

Majuli: The Prosperous River-Island

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Majuli, situated amidst the river Brahmaputra, is a sub-division of Jorhat district of Assam. The entire area of the sub-division is encircled by the main channel Brahmaputra on the East, South and West, and its main tributaries Kherkatia and Luhit on the North. The sub-division lies between the geographical coordinates of Latitude 26045/ and 27012/ North, and Longitude 93039/ and 94035/ East. Majuli shares its border with Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts in the North; Sibsagar district in the East; Jorhat sub-division in the South; Golaghat and Sonitpur districts in the West. The landmass of the sub-division extends for a length of about 90 km. towards East-West direction. It lies at an elevation of 84.5 meters above the mean sea level. The sub-division is delinked by motorable roads from the either side which makes it an island. However, in 1972, a long embankment was constructed over the Kherkatia channel in the north-east of the island by the Flood Control Department to connect Majuli by road with the district of Lakhimpur.

The myrobalan-shaped Majuli is considered to be a large river island in the world. Regarding the land area of the island, different records revealed different data. While visiting the island during the last decade of the 18th century (1792-94), Wade estimated that Majuli comprised an area of 24,863.90 sq. km. (9600 sq. miles). This is believed to be the first scientific estimation regarding the surface-area of the island. According to Hamilton, the area of Majuli was between 3389 sq. km. and 5044 sq. km. between the years, 1807 and 1814. But, as per the estimation of Mills, the area of the island was 1142.37 sq. km. (2,82,165 acres) in 1853. In his *Account of Assam*, Mills wrote that the island was once well inhabited and cultivated, and because of its rich and alluvial soil, it was very suitable for every kind of crops.....

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