Flat arch with triangular pediment and presence of four relatively small openings (two in rectangular and other two in trinagular on top of it). There is no presence of <i>shikhara</i>.</p>	<p>k) Dhekiakhowa Bornamghar Majuli Trilobe arch with segmental pediment and pointed <i>shikhara</i>.</p>	<p>q) Naamghar Path Flat arch with no dome with only one main entrance.</p>
		
<p>f) Samaguri Satra Majuli Polylobed arch with archivolts and angular pediment. The pillar is Tuscan. There is no dome and <i>shikhara</i>.</p>	<p>l) Hati Satra Suwalkuchi Flat arch with segmental pediment. Sphere dome at sides with presence of <i>shikhara</i>.</p>	

Fig. 4.58: Form analysis of main gate of *Namghar* at Rural [(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f)] Semi Urban [(g), (h), (i), (j), (k), (l)] and Urban [(m), (n), (o), (p) and (q)]

ii). Main Door:

Rural	Semi-urban	Urban
		
<p>(a) Kamlabari Satra, Majuli The wooden double door has a segmental arch (transom) at the top. Unlike other <i>Naamghars</i>, the doors has relatively large number of panels (36). The width of trim is much smaller and thinner. A crown is present at the top of door. The arch of crown is polylobed (scallops) with flat pediment. The crown is supported by round shaped pillars having pedestal at the bottom).</p>	<p>(b) Sunderdeya Satra Naamghar The wooden double door is pentagonal shape (with triangular arch formation at the top) and have six panels. Out of six panels, four are of square shape and other two are quadrilateral. The width of trim (linings) is much smaller and thinner. A crown is present at the top of door in form of hat.</p>	<p>(c) Nizapar Naamghar, Guwahati The wooden double door is rectangular shape and have four panels of also rectangular shape. The trims (linings) are flat plate and rectangular. There is no crown on top of door as usually seen in many rural <i>Naamghars</i>.</p>
		



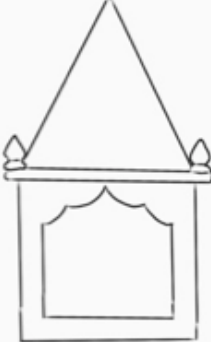
<p>(d) Ramdiyar Naamghar</p> <p>The wooden double door is rectangular in shape. The panels (fifteen) are of uneven size. Fourteen panels are of similar shape (square), while one panel in the centre is large rectangular in shape. There is an illustration of three concentric circles at the center of double door. As per hindu context, the outermost layer (<i>Paisachika padas</i>) signify the aspects of Asuras and evil; whereas the inner <i>Devika padas</i> signify aspects of <i>Devas</i> and good. In between the good and evil, there is the concentric layer of <i>Manusha padas</i>, which signifies the human life. The width of trim passing between panels is thinner. There is a crown on the top of door in form of semi-spherical shape (concave down).</p>	<p>(e) Dhekiakhowa Naamghar, Majuli</p> <p>The wooden double door has a segmental arch at the top. Unlike other Naamghars, the doors has relatively large number of panels (36). The width of trim is much smaller and thinner. A crown is present at the top of door. The arch of crown is polylobed (scallops) with flat pediment. The crown is supported by round shaped pillars having pedestal at the bottom).</p>	<p>(f) Akasi Path Naamghar</p> <p>The wooden double door and its panels (four) are rectangular in shape (higher vertical length than horizontal). The width of trim is much smaller. It is double door. There is no crown on top of door as usually seen in many rural <i>Naamghars</i>.</p>
		
		<p>(g) Srimanta Shankradeva Kala Krishi Kendra</p>


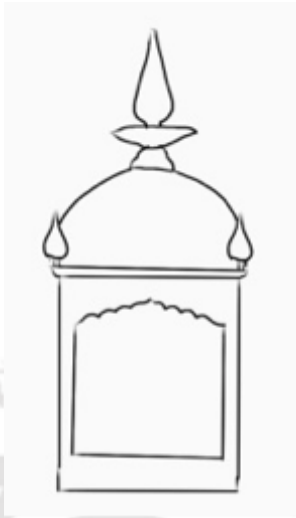

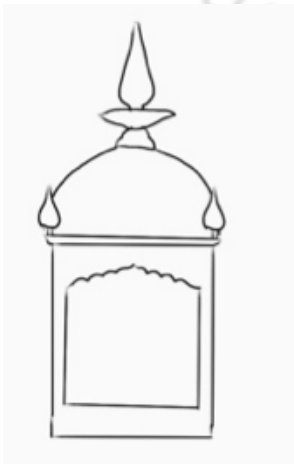
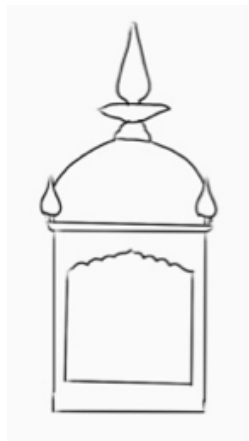
		<p>The wooden double door is hexagonal in shape with a polygon transom. The panels (eight) are of uneven size. Six panels are of rectangular shape while two panels (at top) are of quadrilateral shape in order to fit the overall frame of double door. The width of trim is also uneven with thicker width at the bottom and thinner width at top portion of door. There is no crown on top of door as usually seen in many rural <i>Naamghars</i>.</p>
		
		<p>(h) Zoo road <i>Naamghar</i></p> <p>The double door has a shape of semi-circle (transom). Unlike other <i>Naamghars</i>, there are no trims here. However, there are presence of mouldings (archivolts) at the top portion of door. The crown sits on the door with a polylobed shape of arch and flat pediment. The span of entire door including outer portion is much larger compared to that of other urban <i>Naamghars</i>.</p>

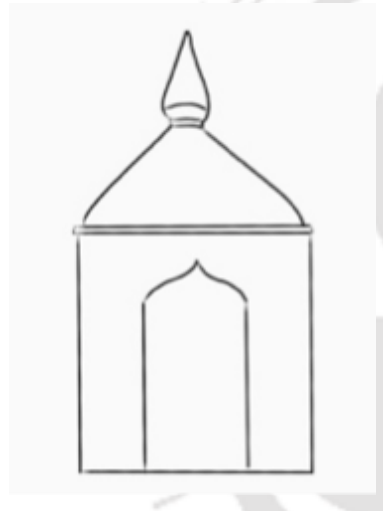

Fig. 4.59: Form analysis of main doors of *Naamghar* at Rural [(a), (d)], and Semi-Urban [(b) and (e)] and Urban [(c), (f), (g), (h)]

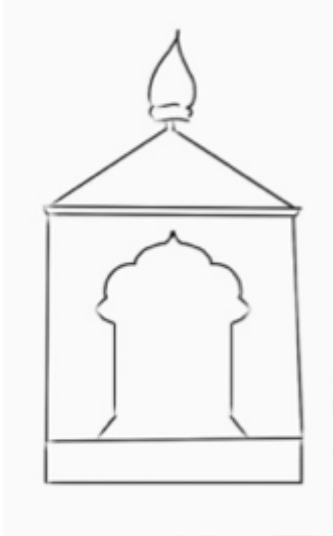
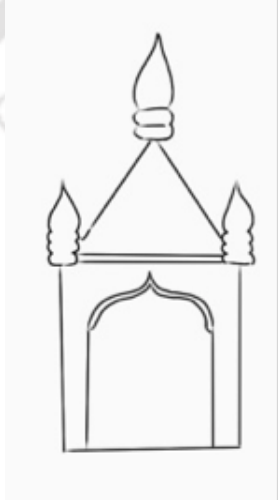
The wooden double door is hexagonal in shape. The transom is polygonal in shape. It has fifteen wooden panels (on which decorations of *dashavatar* is done; not shown here) and fourteen glass panels around the boundary of wooden door. The glass panels are placed as to provide a modern look to the crown (which was mainly wooden or metal in case of rural and semi-urban *Naamghars*). The width of trim in the panels of wooden door is thin so as to allow carvings of *dashavatar* within the panel. The double door is different from other urban *Naamghars* as it has mix of both glass and wooden panels. The presence of glass needs lower maintenance and also seem to attract people in urban area.

iii). Palki arch:

Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban
		
<p>a) Sarbhog Medhipara Gorakhia Gsain Than</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is polylobed (six lobes) with pediment having mouldings. It resembles the outer gate of the <i>Satra</i>. The dome is of parabolic shape (concave down) with <i>kalas</i> at the top. The <i>kalas</i> resembles that of <i>Xorai</i>, where <i>Bhagwad</i> is kept. Two miniature <i>kalas</i> are also present at left and right side over pediment.</p>	<p>f) Sunderdeya Satra</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is polylobed (six lobes) with polylobed pediment. There is no direct correlation with outer gate of <i>Naamghar</i>. The dome is of spherical shape (concave down) with presence of <i>kalash</i> at the top. <i>Kalash</i> shape resembles that of flame of diya lighting. Two miniature <i>kalash</i> of similar shapes are present at left and right side over pediment. Presence of distinctive pillars are also shown</p>	<p>h) Akasi Path Naamghar</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is polylobed (six lobes) with flat pediment without mouldings. There is no direct correlation with outer gate of <i>Naamghar</i>. The dome is of conical shape with presence of no <i>kalash</i> at the top. Two miniature <i>kalash</i> of parabolic shapes (more like pots) are also constructed at two corners over pediment.</p>

	here.	
		
<p>b) Bor Alengi Satra</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is a foil (multiple scallops) shape with a curved roof (concave down). There is a presence of <i>kalas</i> at the top. <i>Kalash</i> shape resembles that of flame of diya lighting. There are no presence of two miniature <i>kalash</i> as seen in other <i>Naamghars</i>.</p>	<p>g) Ramdiyar Naamghar</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is polylobed (six lobes) with flat pediment. The dome is of spherical shape (concave down) with presence of <i>kalash</i> at the top. Two miniature <i>kalash</i> of similar shapes are present at left and right side over pediment.</p>	<p>i) Zoo Road Naamghar</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is triangular with flat pediment having no mouldings. There is no direct correlation with outer gate of <i>Naamghar</i>. The dome is of parabolic shape (concave down) with presence of <i>kalas</i> at the top. <i>Kalash</i> shape resembles that of flame of diya lighting. Two miniature <i>kalas</i> of similar shapes are present at left and right side over pediment.</p>
		

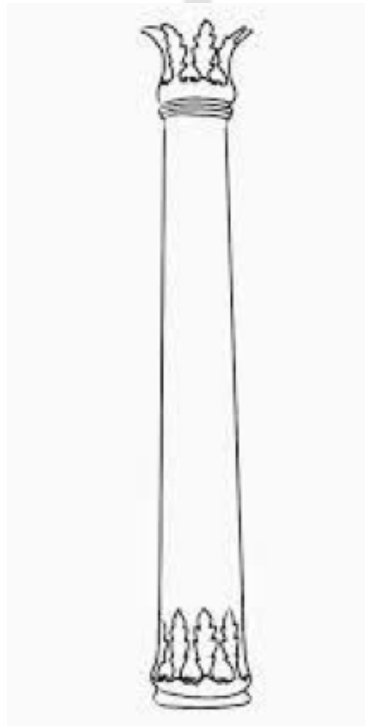
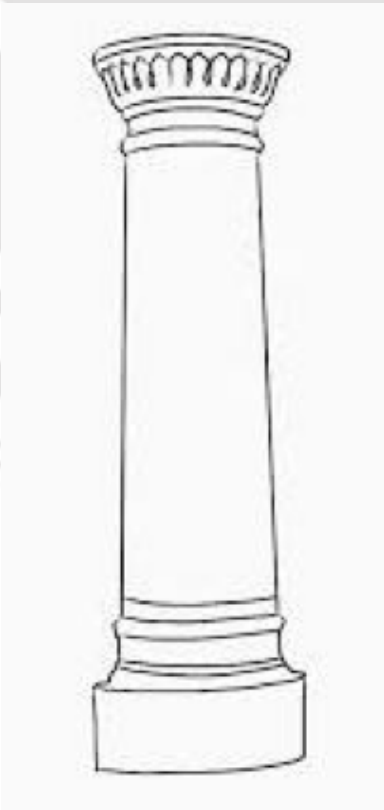
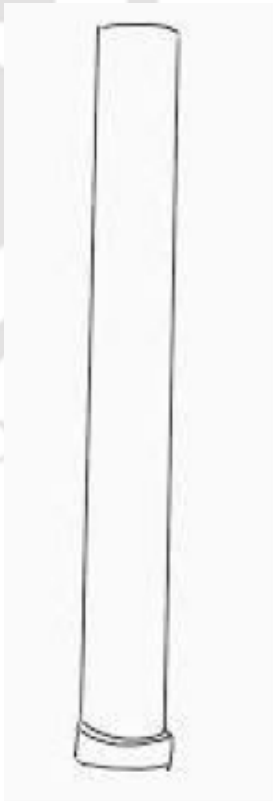
<p>c) Sualkuchi Palki</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is polylobed (six lobes) with polylobed pediment. The dome is of spherical shape (concave down) with presence of <i>kalas</i> at the top. <i>Kalas</i> shape resembles that of flame of diya lighting. Two miniature <i>kalas</i> of similar shapes are present at left and right side over pediment.</p>		<p>j) Srimanta Shankra deva kala krishi Kendra</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is polylobed (six lobes) with polylobed pediment. The dome is of spherical shape (concave down) with presence of <i>kalash</i> at the top. <i>Kalash</i> shape resembles that of flame of diya lighting. Two miniature <i>kalas</i> of similar shapes are present at left and right side over pediment.</p>
		
<p>d) Ananta Kalsila Satra Majuli</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is ogee shaped with flat pediment having no mouldings. There is no direct correlation with outer gate of <i>Naamghar</i>. The dome is of conical shape (concave down) with presence of <i>kalash</i> at the top. <i>Kalash</i> is triangular and more sharper at edges. Presence of two miniature <i>kalash</i> in other <i>Naamghars</i> are missing.</p>		<p>k) Naamghar Path</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is polylobed with a flat pediment. The dome is of inverted cone shape (concave down) with presence of <i>kalas</i> at the top. <i>Kalash</i> shape resembles that of flame of diya lighting. There are two miniature <i>kalash</i> as seen on the left and right side too. Presence of distinctive pillars are also shown here as compared to other <i>Naamghars</i></p>

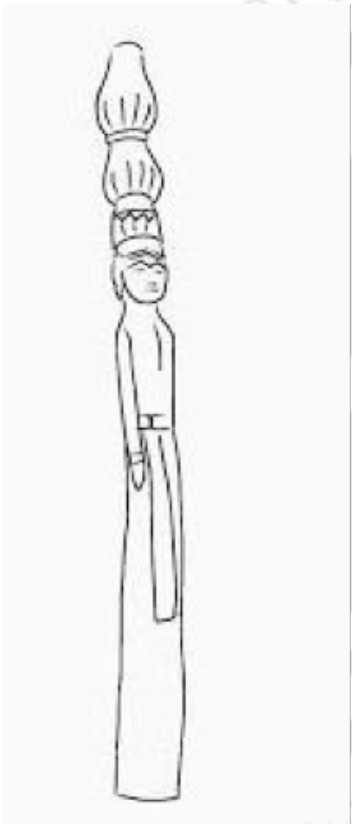


		<i>Guru Asana.</i>
		
<p>e) Tokoubari Satra Majuli</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is a foil shape with flat pediment. The dome is of triangular shape (concave down) with presence of <i>kalash</i> at the top. The bottom of entrance is cut inside. There are no two miniature <i>kalas</i> as seen in other <i>Naamghars</i>.</p>		
		
		<p>l) Bangshi Gopal Naamghar</p> <p>The <i>Guru Asana</i> arch is a ogee</p>

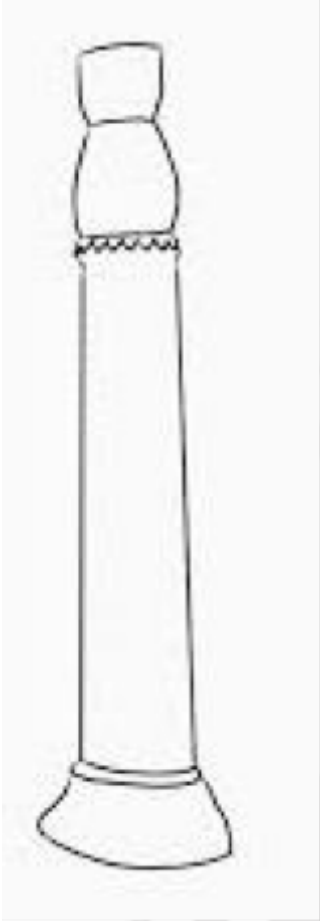
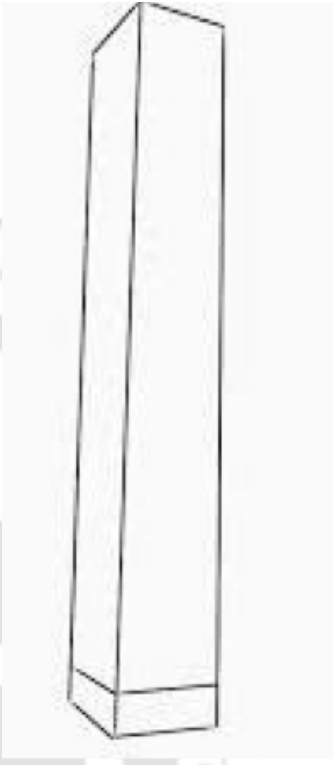
		<p>shape with flat pediment. The dome is of triangular shape (inverted cone) with presence of <i>kalash</i> at the top. There are two miniature <i>kalash</i> present on the left and right side at bottom of dome.</p>
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Fig. 4.60: Form analysis of *palki* of *Naamghar* at Rural [(a), (b), (c), (d), (e)], Semi Urban [(f), (g), (h)] and Urban [(i), (j), (k), (l)]

iv) Pillars

Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban
		

<p>a) Sarbhog Medhipara Gorakhia Gosain Than</p> <p>The pillar is round shape with decoration present at the bottom and top of pillar. The shaft is plain while pedestal and capital are carved with leaf art work. There are mouldings present at the neck of pillar.</p>	<p>f) Sunderdeya Satra</p> <p>The pillar is round shape with decoration present at the only top of pillar (capital). The shaft is plain while capital of pillar has both horizontal mouldings and vertical curve mouldings (scallops). There are mouldings present at the pedestal and neck of pillar.</p>	<p>g) Nizapar Satra</p> <p>The pillar is round shape and plain with no decoration at all. There is very small amount of mouldings between junction of pedestal and shaft. It appears clearly that the urban <i>Naamghar</i> pillars are much more simplified with minimal decoration and carvings.</p>
		
<p>b) Hajo Naamghar</p> <p>The shaft of wooden pillar is carved with <i>bhakat</i> decoration. There is no distinctive pedestal whereas, the capital is adorned with pot shape hats, over <i>bhakat</i> head. This pillar signified</p>		<p>h) Zoo Road Naamghar</p> <p>The pillar is plain with pentagonal shape. There is absence of any sort of decoration and also, there is no clear distinction of abacus, annulus and also fluting are</p>

<p>importance of <i>bhakat</i> in <i>Vaisnava</i> sect, on which <i>Naamghar</i> is based.</p>		<p>absent.</p>
		
<p>c) <i>Ramdiyar Naamghar</i> The shaft of pillar round shape with no mouldings. There is presence of anullet between capital and shaft as well as mouldings between pedestal and shaft. Unlike other pillars of <i>Ramdiyar Naamghar</i>, this is relatively very minimal decorated and carved. The capital also represent shape of pot.</p>		<p>i) <i>Srimanta Shankradeva Kala Krishi Kendra</i> The pillar is square shape with no decoration present at any portion. The shaft is plain and there is no distinction of pedestal and capital. As compared to those in rural, the pillar in urban appears to be more simple in design. Many elements of pillars appear to vanish in urban <i>Naamghars</i>.</p>

		
<p>d) Ramdiyar Naamghar</p> <p>The shaft of pillar is highly fluted with horizontal bands as compared to vertical in most other <i>Naamghars</i>. The capital resembles shape of the clay pottery form. The diameter of the pillar is much smaller than most other pillars In other <i>Naamghars</i>. The pedestal is also short with fine mouldings. The capital of pillar has relatively higher length and also horizontal mouldings (anullets) than other pillars in <i>Naamghar</i>.</p>		


		
<p>e) Ramdiyar Naamghar</p> <p>The pillar is round shape with decoration present at both top of pillar (capital) and bottom (Pedestal) of pillar. The shaft is plain while capital of pillar is adorned with lotus carvings. There are horizontal moldings (Anullets) appearing at the junction of shaft and pedestal as well as between shaft and capital.</p>		

Fig. 4.61: Form analysis of pillars of *Naamghar* at Rural [(a), (b), (c), (d), (e)],
Semi-Urban (f) and Urban [(g), (h), (i)]

v). *Dashavatar* elements:

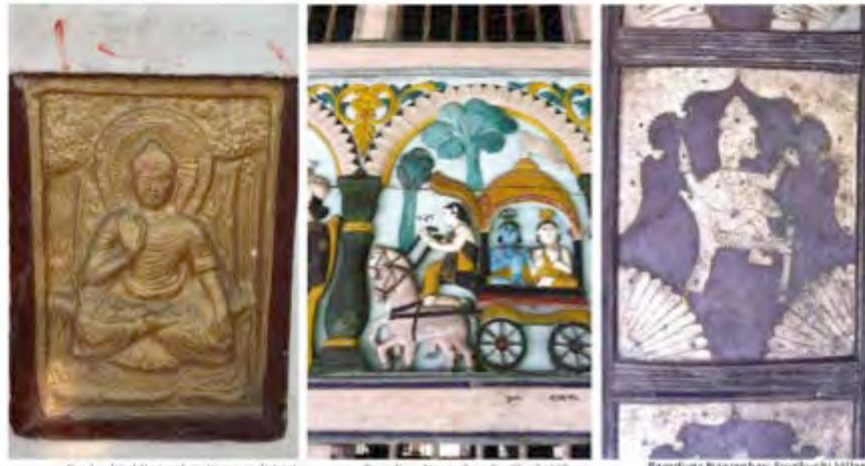


Fig.4.62: Cement, wooden and metal relief work in *Naamghar* (Photograph: Researcher)

The researcher has also tried to understand the presence of *Dashavatar* on the walls of *Naamghar* (fig. 4.62). The frequency of illustrative *Dashavatar* on the sidewalls, front entrance, main door, on *Manikut* etc has been studied. It has been coded and found that *Bhakat*, lotus, *Shankha* has been extensively used at different positions (Appendix III).

vi). **Study of Krishna in Naamghar:**

The idol of *Krishna* is always been there in the *Naamghar* of Assam as it is one of the *Dashavatar*. It is present in Rural, semi urban and urban setting. The pictorial documentation of the lord *Krishna* has been done in an extensive way. It was found that the size of the *Krishna* depiction on the walls is varying. *Krishna* idol has been carved on the main gate to visually tell the devotees about the connection of lord *Krishna* with the vaishnav culture. Secondly *Krishna* sculpture has been found on the walls of the *Naamghar* in form of stories depicting good over evil. Third, in the centre of the pond present in the *Satra*, *Krishna* has been depicted with a scene of *Kalia daman*. One can see in image (a) the details and variation of lord *Krishna*.



(a)



(b)

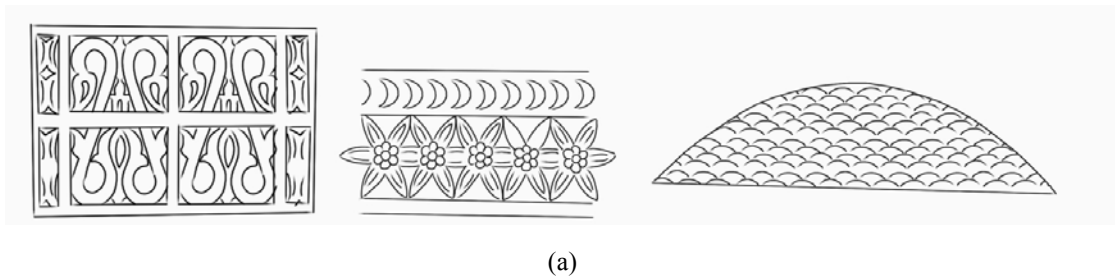
Fig. 4.63: (a) Variation of *Krishna* Idol in *Naamghars*, (b) Variation in size of *Krishna* idol

In Fig. 4.63 (a) and (b) one can see the variation of size. At some places the child *Krishna* is been shown and in other places young and adult *Krishna* has been shown. It has been found from the field research that in the rural *Naamghars* child version of *Krishna* has been shown on the main gate of the *Naamghar* and in urban *Naamghars* poster of child *Krishna* is been shown (sculpting is absent). In one of the urban *Naamghars*, adult version of *Krishna* has been shown with a huge size. He is standing under a tree with his flute. It shows the depiction of harmony in nature.

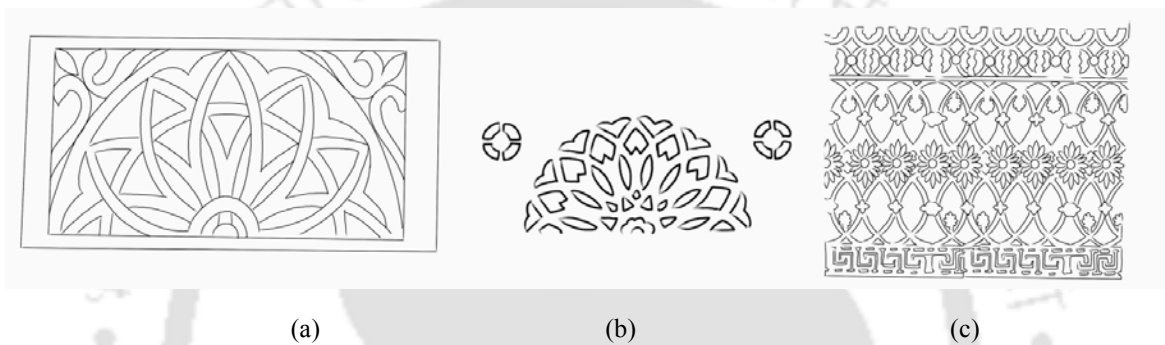
vii). Form study of *Jali* work in *Naamghar* of Assam:

Jali's are used in *Satras* and *Naamghars* in an extensive way. It is used around the *Kirtanghar* so that devotees who are sitting in the *varandha* side can hear the *Naam kirtan* and participate in it. Also it has been used for ventilation purpose. Researcher has found that these has been designed in a very planned way in terms of using elements related to *Vishnu* like lotus and nature. Artisans have used nirmali flower and lotus so that devotees can feel connected to the space of *Naamghar*. Below are the forms exploration from the field survey using the parameter of population in the location. It's been divided into (i) Rural, (ii) Semi-Urban and (iii) Urban setting.

a) Rural Naamghar Jali work



b) Semi-Urban Naamghar Jali



c) Urban Naamghar Jali work

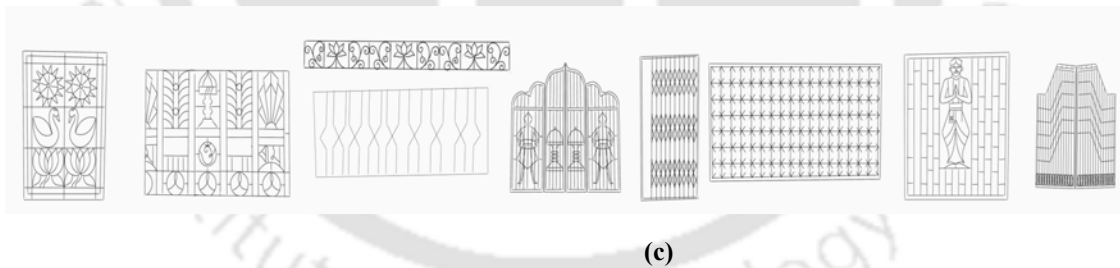
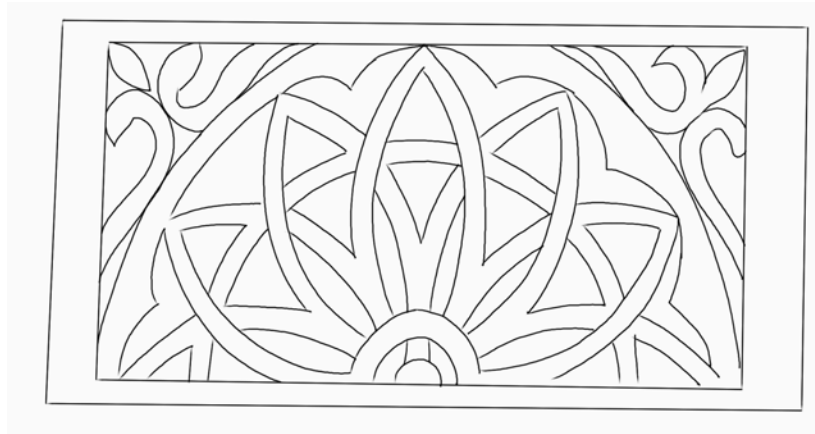


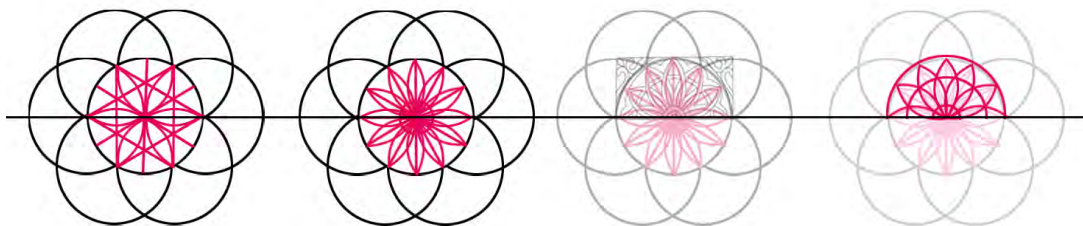
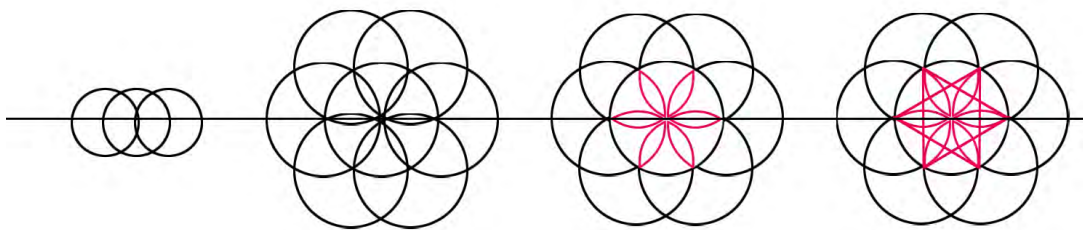
Fig. 4.64: Jali work in (a) Rural Naamghar, (b) Semi Urban Naamghar and (c) Urban Naamghar of Assam (Illustration: Researcher)

viii) Naamghar Jali with flowers and tendrils:

Jali work of *Ramdiyar Naamghar* is been analyzed, which is in Semi-urban setting. Pattern of the *jali* work has been unfolded by analyzing geometric shapes in basic circles.

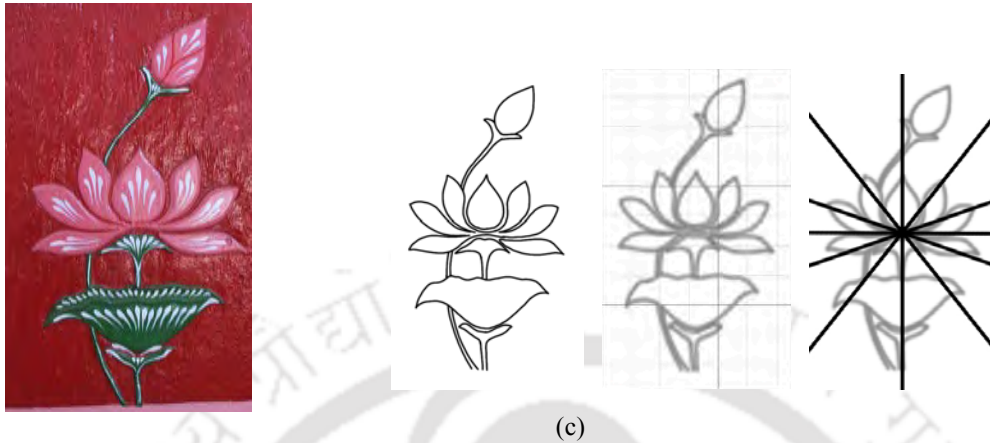


संस्कृत (a)



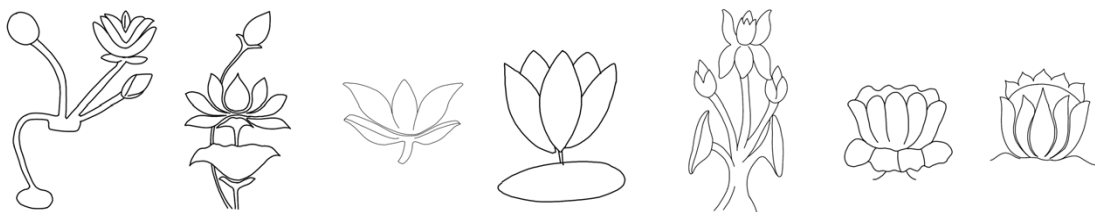
(b)

a) Flower variation analysis:



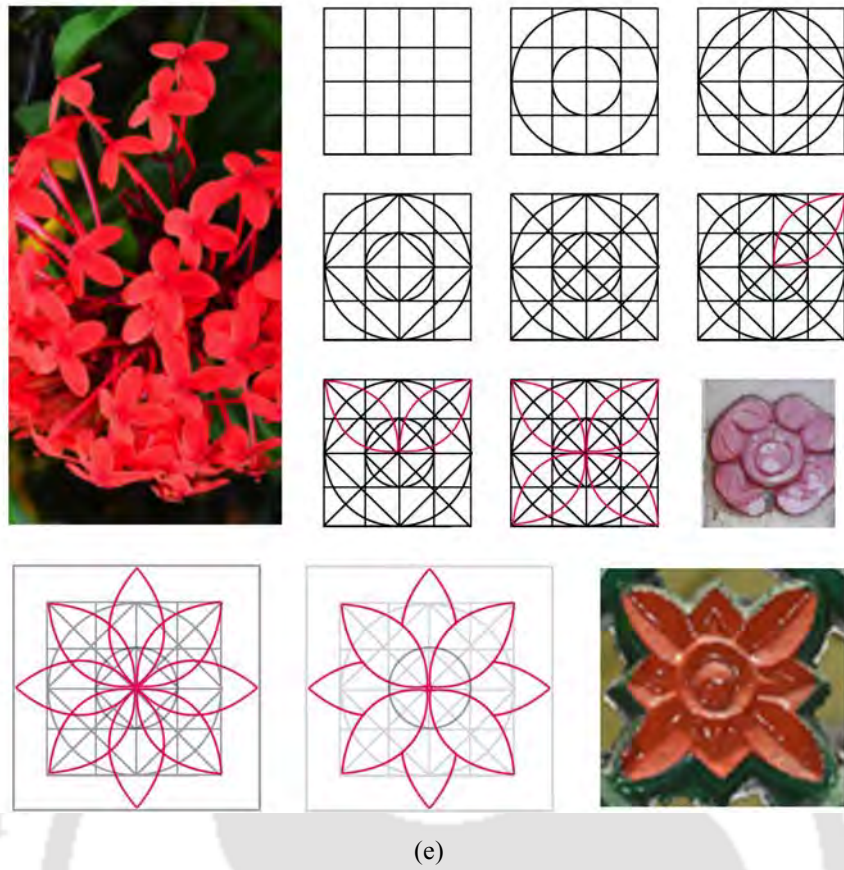
(c)

The pattern of the *jali* work is been analysed in above fig. 4.65 (a) and one can see the clear use of lotus flower in *jali* work of *Naamghar*. Another use of lotus flower in fig. 4.65 (b) can be also seen. One can see the symmetry from the central bud of the lotus. It is been equally divided. Similarly researcher has analysed other forms of lotus found in different *Naamghars* in fig. 4.65 (c). One can see that in semi-urban and urban setting the design of the lotus is different but it is been made with similar approach. Form is been modified but the concept of the lotus is same hence one can identify it with variety in forms.



(d)

In similar way *Ashoka* flower, which is associated with Srimanta Shankardeva and Madhavdeva has been analyzed. And it has been found that in some places it has four petals and in some places it has eight petals. But because of the strong influence of colour one can recognize it very clearly. One can see it in Fig. 4.65 (d), (e) the pattern formation in a clear way.



(e)

Variation of *Ashoka* and Lotus flower has been shown in the matrix below in fig. 4.64 (f). Lotus and Ashokai flower is used in various locations. There are three types of leaves are used in the walls and pillars of *Naamghar*.

S. No	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6	N7	N8	N9	N10	N11	N12	N13	N14	N15	N16	N17	N18	N19	N20	N21	N22	N23	N24	N25	N26
Lotus																										
Nirmali																										
Ashoka																										

S. No	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6	N7	N8	N9	N10	N11	N12	N13	N14	N15	N16	N17	N18	N19	N20	N21	N22	N23	N24	N25	N26
Leaf T1																										
Leaf T2																										
Leaf T3																										

(f)

Fig. 4.65: Geometrical variations analysis of flower (a) Jali work in *Naamghar* and (b) Design detailing of *Ramdiyar Naamghar Sualkuchi* in Semi Urban setting, (c) Lotus flower form in Urban setting at Big Bazaar *Naamghar*, (d) Lotus flower forms in Rural, Semi Urban and Urban *Naamghars*. (e) Form analysis of *Ashoka* flower at *Srimanta Shankardeva Kala Kriti Kendra Naamghar* and *Naamghar path* (f) Matrix depicting natural elements and their designs associated with *Naamghar* (Illustration: Researcher)

ix). Animal variation matrix:

The animals and birds associated with *Naamghar* have been visually documented in an extensive way. On the walls of the *Naamghar* and at different locations from main gate to *Kirtan ghar* walls, there are depiction of animals and birds. Most of them are related to *Dashavatara* like peacock, elephant, *Garuda*, tortoise, flying lion etc. but there is variation in its style of depiction. Researcher has categorized them into different sections in terms of similarity. For example showing the depiction of flying lion and *Garuda* in the section of animal 4 and 5 in matrix. The highly depicted animals are flying lion and *Garuda* and the least used one is Animal 3, which is elephant. All the animals and birds are associated with *Dashavatara*. Peacock which is Animal 2 at N2, N8, N9 and N11 is been depicted on the main gate but in different styles like sometimes sculpted or sometimes made out of grill Hence, material is changing.




S. No	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6	N7	N8	N9	N10	N11	N12	N13	N14	N15	N16	N17	N18	N19
Animal 1																			
Animal 2																			
Animal 3																			
Animal 4																			
Animal 5																			
Animal 6																			

Fig. 4.66: Matrix depicting birds and animals associated with *Naamghar* (Illustration: Researcher)

4.6.4 Color palette generator using K-means clustering algorithm:

For visual analysis, tools such as Image J (Rasband, 2011) and machine learning algorithm (K-means) were used, while for statistical analysis, Microsoft excel (2011) was utilized. Descriptions of following elements are given as follows

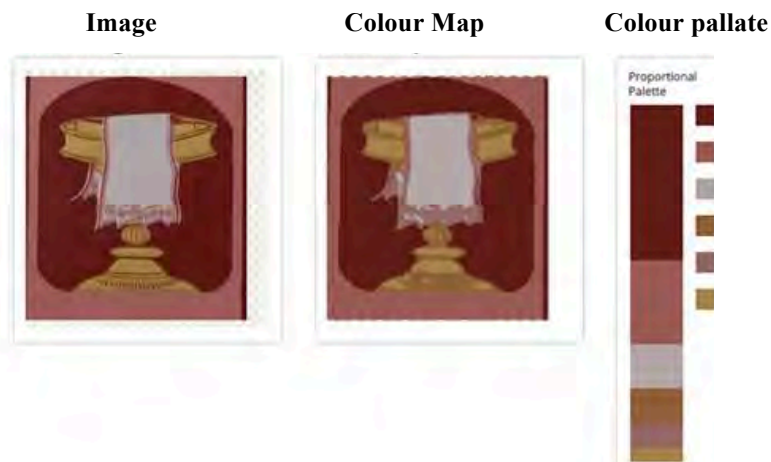


Fig. 4.67: Overview of color palette generation of a *Xorai* with *Bhagvad* (Illustration: Researcher)

Color palette (fig. 4.67) is an essential output of color quantization process. Color palette provides information on the dominant list of colors of any particular image. The color palette has been used effectively by various researchers in field of image processing and designs (Meier et al., 2004; Tsai et al., 2004; Ke et al., 2006; Heer and Stone, 2012). In this study, an open source program (Mediafox Marketing, 2015) “Color palette generator” was adopted for color palette quantification of various design elements of *Naamghar*. This open source program is available online, which is based on “Lloyd’s k-means clustering algorithm (Linde et al., 1980). The proposed algorithm was actually used for pattern recognition (Tou and Gonzalez, 1974). It is a sub-optimal quantization approach which can be additionally applied to image segmentation, color vision and vector quantization (Hu and Lee, 2007). The color palette is generated in two stages using K-means algorithm. The stages involve pixel grouping process and the centroid updating process. Through iterative process involving these two stages, the desired color palette is obtained.

The tool allows generating color palette of the collected visual images of various interior and exterior design elements of *Naamghar*. The procedure for generating color palette is as follows. The high-resolution image of the particular element that needs to be analysed is first selected. Initial editing is carried out on the image to remove any unwanted background color or elements that appear in the image. The edited image containing that particular element is then imported in the program for generating color palette. The color palette generated from this program contains actual image, color palette image as well as list of dominant colors along with their proportion (in %). The adopted process is similar to the one adopted by Delon et al. (2005) and Chang et al. (2015).

Fig. 4.68 shows the sample image along with colored palette and list of colors in proportion obtained for element “Xorai with Bhagvad” Avatar from a particular Naamghar. As seen from the figure, the color palette obtained contains different forms of Red oxide, Au chio, copper rose, Mckenzie and muddy waters with their proportions as 44%, 24% 13% 8% 7% and 4% respectively. This suggests that the most dominant color in this element is red oxide while least is muddy waters. The color palette obtained hence can be useful to provide comparative study on changes in design of various elements across space (urban, semi-urban and rural) and time (age of establishment).

b) Image analysis using Image J

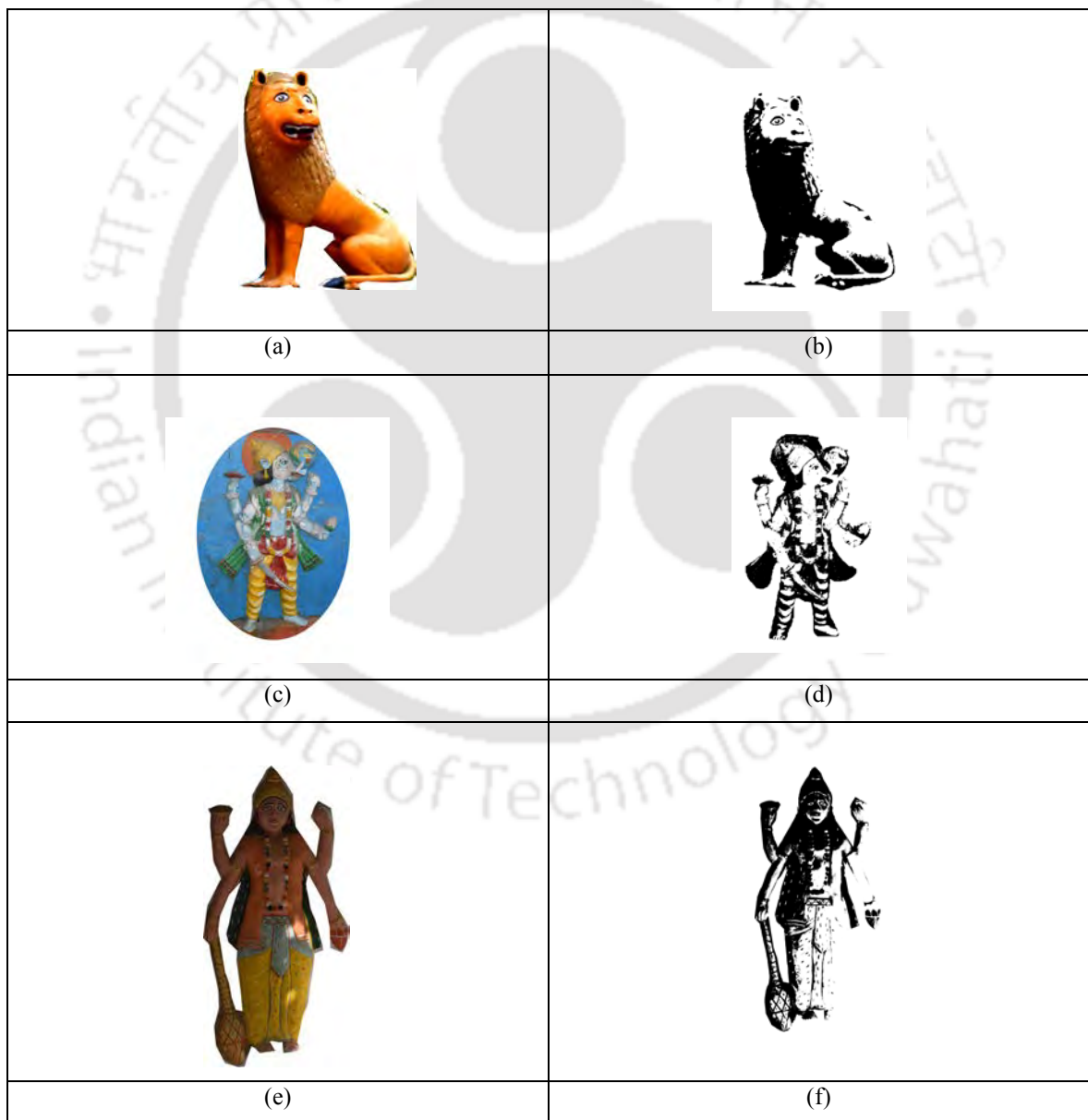


Fig. 4.68: Image analysis using Image J. Overview of (a) Color image of *Narsimha* and (b) Binary image of *Narsimha* for calculation of area. Similarly, overview of color images of (c) *Varah* (one of *dashavatara*) ;(e) *Vishnu* and their respective binary images is shown in (d) and (f) (Illustration: Researcher)

c) Study of Colour palette variation

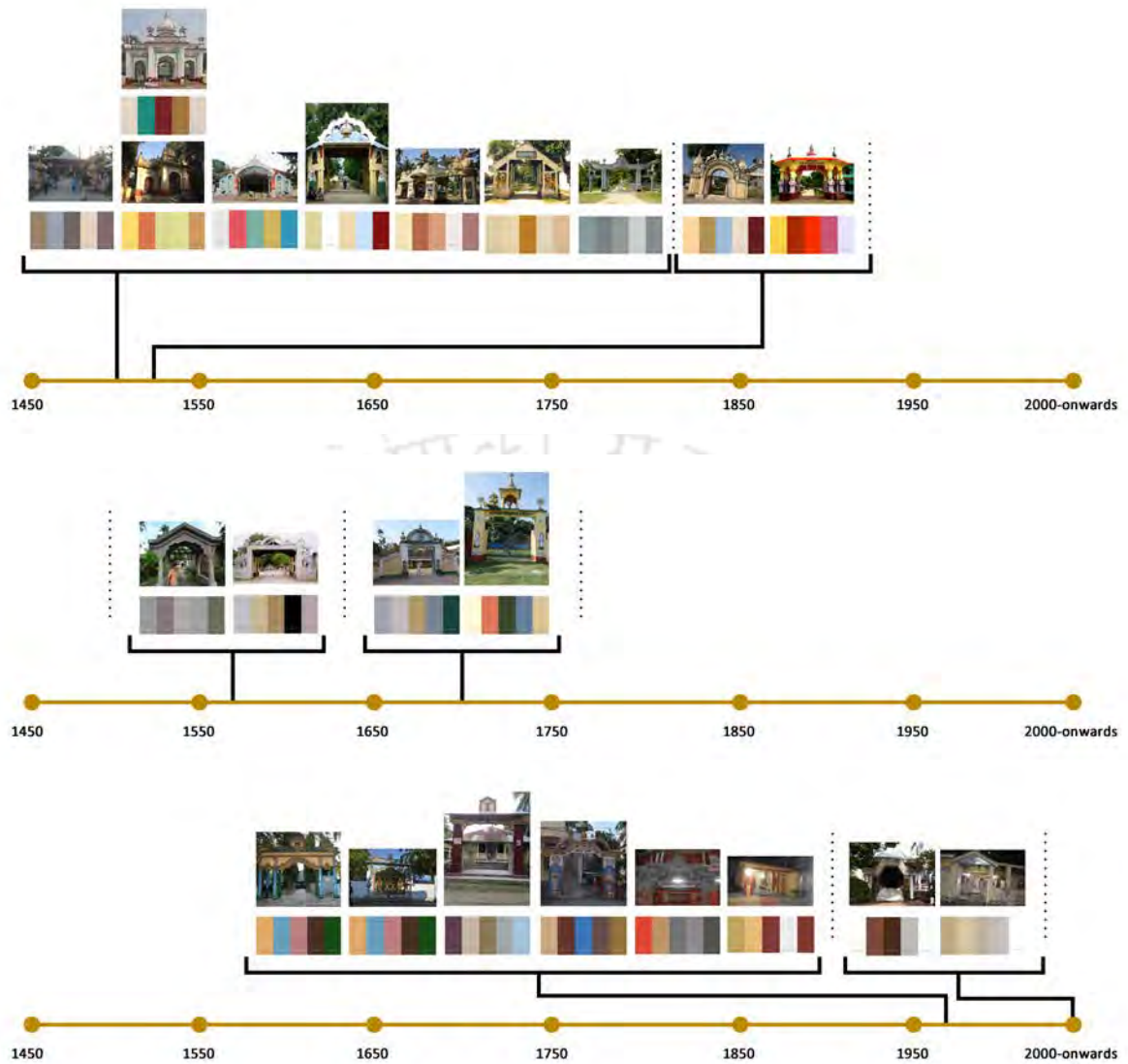
i. Main Gate *Naamghar*:

Main gate has been analyzed in terms of its modification in the colour used into it. Visual documentation is been done and further color analysis of each and every main gate has been done for 26 *Naamghars* with an online colour analysis tool (called colours). One can see in Fig. 4.69 (a) and (b) the depiction of variations in colours like granite grey, old lavender etc. on the main gate colour palette of *Barpetta Satra*.

Naamghar has been chosen from 14th to 20th century and when its been compared it has been found that modification in the use of colour has happened. *Naamghars* between 14th and 15th century [Fig. 4.69 (b)] has more of grey pallet moving towards bright use of colours whereas, in the 16th century the use of colour is been transformed into subdue grey tone and in coming of the 19th century use of dark colours is been encouraged and in 20th century its again went into the use of flat tones of grey and the choice of colours has become flat and in single tone. One can see it in image below the modification happened in the colours. This analysis will help the designers to plan the use of colour in upcoming *Naamghars* and also use of red, blue and golden is been extensively used in *Naamghars* because of its association with *Vishnu* like use of red colour is coming from *Nirmali* flower, which is associated with *Shankardeva*. Use of blue colour in *Naamghar* has been done because it has been associated with *Vishnu* and *Krishna*. Shades of golden have been used because of the brass metal (here *Xorai*) object associated with *Vaishnavite* tradition of Assam.



(a) Colour palette of *Barpetta Satra* Main gate



(b) Timeline of Main gate in different *Naamghars* of Assam

Fig. 4.69: Century wise colour palette of Main gate of various *Naamghar* and *Satra* (a) Colour palette of *Barpeta Satra* Main gate; (b) Timeline of Main gate in different *Naamghars* of Assam

(Illustration: Researcher)

ii. Study of Colour palette variation in Outer structure of *Naamghar*

Similarly the colour palette of Outer structure of *Naamghar* (Fig. 4.70) has been created from 1450 till 2000 years. One can see the variations in terms of colours from the tone of sepia greens between 14th and 15th century and then totally moving towards dark colours between 16th to 17th century and between 18th to 19th century the colour palette moved towards dark shades of green colours. Further in 19th century onwards the tone of colour palette moved towards dark grey and brown colours.

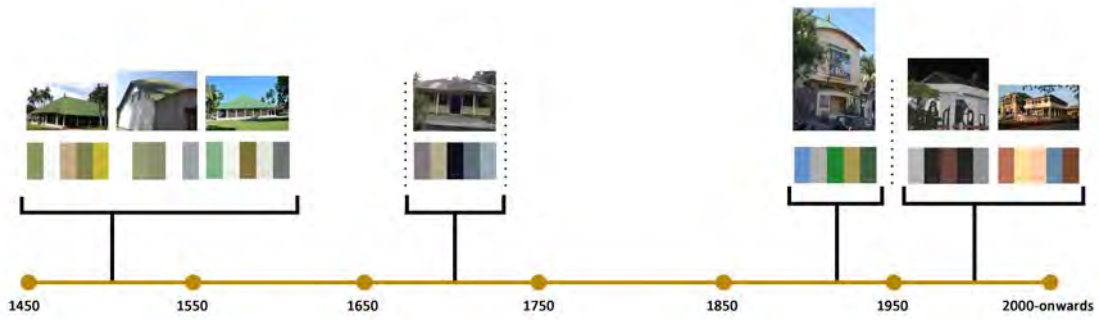


Fig. 4.70: Century wise colour palettes of outer side of *Naamghar* and *Satra*

iii. Study of Colour palette variation in Main door of *Naamghar*

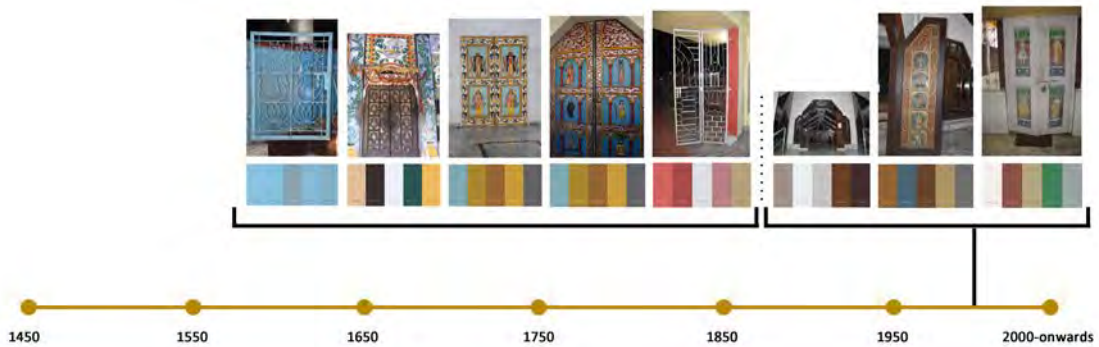
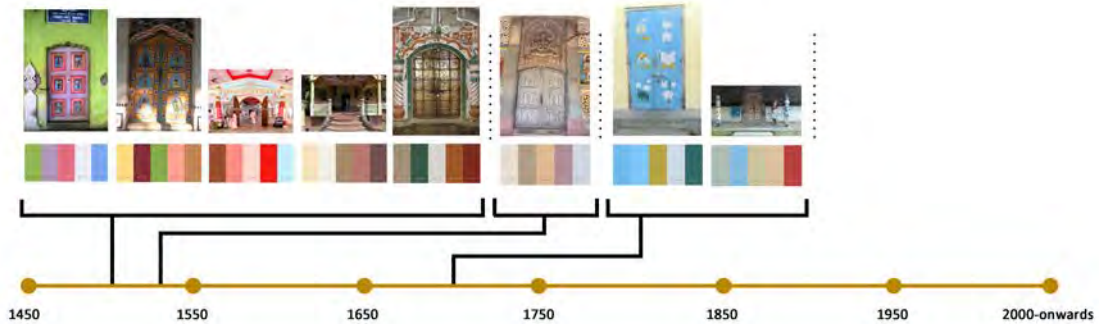


Fig. 4.71: Century wise colour palette of main gate of *Naamghar* and *Satra* (Illustration: Researcher)

iv. Study of Colour palette variation in *Manikut* of *Naamghar*

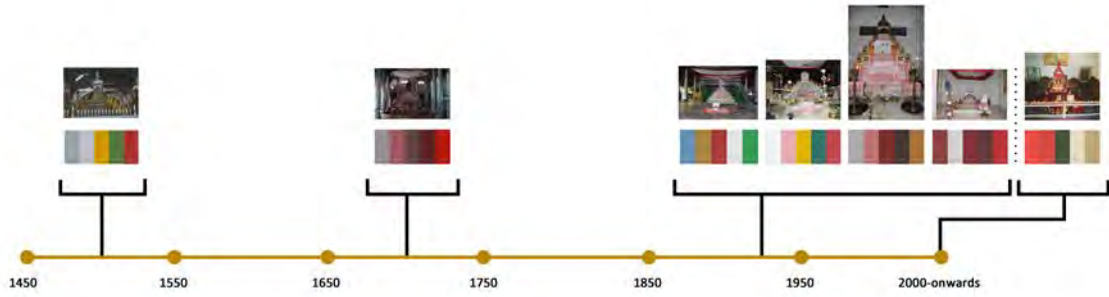


Fig. 4.72: Century wise colour palette of *Manikut* of *Naamghar* and *Satra* (Illustration: Researcher)

v. Study of Colour palette variation in Pillars of Naamghar



Fig. 4.73: Century wise colour palette of pillars of *Naamghar* and *Satra* (Illustration: Researcher)

vi. Colour analysis of Wall narratives of Naamghar

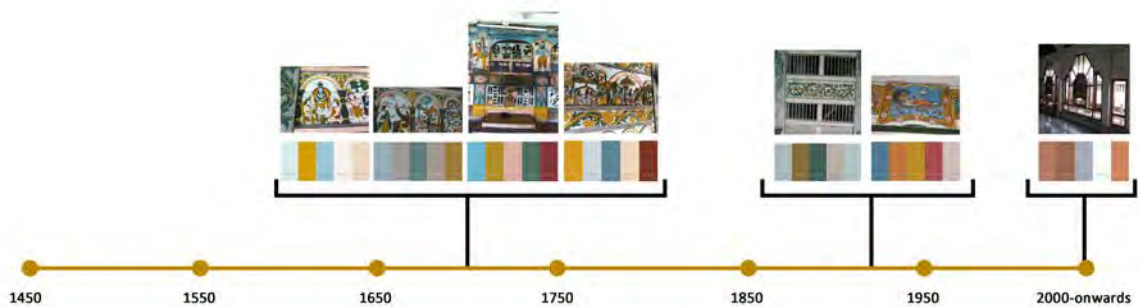


Fig. 4.74: Century wise colour palette of wall narratives of *Naamghar* and *Satra* (Illustration: Researcher)

4.6.5 Material identification

The researcher has also collected data regarding the material used in different *Naamghars*. Material plays a very important role in making of the *Naamghar* and it has been tracked in 26 *Naamghar* of Assam. One of the purposes has been to see the changes in the use of material over time as also habitation. As the researcher has divided the *Naamghars* in three categories which is rural, semi urban and urban on the basis of population, condition of houses around the *Naamghar* (mud houses, concrete, fully furnished etc.) and location (village, city etc.). The data has also been tracked over the period of time of construction. It has been seen that one of the major reason for modification has been because of modernization, availability of suitable material and other accessibility decisions. In the material identification matrix given below different *Naamghars* have been represented as N1, N2, N3 etc. The matrix is having the details of material used in floor, wall, structure, roof, door, window etc. The detail list has been mentioned in the Appendix III.

List of materials used in *Satra/Naamghar*

Code	Rural/Semi-Urban/Urban	Mud	Concrete	Marble	Wood	Tin/Aluminum	Metal/Brass	Other
SU1	Semi Urban		✓		✓			
R2	Rural		✓		✓			
R3	Rural				✓			
R4	Rural				✓			
SU5	Semi-Urban				✓			
R6	Rural				✓			
R7	Rural				✓			
R8	Rural				✓			
SU9	Semi-Urban		✓		✓			
SU10	Semi Urban				✓			
R11	Rural				✓			
SU12	Rural				✓			
R13	Rural				✓			
R14	Rural				✓			
R15	Rural				✓		✓	✓
SU16	Semi Urban				✓			
SU17	Urban					✓	✓	

R18	Rural						✓	
SU19	Semi Urban		✓		✓		✓	✓ (Plastic)
U20	Urban		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓ (glass)
U21	Rural				✓		✓	
U22	Urban				✓			
U23	Urban				✓			
U24	Urban		✓		✓	✓		
U25	Urban		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓ (glass)
SU26	Semi Urban				✓			

Table 4.2: Matrix detailing out the material used in *Naamghars* of Assam

As is obvious from the above table the material used in majority of the *Naamghars* selected for study is wood. Use of glass, tin and aluminium has also been made but only in urban *Naamghars*. Interestingly the metal has been used in all the settlements of *Naamghars*.

4.6.6 Summary of Design elements

On the basis of related literature study as also visits to the various *Naamghars*, use of questionnaire and interviews, the data was extracted to bring out the relation of various elements of the tradition of *Naamghar* as also varied design elements. An attempt was made to identify the variation on the basis of community surrounding *Naamghar* as also the time of its establishment. Detailed study and analysis of design elements was also made to arrive at variation and changes in the similar dimensions. The data has been presented in a way to unfold the complex relations as mentioned earlier.

The researcher has conducted focus group interviews, analysis and observations carried out on 26 *Naamghars* with 246 respondents (sample size) from four categories 1) Internal people, 2) External people, 3) Policy makers and architects, 4) Craftsmen and

local shop people. The selected samples were compared to understand the degree of modification.

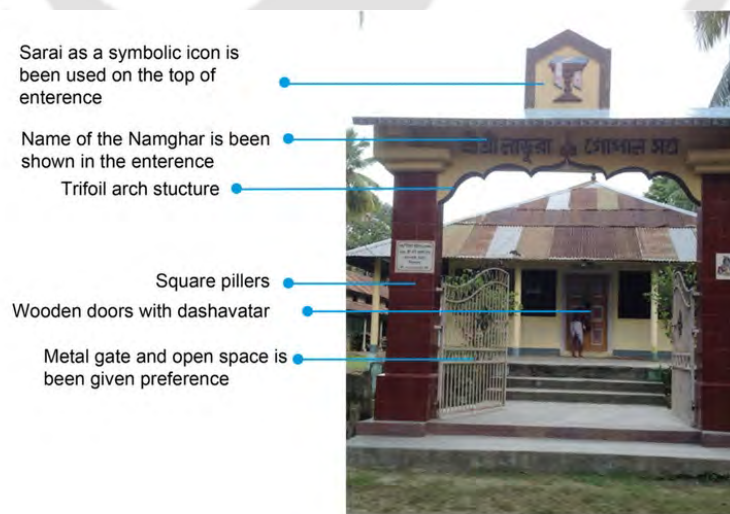
Data collection with regard to extracting the colour palette from various pictorial documented data has been done and it has been found that there were neutral use of colours used in the rural areas and bright use of colour has been done in Semi-Urban areas and again in Urban areas there is a use of flat dark colours.

Naamghar has a passive design and while designing it, climatic considerations were taken care of. There was an attempt to control comfort (heating and cooling) without consuming fuels has been thought about. To reduce the heat gain and heat loss orientation of the building has been taken care in *Naamghar*. There is a use of shape in the building (plan, section) to control airflow. There is a use of thatch and organic materials to control the heat inside the *Naamghars*. There is free space for ventilation for cooling inside the *Naamghar*.

4.7 Comparative study on design elements of *Naamghars* in Urban, Rural and Semi-Urban region using visual approach

In this section, high resolution captured images were collected. Results are categorized into outer and inner architectural design elements were done.

4.7.1 Comparison of exterior design elements



(a)

- As the craftsmen are muslim so the muslim influence is coming in design
- One can see ornamentation of design elements in the gate in outer and inner forms
- Design elements in pillars is visible but the basic form is kept round.
- Open space is been kept around the walls



(b)

- New construction of design in front entry is like mandir and basic shape of the entry gate has been simplified.
- Wooden doors with dashavatara relief
- Singha in the entry is the only statue from which one can identify Namghars identity.
- Decoration on pillars is been totally vanished and its been made very simplistic also its round no-taper pillars.
- Marble, concrete and steel is been used in new construction



(c)

Fig 4.75: Comparison of Outer Gate of *Naamghar* in (a) *Sarbogh Naamghar Garakhia Gosain Than*, 100 years (Rural) (b) *Ramdiyar Naamghar*, 75 years (Semi-urban) and (c) *Zoo Road Naamghar*, 18 years (Urban area) (Illustration: Researcher)

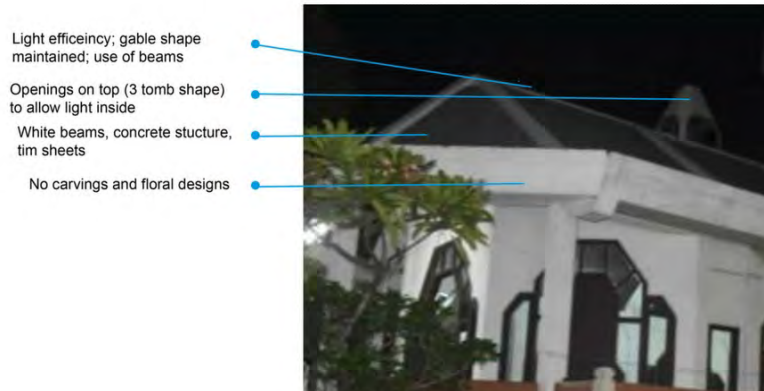
Figure 4.75 shows the comparison of overview of outer main gate of *Naamghars* located in (a) Rural (a) Semi Urban and (c) Urban areas. As seen from the figure, the span for outer gate in rural area is much larger than that of semi-urban and urban area. It is consistent with the notion that there is lack of space for construction due to increase in population in urban areas. Secondly, it can be seen that that arches of outer gate for rural is polylobed, which is normally found in many Hindu architecture (Sohini, 2011). Whereas for semi-urban it is semi-circular. The gate arch is of semi-hexagonal shape with a pediment shape of semi-hexagonal. There is a trend of simplification of arch from rural to urban *Naamghars*. Only one main entrance is there for semi-urban and urban as compared to rural *Naamghars*. In addition, on a close look, one can identify that the walls of outer gate in rural and semi-urban *Naamghars* are adorned with other elements of *Naamghar* (*Xorai*, *Bhakat*) while for urban case, such decorations are missing. Based on interview with locals, it was found that there is tendency for cost cutting in newly formed *Naamghars* in urban areas.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Fig 4.76: Comparison of Outer roof of *Naamghar* in (a) *Sarbogh Naamghar Garakhai Ghai Gosain Than*, 100 years (Rural) (b) *Ramdiyar Naamghar*, 75 years (Semi-urban) and (c) *Zoo Road Naamghar*, 18 years (Urban area) (Illustration: Researcher)

As seen from the Fig. 4.76, the shape of rooftop appears to be similar to that of gable shape in case of *Naamghars* in all three cases. While, there is a difference in material used. For older *Naamghars* in rural and semi-urban areas tin sheet is used while for urban *Naamghar*, concrete is used. The entire rooftop is enclosed with no passage of light for

rural and semi-urban *Naamghars*, while for urban *Naamghar*, there are three openings made to allow light to pass. It implies that there is a special attention paid to increase light efficiency in case of urban *Naamghars*. Three openings have dome with shape of *Guru Asana* in case of urban *Naamghars*. This also indicates the need to showcase and maintain identities of *Naamghar* in urban densely located area, where there are numerous temples are located nearby.

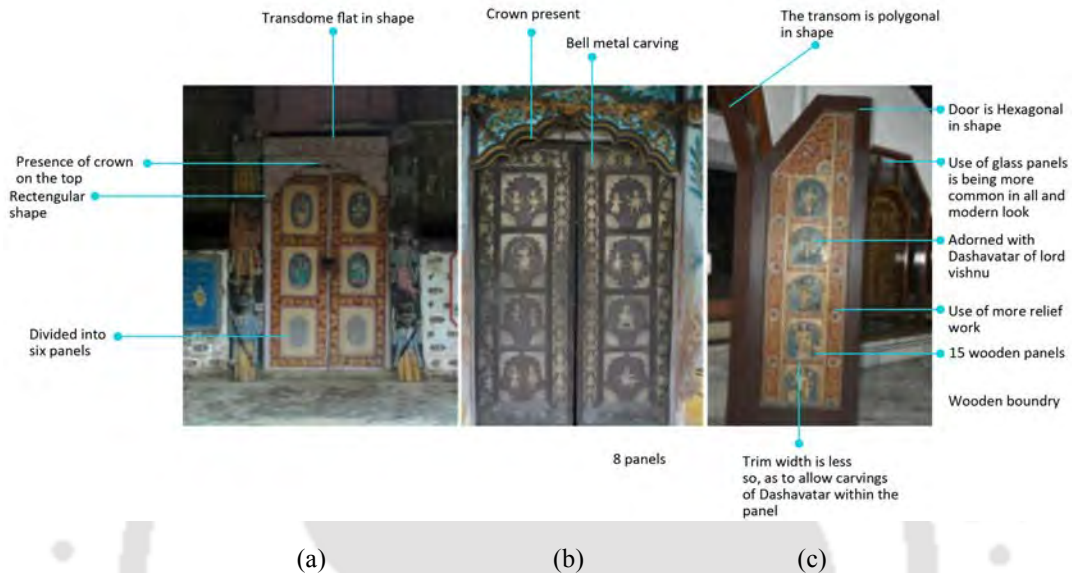


Fig 4.77: Comparison of Main Door of *Naamghar* in (a) *Sarbogh Naamghar Garakhia Gosain Than*, 100 years (Rural) (b) *Ramdiyar Naamghar*, 75 years (Semi-urban) and (c) *Zoo Road Naamghar*, 18 years (Urban area) (Illustration: Researcher)

Figure 4.77 shows the comparison of overview of main door of *Naamghars* located in (a) Rural, (b) Semi-Urban and (c) Urban areas. The significance of main door lies in the fact that it is the first architectural element, where *Vaishnava sect* is depicted for *bhakats* to visualize. As seen from the figure, the main door in case of rural and semi-urban are similar in shape (rectangular) with a presence of crown at the top. The transom is flat in shape. The door in rural area is divided into 6 panels while in semi-urban area into 8 panels. These doors are adorned with paintings of *dashavatar* of Lord *Vishnu*, which is integral part of *Vaishnava sect* (Vardhpande, 2009).

Whereas for the urban door is hexagonal in shape and transom is polygonal in shape. It has fifteen wooden panels (on which decorations of dashavatar is done; not shown here) and fourteen glass panels around the boundary of wooden door. The glass panels are placed as to instead of crown to provide a modern look to the crown (which was mainly wooden or metal in case of rural and semi-urban *Naamghars*). This shows that

despite lack of space, the dashavatar form is preserved while there is change in illustration (use of more relief work than painting). In addition, the use of glass panels is becoming more common for aesthetic and modern look.

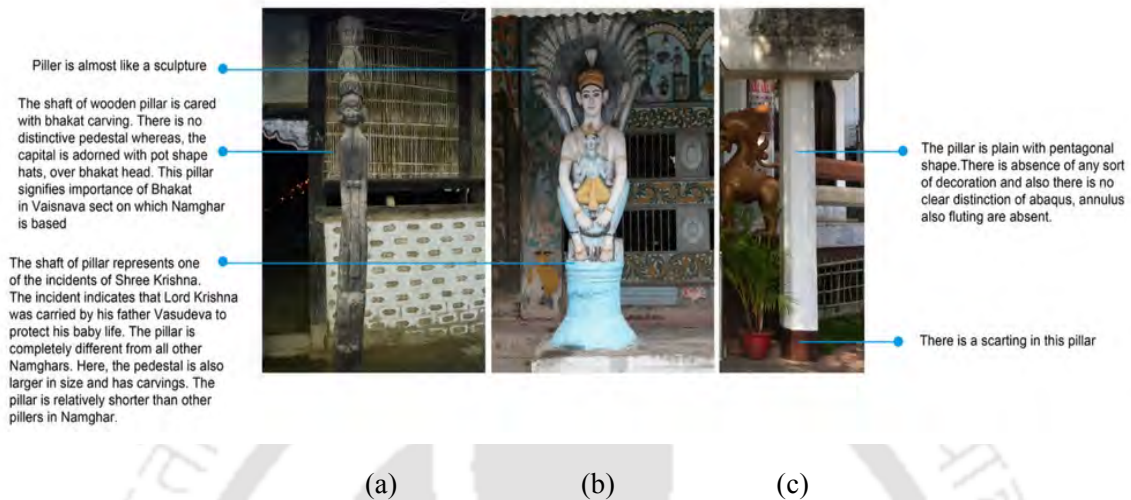


Fig 4.78: Comparison of Pillars of *Naamghar* in (a) *Sarbogh Naamghar Garakhia Gosain Than*, 100 years (Rural) (b) *Ramdiyar Naamghar*, 75 years (Semi-urban) and (c) *Zoo Road Naamghar*, 18 years (Urban area) (Illustration: Researcher)

Figure 4.78 shows the comparison of overview in pillars of *Naamghars* located in (a) Rural, (b) Semi-urban and (c) Urban areas (c). The pillars also form the important element of *Naamghar* as introduced by Neog (1998). It can be clearly seen from figure 4.77 that the pillars in case of rural and semi-urban *Naamghars* are more adorned with *Vaishnava* elements (*Bhakat* [Fig. 4.78(a)] and incident of Lord *Krishna* with father *Vasudeva* [Fig. 4.78(b)] than that of contrastingly plain pillar in case of *Naamghar* in Urban area [Fig. 4.78(c)]

For pillar in rural *Naamghar*, there is no distinctive pedestal whereas; the capital is adorned with pot shape hat, over *Bhakat* head. This pillar signified importance of *Bhakat* in *Vaishnava sect*, on which *Naamghar* is based. Whereas; in case of semi-urban *Naamghar*, the shaft of pillar represents one of the incidents of Lord *Krishna*. The incident indicates that his father *Vasudeva* to protect him carried Lord *Krishna*. The pillar is completely different from all other *Naamghars*. Here, the pedestal is also larger in size and has carvings. The pillar is relatively shorter than other pillars in *Naamghar*. In contrast, the pillar in *Naamghar* located in urban area is plain with pentagonal shape. There is absence of any sort of decoration and also, there is no clear distinction of abacus, annulus

and also fluting are absent. This shows that with time and space, there is loss of decorations and representations of *Vaishnava sect* on architectural elements. This might be due to lack of funds and also lack of preservation of associated elements or due to skill person to execute the carvings.



Fig 4.79: Comparison of windows of *Naamghar* in (a) *Sarbogh Naamghar Garakhia Gosain Than*, 100 years (Rural) (b) *Ramdiyar Naamghar*, 75 years (Semi-urban) and (c) *Zoo Road Naamghar*, 18 years (Urban area) (Illustration: Researcher)

Figure 4.79 shows the comparison of windows in *Naamghars* located in (a) Rural, (b) Semi-Urban and (c) Urban areas. These windows are important architectural element and is not only meant for light passage but also carry significance in terms of watching *Kirtan (Naam)* from outside especially by women. It can be clearly seen from Fig. 4.79 that the windows in case of rural was porous and was made of thatch. There are vertical gaps between thin elements of thatch to allow outsiders to visualize *Kirtan* inside. In addition, there is a gap left between the top portion of window and lower portion for light passage as well as ventilation. Whereas in case of semi-urban areas, the windows are made of wood and again divided into top and bottom portion using a trim and metal rods. The trim is adorned with floral design mainly depicting lotus (associated with Lord *Vishnu* of *Vaishnava sect*). The metal grills are provided in vertical alignment for security reason and also for ventilation. This may be also because with modern times, the threat of theft has increased.

When compared to that of urban *Naamghar* [Fig.. 4.79 (c)], the windows are modern with glass panels. The shape is also hexagonal with trims dividing it into seven parts. In the center of window, there is wooden panel where decorations of elements of

Vaishnava sect are done. This outlook of window in modern *Naamghar* is meant to suit the younger and new generation audience. Windows size also appears to be bigger than rural and semi-urban *Naamghar* to allow more passage of lights. This shows that with time and space, there is a special focus being put to modernize material and also attention to make it more energy efficient.



Fig 4.80: Comparison of outer wall of *Naamghar* in (a) *Sarbogh Naamghar Garakhia Gosain Than*, 100 years (Rural) (b) *Ramdiyar Naamghar* and 75 years (Semi-urban) (Illustration: Researcher)

For urban *Naamghar*, there was almost no relief work on outer walls; hence it is not shown here. For rural and semi-urban *Naamghars*, the decorations on outer wall are shown in figure 4.80 (a) and (b) respectively. As seen from figure 4.80 (a), the illustration in rural *Naamghar* is of “*Xorai*” with “*Bhagvad* (holy book)”. This is one of the most important elements of *Vaishnava sect* also promoted by Saint Sankradeva (Neog, 1998). As per *Vaishnava sect*, there is no worshipping of idol (as done in other *Hindu* temples) in case of *Naamghars*. The colors use to depict holy book is green (importance to Lord *Krishna*) and that of *Xorai* is brown. The entire illustration is enclosed in a rectangle and a text is written in local (Assamese) language signifying the holy book. There is a presence of floral design (lotus petals) above the holy book painting. This floral design is also associated with *dashavatar* of Lord *Vishnu* (integral element of *Vaishnava sect*). The only equilateral of idol is the holy book “*Bhagvad*”, which is writing of stories of Lord *Krishna*. Whereas, for the semi-urban *Naamghar*, instead of showcasing holy book, the incidents mentioned in it are showcased through relief work. The incidents of Lord *Krishna* in *Mahabharata* are shown in outer walls of semi-urban *Naamghar*. The illustrations in both

rural and semi-urban *Naamghars* are significant as people (especially women and children) can visualize the *Krishna* lila that is going to take place inside *Naamghar* in form of *Kirtan*. The women were prohibited in some *Naamghars* in earlier times. The background color is blue (depicting sea in *Mahabharata*) with presence of other elements associate with *dashavatar* of Lord *Vishnu* of *Vaishnava* sect. The absence of these illustrations on outer wall in case of urban *Naamghar* might be because of cost cutting and it can be also due to lesser need to visually present *Mahabharata*, whose material in visual forms are highly accessible now in form of digital and print media already to public in modern era.

4.7.2 Comparison of interior design elements



Fig 4.81: Comparison of Prayer hall of *Naamghar* in (a) *Sarbogh Naamghar Garakhai Ghai Gosain Than*, 100 years (Rural) (b) *Ramdiyar Naamghar*, 75 years (Semi-urban) and (c) *Zoo Road Naamghar*, 18 years (Urban area) (Illustration: Researcher)

Figure 4.81 shows the comparison of overview of prayer hall in *Naamghars* located in (a) Rural, (b) Semi-urban (c) Urban areas. As seen from the figure, the prayer hall in case of rural and semi urban *Naamghars* is mostly made of mud floor. In both *Naamghars* [Fig. 7.80 (a) and (b)], series of pillars run parallel along the length of hall. *Manikut* is kept in the center and back end of Prayer hall of both *Naamghars*. This *Manikut* is meant to place idol (*Bhagvad*) to be worshipped. The pillar at North East closes to *Manikut* attaches importance and is generally known as “*Lai Khutta*”. The term “*Lai Khutta*” originates from Ahom kingdom (Gogoi, 2016). Also, one can observe, the presence of canopy (*Chandrataap*) over *Manikut*. The *chandrataap* signifies the respect for idol to be worshipped. The ceiling in case of rural and semi-urban *Naamghar* is mainly of corrugated galvanized tin sheet without any provision for passage of light.

As compared to prayer hall of urban *Naamghar*, the floor is made of marble. Unlike rural and semi-urban, there is no presence of pillars. Large section of outer wall is built with windows of glass panels, which were completely absent in rural and semi-urban *Naamghars*. This indicates that there is lot of attention being paid to make inner hall light efficient. There is special pathway made (red color marble) for emphasizing the sitting arrangement of *Bhakats* while doing *Naam (Kirtan)* in Urban *Naamghar*. This was missing in case of rural and semi-urban *Naamghar* [Fig. 4.81 (a) and (b)]. The ceiling is made of polished wooden with white color wooden beams for lateral support. There is a small opening present at the ceiling to allow further light passage. The *Manikut* unlike in rural and semi-urban *Naamghar* is kept inside another room towards the end of prayer hall. The room is generally known as “*Jewel hut*”. Due to security reasons, the *Manikut* is enclosed inside a door made of steel. This is different from that of rural and semi-urban *Naamghars*, where *Manikut* was kept in open in prayer hall. This shows that with time and space, there is a special focus being put to modernize material and also attention to make architectural elements more energy efficient and security measures. The importance of pillars seems to be lost in urban *Naamghars* as compared to rural and semi-urban *Naamghars*.

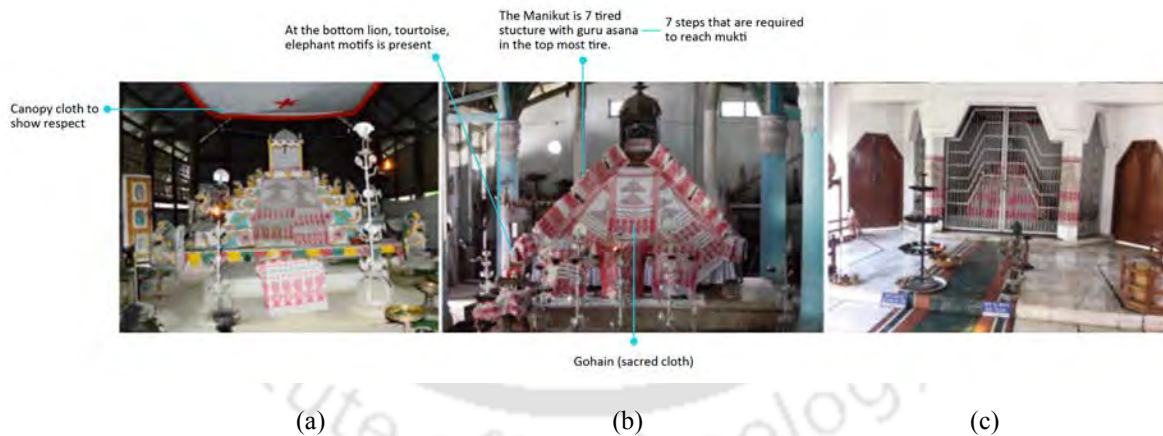


Fig 4.82: Comparison of *Manikut* in *Naamghar* in (a) *Sarbogh Medhabari Naamghar Garakhai Ghai Gosain Than*, 100 years (Rural) (b) *Ramdiyar Naamghar*, 75 years (Semi-urban) and (c) *Zoo Road Naamghar*, 18 years (Urban area) (Illustration: Researcher)

Figure 4.82 shows the comparison of *Manikut* in *Naamghars* located in (a) Rural, (b) Semi-Urban and (c) Urban areas. As seen from the figure, the *Manikut* is present in the prayer hall for rural and semi-urban *Naamghars*, while it is present inside a separate room (secured with grill door) in case of Urban *Naamghar*. The *Manikut* is seven tired structure

with a *Guru Asana* at the top most tier. The seven tier represents seven steps that are required to reach *Mukti* (or God) as per *Hindu mythology* (Chakravati ,1991).

On these seven steps, the motifs of lion is present. At the bottom most tier, the motif of lion over elephant is carved. This indicates the victory of good (lion) over evil (elephant). The overall shape of *Manikut* is pyramidal in all three cases (i.e., rural, semi-urban and urban). The seven tier structure is usually overlaid by *Gohain* (sacred cloth). Here, the *Gohain* is similar to that *Gamosa* of Assamese tradition (Barman and Bhattacharjee, 2016). The canopy *chandratap* (cloth) over *Manikut* is to show respect and honor to idol worship (Bhagvad; holy book) in *Naamghar*.

The overall structure of *Naamghar* is similar in all three *Naamghars*. There is lamp stand present in front of *Manikut* for offering prayers for worshipping. The similar structure of *Manikut* to the extent of preservation and importance is maintained across different locations. As compared to other architectural and design elements such as door, gate, pillars, illustrations on walls and prayer hall, the *Manikut* is much more similar and seems to be preserved even in Urban *Naamghar*. This indicates the essentiality of components associated with *Naamghar*.

4.8 Summary and Conclusion

A visual study was conducted to analyse the variations in design of architectural and design elements such as outer gate, main door pillars, prayer hall and *Manikut* of *Naamghars* (Social-cultural institutions) located in urban, rural and semi-urban areas. It was found from the study that there is a huge variation in terms of relief work and decorations on these architectural and design elements between these three categories of *Naamghars*. The relief work and decorations seems to minimize with urbanization. The shape (design) of outer gate has changed from polylobed (rural) to simpler hexagonal shape (urban). The illustration on outer wall in terms of *Krishna leela* (incidents of Lord *Krishna*) is no longer present in Urban *Naamghar*. This might be due to availability of *Bhagvad* in modern times in various other forms of visual media (Digital, print etc.).

The design of outer main gate, which was adorned with *Vaishnava* elements and floral design work for rural and semi-urban areas, is now almost plain without any significant decorations. Similarly, Pillars which were carved with complex design of *Vaishnava* elements (*Bhakat* or Lord *Krishna*) and also floral work in case of semi-urban and rural *Naamghars* seems to change too much simpler design form (plain round shape)

in case of urban *Naamghars*. The material has changed from less durable to more durable. For example, the mud floor (rural) is changed to marble (urban); the wooden doors to mix wooden/glass doors and thatch roof to tin roof. Prayer hall pillars, which were carved at top portion (capital) and pedestal (bottom) is no longer decorated. In terms of relief work, it has almost vanished on outer walls for urban *Naamghar*. The entire illustration of *Vaishnava sect* elements is now depicted in only main door for urban *Naamghars*.

In urban *Naamghar* as compared to rural *Naamghar* indicates inclination of architectural design towards energy efficient structure. Among all the architectural and design elements, *Manikut* structure and also form shape and color seems to be preserved the most. Overall, there is strong indication of increasing essence of modernization, energy efficiency along with security as compared to relief and decorative work (*Vaishnava sect* elements) in design of architectural elements of *Naamghar* in Urban location.





CHAPTER 5

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1 Overview:

In this Chapter analysis of data collected and its interpretation has been presented. Part of the data collection for the study was done using questionnaire, interview schedule group discussion as also card sorting method. In order to probe social relations group discussions and interaction with members of society attached to *Naamghar* was done. It has been detailed how *Naamghar* emerged as a synthesizing force to bring together different groups of Assam as well as neighboring communities.

Further bringing together various music, dance forms, and skills into the fold of *Vaishnavite* religion. Giving an altogether novel richer cohesive meaning to the social life. This had a long and deeper impact across the state and society. This kind of integration is rare to be seen. Consequently not only various members of society came closer but participated in a richer meaningful way. This has continued over such a long period of time transcending the socio-historical changes.

It will be improper to say that the social changes had no effect on the institution of *Naamghar*. The study has found distinct changes among the *Naamghars* and *Satras* located in Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban settings. The movement of population largely from rural to urban settings had its impact not only in size and construction of the *Naamghars* but major aspects of Design. Partly due to occupation as also lesser non-availability of land for new *Naamghars* in bigger area. As mentioned in data collection, 26 *Naamghars* located at different places were selected for the study. The selection was purposive based on composition of population and location. The *Naamghars* for the study adequately represent Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban settings and also time of establishment from recent to 500 years old located at the different places in the State of Assam.

5.2 Analysis of responses from participants in Interview

The study has a complex issue at hand involving the interrelation of religion here *Naamghar*, its social expression changes in the religious belief as also design elements. The study involves unfolding, the functional as also denotation meaning through appropriate methodology. The research questions have been identified into the following four major categories. Also the study has been designed in a very systematic manner by planning an intensive interview schedule:

A. Preliminary analysis of participants in interview

The variation in age of respondents (*Satradhikari*, *Bhakats* etc.) that were interviewed during field survey of different *Naamghar* has been observed; the age varies from as low as 30 years (*Akasipath Naamghar*) to 85 years (*Srimanta Shankradev Kalakriti Kendra*). It is also worth noting that for minimum and maximum age, the *Naamghar* are located in urban area. However, more than the age their experience (time spent) in that particular *Naamghar* is more important parameter that can influence their views. Out of 26 *Naamghar* selected for the study maximum number of 13 are in the rural setting, 7 and 6 are in semi-urban and urban setting.

An analysis of variation in year of establishment of *Naamghar* shows that the maximum number 9 *Naamghars* are older than 500 years. Only 6 are less than 50 years, 3 these are less than 20 years old. Five of these are 50 to 100 years old. Location wise, a good number 10 are located in Majuli and 4 in Berpeta. Rest of them are located in other parts of state. The experience of priests here *Satradhikar* staying in *Naamghar* varies from one to 50 years. This indicates that younger priests are also taking interests in being associated with the *Naamghar*.

i) Variation of age and experience of respondents from different Naamghar in reference to age of Naamghar

The survey questionnaire was comprehensive in considering views from both fresher's and experienced in terms of *Naamghar*. One such case was respondent of 30 years of age in *Akasipath Naamghar*. He specifically discussed about the concern of reducing importance of *Naamghar* and also role of youth in maintaining it. He also mentioned about future plan in renovating *Naamghar* and also about generation of funds. However, the interpretation with respect to actual age of *Naamghar* would be of high relevance. According to the respondents there is an additional variation in age of *Naamghar*. This shows that for case of *Nizarapar Naamghar* (respondent age is 75 years and experience is 50 years) and also for *Akasipath Naamghar* (respondent age is 76 years and experience is 55) to some extent, the respondents age are more similar to age of *Naamghar* and their experience. This is meaningful for understanding the evolution in design elements of *Naamghar* over period of time.

ii) Gender variation among respondents from different Naamghar

As compared to these two, for case of rural *Naamghar* (i.e., *Sarbhog Naamghar*) and also urban (*Sarbajanin Naamghar*), the contrast is much higher. The comparative

variation in age and experience are important to interpret the results from the interview. When comparing gender variation among respondents, it was found that the committee was highly dominated by males around 89% as compared to females, which is just 11%. However, this was different for one particular *Naamghar* (*Akasipath Naamghar*), where it was found from interview that the committee is formed entirely of women. Also, very interestingly; it was also found from the interview that most of the visitors (members) are now women especially in urban *Naamghars* (*Srimanta Kala Kriti Kendra* and *Nizarapar Naamghar*) as compared to mixed in case of rural *Naamghar*. This may be because with changing lifestyle, men in urban areas are mostly busy with earning household income or do service jobs somewhere else. In that case, women participation appears to increase tremendously in urban *Naamghar*. Therefore, an integrated approach including interview and questionnaire is required for better understanding of functions in *Naamghar*.

B. Physical structure (Design)

i) Comparison of total area of *Naamghar* as well as decision makers (committee) with age of different *Naamghar*.

The study of variation of total area of *Naamghar* and also decision makers to corresponding *Naamghars* with year of establishment. It was found that with increase in historical establishment, time, the total area of *Naamghar* as well as its corresponding decision maker decreases. The area is reduced from total 324 m² to around 150 m² over period of 500 years. This is also consistent with the trend of urbanization, where space is reducing. At the same time, the decision makers seem to change from 90 to almost 4 people in a committee. This shows that with time and also space (urban and rural), the decision makers has been reduced sharply. This is because one of the fundamental aspects of *Naamghar* in village (rural) was to hold meetings and take important decisions related to village. However, with increasing urbanization trend in space, living style and income, the concept of social meetings have been reduced. The *Naamghar*, which once used to be called Mini Parliament by Mahatma Gandhi appears to significantly lose its uniqueness of being social gathering institution for binding people of different tribes together.

ii) Comparison of variation of area of gate and area of *Manikut* with time between different *Naamghars*. (Variation of total area of *Naamghar* with time is shown as reference).

Exploring the variation of total area of *Naamghar* and also decision makers to corresponding *Naamghar* with year of establishment. It can be observed that area for gate appears to decrease but at a much smaller rate than that of total area of *Naamghar*. Here, it's worth noting that the area for gate refers to the main entrance of the gate.

To clearly understand this, it can be seen from the images captured from field based visual survey below [Fig. 5.1 (a) and (b)] that the entrance in older *Naamghar* [Fig. 5.1 (a)] are multiple instead of single main entrance at the front for *Naamghar* as located in recently constructed *Naamghar* [Fig. 5.1 (b) and (c)]. The possible reason for such difference as found from interviews was (1) lack of sufficient space and (2) lack of sufficient funding. The gate for recently constructed *Naamghar* in urban are usually plain and simple as compared to those with older *Naamghar*, which are adorned with characters from *Vaishnava sect* (*Bhakats, Xorai, Narsimha*) etc. with jali work on grilled gates.

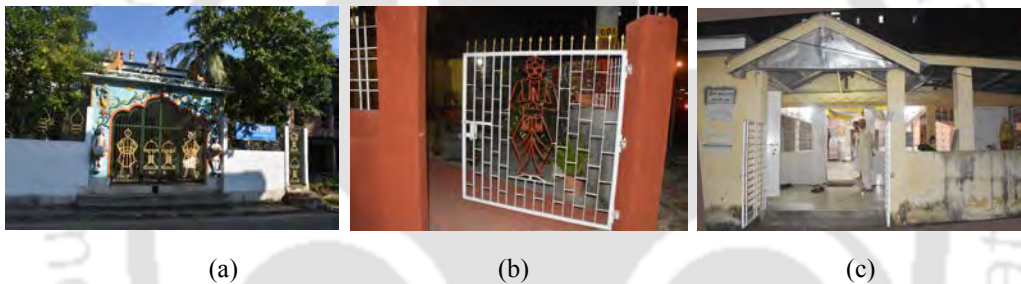


Fig. 5.1: Outer gate of Naamghar in (a) Nizarapar Naamghar (urban; 55 years old) (b) Naamghar path (urban; 20 years old) and (c) Akasipath Naamghar (urban; 30 years old)

iii) Overview of Manikut (i) Nizarapar Naamghar (urban-55 years old), (ii) Naamghar path (urban-20 years old) and (iii) Akashipath Naamghar (Urban-30 years old)

On the other hand, when volume occupied by *Manikut* is compared, it was found that the size of *Manikut* is also appeared to decrease at a faster rate as compared to the rural *Naamghar*.



Fig. 5.2: Overview of Manikut a) Nizarapar (urban; 55 years old) (b) Naamghar path (urban; 20 years old) and (c) Akasipath Naamghar (urban; 30 years old)

To clearly understand this, images captured from field visual survey is shown [Fig. 5.2 (a), (b) and (c)]. It can be inferred from figures that for older *Naamghar* [Fig. 5.2 (a)], the *Manikut* size is much higher (7-tier) and also adorned with more relief work, whereas for *Manikut* in (b) and (c) the size (3-tier) appears to reduce drastically. The size of *Manikut* for (b) is smaller than that of (c) and also indicated in Fig. 5.2. The reduction in size of *Manikut* also could be due to lack of space, funding and also lack of people and also due to increasing trend of keeping miniature versions of *Manikut* [5.2 (b)] at different places. The above findings are consistent to the overall decreasing size and scale of *Naamghar* and other elements.

iv) Variation of Area of prayer hall and area of *Manikut* (*Manikut* area/total area of prayer hall) with year of establishment

When the variation in area of hall and also corresponding *Manikut* area with year of establishment of *Naamghar* is been compared. The hall size for offering prayers varies from around 80 m² to 50 m². Unlike in case of total area of *Naamghar*, there is no clear definitive trend with year of establishment. However, there is an overall size reduction *Manikut* in prayer hall. As compared to this, the area varies from as low as 7.7% to 20% of the size of prayer hall. This percentage is also appearing to reduce overall with time. This seems to suggest that due to smaller or miniature versions of *Manikut* available in market it is now being more frequently used.



Fig. 5.3: Square plain pillar at Akasipath Naamghar

v) Variation of Area of prayer hall and Normalized area of *Manikut* (*Manikut* area/total area of prayer hall) with year of establishment as compared with the size of the pillar.

For understanding the size of pillar, the area of pillar was also normalized with that of size of prayer hall. As observed from figure 5.3, the normalized pillar area (%) is found to lie close to that of normalized *Manikut* area. It is found to generally reduce with time and for latest two *Naamghars* pillars were found to vanish. This is a clear shift towards modern architect, where there is a tendency to maximize space by eliminating pillars from the hall. The pillar (*Lai Khuta*), which once carried significance is no longer present in recent *Naamghars*. Also, the pillars are found to be plain and simple without any decorative relief work or carving in *Naamghars* of recent times and urban location. Fig. 5.3 showing square shaped pillar at *Akasipath Naamghar* (urban) indicate the same.

The reasons for not having pillar are that there is loss of significance of *Lai Khuta*. As compared to rural *Naamghars*, urban *Naamghars* do not consider the importance of *Lai Khuta* pillar. Also pillars do not have any importance in urban *Naamghar*. This may be due to the restriction in structural design of *Naamghar* and the building does not require the pillars due to material & construction technology.

Table 5.1: Data analysis of area of the Pillars of Naamghar

Code	Naamghar/ Satra	Year of Establi shment	No. of pillar	Shape of Pillars	Pillar material	Size Height and thickness	Form (plane, carving, god, goddesses, figures)	% of carving
SU1	Dhekiakhowa Bor Naamghar Majuli	639	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving	40%
R2	Berpeta Satra Naamghar	600	20	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving including arches	50%
R3	Auniati Satra, Majuli	600	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving of lotus petals	20%
R10	Batadrawa Satra, Majuli	600	12	Cylindrical	Wood+ Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving	20%
SU5	Dakshinapat Satra, Eastern Assam, Majuli	600	12	Cylindrical	Wood+ Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving	30%
R6	Kamlabari Satra, Majuli	600	12	Cylindrical	Wood+ Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving	30%
R7	Patbaushi Satra, Berpeta, Assam	549	12	Cylindrical	Wood +concrete	4.0 m	Vishnu and Bhakat carving	80%
R8	Bordoa Satra, Kamargaon	519	12	Cylindrical	Wood +concrete	4.0 m	Vishnu and Bhakat carving	80%
SU9	Sundridaya Satra	500	12	Cylindrical	Wood+ Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving	30%
SU10	Sri Athkhelia Naamghar Majuli	500	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving	30%
R11	Samaguri Satra Majuli	437	06	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving	30%
SU12	Khatara Satra, Darrang, Assam	446	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thin pillar	carving	10%

NR13	Garumur Satra, Majuli	440	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving	30%
R14	Chakrashila Naamghar, Deshmukh village	400	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving	20%
R15	Bangshi gopal, Hajo Pakhmela Naamghar	300	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving of Vishnu and others	80%
R16	Borbheti Than, Jorhat	239	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	Thick pillar	Carving of Vishnu and others	30%
SU17	Auniti Satra, North Guwahati	102	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	4.0 m	Lotus carved	
R18	Sarboogh Medhibara Gorokhia Ghai Naamghar	100	12	Cylindrical	Concrete	3.8 m	Plane	105 wooden + 10 jali, metal doors
R19	Hati Ramdiyar Naamghar, Sualkuchi Naamghar	75	12	Cylindrical	Wood +concrete	4.0 m	Vishnu and Bhakat carving	80%
U20	Srimanta Shankardev kala kriti Kendra (Near Big Bazaar)	48	Inner piller- 0 Outer :9	Cubic	Concrete	2.2 m	Plane	No carving
U21	Nizarpar Naamghar, chandmari	55	4	Diagonal	Concrete	3.2 m	Plane	No carving
U22	Sarbojanin Naamghar	44	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
U23	Dehing Satra, Guwahati	38	2	Cylindrical	Concrete	2.2 m	Plane	No carving
U24	Naamghar path	20	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
U25	Zoo road Naamghar	18	Inside :0 Outsi de:2	Cylindrical	Concrete	3.2 m	Plane	No carving

SU26	Akasi Path Naamghar	16	2	Cubic	Concrete	2.2 m	Plane	No carving
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C. Religious organization

During the interview researcher has found that every *Naamghar* has been associated with a particular older *Satra*. The elder person from the community has been chosen to become the part of the committee for taking decisions related to *Naamghar* and *Satra*.

1450-1550: When the data of the pillar was compared from field visit and respondents feedback. It has been found that out of 26 *Naamghar* 7 of the *Naamghar* made between 1450-1550 has cylindrical pillars. 3 of them are made up of concrete and in 4 of them are combination of wood (carved pillars) and concrete is been used. In 6 of the pillars have ornamental, lotus and figurative carvings were used. Out of 6 *Naamghar* pillar 1 of the pillar has 50% carving and in another 1 has 40% to 30 % carving. In 4 of the pillars has 20% carving. In 1 of the *Naamghar* the number of pillars are 20 and in 6 of the *Naamghar* the pillars are 12 in number.

1650-1750: *Naamghar* which were made between 1650-1750, which are 3 (selected by the researcher) in number combination of wood and concrete is been used and in 1 of them pillar is made up on just concrete material. There are carvings over the pillars in 3 of the *Naamghar*. The carving is around 30% on top and bottom of the pillars.

1750-1850: Out of 26 *Naamghar* 2 of them are having 12 number of pillars and 1 of these are having 6 numbers of pillars, 3 of these are made of concrete entirely and cylindrical in shape. In 3 of the pillars there are carvings and in 2 of these, percentage of carving is 30% and in 1 of the pillar it's been reduced to 20%.

1850-1950: Out of 26 *Naamghar* 1 of the *Naamghar* has 12 number of pillars which is made of concrete material. It has carvings of *Vishnu* and *bhakats* over it. In this particular pillar around 80% of the pillar is been totally carved with figurative forms.

1850-1950: Out of 26 *Naamghar* pillars, 2 of them are having 12 number of pillars. One of the *Naamghar* is having 4 number of pillars, 1 of the *Naamghar* is having 9 number of pillars which is outside; and inside the *Naamghar* there is no pillar. One of the *Naamghar* is having 2 number of pillars and two of the *Naamghar* does not have any pillar. In Four of the *Naamghar*, the pillars are made up of concrete material entirely and in one of the *Naamghar* pillars have been made up with the combination of wood and concrete. Four of the *Naamghar* are having plain forms, One of the *Naamghar*'s pillar is

having carving of *Vishnu* and *Bhakat* on the pillar and One of the *Naamghar* is totally plain. In 2 of the pillars percentage of carving is around 80% and in case of 5 of *Naamghars*' pillars does not have any carving.

2000-onwards: Out of 26 *Naamghar* 1 of the *Naamghar* has 2 number of pillars which is outside the main *Kirtanghar* and inside there is no pillar and another one of the *Naamghar* is having 2 number of pillars. In 2 of the *Naamghars*, the pillar is made up of concrete and totally plain without any carvings. In one of the *Naamghar*. In one of the *Naamghar* the shape of the pillar is cylindrical and in another one of the *Naamghar* the pillar shape is cubical and its much thinner in width as compared to other *Naamghars*.



Fig. 5.4: Naamghar as community place

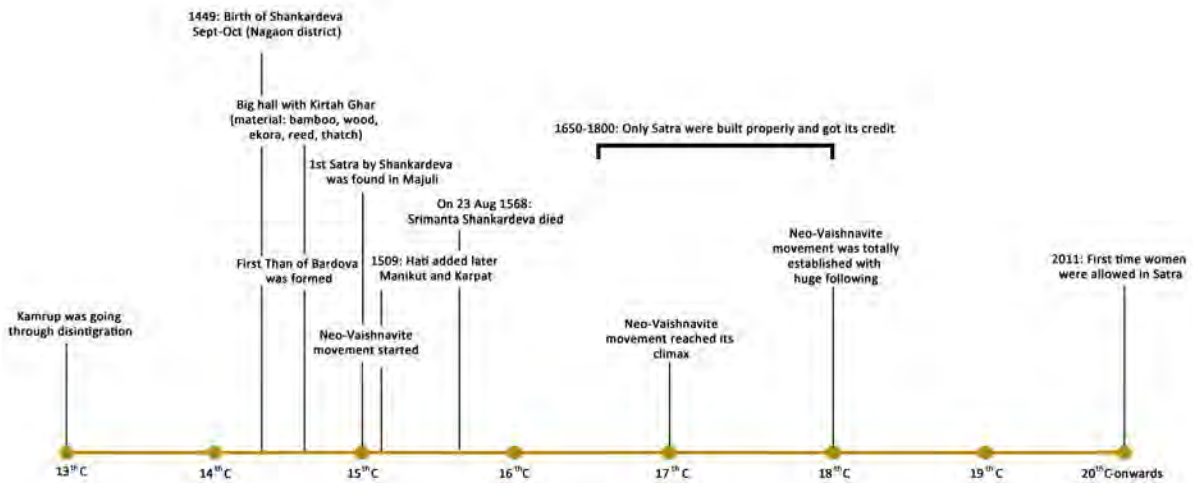


Fig. 5.5: The time line of Neo-Vaishnavite tradition of Srimanta Shankardeva from 13th to 20th century onwards

Naamghar is a community place (fig. 5.4) and most of the funds come from devotees who visit *Naamghar* and sometime from the ‘*Thiti*’ event (death anniversary of Srimanta Shankardeva) and others like Madhavdeva. Other set of funds comes during the *Doul* and other festivals in *Satra* and *Naamghar*. Donations by every sect of society are been contributed for managing the *Naamghar*. Also its not just the funds but also cloths, eatables, *Gamosa* etc. which has been donated to the *Naamghar* by the devotees. Some of the respondents also mentioned that some funds come from local parties like MLA’s, Local Development Fund and because of the condition of the funds only renovation decision can be taken for particular *Naamghar* or *Satra*. Fig. 5.5 shows major changes of *Neo-Vaishnavite* tradition from 13th century towards 20th century.

D. Relation with society

Naamghar are very well connected and embedded in the Assamese society and people are very well connected with there traditional roots. Most of the respondents have mentioned that they visit the *Naamghar* during the festival season. On the other hand, women visit the *Naamghar* twice everyday for *Naamkirtan*. There are various occasions when people visit the *Naamghar* during birth anniversary and death anniversary of Srimanta Shankardeva.

Naamghar has also contributed in the society in ways other than religion. During the floods and natural calamity, *Naamghar* plays an important role for the needy. Also on different occasions food has been cooked and served in *Naamghar* by devotees. There are

time-to-time constructions for renovating the older *Naamghar* like shifting of diya stands and diya keeping spaces from inside to outside in *Naamghar* to avoid pollution. Keeping the gap between the ceiling and the wall so that ventilation can happen. For the same devotees and *Naamghar* committee comes together and creates a common discussion before taking the decision.

5.3 Categorization and Semantic Analysis

With the data collected, Categorization method (Athavankar, 1989) has been adopted to analyze the large amount of data in a comprehensive manner. First, the *Naamghars* were mapped with the help of Google maps. It helped the researcher to identify the locations and the positioning of the *Naamghars*; also it has been found that most of the *Satras* and *Naamghars* are located near the water body mostly the Brahmaputra River or any other of its tributaries. It has also been mentioned in the literature review that canals were always been the part of the *Satras* and *Naamghars*, so that *Satradhakari*'s and other *bhakats* can use it for different purposes. Second pictorial and qualitative and quantitative data categorization has been done to systemize the segregation process, as the amount of data is widespread. As an example, *Naamghar* has been divided into outer and inner sections and further into super ordinate sections (Outer-main gate, outer wall; Inner-Hall, *Manikut*). Further it has divided into basic level (doors, windows, pillars etc.). Also it has been categorized into Sub-ordinate level (e.g. Variation of flowers, musical instruments etc.). This extensive digging helped the researcher to analyze the *Vaishnavite* elements embedded into the system, on the basis of which it's connected with sub categories of various elements. As it is shown in the Fig. 5.6 by Athavankar about "Categorization...Natural Language and Design" with an example of belonging of multiple categories of lighting. It is further divided into three levels like Super ordinate, Basic and Subordinate level, which is unfolding and systematically segregating the data related to lighting. The same method has been adopted for categorizing the data related to *Naamghars*.

BELONGING TO MULTIPLE CATEGORIES

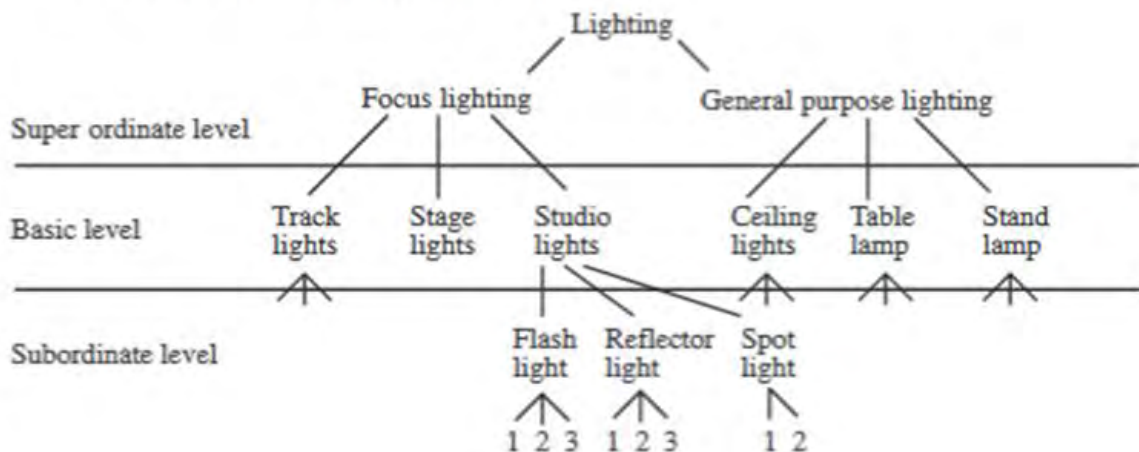


Fig. 5.6: From Athavankar, Uday A., “Categorization...Natural Language and Design”
Design Issues, Vol. V, No. 2, Spring 1989. P.106

Taking a cue in the study of *Naamghar* one can identify different layers of meaning, an outline is depicted below. At the super ordinate level one can place the outer and inner elements namely main gate, outer wall and at the inner level the hall and Mianikut. Similarly, at the basic level further details are placed. The sub ordinate level further identified elements in greater detail.

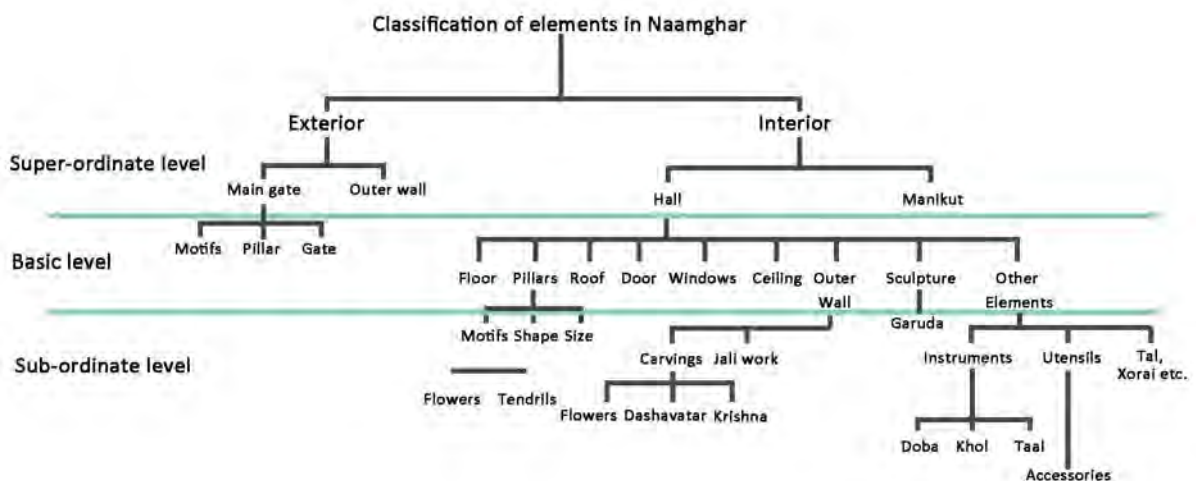
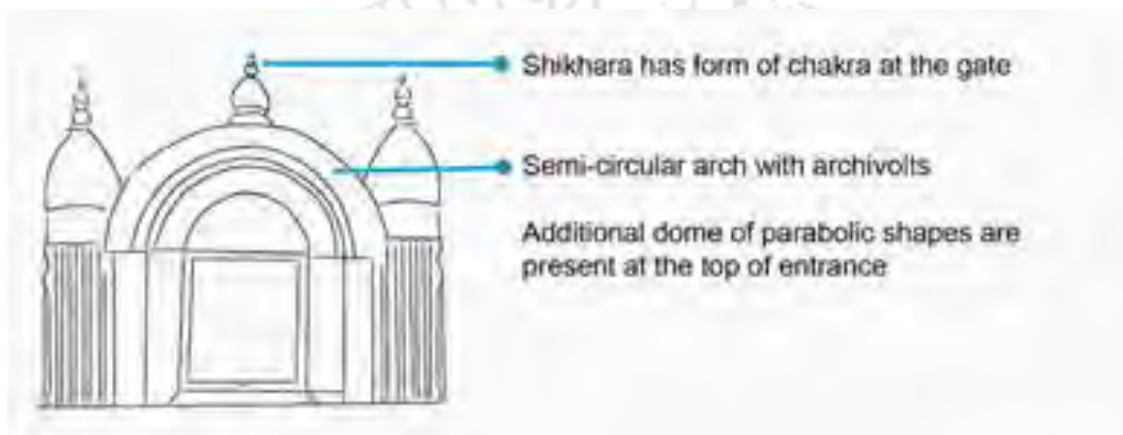


Fig. 5.7: Classification and categorization of elements associated with *Naamghar*

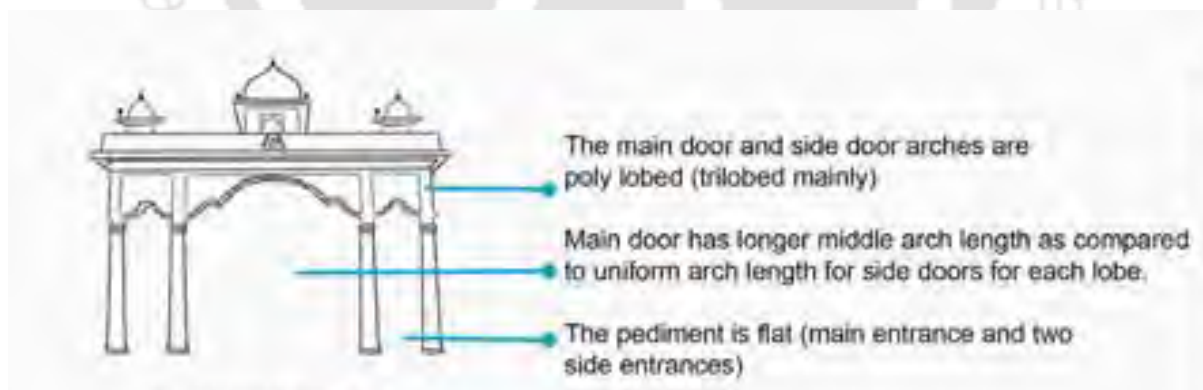
5.4 Card sorting analysis from Typical and A-Typical rating:

To identify the typicality in various elements of *Naamghar*, Athavankar (1989) method of Typical towards A-Typical has been adopted as per the researcher’s need. For

the same selected pictorial cards has been shown in a group interaction. Total 21 groups of cards were shown to the respondents having 26 numbers of cards in each folder. Hence, total 546 numbers of pictorial cards has been shown to the respondents in a group discussion. The preferences of the respondents from Typical towards A-Typical has been identified to understand the most relevant *Naamghar* elements. There were different respondents from *Satradhikar* to devotees, from craftsmen to older people etc. Visual data has been coded (1, 2, 3....etc) for identification and for not revealing the names of the *Naamghars* to the respondents.



(a) Sundaridiya Satra



(b) Sarbogh Medhibara Satra

Fig. 5.8: Semantics of Main Gate: “Gateness” of a Gate

a. Typical to A-typical of Main Gate (*Pratham Dwar*) :

Main Gate			
Typical			
	SU9(MG10)	SU17(MG13)	SU9(MG11)
Not so Typical			
	R6(MG21)	U20(MG2)	
Fuzzy Boundary			
	SU10(MG12)	R13(MG18)	R11(MG22)
Not so A-Typical			
	R15(MG20)	R8(MG9)	R2(MG14)
A-Typical			
	R18(MG1)	SU26(MG4)	U25(MG7)

Fig. 5.9: Selected pictorial images of Main gate of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement

For the *Naamghars* main gate (also called *Dalam*) the typical ones are 10, 13 and 11 (this structure came from Ahom kingdom and it is more similar to *Xorai*) has been chosen in a highest category (fig. 5.9). The respondents have given many reasons for choosing these particular gates as it has many things like *Udanto singha* (particular kind of flying lion, which has been the symbol of Ahom kingdom and represents a mystical creature that is used as a metaphor for showcasing the might of the Supreme Hindu deity *Lord Vishnu*) on top of the gate. They mentioned that gate is an extension of *Thapana* in a symbolic manner, on the same *bhakat* with *taal* and *khood* (musical instruments) in their hand on the gate representing welcoming of the visitors. Respondents said that on the gate something in relevance to supreme (*Vishnu*) has to be there in form of *thapana* or *Vishnu* avatar itself. *Xorai* with *Bhagwat* and *Gamosa* has been used to give respect as a symbol of Assamese culture also its auspicious and has been used in the main gate.

Second preference has been given to gate no 21 and 2 in which some of the elements are present like *singha* and *Jay Vijay* but *singha* is not the exactly *udantu singha* (flying lion). Also image no. 14 has influence of muslim architecture. Details about the cards used for card sorting can be seen in Appendix-4.

Main Gate (pratham dwar) preference shared by the respondents are the following:

1. **Udantu singa/ Nama singa (flying lion)** denotes *bhakti* also called *Naamghar rokheyas* i.e the protectors of the *Naamghar*. It is believed by the people that the lions protect the *Naamghar*. We can see that the lion has been used as a mythical creature at the top of the main *Naamghar* gate as a metaphor for showcasing the might of the supreme Hindu deity lord *Vishnu*. The essence of *Vaishnavism* is in the worship of lord *Vishnu*. Just like the *garuda* is shown as an insurmountable force and a humanoid bird. Processes extraordinary martial prowess. In the *simhasana*, the lion is always depicted as a dominant to the elephant, which symbolizes the idea of sin being destroyed by the *Name* (Name of God) (Mahanta, 2007). Similar inferences can be drawn for the *Singha duar/Batacora*.

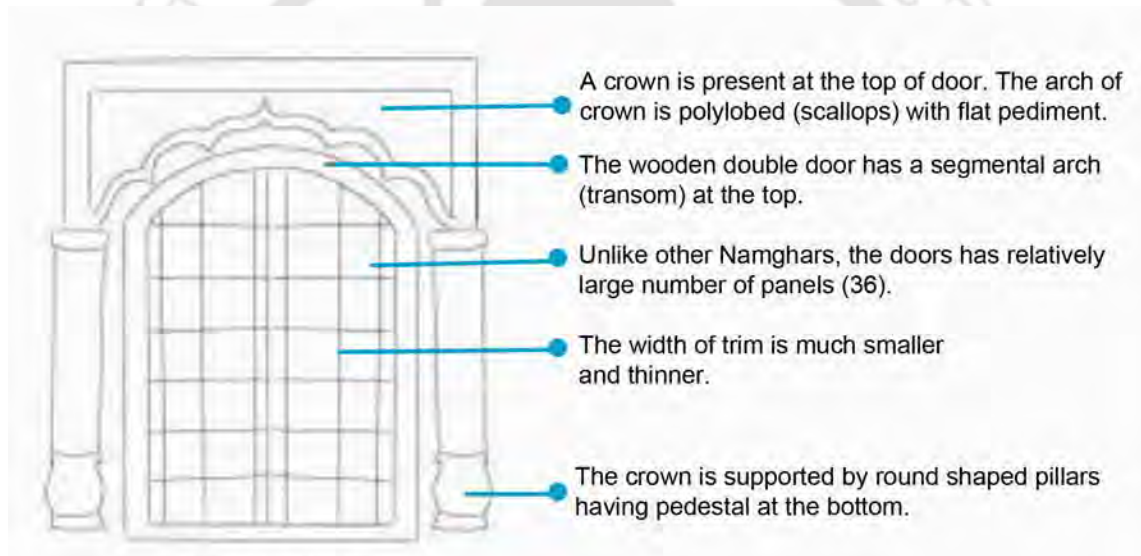
2. **Bhakat with Bhor-taal and Khols** (two sided drums): *Khols* are made up of baked clay is typical of *Naamghar* music. *Bhor-taal* (originated from Bhutan). It is been carved on the main gate to welcome the visitors with music and hymns. The plays and songs bring the spiritual entertainment for the people.

3. **Xorai with Bhagwat and Gamosa** representing auspicious and respect to the Supreme.

4. **Shape of dome structure:** Mahapurusha Srimanta Shankardeva has spent good number of years in Orisha, the details of which are found in the “Oresa Barnana” section of “Kirtan Ghosa”. He was greatly influenced by Hindu deity Lord Jagannath and the teachings of *bhakti* movement. He was inspired by architecture of the Jagannath temple, Puri and the *Singhaduar* (lions gate) situated in the temple premises also the structure represents *Xorai*, which is a symbol of respect.

5. There is a **crown on the top of the gate** with semi-spherical shape. This symbol is also been used in the *bhaona* performance and it represents the crown.



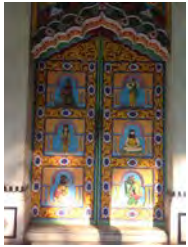
The A-typical ones are 1, 4 and 7 as the respondents mentioned that the main gate should not look like a house gate also there is no symbolic elements are present which represents the *Naamghar*. The lion which is been used is also not *Udantu singha* and different *singha* is been used.



(a) Kamlabari Satra in Majuli

Fig. 5.10: Main door semantics “Doorness” of a Door

b. Main Door (*Saptam Dwar*):

Main Door			
Typical			
	R15(MG9)	SU9(MG10)	R2(MG11)

Not so Typical			
	U21(MG3)	SU1(MG13)	
Fuzzy Boundary			
	U25(MG7)		
Not so A-Typical			
	SU19(MG8)		
A-Typical			
	U24(MG5)	SU26(MG4)	

Fig. 5.11: Selected pictorial images of Main door Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

For the *Naamghar* main door also called *Saptam dwar* (Fig. 5.10-5.11) is the typical once are 9, 10 and 11. It has been chosen in the highest category. The respondents has given many reasons for choosing these particular door as it has many depictions of *Dashavatara*, which represents *Vishnu* and its ten primary *avatars* (incarnations). The Hindu God of preservation. With these representations visitors and *bhakats* instantly

connects with the power of God and its presence on earth. However, most draw from the following set of figures, omitting atleast one of those listed in parentheses: *Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, (Balarama) or (Buddha) and Kalki*. The stories of all *Vishnu's* incarnations inspires the *bhakats* and visitors. Respondents also mentioned that *Jay Vijay* presence on right and left side of the door is important. Also on top of the main door presence of *Vakhunth Dham (Anant sajja)*, where the God or *Vishnu* lives has to be there as it represents the supreme of all “Vishnu” (the preserver God). Which means he protects the earth from being destroyed and keeps it going and he has come to earth with its nine forms. *Vishnu* is most famous forms are *Rama* and *Krishna*. *Vishnu's* wife is *Lakshmi*, the Hindu goddess of fortune. *Vishnu* is usually shown with light blue skin and four arms. He holds a lotus, mace (*gada*), conch (*shankha*) and disc (*chakra*) in each of four hands. Presence of peacock on the top of the door as its a symbol of *Sri Krishna*. The whole main door should give the aura of *Vishnu's* stories/ narratives. Respondents also said that traditional influence is required on the main door.

Second preference is been given to door no. 3 and 13, which again has *Vishnu* and *Dashavatar* but not in clarity as well as the carvings are minimal. Later the respondents has chosen A-typical doors as 5 and 4 which does not have any of the symbols or *Dashavatara* in any form.

For the Main Door (Saptam Dwar) the respondents preferences are the following:

1. Dashavatar on main door: It denotes the stories of *Vishnu avatars* with its incarnations. There are total nine of them, which are Fish (*mach*). *Kurma, Narsimha, Bamuni, Parshuram, Hariram, Baraha, Sri Ram, Buddha and Kalki* are present in different ways. Respondents also said that dashavatar did good for the earth and that has to be represented on the doors.

2. Vakhuntha (Unnat sajja/Vakhuntha dham): As in Hinduism *Vishnu* is the preserver and supreme of all. So its position is on the top of the main door, where the main *dham* should be represented. In Hindu iconography, *Vishnu* is usually depicted as having a dark or pale blue complexion and having four arms. He holds a *padma* (lotus flower) in his lower left hand, *Kaumodaki gada* (mace) in his lower right hand, *Panchajanya shankha* (conch) in his upper left hand and the *Sudarshana Chakra* (discus) in his upper right hand. A traditional depiction is *Vishnu* reclining on the coils of the *serpent Shesha*, accompanied by his consort *Lakshmi*, as he "dreams the universe into reality". It shows the story of

Vishnu puran. It says all the religion is one and the supreme that is *Vishnu* and others are its *avatar*.

3. Jay Vijay: They are the two gatekeepers of the abode of *Vishnu* known as *Vaikuntha* (meaning *place of eternal bliss*). There is a story that once *Vishnu* was resting and *Kumaras* appear to meet *Vishnu* so *Jay Vijaya* stopped them by saying that *Vishnu* is resting and he can't meet anyone. On this *Kumaras* replied *Jay and Vijaya* that *Vishnu* is available for his devotees any time, and cursed both the keepers *Jay* and *Vijaya*. Suddenly *Vishnu* appeared and asked *Kumaras* to undo the curse but the curse was not reversible. Instead, he gives *Jay* and *Vijay* two options. The first option is to take seven births on Earth as a devotee of *Vishnu*, while the second is to take three births as his enemy. After serving either of these sentences, they can re-attain their stature at *Vaikuntha* and be with him permanently. *Jay* and *Vijay* cannot bear the thought of staying away from *Vishnu* for seven lives. As a result, they choose to be born three times on Earth even though it would have to be as enemies of *Vishnu*.

4. Arch of the main door: Polylobed arch of the pediment and the upper curve is taken from *bhaona* (traditional performance).

5. Motifs: It depicts the elements of nature like flowers and plants and its taken from '*Rangiyal flower*' and '*Ashok flower*' which has a symbolic association with *Madhavdeva*.

c. Outer Structure of Naamghar

Outer Structure			
Typical			
	R2(O5)	U20(O6)	
Not so Typical			
	R2(O2)		








<p>Fuzzy Boundary</p>			
	<p>R15(O1)</p>		
<p>Not so A-Typical</p>			
	<p>U20(O7)</p>		
<p>A-Typical</p>			
	<p>U25(O3)</p>		

Fig. 5.12: Selected pictorial images of Outer structure of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

For the outer structure of the *Naamghar* respondents (Fig. 5.12) have chosen image no. 5 and 6 in a highest category as it has more Assam type roof top structure with flat arch with triangular pediment and secondly it has a particular kind of curve which is been found in the Ahom architecture style. On top it has circular *shikhara* at the top of the pediment symbolizes lotus (design element associated with *Vishnu*). Thirdly *Krishna* story is been shown as an extruded narrative so that *bhakat* and visitors can relate to it and feel the *bhakti* from far itself. It's a typical hip roof structure, which has been shown and another one is curved roof painted in green colour. Second preference has been given to image no. 2 in which its again hip roof structure but it looks more like a normal Assamese housing. Hence, respondents have mentioned that it looks Not so Typical. Not so A-Typical is image no. 7 and A-Typical is image no. 3, which almost looks like a house or school structure. Here respondents were unable to associate it with *Naamghar*.

- 1) **Hip roof structure** with green coating on top is the typical *Naamghar* outer structure.
- 2) **Curved roof Structure** became the identity of *Naamghar*.

d. Manikut (Vakhuntha Dham):

Manikut		
Typical		
	U21(M5)	R2(M2)
Not so Typical		
	R18(M6)	R15(M3)
Fuzzy Boundary		
	U20(M7)	SU19(M8)
Not so A-Typical		
	U24(M4)	

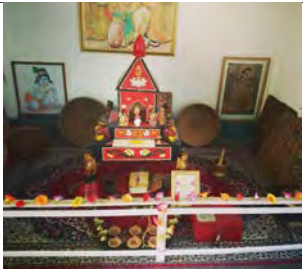
A- Typical			
	SU16(M1)		

Fig. 5.13: Selected pictorial images of Manikut of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

Manikut is an important aspect of *Naamghar*. For the *Manikut* the typical once are 5, 2 and 3 (Fig. 5.13), which has been chosen by respondents in a highest category. The respondents has given many reasons for choosing the particular kind of *Manikut*. Firstly it's a seven tyre structure and symbolizes seven steps to reach heaven for *moksha*. It is also been given typical preference because it is made up of wood and brass which is a very traditional material and shows cultural authenticity. Another important element respondents mentioned is presence of *dashavatar* like tortoise, elephant and lion (*udantu singha*). *Manikut* also have motifs of *rangiyal* flower (which is associated with Madhavdev) and lotus flower (which is symbol of *Vishnu*). *Manikut* is covered with *gamosa* on which its written 'Ram Ram Krishna Krishna' *Manikut* is the nucleus of the *Naamghar* and a place to reach *moksha*, which is the most difficult step.

Last preference is been given to *Manikut* no. 4 and 1, which is three tyre and the base is made up of tiles, which is Not so A-Typical and A-Typical in nature according to the respondents.

- 1) **Seven steps structure:** It's literally the Seat of the *Guru* having seven-tiered, triangular, wooden throne adorned by the tortoise-elephant-lion motif and other decorative wood work. It symbolizes the seven *Vaikunthas* or Heavens. From the four corners its been carved with the tortoise, elephant and wing lion motifs.
- 2) **Shrine:** The top of *Manikut* holds a shrine (Fig. 5.15), which carries sacred books (*Namghosha*, *Kirtanghosha*) composed by Srimanta Shankardeva and Madhabdeva.
- 3) **Motifs:** Motifs of tortoise, elephant and wing lion are carved with wood. It symbolizes the connection with *Vishnu* also means that 'Supreme is One'.

- 4) **Gohain-Kapor:** It is a richly woven textile. It has seven tiered *Manikut* structure weaved with an interesting pattern also 'Hare Krishna' in Assamese language is been written over it through weaving. Thirdly Earthen lamp is been weaved over the cloth. The cloth is of red colour and weaving is in white colour (totally opposite of *gamosa*) shown in Fig. 5.14



Fig. 5.14: Gohain Kapoor on *Manikut*

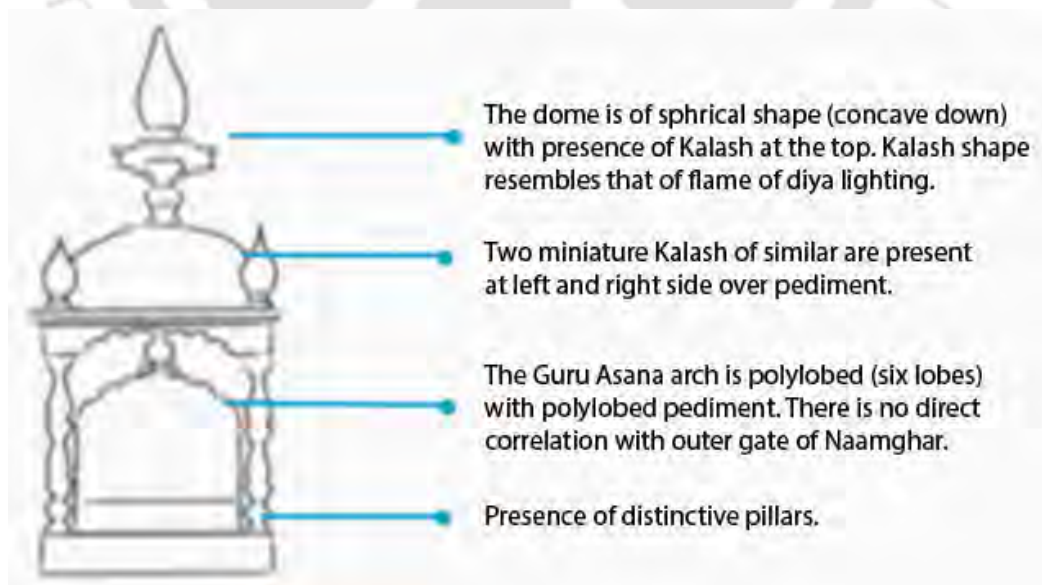






Fig. 5.15: Semantics of Thapana in Sundridaya Satra

e. Thapana:

Thapana			
Typical			
	R15(P2)		
Not so Typical			
	R18(P5)		
Fuzzy Boundary			
	U21(P3)		
Not so A-Typical			
	R18(P4)		

A-Typical			
	SU26(P1)		

Fig. 5.16: Selected pictorial images of Thapana of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

The most typical *Thapana* shown in Fig. 5.16 is image no. 1. Inside *thapana* ‘*Gunamala*’ (both written by Srimanta Shankardev) has been kept. The respondents has chosen it because of its shape. The top most shape is more similar to ‘petals of *padam* flower’ (part/leaf of lotus flower) as well as *Xorai* (Fig. 5.17), which is a symbol of respect in Assamese tradition as well as lotus is associated with *Vishnu*. Respondents also mentioned that both of the *thapana* has wooden and metal decoration with carving.

Respondents choice for not so A-Typical one was image no. 4 as they mentioned peacock carving should not be there on the *thapana* and totally A-Typical once are image no. 1 because they can’t associate the shape of *thapana* with *Naamghar* as its not like lotus flower neither like *Xorai*. Hence, they can’t associate with it.

1. **Upper shape:** Top most shape of the *Thapana* is very important as it represents lotus petal and *Xorai* shape, with which *bhakats* can associate themselves. Repetition of *padum* (lotus) shape in all four corners and in center is important.
2. **Gunamala:** In *Naamghar* there is no idol, instead there is ‘*Gunamala*’ kept in the *thapana*. It has preachings of Shrimata Shakardeva and his belief was that there is only one supreme God. (there is only one dharma of *Vishnu* and its avatars).
3. **Motifs:** Use of lotus flower (*kamal*) also associated with symbol of creation has been used in repetition. It is used in three dimensional carved form in all four corners with which one can associate with *Vishnu*. Use of *Rangiyal* flower’ and ‘*Ashok* flower’ which has a symbolic association with Madhavdev has been used.

Later, in the epic story of the Mahabharata, the Creator, under the name of *Brahma*, is described as having sprung from the lotus that grew out of *Vishnu's* navel when that deity lay absorbed in meditation. Hence, one of the appellations for *Brahma* is lotus-born (*abja-ja*, *abja-yoni* etc.). The lotus is thus connected with *Vishnu*, one of

whose names is, accordingly, *padma-nabha*, lotus-naved. It is further associated with *Vishnu's* wife, Lakshmi, Goddess of fortune and beauty. The *Mahabharata* relates the myth that a lotus sprung from *Vishnu's* forehead, out of which came Sri (another name for the Goddess). Lakshmi is also called *Padma* (lotus-hued).

4. **Material and colour:** There are two ways metal and wood can be used. Firstly metal form should be there and on top of that metal carving should be added by showcasing nature like flowers and tendrils. If its a wooden *thapana*, then carvings can be painted by using natural colours like '*hegul haithal*' and '*eta colour*' (like brick colour). Use of blue colour is there as one can associate it with *Vishnu*.

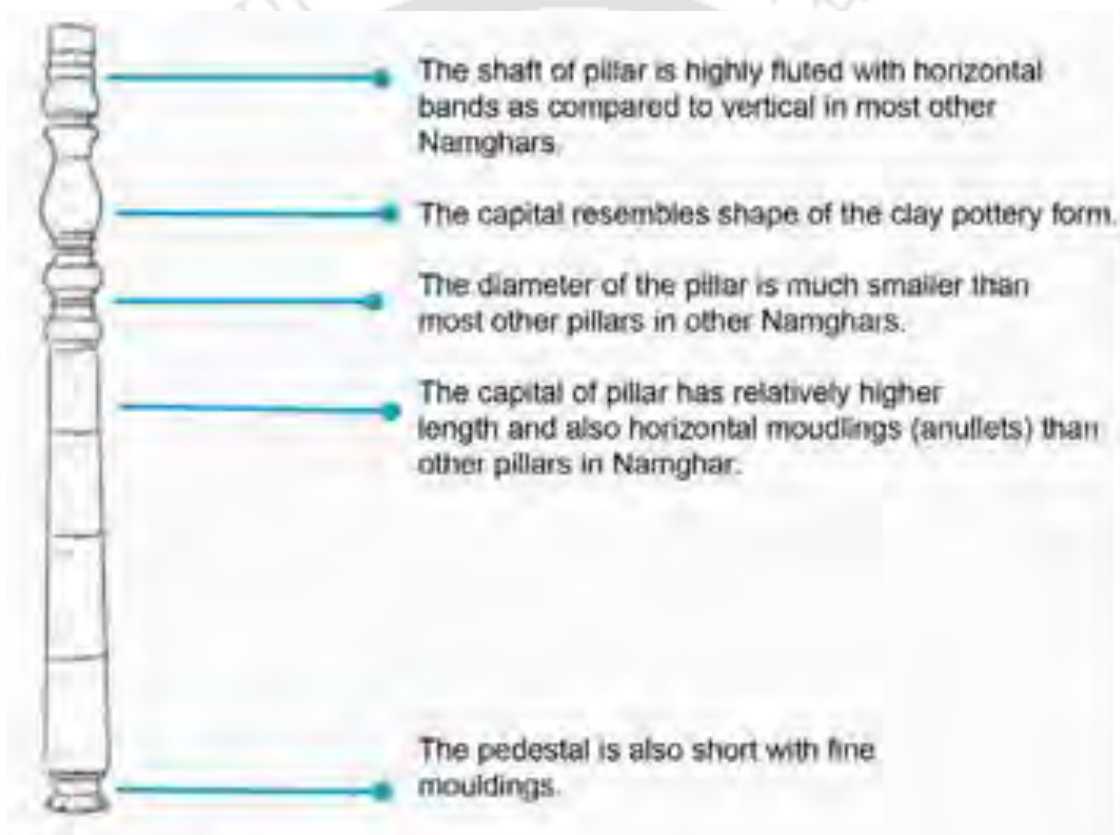


Fig. 5.17: Pillar semantics in Ramdiyar Naamghar

f. Pillars:

Pillars			
Typical			
	SU19(P2)	R2(P5)	R2(P6)
Not so Typical			
	SU17(P4)		
Fuzzy Boundary			
	R15(P1)		
Not so A-Typical			
	U25(P3)		

A-Typical			
	U2(P7)		

Fig. 5.18: Selected pictorial images of Pillars of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

The most typical pillar identified (Fig. 5.17-5.18) by the respondents were 2, 5 and 6. All of these has some association with *Vishnu* and its avatar *Krishna* or other elements associated with them like lotus and peacock feather has been carved over the pillars. The pillar is round shape with decorative pattern present at the top and bottom of the pillar.

As compared with the not so A-Typical and A-typical once, which is image no. 3 and 7, in which the pillars are totally flat and looks like a common house pillar. Respondents mentioned that pillars work as a guiding lines/direction towards the *Manikut* (like a story which is leading towards *Manikut*) so, it's important that some of the visual design elements like lotus petals etc. should be incorporated in the design of the pillar itself. It can be in any form of carved format like all surrounded around the pillar or just on top and bottom of the pillar.

- 1) **Motif:** *Vishnu* and *Krishna* associated motifs like lotus has an important significance.
- 2) **Narrative over the pillar:** Story of *Vasudeva* and *Krishna* is been sculpted over the pillar so that *bhakat* and devotees can associate themselves with it. Hence story over the pillar works as a guiding line so pillars act as a guiding path for devotees towards *Manikut*.

g. Hall Division:

The most typical Hall divisions identified by the respondents were 5 and 4 shown in Fig. 5.19. Respondents explained that hall is the place where *bhakat* do the *Naam Kirtan* thrice in a day and the sitting position is extremely important as one can't move or cross from front and from the center. Hence, central part positioning of the hall is very important because many respected things are kept there like *Xorai*, *Gita*, *bhor taal* etc. A minimum

of eight people are required to do the *Naam prasanga* (prayer gathering). All the devotees sits in a U-shape position facing the Altar.

Hall Division			
Typical			
	R2(HD5)	U21(HD4)	
Not so Typical			
	SU19(HD9)	SU17(HD2)	U20(HD7)
Fuzzy Boundary			
	R11(HD3)		
Not so A-Typical			
	SU10(HD1)		
A-Typical			
	U25(HD10)	R15(HD6)	

Fig. 5.19: Selected pictorial images of Hall division of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

Significance of the pillar in the North East corner next to *Singhasana (Altar)* is an important place where the most senior one of the *Naamghar* sits. It's also been offered to the dignitary (*Satraadhikari*) when he visits the *Naamghar*. "Seatings along the row of pillars facing North are all given to the senior devout in the village. It is known as *Dohaar sari* or Chorus singers' row.

The seats directly opposite the *Altar*- the round of the U, is meant for the *Naam Acharya* or *Naamlogova*- literally, the *Naam* leader. On his side is the reader or the *Pathak* of the Scriptures or *Kirtans* (Hymns). In the same line are the musicians i.e. *Gayan-bayans*, (cymbal players and drummers) and behind them are the chorus singers (*paalor sari*). On the northern stem of the U are places for the *Bhakats* (monks of the *Naamghar*) and the *Bilaniyar* (distributor of the *Prasad*)."

As compared with the Not so A-Typical and A-typical once, which is image no. 10 and 6, the importance of pillars has been lost also the *Garuda* and *Hanuman* sculpture has vanished, which used to give a narrative feeling in the whole environment.

- 1) **Pillars as guiding lines:** Around pillar *gamosa* should be there as name written over it devotes *bhakti* "*Hare Ram..Hare Krishna*"
- 2) **Centralized division:** It should be kept for indicating sitting position of the *bhakats*.
- 3) **Diya stand:** *Akkhoy Banti* (the eternal lamp/diya) act as guiding elements towards the *Manikut* and it has been associated with long trees, which is guiding the *bhakat* towards *moksha*.
- 4) **Light source:** Presence of source of light on top or sides of the hall.
- 5) **Garuda with wings & Hanuman** sculpture on left and right side are *vahanas* of *Vishnu* (*Garuda*) and *Hanuman* is devotee.

h. Wall Narrative:

Wall Narratives			
Typical			
	R2(WN5)	SU9(WN17)	SU9(WN15)
Not so Typical			
	R2(WN2)	SU9(WN21)	
Fuzzy Boundary			
	SU9(WN16)	SU9(WN18)	U21(WN14)
Not so A-Typical			
	R15(WN13)	R2(WN1)	SU9(WN20)
A-Typical			
	SU19(WN11)	R15(WN10)	U25(WN12)

Fig. 5.20: Selected pictorial images of Wall Narratives of Naamghar by the respondents

The most typical wall narratives are 5, 17 and 15 shown in Fig 5.20. Respondents said that wall narratives are for public who can't read and only understand the visuals. It's been based on *darshan shastra*. Stories have been depicted in a sequential format and most of them are about *Krishna leela*.

The treatment on the outside and inside walls also showcase a wide range of simple and ornamented designs with wooden carved, figures and motifs of flower (*ashoka* flower) and tendrils. Most of the wall narratives are stories of *Krishna leela*, which reminds the devotees about the life of *Krishna*. The plaster jali work has also been carved into the walls with which devotees can see inside the *Naamghar* and hear the sound of *Naam Kirtan* and feel associated with the God.

Lotus flower (*padum* or *padma*) has been extensively used as it depicts *Vishnu*. Also repetition in shape has been observed. Wooden and cemented extruded carving has been used to depict different narratives. There is a difference in extradition. It's been said that "*Dharma* of *Vishnu* is one and everyone are their *avatar*" also *Vishnu puran* story has been depicted. The story narrative is composed in a realistic way. Also the outside has been ornamented with flowers and tendrils.

Presence of *Dashavatar* is important as it depicts Krishna. Matsya, Kurma, Narsimha, Bamuni, Parshuram, Halirama, Barha, Sri Ram, Buddha and Kalki are the *avatars* which should be present in the walls of *Naamghar*. Respondents said that God did good on earth with the help of *Dashavatar*.

As mentioned by the respondents colour also plays a significant role as it helps in associating the characters quickly for eg. blue colour symbolises *Vishnu*. Also colour helps in segregating the characters from one another in a complicated composition. Respondents have chosen 1 as Not so A-typical as the narrative is understood but because the colour has not been painted over the narrative. Hence it is difficult for respondents to understand the character. In image 10 and 12, carvings are missing hence respondents can't relate the space as *Naamghar*.

It's also been written below, every composition, the name and event in Assamese language so that people can confirm the narrative event. Natural colours like blue, yellow, green and tint of red has been used in the illustrative carvings. Framing has been given around every composition and most of the compositions are extruded from the walls.

- 1) **Dashavatar:** Sequential narrative has been depicted.
- 2) **Motifs:** Motifs of *ashoka* flower, lotus and tendrils have been used as one can associate themselves with *Vishnu*.

- 3) **Material:** In older times wood has been used but now its been replaced with concrete.
- 4) **Colour:** Colours related to *Vishnu* have been used in the walls like blue, light crimson (lotus colour) etc. the body and faces of the narratives has been painted so that people are able to make distinctions in the characters.
- 5) **Composition:** The composition is important part of the *Naamghar* as in one composition the whole story of the activity has been detected hence, it helps the audience to link one composition to another one.

i. Chandratap:

Chandratap			
Typical			
	R15(C5)	SU9(C7)	
Not so Typical			
	U20(C3)		
Fuzzy Boundary			
	SU10(C4)		
Not so A-Typical			


	U21(C2)		
A-Typical			
	U21(C1)		

Fig. 5.21: Selected pictorial images of Chandratap of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

For the *Chandratap* the Typical once are 5 and 7 shown in Fig. 5.21. It's been used to cover the *Manikut* from the top. Its a square piece of cloth tied from four corner sides with a skirted boundary. In the centre of the *chandratap* a flower has been stitched which is of red colour. The Not so A-Typical and A-Typical one is no. 2 and 1, where the respondents said that the colour of the *chandratap* is yellow and green.

- 1) **Colour:** Red and white colour (depicts purity) *chandratap* is preferred by *bhakats* as the flower associated with Madhabdeva is red in colour.
- 2) **Size:** Size of *Chandratap* has to be big so that it can cover a wide area not just a small portion.

j. Lamp stand:

Lamp stand			
Typical			
	R15(L2)		
Not so Typical			
	U25(L8)		
Fuzzy Boundary			
	U20(L7)		
Not so A-Typical			
	U24(L3)		


A-Typical			
	R18(L6)	U21(L5)	

Fig. 5.22: Selected pictorial images of Diya stand of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

For the Lamp stand the Typical once are in image no. 2 shown in Fig.5.22. It's an integral part of the *Naamghar* and it depicts big trees around the *Manikut*. It's been placed in both sides in such a way that visually the placement is leading towards *Manikut*. Respondents said that with the reflection of the *diya* light one unites with God. It's a seven level *diya* stand and around it mixture of flower and *diya*'s are attached and on top peacock has been placed, which is a vehicle of *Vishnu* (*mayur* is *Vishnu*'s *vahan*). *Nirmali* (*rangiyal* flower) is been used in the *diya* and its flower season is March to May mentioned by respondents. The *diya* stand is made up of metal and its size is also huge. In Not so A-Typical once Image no. 3. It's been modernized and flower is painted in white and red colour. The most A-Typical once are image no. 6 and 5 in which there are no flowers and peacock and there is only one *diya* at the top most. For respondents it's difficult to relate to it with *Naamghar diya* stand. *Naamghar diya* stand has a particular design and by seeing it only one can relate it with typical *Naamghar*. Hence, following are the elements which is been found important to be present in design of a *diya* stand.

- 1) **Flower:** A typical flower *Nirmali* (*rangiyal* flower) has been used on *diya* stand, with which one can relate it with Srimanta Shankardeva. Its been made with metal moulding.
- 2) **Peacock:** As its a *Vishnu vahan* and reminds the respondents about the God hence, its been used in *diya* stand too.
- 3) **Tree Levels:** In the typical *Naamghar diya*, seven levels has been used and one can relate it with *Manikut* seven steps structure. The height of typical *diya* stand is huge

to show the large height of trees. As compared it with *Manikut*, visually it guides the *bhakats* that if trees are so large than *Manikut* is larger then that.

k. Musical Instruments










Music Instruments			
Typical			
	U24(MI6)	U20(MI8)	
Not so Typical			
	U24(MI7)	U24(MI11)	
Fuzzy Boundary			
	R2(MI1)	R15(MI10)	
Not so A-Typical			
	U20(MI9)	U24(MI4)	
A-Typical			
	U24(MI5)		

Fig. 5.23: Selected pictorial images of Musical instrument of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

For the Musical Instruments the Typical once are image no. 6 and 8 which is *doba* shown in Fig. 5.23 and it's been used to call people that *Naam Kirtan* has started. It's an important part of *Naamghar*. Second preference by the respondents has been given to image no. 7 and 11, which is *Bhor taal* (bigger) and *Kah* (small). It's been played during the *Naam Kirtan*. *Bhagwat Geeta*, *Naam Ghosha*, *taal*, *lota* (for washing hands) and *Gamosa* has been kept. According to the respondents it should be kept together. *Naam Ghosha* is the holy book kept in *Naamghar* and it has writings of Shankardeva and Madhabdeva. *Bhakat* recide the *Naam Kirtan* from *Naam Ghosha*.

In third section preference has been given to image no. 1 and 10, where *Khol*, *taal* and *khanjuri* (small taal) has been used in *Naamghar*. *Khanjuri* came from *Ojha palli*. *Khol* has been used during the *Raas leela* performance. The Not so A-Typical one is image no. 9 and 14 which is *Nagada*, bell (*ghanti*, usually used in temples) totally A-Typical one is image no. 5 in which loud speaker is there, which is generally used in the functions. According to the respondents It's not a part of *Naamghar*. Hence according to the respondents following are the important musical instruments which has to be present in the *Naamghar*.

- 1) **Doba:** It's an important musical instrument of *Naamghar* and its made of baked clay.
- 2) **Bhor taal & Kah:** It's made up of Bell metal and used during the *Naam Kirtan* in the *Naamghar* as a musical instrument.
- 3) **Naam Ghosha/ Kirtan Ghosha:** It's the most important scriptures kept folded with *Gamosa* (on which its been written 'Hare Ram Hare Krishna'). The songs made by Shankardeva has been written over it.

I. Jali work:

Jali work			
Typical			
	SU9(J17)	SU9(J18)	
Not so Typical			

			
	U24(J9)	R15(J27)	
Fuzzy Boundary			
	SU19(J8)	R2(J26)	U24(J28)
Not so A-Typical			
	U21(J3)	SU17(J13)	
A-Typical			
	SU9(J16)	SU26(J4)	
			
	R3(J22)	U20(J2)	

Fig. 5.24: Selected pictorial images of Jali work of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

The most acceptable *jali* patterns by respondents are image no 17 and 18 shown in Fig. 5.24. Here the eight petal flower (lotus and *nirmali* flower) has been carved as a *jali* pattern in a repeated way; with that tendrils pattern has been used. Even the pattern which has been made by cross curves is becoming the leaf of the lotus. The principle of design called repetition has been used from macro to micro scale. According to the respondents its been called *kundraksha jali*. It's a stone screen, perforated and latticed, usually with a geometrical ornamental pattern used so that *bhakat's* can hear the *Naam prasang* from outside of *Naamghar*. Usually women sits outside on both the left and right sides of *Naamghar*. The lotus pattern reminds about *Vishnu* and his *bhakti*. This pattern is also influenced by *puthi chitra*.

Second preference has been given to image no. 9 and 27. The tendril pattern is similar to pattern present in *puthi chitra*. They have used a different kind of grill pattern but it has balanced by carvings of flowers and leaves on the walls. Image no. 9 is almost a new design of grill (*jali*) work and shape of *Xorai*, which is a very respected symbol of *Naamghar* has been used and again lotus shape, which is associated with *Vishnu* is been used. Even the design of the *Xorai* has carved lotus petals.

Another image is no, 8, 26 and 28. The maker has mixed the patterns like *Xorai* Pattern, which has been distorted by division of the gate and in that case it's giving less feeling of *Naamghar*. Similarly in image no. 26 the pattern has been totally merged although it has been used, but respondents found that its very confusing for them. In image no. 3 and 13 symbol of *Xorai* and *bhakat* on gate is been used and peacock and flower grill work has been used but its not giving the feel of *bhakti*. In image no. 16, 4, 22 and 2 respondents are miscommunicating the design visually and considering *bhakat* as *Shiva*. In image no. 4 the grill pattern doesn't looks like a flower hence, devotees are not able to connect to it. In image no. 16 half curve *jali* has been used in which lotus pattern has been depicted but respondents are not able to relate to it as there is no colour used for segregation of lotus petals and other forms. A-typical once is image no. 22 and 2 as respondents are not at all able to identify the *jali* pattern with *Naamghar*.

- 1) **Flower pattern:** Lotus and *Nirmali* flower pattern is important part of *Naamghar* as its associated with *Vishnu* and *Nirmali* is associated with Madhabdev.
- 2) **Tendrils:** Its a supporting element and carved in a lyrical way. It's a similar pattern used in *puthi chitra*.

m. Symbolism:

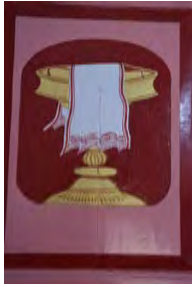



Symbolism			
Typical			
	U21(S6)	U20(S11)	
Not so Typical			
	R2(S3)	U21(S7)	R15(S4)
Fuzzy Boundary			
	SU17(S1)	U20(S9)	U20(S10)
Not so A-Typical			
	SU17(S2)	U20(S8)	
A-Typical			
	U21(S5)		

Fig. 5.25: Selected pictorial images of Symbolism of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

The most typical symbols in *Naamghars* chosen by respondents are image no. 6 and 11 shown in Fig. 5.25. In Image no. 11 an illustration of *Xorai* with *Giamosa* is present. *Xorai* is considered as traditional and auspicious object in *Naamghar*. Colour is very typical of *Naamghar* like red, yellow and white is been used. In image no. 06 there is *kalash* and *sudarshan chakra* (one on top of other) is present. *Kalash* and *chakra* is the symbol of *Krishna* and *kalash* has also been associated with *Madhavdev* and *trishul/sudarshan chakra* is associated with power (*shakti prateek*). Other preference has given to the symbol of *Xorai* with *Bhagwat Geeta* and *Gamosa* has been shown in image no. 4, which is very much present in *Naamghar* and with that *Jhapi* is been carved. On top of the *kalash* lotus flower, *shankha* and *nirmali* flower has been made with the grill as material (metal). In image no. 3 *qua* (water) and *naad* is been shown from which water is been used for *prasad* and there is a symbol of *chakra*. In image no. 04 silver flower is pinned up with the *Gamosa*, which is on the *Manikut*. One of the respondent mentioned that its been used because as God like flowers hence, its been given to him in an auspicious occasion. On *Gamosa* its been written *Hare Rama* and *Krishna* to evoke *bhakti*.

Not so A-typical and A-Typical once are 2, 8 and 5. Respondents said that they don't use the symbol of 'Om' in *Naamghar* and the *bhakat* on grill is not been clear to them.

- 1) Symbol of *Xorai*, *Bhagwat Geeta* and *Gamosa* together is the symbol of *bhakti*.
- 2) *Shikhra* with *Sudarshan chakra* on top is important in *Naamghar* and it resembles the lotus petal.

n. Dashavatara:



Fig. 5.26: Vishnu's Dashavatar (ten incarnations) (Source: Wikipedia)

Dashavatar are the ten incarnations of Hindu God *Vishnu* shown in Fig. 5.26. In Hindu mythology *Visnu* is considered to be the creator and God of preservation of Earth. The *Vishnu's* ten incarnations are *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Narasimha*, *Vamana*, *Parashurama*, *Rama*, *Krishna*, *Balarama* or *Buddha*, and *Kalki*. On the doors of *Naamghar* the presence of *Dashavatar* plays a significant role.

Dashavatar			
Typical			
	R2(D3)	U21(D9)	
Not so Typical			
	R18(D19)	U21(D11)	U20(D20)
Fuzzy Boundary			
	U21(D14)	SU19(D7)	
Not so A-Typical			
	SU19(D8)	U21(D15)	
A-Typical			

			
	U20(D21)	R15(D6)	SU17(D2)
			
	U25(D22)		








Fig. 5.27: Selected pictorial images of Dashavatara of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

The most typical *Dashavatar* chosen by respondents are image no. 3 and 9 shown in Fig. 5.27. In image no. 3 *Garuda* sculpture is present who is the *bhakat* of Sri Krishna and *Hanuman* is the *Ram* bhiagat. The characters which are present in the *Naamghar* are *Bhishma*, *Prahalad*, *Dhruva* and *Narad*, who are related to *Vishnu* and others are *Vidur*, *Bashya* and *Udhhab*, who are related to Sri Krishna. Secondly the characters chosen by respondents are image no. 19, 11, 20, 14 and 7. In image no. 20 on the door of the *Naamghar* is been shown in which *Hanuman*, *Jambuvan*, *Prahalad*, *Udhab*, *Vidur* and *Mojiya* is carved (wooden sculpture on the door). In image no. 11 *dashavatar* of *Vishnu* is been carved on the walls. In image no. 19 *Varaha* with globe is been shown, It also shows the modernized concept in today's context. Further towards the A-typical respondents has chosen image no. 8 and 15, in which *Vishnu Dham* (*Anant Sajja*) is been shown, which means whoever will do the *Naam Kirtan* they will attain *moksha*.

The most A-typical once are image no. 21, 6, 2 and 22 in which respondents are not able to relate to *dashavatara*s and *Naiamghar*s as their form is not clear to them. *Dashavatara*s has been strictly used on entrance door of *Naamghar*s, carved on the door or just on top of the door.

- 1) **Dashavatar:** These ten *Vishnu avatars* are important in *Naamghar*. They are *Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, (Balarama), (Buddha), and Kalki*.
- 2) **Position:** Their placement is important so that *bhakats* can easily remember their stories and hence *Vishnu* (God of preservation) on the main door or top of the main door.
- 3) Presence of **Vakunth Dham** on the top of the entrance door of *Naamghar*.
- 4) **Garuda, Hanuman and Jambuvan** sculptures are important in *Naamghar* inside the main hall to depicting *bhakti*.

o. Birds & Animals:

Birds & Animals			
Typical			
	R18(BA7)	U25(BA10)	
Not so Typical			
	SU17(BA3)	R15(BA4)	U21(BA5)
Fuzzy Boundary			
	SU17(BA2)	U21(BA6)	
Not so A-Typical			

			
	U20(BA8)	U21(BA11)	SU26(BA1)
A-Typical			
	U20(BA9)		

Fig. 5.28: Selected pictorial images of Birds and Animals of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

The most typical birds & animals chosen by respondents are image no. 7 and 10 shown in Fig. 5.28. In image no. 7 *singha* has been shown and in image no. 10 flying horse has been shown. Respondents said that this kind of *singha* should be present inside the *Naamghar* on *Manikut*. Second preference has been given to image no. 3, 4 and 5. In which respondents said that image no. 3 *singha* should be inside of *Naamghar* on *Manikut* and should not be used outside. In other two images no. 4 and 5 a typical *singha* sculpture is there, which should be on the outer gate for protection. In image no. 2 and 6 has fuzzy boundry in which peacock and flying lion has been shown. Not so A-typical and A-Typical once are image no. 8,11, 1 and 9 in which respondents are totally not able to associate themselves with the following animals & birds as their form is not acceptable to them. Hence, according to the respondents following are the basic birds and animals associated with the *Naamghar*.

- 1) **Lion:** On the main gate.
- 2) **Flying lion:** On *Manikut* inside the *Naamghar*.
- 3) **Peacock:** On the gate.

p. Flowers & plants:

Flowers & Plants			
Typical			
	R2(FP9)	U24(FP15)	SU17(FP6)
Not so Typical			
	U20(FP21)	SU9(FP11)	
Fuzzy Boundary			
	R15(FP13)	U20(FP26)	R2(FP12)
Not so A-Typical			
	U20(FP2)	U24(FP17)	
A-Typical			
	U20(FP22)	U21(FP20)	

Fig. 5.29: Selected pictorial images of Flowers and Plants of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement

The most typical flowers & plants chosen by respondents are image no. 9, 15 and 6 shown in Fig. 5.29. Lotus and *Nirmali* are the most used flower in *Naamghar*. Second preference has been given to image no. 21 and 11 in which again lotus has been used but from a different angle with particular kind of tendrils. Third preference is been given to image no. 13, 26 and 12 in which six and ten petal flower has been used. Even the locking ring is made up of flower shape. Further preference is been given to image no. 2 and 17 in which four petal flower has been used. The most A-typical image is 22 and 20 in which lotus and eight petal flower is been used but from a different angle and *shankha* has been placed inside the lotus flower, which according to the respondents its difficult to relate by the respondents. Hence, following are the two kind of flowers which is associated with *Naamghars* of Assam.

- 1) Lotus flower
- 2) Nirmali flower

q. Krishna:

Krishna				
Typical				
	U21(K8)	SU9(K13)	U24(K5)	SU19(K14)
Not so Typical				
	R18(K7)	U21(K6)		

Fuzzy Boundary				
	R13(K4)	R13(K10)		
Not so A-Typical				
	SU19(K11)	SU26(K2)		
A-Typical				
	U23(K1)	SU9(K9)	R15(K3)	R15(K12)

Fig. 5.30: Selected pictorial images of Krishna of Namamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

The most typical *Krishna* image is chosen by respondents are image no. 8,13,5 and 14 shown in Fig.5.30 in which a typical image of *Krishna* with flute has been sculpted or printed. Respondents also mentioned that they like the child version of *Krishna*. Second choice of respondents were image no. 7 and 6 in which *Krishna* with flute and *Krishna* fighting with demon has been shown. As *Krishna* has many names and faces hence, third preference has been given to image no. 4 and 10 *Damodar* (with flute) and *Nayak mukha balak Krishna* (by eating *ladoo*) has been shown. Further choice of the respondents are image no. 11 and 2 in which *Krishna* with flute and grown up version of *Krishna* with *shankha* has been shown. The most A-typical once are image no. 1, 9, 3 and 12 in which *Krishna* with *Gamosa*, *Krishna* inside the *Om* symbol, growing *Krishna* giving blessings is been shown.

1) **Child version of *Krishna* eating butter**

- 2) **Krishna with flute:** Smiling with peacock feather on head in a cross legged pose and playing a particular type of flute.
- 3) **Natural surroundings are important:** *Krishna* is surrounded by natural surroundings.

r. Utensils in Naamghar:

Utensils				
Typical				
	U21(U7)	SU9(U12)	SU26(U1)	SU9(U11)
Not so Typical				
	U21(U5)	SU19(J8)	U21(U6)	
Fuzzy Boundary				
	U18(U10)			

Not so A-Typical				
	R18(U9)			
A-Typical				
	R15(U2)	U21(U4)		

Fig. 5.31: Selected pictorial images of Utensils of Naamghar by the respondents from typical towards A-typical arrangement.

The most typical utensils image is chosen by respondents are image no. 7,12,1 and 11 shown in Fig. 5.31 in which image 11 is a good version of *Xorai*. There is another utensil called *Bota* in which *tamul paan* and *prasad* should be given. It's a very traditional and authentic piece. Second preference is been given to image no. 5, 8 and 6. Image 5 is having *khorahi*, which one uses in *Naamghar* for keeping flowers. Image 8 is showing the *daan patra* in which *bhakat* can put money by their own choice. Third preference has been given to image no. 10 and 9 in which *bota* has been shown. *Tamul paan* has been kept in it and served to the guests. *Gamosa* is also been used in which 'Hari Hari Krishna Krishna Rama Rama' has been written. It's been kept in *Naamghar* because it's very auspicious. Image no. 9 shows the *basket* in which incense sticks has been kept. This is quite new in *Naamghar*. A-Typical once are image no. 2 and 4 in which regular utensils is been shown and respondents said that its not been related to *Naamghar*.

- 1) **Xorai:** Its been used for offerings and it's very auspicious.
- 2) **Bota:** Its been used to keep paan.
- 3) **Khorahi:** Its been used for keeping *nirmali* flowers.

5.5 Analysis of Design Elements:

Once Typical to A-Typical categorization has been done for the data collected and the important *Naamghar* elements were identified, then the semantic analysis of selected elements were carried out to get into the depth of the details.

This approach has been utilized to know the layer of meanings given through the objects in *Naamghar*. For viewers who know the language or who are already associated with *Naamghar*, it is very easy to tell about the object or the elements associated with it but what else has been tried to express by the producer of the design is something which requires more efforts to decode the meaning hidden inside. It will be significant to discuss the Saussurean dyadic model of sign (Fig. 5.32).

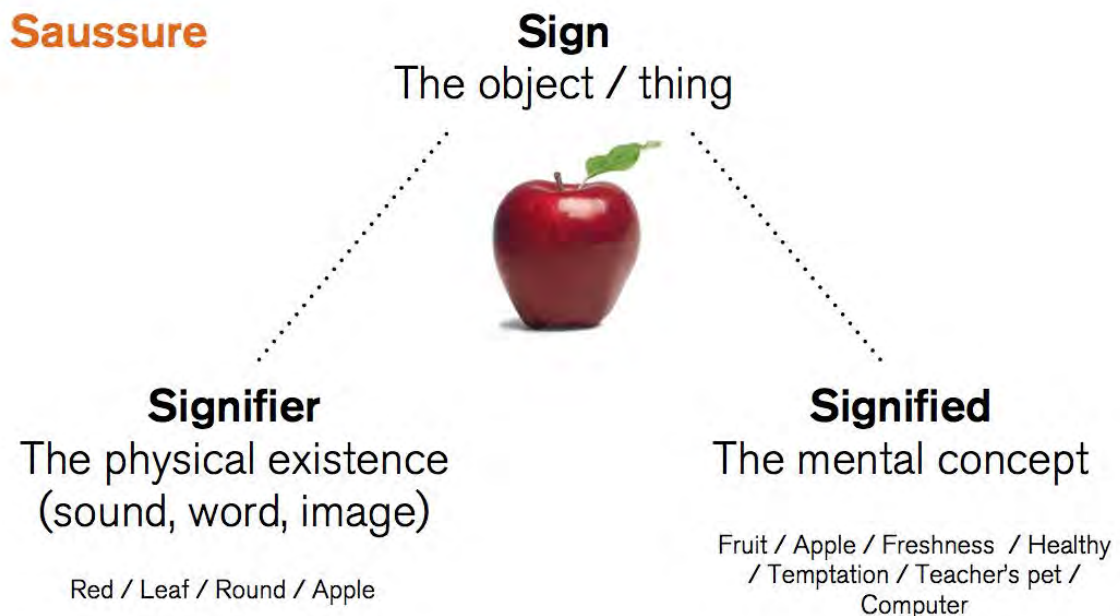


Fig. 5.32: Saussurean dyadic model of sign

The meaning making and persuasion of design elements in *Naamghar* depends on these values and relationship generated by different components of the elements of *Naamghars*.

For a designer it is necessary to have second-order understanding to provide appropriate sign so that viewer would be able to decipher the meaning behind what is represented (Krippendorff, 2006). In the same way a viewer would also need a second order understanding to decipher the symbolic meaning behind what is represented. Here second order understanding is used in the sense that, when a viewer will look at the

different elements of *Naamghar* precisely on the *Manikut* with its literal meaning, he should be able to decode the message given by the maker (here a designer) of the *Manikut*. Most of the time maker would present the *Manikut* with some clue to understand those hidden meaning. Also their meanings were suggested by society which leads to understanding of the object (here *Manikut*). For example the role of *Manikut* in the *Naamghar* setting have been used to give the symbolic meaning like seven stairs represents the seven levels to reach *moksha* or to the supreme, which is God and with that representation of *Vishnu avatars* (symbolic characters) is been done.

This above approach of meaning making has been used throughout the study to analyze the elements of *Naamghar* and interpret the result.

5.5.1 Structure and meaning making

Individual elements act as building block of an object (*Xorai* with *Gamosa*, *betel nut* etc. together) where its form, placement and dimension plays an important role in communication of object matter (composition). Looking from the Barthes's visual semiotics point of view (Fig. 5.33), his denotation of individual elements is an unproblematic issue. Knowing the written language ensures each viewer to understand the literal meaning of object. But the meaning of the object gets generated through understanding of the message which is hidden somewhere in the form and structure of the object.

This does not mean that denotation is entirely up to the beholder. This also depends upon the context (Leeuwen, 2001). This could be further understood by taking examples of two objects used in *Naamghar*.

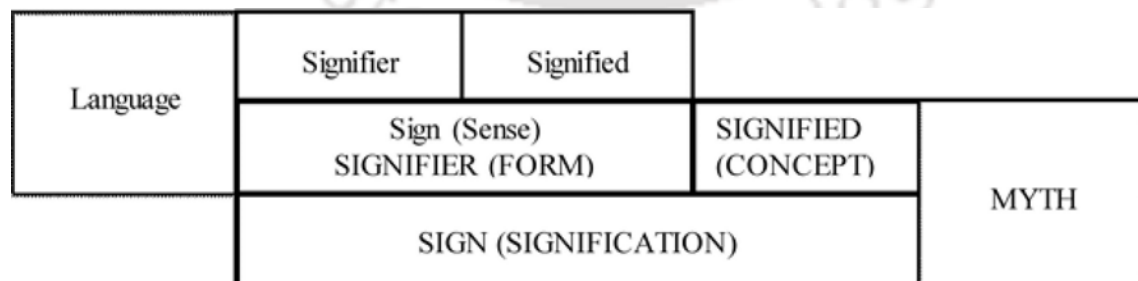




Fig. 5.33: Structural analysis [Barthes (2009, p.205)]

For analyzing the design elements in *Naamghar* Barthian's visual Semiotics approach has been adopted. The main idea behind Barthian's visual semiotics is layering

of meaning. The first layer denotes the layer of *Denotation*, which deals with who and what is being represented? The various objects and denotations are listed below. These elements were identified by using categorization theory and Typical and A-Typical theory.

5.5.2 Connnotation and Denotation

Image/Object	Denotation (Who/what is being represented)
 <p style="text-align: center;">(a)</p>	<p>What: <i>Xorai</i> (name)</p> <p>Form: Its a metal object which is having a half cylindrical and semi-sphere on top shape</p> <p>Function: It is been used as an offering utensil or tray for <i>prasad</i> (devotional offering of food) and other items placed in front of the <i>Thapana</i> (<i>Naamghar</i>) for soliciting blessings by the lord and is used while performing respectful offerings.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">(b)</p>	<p>What: <i>Gamosa</i></p> <p>Form: A hand woven white cloth with design woven with white and red colour thread.</p> <p>Function: It is used as a gesture of respect and its very auspicious and represents the Assamese identity and culture.</p>



Who: *Bhoor taal*

Form: Two pieces of half curved metal bowls with a thread in centre.

Function: Large bronze cymbals used in the communal singing/chanting of hymns/recitation of scriptures in a *Naamghar* service, which are extremely loud and metallic sounding.



(c)



Who: *Khol*

Form: Its cylindrical and flat from two sides.

Function: Its a two sided drums made up of baked clay and used during the performances in *Naamghar*.

(d)



(e)

Who: *Manikut*

Form: A seven level stair and square structure and on top a wooden cube and half curved metal sphere.

Function: It's literally the Seat of the *Guru* is a seven-tiered, triangular, wooden throne adorned by the tortoise-elephant-lion motif and other decorative wood work. It symbolizes the seven *Vaikunthas* or Heavens. From the four corners it been carved with the tortoise, elephant and wing lion motifs

The top of *Manikut* holds a *thapana*, which carries sacred books (*Namghosha*, *Kirtanghosha*) composed by Shankardeva and Madhabdeva.



(f)

Who: *Gohain Kapor*

Form: A hand woven cloth.

Function: It is a richly woven textile. It has seven tiered *Manikut* structure weaved over it in an interesting pattern also 'Hare Krishna' in Assamese language is been written over it through weaving. Thirdly *Xorai* is been weaved over the cloth. The cloth is of red colour and weaving is in white colour (totally opposite of *Gamosa*)



(g)

Who: *Thapana*

Form: Wooden square structure with half cut sphere on top.

Function: Inside *thapana* 'Gunumala' (Srimanta Shankardev's book) is been kept. The top most shape is more similar to 'paat of *padam* flower' (part/leaf of lotus flower) as well as *Xorai*, which is a symbol of respect in Assamese tradition as well as lotus is associated with *Vishnu*. *Thapana* has wooden and metal decoration carving on it.



(h)

Who: *Diya Stand (Gosha)*

Form: A straight structure surrounded by small half cut curves. It has seven levels one on top of each other.

Function: Its a *diya* stand having large height and show the largeness of trees. Used to light up around the *Manikut* for prayer. As compared it with *Manikut*, visually it guides the *bhakats* that if trees are so large then *Manikut* is larger than that.



(i)

Who: *Doba*

Form: Big half curved sphere with a flat elastic surface.

Function: It's an important musical instrument of *Naamghar* and its made of baked clay. Its used to call the *bhakats* before the *Naam Kiran* starts. Its been carved on the main gate to welcome the visitors with music and hymns. The plays and songs brings the spiritual entertainment for the people.



(j)

Who: *Bhor Taal & Kah*

Form: Its circular in shape with a bump in the centre.

Function: *Bhor Taal* is musical instrument played during the *Naam Kirtan* in *Naamghar*.

  <p style="text-align: center;">(k)</p>	<p>Who: <i>Khorahi</i></p> <p>Form: Oval half cut sphere shape.</p> <p>Function: It is used to keep <i>prasad</i> for <i>Naam Kirtan</i>.</p>
 	<p>Who: <i>Bota</i></p> <p>Form: Circular form with cylindrical stem.</p> <p>Function: Its been used to keep <i>prasad</i> in <i>Naam Kirtan</i>.</p>

Table 5.2: Objects in Naamghar and its Denotation

Whereas the second layer is the layer of *Connotation* which enquire about the value and idea expressed through what is represented and through the way in which it is represented (Leeuwen 2001).

Table 5.3: Denotation and connotation in objects of *Naamghar*

Denotation (Who/what is being represented)	Connotation (value/idea expressed)
<p>1) Who: <i>Xorai</i>(name) (What is being represented means form): Its a metal object which is having a half cylindrical and half cut sphere on top shape Function: Used as offering tray for food and other items placed in front of the <i>altar (Naamghar)</i> for blessing by the Lord and is used while performing respectful offerings.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: Its a manufactured bell-metal object and an article of great respect and is used as a container-medium while performing respectful offerings. - As an offering tray for food and other items placed in front of the <i>altar (Naamghar)</i> for blessing by the Lord.</p>
<p>2) Who: <i>Gamosa</i> Form: A hand weaved yarn white cloth with design weaved with red colour thread. Function: Its used as a gesture of respect and it's very auspicious. It represents the assamese identity and culture.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: Social status, an act of purification and respect.</p>
<p>3) Who: <i>Bhor Taal</i> Form: Two pieces of half curved metal bowls with a thread in centre. Function: Large bronze cymbals around 2 kg used in the communal singing/chanting of hymns/recitation of scriptures, in a <i>Naamghar</i> service, which are extremely loud and metallic sounding.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: High pitched sound of <i>Bhor Taal</i> during <i>Naam kirtan</i> makes the surroundings pure and sacred for the <i>bhakat</i> and devotees.</p>
<p>4) Who: <i>Khol</i> Form: Its cylindrical and flat from two sides. Function: Its a two sided drums made up of baked clay and used during the performances in <i>Naamghar</i>.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: It is used during the performances in <i>Naamghar</i> and sound of <i>Khol</i> bring devotion inside the <i>bhakats</i> towards Srimanta Shankardeva.</p>
<p>Who: <i>Manikut</i> Form: A seven level stair and square structure and on top a wooden cube and half curved metal sphere. Function: It's literally the Seat of the <i>Guru</i> is a seven-tiered, triangular, wooden throne adorned by the tortoise-elephant-lion motif and other decorative wood work. From the four corners it been carved with the tortoise, elephant and wing lion motifs. The top of <i>Manikut</i> holds a shrine, which carries sacred</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: Its in the core space called <i>jewel's</i> hut, which is inside the <i>Naamghar</i>. It symbolizes the seven steps to reach <i>Vaikunthas</i> or Heavens.</p>

<p>books (<i>Namghosha</i>, <i>Kirtanghosha</i>) composed by Shankardeva and Madhabdeva. It takes the space of main idol inside the <i>Naamghar</i>.</p>	
<p>5) Who: <i>Gohain Kapoor</i> Form: A hand woven cloth. Function: It is a richly woven textile. It has seven tiered <i>Manikut</i> structure weaved over it in an interesting pattern also 'Hare Krishna' is written over it in Assamese language through weaving. Thirdly <i>Xorai</i> is been weaved over the cloth. The cloth is of red colour and weaving is in white colour (totally different from <i>gamosa</i>). It is been used to cover the <i>Manikut</i>.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: Its a hand woven respectable cloth on which 'Hare Rama and Hare Krishna' mantra is been weaved and it's a very auspicious piece of cloth with which <i>bhakat</i> covers the <i>Manikut</i>. The idea is that <i>bhakats</i> can do the <i>darshan</i> at a particular time of the day only hence, it should be covered.</p>
<p>6) Who: <i>Thapana</i> Form: Wooden square structure with half cut sphere on top. Function: Inside <i>Thapana</i> '<i>Gunu mala</i> (Srimanta Shankardev's book) is been kept. The top most shape is more similar to '<i>paat of padam flower</i>' (part/leaf of lotus flower) as well as <i>Xorai</i>, which is a symbol of respect in Assamese tradition as well as lotus is associated with <i>Vishnu</i>. <i>Thapana</i> has wooden and metal decoration carving over it.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: Its the top most part of <i>Manikut</i> and the most important thing called '<i>Gunu mala</i>' is been kept, which is the most auspicious book written by Srimanta Shankardeva also as there is no idol been used. Hence, this book is the knowledge bank of Vaishnavite tradition. In this songs written by Shankardeva are written.</p>
<p>7) Dashavatara: i) Matsya: Form: <i>Matsya</i> iconography symbolysis of a fish with horn or form of the human like figure connected to a certain part of the fish. Function: <i>Matsya</i> is a fish saviour. It is described to have rescued Manu and earthly existence from a great deluge.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: These are ten <i>Avatars</i> of <i>Vishnu</i>, who is the God of creation. A small fish with Manu's protection grows to become a big fish and the fish saves earthly existence.</p>
<p>ii) Kurma: Form: It shows in a form of either a tortoise or more commonly as half man-half tortoise. Function: <i>Kurma</i> appears at a time of crisis to restore the cosmic equilibrium. He appears in the form of a tortoise or turtle to support the foundation for the cosmos and the cosmic churning stick.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: Together the Gods and demons churn the ocean with divine serpent Vasuki as the rope (<i>Samudra Manthan</i>), and the churn skins out a combination of good and bad things. Along with other products, it produces poison which Shiva drinks. <i>Kurma</i> symbolizes the need for foundational principles and support for any sustained creative activity. <i>Kurma's</i></p>

	<p>shape reflects the presumed hemispherical shape of the earth and this makes it part of the fire altar design. He is also considered the lord of the waters.</p>
<p>iii.) Varaha: Form: <i>Varaha</i> is with a boar's head and human body, the rescued earth lifted by <i>Varaha</i> is often depicted as a young woman called <i>Bhudevi</i>. The earth may be depicted as a mass of land balanced on his tusk. Function: when the demon Hiranyaksha tormented the earth (personified as the goddess <i>Bhudevi</i>) and its inhabitants, she sinks into the primordial waters. <i>Vishnu</i> took the form of the <i>Varaha</i>, descended into the depths of the oceans to rescue her. <i>Varaha</i> slew the demon and retrieved the Earth from the ocean, lifting her on his tusks, and restored <i>Bhudevi</i> to her place in the universe. In <i>Vishnu purana</i> his feet represent the <i>Vedas</i> (scriptures), his tusks represent sacrificial stakes. His teeth are offerings, his mouth is the altar, tongue is the sacrificial fire. The hair on his head denotes the sacrificial grass, the eyes represent the day and the night. The head represents the seat of all, the mane represents the hymns of the <i>Vedas</i>. His nostrils are the oblation, his joints represent the various ceremonies. The ears are said to indicate rites. Thus, states <i>Vishnu Purana</i>, the <i>Varaha</i> is the embodiment of the Supreme Being who brings order amidst chaos in the world by his sacrifice. <i>Varaha</i> symbolizes the resurrection of the earth.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: <i>Varaha</i> describes the role of warrior king, who goes to the depth to preserve dharma and rescue goddess earth (kingdom) from forces of persecution and evil.</p>
<p>iv) Narsimha: Form: He is with a upper body with human torso and lower body, with a lion face and claws, typically with a demon Hiranyakashipu in his lap whom he is in the process of killing. Function: <i>Narasimha</i> is a significant iconic symbol of creative resistance, hope against odds, victory over persecution, and destruction of evil. He is the destructor of not only external evil, but also one's own inner evil</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: <i>Narasimha</i> is known primarily as the 'Great Protector'. He specifically defends and protects his devotees from evil.</p>

<p>of "body, speech, and mind" states Pratapaditya Pal.</p>	
<p>v) Vamana: Form: Dwarf, benevolent God who in three steps defined all there is in the universe. Function: He incarnates in a time of crisis to restore cosmic balance by creatively defeating the <i>Asura</i> king <i>Mahabali</i>, who had acquired disproportionate power over the universe. <i>Mahabali</i> symbolizes Samridhi (prosperity), the three feet symbolizes the three states of existence (<i>Jagrat</i> (awake), <i>Swapna</i> (dream sleep) and <i>Sushupti</i> (deep sleep) and final step is on his head which elevates from these three states, unto <i>moksha</i> (spiritual liberation, release from rebirths).</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: He benevolent God who protects the oppressed humanity by his creative acts against the evil.</p>
<p>vi) Parshurama: Form: Shown with two hands, with axe in his right hand either seated or standing. Function: Appear at a time when overwhelming evil prevailed on earth.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: He is with weapons and power, had begun to abuse their power, take what belonged to others by force and tyrannize people. <i>Parashurama</i> corrects the cosmic equilibrium by destroying these evil <i>Kshatriya</i> warriors.</p>
<p>vii) Rama: Form: He holds a <i>bana</i> (arrow) in his right hand, while he holds the <i>dhanus</i> (bow) in his left. He is been shown standing in <i>tribhanga</i> pose (thrice bent "S" shape). He is shown black, blue or dark color, typically wears reddish color clothes. Function: One must also introspect and never neglect what one's proper duties, appropriate responsibilities, true interests and legitimate pleasures.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: Rama's life and comments emphasize that one must pursue and live life fully, that all three life aims are equally important: virtue (<i>dharma</i>), love (<i>kama</i>), and legitimate acquisition of wealth (<i>artha</i>).</p>
<p>viii) Krishna: Form: His iconography typically depicts him with black, dark, or blue skin, like <i>Vishnu</i>. Function: The common theme presents <i>Krishna</i> as the essence and symbol of divine love, with human life and love as a reflection of the divine.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: He is the God of compassion, tenderness, and love in Hinduism.</p>
<p>ix) Balrama: Form: His strong associations with farming and</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: He is associated with strength, farmers and farming.</p>

<p>farmers, as the deity who used farm equipment as weapons when needed.</p> <p>His <i>ayudha</i> or weapons are the plough <i>hala</i> and the <i>gada</i>. The plough is usually called <i>Balachita</i>. He often wears blue garments and a garland of forest flowers. His hair is tied in a topknot and he has earrings, bracelets and armlets and he is known for his strength, the reason for his name.</p> <p>Function: he has been a historically significant farmer-related deity.</p>	
<p>x) Buddha:</p> <p>Form: He symbolises the concept of wisdom, patience, determination and intellectualism.</p> <p>Function: The function is to reveal the potential of enlightenment to the law of life so that one can lead the happy and meaningful life.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: A preacher who deludes and leads demons and heretics away from the path of the <i>Vedic</i> scriptures, but another view praises him a compassionate teacher who preached the path of <i>ahimsa</i> (non-violence).</p>
<p>xi) Kalki:</p> <p>Form: He will be on top a white horse and his sword will be drawn, blazing like a comet.</p> <p>Function: He is the harbinger of end time in Hindu eschatology, and will destroy all unrighteousness and evil at the end of Kali Yuga.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: It expresses the isead of <i>adharama</i> and acts as an invisible for ce to distroy evil.</p>
<p>8) Who: Doba</p> <p>Form: Big half curved sphere with a flat elastic surface.</p> <p>Function: It's an important musical instrument of <i>Naamghar</i> and its made of baked clay. Its used to call the <i>bhakats</i> before the <i>Naamkiran</i> starts. It is been carved on the main gate to welcome the visitors with music and hymns. The plays and songs brings the spiritual entertainment for the people.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: Its an auspicious instrument played to call devotes for <i>Naamkirtan</i> in <i>Naamghar</i> from various villages and its pitch is so high that it reaches to the far direction.</p>
<p>9) Who: Bota</p> <p>Form: Circular form with cylindrical stem.</p> <p>Function: Its been used to keep prasad in <i>Naam kirtan</i>.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: Its an auspicious tray and used to give highly important things related to <i>Naamghar</i> like prasad and flowers. <i>Prasad</i> is never been kept in any kind of utensil. It should be kept in <i>bota</i>.</p>

<p>10) Who: <i>Khorahi</i></p> <p>Form: Cylindrical shape half open box and on top of that half curved strip.</p> <p>Function: Its been used to keep flowers for <i>Naam kirtan</i>.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: The idea behind <i>Khorahi</i> is that special flowers should reach the <i>Manikut</i> during the <i>Naam kirtan</i>.</p>
<p>11) Who: Diya Stand</p> <p>Form: A straight structure surrounded by small half cut curves. It has seven levels one on top of each other.</p> <p>Function: Its a diya stand having large height and show the largeness of trees. Used to light up around the <i>Manikut</i> for prayer. As compared it with <i>Manikut</i>, visually it guides the <i>bhakats</i> that if trees are so large then <i>Manikut</i> is larger than that.</p>	<p>Value/idea expressed: It represents long trees in a forest and devotes has to cross it to reach God. It also brings positivity into the environment with good smell.</p>

5.5.3 Form analysis:

With the analysis of visual data, which was gathered during the field visit. The main gate of *Naamghar* is been analysed. Firstly the form is been extracted from the gate with the help of line drawings. With this the variation in form evolved. Further its been categorized and arranged in a decade wise manner. In the fig. 5.34 researcher has depicted the variations in form at the main gate of *Naamghar*. It can be seen that NSU1, NR9, NR10 and NSU11 are having transition from trilobe arch with segmental pediment to flat arch with triangular pediment. Secondly there is use of *sikhara* on top of main gate. Further one can see from 16th century towards 20th century the transition from semi circular arch and triangular arch towards semi hexagonal arch. It can be seen from this transition that use of more complicated structures has been diminished over the period of time and its been taken over by straight and flat arches. It may be because of the change in construction style or non availability of the maker. There could be a reason that it may have been done because of non availability of the material. The form is been simplified and taking the shape of a house kind of structure. Which may be also because of the increase in numbers of *Naamghar* in the society also may people does not have much time to construct a new *Naamghar* by keeping in mind there design dimensions and they are taking another house and converting it into a *Naamghar*.

Further the Main gate is been analysed to understand its semantic meaning. Also to find out that what makes a *Naamghar* gate a valid gate or what are the elements which gives the identity to the main gate.

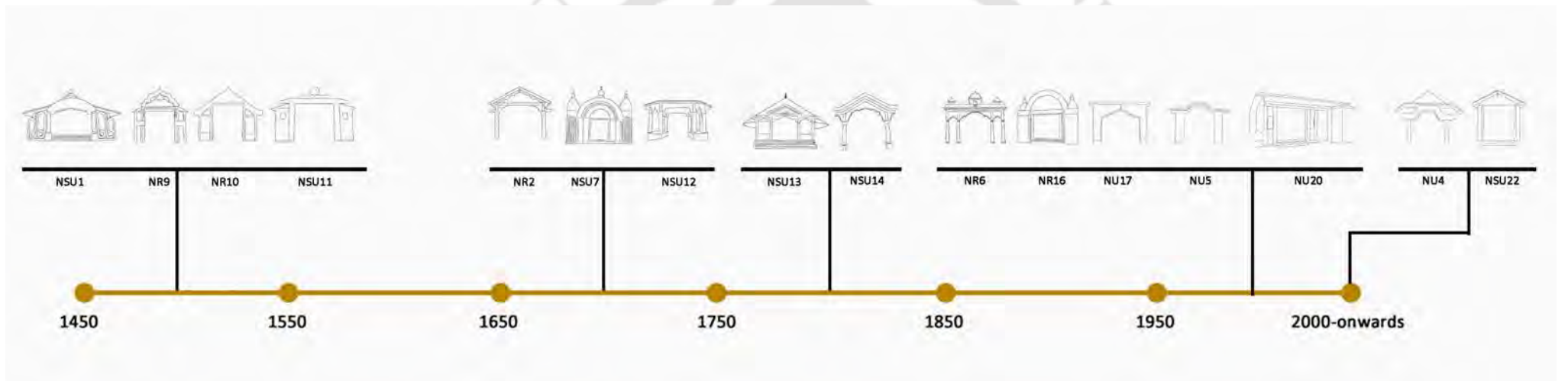


Fig. 5.34: Timeline showcasing the Main gate changes and variations over the period of time

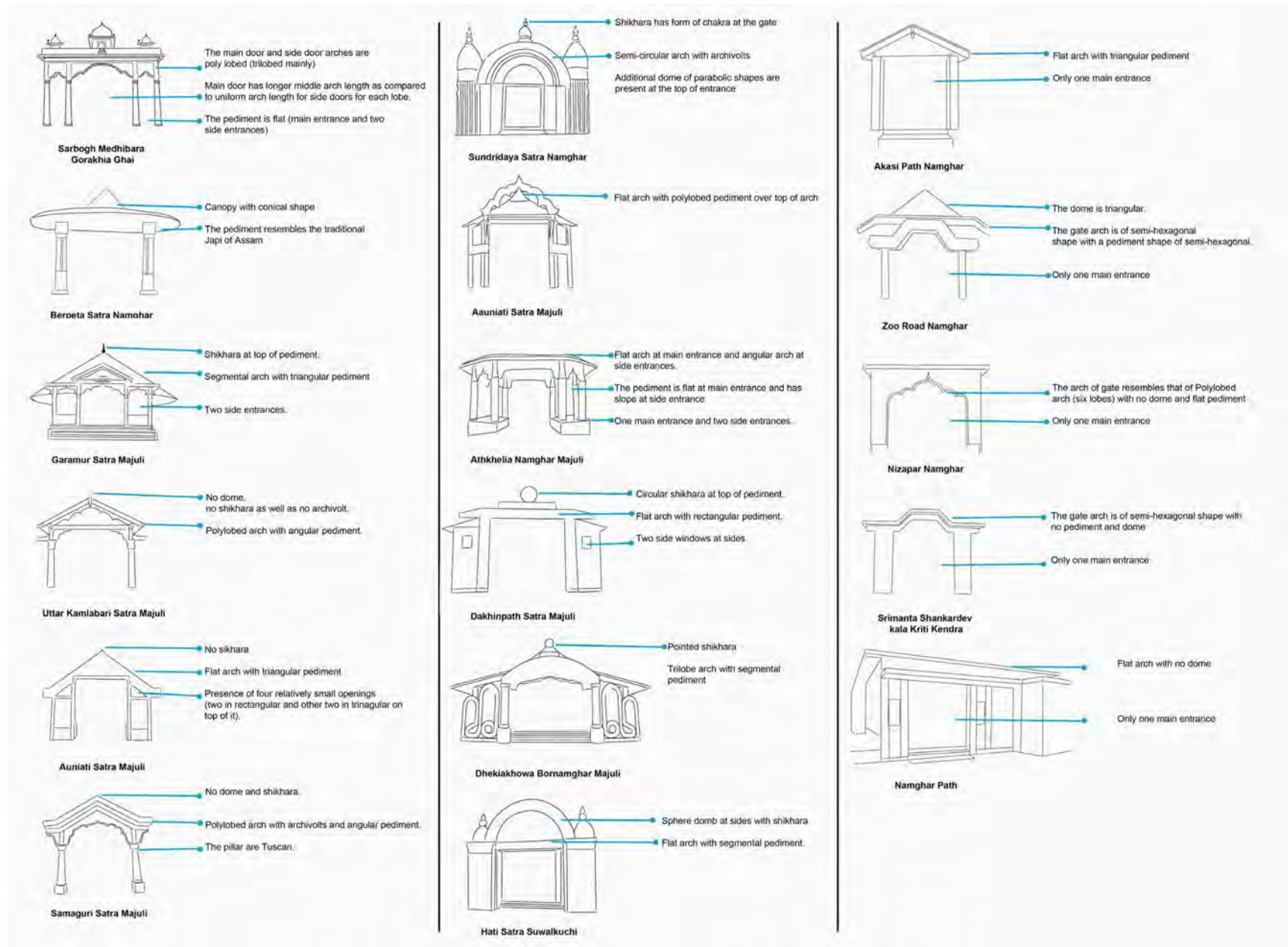


Fig. 5.35: Main gate semantics to understand the “Gateness” of a Gate

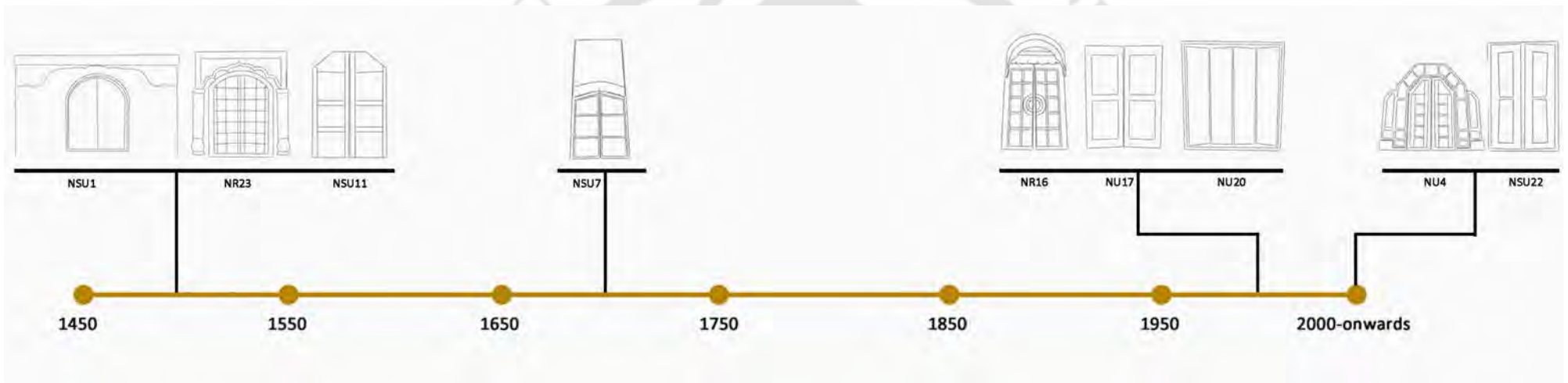


Fig. 5.36: Timeline showcasing the Main door changes and variations over the period of time

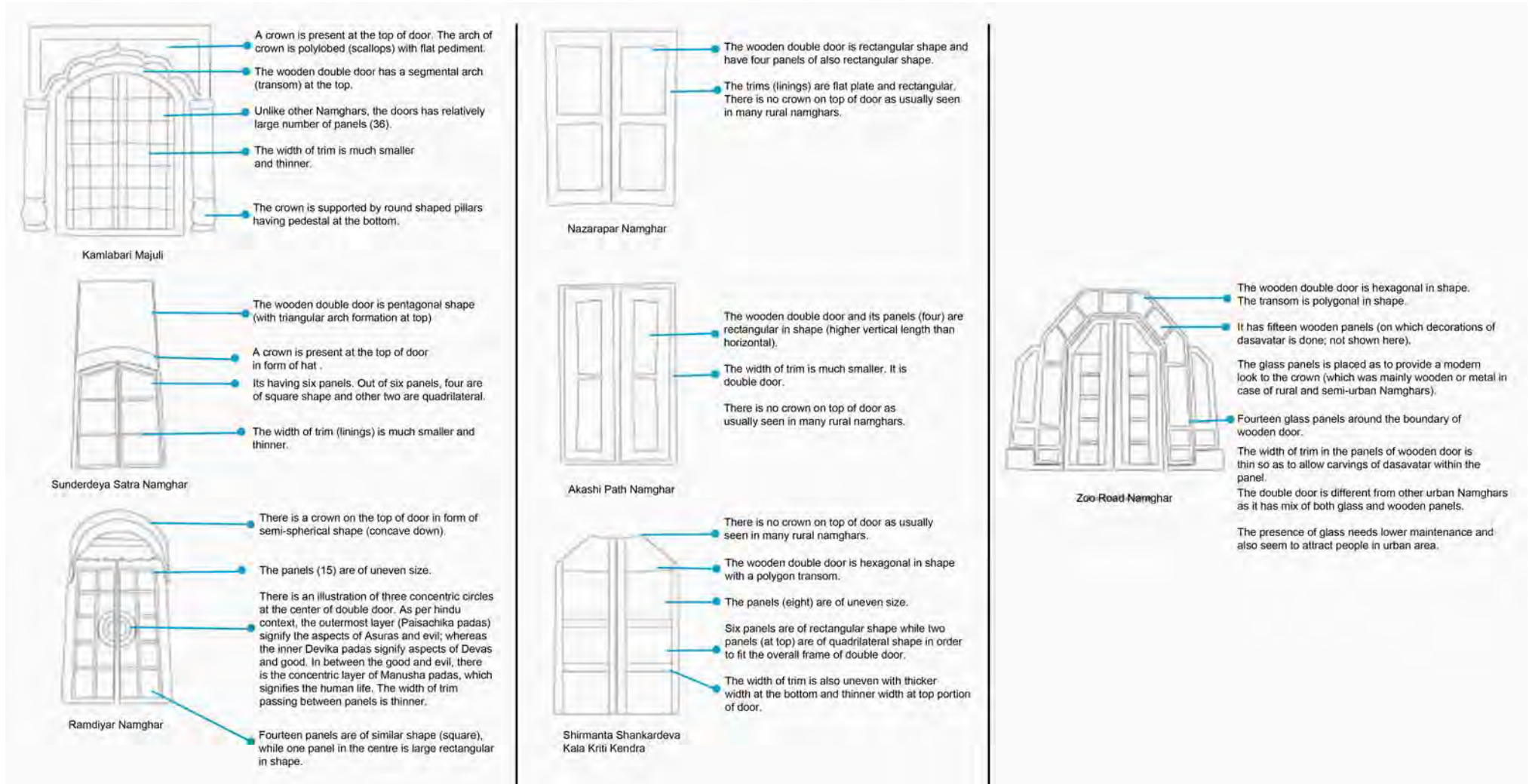


Fig. 5.37: Main gate semantics to understand the “Doorness” of a Door

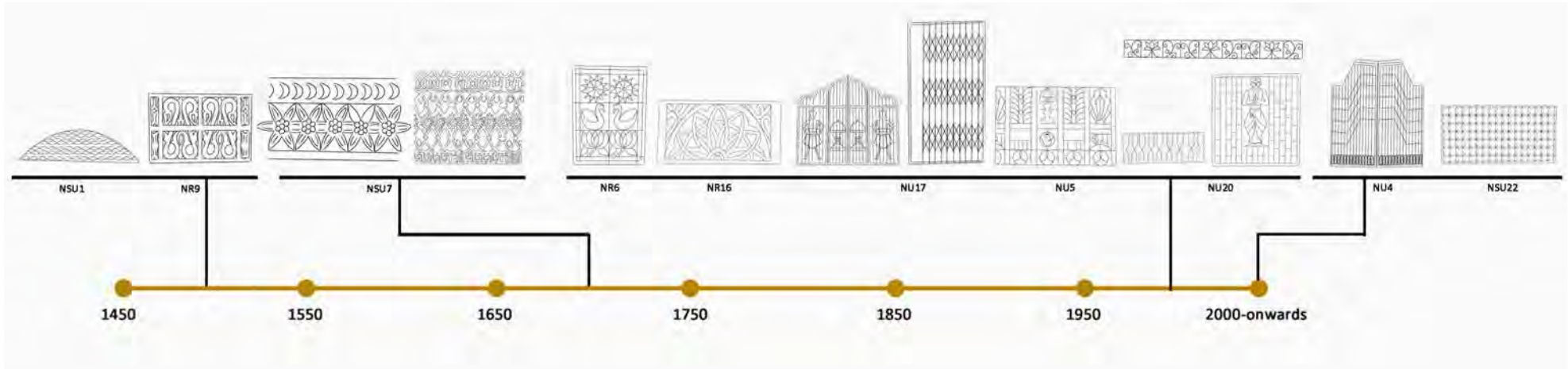


Fig. 5.38: Timeline showcasing the Jali work changes and variations over the period of time

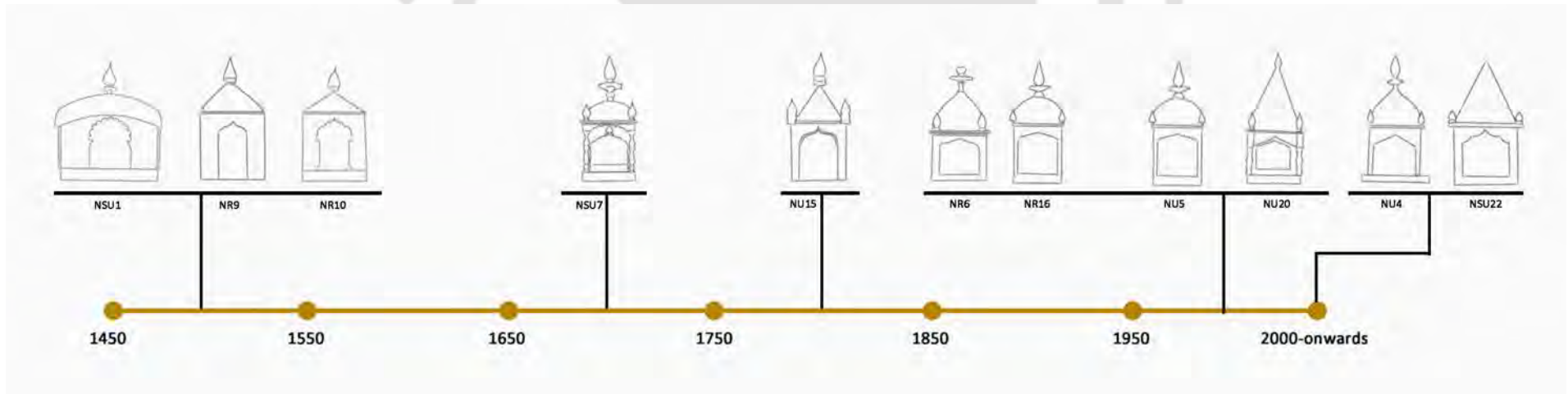


Fig. 5.39: Timeline showcasing the Palki changes and variations over the period of time

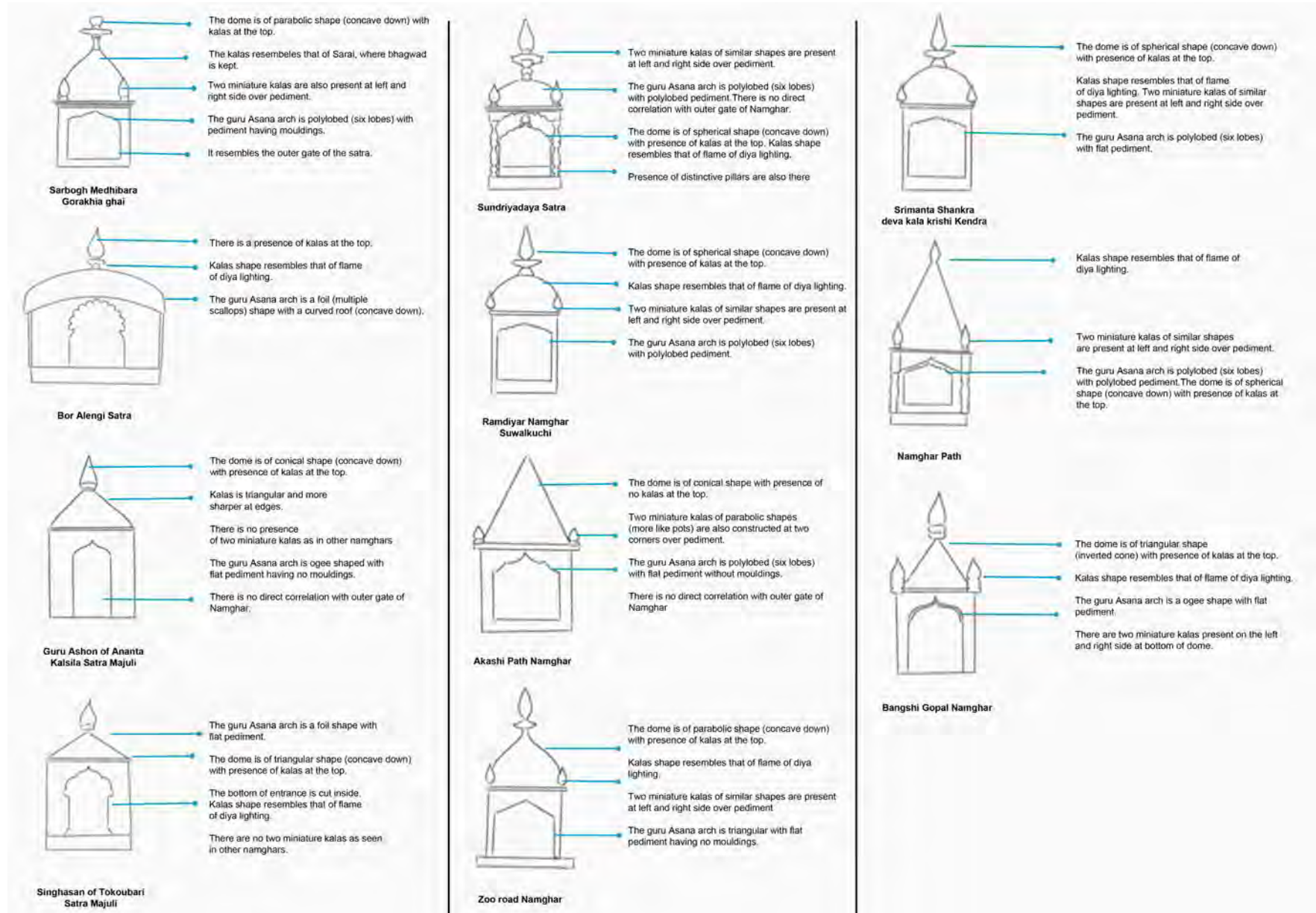


Fig. 5.40: Main gate semantics to understand the “Palkiness” of a Palki

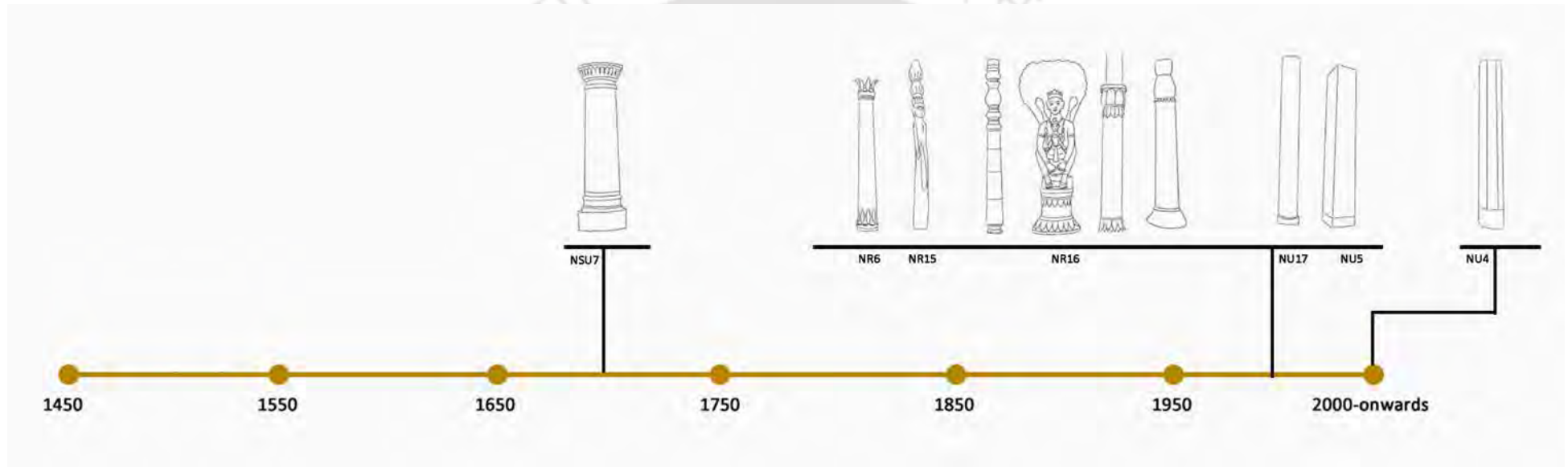


Fig. 5.41: Timeline showcasing the Pillars changes and variations over the period of time

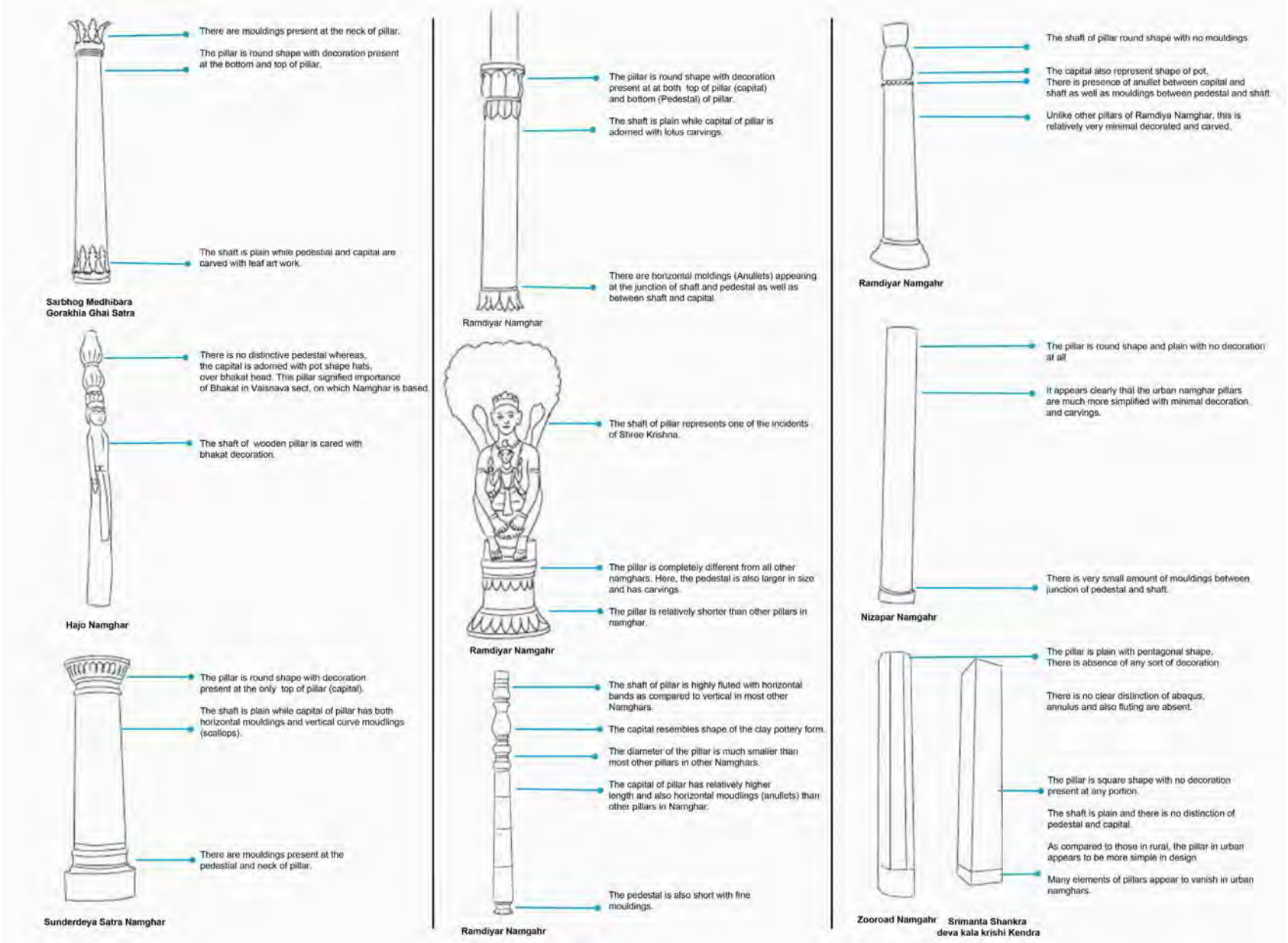


Fig. 5.42: Main gate semantics to understand the “Pillarness” of a Pillar

5.5.4 Colour Analysis:

Color palette is an essential output of color quantization process. Color palette provides information on the dominant list of colors of that particular image.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

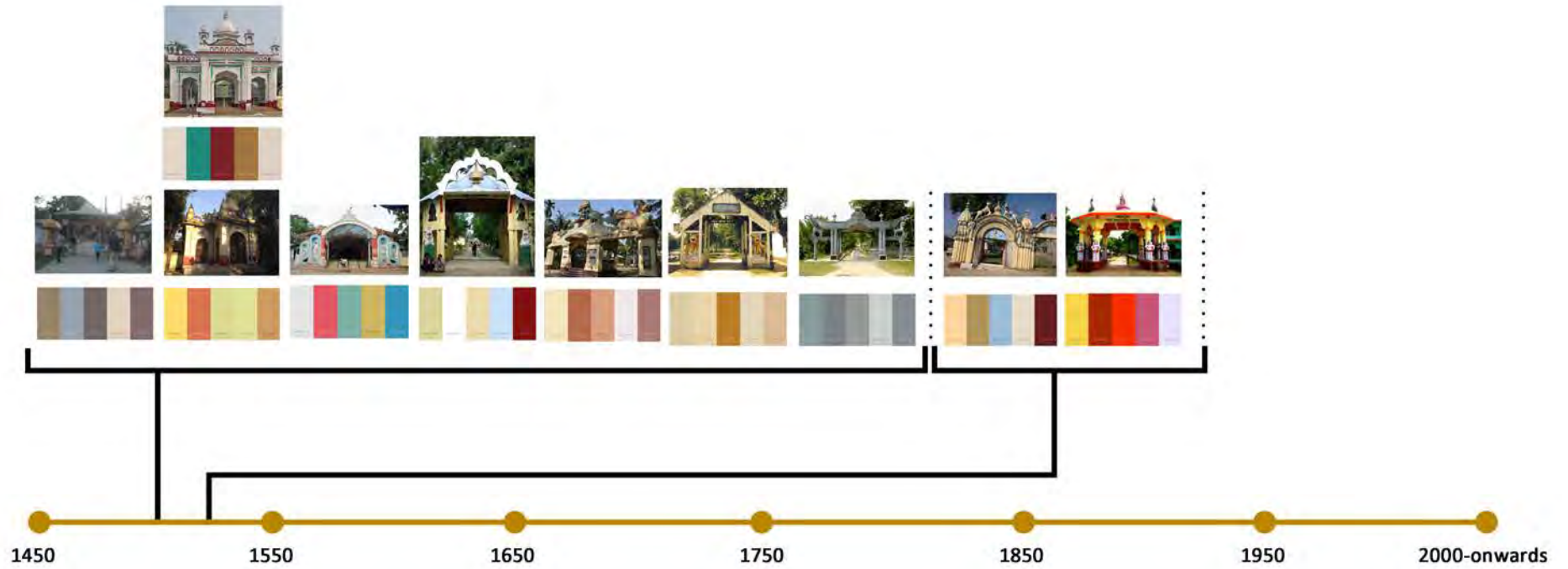
Fig. 5.43: Colour palette generation of Naamghar elements

It was found that the colors palette varies significantly across different elements shown in Fig. 5.43. Even within a same element, the color may vary hugely. The main gate is mainly dominated with the crater brown and dove grey. For sculptures such as lion (*singha*) on outer gate, the top portion till half is dominated with Carnaby Tan white. Its face is dominated with shade of brown and muddy water (brown) colors. Floral designs are painted usually on bright red background while lotus leaves with puce and lily leaves with metallic gold.

The petals of both the flowers are decorated with plantation green color. The *Manikut* itself is decorated with dusty grey and horizon blue colors. The relief of God and also of *dashavatar* on walls of *Naamghar* is mainly represented with different hues of blue color. The cloths are mainly colored using different forms of yellow, red or green for God, however, it is black for evil. The blue color usually represents sea (or water) and the relief on walls represents a certain section of Hindu mythology from *Mahabharata*.

On the basis of visual data colour palette is been generated of 26 Naamghars. In fig. 5.44 (a) one can see the decade wise use of colour in various main gates of *Naamghars*. Main gate has an important significance as it indicate the viewer about the identity of the *Naamghar*. With the colour of the main gate one can predict weather it's a *Naamghar* gate or a temple gate or Masjid gate. One can see that the colour palatte is been changed over the period of time. From bright colour palatte its been moved towards grey and dark tones over the decades. It indicates that while selecting the colours the bright use of colours is not encouraged. In fig. 5.44 (b) one can see the dominance of colours over the period of time. In some parts of the gate its been used in abundance and in other parts a small part is been highlighted with bright use of colour.

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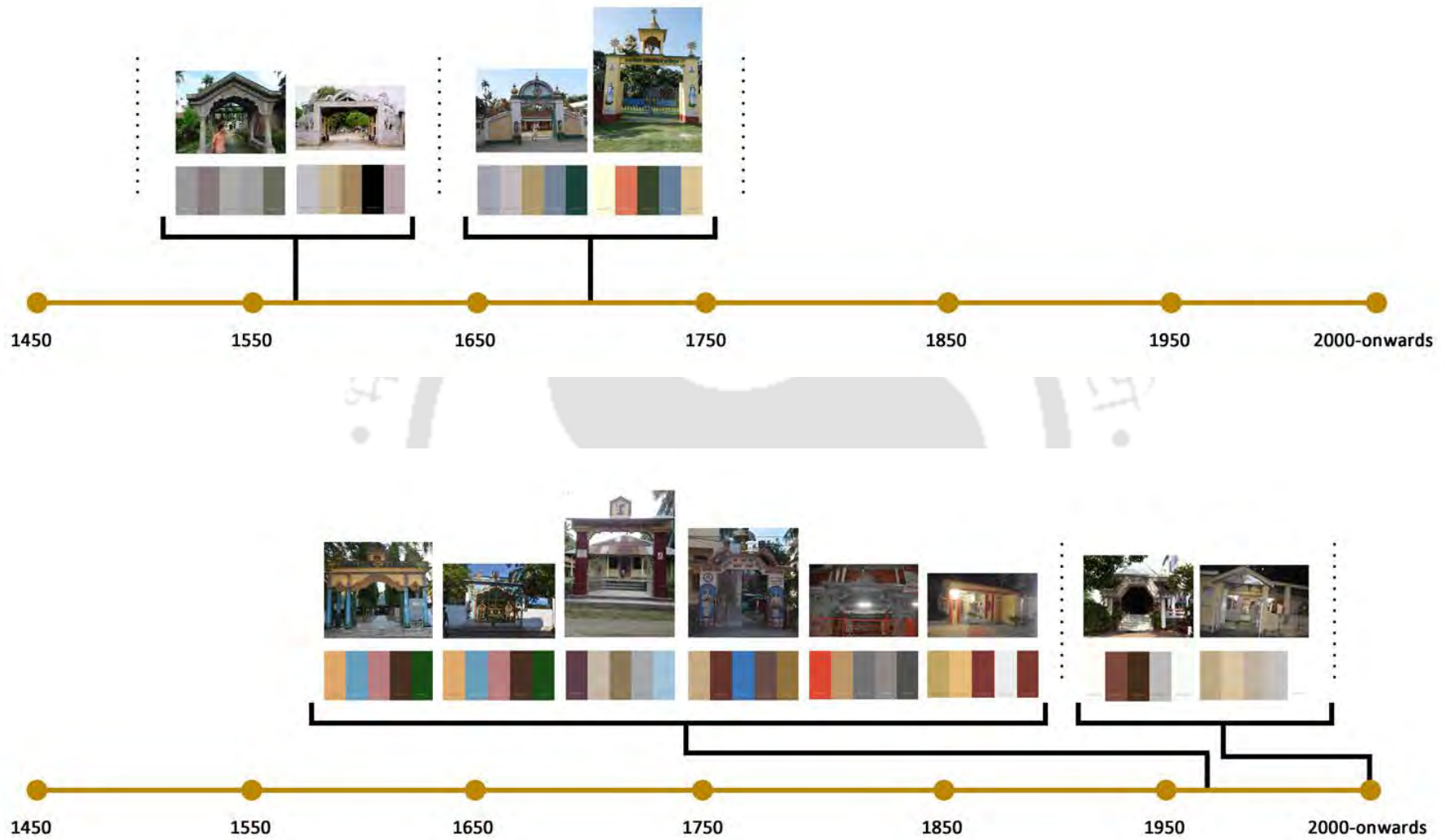


Fig. 5.44 (a): Colour generation of Main gate of Naamghars

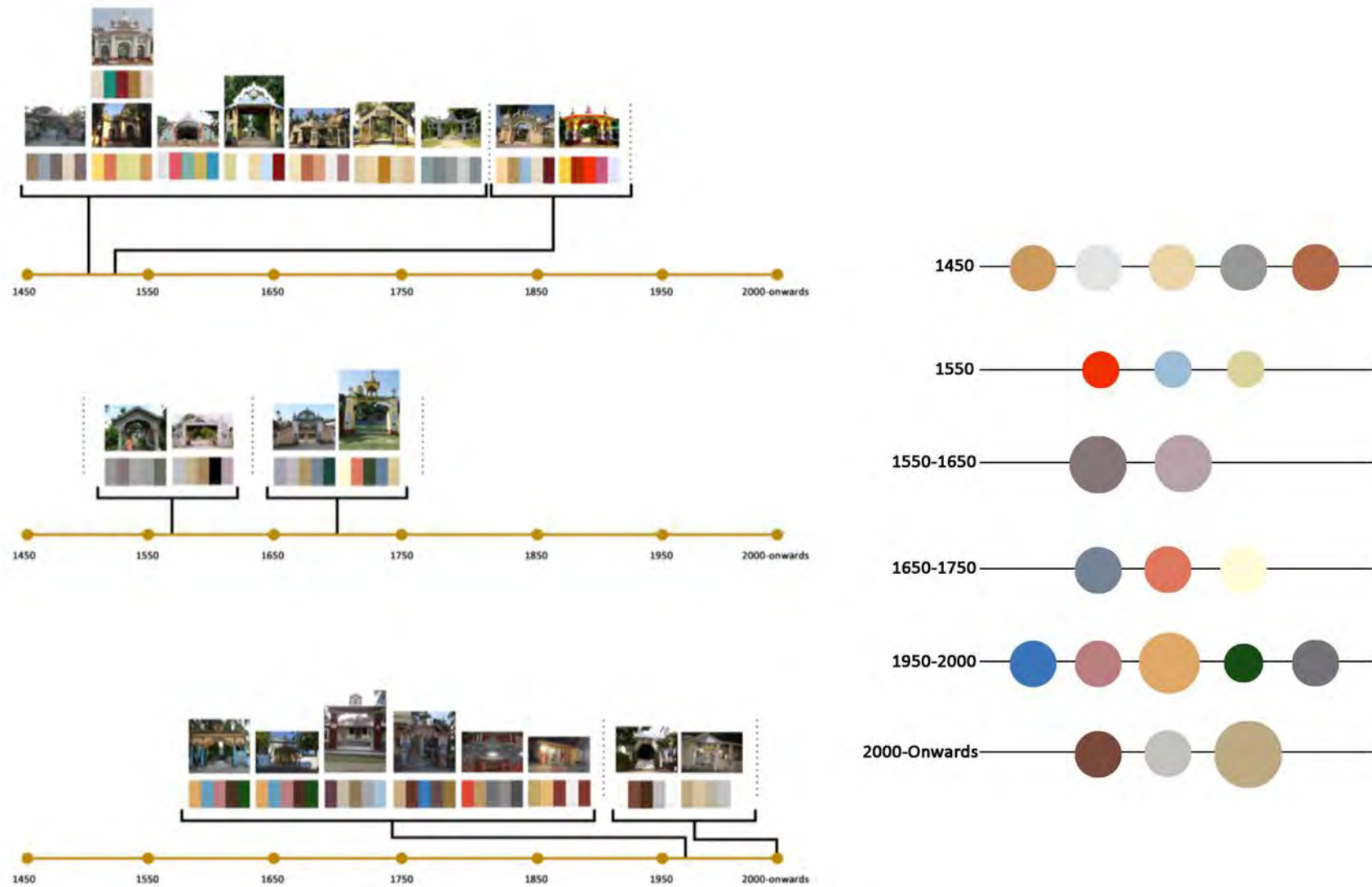


Fig. 5.44 (b): Dominating colours on the Main gate of Naamghar

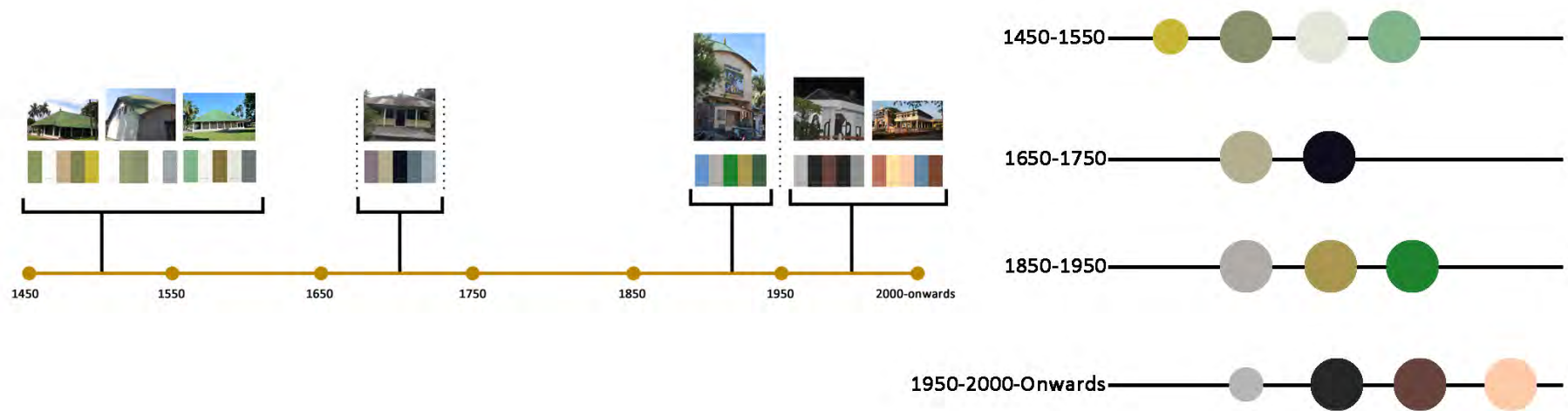


Fig. 5.44 (c): Dominating colours on the outer structure of Naamghar

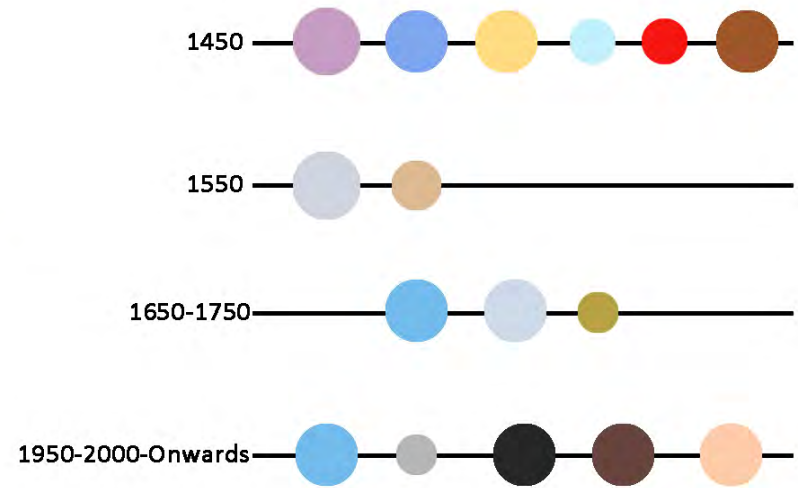
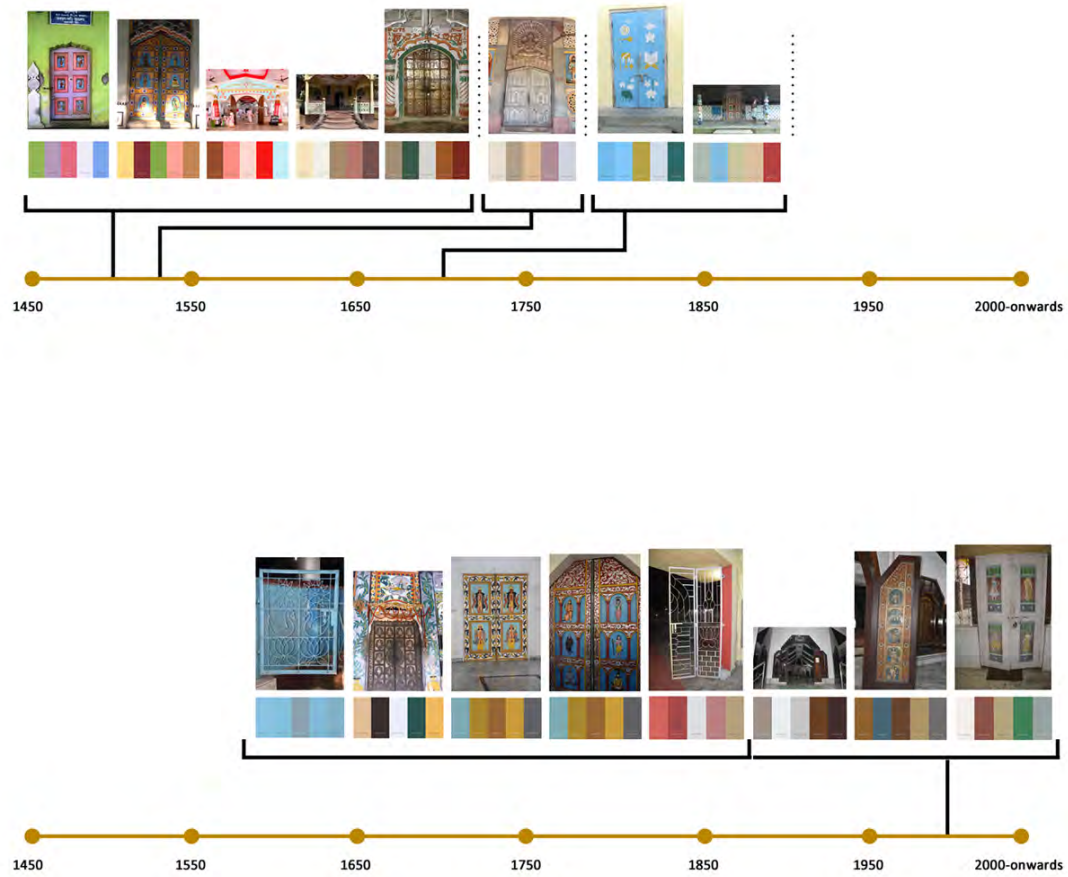


Fig. 5.44 (d): Dominating colours on the main gate of Naamghar

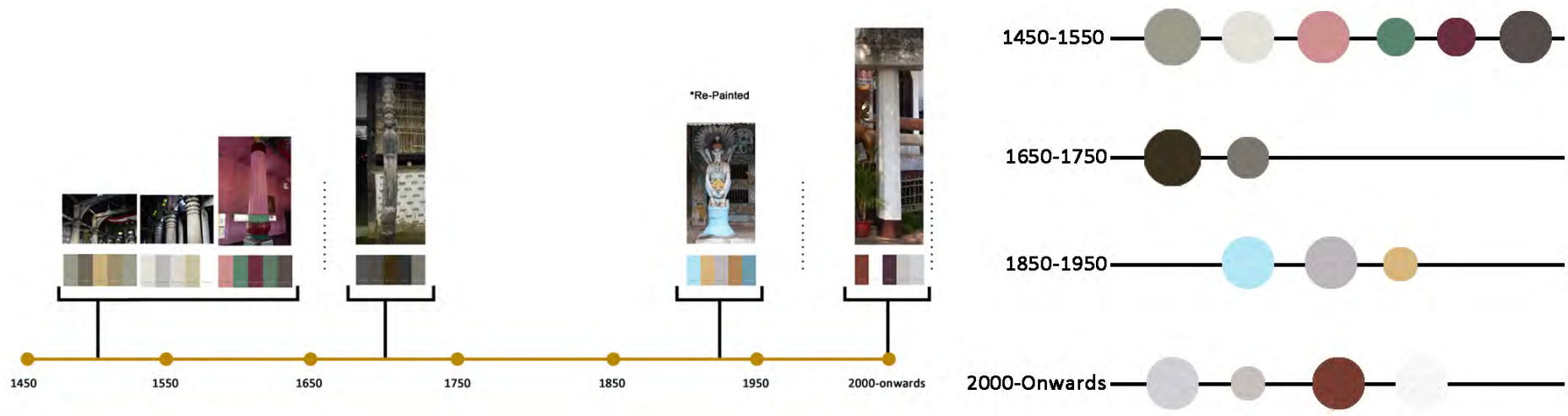


Fig. 5.44 (e): Dominating colours on the Pillars of Naamghar

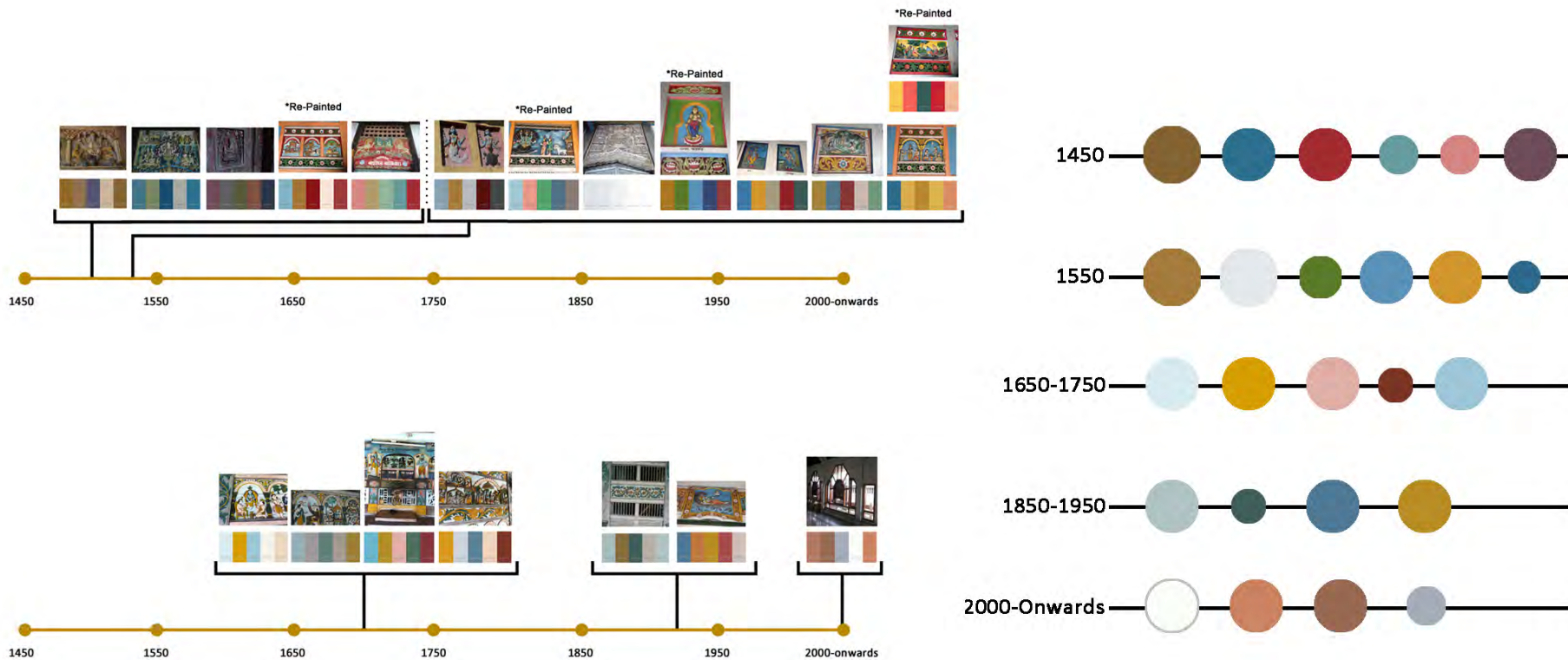


Fig. 5.44 (f): Dominating colours on the wall and narratives of Naamghar

5.5.4 Material Analysis:

Material plays a very important role in building of *Naamghar*. It also brings restrictions in terms of making of design elements as well as construction. It also has its own limitations in terms of making a particular part like if one wants to make a carved illustration with cement as compared to wood, then its details may change. From the data one can see that there are different kind of material is been used in *Naamghar* like wood, concrete, metal, brass and in urban setting marble, plastic, tin, aluminum and even glass is been used. In table 5.4 one can see that the material is been arranged according to the establishment of *Naamghar* and *Satra* in Assam.

Table 5.4: Use of material on the basis of century wise

Code	Age of Establishment	Concrete	Marble	Wood	Tin/ Aluminum	Glass	Metal/Brass	Other
SU1	639	✓		✓				
SU24	639			✓				
R8	600	✓		✓				
R9	600			✓				
R10	600			✓				
SU11	600			✓				
R23	600			✓				
R8	600	✓		✓				
R21	600			✓			✓	
R2	505			✓				
R25	505			✓				
SU7	500	✓		✓				
SU12	500			✓				
R3	400			✓				
R26	400			✓				
R13	440			✓				
R14	437			✓				
R15	300			✓			✓	✓
R6	100						✓	
R16	75	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓ (Plastic)
U17	55				✓		✓	
U5	48	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
U18	44			✓				

U19	38			✓				
U20	20	✓	✓	✓				
U4	18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
SU22	16			✓				

1450-1550: Out of 26 *Naamghar* in most of them Wood is been used almost in 9 *Naamghar*. Concrete is been used in 3 *Naamghar*. Only in 1 of the *Naamghar* brass is been used (mostly on the doors).

1650-1750: Out of 26 *Naamghar* in 4 *Naamghar* extensive use of wood is been done.

1750-1850: Out of 26 *Naamghar* in 1 *Naamghar* extensive use of brass metal is been done. And in 1 *Naamghar* wood is been done with other new materials.

1850-1950: Out of 26 *Naamghar* in 5 *Naamghar* use of wood is been done. And in 3 *Naamghar* there is a use of tin and aluminum is been done. In 2 of the *Naamghar* use of brass metal is been done. In 2 *Naamghar* use of marble is also been used. In 3 *Naamghar* use of concrete is been done. In 1 *Naamghar* use of glass is been done and in 1 *Naamghar* use of plastic is also been done.

1950-2000: onwards: Out of 26 *Naamghar* in 2 *Naamghar* wood is been done. In 1 *Naamghar* glass is been done, In 1 *Naamghar* brass metal is been done. In 1 *Naamghar* use of Aluminum is been done. Use of marble is also been done in 1 of the *Naamghar* and in 1 of the *Naamghar* concrete is been done.

List of material used in *Naamghars* in prority wise manner

Code	Year of Establishment	Concrete	Marble	Wood	Tin/Aluminum	Glass	Metal/Brass	Other
NR2	505			✓				
NR3	400			✓				
NR6	100						✓	
NR8	600	✓		✓				
NR9	600			✓				
NR10	600			✓				
NR13	440			✓				
NR14	437			✓				
NR15	300			✓			✓	✓
NR21	600			✓			✓	
NR23	600			✓				

NR25	505			✓				
NR26	400			✓				
NR16	75	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓ (Plastic)
NSU1	639	✓		✓				
NSU7	500	✓		✓				
NSU11	600			✓				
NSU12	500			✓				
NSU22	16			✓				
NSU24	639			✓				
NU4	18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	No pillar
NU5	48	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		No Pillar
NU17	55				✓		✓	No pillar
NU18	44			✓				No pillar
NU19	38			✓				No pillar
NU20	20	✓	✓	✓				No pillar

Table 5.5: Use of material on the basis of Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban

Out of 26 *Naamghar* in 14 *Naamghar*, which are in Rural setting. In 13 of them use of wood is been done shown in table 5.5. In 2 of the *Naamghar* use of concrete is been done. In 4 of the rural *Naamghar* use of metal and brass is been done. In 1 of the *Naamghar* tin is been done and in 1 of the *Naamghar* Plastic is been done. In 3 of the urban *Naamghar* use of aluminium and tin has been done.

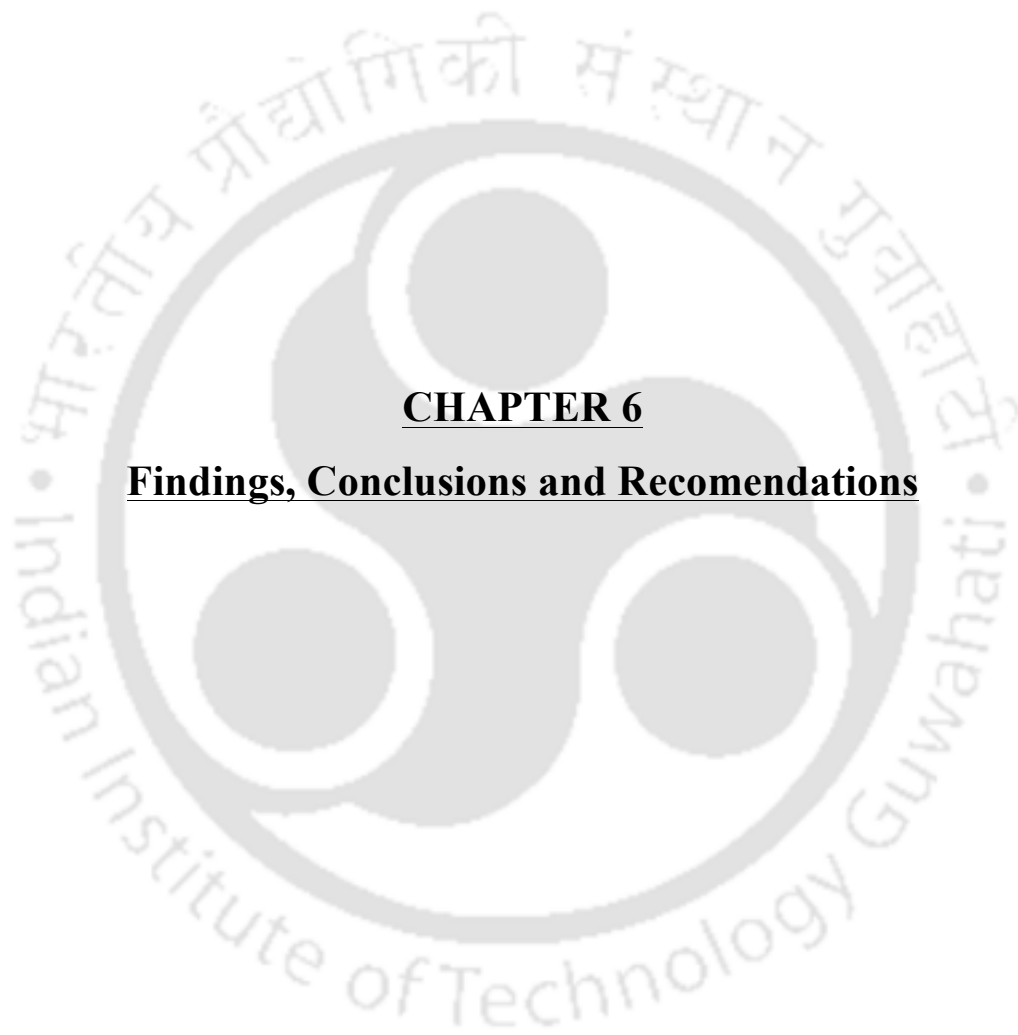
Out of 26 *Naamghar* in 6 of the Semi-Urban *Naamghar* use of wood is been done. In 2 of the *Naamghar* use of concrete is been done.

In 6 of the Urban *Naamghar* in 5 of them use of wood is been done. In 3 of the *Naamghar* use of concrete is been done. In 3 of the Urban *Naamghar* use of marble is ben done. In 2 of the urban *Naamghar* metal and brass is been done and in 2 of them use of glass is been done.

5.5 Summary and conclusion:

As exhaustive analysis of data collected with the help of personal visits, interviews schedules and focused social group studies and also audio visual recording led to rich data about various aspects of the study. The major conclusions from analysis of these data are:

- Overview: There is a long history of religious movement and about 600 year old *Naamghars* are in existence. The movement has integrated the society involving diverse groups of communities. The *Naamghars* exhibit rich cultural traditions having social involvement and various design elements.
- The study was done to unfold the rich meaning of various entities using techniques appropriate for each aspect of the study. Use of self developed questionnaire, interview schedules as also social group discussion was made. Card sorting in social groups were used to identify perception of typical characteristics of *Naamghar*. Extensive visual techniques were used to capture the various dimensions of design for the study.
- As 26 *Naamghars* were selected for the study situated in Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban setting as also spread over a period of 600 years. The data and analysis can be considered adequately represented.
- Three major aspects were identified;
 - (i) Visual design details,
 - (ii) Relation of Design with *Vaishnavite Sect* and
 - (iii) Spatial and temporal evolution of *Naamghars*.
- The semantics, syntactic, semiotic, denotative and connotative as also pragmatic implications were identified as revealed from analysis of the data collected.
- The study of the various *Naamghars* revealed the nature of its structure, the social setup as also specific design elements like Main gate, main door, main hall, roof structure, *Manikut*, pillars, windows etc.
- The variation regarding material use with regard to location as also year of *Naamghar* showed is been elaborated.
- The colour analysis of various objects found in *Naamghar* both external and internal including walls, carvings etc. brought forth the dominant colours as used during different periods and location of the *Naamghar*.
- Study of the form was done over the long period as also spread over geographic location.
- The significance of different elements points to the semiotic and *connotative* meaning in relation to semantic and syntactic expression. For example *Xorai* appears to be a container but actually its connotative meaning is for offering *prasad*, which is placed in front of the altar (*Naamghar*) for blessing by the Lord.



CHAPTER 6

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 6: Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Overview

The research was set out to examine the design elements of *Vaishnavite* tradition of *Naamghars* in Assam, which was initially established in 15th century and continued to build new once till today. It was transversed and covered through initial review of literature on both social and design perspective in Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban areas, thus building block for the analysis of the relationship between the three. It further explored their meanings, design details and through visual analysis methods. Based on initial study, 26 *Naamghars* in Assam were chosen to conduct this study. Interview was conducted with *Satradhikari*, *bhakats*, *devotees*, architects, makers, craftsmen, local shopkeepers, visitors and others to understand the views and insights associated with *Naamghar*. Further tests with design tools which were calibrated and validated for the study were performed. On the basis of re-evaluation for the study, the dominant areas of Assam were using both qualitative and quantitative research strategies were done. Based on the study, the selected data had been mapped, segregated and divided into various sections to understand the variations in a structured manner. With this approach the data had been funneled down and selected to examine the various elements which are necessary in the *Naamghar* setting. Various forms, patterns, colour, variations, scale, shape, harmony, composition has been explored to understand the deeper meaning associated with the *Naamghar*. Visual documentation using appropriate techniques, various *connotation* and *denotation* analytics has been done using analytical and mapping techniques.

While Quantitative methods of data collection including self-administrative questionnaire survey was carried out at the same time qualitative methods including semi-structured open-ended personal interviews, focused group discussions and non-participant observations were used to seek an indepth understanding of the process used in making of the *Naamghar*. Quantative and qualitative data were analysed using semantic and characterization theory by Atvankar and Barthey's theory. The combination of this complex relationship between different aspects of *Naamghars* on various aspects of design elements were derived.

This chapter, presents the findings of the empirical tests, draws some key conclusions which shows retaining design elements in the *Naamghars*, which are important aspect of the system. An attempt has been made to identify the continuities

which have persisted among the changes. They are further translated into necessary framework focusing on three major aspects which were identified (i) Visual design details, (ii) Relation of Design with *Vaishnavite Sect* and (iii) Spatial and temporal evolution of *Naamghars*. These plays an important role in making of a typical *Naamghar* in the Assamese community.

6.2 Findings:

6.2.1 Study of Stuctural Design over the period of time: Qualitative and Qualitative assessment – Case studies of 26 *Naamghars* in area of Assam, North East, India

i) Physical structure

The qualitative data has been collected and analysed for Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban *Naamghars* of Assam. Its been catagorized into Super-ordinate level, Basic level and Sub-ordinate level. By analysing 26 case studies showed that Urban *Naamghars* are significantly changing as compared to Rural *Naamghars* in terms of socio-temporal differences. (Urban *Naamghars*: Zoo road *Naamghar*, Nizarapar *Naamghar*, Akashi Path *Naamghar*, Srimanta Shankardeva Kala Kriti Kendra, Rural *Naamghars*: Barpeta Satra, Auniati Satra, Bangshi Gopal, Hajo Pakhmela *Naamghar* etc.) but they have strong co-relation of similarity in its physical stucture.

After catagorizing and doing Typicality analysis following traditional elements were derived (a) Importance of Main gate, (b) Main door, (c) Outer structure of *Naamghar*, (d) Pillers, (e) Manikut, (f) Thapana, (g) Hall division, (h) Chandratap, (i) Jali work, (j) Dashavatar, (k) Flower & plants, (l) Birds and animals, (m) Wall & narrative, (n) musical instruments, (o) Lord Krishna, (p) Lamp stand and (u) Utensils in the *Naamghars*. Its been analysed using syntactic, semotic, connotative, denotative and pragmatic methods.

There is an extent of modifications happened in *Naamghars* over the period of time and with population as a variable:

- a) For instence outer gate of *Naamghar* in (a) Nizarapar (Urban: 55 years old), (b) *Naamghar* Path (Urban: 20 years old) and (c) Akasipath *Naamghar* (Urban: 30 years old). It shows that the variation of total area of *Naamghar* and also decision makers to corresponding *Naamghar* with year of establishment. It can be observed

that area of gate appears to decrease but at a much smaller rate than that of total area of *Naamghar*. Reasons for the same were found that there is lack of sufficient space and sufficient funding which lead to these decisions.

- b) The main door for recently constructed *Naamghars* in urban area are usually plain and simple as compared to those of older *Naamghars*, which are adorned with characters from *Vaishnava* sect (*Bhakats*, *Xorai*, *Narasimha*) etc. with *jali* work on grilled gates.
- c) In most of the *Naamghars* the *Lai khuta* (a special pillar) occupies a prominent place for identification; subsequently the pillar seems to lose its significance particularly in the urban setting. Also the pillars are found to be plain and simple without any decorative relief work or carving in *Naamghars* of recent times and urban location.
- d) There is specific pathway going towards God in prayer hall for making space for devotees to sit.
- e) On the other hand, when volume occupied by *Manikut* is compared, it was found that the size of *Manikut* also appears to decrease at a faster rate. The *Manikut* size is much higher (7-tier) and also adorned with more relief work, in case of older rural *Naamghar* whereas, for *Manikut* in urban *Naamghars* is coming up with 3 tier structure.
- f) Some element such as musical instruments like *doba*, *taal*, *Manikut*, *prasang* seems to be unchanged irrespective of changes in space and time.
- g) When the decade wise comparison of material has been done it has been found that use of wood is been used extensively from 14th century onwards. Although in 19th century onwards its use has been reduced to only doors of the *Naamghar*. From 1850 to 1950 use of modern materials have been started like use of marble, glass, tin and aluminium and extensive use of concrete is been started for the making of the *Naamghar*. When the Rural, Semi urban and Urban *Naamghar* were compared it has been found that in Urban *Naamghar* use of glass, tin, aluminium and marble has been increased as compared to Rural and Semi urban *Naamghar*. In rural *Naamghar* use of wood is extensive, which now is shifting towards concrete. Surprisingly metal and brass is been used in certain traditional objects like *Xorai*, *diya* stand, *kohari* and *bota* also retaining its authenticity. Use of traditional materials has been reduced (wood, metal and thash) and its been totally taken over by modern material like concrete, glass, marble and plastic.

h) It has been found that the number of pillars are reducing from twenty to zero in number. It means that in modern *Naamghars*, the pillars are vanishing. Also it has been found that there are no pillars now inside the main *Kirtan Ghar* and few of the pillars are found totally outside the main *Kirtan Ghar*. It has also been found that the shape of the pillar has been transferred from cylindrical towards diagonal and cubical. This change in pillar design has been done because of the construction style according to the respondents. From the research it has also been found that the carvings on the pillar has been reduced as compared to older times and now there is hardly any carvings found over the pillars.

ii) Visual culture

- a) The **colour** of almost all design elements appear to change significantly even among Urban *Naamghars* (located closely to each other).
- b) Blue **colour** as background for relief work is considered mostly associated with lord *Krishna*.
- c) **Flowers, animal and forms of God**, design shifting to door and windows (grills) from outer wall relief in Urban *Naamghar* or newly renovated *Naamghars*. This may be due to lack of craftsmen in city or high maintenance on concrete.
- d) Lotus **flower** have been used as a motif in various places in terms of carving, sculpture, *jali* work, *chandrataap* as a design element.
- e) In traditional Naamghiars many ornamental designs were used. One of them is lotus, *rangiyal* and *ashoka flowers*. It has been used in many ways. 1. Relief, 2. Metal casted symbol on the doors, 3. Within sculpture as a design motif on *Manikut* also 4. *Chandrataap*, 5. Outer gate.
- f) **Symbols** such as petals (lotus) (representing *Vishnu*) have been used in different forms in illustrations of gate, *Xorai*, *Thapana* top symbol, *Manikut* top etc.
- g) Pictorial depiction of **Animal** creatures representing *Singha* (lion) is also associated with *Narashimha* (*dassavatar* of *Vishnu*)
- h) Boar **animal** creature has also been depicted on *Manikut* and as illustrations carved on walls of *Naamghar*.
- i) Use of different lotus **symbols** above *Jay vijay* and on new metal gate.
- j) Perhaps due to migration of Muslim population and since construction workers are mainly from this community, the **colour** of structure (green) and design of main gate (*Xorai* replaced Muslim gumbad) eg. in Rakh mandir (*Naamghar*) Nagaon

Bazar, Howly Charali *Naamghar's* main gate is been developed like Muslim gumbad.

iii) Religious structure

- a) There is tendency for more emphasis on *Xorai, bhakat and dasavatar* designs on main door or entrance in urban *Naamghar*. This might be also to distinguish themselves from temples in the city.
- b) Placement of *Garuda and Hanuman* statues is not that prominent in urban or recent *Naamghars*.
- c) Old age *Naamghars* appear to have more design elements in terms of **floral, animal** and forms of God than their recent once.

iv) Functional changes

- a) **Outer gate** elements are not considered that essential as that of *Kirtan* hall and *Manikut* in urban *Naamghars*.
- b) There is a trend to increase **light passage** in new *Naamghars* where openings at ceiling or sides (windows) can be seen. This is in contrast to older *Naamghars*, which entirely covered with thatch roof (with entrance only from side).
- c) **Diya stand** is placed in a container to avoid any overspill of oil.

v) Change in facilities

- a) Due to lack of space, there is almost no presence of **well or pond** in recent *Naamghar* (Except in Nazarpur; where well is maintained since 55 years).

6.2.2 Study of Social Aspects over the period of time: Qualitative and Qualitative assessment – Case studies of 26 Naamghars in area of Assam, North East, India

i) Wider community

- a) Most of *Naamghars* are including a part of temple in their **system** to reach out to wider communities of people (including those who migrated from other places).
- b) There is tendency of **religious liberation** in city where some *Naamghars* have strated *Durga Puja* (idol worship) to attract more audience and celebration.

ii) Funding

- a) To attract more **donation**.
- b) Amount of relief work seems to be **dependent on funding**.
- c) Urban *Naamghars* get **donation** from Member of Legislative Assembly's Local Area Development fund as compared to rural *Naamghar*, where people or committee members donate money. This also causes difference in number of decision makers, which is obviously lesser in Urban than rural areas.

iii) Outreach

- a) Presence of **relief work** and design appears to be proportional to size of *Naamghars* in urban area and also number of households connected. This is because fund collection depends on outreach of that particular *Naamghar*.
- b) Tendency to add similar structure of temples to attract more people in urban areas and also increase the visibility.
- c) Tendency to open singing and dance classes nearby or within *Naamghar* to reach out to more audience.
- d) The new construction, which is happening even in rural *Naamghar* has also kept in mind, that the design should resemble that of temple. So we find in particular Sarbhog *Naamghar* in which, the entry point of main hall has a temple top structure made of cement.
- e) Before only *chakra* (associated with *Krishna*) was there, but now they have added *Trishul* (Associated with Hindu *Saivatite* temple) at rooftop of *Naamghar* to attract more people.

iv) Gender:

- a) Due to changing lifestyle and with working for earning, Women participation in *Kirtan* and committee has increased (Nizarapar *Naamghar*).
- b) Monks live the life of celibacy in old *Satra* but now that tradition is vanishing.

v) Health issues:

- a) Due to health issues, the placement of diyas have either become limited in number or has been provided outer space.

vi) Incorporation of faiths:

- a) It has also been found that main God is *Krishna* and *Balram*. But now presence of other forms of God and Goddess (*Shiv, Brahma, Narad muni, Kali Maa*) are also been found in the illustrations carved on the walls of *Naamghar*.
- b) Some people have said, it is *Naamghar* and some said, it is *mandir*. So the identity is merging.

vii) Social Settlement:

- a) Area of *Naamghar* is large in villages so the authorities want people to come to bigger temple for worshipping their God/Goddess rather than going to small temples.
- b) One new gate, *avatar* of *Krishna* (having butter) has been added to Gate, for connecting people to *Naamghar* space as temple].
- c) Design is changing so to meet the needs of the audience.
- d) Loud Speakers have been used now in *Naamghar*. These have some resemblance to that used in *Masjid* etc. The growing population of muslim Might be an influence. It may be due to migrant population also.
- e) The new construction, which is happening in rural *Naamghar* has also kept in mind that the design should resemble that of temple. So we found in particular *Sarbogh Naamghar* the entry point of main hall has a temple top structure made with concrete.

6.3 Major findings and Interpretation:

The broad structure of the *Naamghar* has survived over time and social changes. However, the social changes, seems to have effected both the structural changes of *Naamghar* as also its functions in some aspects. The study shows that urban *Naamghars* have tried to modify the outlook in order to attract larger number of community members. The changes in the construction techniques have had their impact on the manner in which various elements of structure are affected like roof, window, entrance, flooring etc. The colour and the design have also changed partly due to compulsions of construction as also due to social faith of wider communities. The rural urban divide is reflected in highlighting some of these changes as the *Naamghar* in the rural setting retained the traditional stucture and social function as compared to their urban counterparts. The funding of the

Naamghars has affected the manner in which its social organization is adapting to the changing time. Inclusion of religious motifs, relief work, sculptures, carvings have also their imprint with regard to social changes and inclusion. The changes in family structure and job profile have resulted in more women coming to the *Naamghar* as compared to the men.

- The shape of *Udantu Singha* found in most of the earlier *Naamghar* largely in Rural and Semi urban settings has been changed in a manner that it looked like a regular *Singha*. In some urban *Naamghar* it has totally disappeared. It may be because of non availability of artisans or resources.
- The presence of *Bhakats* with *bhor taal* and *khols* is quite dominant in the older *Naamghars* mostly situated in rural setting but with the passage of time and particularly in urban settings the image of *bhakat* with *khols* has substantially changed. Part of the reason is that the shape and the significance of main gate has not been sustained particularly in *Naamghars* located in urban settings.
- There used to be great significance attached to the presence of ***Xorai with Bhagwat and Gamosa together***. They use to be an indicator of the place being a *Naamghar*. The study found this design of main gate in almost all the older *Naamghars*.
- Significantly the top of the main gate having the shape of *Xorai* is present in most of the *Naamghars* located in rural and semi urban settings. But in some of the *Naamghars* situated in urban settings the *Xorai* is missing, instead of that it is replaced by *jhapi* in some of the *Naamghars* located in urban settings.
- The top part of the main gate in some of the rural *Naamghar* has the shape of poly lobed (trilobed mainly) whereas in semi urban it has semi circular shape with archivolts with *shikhara* having *chakra* at the gate. In comparison to that the gate of *Naamghars* in urban settings is mostly having either the flattened arch with triangular pediment or arch is semi-hexagonal shape with a pediment.
- In most of the *Naamghars* situated in rural settings there is a prominent presence of ***Vakhuntha (Unnat sajja/Vakhuntha dhamm)*** and *Naamghars* in urban settings this is typically missing. One of the reason could be the influence of other religious groups and communities. Another reason could be non availability of traditional artisans.
- Traditionally the presence of gate keepers on the main door called *Jay Vijay* used to be invariably present in older *Naamghars* located mostly in rural settings but

with the passage of time and we find in some semi urban and most of the *Naamghars* situated in urban settings *Jay Vijay* are typically missing. This is another indication of dilution of the portrayal of religious designs. This may also be attributed to either non availability of conventional artisans or lack of concern for maintaining the sanctity of *Naamghar*.

- The study also revealed that one essential characteristics of *Naamghar* namely *Manikut* has undergone substantial change. In the rural and semi urban settings it use to be seven steps indicating the seven levels to reach God. Strangly this is diluted to three tier in *Naamghars* situated in urban settings. This may be because of the space constraint or cost.
- The study of pillars in *Naamghar* reveals rich resources of motifs and design associated with *Vaishnavism*. The various parts of the pillars and the location of the pillars are all important in this regard.
- The pillars in older *Naamghars* situated in mostly in rural settings depict various designs of *Vishnu*, lotus and *bhakat*. Infact the whole pillar is carved with these motifs. The situation in later *Naamghars* mostly located in urban settings is dramatically different. In a number of situations the pillars are bereft of any motif and are just plane or ordinary pillars. This is a major departure and can not be attributed mainly to non availability of artisans. This indicates a shift in design and perceiving the image of *Naamghar*.
- There was large number of wall naratives in older *Naamghars* situated mostly in rural settings depicting the various *Vaishnavite* stories of mostly *Krishna*. One can prominatly notice the absence of these pictorial depections on walls in *Naamaghar* situated in most of the urban areas. This again reflects the shift in perception of *Naamghar* in the later urban settings and it can not be attributed to non availability of artisans or pictures. Another reason could be that such *Naamghars* are associated with smaller number of families and population in cities.
- In rural *Naamghars* there is a rich design tradition of *jali* work made of metal or concrete but in *Naamghars* located in urban settings except the gate in the walls the *jali* work is totally missing and it has been replaced by glass in some *Naamghars* and in others ordinary windows.
- The presence of lotus and *nirmali* flower as motifs at various positions is typically present in *Naamghars*. Although they continue to register there presence in all

Naamghars of the study whether rural, semi urban or urban yet the shape and design has undergone noticeable change. This has been discussed in the previous chapter on analysis.

6.3 Novalities (Key Contribution) of the Present Research:

1. Contribution to knowledge base: The study attempted to contribute towards knowledge base with regard to the institution of Naamghar over spatio-temporal extension particularly with regard to the socio-religious dimensions and aspects of design elements evolution. It also contributed in the systematic documentation of visual data, which can be further used for design and development of Naamghars with the identified design elements.

2. Methodological perspective: It also provides a methodological perspective for the study of evolving socio-religious institution, its social relations and changes in design elements over space and time. This contribution can be of relevance for other researchers in similar studies. The analytical strategies used in the study particularly in relation to concepts, design elements and therefore an evolving movement can find wider use in the study of similar social institutions, which have deeper meaning and which needs to be deciphered.

3. Perspective of Intervention Strategy: The technique of digital restoration of historical institutions can find wide use in the study of similar researches. The study can also contribute towards comprehension of essential elements of Naamghar, so that it not only contributes towards the essence as also towards how it perceived changes. This can suggest the essential elements, which needs to be preserved despite the changes, that takes place in details and caused by social compulsions. The study also underlines the necessity of comprehending meaning involved in any complex social institution and its variation over spatio-temporal changes. The technique of meaning analysis can be used in similar institutions while unfolding deeper essential meaning is so important.

6.4 Discussion section:

Following are the specific objectives, which has been fulfilled:

(a) Explore and study the design elements of *Naamghar* over a period of time and track the changes and design details to enhance the design directions for upcoming *Naamghar*.

The Naamghars in various locational settings: Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban are spread over a wide area and a period of about 500 years, were studied. A good number of Naamghars (26) showed substantial variation in various design elements. In particular the design and number of gates, the pillars, various areas, as also Manikut, walls, doors jali-work etc.

The changes in design elements of various Naamghars were studied using the technique of digital documentation and card sorting method. This was particularly relevant in the case of Naamghar damaged by natural calamities or being very old. The essential form and their design continuity was identified to serve as guideline for the future Naamghar. These directions have been discussed in Chapter 3 of Data Collection. Also it has been summarized in Chapter 5 of Findings.

(b) Understand the levels of these changes, through study of the modification of *Naamghar* located in Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban areas and how the social and cultural aspect contributed in the level of variations in the *Naamghar* establish recently.

Though the above changes in design can be identified as substantial, yet at the same time there is a continuity of form in the details that vary. For instance the study of older Naamghars, which were established in Rural setting shows detailed variation of design in relation to motifs, design of flowers, wall-narratives, colour, materials etc. At the same time there are noticeable variations of architectural and design details. The overall size of the Naamghar has got reduced substantially. Also the Manikut has been reduced from seven tiers to three tiers in urban areas. These details have been discussed in Chapter 4 of Data Analysis and Interpretation.

The Naamghar established in earlier period particularly in Rural areas are spread over a large area, have many entrance points, whereas Naamghar established later in Semi-Urban and Urban locations, where population density is high and occupations are different,

as availability of land is scarce are found to be smaller. They have smaller area mostly, one entrance gate of simpler design as also simple motifs. These also differ in terms of design of top part of the buildings as also paintings on the walls. These details were observed on field visits and use of technique of card sorting and these has been discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

(c) Understand the mutual inter-relations among various religious, social and design elements. It is expected that there is same or some continuity in the apparent change. One of the major aim of the research is to identify this continuity.

The inter-relationship of design and social elements was also identified in the study during field observations as also interactions with the Satradhikaris and devotees. It was note -worthy to find that the decision making body has been substantially reduced from 90 to 5 successively. The social interaction and celebrations including Kirtan, Katha and other functions continue to happen, but the participation of women have increased as compared to men. This may be attributed to the changes in nature of jobs in Urban areas. This has been discussed in Chapter 4 of the Thesis.

(d) To identify the extent and nature of modification, which has happened over a period of time and whether these modifications has in any way influenced the identity of the place.

Despite changes in detail, there are a number of aspects which have continued over time. This has happened despite expansion of number of Naamghars, their establishment in Semi-Urban and Urban settings in later period of time. Also reduction in the number of decision making body and resources available with the Naamghar. The role of Naamghar as a centre of social discussios and decision making have somewhat got diluted. This has been discussed in Chapter 5.

All the objectives of the study have been accomplished within the limitations as mentioned above.

6.5 Conclusion and Recomendations:

Since, the basic philosophy of establishment of *Naamghar* was “*Vaishnava sect*”, it can be concluded that the design elements of *Naamghar* may be similar to each other. The design elements such as *dasavatar*, *Xorai*, *Bhagvad* etc. are all related to *Vaisnava sect*, which is also documentation of stories related to each of these elements. Design elements

are changing over time and location to a reasonable degree. However, some basic elements have sustained over time. Due to rapid and heterogeneous (space and time) urbanization, there is development of contrast in social and cultural aspects (including lifestyle) of people. Since, *Naamghar* are considered the basis of binding people in earlier times, it is essential how the design elements are evolving with space as well as time. From the study one can conclude that the changing social and cultural milieu had substantial effect on the design elements of *Naamghars*. However, some essential forms and functions are maintained.

The socio-cultural forces had substantial effect in changing the design elements of *Naamghar* over time. The spatial constraints had substantial effect on design of *Naamghar* as evident from the study. However, in a number of cases the changes had been to adapt to the changing social times. The study concludes that there are adequate changes both in the structural and the design elements with regard to structural elements as also changes due to social cultural dimensions over time. One can say that in various aspects under study viz. Organization, design and social relations there is essential continuity underneath the apparent changes. Also the social changes have had their impact and at a number of cases they have been amalgamated in the development of *Naamghar* as a structure as also its functioning.

6.6 Scopes for future study:

- Suggestions for further study: Since these elements are designed by certain group of people (associated with particular society and culture), these may change. Therefore, further extensive study is required to verify the extent of similarity or change of design elements of *Naamghar*.
- The study involves 26 *Naamghars* spread over various parts of Assam. The study was also focused on *Naamghars* major social relations and design elements. It is suggested that a future study in this area can take up still larger number of *Naamghars* and other aspects like economic relations and inter relation with other religion.



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Appendices

Appendix-1: Semi-Structured Open-ended Personal Interview Questionnaire

A. **First visit** was focused on basic understanding of the *Naamghar* and *Satra* tradition of Assam. In this visit basic questions were asked to understand the demographic condition of the place.

- 1) Basic Questions: Name, Age, Gender, Background, location and year of establishment.
- 2) Visual Documentation of *Satra* and *Naamghar*.
- 3) Organization setting, division of the area.

B. Second Questionnaire

The image shows a questionnaire form with a white background and a blue header. The title 'QUESTIONNAIRE' is in large, bold, black letters. Below it, the subtitle reads 'FOR IDENTIFICATION OF DESIGN ELEMENTS IN VASHNIVITE CULTURE OF ASSAM: A STUDY OF NAMGHAR'. The form is divided into two columns: 'USER GROUPS:' and 'SETTINGS:'. Under 'USER GROUPS:', there are four options: 'SATRAADHIKARES/PRIEST/MONKS', 'BHAKATS/DEVOTIES', 'VISITORS', and 'ARCHITECTS'. Under 'SETTINGS:', there are three options: 'RURAL', 'SEMI-URBAN', and 'URBAN'. At the bottom of the form, there are three blue horizontal bars.

QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR IDENTIFICATION OF DESIGN ELEMENTS IN VASHNIVITE CULTURE OF ASSAM:
A STUDY OF NAMGHAR

USER GROUPS:	SETTINGS:
SATRAADHIKARES/ PRIEST/MONKS	RURAL
BHAKATS/DEVOTIES	SEMI-URBAN
VISITORS	URBAN
ARCHITECTS	

1. Name: _____
Age: _____
Gender: _____
Background: _____
Address: _____
Duration of stay: _____

2. Primary locations where i am conducting my research.
- Geographic location
- Institutional or organized setting
- Type of community

3. How many people are associated with Namghar, what are their roles, relevance and hierarchy?

4. What is your day schedule?

5. According to you what are those outstanding components that reflect characteristics of Assam Namghar?

- The layout of the building _____
- Primary elements _____
- Secondary elements _____
- Miscellaneous elements _____
- Landscaping design _____

6. According to you from where the influence of the elements, which are in the Namghar came from?

- Structure _____
-Assets _____

7. Is there any characteristic Assam Namghar features available in the building? If yes, What are they?

8. According to you how the stucture of Namghar has been changed. What are the significant changes?

9. What are the various symbols used in Namghar, which are important to the stucture?

10. What are the various symbols used in Namghar, which are important to the stucture?

11. How is the appropriate layout and pipeline of the Namghar works? And how is the interior space management works?

12. What are the materials used in making of Namghar?

13. What are the crafts used in Namghar and what is their significance?

14. Who are the artists/craftsmen/Architects etc. who makes designs/narratives on the Namghar?

15. Is the use of modern materials and technology been used in the building? If yes then how?

16. If some part of the Namghar structure suppose to be re-constructed then how will you take the decision?

17. What kind of new construction has been happening over the period of time in this Namghar?

18. What is the step by step pipeline structure of working in the Namghar?

19. How the spaces are changing within the Namghar?

(a) Storage space

(b) Flow of air

20. Who are the artists/craftsmen/Architects etc. who makes designs/narratives on the Namghar?

19. Identification and validation of elements in the following images



19. Identification and validation of elements in the following images



19. Identification and validation of elements in the following images



19. Identification and validation of elements in the following images















C. Third Questionnaire (Semi structured interviews)

A. Location/Foundation

- **When was *Naamghar* established? And who established it?**
 - i. Who were the founders?
 - ii. What was the vision of the group?
 - iii. What is the perceived relation between *Naamghar* & Society?

B. Physical structure and design elements

- **Details of the present physical structure (structure, pillars, walls, roof, space division and various design elements associated with the above (observation of research and discussions)).**
 - i. How is the space organized in the *Naamghar*? (As narrated by people in *Naamghar*)
 - ii. Was the physical structure modified at any time? What were the reasons for modifications (natural causes, desire of people or subtle factors?).
 - iii. What are the most significant design elements that gives the place an identity of a *Naamghar*.
 - iv. Future plans for *Naamghar*.

C. Religious organization

- **How various groups are formed (groups of caretakers, *Satradhikaris* etc.)**
 - i. How the change happened? Is it linked to other *Naamghars*? Do one visit other *Naamghars* or persons from other *Naamghars* visits here?
- **How does the religious organization sustain themselves (donation from devotes, patrons etc.)**
 - i. What part of funds is available for the maintenance of the *Naamghar*? Is it adequate?
 - ii. How much additional funds are required for the sustainability?

D. Relation with society

- **The occasions when people visit the *Naamghar* (daily, weekly, special occasions)**

- i. What are the special occasions?
- ii. To what extent are authorities of *Naamghar* satisfied with the contribution by the society for its sustenance?
- iii. Has the *Naamghar* helped the society in any other ways other than religious aspects say at the time of natural calamity like flood, drought etc. or providing yearly guidance in the life of the devotees?
- iv. How does society help the *Naamghar*? (like through donation, organizing special occasions, physical reconstruction of the *Naamghar*, contributing towards other *Naamghar*)
- v. What are the changes that took place in physical and organizational structure of the *Naamghar* over time? What were the timeline for the changes?
- vi. Future plans for *Naamghar* (like social upliftment)



Appendix-2: List of Naamghars

Code: NU (Naamghar Urban); NSU (Naamghar Semi Urban); NR (Naamghar Rural)

Code	Naamghar/Satra
SU1	Dhekiakhowa Bor Naamghar Majuli
R2	Uttar Kamlabari Satra
R3	Chakrashila Naamghar, Deshmukh village
U4	Zoo road Naamghar
U5	Srimanta Shankardev Kala Kriti Kendra
R6	Sarbogh Medhibara Gorokhia Ghai Naamghar
SU7	Sundridaya Satra
R8	Berpeta Satra Naamghar
R9	Auniati Satra, Majuli
R10	Batadrawa Satra, Majuli
SU11	Dakshinapat Satra, Majuli
SU12	Sri Athkhelia Namghar Majuli
R13	Garumur Satra, Majuli
R14	Samaguri Satra Majuli
R15	Bangshi gopal, Hajo Pakhmela Naamghar
SU16	Ramdiyar Naamghar, Sualkuchi Naamghar
U17	Nizarpar Naamghar, chandmari
U18	Sarbojanin Naamghar
U19	Dehing Satra, Guwahati
U20	Namghar path
R21	Madhupur Satra, Majuli
SU22	Akasi Path Naamghar
R23	Kamlabari Satra, Majuli
SU24	Dhekiakhowa Bor Naamghar Majuli
R25	Uttar Kamlabari Satra
R26	Chakrashila Naamaghar, Deshmukh village
















Appendix-3: List of Naamghars with year of establishment







Code: U (Namghar Urban); SU (Namghar Semi Urban); R (Namghar Rural)

Code	Naamghar/Satra	Age	Rural/Semi-Urban/Urban
SU1	Dhekiakhowa Bor Naamghar, Jorhat	639	Semi Urban
R2	Barpeta Satra Naamghar	600	Rural
R3	Auniati Satra, Majuli	600	Rural
R4	Batadrawa Satra, Majuli	600	Rural
SU5	Dakshinapat Satra, Eastern Assam, Majuli	600	Semi-Urban
R6	Kamlabari Satra, Majuli Island	600	Rural
R7	Patbaushi Satra, Berpeta, Assam	549	Rural
R8	Bordoa Satra, Kamargaon	519	Semi-Urban
SU9	Sundridaya Satra	500	Semi-Urban
SU10	Sri Athkhelia Naamghar, Majuli	500	Semi Urban
R11	Samaguri Satra, Majuli	437	Rural
SU12	Khatara Satra, Darrang, Assam	446	Semi Urban
R13	Garumurh Satra, Majuli (famous for mask making)	440	Rural
R14	Chakrashila Namaghar, Deshmukh village	400	Rural

R15	Bangshi Gopal, Hajo Pakhmela Naamghar	300	Rural
SU16	Borbheti Than, Jorhat	239	Semi-Urban
SU17	Auniti Satra, North Guwahati	102	Semi-Urban
R18	Sarboogh Gorakhia Gosain Than	100	Rural
SU19	Hati Satra, Ramdiyar Namghar, Sualkuchi village	75	Semi Urban
U20	Srimanta Shankardev kala kristi Kendra (Near Big Bazaar)	48	Urban
U21	Nizarpar Naamghar, chandmari	55	Urban
U22	Sarbojanin Naamghar, Guwahati	44	Urban
U23	Dehing Satra, North Guwahati	38	Urban
U24	Naamghar path	20	Urban
U25	Zoo road Naamghar	18	Urban
SU26	Akasi Path Naamghar	16	Semi Urban










Appendix-4: List of card sorting data with coding shown to the respondents

Main Gate					
Image					
Code	R18(MG1)	U20(MG2)	U21(MG3)	SU26(MG4)	U24(MG5)
Image					
Code	U22(MG6)	U25(MG7)	R3(MG8)	R8(MG9)	SU9(MG10)
Image					
Code	SU9(MG11)	SU10(MG12)	SU17(MG13)	R2(MG14)	R15(MG15)
Image					
Code	R15(MG16)	SU1(MG17)	R13(MG18)	R3(MG19)	R15(MG20)
Image					
Code	R6(MG21)	R11(MG22)			

Outer Structure of Building					
Image					
Code	R15(O1)	R2(O2)	U25(O3)	R2(O4)	R2(O5)
Image					
Code	U20(O6)				





Main Door					
Image					
Code	R18(MD1)	U20(MD2)	U21(MD3)	SU26(MD4)	U24(MD5)
Image					
Code	SU17(MD6)	U25(MD7)	SU19(MD8)	U25(MD9)	R15(MD10)
Image					
Code	SU9(MD11)	R2(MD12)	R2(MD13)	R15(MD14)	R6(MD15)
Image					
Code	SU1(MD16)				









Manikut					
Image					
Code	SU16(M1)	R2(M2)	R15(M3)	U24(M4)	U21(M5)
Image					
Code	R18(M6)	U20(M7)	R15(M8)	SU19(M9)	

Palki					
Image					
Code	SU26(P1)	R15(P2)	U21(P3)	R18(P4)	R18(P5)

Pillars					
Image					
Code	R15(P1)	SU19(P2)	U25(P3)	SU17(P4)	R2(P5)
Image					
Code	R2(P6)	U2(P7)			

Wall Narratives					
Image					
Code	R2(WN1)	R2(WN2)	R2(WN3)	R2(WN4)	R2(WN5)
Image					
Code	R2(WN6)	R2(WN7)	R15(WN8)	SU19(WN9)	R15(WN10)
Image					
Code	SU19(WN11)	U25(WN12)	R15(WN13)	U21(WN14)	SU9(WN15)

Image					
Code	SU9(WN16)	SU9(WN17)	SU9(WN18)	SU9(WN19)	SU9(WN20)
Image					
Code	SU9(WN21)	R15(WN22)			

Hall Division					
Image					
Code	SU10(HD1)	SU17(HD2)	R11(HD3)	U21(HD4)	R2(HD5)
Image					
Code	R15(HD6)	U20(HD7)	R15(HD8)	SU19(HD9)	U25(HD10)

Chandratap					
Image					
Code	U21(C1)	U21(C2)	U20(C3)	SU10(C4)	R15(C5)
Image					
Code	SU9(C7)				


























Jali work					
Image					
Code	R18(J1)	U20(J2)	U21(J3)	SU26(J4)	U24(J5)
Image					
Code	U24(J6)	U25(J7)	SU19(J8)	U24(J9)	U21(J10)
Image					
Code	SU9(J11)	U20(J12)	SU17(J13)	SU9(J14)	SU9(J15)
Image					
Code	SU9(J16)	SU9(J17)	SU9(J18)	R3(J19)	R3(J20)
Image					
Code	R3(J21)	R3(J22)	SU10(J23)	R3(J24)	R3(J25)

Image					
Code	R2(J26)	R15(J27)	U24(J28)	U24(J29)	U20(J30)












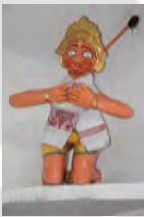































Dashavatar					
Image					
Code	SU17(D1)	SU17(D2)	R2(D3)	R2(D4)	R2(D5)
Image					
Code	R15(D6)	SU19(D7)	SU19(D8)	U21(D9)	U21(D10)
Image					
Code	U21(D11)	U21(D12)	U21(D13)	U21(D14)	U21(D15)
Image					
Code	U21(D16)	U21(D17)	R18(D18)	R18(D19)	U20(D20)

Image					
Code	U20(D21)	U25(D22)	U25(D23)		

Musical Instruments					
Image					
Code	R2(MI1)	R15(MI2)	R14(MI3)	U24(MI4)	U24(MI5)
Image					
Code	U24(MI6)	U24(MI7)	U20(MI8)	U20(MI9)	R15(MI10)
Image					
Code	U24(MI11)				



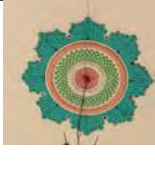

Utensils					
Image					
Code	SU26(U1)	R15(U2)	U24(U3)	U21(U4)	U21(U5)
Image					
Code	U21(U6)	U21(U7)	SU19(J8)	R18(U9)	U18(U10)
Image					
Code	SU9(U11)	SU9(U12)			

Lamp stand					
Image					
Code	SU26(L1)	R15(L2)	U24(L3)	U21(L4)	U21(L5)
Image					
Code	R18(L6)	U20(L7)	U25(L8)	SU9(L9)	

Symbols					
Image					
Code	SU17(S1)	SU17(S2)	R2(S3)	R15(S4)	U21(S5)
Image					
Code	U21(S6)	U21(S7)	U20(S8)	U20(S9)	U20(S10)
Image					
Code	U20(S11)				

Krishna					
Image					
Code	U23(K1)	SU26(K2)	R15(K3)	R13(K4)	U24(K5)
Image					
Code	U21(K6)	R18(K7)	U21(K8)	SU9(K9)	R13(K10)

Image					
	SU19(K11)	R15(K12)	SU9(K13)	SU19(K14)	U20(K15)
Flowers & Plants					
Image					
Code	R18(FP1)	U20(FP2)	U21(FP3)	SU26(FP4)	SU26(FP5)
Image					
Code	SU17(FP6)	SU17(FP7)	SU19(FP8)	R2(FP9)	R2(FP10)
Image					
Code	SU9(FP11)	R2(FP12)	R15(FP13)	U24(FP14)	U24(FP15)
Image					
Code	U24(FP16)	U24(FP17)	U21(FP18)	U21(FP19)	U21(FP20)
Image					
Code	U20(FP21)	U20(FP22)	U20(FP23)	U20(FP24)	U20(FP25)

Image					
Code	U20(FP26)	U20(FP27)	SU9(FP28)	SU9(FP29)	SU9(FP30)

Birds & Animals					
Image					
Code	SU26(BA1)	SU17(BA2)	SU17(BA3)	R15(BA4)	U21(BA5)
Image					
Code	U21(BA6)	R18(BA7)	U20(BA8)	U20(BA9)	U25(BA10)
Image					
Code	U21(BA11)				