

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
LADY SHRI RAM COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

যাত্রা

Jatra: JOURNEY

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We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Professor Suman Sharma, Principal, Lady Shri Ram College for Women for allowing us to undertake this journey or '*jatra*'. Our heartfelt thanks also extend to the faculty at the Department of Sociology, LSR for their valuable guidance and mentorship. This trip would not have been possible without the efforts and advice of Professor Gopa Sabharwal and Professor Bhawana Sharma Jha.

We acknowledge the help we received from our hosts in Guwahati. This journal and the reports held within would not have materialized without the people at Guwahati, who took out their valuable time to converse with us.

EDITORIAL NOTE

'Jatra' alludes to a journey, to the process and experiences of travel. It also represents a specific form of grassroots mobile theater popular in certain parts of India, such as Assam and West Bengal. In popular usage, journeys are given a greater aesthetic weightage in comparison to the destination- it is the road that one traverses on their way to a location that shapes their perspectives in life deeply. The tradition of 'jatra' plays, once very popular in the countryside but now in decline, also aimed to capture the vibrancy of everyday life, of myths and stories that give the ordinary meanings for people.

The field journal for the academic year 2022-23 is our attempt at capturing the essence of the ordinary, of the journeys people take in life, of movements and continuity. The idea of a journey was all the more apt for our field trip this year for two reasons. First, this was a field trip undertaken after 3 years of hiatus in a 25-year long department tradition owing to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, the journey to our field site this year- Guwahati, Assam- was marked by events of the most memorable quality. From a delay in the train both ways- 14 hours on our way up and 5 hours on our way down- to *antakshari* sessions with our professors, the journey proved to be material for a research report in itself. The shared experiences of frustration, hope, amusement and discovery paved the way for the building of enduring ties which, hopefully, would last for years to come.

The process of our travel did not conclude with reaching Guwahati. The actual physical journeys to the respective field sites on a daily basis, generally by public buses, familiarized us to the rhythm of life in a new city.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The average field work day usually involved long hours of walking, inevitably meaning that some of us lost our way more times than once despite having Google Maps handy. But this travel in itself meant finding new places, new faces and new experiences every day. While some events we might have encountered were not directly applicable for our specific research questions, they nevertheless opened up hitherto unknown aspects of life and opportunities for our personal growth. Our travels- for field research or for recreation- took us across rivers, from one end of the city to another, from Guwahati to its neighboring villages. The everyday journey widened our horizons in multiple ways.

Fundamentally, this journey enabled us to discover ourselves as field workers. The fieldwork tradition has achieved a centrality in sociological practice, and our field trip allowed us to honor time-honored methods of our discipline in an effort to know more about the world we encountered. Research is more than just about the collection of data, and it also goes beyond the arrangement and analysis of facts. Guwahati made us realize the nuances of social interaction inherent in the research process. Field research means the realization of the strands of the 'ordinary' and the 'exceptional' which weave the fabric of social reality. It also means the debunking of stereotypes and poorly researched assumptions about social realities. Our 'jatra' this year highlighted the revolutionary character inherent in fieldwork- both in terms of transformations in knowledge and transformation of the Self.

-SHREYA MUKHERJEE

EDITOR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

S L N O.	TITLE	PAGE NO
1	INFLOW MIGRATION IN GUWAHATI: AN ANALYSIS OF ASSIMILATION OF MIGRANTS AND RESENTMENT OF INDIGENOUS ASSAMESE PEOPLE- REGINA GURUMAYUM, SHREYA SINHA	1-2
2	GLOBALIZATION OF ECONOMIC CULTURE IN GUWAHATI- CHINNEIHNGAH LUPHENG, ENEIU DOULO, IMKONGSANGLA LONGKUMER	3-4
3	WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR OF GUWAHATI- AYUSHI RANJAN, LATIKA KUMARI, TALIMA	5-6
4	AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE MARWARI COMMUNITY IN FANCY BAZAAR, GUWAHATI- MEHAK BAJAJ, VANSHIKA NAG	7-8
5	WHERE IS JOLLYWOOD? THE DILEMMA OF IDENTITY FORMATION THROUGH ASSAMESE CINEMA- NANDINI SINGH, VANSHIKA YADAV	9-10
6	THE FESTIVAL OF FEASTING: MAGH BIHU - PUNYA RAJPUT, RADHIKA PANDEY	11- 12
7	OUT MIGRATION FROM NORTH-EAST INDIA POST HIGH SCHOOL- AMELIA PILLAI, ESHA SONI	13- 14
8	THE WORKING LIFE OF STREET VENDORS IN GUWAHATI- M ARCHANA, THASNIMSHA MS	15- 16
9	THEATRICAL CULTURE IN ASSAM: EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AMATEUR AND MOBILE THEATRE IN SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION- MAANITA KUMAR, SAKSHI RAI	17- 18

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SL No.	TITLE	PAGE NUMBER
10	INFLUENCE OF THE HALLYU WAVE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY NORTH-EAST INDIAN IDENTITY- GAURIKA BHALLA, RIDDHI MUKHERJEE, VIDHI SMRITI	19-20
11	THE ROLE OF BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER IN GUWAHATI: DEVELOPMENT OR RISK- GAURAVI BHARUKA, SUBHECHHA BHARATIYA	21-22
12	PROMINENCE OF ASSAM TEA AND FUNCTIONING OF GTAC- SOWMYA ST, SRI PRAGNYA	23-24
13	THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF HANDLOOM TRADE: A CASE STUDY OF GUWAHATI- SHREYA MUKHERJEE, SOUROMI DHAR	25-26
14	A COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS AND NEWER OCCUPATIONS IN GUWAHATI, ASSAM- AKANSHA SHARMA, NICOLE JOHN, PRIYANKA KUMARI, SONAL KOUL	27-28
15	EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS IN THE GROCERY SECTOR OF GUWAHATI- SAMPURNA MAITRA, TALYA RANA	29-30
16	MARRIAGE: RITUALS AND CUSTOMS- KHUSHI YADAV, MANASVI SINGH, MANVI SHARMA	31-32
17	GALLERY	33-34

INFLOW MIGRATION IN GUWAHATI:

An Analysis of Assimilation of Migrants and Resentment of Indigenous Assamese people

-REGINA GURUMAYUM, SHREYA SINHA

In the words of Ban Ki Moon, the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations, "Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety, and a better future. It is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family."

As per the data released by the Government of India for the 2011 Census, Guwahati is an urban agglomeration falling under the category of Class I UAs/Towns. The recent infrastructural development of Guwahati has attracted investments in the corporate sector, which has subsequently generated employment opportunities. Greater livelihood opportunities have further facilitated the inflow of migrants. Given the size and nature of India's economy, dependency on the informal sector is inevitable. This holds true for Guwahati as well. But the high inflow of migration also leads to job competition between locals and migrants. Indigenous people start seeing migrants as job threats and sometimes also as cultural threats. This causes unstable and hostile relations between outsiders and local people. As a result, migrants sometimes find it difficult to assimilate into the host society's culture and face alienation. This paper is an analysis of the ground reality of the experiences of migrants working in the informal sector, their alienation and assimilation, as well as the views, opinions, resentments, and fears of indigenous people in Guwahati. The study is, however, solely based on internal migration (within the country).

The data used in the paper has been collected through primary research carried out in all the major markets in Guwahati. Secondary data from journals, articles, books, etc. has also been used. The total number of days spent in the field was 12. A normal working day started at 9 or 10 in the morning and ended by 7 or 8 in the night. On one day, one particular location or market was selected, and researchers spent the entire day in the same market. Respondents were chosen using random sampling techniques. Structured interview method was used to collect the data, with two different sets of questionnaires used for migrants and the Assamese population. The total number of samples for migrants is 22, and that of local people of Guwahati is 16.

The research paper is divided into six chapters:

Chapter 1 has four sections: "Introduction," "Setting," "Who is a migrant and who is local?" and "Why are informal sector migrants important in Guwahati?" This chapter sets the groundwork for the actual description and analysis of research data.

Chapter 2 deals with the methodology part of the paper, the aims of the study, and the limitations of the research. The methodology section is subdivided into three parts: data source, research design, and data analysis. This chapter illustrates how the study is based largely on primary data, how data was collected, techniques used to reach out to respondents, our main objectives of writing this research paper and shortfall of research.

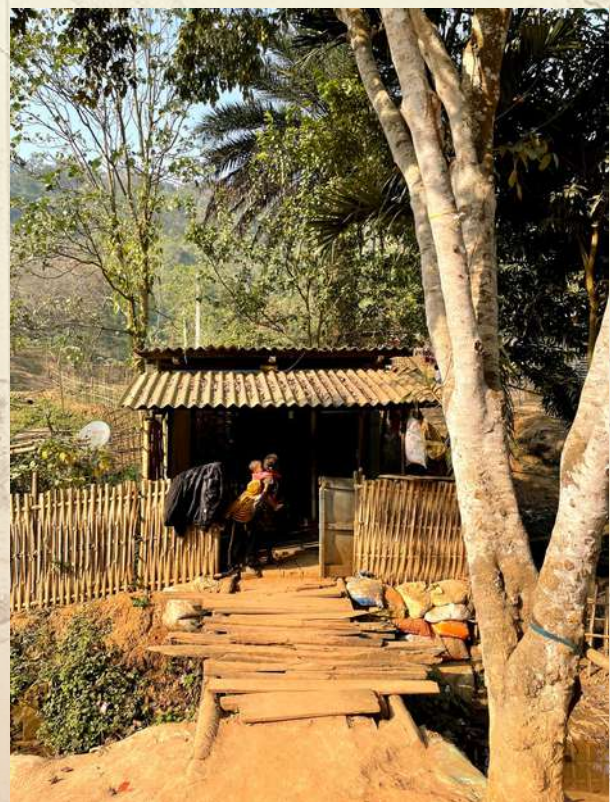
Chapter 3 comprises four parts: i. Basic profile of migrants—concerning age groups, sex, and place of origin where it was found that majority were male migrants from Bihar of different age groups followed by West Bengal; ii. Socio-economic background of the migrants—consisting of their educational, job, and ownership profiles which highlighted how most of them have received atleast a minimum level of education and live a decent lifestyle; iii. How people immigrate to Guwahati because of employment opportunities and how it consequently led to chain migration of many; and iv. The experience of settling down in Guwahati for an informal sector worker.

Chapter 4 delves into the work and social alienation faced by the immigrants and how the conditions of the migrants have improved over time owing to the creation of their own communities for social support as well as the increasing acceptance by the Assamese.

Chapter 5 explores the reasons for the fear of the indigenous Assamese population and discusses the impact of the migrant influx on Assam under three broad categories: cultural aspect, economic aspect, and political aspect. It also highlights the indigenous peoples' call for improved economic possibilities, the promotion of cultural diversity, and the protection of the land rights of all the indigenous population.

Chapter 6 concludes by stressing the evolution of Guwahati into a more inclusive, pluralistic, and cosmopolitan society according to our observations and the importance of creating harmony and mutual understanding between the Assamese and the migrants to ensure peaceful coexistence and inclusive development in Assam.

All the days spent in the field provided us with an immense opportunity to connect with the people of Guwahati and learn significantly about their culture, tradition, values, aspirations, and much more. We had no prior knowledge of the field or the language spoken there. Our experience of staying there began with a hesitancy of talking in Hindi or asking strangers for directions and ended with an amazing cognizance of Guwahati's markets' maps, its grand diversity, and its ability to integrate outsiders over a very short span of time. We talked to many local people as well as migrants settled in Guwahati, aside from our respondents. The conversations that we had with them made us aware of their lifestyles and daily routines. We got to learn about many little but significant habits, practises, and norms. Since we went during Bihu, we got a chance to live and experience their traditions and become a part of their festivals. We were also able to develop personal relationships with a few respondents who used to live closer to our place of stay. These personal relations not only helped us understand Guwahati's geography and culture in a better manner but also allowed us to know about the genuine situation of migrants'-locals' relationships.



GLOBALIZATION OF ECONOMIC CULTURE IN GUWAHATI

-CHINNEIHNGAH LUPHENG, ENEIU DOULO,
IMKONGSANGLA LONGKUMER

The term globalization refers to the process of economic integration among countries of the world. It implies economic openness, economic interdependence, and free movement of goods and services and people across the boundaries of nations' economies. Globalization is the process by which a nation's economy becomes more interconnected with other nations' economies, resulting in increased economic interdependence.

Guwahati, the largest city in northeast India, is a city in the Indian state of Assam and is the seat of government of the state. Guwahati is located on the south bank of the Brahmaputra and is the biggest city in the Indian state of Assam. It is also the biggest metropolis in the northeastern region of India.

Through our research, we studied the impact of globalization on the streets and culture of Guwahati, looking at the impact of global brands and Indian brands. Our studies concluded that Globalization has had a major impact on the social lives of people in Guwahati, Assam. It has created a more efficient lifestyle as people are exposed to new cultures and pop culture from all over the world. The globalization of Guwahati brings many benefits such as increased economic growth, better job opportunities and improved quality of life for its citizens. Seventy percent of the population in Guwahati is now exposed to global brands spanning food, consumer durables, fashion, etc., which has become a part of the lifestyle in the city.

This study on the globalization of economic culture in Guwahati, Assam, is based on an interview approach with prior questions. The research involves qualitative data collection methods. The qualitative research consists of in-depth interviews conducted with key stakeholders, including , small vendors and sales workers to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of globalization on Guwahati's economic culture, as well as the perspectives of various stakeholders on how to manage the impact of globalization in the future. The findings and case study of Guwahati for the purpose of research was aimed at understanding the brands that exist and are operating in Guwahati to enhance globalization and how they have impacted the development of Guwahati. The study was carried out by interviewing people connected with various brands, both global and Indian. The study was carried out in malls and stores in the city. Questions of various types were formed beforehand to be asked in the interview and a lot of information was extracted about the stores and their origin. The research consisted of basic questions for the interview starting with why the brand decided to set up their outlet in Guwahati and why was Guwahati chosen to represent the brand. Most of the findings indicated that Guwahati, as the largest and fastest city in northeast India is becoming a bigger financial and tourist hub through the setting up of various brands.

By interviewing the people working in the brand outlets, the findings indicate that with globalization there is a profound effect on the Assamese people in all aspects of thought. People from neighboring states come to Guwahati in search of better job opportunities and better living conditions. Our findings also examined popular assumptions- there is no pressure on the part of brands/shops to hire locals for jobs. However, this did not prove true for all. With the onset of Covid-19, most of the brands had gone through a rough financial patch, as most of them faced a huge loss in sales and marketing.

The findings of this research also state that globalization should be encouraged and spread more, but instead of making a huge retail store, small retail stores should be set up in different places all over the state. There has also been a unique perspective in the minds of the employees of both global and Indian brands who aim to manufacture products which are eco-friendly and are recyclable, ban paper, ban use of plastic and use alternative ways to decrease the use of plastic. It was also found that in most prominent brands/shops, the managers are between the age of 25-35, with prior experience or qualification. A notable finding of this is that most managers hired are from Bihar, Bengal, and Assam. Workers hailed from all over India, while the majority were from the northeast itself. As for the customer base, customers are from all of the northeast states,, as well as neighboring countries such as Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet etc.

Another important finding was that most of the people who work as sales people had dreams of clearing the civil service exams. 80 percent of the sales workers we conversed with told us that even while passing state civil services examinations, they were not given the post due to corruption on the part of government officials and backdoor appointments.

Globalization has also brought about significant changes in the cultural sphere of Guwahati. The emergence of new malls and supermarkets has led to the adoption of new consumer behaviors and lifestyles, which are more in line with global trends. On the negative side, globalization has also brought about significant challenges for the local society. The emergence of new malls and supermarkets has led to the displacement of small traders and vendors, who are unable to compete with the large retail chains. The growth of the service sector has also led to the displacement of traditional industries, such as agriculture and handicrafts. The emergence of a new cultural milieu has also led to the erosion of traditional values and practices, which are being replaced by new consumer behaviors and lifestyles.

While globalization has brought about significant economic growth and development, the presence of global brands can act as a catalyst for the modernization of Guwahati and Northeast India. A balance needs to be struck between modernization and preserving the local culture and traditions. Only then can Guwahati, and indeed the whole of Assam, realize the full potential of globalization.



WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR OF GUWAHATI

-AYUSHI RANJAN, LATIKA KUMARI, TALIMA

Our field work is on the title 'Women in Informal Sector in Guwahati' which includes the working conditions, struggles and challenges of the women who are living their lives by working in the urban informal sector of Guwahati. The ethnography was done at some popular market places of Guwahati, where we thought that the probability of finding such women would be high. Those places included, Fancy Bazar, Six Miles, Uzan Bazar, Pan Jabari, Pan Bazar and Khanapara.

While doing the field work it was evident that a lot of women were working in small stall set ups of their own, for example, pan-stall - selling tobacco and smoking items. Another very common set up was of food items, women alone as well as along with a family member were working in their own stalls of tea, snacks etc. It's critical to comprehend what the informal sector means. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) popularized the term "informal sector" in its 1972 report on the Kenya Mission, which defined it as a "...way of doing things characterized by - ease of entry and exit; reliance on indigenous resources; family ownership; small scale operations; labor intensive and adaptive technology; skills acquired outside of the formal sector; and unregulated and competitive markets." The informal sector is more usually understood using the contrast between the official and informal sectors. The difference between the formal and informal sectors, however, frequently minimizes the importance of the latter in terms of urban areas. Even though they significantly contribute to urban employment, metropolitan areas frequently disregard the informal sectors. However, the ILO has stated that the workforce of the informal sector generates a sizable portion of India's Net Domestic Product and Total Income. Knowing who represents that informal sector is crucial.

This study explores the numerous jobs women hold in the Guwahati urban-informal sector as well as the motivations behind those jobs. The report also discusses how the lives of those women are impacted by their participation in the workforce, which helped contribute significantly to India's income. After doing a proper analysis we were able to say that many of them were satisfied with what they were doing because it was their own small business and they were not worried about being somebody's slave, also if the financial needs were met, they were happy with it. But on the other side a lot of them were obviously facing a lot of obstacles in earning even the bare minimum.

Additionally, there were young women who because of the pressure of running their family had to drop their education and get into work. Moreover, it would not be wrong to say that, apart from those women who were struggling really hard, we encountered many women who were really satisfied with what they were doing and how they were living. The reason behind that could possibly be a lack of exposure, though that did not stop them from being happy and grateful. We therefore conclude by saying that women of the informal sector in Guwahati are engaged in various form of small works and there should be more reforms and laws favoring them in respect of education (first and foremost), economic support, human rights, etc.

The research focuses mostly on women and their work in the informal sector of urban areas, demonstrating how resilient women can be in patriarchal societies to support themselves and their families. They continue to labor in the informal sector for the necessities despite having the necessary education and the gender gap issues. Initially language was a barrier for us, but migrant women were able to speak Hindi. Few of them earned well and were able to earn a good amount of profit but most of them barely earned profit. Only one woman objected to the interview while the others all agreed and were eager to respond. They welcomed us with open arms and were quite kind.

While conducting the interviews, we didn't encounter many issues. Additionally, we noticed that they were having issues with the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC), but they chose not to disclose this because their family members or the nearby shopkeeper would try to manipulate them if they did. Only two females responded simply and directly that they had problems with GMC. Although we clarified that we were college students conducting research for which we were being graded, they were still fearful of talking and flatly denied any trouble from GMC. Others were hesitant, but they were more vocal about their troubles. We found that Guwahati women were significantly more independent than women in certain other states or cities.



AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE MARWARI COMMUNITY IN FANCY BAZAAR, GUWAHATI

-MEHAK BAJAJ, VANSHIKA NAG

In this work, we undertook a descriptively rich ethnographic account of the numerically small but economically dominant Marwari community in the biggest wholesale and retail market for the entire North-east: Fancy Bazaar. Firstly, a brief account of the historical pattern on migration of Marwaris into Assam was given followed by a detailed description of the economic, socio-cultural, and political dimensions of the Marwaris in Guwahati. This was followed by an elucidation of the primary institutions established by the migrant Marwari community in and around Fancy Bazaar area of Guwahati alongside their philanthropic contributions in their non-native land. Primary research was conducted through the interview method for a period of 2 weeks wherein majority of the responses were obtained through the technique of snowball sampling. An outline of the social geography of our field of Fancy Bazaar and Pan bazaar was formulated based on 2 days of field observation wherein parallels with Chandni Chowk in Delhi were visually evident in terms of trade specialization in particular streets and the co-existence of all major religious institutions in proximity. To transcend the limitations inherent in a monolithic account, we also interviewed Assamese respondents to delineate the nature of relations between the migrant Marwari traders concentrated in Fancy Bazaar and the indigenous Assamese shop-owners in Pan Bazaar.

Our experience of undertaking fieldwork in the most prominent Bazaar of Guwahati- which was the core of the old city and entailed historically significant establishments was a completely novel and dynamic one. The warmth and cooperation received from all respondents assuaged our initial hesitations, with the hospitality shown by the shop owners and traders in Fancy Bazaar and Pan Bazaar making it bittersweet to exit from our field site. The experience of finding a flourishing Marwari culture around the Bazaars of Guwahati provided a separate image to the migration tales surrounding Assam. The cooperation and coexistence of traders from diverse ethnicities highlighted the formulation of a mosaic of multicultural interaction.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

A detailed field description of Fancy Bazaar and Pan Bazaar portrayed the imprint of Marwari community on the social geography of Guwahati landscape. The use of religio-cultural symbolism in shops, cultural identity markers, non-native food items like- Ghevar, Bhujia, Chaat, etc. and conversations in Marwari language blurred the distance between the native homeland of Marwaris in Shekhavati, Rajasthan and their immediate context of Guwahati, Assam. Etymology of road names was also addressed through a combination of secondary research and interviews with primary respondents.

Functioning of the class aspect within the Marwari community was visible through distinctions between upper class Marwari businesspersons and the lower-middle class traders in terms of diversification of trade establishments, nature of problems experienced, contribution towards philanthropic activities, and motivation among next generation for business expansion. In the economic realm, the role played by joint family and kin networks in socialization of next generation for business and trade activities and in furthering the expansion of business beyond proximate regions was highlighted.

The presence of a dense network of institutions catering to the Marwari population in Assam in the form of- guild associations, temples, caste and native place specific Bhavans, schools, charitable trusts, hospitals, marriage halls, PGs, etc highlighted the formulation of a self-sustaining Marwari community in Guwahati. Further, organizations like Marwari Yuva Manch and Marwari Sammelan depicted attempts at consolidation and unification of Marwari community in a non-native land to articulate their demands and further their interests. This resembled the notion of pillarization among Marwaris relative to the native Assamese atleast in the socio-cultural realm.

There was a preservation of native socio-cultural traits among the Marwaris through practices of endogamy, food, festivals, rituals, language, etc. which was aided by their spatial concentration in the environs of Fancy Bazaar. This was accompanied by a simultaneous attempt at assimilating with the Assamese way of life through learning of Assamese language for daily conversation, participation in Assamese festivals such as- Bihu with native populace, and philanthropic contributions benefitting all sections of population. These Marwari migrant traders played a prominent role in linking Assam with the rest of the Indian economy due to the existence of kin networks and resource groups which aided in expansion of trade activities.

Our field experience imbued us with perseverance, empathy, and an open-mindedness to look beyond mainstream notions attached to places and groups. The novel experiences of traveling in city buses, approaching random people and eventually gaining familiarity with them, receiving support for our work, and getting to know the nitty gritty of the Marwari ethic towards business all made our field trip a worthwhile experience. These two weeks not only induced personal growth and learnings but also brought us closer to our fellow batchmates, strengthening our bonds beyond the arena of college, hence enhancing the vitality of our college experience.



WHERE IS JOLLYWOOD?

The Dilemma of Identity Formation through Assamese Cinema

-NANDINI SINGH, VANSHIKA YADAV

The following research hypothesized that with the changing nature of cultural self-identification, consumption patterns of cinema are impacted. The methodology for the study includes primary data collected in the Guwahati region of Assam over a course of 12 days from (13 January to 25 January 2023). The methodological tool used to collect data was conversational interviews. Concerning the secondary data, a variety of resources ranging from Census reports, articles, research papers, movies, and documentaries were utilized.

The nerves and buzz around the 14-day field trip were all-consuming for quite a few weeks before the trip came to fruition. The journey took around 40 hours to complete and was inevitably exhausting. However, it was filled with a certain childlike indulgence in games like 'Antakshri' and 'Heads-Up' which made the trip the kind of experience you make photo albums about. We headed into the field with preconceived notions, which were in contrast with the reality on the ground. The conspicuous absence of the Northeast from the mainstream discourse and our interactions with our peers had a significant influence on how we perceived the context. The recent recognition of the movies at the national and international level also pointed towards stellar growth in the industry for an outsider. It was through this interaction that we reached the assumption that 'Assamese cinema is extensively consumed'.

However, our perception shifted following the first few interactions in the field. Assamese cinema was not being consumed actively. The first few interviews with the sellers and managers of various cinema halls pointed towards the dire state of the Assamese cinema concerning the revenue earned. The field, thus, threw at us a completely different reality. A lot of things can and were assumed about what was at the forefront of Assamese cinema but the people were exceptionally kind enough to talk to us and clear those assumptions. This fundamentally shifted our ideas about the field.

The managers of the movie theatres were among our first respondents. A variety of movie halls ranging from mega capitalist enterprises like INOX Leisure to local cinema halls like LG Towers were covered. The next perspective gauged was of the producers. The trip to the Assam Film Corporation (AFC) answered a number of our concerns regarding the role of the government, and the issues the film industry faced. We were also introduced to the Assam Film Museum. The museum stored various artifacts from the mechanical setup used by famous personalities of the cinema industry. The rich history of the Assamese cinema was all contained in that one room and proved to be a cardinal experience. Interactions with workers at the Jyotirao Chitrabon Film Studio located at Kahilipara Main Road is the only Film Studio in North-East India spread across an area of around 73 Bigha also significantly informed our opinion.

A typical day began with us waking each other up and wasting the first few minutes watching the Instagram reels we missed over the previous few hours. On most days, after getting ready and skipping breakfast, we would depart for our intended destinations. Even though there wasn't an established schedule that applied to every working day, most days appeared to be very similar- finding an e-rickshaw, traveling to Six Miles, sitting in the bus, and finally conducting interviews. Upon returning from the field, we would organize the data and field notes and report the same to our professors.

After analyzing the data we arrived at the conclusion that our hypothesis holds true. It is imperative to note the cyclical nature of the social reality regarding the consumption pattern of Assamese cinema. The consumers choose to watch Bollywood, Hollywood, or South Indian movies over Assamese films due to the former's better aesthetic and mass entertainment value. The size and scale of the movies hide the utter lack of regional representation. The regional identity takes a backseat as people find common ground to relate to these stories based on generic themes of love and more specifically struggles of lower-income households. This results in a niche population consuming Assamese cinema. This audience is comprised of a certain class group that has time, money and cultural capital. This group has varying contextual perceptions of recognizing the need for the existence of a regional Assamese cinema industry.

Assamese films are deeply traditional. People still consuming Assamese cinema do so to reminisce about what Assam traditionally used to be like. In this retention of the idea of what it is to be traditional, the themes of Assamese films have not evolved. There seems to be a sort of hegemony of the traditionalists in the industry. This hegemony does not allow the production of films with modern themes. Since the youth identifies its culture with modern themes, it does not find a space for active expression in the industry, which leads to a 'brain-drain' in the Assamese film industry. The youth trains in Assam but goes out of the region to practice those skills due to the availability of better career avenues and spaces of expression.

Ultimately, the small audience reduces the funds generated by these movies. Furthermore, fewer advertisers line up to contribute to the production process. This reduces the quality of movies produced compared to their mainstream counterparts. Bringing us back to the first aspect of the cycle, we note a reduced consumption due to a minimal production value. Nonetheless, with changing definitions and expressions the Assamese identity continues to attempt to retain its essence—that of diversity. The role of multiple centers of cultural production is prominent in the region even though mainstream Indian media continues to fail at the appropriate representation of the Northeast culture in general. Regional cinema continues to fight for its existence.



THE FESTIVAL OF FEASTING:

MAGH BIHU

-PUNYA RAJPUT, RADHIKA PANDEY

The journey began from New Delhi's railway station. We had a long journey ahead to Guwahati. A delay was expected due to the January fog. Travelling together as a team was truly one of the most enlightening experiences as all of us tried to keep each other in high spirits despite a 12 hour + delay. Even at an individual level, we learned to manage a lot of our own things better. Our time as novices in the area of field research was truly enriching. The city and the people of Guwahati were extremely welcoming and willing to help us out in whatever way possible. Our project focused on Magh Bihu- the time at which we went was ideal since it was the time when the festival was being celebrated. Being able to witness the celebrations and getting to interact with those celebrating allowed us to capture the essence of it as much as possible, given that it was very new to us.

Magh Bihu, is a festival celebrated in Assam, India, during the month of January. The festival marks the end of the harvest season and focuses on feasting and celebrating food. The celebration lasts for two days: day one involves Uruka 'the community feast' and the burning of a Meji, a pyre made of straw, on the second day. People consume fish and alcohol during the festival, and delicacies such as pithas are prepared. We learned that festivals akin to Magh Bihu are celebrated across Asia. We also discuss the three Bihus, namely, Bohag Bihu, Kangali or Kati Bihu, and Magh or Bhogali Bihu, each marking a different stage of the agricultural cycle. However, the focus of the study remains on Magh Bihu.

The report further dwells on the significance of Magh Bihu, which marks the end of the agricultural cycle and brings the community together. The festival is celebrated with different customs and rituals and is an essential part of Assamese culture and heritage. The text highlights the deep connection of the Assamese people with their land and the cycles of nature, which are an essential part of their daily lives. The text also discusses the celebration of Bihu across all religions, regions, tribes, and even by people outside of Assam, but it holds the most significance for farmers and other people directly involved in cultivation. The report emphasizes the spirit of togetherness and community during the festival and how it is celebrated by groups, clans, villages, and families who come together to feast, drink wine, and enjoy the food. Magh Bihu has gained significant commercial importance. The festival's commercialization has led to a surge in demand for traditional and contemporary products, with online retailers and e-commerce platforms capitalizing on the festival's potential. The festival also generates significant revenue for farmers and agricultural communities, who sell their produce in local markets. However, there are concerns about commercialization overshadowing the festival's cultural and social significance. The Mejis, traditional structures built during the festival, have become more about aesthetics and visual appeal, with people now hiring others to create them for social media or buying pre-made mejis due to their fast-paced life.

Looking at the recent developments, the report also discusses the impact of current agricultural policies and land alienation on the celebration of Magh Bihu, a festival closely linked to agriculture. The main features include the harmful impact of chemical fertilizers and pesticides on the environment and farmers' production costs, the focus on cash crops that are unsuited to the local conditions, the negative impact of proposed dam construction, the promotion of genetically modified seeds, and the impact of land alienation on the cultural practices of the Assamese people. The text highlights how these issues affect Magh Bihu's celebration, leading to a disconnection between individuals and communities and a loss of connection to soil and traditions.

This research project began with the aim of understanding the celebration of Magh Bihu, the festival of feasting, in Assam. It remains a critical celebration primarily by those engaging in agriculture. It has been interesting to note how the celebration goes beyond mere rituals. Questions about Assamese identity—who celebrates the festival to what extent, how communities intermingle with each other, what are the commercial angles related to the festival, and even how centralized policies of agriculture affect those who celebrate the festival. There is a growing alienation in terms of the building of Meiji. It is customary that those who will pray next to it and burn it are the ones who make it. However, the cities have witnessed the commercialisation and contracting of Meji building to freelancers. The rituals are more strictly followed in the villages compared to the cities. The bustle of the city contributes to the shortening and altering of rituals based on convenience. The celebration has not become too individualized but the magnitude has certainly decreased in the cities, rural areas in Assam have still managed to retain what traditionally counted as the celebration of Magh Bihu. Cities like Guwahati and their altered manner of celebration is no different from how in North Indian homes (where we come from) the people celebrate say Makar Sankranti: a way which would be more concise and minor compared to a large-scale celebration in a village. While studying Bihu in Guwahati, most respondents who got to know our background made these comparisons of rituals and foods to whatever idea they had of North Indian traditions.

Gender divisions could be seen, not too staunchly but they can be seen in the division of labor: with men guarding the fences and mejis while women cook and serve the food. What comes out in all the sections is a distinction between the upper and lower Assamese traditions and how they differ in terms of the celebration of Magh Bihu. This aligns with our mentioned hypothesis. However, it must be stated that interviews were conducted in the city of Guwahati. The accounts of countryside celebrations have been mentioned here based on the both city and countryside celebrations.



OUT MIGRATION FROM NORTH-EAST INDIA

POST HIGH SCHOOL

-AMELIA PILLAI, ESHA SONI

Human Migration has a long history, but it is only in the twentieth century that the issue has become politicized and internationalized. India is one of the largest source countries for student migration both locally and globally.

Migration as a concept means movement of people in search of work or economic opportunities, to join family, or to study. Others move to escape conflict, persecution, terrorism, or human rights violations. Still others move in response to the adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters, or other environmental factors. A process of migration comprises different aspects, such as the level of migration, migrating in or out and reasons for migration. Out-Migration, a subtype of Migration has become a fairly common practice amongst the youth of the country today. As a phenomenon, outmigration means the movement of people out of one region of the country to the other for a variety of reasons. Another phenomenon that we attempt to study here is In-Migration of people in Guwahati from other neighbouring North-East states, towns and villages because Guwahati is one of the most developed cities of the North East in terms of services, educational opportunities and overall globalization. Guwahati has seen significant urbanization and development in the past decade however even then the rate of out migration has not dropped, hence the inquisitiveness to study the same as part of our research project.

Through our research we studied the concept of outmigration amongst the youth of Guwahati and Assam and tried to gauge if and why they want to leave Guwahati or their hometown and live or work in some other part of the country or the world. We wanted to study this as it is a common happenstance in our very own college, LSR. A lot of our batchmates, juniors and seniors come from Guwahati to study in Delhi and most of their reasons have been that there are not enough opportunities for higher education in the city. Some of the underlying reasons for outmigration in Guwahati are, inadequate education opportunities, neglect of government towards educational institutions and minimal exposure. There were other reasons which guided their decisions like family history. In the course of our research work we also met and studied potential migrants who eventually would want to move out of Assam for similar reasons. In case of in-migration the respondents came from a variety of places neighbouring the Northeast like Mizoram, Karbi Anglong, Diphu, Hozai, Haflong, Nagaland and Manipur. What must be highlighted here is that most of these Migrants are from Rural settlements and one can say that the migration took place with an aim for better access to economic, social, and cultural capital. With regards to out migration, we see the target destination being metropolitan cities, the reasons being alike. For instance, an interviewee from Cotton College said that the North-East as a whole is cut off from the rest of India and research spaces are limited.

The methodology we used to conduct our research was primary and first-hand data. We used the interview method by framing a semi structured questionnaire designed exclusively for the purpose where we had to change and add new questions according to the respondents. There is also use of secondary data to corroborate with our analysis. We also interviewed students from different coaching centres and young professionals like employees in shopping malls to gauge their plans further. To complete our research and to arrive at final conclusions we analysed these interviews on parameters like age, gender, family orientation and education.

As advancing sociologists, the study of migration and its social implications peaked our interest as it stands to be the third factor for changes in the population and social functionality of individuals. Through our research we were able to gauge that people constantly strive for a better life. To this end, a majority of them are willing to give up the comforts of their hometown and venture out for better opportunities to build a comfortable future for themselves and their future generations. These movements lead to assimilation, acculturation, multiculturalism but in some case may also result in marginalisation. Our interactions with the respondents confirmed the importance of family and friends in the destination area, as an explanatory variable for the rate of migration out of particular areas of origin. Often chain migration takes place where the successful migration of one family member creates a chain of opportunities for the whole kin network. Families and friends also at times act as an obstacle for moving out. All in all we see how people are influenced by those they are surrounded by in their decision making process and further how these decisions are made keeping in mind the betterment of these people.

After thorough analysis we concluded that the aspects of migration are manifold and have different connotations for different parts of the country. The skyrocketing unemployment rates in the North East materializes instances of outmigration coupled with widespread social and political stress and changing aspiration of the populace, particularly of the youth. Having been aware of the issue, most people choose to migrate right after high school so as to acquire a good quality education which acts as a catalyst in obtaining better job opportunities. However, what must be noted here is that out-migration too at the end of the day simmers down to a matter of privilege.



Students belonging to higher social classes are more privileged to choose destinations and institutions while those belonging to backward social classes and regions must continue studying with compromise. According to UNESCO quality education has five elements- quality learning environment, quality processes, quality content, quality learners and quality outcomes. Educational environment, supervision and support, quality resources, and quality teachers and students need to be examined along a spectrum of socio-economic, political and demographic aspects at various levels. What is noteworthy is that interactions with the prospective out-migrants indicated economic factors at the root of such outward movement. This stands in tune to the neo-classical framework of migration as an outcome of the labour market variations. With instances of household income and education as well as the cultural and environmental setting in undertaking migration decisions shows us that family plays a role in explaining migration. In recent times the pandemic Covid-19 hit hard and has also adversely affected the economic growth and employment. Overall, we can conclude by saying that a large proportion of people migrate out of the North East in pursuit of better living standards and opportunities. Lastly, although both economic and social factors play a significant role, it is the economic reasons which take precedence over social factors when it comes to reasons behind out-migration.

THE WORKING LIFE OF STREET VENDORS IN GUWAHATI

-M ARCHANA, THASNIMSHA MS

The title of our research was "The Working Life of Street Vendors in Guwahati." We conducted ethnographic research on street vendors in the popular markets of Fancy Bazaar and Paltan Bazaar. We started with a brief explanation of street vending and the informal sector in India and provided an in-depth description of street vending in Guwahati. We collected primary data through semi-structured interviews for two weeks, which resulted in a majority of the responses we received. We also created a visual outline of the research sites in Fancy Bazaar and Paltan Bazaar. Conducting our fieldwork in the core of the old city, where historically significant establishments exist, was a unique experience. The warmth and cooperation shown by the vendors and traders helped us to successfully complete our fieldwork.



As a sociological research group, our two week trip to Guwahati has been an enriching experience, providing us with a unique opportunity to gain practical insights and knowledge about the diverse cultural landscape of Northeastern India. Our field travel has enabled us to interact with local communities, understand their norms, and observe their daily lives.

By immersing ourselves in the local culture and engaging with the people, we have been able to develop a deeper understanding of the intricacies and complexities involved in street vending prevalent in the region. The experience has also granted us access to information and data that we would not have been able to obtain otherwise.

We would like to express our gratitude to the faculty for their support and guidance throughout our travels. The faculty has been instrumental in organizing the trip, arranging for our accommodation and transportation, helping us decide on an itinerary, and most importantly, ensuring our safety and well-being during our stay.

We used city buses as our mode of transportation to visit the sites of research. Upon arriving at Paltan and Fancy Bazaar, we conducted interviews with street vendors using a questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed to gather information on the vendors' socio-economic background, their sources of income, the challenges they face in their work, and their opinions on policy interventions that could alleviate the issues they face.

During our two week field trip to Guwahati, we studied the demographic profile and issues faced by street vendors in accessing their livelihood. The study involved visiting Paltan and Fancy Bazaar, two areas known for the significant presence of street vendors.

Our field report highlighted the diverse demographic backgrounds of street vendors which include age, gender, religion, ethnicity, and education level. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs estimates that there are around 10 million street vendors in India, with approximately 7182 in Guwahati as of 2014-2015. Our findings indicate that the majority of street vendors were male and between the ages of 30 to 44. It is also worth noting that some vendors did not complete high school or have equivalent qualifications.

We found that a significant proportion of street vendors in these areas were from marginalized backgrounds, such as lower castes and ethnic minorities.

In terms of obstacles faced by street vendors, our investigation revealed that obtaining permits was challenging, and complying with regulations was burdensome. Vendors also faced competition from other vendors, and inadequate infrastructure hindered their businesses. Our study found that vendors were particularly concerned about the high cost of permits and the complicated application process. They also expressed concerns about regulations that restrict the areas they can operate in. Communication with other vendors and shop owners was crucial to preventing physical conflicts and disagreements.

Despite facing competition from other vendors during peak hours, street vendors have not experienced a significant impact on their profits and business operations.

Many of the vendors faced difficulties in accessing basic facilities which affected their livelihoods. However, they do face various infrastructure-related challenges such as inadequate space, insufficient sheds, lack of basic amenities and storage spaces. Additionally, street vendors often have to rely on nearby shops for toilet facilities and buy bottled water during vending hours. Women street vendors, in particular, encounter a range of obstacles because of their gender and socio-economic status.

We also discovered that street vendors faced challenges related to harassment by local authorities and a lack of legal status, which affected their sense of security and stability; street vendors are vulnerable to harassment and extortion from law enforcement agencies and due to a lack of legal recognition, they operate in informal spaces without protection. As a result, they are prone to exploitation and abuse. Street vendors are commonly viewed as a nuisance and are not considered legitimate economic actors, adding to their vulnerability.

Overall, the field trip was a useful opportunity for the us to gather important data on the challenges faced by street vendors in Guwahati. The findings of this study can help inform policymakers and other stakeholders on the need to improve the living and working conditions of street vendors in the city. The trip also has been an impactful and transformative experience that has broadened our horizons and enhanced our perspectives on sociological research. We are immensely grateful for this experience and look forward to incorporating the knowledge we have gained in our future research endeavors.

THEATRICAL CULTURE IN ASSAM: EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AMATEUR AND MOBILE THEATRE IN SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

-MAANITA KUMAR, SAKSHI RAI

The city boasts a vibrant theatre scene, with numerous theatre groups and organizations actively involved in producing and staging plays. From our conversations with people in Guwahati, it became clear that theatre plays a significant role in their lives. This fieldwork was an important opportunity that enabled us to gain a lot of confidence in our discipline as a whole. We found great support in this entire process, specially from a LSR alumna, Hiya. Every person that we interviewed was inviting and encouraging. People took out time from their busy schedules to have long conversations with us. This fieldwork played a great part in solidifying a sense of companionship in our batch and gave us something to really hold on to. Our professors were very supportive, always 'there' and went out of their way to make this an enriching experience for us.

Our research paper explores the cultural and socioeconomic significance of amateur and mobile theatre in Assam, India.

Mobile theatre or "Bhramyaman" is a popular form of entertainment that involves theatre troupes moving from one location to another, performing plays in tents set up in villages, towns, and cities. Every year, the theatre units launch their annual stage shows from mid-August to the 13th of April, just before Rongali Bihu. The theatre season begins in July/August, when the plays begin to be rehearsed. The actors establish a temporary residence, travel, rehearse, and perform together. After nearly two months of rehearsal and preparation, the theatre groups begin performing around September/October, coinciding with important Hindu festivals in Assam such as Durga Puja and Deepawali. These are also the months with the least amount of rainfall.

Any performance of mobile theatre requires extensive preparation, including rehearsals that last for approximately 1.5 months. The actors are required to sign a contract that is valid for approximately a year, during which they perform in over 30 theatres. The setup of mobile theatre is unique, as it calls for two stages on which simultaneous performances take place. These performances typically last for around 2 and a half hours and feature songs and actions similar to those in movies. It is worth noting that the songs and actions are an integral part of mobile theatre performances and are used to captivate and entertain the audience.

One of our interviewees reported that the transition from mobile theatre to amateur theatre was not restricted or stigmatised. This suggests that there is a degree of flexibility and openness in the theatre industry, which allows for actors and actresses to transition from one form of theatre to another without significant barriers.

Moving on to amateur theatre, One of its significant cultural contributions is the promotion and preservation of the Assamese language. Amateur theatre in Assam also plays a crucial role in promoting social and political commentary through drama. Theatre has been an essential tool for expressing dissent and bringing about social change.

The economic significance of amateur theatre in Assam is multifaceted. While amateur theatre groups may not generate significant revenue or create a large number of jobs, they play an important role in promoting cultural tourism, fostering social cohesion, and supporting local economies.

However, despite the numerous economic benefits of amateur theatre, it is not always sustainable for artists to make a living solely through their involvement in amateur theatre as most theatre artists had to take up multiple jobs in industries other than the theatre in order to make ends meet. While some actors could sustain themselves and their families through theatre alone, it was typically only the most renowned and established actors who were able to do so. Despite the challenges of making a living through amateur theatre, the artists we spoke with expressed a deep love and passion for their craft. They shared stories of how their involvement in theatre had enriched their lives, given them a sense of purpose and community, and provided an outlet for their creativity. The process of selecting a play for production in amateur theatre can be quite varied. Some groups may choose to adapt or translate existing plays from other languages or cultures, while others may opt to write original plays or scripts that draw on local themes and traditions.

Once a play has been selected, the production team will typically work together to develop a concept or vision for the production. This may involve brainstorming ideas for staging, lighting, sound, and costumes, as well as discussing the themes and ideas that the play explores. Sometimes, the director provides the concept, and the performers construct the script and the character, going with the flow and creating the script on the go. It is the entire team that creates what people get to see in the end. The actors usually have a lot of creative freedom in characterizing for the play. But it is the director's discretion on how they want the direction of the play to move forward, which is respected by the rest of the crew. The directors usually disclose how they want to move forward and the actors pick productions based on what they need. The directors usually choose to be a little flexible with all of this.

In the context of amateur theatre, team relations play a critical role in the production process. Our interviews with individuals involved in amateur theatre revealed a strong sense of familial bonding between team members. This bonding was not limited to actors alone, as many team members were found to be involved in multiple aspects of production, such as making of props, lighting, and music. Interestingly, even when our interviewees moved on to professional theatre, they found themselves instinctively wanting to help others. One interviewee recounted an amusing anecdote about how his friend, while rehearsing for his role, ended up assisting an overburdened lights crew. This act of kindness was met with displeasure from the director, who felt that the actor was neglecting his primary responsibilities.



INFLUENCE OF THE HALLYU WAVE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY NORTH-EAST INDIAN IDENTITY

-GAURIKA BHALLA, RIDDHI MUKHERJEE, VIDHI SMRITI

The gateway to the mysteries of North East India lies in the metropolitan city of Guwahati, Assam. In the last few decades, the dynamic changes in lifestyle trends have caused microcosms of urbanization and modernity to exist in the Northeast and now thrive under the influences of various differing soft power variables. While considering the Korean wave in North-East India (also called Hallyu Wave- a Chinese term meaning 'Korean wave'), as a medium of popular culture, we intend to look at the current trend of the influence of Korean culture on the urban youth landscape of Guwahati.

This research examines the influence of Korean culture in Northeast India by looking into the socio-economic factors which led the youth to opt into the Korean wave. It examines the roles of information and communication technology and mass media exposure in the process of increasing inclination towards Korean culture and how they negotiate their positions as transcultural audiences. It analyses the current trend of the influence of Korean culture on the urban youth landscape regarding fashion, eating habits, educational preferences, and popular culture through music, movies, art and business.

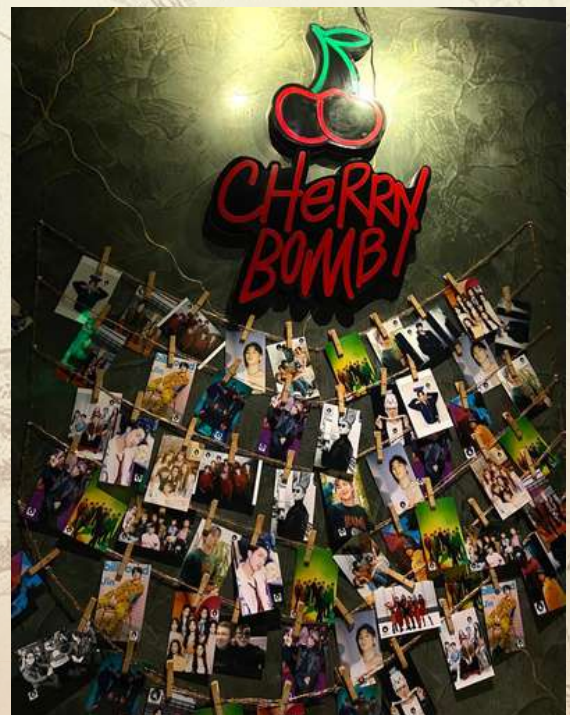
The initial hypothesis was to study the Influence of the Hallyu Wave on contemporary Assamese Identity. This was sociologically significant and extensive, but needed to be amended on the basis that Assamese Identity is extremely heterogenous, with locals from other states in the Northeast living there for hundreds of years. This study then examined the influence of the Hallyu Wave on the North-eastern Identity, as explored through lifestyle and contemporary culture. Primary research was conducted at The City Centre Mall on GS Road, followed by restaurants like Kori's and Kalita Spectrum Café and stores like Miniso, Mumoso and Illahui. Interviews were conducted with youth, restaurant managers, staff members, chefs, and store owners to understand their perception and the level of business of the demand due to the Korean influence from the supply side. Secondary research was undertaken in the form of a literature review to supplement the analysis.

The extent of Korean influence among the cultural identities of young people in the North East is largely due to the advent of Korean missionaries and the absence of a mainstream identity to ascribe to. This has created an aspirational positive value associated with South-East Asian features, which has been able to pull several young and old individuals that remain at odds with their Indian identity. Tribals in Northeast India feel a communal connection with South-East Asians and share similar lifestyles, family values, music, crop cultivation, and shamanism. This is due to the representation of Asian family values, socio-cultural similarities, the Hanguk/Hangul language.

Korean music and dramas have revolutionized North-eastern people's culture, allowing them to speak in accented English, dance in western clothes to western sounding music, and to connect with the Hallyu Wave. Clothing and design has also been revolutionized by the Korean wave, with almost 60% of the given demographic wearing clothing that is stylistically similar to Korean designs. Korean makeup and skincare have led to a marked preference in India for having good skin and a natural look. Korean dramas are an avenue of reflection for the tribal people and people want to emulate the visuals they see. Migration and linguistic patterns have evolved in number between Korea and the Northeast, and young people in Manipur have learned several words from the Korean language. Korean owned/influenced restaurants and shops were commodifying aspects of the North-eastern face cut to give an optical value of authenticity. Corporate co-option of Korean identity is evident in the growing financial hub of Guwahati.

By examining the extent of influence of Korean culture in North-East India we attempted to analyze the interactive dynamics of media, soft power, culture and society. We concluded that all of these are mediums to disseminate popular culture and its products- both contemporary and traditional. Due to temporal and geographical extent in influence of Hallyu wave, we can conclusively assert that this not a trend but a shift in the cultural norms on which the traditional people of northeast have built their identities. This effect of the wave however is disproportionate and nuanced. Certain tribal areas like Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland remain a hub for Korean influences in status quo, are heavily influenced by the penetration of this soft power, whereas many other tribal and non-tribal areas remain relatively in the shadow. It seems to be a common occurrence that despite the permeation of cultural products like K-dramas that seem to have more proportionately seeped to every part of the Northeast, the entire ecosystem of cultural consumption of Hallyu products is still evolving in many parts of the North East. The overall influence of Korean culture becomes culturally and economically revolutionary as it allows all the people of the Northeast parallel identities and narratives to opt into as Indian nationals.

We experienced a living cultural revolution in action by interacting with those that consciously knew that they were influenced by the Hallyu wave by opting in, as well as many that behaved and dressed in Korean ways but did not know they were part of a larger demographic of influence. While travelling on foot, we discovered that Korean culture existed in different ways around the city- in restaurants and franchised stores or markets specifically, but more ambiguously in the social surroundings of Guwahati- through second copy stalls of Jordans on the street, Korean Ramen in small grocery stores, and in most of the public spaces around us through people emanating it. Discussion with people from myriad age groups, ethnic contexts and gender identities allowed us not only to study the socio-cultural factors and outcomes of the permeation of Korean soft power in India, but also think about and study the demographic of people in the North-East with a significantly deeper sense of nuance. This nuance is of utmost importance while studying the growth of a cultural wave, understanding the reasons behind it and recording the oral histories of those that have pioneered it.



THE ROLE OF BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER IN GUWAHATI: DEVELOPMENT OR RISK

-GAURAVI BHARUKA, SUBHECHHA BHARATIYA

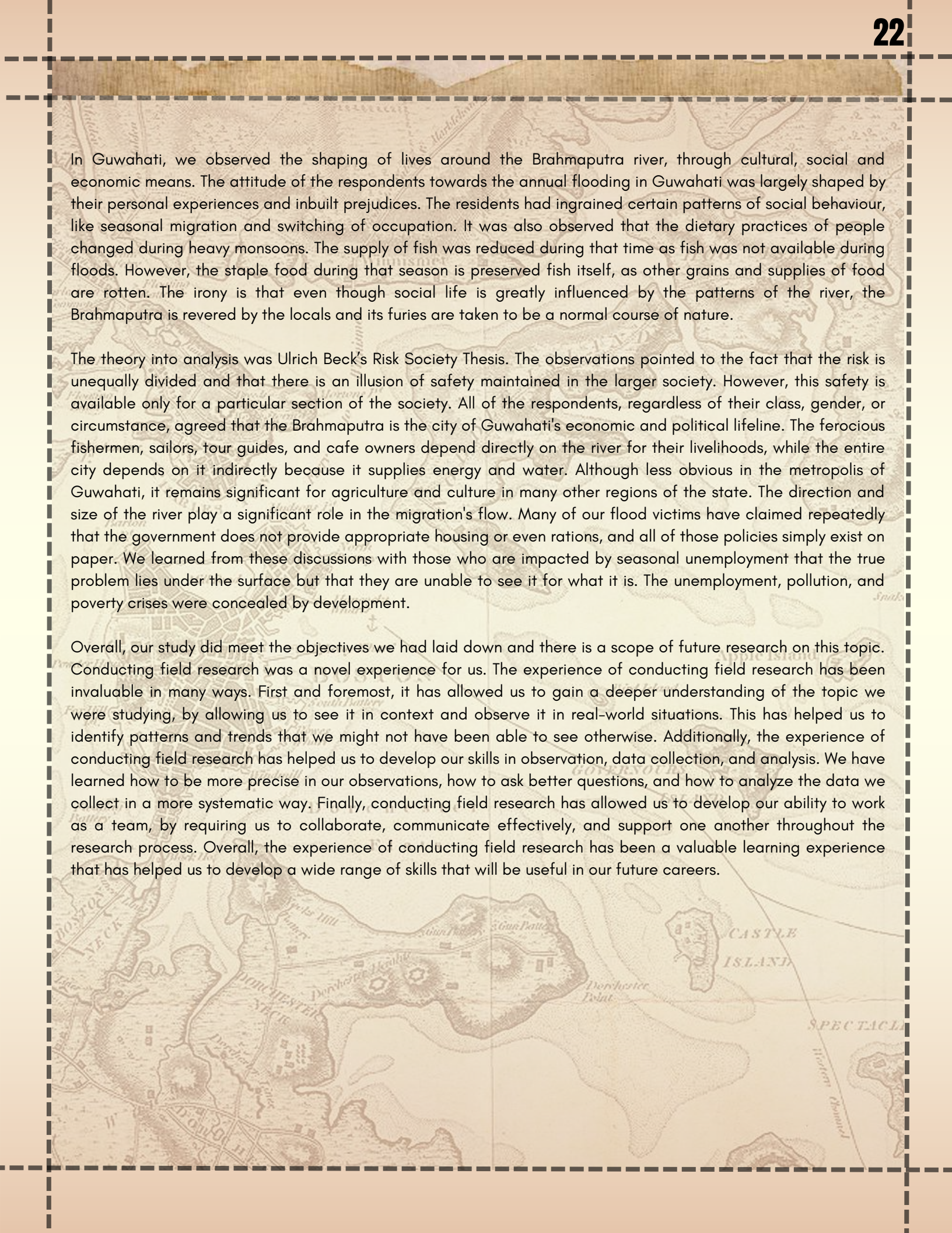
Since ancient times, rivers have been crucial to the growth of society. They supported agriculture, assisted transportation, and served as a source of energy for industry. From the earliest civilizations in Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean empires of Greece and Rome to the current industrial world, sociologists recognise that rivers have played a critical role in the formation and spread of civilizations. Rivers were a cause of conflict or collaboration and acted as boundaries between various governmental organizations in numerous cultures. Rivers have also had a spiritual significance, with various religious traditions attributing divine significance to rivers, from the Ancient Egyptian belief in the Nile to the Hindu belief in the Ganges.

In the contemporary world, rivers continue to be crucial to society's ability to function since they provide power, transportation, irrigation, drinking water, and recreation. Sociologists understand that rivers are essential to human existence and that they must be managed and preserved in order to secure society's future.

The Brahmaputra River is a major river in the Indian subcontinent that originates in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, passes through India and Bangladesh, and empties into the Bay of Bengal. In our research paper we tried to investigate the impact of the Brahmaputra River on the social-political-economic life of the people of Guwahati and how the meanings attached with the river have changed over the years.



The Brahmaputra river provides the basic necessities of life to the people of Guwahati, like food, transport and water. Therefore, it is considered to be a vital source of livelihood. After talking to the fishing community and the local residents, we came to understand how the changes in social patterns were a part of their everyday life now. The events and behaviour observed in the field, with respect to the flooding of Brahmaputra in Guwahati are prevalent mostly among the lower classes of people, especially women. The patterns of our observation tell that the distribution of the effects of the calamity were unequally distributed among various groups of people. The peasants, fishers and wage workers were the worst hit by the calamity.

The background of the page is a sepia-toned map of Guwahati, India, and the Brahmaputra river. The map shows the city's layout, including the river flowing through it, and various landmarks like hills and islands. The text is overlaid on this map.

In Guwahati, we observed the shaping of lives around the Brahmaputra river, through cultural, social and economic means. The attitude of the respondents towards the annual flooding in Guwahati was largely shaped by their personal experiences and inbuilt prejudices. The residents had ingrained certain patterns of social behaviour, like seasonal migration and switching of occupation. It was also observed that the dietary practices of people changed during heavy monsoons. The supply of fish was reduced during that time as fish was not available during floods. However, the staple food during that season is preserved fish itself, as other grains and supplies of food are rotten. The irony is that even though social life is greatly influenced by the patterns of the river, the Brahmaputra is revered by the locals and its furies are taken to be a normal course of nature.

The theory into analysis was Ulrich Beck's Risk Society Thesis. The observations pointed to the fact that the risk is unequally divided and that there is an illusion of safety maintained in the larger society. However, this safety is available only for a particular section of the society. All of the respondents, regardless of their class, gender, or circumstance, agreed that the Brahmaputra is the city of Guwahati's economic and political lifeline. The ferocious fishermen, sailors, tour guides, and cafe owners depend directly on the river for their livelihoods, while the entire city depends on it indirectly because it supplies energy and water. Although less obvious in the metropolis of Guwahati, it remains significant for agriculture and culture in many other regions of the state. The direction and size of the river play a significant role in the migration's flow. Many of our flood victims have claimed repeatedly that the government does not provide appropriate housing or even rations, and all of those policies simply exist on paper. We learned from these discussions with those who are impacted by seasonal unemployment that the true problem lies under the surface but that they are unable to see it for what it is. The unemployment, pollution, and poverty crises were concealed by development.

Overall, our study did meet the objectives we had laid down and there is a scope of future research on this topic. Conducting field research was a novel experience for us. The experience of conducting field research has been invaluable in many ways. First and foremost, it has allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the topic we were studying, by allowing us to see it in context and observe it in real-world situations. This has helped us to identify patterns and trends that we might not have been able to see otherwise. Additionally, the experience of conducting field research has helped us to develop our skills in observation, data collection, and analysis. We have learned how to be more precise in our observations, how to ask better questions, and how to analyze the data we collect in a more systematic way. Finally, conducting field research has allowed us to develop our ability to work as a team, by requiring us to collaborate, communicate effectively, and support one another throughout the research process. Overall, the experience of conducting field research has been a valuable learning experience that has helped us to develop a wide range of skills that will be useful in our future careers.

PROMINENCE OF ASSAM TEA AND FUNCTIONING OF GTAC

--SOWMYA ST, SRI PRAGNYA

Tea has become an integral part of the lives of many Indians which can be backed up by the fact of India being the 2nd largest producer of tea in the world. In all aspects of tea production, consumption and export, India has emerged to be the world leader, mainly because it accounts for 31% of global production. It is perhaps the only industry where India has retained its prominence over the last 150 years. The scientific name for tea is 'Camellia Sinensis'. 'Camellia Assamica' is an indigenous variety of tea plant which grows best in the tropical climate found in Assam. This variety of tea can be found in no other place in India. This topography forms one of the richest biodiversity zones in the world and is home to some of the endangered species of flora and fauna. The valley is fertile and offers rich loamy soil to the region, creating the perfect natural setting for the production of tea. The Assam tea has the ability to blend well with milk and sugar unlike the other varieties of teas. It also compliments the flavors of a few spices like cardamom, ginger, cinnamon. There are many variations in the Assam tea where the quality and grades differ as well. Tea was originally introduced to India by the British during their colonial rule to overcome the monopoly of China which has been the first largest producer of tea. The development of tea cultivation on the plains of Assam has accelerated this process. Assam is the highest tea producing state in India and occupies a unique place by producing more than 50% of total annual national production. In this research paper, we will explore the role of GTAC (Guwahati Tea Auction Center) and the government intervention in it, tea preferences of people in Guwahati, economic contribution of Assam tea in Indian economy and how integral tea is in the lives of people.

In India, with the advent of the modern tea industry, tea gradually became an important part of the Indian mainstream culture, especially of the Assamese as well as the Bengalis. In the case of the Assamese, today, tea may be said to be the mirror of the culture along with rice and betel nut. Today, an Assamese cannot think of starting his day without a cup of tea and an Assamese villager cannot think of going to the rice field without taking a bowlful of red tea. Tea goes very well with the easy going Assamese lifestyle where any time of the day or night may be said to be 'tea time'. Traditional Assamese hospitality is such that even if a stranger comes to one's house, a cup or a ban-bati of tea is generally offered before questioning his motive. From Assam, tea also spread into the mainstream Indian culture and economy. The tea plantations of this region have been following a separate time standard for over 150 years which is popularly known as the 'chai bagan time' which can be translated into- tea garden time. This regulation of time was put in by the Britishers and other plantation owners. This was done to make sure that tea plantations can fully utilize the daylight hours and work at maximum efficiency.

The story of the modern tea industry is associated with the origin and culture of tea itself. Like the expansion of the British empire in India with its colonialism during the 18th and 19th centuries, the growth of the modern tea industry itself is an outcome of the western concept of perpetual economic growth, by exploitation of nature by man. The modern tea industry had contributed immensely to the growth of the economy of many individuals and companies and especially to the growth of the British Empire itself. But this growth in wealth and economy were achieved at a price. Tea industry, like coffee and sugarcane, had its conflicts and victims. The tea industry has had a mixed effect on the local people of Assam who were exposed to the benefits of the Western culture on one hand but on the other hand, they lost their valuable political independence, because of it.

The modern tea is derived from early Chinese dialect, tchai, cha, tchea and tai which is used to describe both the beverage and the leaf. Nature's wonder drug "tea" plays an important role in various countries which includes the formation of cultural ceremonies, trade routes, formal events, entertainment and leisure for almost 4000 years. There are also certain claims from India concerning its origin that the discovery of tea is attributed to Bodhidharma. People have firmly believed that this Buddhist legend is stated to have formed the basis of the ritualistic tea ceremony which was later formalized as the meditative Zen Buddhist tea ceremony that is limited only to few people today.

Tea is important not just solely due to the taste but also health benefits that are tied along these ancient drinks. Tea has numerous health benefits which helps with overall health care, mental health, fitness and appearance, and illness. Many researches also show that tea provides a positive impact towards the brain and improves the mental state of the person. Assam is the largest tea growing state in the world and is known for its highly distinctive, strong and is filled with refreshing qualities. There are around 803 tea estates in Assam which are registered with the government of India. These tea estates are covered around the land of 21,62,000 hectares. The total area under cultivation accounts for more than half of the country's total area under tea.

The establishment of the tea industry of Assam not only changed the existing demography of Assam but also the political life of the people of Assam. Tea is a labor oriented enterprise as it is agro-based. It requires labor at every stage of its work right from clearance of jungle, making the land suitable for plantation, work for the nursery giving manure both in the nursery and in the plantation area, spraying of pesticides, drain cutting, path making, plucking, manufacturing and then finally dispatching it to different destination. Both men and women, belonging to different age groups earn their livelihood by working in tea gardens and plantations. The brew here provides a number of people with a means to earn their livelihood. Hence labor is the heart and soul of tea plantation.



THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF HANDLOOM TRADE: A CASE STUDY OF GUWAHATI

-SHREYA MUKHERJEE, SOUROMI DHAR

Assam's handloom industry has garnered widespread recognition from the world. The state boasts of being home to a variety of handloom products like gamosas, mekhla chadors, sarees etc. Handloom has a historical legacy, and its socio-cultural importance reflects on the economy of the state as well. While work has been done on the weavers widely, there is a dearth of academic literature on the trade in the handloom sector. Our research was aimed towards understanding the socio-economic dimensions of the trade- both in terms of process and the meanings, through fieldwork in the trade hotspots of Fancy Bazaar and Pan Bazaar in Guwahati, Assam; and a day's trip to the weaving village of Sualkuchi, located 27 kilometers away from Guwahati.

Our journey to Guwahati was highly eventful- from a 13 hour train delay to creation of memories and bonds that could perhaps constitute a study in itself. Our first day of fieldwork took us to Pan Bazaar, and in the following days, we found our way to Fancy Bazaar and various pockets of shops in-between. Our main mode of gathering information from shop owners and employees was through in-depth interviews, with questions on themes such as the range of products in shops, product source, and conditions of business. Once we had gathered sufficient information on the trade aspects from the shop owners, our inquiry led us to Sualkuchi, the infamous weaving village that has a historical relationship with the craft of handloom weaving.



What we learned was the multi-faceted nature of Assam's handloom trade. Our sample for shops consisted of both private enterprises and cooperative societies, managed by both Assamese and migrant traders. These shops also carried a range of products in both silk and cotton. Of the 26 private enterprises/shops covered, 19 were located within Guwahati- 3 in Pan Bazaar and the rest distributed in specific sections of Fancy Bazaar. The remaining seven enterprises were situated in Sualkuchi- although the number of shops in Sualkuchi are much more. Product procurements were done from both within Assam and from outside, with the exception of Muga silk products, since this variety is exclusive to the state. We categorized the three different ways of product procurement- through wholesalers/ agents, through direct connection with weavers- either through representatives coming to shops to sell products or the owners going to the weavers directly to buy items, and through manufacture in their own 'factory' or procuring from contracted weavers. Sualkuchi's case was more uniform as all shops had their own weaving units. Cotton products, though, were procured from nearby villages of Sualkuchi.

Our attempt at studying handloom trade also involved understanding the perspectives of our respondents towards government activities affecting the sector. This led us to a two-fold analysis- one, of the impact of GST on the handloom sector and two, of the impact of handloom-specific government schemes. We received a mixed response towards implementation of GST- while the cooperative societies faced losses post its implementation, shops in Fancy Bazaar and Pan Bazaar that had been running since before GST-implementation did not face any serious losses and were positive towards it. With respect to government schemes, some traders emphasized the lopsidedness of policies and rampant systemic corruption as reasons behind inefficiency of state programs. The owners of enterprises and shopkeepers who had a positive attitude towards these schemes believed that these programmes were helpful in inducing innovations in the trade.

An important aspect of our study was understanding the relationship between powerloom and handloom sectors in the state- in 2019, clashes had erupted in Fancy Bazaar between powerloom businesses and government handloom officials. To preserve the handloom industry, the state government has earmarked 31 products for exclusive handloom production. Our conversations in the market highlighted that handloom has not been a very profitable business owing to the time and money involved in production, especially in the face of cheaper powerloom products and the lack of yarn processing units in the state. However, our visit to Guwahati helped us in understanding the place handloom products hold in the socio-cultural fabric of Assam- the meaning that weaving and handloom holds for the people of the state is an enduring legacy, and most businesses supported a continued demand, though low, for handloom products in the market.

The market also showed a move towards changing trends. While handloom products are still generally characterized by traditional motifs, recent decades have witnessed a vogue for more modern designs and colors in these items, like green gamosas; but the adoption of trends has been slow in the handloom sector. The demand for innovations is still being largely fulfilled by the powerloom sector.

Through our study, we were also able to ascertain the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on business. While all of our respondents had to close their shops, with major economic upheavals; almost all concerned weaving units in Sualkuchi were functional in our sample, save one, during lockdowns- manned either by local weavers from Sualkuchi itself or by migrant workers who had been unable to return home at the time. As for the weavers associated with ARTFED, all 9 were home, but were receiving a stable salary every month. It can be inferred that weavers working on a piece-rate basis who had been unable to resume work for a multitude of reasons had faced a substantial cut to their income during the lockdown periods.

Social change has made inroads into the sector in Assam, but handloom's centrality in Assamese culture remains intact. We were also able to debunk some common mass media conceptions like Sualkuchi's self-sufficiency in weaving, which is not the case. Alongside understanding the trade process, our fieldwork helped us understand ourselves better. Considering it was our first study in a relatively unfamiliar context, this experience taught us to navigate and form social relations. Our prior knowledge of Bengali also helped us in some scenarios, though some knowledge of Assamese could have aided us in holding conversations with weavers at ARTFED. Nevertheless, through this journey, we have become better aware of the diversity and host of experiences that constitute everyday. Fieldwork is not a monolith or linear process- it consists of real interactions, social ties and mutual respect.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS AND NEWER OCCUPATIONS IN GUWAHATI, ASSAM

-AKANSHA SHARMA, NICOLE JOHN,
PRIYANKA KUMARI, SONAL KOUL

The research conducted on the occupational scenario in Guwahati Assam shows that the city's economy is transforming from traditional occupations to newer ones due to urbanization and globalization. The emergence of new markets and the lack of modernization and government support for traditional occupations have made them less competitive in the market. The younger generation's migration to newer occupations is leading to a decline in the workforce of traditional occupations.

We analyzed data collected through surveys and interviews with people engaged in traditional and newer occupations. The comparative method was used to assess the satisfaction levels and problems people faced in both occupations. We conducted our interviews at various locations in Guwahati. We have 50 interviews in total. The city has several important landmarks, including the Kamakhya Temple, a major Hindu pilgrimage site, the Assam State Museum, and the Umananda Temple located on the island in the Brahmaputra River.

The traditional occupations in Guwahati include fishing, handicrafts, tea, street vending, and silk handloom, while the newer occupations include mobile repairing shops, boutiques, showrooms, food chains, eyelash and nails technician, presence of women in the service sector, and hotel and transportation services. The data indicates that newer occupations offer better job security, higher pay, and more professional opportunities than traditional occupations. Guwahati, the capital of the state of Assam, is a premier city because it is the most important cultural, commercial, and industrial center of north-eastern India. Various traditional crafts, traditional trading practices, and other traditional occupations are practiced in Guwahati, which contribute a substantial share in the economy of the city. Guwahati is also the leading metropolis and the most significant industrial, commercial, and cultural hub of north-eastern India.

The popular local markets which our group visited include the Fancy Bazaar Market, Paltan Bazaar Market, Maligaon Market, and GS Road Market. In terms of location, the traditional occupants are found broadly in these places.

Last but not least, Uzan Bazaar is the iconic fish market along the Brahmaputra riverside at the heart of the city. The fish sellers and dealers pitch their voices to the guests and buyers flocking and squeezing the venue which has attained near cult status among the older generations of Guwahati residents.

The prevalence of women workers in newer occupations in the form of nail art studio professionals, special hair and facial spa professionals and as sales professionals at the newly opened Taco Bell should be noted. In Guwahati, these working women are an essential component of the workforce. Nonetheless, in addition to their obligations at work, women are still seen as having household responsibilities. To perform their jobs and responsibilities at home in a timely manner, married working women are under time pressure both inside and outside the house.

In conclusion, the occupational scenario in Guwahati is changing rapidly, and the government needs to take steps to promote traditional occupations and provide support to the people engaged in them. At the same time, newer occupations need to be regulated and monitored to ensure that they provide decent work conditions and do not exploit workers. Overall, a balance needs to be struck between the old and new, to ensure sustainable economic development and social welfare in Guwahati.

Our experience of traveling to and within Guwahati was one of a kind. We learned a lot of things about adjustment, and group settings and have also got the chance to introspect within ourselves as to who we are and what we do. We talked to a lot of people and we got to learn about their life stories and their experiences with the ongoing capitalism. Some stories brought tears to our eyes and some stories made us laugh which shows that no one's life is just one-dimensional. The conversations still have a hold on us to this day. We created a lot of good bonds and had our share of misunderstandings too, but we came out as more mature versions of ourselves. The train journey, where the train was delayed for almost 17 hours, was really tiring but it was beautiful as we got to sing and dance with the people we love the most and also adjust to the situation we didn't like. Like our professor, Ravindra Karnena said, "Everything in life is abnormal but you", this holds true as we were faced with so many situations which were dangerous to us yet we fought through them all which only made us stronger and gave us innumerable willpower.



EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS IN THE GROCERY SECTOR OF GUWAHATI: AN ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

-SAMPURNA MAITRA, TALYA RANA

Our research in Guwahati focused on exploring the intersection of social and economic factors in the grocery sector of the city, from an economic sociology perspective. The study was aimed at understanding the complex relationship between social structures, economic policies, and market dynamics in shaping the grocery sector in Guwahati. The research process involved several stages, including literature review, data collection, data analysis, and report writing.

Our literature review focused on identifying relevant theoretical frameworks and previous studies that could inform the research question. The review covered topics such as economic sociology, market dynamics, social stratification, and policy analysis. This exercise helped us identify the gaps in existing knowledge and formulate a research question that could contribute to the existing literature.

The data collection involved both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through interviews with grocery store owners, managers, and employees in various neighborhoods of Guwahati. The interviews focused on understanding the various social and economic factors shaping the grocery sector, such as the role of caste and ethnicity in market access and competition, the impact of government policies on market dynamics, and the challenges faced by small and medium-sized grocery stores. Secondary data was collected from government reports, academic publications, and other relevant sources.

The data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative analysis focused on identifying themes and patterns in the interview data, while the quantitative analysis involved statistical analysis of the secondary data. The analysis revealed several key findings, including the prevalence of caste-based discrimination in the grocery sector, the impact of government policies on market dynamics, and the challenges faced by small and medium-sized grocery stores.

The report writing process involved synthesizing the findings of the research into a coherent and actionable report. The report provided recommendations for policy makers, practitioners, and researchers. It also emphasized the need for policies that promote market competition and reduce caste-based discrimination in the grocery sector. It also recommended measures to support small and medium-sized grocery stores and to promote entrepreneurship in the sector.

Chapter 2 explores the grocery sector in Guwahati, analyzed through the lens of economic sociology. Elements such as class, culture, and community norms impact both supply and demand in the grocery sector. Economic sociology helps understand the interplay between economic and non-economic factors, providing insights into challenges faced by the grocery sector and ways to improve it.

Chapter 3 summarizes the economic pressures such as market competition and fluctuating commodity prices, as well as social pressures due to cultural and social norms. Grocery store owners use strategies like collaborating with other stores, using technology to manage their operations, and engaging in community outreach programs to navigate these pressures. They must balance their social obligations with their economic goals, such as maintaining competitive prices and profit margins. Meeting diverse customer needs and expectations is critical in this context.

Chapter 4 discusses how the grocery sector in Guwahati is heavily influenced by social factors such as social class, culture, and community norms. Middle-class consumers prioritize quality and convenience while lower-income groups prioritize affordability, leading to different shopping patterns. Cultural norms surrounding food preparation and consumption also influence grocery shopping habits. Community norms dictate which products are purchased and consumed. Grocery stores must cater to the preferences and habits of their target market to remain competitive. Non-economic factors such as personal preferences and beliefs also shape consumer behavior. Research must consider both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the impact of social factors on consumer behavior.

Chapter 5 highlights the impact of a range of economic, political, and social factors. The insurgency of ULFA, for instance, had disrupted transportation networks and discouraged investment, imposing taxes on businesses. Competition, availability and cost of inputs, government policies, market forces, and cultural norms also affect the industry. Despite improvements in the region's stability, the legacy of ULFA's insurgency still has an impact on the economy. Grocery stores need to understand these factors to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the industry and position themselves for success in a changing market.

Chapter 6 concludes by stressing that Guwahati, like many Indian cities, faces infrastructural challenges due to rapid urbanization, limited resources, difficult topography, political instability, and lopsided planning. The government is investing in infrastructure projects, but there is more that needs to be done. We found that grocery store owners and managers face challenges balancing economic concerns with social expectations, consumer behavior is influenced by social factors such as class and culture, and government policies and market forces shape the industry's outcomes. Understanding these factors is crucial for promoting sustainable and equitable development.

Our research experience also involved engaging with the local community and stakeholders. We organized several community meetings and discussions with grocery store owners and employees, as well as representatives from government agencies and non-governmental organizations. Our study highlighted the importance of considering social structures and power dynamics in understanding market dynamics and policy outcomes. Our report also demonstrated the potential for interdisciplinary research in informing policy and practice in complex social and economic systems.

Overall, our perspectives as ethnographers was characterized by a deep commitment to understanding and documenting the diversity of human experience. Through our work in the field we tried to capture the lived realities of the individuals and communities we studied and to use this knowledge to help build a more just and equitable world.



MARRIAGE- RITUALS AND CUSTOMS

-KHUSHI YADAV, MANASVI SINGH, MANVI SHARMA

The fieldwork is not just a part of academics but a part of life as well, one that is full of experiences and learnings. During our 15-day fieldwork which began with the train journey that lasted for about 40 hours gave us the biggest challenges and the lessons on how to deal with them, further we did face challenges in adapting to the climatic conditions and the food but overall it was a journey that will always have a special place in our hearts.



Marriage, a legally and socially sanctioned union, usually between a man and a woman, that is regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs, and attitudes that prescribe the rights and duties of the partners and accords status to their offspring (if any). The universality of marriage within different societies and cultures is attributed to the many basic social and personal functions. But what is it that sanctions a marriage ritual as legal and how do different religions, regions, caste bring different forms to this institution? This research revolves around the topic of marriage - rituals & customs, and it was conducted in Guwahati, a city in the state of Assam, India. Primary and secondary data was used along with the observation and interview methods. The field site was chosen keeping in mind the population that ranges from 1,176,000, the largest metropolis in North - Eastern India, stable climatic conditions, well connected road transport system etc. The topic for the fieldwork i.e Marriage was chosen because the auspicious ritual begins in the month of January with the pooja of Maa Kamakhya Devi Temple marking the onset of weddings for all the tribal and non-tribal population. This was a major advantage in carrying our research since it was easier to attend weddings and observe rituals and also meet a variety of people.

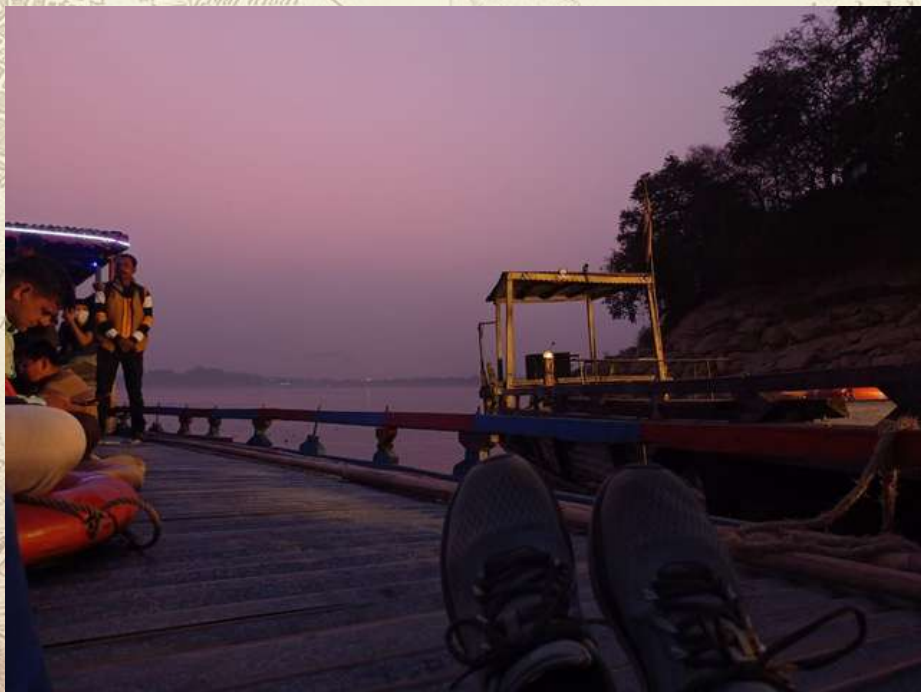
The ethnicity of Guwahati consists a fair share of Bengali, Assamese Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh population. This research focused on all of the different ethnic and religious groups, and through that we have tried to establish the different rituals and customs that take place in the weddings beginning from the pre-wedding rituals, the wedding ceremony itself, followed by the post-wedding rituals. This paper also covers the special mention of weddings in Kamakhya Temple and weddings conducted in the ISCKON temple through Krishna Consciousness. Both primary and secondary data were used for this paper. Observation and interview methods have been adopted in the field study.

The topic of our study required an ethnographic method, and in order to conduct a thorough investigation of the topic, participatory observation was required on our part to do an in-depth study of the subject matter. Talking to locals, couples, and the priest was very helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of the research problem. Although primary data served as the foundation for this research, comprehending the theory and methodology was greatly aided by secondary sources. For collecting secondary data, books, journals and internet sources were studied.

The traditional Assamese wedding ceremony is a grand affair that involves various rituals and customs, including the selection of bride and groom by the parents, fixing of dates, etc. These customs and rituals vary from region to region, and even within the same region, there can be significant differences based on religion, ethnicity, and social class. However, following are some of the most common and popular rituals and practices of the Assamese. The state of Assam has a diverse cultural heritage with different religions, each with their unique customs and traditions. Our report explores the marriage customs and rituals of different religions in Assam, shedding light on the cultural significance and historical background of each. the marriage customs and rituals of Hindus, then Muslims, then Christians, and finally, Sikhs, outlining their unique features and practices with a special mention on the conduct of marriages of devotees of Krishna Consciousness. Each community has its way of celebrating a wedding, and they have been passed down from generation to generation, reflecting their rich cultural heritage. These customs not only reflect their values and beliefs but also create a sense of unity and togetherness among the people. In Guwahati, Hindus top the maximum share of population followed by Muslims, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist and others.



GALLERY



GALLERY



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