

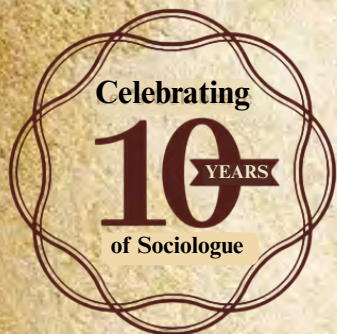


voices from the margin

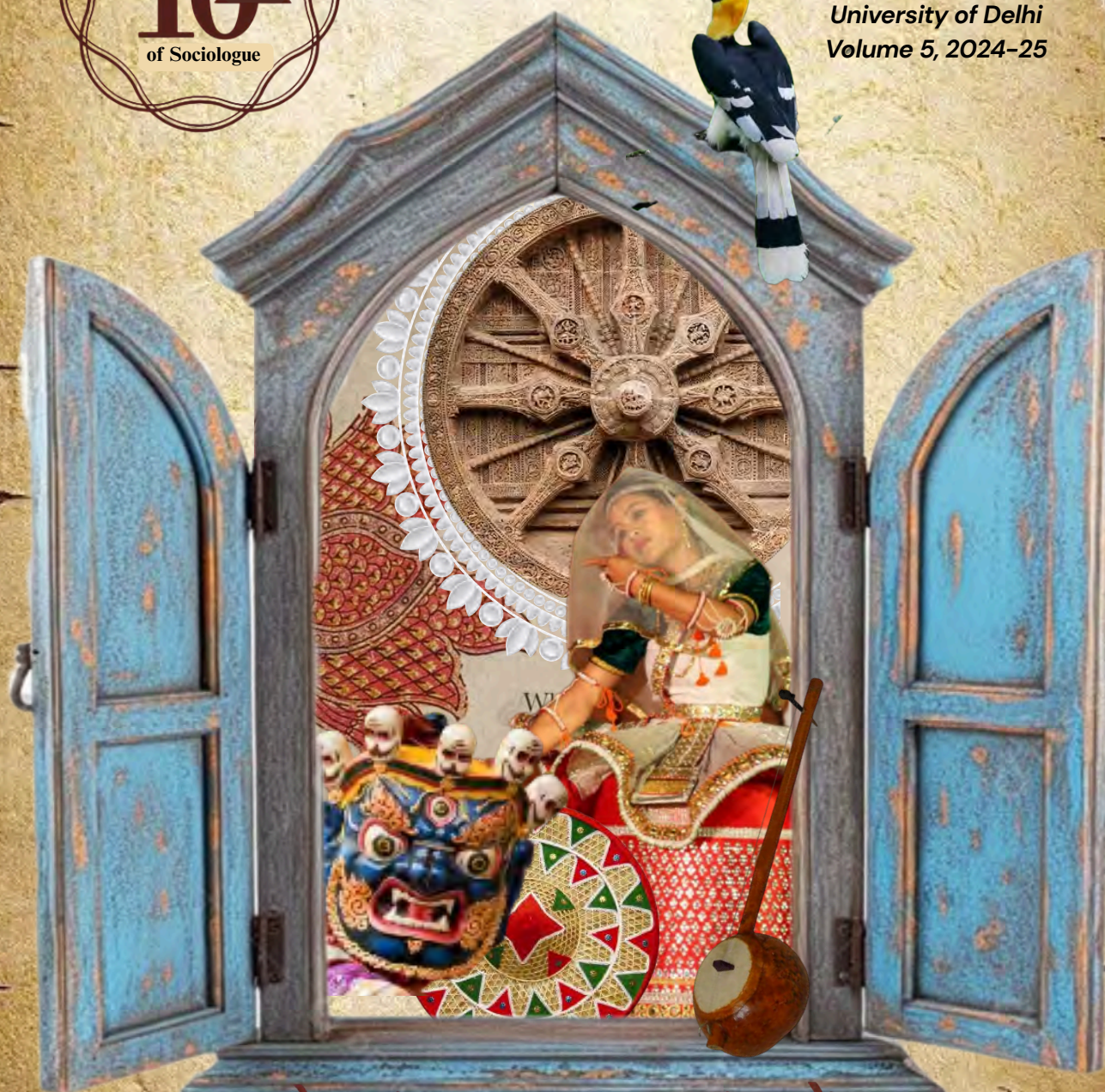


SOCIOLOGUE

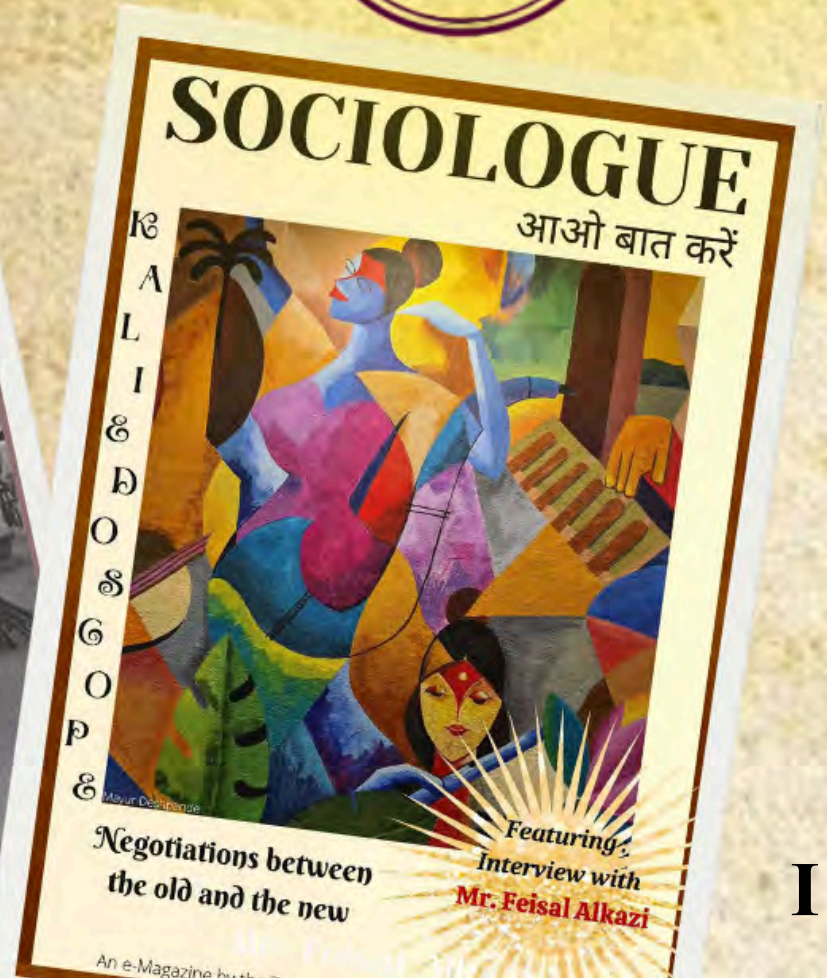
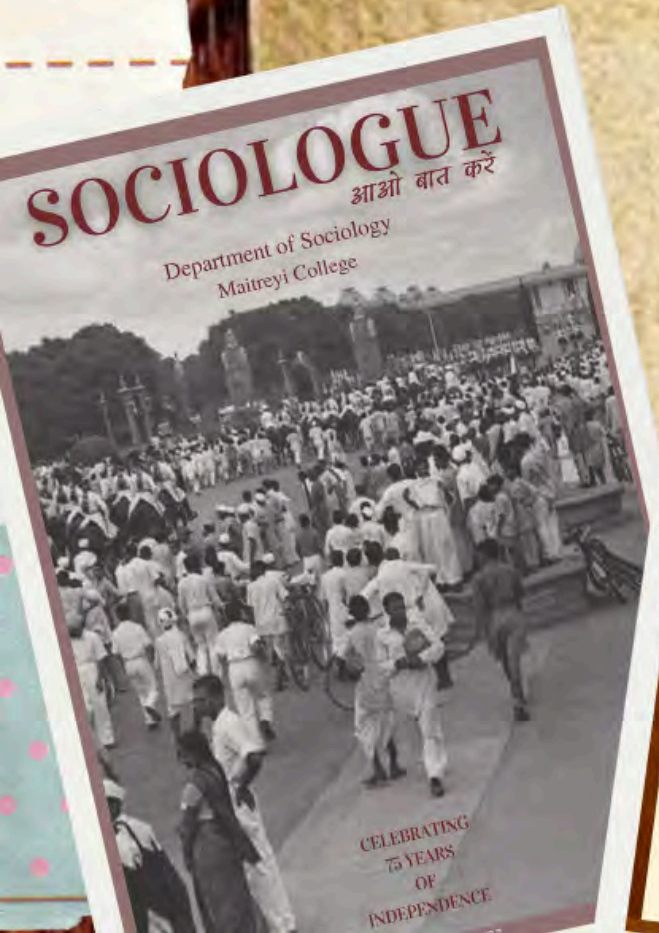
आओ बात करें...



A magazine by the
Department of Sociology
Maitreyi College
University of Delhi
Volume 5, 2024-25



Exploring *lahari* in *india*:
Vernacular beliefs and practices





SOCIOLOGUE

आओ बात करें...



Credit - Atrayie Saikia



Our team

Editorial board



Dr. Gopi D. Tripathy
Editor-In-Chief



Dr. Neeraj Kumar
Language Editor



Ms. Mridusmita Singh
Language Editor



Hadia Arif
Editor



Himadri Prasad
Associate Editor



Anshika Saxena
Associate Editor

Assistant editors



Aditi Verma



Prajukta Sharma



Gunika Sharma



Disha



Lonee Chetia

Design & layout



Mr. Pawan S. Harsana
Faculty Adviser



Harsha P
Design Head



Asba Chauhan



Ritcha Singh



Atrayie Saikia



Sneha



Tanushree

From the editor in chief

With this issue, we complete 10 years of “Sociologue: aao baat karein”. It is indeed a humbling moment, as also one of pride and satisfaction. Back in 2015, this publication was born as a response to certain modes of interaction among our students that were giving rise to a gradual process of othering among them. This was in opposition to the spirit of Sociology: of critical thinking, respect for diversity and difference, and of openness to understanding other perspectives and cultures. We were witnessing what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has called ‘the danger of a single story’.

All of us had experienced the discipline of Sociology as liberating and life-altering. It enabled a perspective that saw reality differently, opening up possibilities of listening to and understanding the other and countering ethno-centricism. But now we felt the need to take Sociology outside the classroom. The students and faculty then came together to launch this bi-annual newsletter, which would reflect on social reality through the lens of Sociology. The newsletter was named “Sociologue: aao baat karein” with a vision to engage in a dialogue with readers across disciplines, revealing different ways of seeing and encouraging an attitude of questioning the given. The newsletter launched in 2015 was converted into an e-magazine in 2021.



Dr. Gopi D. Tripathy

We were clear that this was to be a publication led by the students, under the guidance of the faculty. It created space for each individual involved to express themselves in any language and any form (verse, prose, stories, photos, art, design, layout and whatever else came to their minds). The only condition was that write-ups in languages other than English and Hindi would be accompanied by either simple English or Hindi translations, for readers who do not know the original language.

Taking the lead from Adichie’s phrase, the publication was dedicated to bringing together as many stories as possible, especially those that are told by voices from and of the margins. The attempt was to listen to all of them, and to reach out to a wider audience regardless of field or discipline. This way, we set out to generate dialogue on varied issues, particularly in relation to those living on the margins of society, attempting to disempower the mainstream as much as possible and eventually contribute, in our own small way, to the creation of a just society.

Each issue we have published has been centred on a prevalent discourse, and has shed light on the narratives invisibilized by it. We have engaged with themes of caste, gender, female sexuality, issues of the Northeast, the minorities, the meaning of a university, and the relationships between food, culture and society, questioning food hierarchies and their close association with caste, gender and class inequalities and discrimination. The present issue explores some lesser-known local, regional, and primarily oral traditions, folk culture, day-to-day practices, myths etc. associated with rural peasants, patronisingly termed 'common folk' by those who possess power and privilege. The voices you will hear in this issue are those of cultivators, craftspeople, forest dwellers, fisherfolk, and other communities that provide a glimpse of many Indias.

To us, the most important thing about this publication—second only to its intent—is the process of its making. It engages as many students as possible, either in the form of the editorial board or as contributors, in a process of intensive study: reading, researching, thinking, reflecting, and understanding a theme in order to find ways to express their understanding using whatever form comes naturally to them. They brainstorm and come up with ideas to execute them together. They learn the nuances of language and the skills of editing and designing layouts, while also learning how to work together as a team, led by their editorial and design heads. These editions reflect the honesty and

sincerity of their thought, intent, vision and effort.

Our students are the torch bearers of our vision as they step out of the classroom and go forth into the world. We cannot gauge how much they have learnt or predict how they will carry the torch, but when we see the world becoming a more just place, we will know that some of them are living sociology, and that the torch is shining bright.

आओ बात करें...



Editor's note

Losing oneself in another's culture means losing one's own existence."

— Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Occidentosis*

This quote serves as a hidden warning, encouraging resistance to the ongoing surge of cultural collapse. In an era where the concept of a single national identity is frequently used to build togetherness, we must ask: what is the price? As cultures are homogenized to fit existing narratives, the rich and lively diversity of India's regional traditions is either incorporated or abandoned.

This year marks a decade since *Socialogue* first began its journey. Over the last 10 years, the magazine has remained. From the start, our mission has been to highlight the voices, ideas, and practices that make a significant contribution to India's diversity—stories but are frequently overlooked, undervalued, or unheard.

Against this backdrop, we present this special anniversary issue, "Vernacular Beliefs and Practices of India," an honor to the ideas and activities that exist on the margins but are at the heart of our multicultural society. We live in a time when cultural homogeneity is not only encouraged, but frequently imposed; languages are suppressed, rites are reduced to show, and indigenous knowledge is dismissed as outdated. However, these vernacular ways of life include wisdom, resilience, and



Hadia Arif

B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd year

resistance. They are not relics of the past, but living traditions carried down by communities whose stories are rarely heard in mainstream culture.

Through this issue, we hope to magnify their voices—not as anthropological curiosities, but as significant contributors to India's cultural and intellectual fabric. We made a coordinated attempt to incorporate customs, festivals, and everyday activities from communities throughout India's Northeast, West, and South—regions and cultures that are frequently unidentified and underrepresented in the prevailing cultural perception. These are stories that have survived the silences enforced by centralised narratives and are still widely used in oral memory and communal practice.

What can you expect from the following pages? Essays address fading away festivals and oral traditions that defy eradication. Photographs will represent the quiet dignity of inherited rites, the textures of regional faiths, and the living memory of traditions that are still growing. Each piece draws attention to the ethnic richness that mainstream narratives typically overlook.

This is not a demand to romanticize the margins, but rather to recognize its vibrancy. Vernacular belief systems are not static; they evolve, integrate, and continue to influence how cultures perceive the world. They challenge established structures not only via rejection, but also with determination and invention. As a result, they present us with grounded, inclusive, and compassionate visions of the future.

Our purpose as editors, authors, and collaborators is not to speak for these groups, but to provide a forum for them to express themselves. We are humbled by the experiences shared with us and the ones we discovered, and we are glad to share them with you in this edition.

So, turn the page. Allow your curiosity to wander. And may you, like us, leave with a greater appreciation for the beauty of belief—not the sort that demands conformity, but the kind that flourishes in plurality.

आओ बात करें...



From the associate editors' pen

While researching about vernacular practices and beliefs etched into the often-overlooked corners of India, I came across many thought-provoking, intriguing, and culturally rich facets of our country. I've always been an avid watcher of the Epic Channel, which aired a few years back. My mother and I would sit together, engrossed in shows like *Raja, Rasoi Aur Anya Kahaniyaan* and *Devlok* with *Devdutt Pattanaik*. These shows had a magical way of storytelling—using beautifully illustrated depictions to bring to life ancient epics, culinary traditions, and the fading stories of communities that continue to survive.

Working on my articles for this issue completely changed my perception of India. I found myself engaging in conversations with friends and acquaintances, asking them about little-known beliefs or rituals in their communities. While we often talk about the grand customs of kings and queens, does anyone know what a dhobi might have done to celebrate the birth of a son in their family? These questions made me research about the lives of people who are rarely written about.

While brainstorming ideas for this year's magazine, I was struck by the importance of embracing one's cultural heritage. That evening, I went home and asked my mother if there were any unique or lesser-known customs in our own community. Even she had to call her mother to find out. That moment reminded both of us how vital it is to stay connected to our roots and never forget where we come from.

Through this year's issue, we journey into the heart of India's local traditions—a place where culture lives not just in books, but in lived experiences, in the everyday, in the remembered and the nearly forgotten. In this issue, we focus on rituals, festivals, art forms, and performative traditions—each rooted deeply in local knowledge systems and regional heritage. These are the stories that rarely make it to mainstream narratives, but deserve to be heard.



Anshika Saxena
B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd year

सह-संपादकीय टिप्पणी

जब हम "परंपरा" शब्द सुनते हैं, तो हमारे मन में अक्सर पवित्र ग्रंथों, शास्त्रों और शास्त्रीयता की छवि उभरती है। लेकिन भारत जैसे बहुसांस्कृतिक देश में परंपरा की दुनिया कहीं अधिक व्यापक, जीवंत और जटिल है — वह गाँव की चौपाल पर कही गई कहानियों में भी बसती है, खेतों में गाए गए लोकगीतों में भी, दादी-नानी की यादों में सहेजे गए रीति-रिवाजों में भी और उन बोलियों में भी, जिन्हें अक्सर 'साहित्यिक भाषा' के मानकों से कमतर समझा जाता है।

इस वर्ष के 'Sociologue: आओ बात करें' का यह विशेषांक 'Vernacular beliefs and practices of India' (भारतीय लोकविश्वास और परंपराएँ) के विषय पर केंद्रित है। यह विषय न केवल अकादमिक दृष्टिकोण से समृद्ध है, बल्कि यह सामाजिक और भावनात्मक स्तर पर भी गहराई से जुड़ा हुआ है। लोक परंपराएँ केवल संस्कृति के वाहक नहीं होतीं, वे लोगों की स्मृतियों, संघर्षों, आशाओं और पहचान का भी हिस्सा होती हैं।

मेरे लिए इस अंक से जुड़ना एक गहरे आत्मिक अनुभव जैसा रहा है। लेखों का चयन करते हुए, मुझे विभिन्न क्षेत्रीय अनुभवों से गुजरने का अवसर मिला — कहीं बुंदेलखंड की लोकगाथाएँ थीं, कहीं पूर्वांचल की तांत्रिक परंपराएँ, कहीं उत्तराखंड के पर्वतीय जीवन की झलक, तो कहीं राजस्थान के लोक-नृत्य और प्रतीकात्मक रीतियाँ। इन सबमें एक बात सामान्य थी — लोगों का अपनी मिट्टी, अपनी बोली और अपने जीवन-विश्वासों से जुड़ाव।

हमारा प्रयास है कि जिन कथाओं, परंपराओं और भाषाओं को 'कमतर' या 'अवैज्ञानिक' करार देकर हाशिए पर धकेल दिया गया है, उन्हें एक सम्मानपूर्ण मंच दिया जाए। यह पत्रिका उस विमर्श का हिस्सा है जो स्थापित ज्ञान के ढाँचों को चुनौती देकर, वैकल्पिक और स्थानीय ज्ञान प्रणालियों को पुनः स्थापित करता है।

हम यह भी मानते हैं कि लोक परंपराएँ और भाषाएँ केवल अतीत का अवशेष नहीं हैं, वे वर्तमान में जीवित हैं और भविष्य के निर्माण में सक्रिय भूमिका निभा सकती हैं — बशर्ते हम उन्हें सुनें, समझें और अपनाएँ। इस दृष्टिकोण को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए, हम पिछले दस वर्षों से इस पत्रिका का प्रकाशन कर रहे हैं, दस वर्षों की इस यात्रा में, हमने विविध विषयों और शैलियों के माध्यम से लोक परंपराओं की सुंदरता और महत्व को उजागर करने का प्रयास किया है।

आशा है कि यह अंक हमारे पाठकों के लिए एक अनुभवात्मक यात्रा होगी — एक ऐसा सफ़र जो हमें अपनी जड़ों से जोड़ते हुए, नए सवाल और संवेदनाओं से भी रूबरू कराएगा। यह अंक हमें याद दिलाएगा कि हमारी परंपराएँ और लोकविश्वास न केवल हमारे अतीत का हिस्सा हैं, बल्कि वे हमारे वर्तमान और भविष्य को भी आकार देते हैं।



हिमाद्री प्रसाद
बीए समाजशास्त्र ऑनर्स
तृतीय वर्ष

Department Updates

- 9th September 2024 - Shramdaan
- 25th September 2024 - Movie screening - "Kantara"
- 27th October 2024 - Manan -Declamation Competition
- 22nd October 2024 - Research Methodology Workshop
- 23rd Oct 2024 - SI-UK Global Seminar
- 23rd November 2024 - SI- Global Fair
- 25th November 2024 - Pahuja Law Academy Seminar
- 27th November 2024 - Chahal IAS Webinar
- 28th November 2024 - Prepp IAS Webinar
- 29th January 2025 - Drishti IAS Seminar
- 7th, 18th January and 5th February 2025 - Pre-field work training in research method by Prof. Savyasaachi JMI
- 6th February to 11th February 2025 - Field Trip to Khajuraho
- 24th February 2025 - Prepp IAS Seminar
- 4th April 2025 - Imagine Fest Annual Department Fest
- 23rd April 2025 - Jewar Field Trip

Table of Contents



Reflections

1-10

When traditions speak through personal experience

Telling Tales

11-19

Tales that connect, inspire and endure

Festivals - Beyond the Calendar

20-28

Festivals that Google Calendar forgot, but we didn't

Art and Craft - Handmade Histories

29-36

Artistry born not in studios, but in courtyards and quite corners

From the Faculty

37-47

Voices that nurture our curiosity, now on the page

Beliefs and Practices - Traditions Without Text

48-58

A symphony of traditions echoing across time and terrain

Architecture - Built by Culture

59-71

Where culture breathes, architecture stands

Dance and Music - सुरों की विरासत

72-81

A rhythm passed down, a legacy danced out

Popcorn and Pages

82-89

Stories we love, on screen and in print

Lamhein

90-95

Yaadon ka Karwaan







Reflections

Reflections is a space where our editors share personal stories and moments from their own lives. These are thoughts and experiences that have stayed with them over time. Some are light and joyful, others quiet and thoughtful, but all are honest. Through these stories, we hope to connect with our readers in a deeper way. Each piece is a small window into life, seen through the eyes of someone who has paused to reflect.

কন্যা কাল আৰু আমাৰ পৰম্পৰা

সৰুৰে পৰাই চৌদিশে দেখা প্ৰতিটো কথা ৰে আতিগুৰি বিচাৰ কৰিব খোজাটো মোৰ অভ্যাস। ইয়াৰ বাবে ডাঙৰ সকলৰ পৰা বহুত গালিও খাইছিলোঁ যদিও সেইবোৰে মোৰ অনুসন্ধানসূ মনটোক বাধা দিব পৰা নাছিল। তেনে এক সময়তে মোৰ সমবয়সৰ (প্ৰায় ন,দহ বছৰীয়া) ছোৱালী এজনীক এডাল কলগছৰ লগত বিয়া পাতি দিয়া দেখি বৰ আচৰিত হৈছিলোঁ আৰু ঘটনা টোৰ সাৰমৰ্ম বিচাৰি উলিয়াবলৈ মই মাৰ ওচৰ পাইছিলোঁ গৈ। কিন্তু মাই মোৰ কথাত বিশেষ গুৰুত্ব নিদি মাথো কৈছিল তোৰো তেনে সময় আহিব। মাৰ কথাটো ৰে মোক আৰু বেছি আচৰিত কৰি তুলিছিল। এইবাৰ মই ওচৰ চাপিলো আইতাৰ। কাৰণ মই জানিছিলো যে মোৰ মনৰ মাজত চলা ধুমুহা জাকক কেৱল আইতাইহে শান্ত কৰিব পাৰিব। ভবামতেই আইতাই মোক এখন নতুন জগতৰ লগত চিনাকি কৰি দিছিল, যত এগৰাকী ছোৱালীক প্ৰকৃতিয়ে এক অদ্ভুত শক্তি প্ৰদান কৰে। এগৰাকী নাবালিকাই মাতৃ হব পৰাৰ শক্তি লাভ কৰে, অৰ্থাৎ প্ৰথম ৰজস্বলা হয়। সামাজিক নিয়ম অনুসৰি ঋতুমতী হোৱা ৰ এইসময়চোৱাত ছোৱালী জনীক চাৰিদিন সূৰ্য ৰ পোহৰ নপৰাকৈ ঘৰৰ ভিতৰত ৰখা হয় আৰু লঘু আহাৰ প্ৰদান কৰা হয়। চতুৰ্থ দিনা আয়তসকলৰ উপস্থিতিত এডাল কলপুলি ৰ তলত গা-ধুওৱা হয় আৰু সেই কলপুলি টোক প্ৰতীকাত্মক ভাৱে দৰা সজায় সেইটোৰ লগত ছোৱালী জনীৰ বিয়া পাতি দিয়া হয়। এয়া অসমীয়া সমাজৰ এটি পৰম্পৰা, যি নিয়মৰ জৰিয়তে এগৰাকী নাৰীক ঋতুমতী হোৱাৰ কাৰণ, দৈহিক আৰু মানসিক সুস্থিৰতা, চাফ চিকুনতা আদিৰ জ্ঞান দিয়া ৰ চেষ্টা কৰা হয়। এই বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠান ত ব্যৱহাৰ হোৱা বিভিন্ন সামগ্ৰীসমূহেৰে প্ৰতীকাত্মক ভাৱে যৌন শিক্ষা দিয়া ৰো চেষ্টা কৰা হয়।

আইতাই সাধু এটাৰ দৰে আমাৰ অসমীয়া সমাজৰ এটি ৰোমাঞ্চকৰ পৰম্পৰাৰ বিষয়ে মোক অৱগত কৰালে যিটো মোৰ সৰু মনটোক শিহৰিত কৰিবলৈ যথেষ্ট আছিল। প্ৰতিটো সামাজিক পৰম্পৰা ৰে কিছু বৈজ্ঞানিক ভিত্তি থাকে বুলি মই অনুভৱ কৰো। সেয়ে নিজৰ সময়ত দুটা এটা নিয়মে মোক সেই সময়ত আমনি কৰিছিল যদিও এতিয়া মই অনুভৱ কৰোঁ যে নিয়ম কানুনে আমাক শৃংখলিত কৰি ৰখাতো সহায় কৰে। যিয়ে মানসিক আৰু দৈহিক ভাৱে শক্তিশালী কৰি ৰখাত সহায় কৰে। কিন্তু বৰ্তমানৰ ব্যস্ততাপূৰ্ণ জীৱন শৈলী ত সকলো নিয়ম মানি চলাও সহজ নহয়। সেয়ে পৰম্পৰা অনুসৰি কিছু এৰাধৰাৰ মাজেৰে নীতি সমূহ পালন কৰিব পাৰিলে ই নিজৰ লগতে সামাজিক দায়বদ্ধতা বজাই ৰখাটো সহায় হব বুলি মই অন্তহকৰনেৰে বিশ্বাস কৰো।



Credits- Assam Info

Girlhood and Our Culture

From childhood, I have a habit of getting into the roots of any culture, tradition, or belief I encounter. This habit has sometimes irritated people around me, but it has not stopped my inquisitive mind.

Similarly one day, I saw a girl around 9 to 10 years old getting married to a Banana tree. Seeing this, I was surprised and also became curious to know more about this practice. I decided to approach my mom to learn about the significance of this ritual in a more detailed way. But my mom didn't pay much attention to it and just ended the conversation by saying someday, even I have to do the same ritual. This sentence from my mom acted as fuel to my already inquisitive mind. Next up, I decided to approach my grandmother. I knew only she could patiently answer my questions and calm my storm of thoughts. Just as I thought, she introduced me to a whole new world, giving me a new perspective on a woman's life. This ritual symbolizes that a minor gains the strength to become a mother attaining mental and physical strength of a woman to become, which is the first menstruation. According to social norms, the girl is kept indoors for four days without sunlight, and light snacks are provided. On the fourth day, the girl is bathed under a banana plant in the presence of the *Ayatis* (elderly ladies), and the girl is married to the groom symbolically.



Credits- India Today NE

This is a tradition in Assamese society, which is an attempt to teach a woman to be physically and mentally stable, follow the rules of cleanliness, etc. This wedding ceremony also tries to provide suggestive sexual education with various items used in the rituals.

My grandmother almost narrated the whole concept to me like a story, which successfully ignited my questioning mind. I believe that every social custom and tradition has some scientific reasoning in it. Growing up, I always questioned and tried to oppose these rituals. But, now being an adult, I feel that it is important for us to follow these rituals because this makes a spiritual base for life and makes our lives disciplined.



Credits- India Today NE

This helps us to strengthen our mind and our body. Moreover, these rituals often bring people together, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity . Culture gives a community a shared identity—common language, beliefs, traditions, and values creating a sense of belonging and unity among people. Culture connects the individual to society and society to its past and future. It's like the soul of a community and the compass for individuals..



Prajukta Sharma
B.A. (H) Sociology
1st Year



Credits- India Today NE

Did you know?

Child dropping ritual

In this ritual, children below two years of age are dropped from a height of about 30-50 feet. Men stand on the ground carrying a sheet or blanket to catch the child. After the successful completion of the ritual they celebrate by passing the child from one man to another before giving it to the mother. This ritual is practiced in Solapur, Maharashtra and parts of karnataka.

बिहार में भाई दूज: गोधन

मैं बिहार से हूँ। बिहार एक ऐसा राज्य है जो अपनी समृद्ध सांस्कृतिक धरोहर, ऐतिहासिक स्थलों और विविध कलाओं के लिए प्रसिद्ध है। बिहार में भाई दूज का त्यौहार एक अनोखे और अद्भुत तरीके से मनाया जाता है। इस त्यौहार को भाई-बहन के प्यार और सम्मान का प्रतीक माना जाता है। इस दिन बहनें अपने भाइयों को टीका लगाती हैं और उनकी लंबी आयु की कामना करती हैं।

चलिए अब हम जानते हैं कि बिहार के लोग भाई दूज कैसे मनाते हैं:

भाई दूज के एक दिन पहले, गोवर्धन पूजा की जाती है। इस पूजा के लिए एक पवित्र स्थान को साफ किया जाता है और गोबर से एक चौकोर मंडप बनाया जाता है। इस मंडप में गोवर्धन जी, उनकी पत्नी और उनके बच्चे की मूर्ति बनाई जाती है। साथ ही उनकी बहन खबरीज की मूर्ति भी बनाई जाती है। गोवर्धन पूजा के दौरान, विभिन्न वस्तुओं का निर्माण किया जाता है, जैसे कि फल, मूसल, सांप, बिच्छू, चक्की, पेड़, पौधे, घर के सामान, चूल्हा, बर्तन आदि। इन वस्तुओं को गोबर से बनाया जाता है और मंडप में रखा जाता है।

भाई दूज के दिन सुबह-सुबह सभी स्त्रियाँ स्नान ध्यान करके, पवित्र होकर नए वस्त्र पहनकर वहाँ इकट्ठी होती हैं और बैठकर वहाँ पर पहले गोवर्धन जी की पूजा की जाती है। वहाँ पर पहले टीका, चंदा, फूल, अक्षर सब चढ़ाकर मिठाई, लड्डू, बतासे ये सब रखकर उनकी पूजा की जाती है। इसके बाद सभी औरतें भाई दूज का गीत गाती हैं। फिर सभी औरतें और लड़कियाँ अपने अपने भाई को, उनका नाम लेकर, शराब पीकर मरने के लिए कहती हैं। इसके बाद रुई के गोले बनाकर उसकी माला बनाती हैं। फिर एक दूसरे से पूछती हैं कि ये क्या कर रही हो? तो वो बोलती हैं कि हम अपने भाई की लंबी आयु के लिए माला बना रहे हैं। इसके बाद वहाँ पर एक ईंट रखी हुई होती है और कूटने के लिए मूसल होता है। मूसल से उस ईंट को पूरा कूट के टुकड़े टुकड़े कर दिया जाता है। वहाँ पर एक नारियल भी रखा जाता है।



नारियल को भी उस मूसल से कूटना होता है। इसके बाद रेगिनी के कांटे को जीभ में चुभाया जाता है। ऐसा करने पर पूछा जाता है कि ये क्या चुभा रही हो? तो वे बोलती हैं कि जिस मुँह से अपने भाई को शराब पीकर मरने के लिए बोला है उस जीभ में कांटा चुभा रही हूँ। अपना ये अपराध साबित करने के लिए कि मैंने ये गलत किया है कि भाई को मरने के लिए बोला, तो उस जीभ में कांटे चुभा रही हूँ। इसके बाद फिर जब ईंट को कूट दिया जाता है तो कूटने के बाद मूसल को उत्तर दिशा की तरफ लेटा दिया जाता है। उस मूसल के ऊपर से पैर रखकर औरतें एक एक करके बाहर निकलती हैं। एक स्त्री वहाँ पर लोटे में पानी लेकर खड़ी होती है। वो बाएं तरफ के बाल की लट हाथ में लेकर बाकी औरतों को पानी पिलाती है। जो औरत पानी पिला रही होती है वो पूछती है कि तुम क्या पी रही हो? पानी पीने वाली औरत बोलती है कि जिसको शराब पीकर मरने के लिए बोला है उनके रोग-बलाएं और यमराज का लहू पी रही हूँ। इसके बाद वो सब बैठकर आशीर्वाद देने का गीत गाती हैं। वो गाती हैं कि जिस-जिस ने शराब पी है उन सबकी आयु लम्बी हो। इसके बाद फिर वहाँ पर रखे हुए चने मटर, और मिठाई को लेकर अपने भाई के पास जाती हैं। वे अपने भाई को टीका लगाती हैं और आरती का थाल सजाकर अपने भाई की आरती उतारती हैं। इसके बाद औरतें उस दिन दाल वाली पूरी, गुड़ की खीर, पिठा, साग, दही इत्यादि बहुत प्रकार के व्यंजन बनाती हैं।

साक्षी

बीए ऑनर्स समाजशास्त्र
तीसरा वर्ष



My Unanticipated Encounter

It was during a nonchalant conversation with Sharwari, a friend of mine from Nagpur, Maharashtra, that I first heard about this celebration called “*Marbat*”. I must admit that when I first heard of “*Marbat*” I did not expect how deeply it would change my understanding of what traditions and celebrations can really mean. I had always seen festivals as moments of joy, rituals passed down for devotion or seasonal change. But *Marbat* showed me another side, an image where tradition becomes dissent, where celebration becomes abreaction, and where a community’s voice rises not in silence, but in fire and beats. It made me rethink the very idea of what a festival can do and why it matters so much.

So, let me take you all through the story and history of “*Marbat*”. “*Marbat*” is celebrated in Nagpur, Maharashtra, every year during the month of *Shravan*, right after Nag Panchami. Its history is dated back to 1881. What really makes *Marbat* stand out is the parade and burning of huge effigies. But these aren’t just random puppets made for fun. Each one is carefully built by hand, some as tall as 13 feet. Every effigy stands for something the people want to get rid of - like bad luck, sickness, injustice, or even issues like corruption and social problems. The primary ones are the *Kaali Marbat* (Black *Marbat*) and *Pivli Marbat* (Yellow *Marbat*), along with smaller figures called *Badgyas*.



Credits- <http://www.thehitavada.com>

As they are taken through the streets, people follow them with drums beating, dancing and with slogans shouting, “*Ida, pida gheun jaa ge Marbat*”, which means “take away social evils and human miseries, O *MARBAT*”. It’s not just a ritual but a reminder that “We won’t stay quiet. We want to let go of what’s hurting us.” It’s a way of objection but done with tradition, peace, and a whole lot of heart.

The festival has its roots in the region's farmers, where clay dolls were placed in households on *Pola*, only to be burned on *Tanha Pola*, symbolizing the removal of evil from society and has evolved to become a unique blend of mythology, social commentary and amusement. What makes “*Marbat*” even more captivating is that it does not follow just one tale. There are many narratives passed down through generations where every tale adds a new layer of meaning to the festival.

A very popular narrative knots the festival to mythology, that is to the story of *Putana* and *Krishna*. According to this narrative, the effigies represent *Putana*, the demoness sent by King *Kamsa* to kill baby *Krishna* by breastfeeding him poisoned milk. However, the infant *Krishna*, aware of her evil intentions, sucked the life out of her instead. People believe that the effigies burned during *Marbat* symbolizes the destruction of evil forces that try to harm the innocent, cleansing the community of negativity and ensuring protection and prosperity. This story gives the festival a more religious-spiritual meaning reminding everyone that good always finds a way to win over evil.

The second narrative traces the festival back to the 19th century, when Dalit communities and working-class peasants in the Mahal area of Nagpur began to express their social frustration through symbolic means. These communities, often excluded from dominant cultural and political spaces, began crafting effigies similar to monstrous and inflated figures representing the evils they faced in daily life. These could be anything from unjust landlords, caste discrimination, corrupt officials, or even the illnesses and misfortunes plaguing the community. The act of marching these effigies and then burning them became a people's protest disguised as celebration that is a form of resistance that didn't rely on weapons or words but on ritual and creativity.



Credits- India Today, Hitavada

The third narrative is that the *Kali Marbat* is believed to symbolise the anger and frustration of the people toward the *Queen Baka Bai* of the *Bhonsle* dynasty over her surrender to the British as this was seen as a sign of betrayal by the people. Later came the *Pili Marbat* which the people associated it with diseases and epidemics and other harms and unrest to the community followed by others in red and brown *Marbats* each evolving with the times, always speaking to the fears, frustrations, and hopes of the people.



Credits- Sandeep Gurghate, Nagpur Today

“Marbat” showed me that architecture is not just about vernacular designs and culture is not only about dance and food. It is rather about how communities create their own actualities, fight being disregarded with inventiveness and use traditions not to hold themselves but to set themselves free. The most important lesson *Marbat* taught is not about history or culture but was about paying attention. Paying attention to the voices we often miss, the rituals we tend to overlook, and understanding that sometimes the strongest expressions come from a community uniting to share their stories and stand together with resilience and hope.



Lonee Chetia
B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd year



Credits- MP Tourism

Did you know?

*In Baiga tribe marriages, a form of reverse dowry exists, where the groom's family gives a bride price to the bride's family. This practice, called "**Doodh Lautawa**," symbolizes appreciation for raising the bride and securing the marriage.*

جب ابو دلہا بنے تھے

Jab abbu dulha baney

کچھ تصویریں ہوتی ہیں جو وقت کے ساتھ پرانی نہیں ہوتی بلکہ اور کھری ہو جاتی ہیں۔ میرے پاس بھی ایک ایسی ہی تصویر ہے۔ ابو، ایک شہزادے کی طرح تھے ہولے لیکن چہرہ پھولوں سے نازکے پردے میں چھپا ہوا۔ اس انہی مسکراہٹ میں خمر تھا، یکن آنکھوں میں ایک ایسی شرم اور جی جو آج کے زمانے میں کم ہی نظر آتا ہے۔

زیادہ تر لوگوں کے لیے پردہ صرف عورتوں کے دوپٹے، برقع یا نقاب کا نام ہے۔ قرآن کا پہلا حکم ہی مردوں کو ہے: "قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغْضُوا مِنْ ابْصَارِهِمْ" نظریں جھکانا بھی پردہ ہے۔ لیکن یہ انویسبل پردہ ہیں، اور اس کے زیادہ

اس معنی میں، سہرا الی پناہ اہمیت رکھتا ہے۔ یہ پھولوں کا پردہ، جو شادی کے وقت دلہا کے چہرے پر ڈالا جاتا ہے، اصل میں ایک علامتی (سیمبولک) پردہ ہے۔ بنا صرف محفوظ کرنے کے لیے، بلکہ ایک اخلاقی اور روحانی

ہندوستان کے مختلف علاقوں میں سہرا مختلف سورتوں میں نظر آتا ہے۔ اتر پردیش میں گلابوں اور موگرے کا سہرا عام ہے، اس کے لیے تار ہوا میں لہرا کے دلہا کے چہرے کو ایک نورانی پردہ دیتے ہیں۔ حیدرآباد کے چھ پرانے خاندان اب بھی لندن اور زردوزی والے سہرے پر زور دیتے ہیں، جس میں چاندی کے جھار، گولڈن زرعی کا کام، اور پتے لگے ہوتے ہیں۔ راجستھان میں کئی جلیوں کے پتیوں کا سہرا روایتی طور پر استعمال ہوتا ہے، جبکہ کشمیر میں سہرا بندی ایک خاص دعا کے ساتھ ہوتی ہیں۔ ہر جگہ کا سہرا اپنی روایتی پہچان رکھتا ہے۔ مگر مقصد ایک ہی ہے، دلے کو نامحرم نظروں سے محفوظ رکھنا، اس کی شناخت کو عزت اور حیا میں لینا۔

ابو کی تصویر میں یہ سب چھ ہے۔ گلابی اور سفید پھولوں کا سہرا انہی آنکھوں کے اوپر جھولتا ہوا ہے وہ تصویر صرف ایک ویڈیو فوٹو نہیں بلکہ اس کے کامرزی کردار ہیں جہاں ایک مرد ایک دلہا اپنے لیے بھی پردہ اختیار کرتا ہے۔ بغیر چھ ہے، وہ سہرا کہہ رہا تھا ہے "میری نظر اور میر دل صرف اس کے لیے ہے جسے اللہ نے میری لیے حلال کیا ہے۔"

پردہ صرف پہناوا نہیں ہوتا، یہ نیت ہوتی مردوں کا پردہ انہی آنکھوں کی زبان اور ان کے رویے میں چھپا ہوتا ہے۔ جو مرد سہرے میں اپنا چہرہ چھپاتا ہے، وہ اصل میں دنیا سے کہہ رہا ہوتا ہے "آج میں کسی کا ہو گیا ہوں، اور میری حیا اس رستے کی ابتدا ہے۔"

مضمون صرف ان مردوں کے لیے ہی نہیں جو صرف عورتوں کے پردے پر فتویٰ دیتے ہیں، بلکہ ان کے لیے بھی ہے جو خود بھی اپنے پردے کا مطلب سمجھنا چاہتے ہیں۔

ابو کی تصویر جب میں دیکھتی ہوں تو مجھے وہ پھولوں کا سہرا صرف زینت نہیں لگتا بلکہ، وہ ایک مثال ہے۔ ایک مثال ہے کہ مرد بھی پردہ کرتے ہیں۔ اپنی صورت سے، اپنی نیت سے اور اپنے رب کے سامنے اخلاق سے



Credits- Hadia Arif



Hadia Arif

B.A. (H) Sociology

2nd year

When Abu Became a Groom

Some photographs don't just fade away; they deepen in meaning over time. I have one like that too. It features my father, dressed like royalty, with his face partially concealed by a beautiful floral veil. His smile radiated pride, while his eyes reflected a rare modesty and grace that's hard to find these days.

When people hear the term "*parda*" (veil), they often think of women's *dupattas*, *burqas*, or *niqabs*. However, Islam doesn't limit *parda* to women; it's also a requirement for men. The first guidance on modesty in the Qur'an is actually aimed at men: "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze." Lowering one's eyes is a form of *parda* too, but it's an invisible veil, making it even more significant.

In this light, the *sehra* takes on great importance. This floral veil, worn by grooms during weddings, serves more than just an aesthetic purpose; it symbolizes protection and establishes an ethical and spiritual boundary.

Different regions in India showcase the *sehra* in unique styles. In Uttar Pradesh, it's typically made of rose and jasmine garlands, with long strands of flowers fluttering in the breeze, creating a radiant veil over the groom's face. Some traditional families in Hyderabad craft the *sehra* with elaborate *kundan* and *zardozi* designs, embellished with silver

tassels and gold threadwork. In Rajasthan, pearls are the go-to choice, while in Kashmir, the *sehra* is tied with a special prayer.

Each region has its own interpretation of the *sehra*, reflecting its cultural essence. Yet, the purpose remains consistent: to protect the groom from the eyes of outsiders and to envelop his identity in dignity and modesty.

My father's photograph embodies all of this. With pink and white flowers forming a *sehra* that gently drapes over his eyes, that image is more than just a wedding snapshot; it captures a moment where a man, a groom, embraces *parda* for himself. In that silent frame, the *sehra* doesn't merely hide—it reveals. It reveals a man's quiet surrender to humility, his dignity in devotion, and his commitment to guarding love with grace.



Credits- Hadia Arif



Telling Tales

भारत की विविधता और सुंदरता को शब्दों में पिरोने का प्रयास हमारे विद्यार्थियों ने किया है। इस खंड में हम आपके लिए लाए हैं उनकी रचनाएँ - कविताएँ, तस्वीरें, और लेख जो हमारी लोक परंपराओं और सांस्कृतिक विरासत की झलक दिखाते हैं।

From Victim to Deity

In the heart of a village shadowed by an oppressive tradition known as *Dola Pratha*, Dalit women are forced to spend their first night with upper-caste landlords. A woman named Ragmati had her days filled with hard work and quiet resilience, until one fateful evening, everything shattered.

After marriage while travelling in her palanquin, Ragmati was brutally assaulted by Ranpal Singh, a landlord from a dominant caste and a different territory.

She was assaulted by him, the attack being not just on her body, but on her dignity and soul. Unable to live with the trauma, Ragmati ended her own life. Her silence screamed louder than words ever could.

But what followed was not justice. Instead, it was a tale twisted to serve the powerful. In a bid to maintain the social fabric and prevent unrest, Ranpal Singh and the village elders wove a new narrative – one that turned Ragmati from a victim into a goddess. Word spread that she had ‘ascended to heaven’ during the assault, and soon a temple was built in her name. Her defecation became a tool – cleverly making the crime under the veil of divinity, sanctifying the violence instead of punishing it.

In memory of Ragmati’s sacrifice and her stand against tyranny, the local community erected the ‘Mahthin Mai Temple’ at the site of her martyrdom.

The temple has since become a place of reverence, especially among women, symbolizing resistance against oppression and the quest for justice.

It serves as a reminder of the historical struggles against caste-based and gender-based exploitation.



Ananaya Kumari
B.A. (H) Sociology
1st Year

Resilience Through Culture

As children we have often heard of stories shared by our elders and we absorbed them without questions - they were simply part of our world, woven into festivals, family gatherings and everyday conversations. I remember hearing the story of the legend of *Pabuji*, a folk deity in Gujarat, narrated during festive evenings where they described *Pabuji's* bravery. A warrior who left his sister's wedding to protect stolen cattle, sacrificing his life for his people. Each time I listened to this tale I admired *Pabuji's* courage without fully grasping its deeper meaning. But growing up I have realised how these stories were more than bedtime legends. These stories indeed carried powerful lessons about duty, sacrifice, and protecting livelihoods which have been passed down through generations shaping communities like the *AHIRS*. Yes, the *Ahirs* who thrive in Gujarat's challenging landscape through their resilience and cultural wisdom.



Credits- Patel Bindiya

The *Ahir* Community in Gujarat has been a powerful example of strength and determination. This community has been facing environmental hardships like water scarcity for generations, yet they have held onto their rich culture and continue to play a significant role in India's dairy industry, keeping alive a tradition deeply rooted in their identity. Today, this community stands as one of the biggest contributors to the *Sumul Dairy* of Gujarat, a dairy industry which procures their milk from the local milk producers in Surat and Tapi district of Gujarat. Their contributions through their toils and ability to adapt proves how deeply their traditions are tied to their way of life. But, again this question arises in our mind : How do they do it, year after year?

For the *Ahirs*, cattle are not just livestock, they are a way of life. However, the paucity of water in regions like *Umarpada* forces them into a difficult yet necessary practice which is seasonal migration. Every year, when water sources dry up and grazing land becomes sterile, *Ahir* families travel over 100 kms on foot with their flocks, towards the South of Gujarat in search of greener pastures. What's noteworthy is that this tiring journey has never broken their spirit. Even after walking for days, sleeping under the open sky and looking after large herds through uncertain terrain, they remain optimistic and impelled. Maybe for them it's not



Credits- Patel Bindiya

about survival but about preserving a way of life that is deeply tied to the land, their identity , the cattle and the years old traditions.

What makes it more interesting and powerful is that The *Ahir* Women in this journey are just as critical and uplifting. While the men often lead the cattle, the women carry with them not just *lotas* of water or fodder for their cattle but generations of stories, stitched gently into fabric and woven into their daily lives. When we see *Ahir* women in their richly embroidered *ghagra* and *choli* , with the bright threads and shiny mirror works , just like the ones in the pictures above we don't just see their beauty but their pride as well. Their motifs are never random. Every elephant, peacock, parrot, scorpion, or image of Lord *Krishna* (*Kaanudo*) is a coded message of love, protection, mythology, and everyday life. The silk and cotton threads they use tell stories of joy and struggle, of celebration and memory. When a daughter gets married in the community , these handcrafted pieces are

gifted to them as a token of love wrapping her in memories she can take to a new home. To understand the *Ahir* women is to understand the culture that lives not in monuments, but in hands i.e., hands that sew, nurture , carry and create .



Credits- Patel Bindiya

The Journey of the *Ahir* Community through my writing is an attempt to pass on and share not just a story but a feeling of strength I have felt after learning about their way of life. It's an attempt to carry forward a conversation that respects vernacular voices and recognizes the roles of such communities in shaping our collective identity.



Lonee Chetia
B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd Year

ਸਰਹੱਦਾਂ ਤੇ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਪਰੇ ਰੋਸ਼ਨੀ ਫੈਲਾਉਂਦੇ ਹੋਏ

ਹਿੰਦੋਸਤਾਨ ਦੀ ਦੇਸੀ ਰਿਵਾਇਤਾਂ ਜੀਉਣਦਿਆਂ ਅਨੁਭਵਾਂ, ਕਹਾਣੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਰੂਹਾਨੀ ਗਿਆਨ ਦਾ ਮਿਲਾਪ ਹਨ, ਜੋ ਪੀੜੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਪੀੜੀਆਂ ਤੱਕ ਤੁਰਦਾ ਆ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹੋ ਜਿਹਾ ਹੀ ਇਕ ਵੱਡਾ ਨਾਤਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਧ ਦੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਬਣਿਆ, ਜਿਸਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਤੇ ਸਿੰਧੀ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਨੂੰ ਧਰਮ ਤੇ ਹੱਦਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਉੱਚਾ ਕਰ ਦਿਤਾ।

ਉਦਾਸੀਆਂ (ਆਤਮਕ ਯਾਤਰਾਵਾਂ) ਦੌਰਾਨ, ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਇਨਸਾਨੀ ਅਸਰ ਸਿੱਧ ਦੇ ਇਲਾਕੇ 'ਚ ਹੋਇਆ — ਇੱਕ ਧਰਤੀ ਜੋ ਸੂਫੀ ਰੂਹਾਨੀਅਤ, ਲੋਕ ਸੱਭਿਆਚਾਰ, ਤੇ ਸਭ ਨੂੰ ਗਲੇ ਲਗਾਉਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਸੋਚ ਲਈ ਜਾਣੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਸੀ।

ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਸੁਨੇਹਾ — ਇਕ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (ਇੱਕ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ), ਨਿਸ਼ਕਾਮ ਸੇਵਾ, ਇਮਾਨਦਾਰੀ ਨਾਲ ਜੀਵਨ ਜੀਉਣਾ (ਕਿਰਤ ਕਰਨੀ), ਤੇ ਦੂਜਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਡਣਾ (ਵੰਡ ਛੱਕੋ) — ਸਿੰਧੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਦਿਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਛੂਹ ਗਿਆ।

ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਨੂੰ ਸਿਰਫ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਹੁਕਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਗਿਆ, ਸਗੋਂ ਇਕ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਰਸਤਾ ਸਮਝਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਜੋ ਪਿਆਰ, ਬਰਾਬਰੀ ਤੇ ਅੰਦਰਲੀ ਸਚਾਈ ਵੱਲ ਲੈ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅੱਜ ਵੀ ਕਈ ਸਿੰਧੀ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਜਪੁਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਤੋਂ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਭਜਨ ਗਾਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਤੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਉਪਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਰੋਜ਼ਾਨਾ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਰਤਦੇ ਹਨ। ਪਰ 1947 ਦੀ ਵੰਡ ਨੇ ਇਹ ਸਾਂਝੀ ਇਕਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਝਟਕਾ ਦਿਤਾ। ਸਿੰਧੀ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਆਪਣੀ ਸਦੀਆਂ ਪੁਰਾਣੀ ਧਰਤੀ — ਸਿੰਧ (ਹੁਣ ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ) — ਛੱਡਣ ਲਈ ਮਜਬੂਰ ਹੋ ਗਏ। ਹਾਲਾਂਕਿ ਸਿੰਧ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਾਂਗ ਹਿੰਸਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਈ, ਪਰ ਇਹ ਹਿਜਰਤ ਬਹੁਤ ਦਰਦਨਾਕ ਸੀ।



Credits- Punjab Post

ਦੋਹਾਂ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਪਹੁੰਚੇ — ਲੁੱਟੇ ਪੁੱਟੇ, ਪਰ ਹੋਸਲੇ ਨਾਲ ਭਰਪੂਰ।

ਉਲਹਾਸਨਗਰ, ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ, ਮੁੰਬਈ ਅਤੇ ਅਹਿਮਦਾਬਾਦ ਵਰਗੇ ਸ਼ਹਿਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੰਧੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀਆਂ, ਮੰਦਰਾਂ ਤੇ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੁਬਾਰਾ ਵਸਾਇਆ, ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਸਾਂਝੀ ਰੂਹਾਨੀ ਅਤੇ ਸੱਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਵਿਰਾਸਤ ਨੂੰ ਸੰਭਾਲ ਕੇ ਰੱਖਿਆ।

ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਅੱਜ ਵੀ ਸਿੰਧੀ ਘਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੱਡੀ ਇਜ਼ਤ ਨਾਲ ਯਾਦ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਸਿੰਧੀ ਭਜਨਾਂ, ਲੋਕ ਕਵਿਤਾਵਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਰੀਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਜੀਉਂਦੀ ਰਹਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ — ਇਹ ਇੱਕ ਸਾਂਝੀ ਵਿਰਾਸਤ ਨੂੰ ਦਰਸਾਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਅਸੀਂ ਜਦੋਂ ਅੱਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਦੇਸੀ ਰਿਵਾਇਤਾਂ ਵੱਲ ਵੇਖਦੇ ਹਾਂ, ਤਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਉਦਾਸੀਆਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਯਾਦ ਕਰਵਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਕਿ — ਸੱਚ ਦੂਰ ਤਕ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਦਿਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਾਉਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਦਇਆ ਕਦੇ ਹੱਦਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਮੰਨਦੀ।

Spreading Light Across Borders

India's vernacular traditions are a blend of lived experiences, stories, and spiritual wisdom passed down through generations.

One such powerful thread connects Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings with the people of Sindh—creating a bond between Sikh and Sindhi communities that transcends geography and religion.

During his *Udasis* (spiritual travels), the most impactful region was Sindh—a land known for its Sufi mysticism, folk culture, and inclusive spirituality. His message of *Ik Onkar* (One God), selfless service (*seva*), honest living (*kirat*), and sharing with others (*vand chhako*) deeply resonated with the Sindhi people.

His teachings were not seen as religious instruction, but as a universal path to love, equality, and inner truth. To this day, many Sindhi families recite Japji Sahib, sing hymns inspired by Gurbani, and uphold Guru Ji's values in daily life. However, the harmony was disrupted by the Partition of 1947. Sindhi Hindus and Sikhs were forced to leave their ancestral lands in Sindh, now part of Pakistan. Though Sindh saw less violence than Punjab, the migration was traumatic. Both communities arrived in India as refugees—uprooted but not broken.

In cities like Ulhasnagar, Amritsar, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad, Sindhi and Sikh families rebuilt their lives, temples, and gurudwaras, preserving their shared spiritual and cultural legacy.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji is still remembered with reverence in Sindhi homes. His teachings live on in Sindhi bhajans, folk poetry, and community practices—reflecting a *saanjhi virasat* (shared heritage).

As we explore vernacular traditions today, Guru Nanak Dev Ji's *Udasis* remind us that — truth travels, compassion connects, and faith knows no borders



Credits- Punjab Post



Disha Sachdeva
B.A. (H) Sociology
1st Year

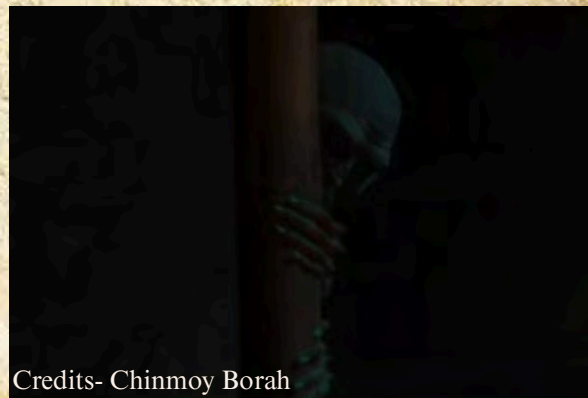
Bira -Tales Beyond Time

The people in the village started to gossip and talk about Khagen's family behind their backs . Khagen's family knew about the buzz that was going behind but cared little to reply back , because they were now no longer the family who used to live on bare minimum with the help and support of the villagers . When Khagen's son passed the matriculation with a 1st division , all the village people came together to support his son's further education but now the same family started ignoring the people that always came to his help. Wondering right? What made this family so arrogant this quickly? And you might be still pondering about the gossip in the town?

When the villagers saw the sudden wealth in the family and some mysterious rituals being performed ,they assumed that Khagen had started to pet "*Bira*". "*Bira*" in the tales of northeast is considered to be a spirit and sometimes a creature which people believe can only be kept as a pet with the help of some specialized tantric rituals and mantras. People believe that "*Bira*" has the ability to control someone's luck , health and even their future. But it's not always that "*Bira*" is like the friendly Genie like those in stories. It is a spirit whose name itself gives chills to people and is surrounded by fear and silence known through old rituals and mystic utterance

Some say they can protect you, while others say they can cause awful damage.

Before I sat down to write on this mysterious tale of *Bira*, I had a conversation with a person whose insights I deeply value. His name is Hrishikesh and he is a psychologist and also a tantric practitioner. As I shared my curiosity to bring the story of *Bira* to my writings, I knew I had to talk to him once as he is a person with deep understanding of the human mind and spiritual realms. This tale is a curiosity of my mind and is something which came out from the memories of my childhood where I heard my grandparents talk about "*Bira*", obviously without their consent !



Credits- Chinmoy Borah

The name '*Bira*' means '*veer*', that is someone who is very powerful. Since *Bira* is one of the most powerful and mysterious creatures it is believed to be Lord *Hanuman's* comrade. *Bira* is not something we can spot with our eyes but locals say and believe that they are always around, living quietly in isolated places like big old trees with wide branches. They are not ghosts or spirits of



Credits- Pragmatic_by_prag

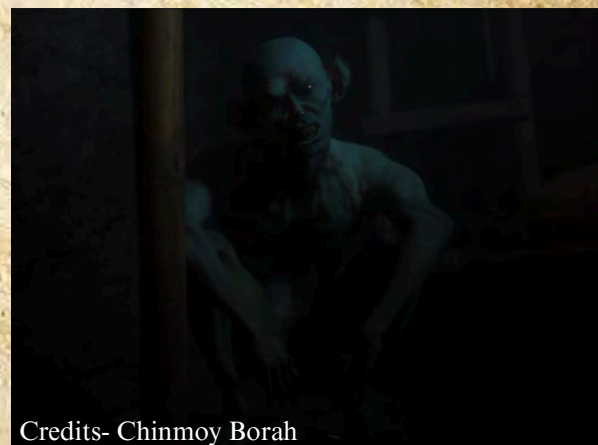
death but a different kind of being altogether. They are said to be living creatures with their own lives who have their own families. Biras have different types, names and roles in various communities.

Most commonly known among them are *Nami Bira*, *Pat Bira*, *Matira Bira*, *Sunni Bira* each with their own traits and behaviour. Some dwell in thick isolated branches of trees like the *Dal Bira* whereas *Matira Biras* are believed to be dwelling deep in the earth and others are more airy and elusive like the *Nami Biras* and *Sunni Biras*. These names may change depending on region and local beliefs showing how deeply woven the idea of *Bira* is in the folk traditions of Northeast India and beyond.

Our ancestors say that although we cannot see *Biras* but we can feel their presence with certain indications such as leaves rustling without any wind, an odd stillness in the air, loud noise on the roofs of houses, or the sudden smell of dried fish, garlic or *gela mod* (a traditional beer made with fermentation) Tantrics who pet them claim that *Bira*

looks like small monkeys with very long tails and a hairy body who walks like humans. With a short height, their faces are quite human-like. The female *Biras*, called the *Suali Bira* are said to be beautiful with sharp long chins, striking faces and very long hairs which are said to flow beyond their height.

People often fear *Bira* and treat them with respect and care but there is also a darker side to this tale. Some tantrics and greedy people try to use *Biras* for their selfish reasons where they capture them and start petting them. One of the most cruel things they do is cut off the tail of the *Bira*. People say this takes away the *Bira's* power and freedom, making it weak and helpless after which the tantrics build a small house for the *Bira* and its family which is not out of kindness but in order to keep them close and under control. They feed them enough so that the *Bira* stays strong enough to do the work they are instructed. The works that are instructed to them may include harming others, destroying someone's crops, bringing bad luck to a household or even making



Credits- Chinmoy Borah

someone fall sick. At the same time, they use *Bira* to bring themselves profit like those of attracting wealth, helping in business using fowl play or winning over enemies .

In these tales , the *Bira* becomes more of a servant than a spirit, doing things not because it wants to but because it has no choice. People even say that deep down the *Bira* feels hurt and angry and if they are over exploited and pushed too far they might even turn against their master. This side of folklore brings into light a complete dark side of how belief and power can be misused and when human cupidity takes over it can even trap a mysterious and powerful being like *Bira* without considering the future

consequences of their impulsive reckless behaviour. This tale showed us that *Bira's* and not naturally bad. They become what the human desires want them to be. If the intention is good, the *Bira* will help and if the intention is selfish the *Bira* may cause trouble .



Lonee Chetia

B.A. (H) Sociology

2nd year

Did you know?

The Koovagam Festival is a prominent transgender ritual in Tamil Nadu, rooted in Mahabharata legend. Aravan, son of Arjuna, wished to marry before sacrificing his life for the Pandavas' victory. Since no woman agreed to marry him, Lord Krishna took the form of Mohini, a woman, and wed Aravan. The next day, Aravan fulfilled his fate. During the festival, transgender people symbolically marry Aravan and mourn his death, celebrating with dance and rhythmic music.



Festivals Beyond the Calendar

Beyond the dazzle of Diwali and the color-storm of Holi, India has a hidden holiday archive—one engraved into oral traditions, shaped through ancestral memory, and eternally linked to nature's cycles. These are festivities that take place in forest clearings, sacred rivers, and community thresholds, rather than in textbooks or on television.



Ambubachi Mela: A Celebration of Womanhood and Divinity

Maa Kamakhya reminds us:

“Where there is creation, there is divinity,

Where there is Shakti, there is purity,
And in every cycle,

There is a sacred story of life.”

Throughout history, menstruation has long been considered a taboo topic in India. Ancient Hindu traditions recognize women as a representation of Mother Earth. In certain parts of the country, menses are equated with the ritual of regeneration and fertility and are thus celebrated.



Credits- Discover East

Such a religious event that is celebrated every year in Assam is the Ambubachi Mela, which is a four-day-long festival celebrated in the month of *Ashaad* or *Ahaar* (in Assamese) according to the Hindu calendar at the Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati. The Ambubachi Mela is a celebration of faith, fertility, and the divine feminine energy.

It is more of a ritual of austerities, a festival celebrated with Shakti rites. According to the legend, after Sati's self-immolation, Lord Shiva wandered around the cosmos in grief, carrying her lifeless body. To restore balance, Lord Vishnu scattered her body into 51 sacred parts. It is at Kamakhya Temple where her *yoni* (womb) fell – the source of creation. During this time, the temple doors are closed for three days, mimicking the seclusion of menstruating women, and tantric practices are performed to celebrate and purify the goddess.

Some of the prominent tantric practices that are usually done during the Ambubachi Festival:

1) Ritual Seclusion: The temple remains closed for three days during the *mela*, for it is believed that Goddess Kamakhya rests for three days like the traditional women's menstrual seclusion. During these three days, some restrictions are observed by the devotees, like not cooking, not performing *puja* or reading holy books, no farming, etc. After three days, the goddess is bathed, and other rituals are performed to ensure that Goddess Kamakhya is back to her original form. Then the doors of the temple are reopened, and *prasad* is distributed. On the fourth day, the

devotees are allowed to enter the temple and worship Devi Kamakhya.

2) The forms of *Prasad*: The *prasad* is distributed in two forms – *Angodak* and *Angabastra*. *Angodak* means the fluid part of the body or water from the spring, and *Angabastra* means the cloth covering the body (a piece of red cloth) used to cover the *yonis* rock fissure during the days of menstruation.

Ambubachi Mela is one of the biggest congregations of the Eastern India. Ambubachi Mela signifies womanhood and the divine feminine energy because the menstruation of the goddess is considered a natural and sacred process. For these tantrics, Ambubachi Mela is considered to have tremendous power where the goddess is in her full, fertile form and radiates immense energy. The Ambubachi Mela is a religious gathering and a melting pot of diverse cultures and traditions.

The Kamakhya Temple's celebration of menstruation as a sacred and powerful event is a stark contrast to the often negative perceptions surrounding menstruation in many parts of India. It serves as a reminder of the deep-rooted cultural respect for the feminine divine and the natural cycles of life, offering a hopeful sign for overcoming menstrual taboos and promoting a more inclusive and respectful understanding of womanhood.



Credits- APN News

The Kamakhya Temple, through the Ambubachi Mela, not only honors the divine femininity but also challenges and redefines societal norms, encouraging a broader acceptance and reverence for natural bodily processes. Though the annual menstruation cycle of the goddess is celebrated in a part of India, an open discussion on this topic or anything closely related to it is still taboo in Indian society. Kamakhya Temple, through the Ambubachi Mela, not only honors the divine feminine but also encourages a broader acceptance and reverence for natural bodily processes. In Kamakhya, the life cycle is honored, and what the world deems 'impure' is worshipped as the very essence of Shakti.



Prajukta Sharma
B.A. (H) Sociology
1st Year

Discovering Sarhul: A Hidden Tribal Tradition

Each year, the atmosphere is filled with enthusiasm and respect as the festival Sarhul becomes the center of attraction. Sarhul is a colorful and energetic festival that is observed by the tribal people of Jharkhand, especially by the Oraon, Munda, Khadiya, and Ho tribes. It is celebrated together every year to worship nature, to rejoice at the harvest, and to recall ancestral roots as people pay homage to the blessings of the Earth.

So why is Sarhul so unique? Why is this celebration so valuable to the people who celebrate it? What makes Sarhul so memorable?

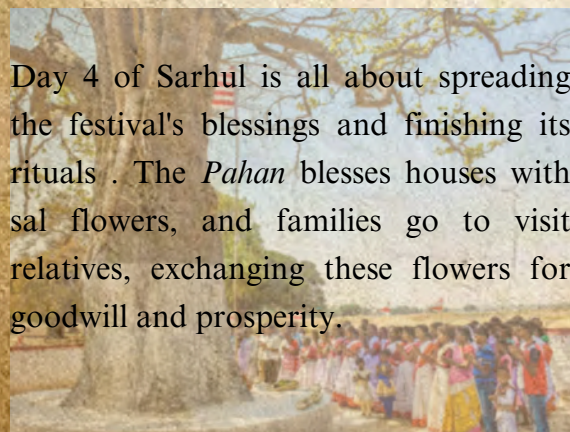
Let's discover the history behind its songs and see the celebration that unites people in a vibrant spectacle of culture and harmony. Because it's not only a festival, but a way of living .

The word "Sarhul" is composed of two words: "*Sar*" for spring and "*hul*" for celebration or worship. Therefore, *Sarhul* means the celebration of spring. Sarhul lasts three to four days. It takes place during the spring season, corresponding to Hindu month *Chaitra* (third day of moon's fortnight), normally in March or April with each day bearing profound religious and social value. It is also a state holiday in Jharkhand.

The *Pahan* (village priest) and elderly village members start off the festivities on the first day by fasting and cleansing themselves, readying themselves for the rituals that will follow. The holy Sarna Sthal (Sal tree/sacred grove) is purified, and water is gathered for worship. The people do not eat non-vegetarian food, keeping themselves spiritually disciplined as they wait for the forthcoming ceremonies. On the second day, the *Pahan* breaks his fast and initiates the worship of Singhbonga (Sun God) and Mother Earth at the Sarna Sthal. Freshly opened Sal flowers are presented to the gods, and the ceremony of marrying earth and sun is conducted symbolizing new life and fertility. The holy water gathered on Day 1 is sprinkled on fields, houses, and individuals for purification and prosperity.

One of the important aspects is the testing of water pots kept under Sal trees, from which forecasts regarding the next year's monsoon are made. If the water level has gone down, it's taken as an indication of possible drought or less rain in the upcoming year and vice versa. It's an ancient way of forecasting weather, demonstrating their close relationship with nature and their dependency on its rhythm.

The last day of Sarhul changes the mood into a festival of communal celebration. This day is a day of public festivity. On this day there is a big social congregation, with much dancing, singing, and overall celebration of the festival. The people wear traditional clothing of common color such as white, cream, or off-white, sometimes bordered with red or black, and participate in a dance called *jhumar* or *paika*. "Jhankis" or cultural floats, are often a part of these processions that highlight the rich tribal culture. Sarhul songs are a way of maintaining and passing on tribal custom and cultural heritage to newer generations. "*Lita dharti odaya, kudur kudur jonoma, horko renda sereng, bonga kanga doboka.*" is a verse from a Sarhul song meaning "This land is sacred, let's protect it forever. The forests, rivers, and hills are the gifts from the gods." The song reminds people that nature is not just a resource but a divine blessing. It urges conserving forests, rivers, and biodiversity, which are at the core of Sarna Dharma (It is a nature-worshipping belief system of tribals). Sung during Sarhul and other festivals, it instills in young minds the significance of conservation.



Day 4 of Sarhul is all about spreading the festival's blessings and finishing its rituals. The *Pahan* blesses houses with sal flowers, and families go to visit relatives, exchanging these flowers for goodwill and prosperity.

Credits- wikipedia



Sakshi Kumari
B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd Year

Sal flowers are given back to nature, being deposited in fields or floated on rivers as a token of thanksgiving. Collective feasting continues, with traditional dishes and dances. Elders can conduct meetings to talk about tribal oneness and conservation of culture. Once the festival ends, supplications for good rains and a fruitful year are made and the people set back to daily routine, borne by the Sarhul spirit. Sarhul, the colorful woven blanket of tribal custom, testifies to that strong all-pervasive tie between humans and nature. The rituals, songs, and dances, passed down by our elders, keep the spirit of Sarna Dharma alive in us. Nevertheless, as we see the still ongoing celebrations of Sarhul, one is left wondering. Will future generations cherish and embrace traditional celebration like Sarhul? Is such cultural taxonomy maintainable in the era of modernity? How is the non-tribal community going to make itself better informed about tribal cultures, faith, and practice to bridge the gaps and provide greater cultural appreciation?

The Gomira Festival

When I first read about Gomira festival, I was so intrigued by the fact that the dancers wear the masks of the deities to invoke their powers and in the process, they may even transcend to a different state of *bhor*, i.e., trance, and need to be brought back by sprinkling water. I had witnessed something similar when I was sitting in a *jagran* and a lady started abruptly dancing and demanding for *bhog*, and that too felt like she went into a trance like situation.

Although Gomira has numerous names—Gajon, Gombhira, and Neel-pujo but one similarity that connects them all is that all are celebrated around the end of the Bengali month of *Choitro* (March-April) at the end of the agricultural year to honor Shiva.

There are various assumptions about the word Gomira. Some argue that it is a vernacular form of the word Gram-Chandi, a female deity; some believe that it is a Bodo word linked to the Tibeto-Burman ancestry of the Rajbongshis; many say that the word 'Gomira' is a local pronunciation of 'Gombhira', while others believe that the root word is *Gamar* - the wood used to make the masks. Then again, Gombhir is also another name for Shiva. Although we may never know the correct origin of the word *Gomira*, one thing we know for sure is that the essence of Gomira has been very much influenced, molded, and changed according to the dynasties that came to rule West Bengal.

Like, with the advent of Buddhism, the festival adopted Buddhist overtones and included the worship of the idolized Mahayana Buddha. Overtime, it became a necessary custom to celebrate these festivals by putting on the guises of Hindu deities. Eventually, the Buddhists replaced the Hindu Shiva and Parvati with Bodhisattva Manjushri.

This was followed by a phase of Hindu revivalism during the Sena period and the systemic marginalization of Buddhist culture; the female Adya/Chandi figure transformed itself into the Hindu Parvati and her consort came to replace the role of Dharma. Thus, overtime, the Gajon/Gambheera form that crystallized around the Adibuddha/Dharma figure of Mahayana ritual merged with the Hindu Shiva-Shakti duality.



Credits- thefloatingpebbles.com

The Gomira festival usually takes place around *Choitro Sankranti*, the last day of the Bengali month of *Choitro*, that is, around mid-April, and the Bengali month of *Asharh* (June-July). Every village hosts at least one Gomira dance during this time, typically at a central venue. Another time the Gomira

dance is performed is during the worship of Amat Kali, which takes place around the mango harvest season, generally in the month of *Joishtho* (May-June). The dancers, who are usually cultivators, craftsmen, smithies, carpenters, or daily wage earners, perform during the season to increase their incomes.

They are, without exception, all male, and usually play multiple roles - male, female or animal. One thing that left an imprint on my mind was that women are strictly barred from the stage of masked dance, and the dance is single-handedly performed by male dancers. Even the roles of females are performed by men.

Gomira is linked with the worship of numerous Kali-centric folk deities, and there is a mask for each of them. Each mask is used for a particular reason and at a particular time. Most of the deities are manifestations of Kali and thus Shiva, and so, there are masks for Chamunda, Smashan Kali (also known as Baher-Kali), and Bura-Buri (a folk manifestation of Shiva-Parvati).

The mask makers and the dancers, the wearers of these masks, must observe specific rituals and keep themselves cleansed both in body and in mind, so that they are protected against any interference from malevolent spirits. The dancers are required to follow a vegetarian diet on the days leading up to and following the performance. On the day of the Gomira dance itself, they fast and consume only steamed '*Atop*' rice once the performance concludes. One striking detail I observed was that the

Gomira characters do not enter the stage all at once; instead, they appear one after the other in a set sequence. The performance begins with the entrance of 'Bura-Buri', followed by characters such as 'Bagh', 'Chamunda Kali', 'Dakini Bishal', 'Shikni Bishal', and culminates with the intense acts of 'Nara Rakkhos' and 'Narasingha'. Interestingly, the dancers portraying 'Nara Rakkhos' and 'Narasingha' often experience possession during their act—a state locally referred to as '*Bhor Otha*'. In this trance-like state, they become wild and uncontrollable. To calm them, the 'Debanghsi' offers pigeon blood to 'Nara Rakkhos', while 'Narasingha' is soothed with sacred water, ritual flowers, and leaves of Tulsi and Bel.



Credits- lopamudra.photography

This made me wonder how such massive masks are even made — and I found that these traditional masks used to be made of wood, but masks made of paper mache with *sholapith* (sponge wood) decorations also go back several hundred years and are today more commonly used than the wooden masks. The wooden masks, kept safely in the homes of the families who own them, are worshipped at home once a year and are brought back to the Gomira

shrine with a fresh coat of paint before the annual rituals begin.

In conclusion, Gomira remains a marginalized and underrecognized art form. Beyond the regions of Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur, very few are even aware of its existence. The most pressing challenge on fronting Gomira is the lack of financial support. Neither the artisans who craft the masks nor the performers receive any consistent aid or stipend from the government. Moreover, the creation of Gomira masks is an intricate and time-intensive process, demanding both skill and dedication.

Despite the danger, Gomira survives as a living proof of Bengal's spiritual and cultural inner voice. While the *dhak* drums pound and dancers swirl, the gods still come down, reminding us that in a transforming world, the divine is ever within grasp.



Anshika Saxena
B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd Year

Did you know?



Credits: The New Indian Express

The Cheetah Mehrat (Kathat) community of Ajmer, Rajasthan practices a unique syncretic religion combining Hinduism and Islam. They have mixed Hindu-Muslim names, follow Hindu as well as Muslim traditions, celebrate all festivals, and even have weddings with both Nikah (Muslim wedding ceremony) and Pheras (Hindu wedding ceremony) as rituals.



Art and Craft - Handmade Histories

Art and craft have always been a way for people to tell their stories — through the colors they choose, the patterns they weave, and the spaces they build. In this section, we take a closer look at some beautiful traditions that continue to shape our cultural life. We explore the delicate charm of Tangaliya weaving, the timeless beauty of vernacular architecture, and the many ways communities keep crafting culture with their hands and hearts. There's also a glimpse into Khajuraho's creative world, where art and craft come together in truly inspiring ways. Each piece in this section is a small window into the creativity, skill, and spirit that make these traditions so special.

Crafting Culture: The Artistic Legacy of Our Land



Credits- Thikri, Linkeidin

What do we first think of when Art and craft are the topic of discussion? Paints or sketches? Well, it's much more than that. It's bold, energetic, and yet unique. In the world of crafting, no ice cream stick is safe, no used matchstick is a waste. Why buy something new when you can upcycle your old wooden chair and half a coconut shell into a statement piece worthy of an Instagram post? We don't need fancy studios and tools in a country where every wall, bus, and pole has a traditional decoration. Give us a mud hut, turmeric yellow, or even worn-out jute strings; it will end up as a gallery-worthy masterpiece.

India is known for its incredible diversity, not only in food and traditions but also in crafts, which are still unknown to people outside their region of origin. These crafts are centuries old, carrying a rich legacy and are deeply connected to culture and beliefs.

Mirror, mirror on the wall, is it *Thikri* we're talking about?

Born from the royal and radiant courts of Rajasthan, the *Thikri* art form narrates stories through the tiny mirrors reflecting light and shadows of art and heritage.



Credits- wikimedia.org

Palaces glowing in the dusk with this incredible mirror art catch every flicker of the sunlight, creating a constellation of sparkles. Mostly found in Udaipur and other regions of Rajasthan, *Thikri* is a kaleidoscopic wonder created by hand-cut mirrors on plain surfaces. The artisans cut the mirror into diamonds, stars, and other shapes, smoothening its edges. These mirror pieces are then arranged in shapes inspired by Rajasthani folklore and Indo-Islamic art. Precision at its peak, these mirrors are pressed in by hand, one by one, like an immaculate puzzle, taking the most beautiful shape at the end.

In the royal period, these mirror pieces were so well polished that they could reflect the flame of a lamp across an entire palace wall, lighting up the room without electricity, mind you, without any 'Pinterest inspo' back then. Interesting, isn't it?

We often attend expensive exhibitions to study craft, art, and its techniques, unaware that they are already perfected in these villages, hidden and underrated. Every palace, havel, and even the huts are adorned by hand. *Thikri* is one example. It's not just an art; it's a masterpiece in which you can see your reflection. The reflection of every minute spent in creating such a constellation. It speaks of the royalty, patience, and beauty of Rajasthan. Monuments of history and significant importance, such as Udaipur's City Palace, the Sheesh Mahal, and Jaipur's Ajmer Fort, are beautifully covered in *Thikri* art. It is a legacy of royalty, a symbol of light, a craft of unmatched skill shining on through centuries.



Credits- MeMeraki

We should thank Bollywood for portraying the grandeur of *Sheesh Mahal*, but the art present on the walls of *Sheesh Mahal* is still unknown to many. In the glistening realm of *Thikri* art, where mirrors do more than reflect—they narrate, glimmer like secrets, and transform walls into wonderlands—we come across a tradition that shines with both history and fantasy. From the palace courts of kings to contemporary galleries, *Thikri* still glistens with ageless magic. So, whether you are an artist, a fantasist, or just someone who likes to know for a bit of sparkle, *Thikri* confirms that sometimes, the best way to look at the world is through a thousand little mirrors.



Credits- Indiamart



Aditi Verma

B.A. (H) Sociology
1st Year

Did you know?

Traditional Bhunga huts (circular plan with a single undivided space with conical rod) of the Kutch district of Gujarat take the natural calamities of sandstorm frequently and survived the Bhuj Earthquake (26 Jan 2011).



Credits- kutchtourguide.wordpress.com

Discovering Vernacular Art Forms and Crafts

Do you know of an art form that represents auspicious ceremonies and rituals of a community through its intricate patterns and geometric designs?

Well, it's true for an art form of Karnataka known as *Chittara* Art. Originating from the heart of Southern India, the traditional art form known as *Chittara* (or *Hase Chitra*) stands as a remarkable cultural phenomenon within the *Deevaru* community. The term "*Chittara*" draws its essence from the Kannada word "*Chitra*," resonating with the notions of "picture" and "painting." It's a type of mural painting and floor art traditionally created by the *Deewaru* community, often depicting scenes from daily life, rituals, and celebrations. The art form is deeply rooted in the culture and traditions of the *Chittar* art originated in the Malnad region of Karnataka, specifically in villages within the Shimoga district is a traditional craft practised by women who use natural materials like mud, burnt rice, and plant-based dyes for their creations. The *Deevaru* society is matriarchal, with women occupying esteemed positions central to family and communal dynamics. Mothers in particular, play a pivotal role in shaping the community's ethos. A unique tradition within the *Deevaru* community involves widows adorning 'red' bangles and actively participating in rituals.

This practice stands in stark contrast to the marginalization faced by widows in some other Indian cultures, underscoring the *Deevarus'* commitment to integrating widowed women into mainstream society. At the heart of this community's artistic expression lies the ancient art form of *Chittara*. This intricate artwork graces the walls and floors of their homes, intricately linked with marriage ceremonies, festivals like *Bhoomi Hunnime*, and other ritualistic practices. Executed collaboratively, the creation of each artwork spans several days.

It is not just an art but is an important aspect of life. Most auspicious rituals, like the naming ceremony of a child, happen under the wall that has a *Chittara* painting. This art form has documented how man has evolved and become civilized.



Credits- Exotic India Art

Chittara paintings hold significant social narratives, and their ornate and intricate patterns mirror the general iconography of the *Deevaru* community, embodying symbols rooted in their local environment. These symbols encompass various elements such as birds, insects, paddy fields, agricultural tools like sickles and ladders, and musical instruments. The polygons and straight lines within the paintings encapsulate the societal and moral guidelines that shape the *Deevaru* way of life. These elements encircle a spacious central area that often contains a palanquin, an emblem of immense significance. The palanquin visually signifies the grandeur historically associated with its ownership. This visual representation carries profound symbolism, representing the *Deevaru's* triumph over past social disparities. India has a very rich traditional heritage of folk and tribal arts and culture. Without folk painting, there is no cultural identity in human life, and the opportunity will be incomplete. The *Deevaru* community is agricultural, so the planting and harvesting beautiful rabbit *Chittara* is intertwined with nature, just as the lives of the creators of these paintings are intertwined with nature. Rabbit *Chittara* is very rich in forms, styles, creativity, and depiction of life and nature. These paintings can provide a new source of income for indigenous peoples alongside agriculture.

Because of the high demand for traditional handicrafts in the international market, many organizations encourage these tribal communities to produce traditional paintings for commercial sale.

In conclusion, *Chittara* painting is a true testament to the enduring power of traditional art forms to captivate and inspire. Through its intricate patterns, vibrant colors, and captivating narratives, this art form offers a window into the rich cultural tapestry of India, inviting us to explore and appreciate the depth and diversity of the country's artistic heritage. As we continue to navigate the ever-changing landscape of the modern world, we must remain committed to preserving and celebrating the timeless beauty of *Chittara* painting and other traditional art forms. By doing so, we not only honor the legacy of the past but also ensure that the creative spirit that has sustained these traditions will continue to thrive and inspire generations to come.



Prajukta Sharma

B.A. (H) Sociology

1st Year

Woven in Dots: The Art of Tangaliya

While casually roaming around at a craft exhibition, I came across a black shawl. It was covered in tiny white dots that looked like little stars in a clear night sky. That was the first time I saw a product *Tangaliya* Weaving.

This indigenous art form began in the *Saurashtra* region, around 700 years ago. According to the legends, a boy from the *Bhadwad* (shepherd) community fell in love with a girl from the *Wankar* (weaver) community and married her. But unfortunately, the boy's family did not agree to the marriage and they were not accepted. So, they ended up settling down among the weavers. While herding his sheep, the boy slowly began learning the art of weaving from his in-laws. He used the wool from his sheep to make shawls, but he also added something new: tiny dots made by twists of extra thread while weaving. This is how *Tangaliya* weaving began, while weaving two communities together – quite literally.



Credits- amounee.com



Credits- banshee.com

Another version of the story says that eventually, the boy's parents softened and offered him sheep wool and grains in exchange for warm shawls. His dots made the fabric look richer and more decorated, and this practice eventually grew into the art we see today.

Over time, the descendants of the shepherd and the weaver went on to form a community in themselves, called the *Dangasia* community. Its name is thought to have come from the word 'dang,' meaning 'stick,' like the one shepherds use to guide their flocks. So, in a way even the name of the community holds a piece of its origin story.

The technique used in this craft is what makes it so unique and special. The dots are twisted into the fabric by hand. It is a very tedious process and requires high



Credits- amounee.com

levels of skill and accuracy. The dots need to be placed very precisely, while counting each thread and knowing exactly where to twist a dot. A single mistake can make the whole design look faulty. The result looks like embroidery, but it is actually weaving. It is a craft that does not follow any kind of sketch. The patterns live in the weaver's mind, and are brought to life by their skilled hands.

Today, this intricate craft has received some of the recognition it deserves; Tangaliya weaving holds a Geographical Indication (GI) tag. This shows its regional and cultural significance. Yet, despite this the craft remains quiet and humble, much like its creators.

What attracted me the most to the craft is that it doesn't attract attention through bold colours or grand designs. It demands focus through dots so small you could miss them if you weren't looking closely. But once you see them, you get a glimpse of the rhythm, and the slow, thoughtful movements of the hand that created them.

In a world where fast fashion is the trend and handmade things are fading, Tangaliya is a reminder that beauty doesn't always need to be loud. Sometimes, it's found in tiny dots, and the stories they carry.



Gunika Sharma
B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd Year



From the Faculty

In this section, we are pleased to share thoughtful contributions from our esteemed teachers. Drawing from their personal experiences and academic insights, they reflect on the vernacular beliefs and practices of India. Their writings offer a unique perspective, enriching our understanding of how these traditions continue to shape our society today.



Spirits, Society, and Sacred Bonds:

Understanding Odisha's Tribal Tradition of Ghost Marriage

They say, 'marriages are made in heaven', but among tribal communities, there exists a unique tradition that unites those who have already passed, forging a bond beyond the realm of the living-known as Ghost marriage or *Pret Vivaha*. The tradition of Ghost marriage (*Pret Vivaha*) has intriguing cultural and spiritual roots that span across regions, including China and Odisha. Though the practice evolved separately, its core belief resolving the spiritual incompleteness of an unmarried deceased soul remains consistent across these traditions.

While ghost marriage is commonly associated with ancient Chinese customs, its occurrence in Odisha and other parts of India suggests that the idea of posthumous unions emerged independently in multiple civilizations. In China, ghost marriages were formalized during the Han Dynasty, where families sought spouses for deceased relatives through symbolic rituals, ensuring the spirit's fulfillment in the afterlife. Over centuries, these traditions remained intact but gradually declined due to modernization.

Odisha's version of ghost marriage aligns more with tribal animistic traditions than with Chinese ancestral customs. Unlike the structured matrimonial customs in ancient China, Odisha's tribal ghost marriages focus on spiritual appeasement and communal

harmony. There is no historical evidence suggesting direct cultural transmission from China to Odisha; rather, the ritual likely emerged from tribal animism and indigenous religious beliefs centered on spirits, ancestors, and the afterlife.

Ghost marriage in Odisha has traditionally been practiced in tribal communities where ancestors and spirits hold a significant role in daily life. Among these groups, marriage is seen as both a social and spiritual duty. When an individual dies unmarried, tribal belief dictates that their soul may remain restless and even bring misfortune to their surviving family. To prevent this, a symbolic marriage ritual is performed, seeking to satisfy the deceased's unfulfilled existence.

The *Santal*, *Juang*, and *Saora* tribes are among those known to engage in *Pret Vivaha*, incorporating indigenous animistic traditions. The *Saora* tribe, in particular, has elaborate spiritual customs where shamans communicate with the spirits of the deceased, guiding posthumous marital ceremonies. These rituals do not follow conventional Hindu wedding customs but instead involve symbolic offerings, prayers, and community participation.

Among the *Juang* tribe, ghost marriages may involve representations of the deceased- such as portraits or figurines- being wedded through ritualistic acts. Meanwhile, in the Santal tribe, there

exists a belief that souls should be properly united in the afterlife to maintain harmony within the spiritual realm, and marriages are conducted accordingly.

Ghost marriage does not have a fixed annual date but is typically conducted during auspicious months, often aligning with *Magha* (January-February) or *Shravan* (July-August) based on traditional beliefs and astrological consultations. It usually follows ancestral worship ceremonies observed within tribal customs.

The marriage follows a ceremonial process deeply rooted in tribal traditions. It begins with families consulting *shamans* or elders to determine whether the deceased's soul is restless, as spiritual dissatisfaction is believed to cause misfortunes. If needed, a spiritual partner-either another deceased individual or, in rare cases, a living participant- is selected, symbolically representing the marriage. Effigies, portraits, or sacred objects stand in place of the spirits, adorned with traditional attire and offerings. The ritual includes reciting vows, exchanging symbolic garlands, and prayers led by village elders, ensuring ancestral blessings for the union. The ceremony concludes with the burning or immersion of the symbolic representations of the couple, believed to facilitate their transition into the afterlife. A communal feast follows, marking the successful completion of the deceased's journey into peace.

It should be noted that ghost marriage extends beyond Odisha and is observed in various parts of India, especially

among tribal and indigenous communities. Regions such as Karnataka, Kerala, and Madhya Pradesh have documented similar practices, where it is believed that the soul of an unmarried deceased individual remains unsettled without a symbolic union. This ritual serves as a spiritual resolution, ensuring harmony between the living and the departed.

With modernization and socio-religious changes, *Pret Vivaha* has become less frequent, but remnants of the practice still exist in remote tribal settlements. Government and social interventions focusing on integrating these communities into mainstream practices have led to a decline in ritual observances. Despite the decline in its traditional form, this system remains a fascinating reflection of Odisha's vernacular belief systems, showcasing how ancient customs adapt to modern values while preserving their cultural essence.



Dr. Bijayani Mishra
Assistant Professor,
Department of Sociology

Manikarnika Ghat: Where Fire Meets Faith and Time Stands Still

I live in Kashi, also known as Banaras—a city that feels alive. It sings, it prays, and it holds centuries of stories in its air. Among all the *ghats* here by the holy river Ganga, there's one that touches my heart every time I see it - *Manikarnika Ghat*.

This *ghat* is not just any place. It's where people are cremated, where their last journey begins. But believe me, it's not a place of sadness—it's a place of peace.

Why People Ask Me Strange Questions

Many people ask me, "Babita ji, how do you live near a *ghat* where so many dead bodies are burned every day? Doesn't it smell bad? Don't you get scared?"

I just smile. Because only those who've walked through the small *galliyaan* (lanes) of Banaras and heard the sound of burning wood with the sound of temple bells will understand.

The Smell of Freedom

Even though hundreds of bodies are cremated at *Manikarnika* every day, there is no bad smell. The cremation happens in the open air with dry wood, *ghee*, and sometimes sandalwood or neem, which gives a natural and clean burn.

The Ganga River flows nearby, taking with her the ashes, the prayers, and sometimes the pain.

There is also an eternal flame here—a fire that has never gone out, just like the ones at *Jwala Devi Temple*, *Amar Jawan Jyoti* in Delhi, or Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Japan. This sacred fire is used to light every pyre, and people believe it is blessed by Lord *Shiva* himself.

Death Is Not the End in Banaras

Here in Kashi, death is not a scary thing. It is not hidden. It is respected and accepted. People from all over India come to Banaras in their last days, hoping to die here and be cremated at *Manikarnika*.



Credits- kevinstandagephotography.wordpress.com

Why? Because we believe that if you die in Kashi, you get *Moksha*—freedom from the cycle of life and death. Your sins are washed away. Your soul becomes free.

At the *ghat*, priests quietly chant *mantras* into the ears of the dead. No loud crying. No big show of sadness. Just calmness and prayers. It's strange, isn't it? A place full of fire and ashes feels so peaceful.

Life Goes On

I've walked past *Manikarnika Ghat* many times. Sometimes I carry vegetables, sometimes flowers for the temple, and sometimes I just sit there watching the smoke rise like silent prayers.



Credits- getyourguide.com

Life doesn't stop here. Children run around. Holy men meditate. *Chaiwalas* sell tea. Foreigners take pictures or sketch the scenes. Here, life and death walk side by side.

More Than Just a Ghat

There are old stories too. They say Lord *Vishnu* dropped a jewel from his ear into a pond here, which is why the ghat is called *Manikarnika* (*Mani* = jewel, *Karnika* = ear). Another story says that when Goddess *Parvati*'s earring fell here, Lord *Shiva* said this would be the place where souls would be freed.

Other *ghats* in Banaras are for bathing, praying, or lighting lamps. But *Manikarnika* is the only ghat where the fire never dies. It keeps burning through the night, during rains, even during festivals.

Because here in Banaras, death doesn't stop life—it completes it.

What Banaras Has Taught Me

Banaras has taught me one big truth: Everything is temporary, except the soul. And that's the beauty of *Manikarnika*. It's not just about fire or rituals—it's about understanding that one day, we will all return to the earth, and that's okay.

Here in Kashi, death is not the end—it's just a return to the beginning.

Om Shanti.



Dr. Babita Chaudhary
Assistant Professor,
Department of Sociology

The Ghost Story: Social Construction of Beliefs

It is around 09:00 pm in the month of April in the early 2000s. The weather feels pleasant at night but for some days the temperature is increasing. The cool breeze, which is making the weather feel pleasant, is trying hard to fight against the heat radiating from the ground. A sound of away going train's whistle is falling on my ears. It is the only artificial sound I can hear besides the sounds of barking dogs and chirping crickets. I had just got down from that train to my maternal uncle's village. In fact, the railway station is not at my maternal uncle's village. It is in a nearby village. I am walking at a fast pace, which is actually my usual pace, to reach my destination. My maternal uncle's village is roughly two kilometres away from the railway station. There is a *kuccha* road which connects the railway station to the *pucca* road. I am already walking on this *pucca* road and this is when I realised that I am the only one who is walking on this road. There were some more passengers who had got down from the same train but now I cannot see anyone. All of them have dispersed in various directions to go to their homes. At this hour, there is no public transport which can take me to my destination. I cannot even call someone from home as at this time mobile phones are not available with everyone. So, I am using my feet to reach home as soon as possible. I am crossing one of the villages which lies in between my maternal uncle's village and

the railway station. As I am crossing the village, I can see some people near the roadside shop. Apart from that there is just sound of crickets, frogs, dogs and trucks running on the road which connects one city to another and I am walking. It is night but I can clearly see the road thanks to the moon for illuminating the surroundings.

It is around 20-25 minutes since I am walking. I can see the lights coming from the street lamps of my maternal uncle's village. It is a signal that I have entered the circumference of the village. Now from here there are two ways to go to my uncle's house. One which passes through the middle of the village and the other is a short-cut. This short-cut is a *kuccha* road passing between the naked fields. All the crops have already been harvested. I am unconsciously thinking which one to take. At the more sub-conscious level of my mind some stories are running. These are the various ghost stories which have been narrated by the villagers to their fellow villagers. Suddenly, I find this one story is flashing through my mind. It is the story of a man running on the moving train, called as '*daak*' which passes the village at 12 noon. The narrative revolving around the story is that it is the ghost of a man who died in an accident with that train. Villagers have claimed to see that running man from a distance.

Another story is of a *bhootni* (female-ghost) residing on a *Jaal* tree (*Salvadora oleoides*) in a field near the road. There is another berry tree which houses a *bhootni*. This is in the village but just outside the *dhaani* (locality). While I am unconsciously thinking about all these stories I realised that I have taken the short-cut. As I get down from the *pucca* road and take the *kuchha* road, I am crossing underneath the *Jaal* tree. Suddenly I start hearing a tinkling sound. The sound appears to be coming from some woman's anklet. This sound was not there when I was walking on the road and it started coming the moment I crossed the *Jaal* tree.

The sound is very crystal clear and it is coming from behind me. I am checking if there is something in my pockets or in my bag. But I am not carrying anything which would make tinkling sound. When I am increasing my pace, the frequency of sound is also increasing, when I am reducing my pace, the frequency is also reducing. When I am stopping, the sound is stopping and when I start moving it again starts coming. My heart is pounding and I am sweating in fear. I know the *Jaal* tree ghost is following me. I am chanting *Hanumaan Chaalisa* in my mind but the sound is not stopping. Somehow, I have reached *dhaani*. I can see some known people under the illumination of street lights. I am feeling relaxed. After having dinner, I told to my maternal uncle what happened on the way. He asked me why I chose that path at night. The next day, I told my experience to some of my friends in the

dhaani. They told me that there is something supernatural there on that tree. They told me that it has happened earlier also but they did not know of details. Now my experience further strengthened their belief. This news got spread in the village like a wildfire and everyone started talking about it. Some people came and asked me what had happened, what I did, what was the time and I narrated everything. They were asking wasn't I carrying any iron, as ghosts are afraid of iron or wasn't I wearing any locket of lord Hanuman. When I told them that I was chanting *Hanuman Chaalisa*, they told me that it was what saved me else something bad could have happened. It was a horrific experience and strengthened not only my belief but also belief of the villagers that there was a ghost in that tree.

The story appears like the story of a Hindi movie or Hindi serial but it is a real story. However, there is a twist. The storyline does go entirely as I narrated. The part till where I was walking on the road is true. The part where I started hearing tinkling sound is also true. It is also true that it was coming from behind me and I was not carrying anything which would make tinkling sound. I was scared that is also true. All this is one hundred percent true. Once I realised that the sound is increasing decreasing with my pace I did think of it as a ghost. However, instead of believing it I questioned it that it cannot be ghost. There is something wrong. I checked my pocket again. I checked the pockets of my bag but could not find anything

which would make tinkling sound. The sound was still coming. I changed the position of the bag I was carrying from my back to my chest. The sound was still coming but now it was coming from front. For a second, a thought passed my mind, 'is some ghost sitting on my bag' like the ghost who sits on the shoulders of the character Tun in the Thai movie *Shutter* (2009, directed by Banjong Pisanthanakuna and Parkpoom Wongpoom).

My mind was curious to find the cause of the sound. I started looking at left and right at the bag. Suddenly, I saw something and I had a sigh of relief. The two zipper pulls, made of steel, of my bag were striking against each other creating the tinkling sound. It made everything clear. The sound may have been earlier also but the *pucca* road was plain and the movement of bag was not much to allow zipper pulls to strike each other. There was traffic on the road because of which also I could not hear the sound even if it was there. The road which connects railway station to *pucca* road was busy road. Many passengers were walking on that road along with me and there was noise. So, even if the zipper pulls were making sound, I could not hear because there was noise, people were talking. Here, it was complete silence. The road was unpaved. My walking movement was not stable which allowed the zipper pulls to strike against each other. Now, I knew there was no ghost. Ghost was in my mind. I didn't tell anyone about it. It never became a talking point.

At that time I didn't think much about it; I just knew that there was no ghost in that tree. I didn't even know how to make sense of beliefs such as beliefs in supernatural elements. However, over a period of time, due to my training in the discipline of Sociology, I have thought about functioning of belief systems. I can now make some attempts to decipher how our beliefs get shape, and how they get strengthened. Because of my academic training, my thinking is also influenced by the writings of scholars like Durkheim (*Rules of Sociological Method*, 1895; *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 1912), Evans-Pritchard (*Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, 1937), Malinowski (*A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, 1944), Radcliffe-Brown (*Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, 1952), and Levi Strauss (*Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*, 1978) to name a few. My training in Sociology enables me to put forth the assertion that 'reality is socially constructed' an idea put forth by Sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (*Social Construction of Reality*, 1966). And when I look around, I find that everything is actually socially constructed, from our needs to desires to aspirations to imaginations to beliefs. But here I will specifically focus on the construction of supernatural beliefs. Taking clue from the ghost story we discussed earlier, I can start by asking a question and a supplementary question: How do ideas like ghost emerge? And how do they become part of the belief

system (why and how do people start believing in these ideas) and how such belief spread and strengthens. While the answer to the first question might not be in the story I narrated but the answer to the second question may be found in the story.

Coming to the first question, the emergence of idea of ghost or, to make it more general, emergence of any supernatural idea. As far as I can think about it, thoughts like this emerge because it serves a purpose or to put it sociologically, it performs certain function. That function could be anything from physical to psychological to emotional. People make sense of the world through such ideas. They try to understand their surroundings through these ideas. Here, I am not going to comment anything about the rationality or scientificity of such ideas. On the basis of their understanding of the natural or social phenomena people assign them various nomenclatures. If they (dominant individual or dominant group) feel that something has positive functions for them they assign favourable ideas and if they feel that something has negative consequences then they assign unfavourable ideas to such phenomena. Similarly, ideas like sacred and profane come into being. However, I do not claim that this explanation is sufficient. It would need more contemplation and more space to elaborate which I cannot do here. Coming to the first part of the second question, how do some ideas become part of the belief system or why do people believe in such idea?

The answer lies in the thesis of social construction of reality. Since our birth, in our upbringing, through every cycle of our life we are surrounded by various supernatural legends, stories, and folktales be it in the form of oral stories, or written stories, or movies, or any other type of media content. They have their reflection in various customs and practices of daily lives. Through various agencies of socialization such idea start penetrating deeper into our mind and become part of our thinking process. The unquestioned acceptance of any idea is the major reason for them becoming part of the thinking process. This is how supernatural becomes a part of belief system. The supernatural is a socially constructed idea; constructed through various agencies of socialization.

This brings me to the second aspect of the second question- the spread and strengthening of ideas. This again is the result of unquestioned acceptance of imagined or actual recurrence of the phenomena termed as supernatural and deliberately or unknowingly assigning it a supernatural cause. For example, in the story we discussed earlier, I had mentioned in the first variation of the story that I was continuously getting the tinkling sound; it was increasing when I was speeding up and decreasing when I was slowing down. It was stopping when I was stopping and starting when I was moving as if someone was following me. I was narrating *Hanuman Chaalisa* and I was able to safely reach home. Some important points should be considered here. Firstly, when I told this incident to

the villagers it will strengthen their belief that the *Jaal* tree has ghost in it. The story was already there and I confirmed it, though I myself never saw a ghost. I just heard tinkling sound. Which I never fully questioned or inquired. There is already this narrative prevalent in the village that when female ghosts walk, tinkling sound comes. It also confirmed another thing for the villagers that reading of *Hanuman Chaalisa* will have positive effects during encounter with supernatural. Since childhood, I have been told so many times that we should not go to specific places during specific hours, ghosts are there, when people die they many become ghost (which reflects in the story of man running on a moving train), women ghosts wear anklet and it create tinkling sound etc. And when I was walking along that unpaved road all these stories led me to believe that I was being followed by a ghost, the trigger for which was something about which also I had been hearing from people (anklet making tinkling sound).

Now when I look back and think about the origin of all these stories I get some answers. These stories may have been created to fulfil some purpose but in the long run they change their form and become a belief system. For example, we were told that a dead man runs on a moving train which comes at 12 noon. It may have been told to scare the children so that they do not go out in the afternoon. In the afternoon, people sleep in the villages. So, to deter kids, they came up with this story and then some people saw some man like figure on train and confirmed that they have seen it.

However when I inquired if they had seen the man from close proximity, not even a single person said that s/he has seen the ghost from close proximity. Similarly, the story of ghost on *Jaal* tree may have been constructed to deter children to go towards road or to prevent people take that path to enter the village because firstly the road is not good and people may injure themselves. Secondly, the path was carved out within the field. So, walking there means damage to crops. The construction of ghost story may have been to fulfil a function but it took other form and became part of the belief system. During our recent academic excursion to Khajuraho, we had a discussion to school children in a village. The children were of the opinion that a ghost lives in a tree and the ghost comes at 1 pm. When I inquired from the students if they had ever seen one, they denied saying that it comes only at 1 pm and they do not go there at 1 pm. Upon asking who told them about the ghost, the answer was their parents. I thought about it and it made sense. The tree is outside the village where children play in the evening. So, parents constructed the story of a ghost to scare them so that they do not go there in the afternoon. A false story which was created to prevent the kids from going out in the afternoon have such a deep impact on their thinking that it lead to them have this belief that supernatural elements do exist.

As a sociologist, we come across various legends. We come across various belief systems, various cultures. How should we proceed with them? Ethics tell us that we should respect the belief of people we are studying. I agree to this point. For the sake of understanding how people make sense of their life world we need to see from their perspective without any kind of bias and prejudice. We need to understand how various activities, practices and customs are important to people and what role do they play in their life. However, at the same time, we also need to develop criticality. A curious mind which does not accept anything without questioning. If someone asks me what do I have to say about supernatural element?

As a sociologist, my answer will be that when I study people what is important for me is how people make sense of supernatural element. What I think becomes irrelevant there. However, my personal opinion would be everything is socially constructed. I do not accept anything without questioning and without analysing it through the notion of 'social construction of reality'. This is what happened, in the second variation of the ghost story we discussed; I was not willing to accept the notion of ghost. So, I was doing whatever I could to find the source of tinkling sound and I did find. Hence, for me there is nothing supernatural in 'ghost'. It is a mental construct. It is a socially constructed notion.

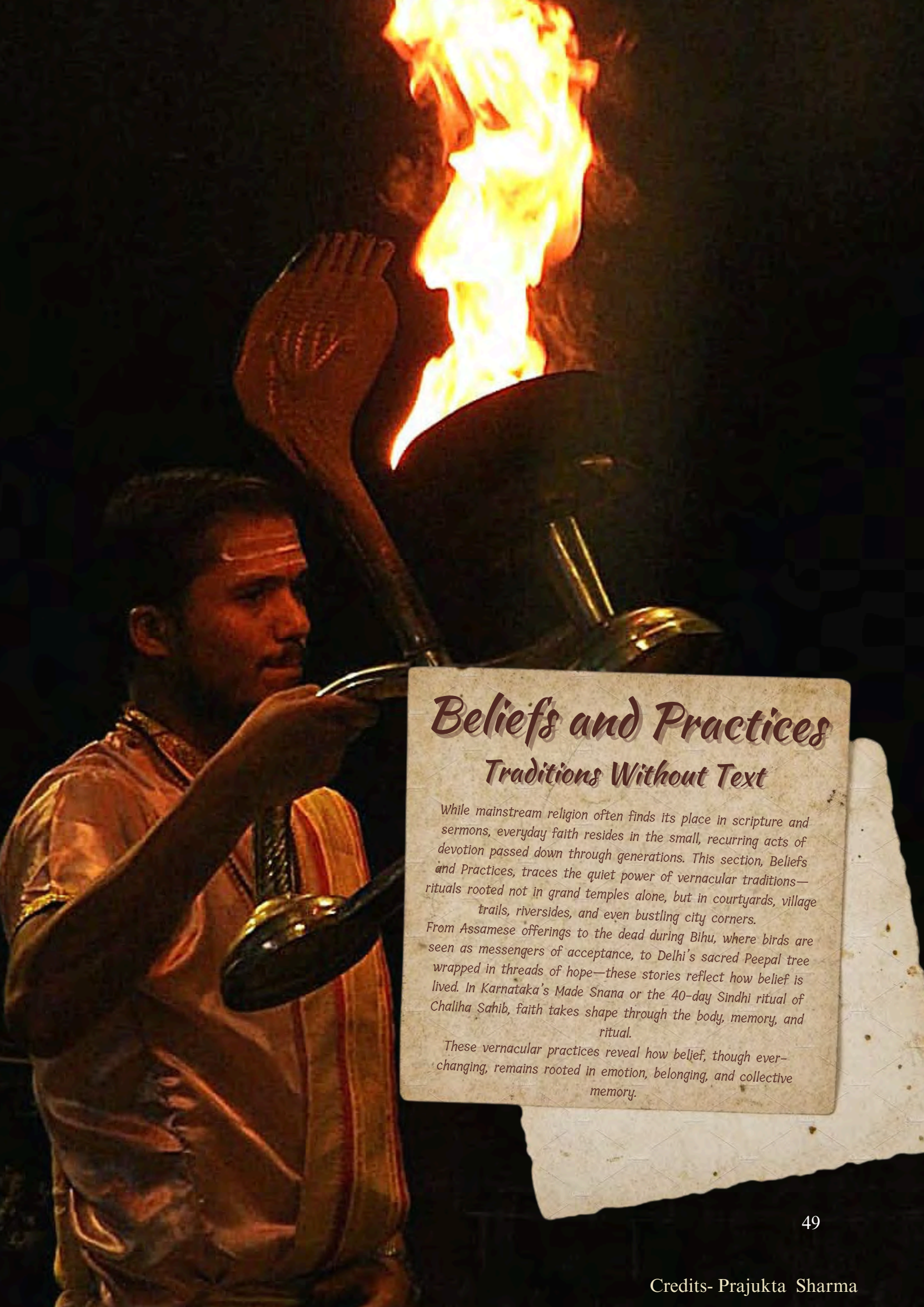
Did you know?

The Zoroastrians and their sky burial A Dakhma or 'Cheel Ghar' and more popularly known as 'The Tower of Silence' are exclusive buildings made as per the Zoroastrian culture, or the Parsi culture, for the sky burial of the dead. Sky burial is a tradition that is ostensibly followed by the Parsi and the Buddhist community, where they leave the dead for birds or scavengers to feed on. For the Parsi community, this practice is carried out in a special place that's known as 'The Tower of Silence.'



Dr. Neeraj Kumar,
Assistant Professor,
Department of Sociology





Beliefs and Practices

Traditions Without Text

While mainstream religion often finds its place in scripture and sermons, everyday faith resides in the small, recurring acts of devotion passed down through generations. This section, *Beliefs and Practices*, traces the quiet power of vernacular traditions—rituals rooted not in grand temples alone, but in courtyards, village trails, riversides, and even bustling city corners.

From Assamese offerings to the dead during Bihu, where birds are seen as messengers of acceptance, to Delhi's sacred Peepal tree wrapped in threads of hope—these stories reflect how belief is lived. In Karnataka's Made Shana or the 40-day Sindhi ritual of Chaliha Sahib, faith takes shape through the body, memory, and ritual.

These vernacular practices reveal how belief, though ever-changing, remains rooted in emotion, belonging, and collective memory.

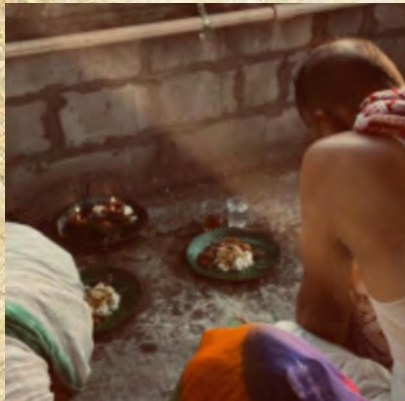
‘মৰা মৃত্য আগ বঢ়ুৱা’



Credits- Barkha Gogoi



Credits- Barkha Gogoi



Credits- Barkha Gogoi



Credits- Barkha Gogoi

‘মৰা মৃত্য আগ বঢ়ুৱা’

(A Tale of Keeping the Dead Alive)

‘মৰা মৃত্য আগ বঢ়ুৱা’ (*Mora Mrityu Aag Borhua*), which translates to Offerings to the dead, has been a tradition followed by my parents since the expiry of my grandparents. It is a traditional Assamese ritual, where in each Bihu :

- *Magh Bihu*
- *Bohag Bihu*
- *Kaati Bihu*

Before feasting, the first meal is offered to the dead souls, believing they still expect us to provide them a meal on happy occasions in exchange for their blessings upon us.

Traditionally, the eldest son and his family members seek blessings from his parents and recite prayers requesting the dead to accept the meal from heaven and ask for forgiveness for any mistakes that might occur during the offering.

Since every picture has a story, I would like to tell the story of the above images briefly:-

In the first picture, we can see that the first plate consists of ধুপ, চিক-বিক (incense stick and small earthen lamp), তামোল পান (betel nut and betel leaf), দই-কচড়া (yogurt and flattened rice), and গুড়(jaggery). This late signifies the offerings as holy. The other two plates consist of meals of two with delicacies such as মাছৰ পপটু (fish intestine), মাছ ভিক (fish fry), দাইল (cooked pulses), ভাত (rice), গাহকৰ (pork), along with glasses of মদ (alcohol) and পানী (water). The importance of mentioning the food items is that the items in the picture signify my grandparents' favourite delicacy, which they enjoyed. At the same time, they were alive, and so it might not be the same for all families, and it solely depends on the likes of the dead.

In the following picture, we see a plate filled with dishes authentic to the Assamese community along with দই-কচড়া, কল্লৰ লাৰু, and বৰা চাউলৰ কপঠা. Since this offering is made during the time of *Magh bihu* (bihu of *bhog*, pith, feasting), the following seasonal items were also offered.

In the third picture, we see the elder son in বগা ধুকত (loincloth) and his wife in পমেমলা চাদৰ (traditional Assamese dress worn by women in Assam offering the food in an open space where the food is exposed. The reason behind the offerings being exposed is to let the birds feed from the same plates, as it is also believed that birds eating from the offerings is a sign of acceptance and satisfaction from the dead, which signifies the ritual as a success.

The last and final photo depicts the family members: the son wearing the গামমাচা and the wife, along with the daughter, who has covered their heads and bowed down to offer their final prayers before leaving the food for the birds.



Barkha Gogoi
B.A. (H) Sociology
3rd Year

“Chak-Long” Marriage of Ahoms

Have you heard of a marriage system that traces its origin to when a universal ruler of a religion got married to a *Manipuri* princess?

Well, it's true for the marriage system of the *Ahom* religion from *Assam* known as *Chak-Long* which is surrounded by numerous stories. One of the prominent story is of *Swargadev (Lengdon) Rajeswar Singha's* marriage with the *Manipuri* princess *Kuranganayani*. It has to be mentioned that it first started when *Lengdon* got married with the eldest daughter of *Ak-kai-Mo-Hung, Nang-Hun-hpa*. The matrimonial process started when *Lengdon* sent a present of honor containing betel ki leaves and Areca nuts clipped on both ends by being decorated on *Sarai* (a kind of platters with stands). This whole gift was being covered by handmade red towels. This was the beginning of the *Chaklong* custom.

During the ceremony of *Chaklong* marriage, the *Ahom* priest recounts the family histories and the heroic deeds of the ancestors from both sides, thereby instilling a sense of pride and continuity in the newlyweds. The *Ahom* priestly classes, namely *Bailung, Mohan* and *Deodhai* perform the community's religious events including marriage ceremonies.



Credits- eSamskriti

. The *Chak-Long* wedding is undertaken by preparing the *Maral*, a form of *Rangoli* adorned with 101 earthen lamps. It is the most vital and unique part of the marriage. At night, the bride and groom sit around the *Rangoli* and pray for their eternal happiness and togetherness. After the rituals, the bride presents the *Hengdang* to her husband. The *Hengdang* is a sword, and the acceptance of this sword is of traditional and historical significance as it marks the protection of the bride by the groom through the administration of an oath. It is also a promise of protecting their family by casting off the perilous entities. *Kavasa* (cloth-like material) is then given to the bridegroom for conquering the evil and negative forces. This officially marks the end of the wedding, and then the newlyweds perform a few fun activities like the game of dice. The *chaklang* ritual concludes after all vows and rituals are completed. The priests bless the newlyweds, who then seek blessings from their elders. The three-day ceremony culminates with the bride departing for her new life at the groom's home.

Chak-Long marriage has its beauty and is quintessential to the *Ahom* community. But the steady corrosion of this traditional system is alarming. The *Chaklong* ceremony stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage of the *Ahom* community, preserving its unique identity and traditions. This ancient marriage practice is not merely a ritual but a vital link connecting present generations with their ancestral past .



Credits- East India story



Credits- Chaklong marriage, facebook



Credits- East India Story

By honoring the legacies of their forefathers and adhering to the customs that have been passed down through centuries, the *Ahoms* ensure the continuity of their social and cultural fabric. As a living tradition, *Chaklong* embodies the values, history, and unity of the *Ahom* people, making it a cherished and enduring aspect of their cultural identity.



Prajukta Sharma
B.A. (H) Sociology
1st Year

Rolling Over Belief: The Ritual of “Made Snana”

To someone who's unfamiliar with the practice of *Made Snana*, it may appear absurd or even inhumane, but for the thousands of devotees who take part in this ritual, it is more than just a practice; it is a path to spiritual freedom.

The ritual of *Made Snana* entails devotees rolling over plantain leaves that have been used by brahmins for their meals. Following this act, they take a sacred dip in the nearby Kumaradhara River, marking the completion of the ritual. Believed to be over 500 years old, this practice is primarily observed in South India, particularly on specific festival days at *Subramanya* temples in Karnataka.

Devotees believe that if one performs this ritual, he/she can get rid of diseases, ailments, and bad *karma*. According to the devotees, performing this ritual makes them stress-free.

Once encountering this unique ritual, I was curious about its origin and emergence, and found out that the practice traces itself to a legend about *Samba*, the son of Lord Krishna. According to this legend, when *Samba* was cursed by some sages, he visited the *Kukke Subrahmanya* temple to get relief from the curse.



Credits- www.indiatimes.com

He is supposed to have taken a bath in the *Kumaradhara River* that flows near the temple and performed “*Made Snana*,” i.e., rolled over the food leftover by the Sages and *Rishis*, who had visited the temple. The legend says that due to the performance of such *Made Snana*, *Sambawas* able to get rid of those curses.

This account provides a clear picture of the essence of the practice of “*Made Snana*” and how it should be understood. In the legend, *Samba* performed this ritual as an act of austerity and self-purification; he wasn't forced by any individual to do it. Instead, his conscience urged him to perform it, his mind went into a full state of devotion, and he surrendered himself to the Almighty.

It is observed that several devotees following this ritual don't consider themselves as mere objects of an age-old tradition rather they take pride in following it, being a part of it. Devotees believe that this ritual isn't humiliating or degrading at all, but it is a path towards healing. For them, this practice is a route to the divine that doesn't depend on wealth, status, or grand ceremonies. Here, the body is the vessel through which pain and devotion blend.

And I think this is the point, where *Made Snana* as a ritual defies the reconstructed classifications, one cannot easily slot it into categories of sacred versus shameful or progressive versus regressive. Today's modern liberals opine that this ritual goes against modern values, saying it's demeaning and inhumane and disrupts human dignity. For dignity, it widely varies, for the devotees rolling on leaves, by doing this ritual, they uphold their dignity.

Now the final question arises, what exactly is the ritual *Made Snana* exactly is? Is it a spiritual practice or a performance influenced by caste, or maybe it is a mix of all of these – this ritual compels us to look and reflect on our beliefs, and then we realise the contradictory ways we take to seek the divine. In the end, I feel that *Made Snana* is much more than just rolling in some leaves; it's a journey across history, clashing faith and beliefs, and to discover what it truly means to be human.



Anshika Saxena
B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd year

Did you know?



Yaoshang is a major festival of Manipur. It is a five-day event celebrated on the full moon day of the month of Lamta (February-March). The festival is similar to Holi, as it is generally celebrated at the same time as Holi and also shares the practice of lighting a fire. But unlike Holi, the celebrations go far beyond just colours. The festival is celebrated with singing, dancing and many other traditional performances.

Credits: www.e-pao.net

कुर्मी समाज का शीराघर



Credits- Wikimapia.com

हमारा देश हमेशा से ही अपनी विभिन्नता के लिए जाना जाता है,। यहाँ विभिन्नता बोलचाल की भाषा से लेकर पूजा पाठ के तरीकों हर चीज में है, और हर कुछ मील के दायरे में हमारी भाषा, हमारा पहनावा, हमारी मान्यताएं, हमारी सोच सब बदलता जाता है।

भारतीय संस्कृति की विभिन्नता में पूजा पाठ से संबंधित कई बातें होती हैं जिनमें क्षेत्रों के हिसाब से इन परंपराओं में बदलाव आते रहते हैं, और ये बदलाव सिर्फ क्षेत्रों के कारण नहीं आते हैं बल्कि इसमें बहुत बड़ी भागीदारी जाति-पाति की भी होती है। अक्सर अलग-अलग जातियों के पूजा पाठ के तरीके, यहाँ तक कि भगवान जिन्हें कुल के देवी या देवता कहा जाता है वो भी बदल जाते हैं।

ऐसे ही भारत के पूर्वी और मध्य के राज्यों में एक किसान प्रधान जाति है जो कि कुर्मी या पटेल के नाम से जानी जाती है, इस जाति के लोगों की भी अपनी पूजा पाठ की एक अलग परंपरा है।, इनके कुलदेवता होते हैं जिन्हें देवूठान के नाम से जाना जाता है और जिन मंदिरों में इनकी पूजा होती है उसे शीराघर कहते हैं।

अगर किसी गाँव में कुर्मी जाति के लोग रहते हैं तो वो उस गाँव में अपने कुल देवता का मंदिर शीराघर बनाते हैं और अगर कोई किसी मजबूरी के कारण अपनी पुरानी जगह से पलायन कर गया है तो वह परिवार अपने गोतिया समेत जिस नई जगह पर जा कर बस रहे हैं वहाँ अपने घर के साथ अपना

शीराघर बनाते हैं जिसमें अपने कुल देवता को स्थापित किया जाता है।

रोज सुबह शीराघर की निपाई यानी कि सफाई की जाती है जो कि उस गाँव में रह रहे कुर्मी समाज की महिलाओं द्वारा की जाती है, उसके बाद वहाँ घी और हुमाद जलाया जाता है और हर शाम को वहाँ मंदिर के बाहर सांझ दी जाती है। सरल भाषा में कहें तो शाम को दिया जलाया जाता है।

शीराघर में घी तो निपाई के बाद हर दिन ही जलाया जाता है पर उसकी शोभा देखने लायक कार्तिक एकादशी के दिन होती है जिसे देवूठानी पर्व कहते हैं और आम जन की भाषा में इसे जेठान कहा जाता है। इस दिन पूरे गाँव के कुर्मी समाज के लोग मंदिर में अपनी मनोकामना के हिसाब से शुद्ध घी जलाते हैं और उस दिन उस गाँव के भगत मंदिर में पूजा करते हैं। ऐसी मान्यता है कि जो भगत मंदिर में पूजा करते हैं उन पर देव आते हैं और लोग उनसे आशीर्वाद लेने के लिए उनके पैर छूते हैं।

यह मंदिर और उनके कुल देवता कुर्मी समाज की रोज की दिनचर्या का अहम हिस्सा है और यह परंपरा बाकी जानी मानी पूजा पाठ की परंपराओं से अलग है और यही इसकी विशेषता भी है।



हिमाद्री प्रसाद
बीए समाजशास्त्र ऑनर्स
तृतीय वर्ष

பாலும் பழமும்

வணக்கம்....!

தமிழ் திருமண கலாச்சாரத்தில் திருமணம் முடிந்தவுடன் நடக்கும் நிகழ்ச்சிகள் அனைத்தும் அறிவியல் மற்றும் நகைச்சுவை உணர்வுகள் கலந்து நடக்கும் . இதில் நடக்கும் அனைத்து நிகழ்ச்சிகளும் புதுமண தம்பதிகள் ஒருவரை ஒருவர் புரிந்து கொள்ளவும் இருவருக்கும் இடையில் இருக்கும் உறவை,பிணைப்பை வலுப்படுத்த இந்நிகழ்ச்சிகள் பெரிதும் உதவுகிறது . இதில் ஒரு நிகழ்ச்சியாக தம்பதிகளுக்கு பாலும் பழமும் கொடுக்கும் நிகழ்ச்சி நடத்தப்படுகிறது.

திருமணம் முடிந்தவுடன் மணமகளின் இல்லத்தில் மணமகளின் சகோதரிகள் தோழிகள் மற்றும் உறவினர்கள் அனைவரும் இணைந்து வாழப்பழத்தை பாலில் நனைத்து தம்பதிகளுக்கு கொடுப்பார்கள் . ஒரு சில நேரம் அவர்கள் மணமகன் மற்றும் மணமகளுக்கு கொடுப்பது போல் கொடுக்காமல் ஏமாற்றி விளையாடுவார்கள் . கூட்டத்தில் இருப்பவர்கள் அந்த சமயத்தில் பல்வேறு நகைச்சுவை சொற்களை பயன்படுத்தி தம்பதிகளை கேலி செய்வார்கள்.



Credits- @vikasraja_vr



Keerthana Krishnan
B.A. (H) Sociology
3rd year

உண்மையில் இந்த நிகழ்ச்சியானது வெவ்வேறு இடம் மற்றும் பழக்கவழக்க கலாச்சாரத்திலிருந்து இணைந்த தம்பதிகள் , ஒருவருக்கொருவர் புரிந்து கொள்ளவும், விட்டுக் கொடுத்தும் , தங்களது வாழ்க்கை பயணத்தை நேர்மறை சிந்தனை மற்றும் தெளிவான பாதையில் வாழ்க்கை பயணத்தை தொடர மிகவும் உதவுகிறது. பாலும் , பழமும் பகிர்ந்து உண்ணுவது போல் தங்களின் வாழ்க்கை பயணத்தில் ஏற்படும் இன்பத் துன்பங்களை ஒருவருக்கொருவர் பகிர்ந்து கொள்ள வேண்டும் என்பது மிகவும் முக்கியமான கருத்தாக அமைகிறது.மணமக்கள் பாலும் வாழைப்பழமும் பகிர்ந்து கொள்ளும் செயல், அவர்கள் திருமணமான பிறகு ஒன்றாக பகிர்ந்து கொள்வதன் ஆரம்ப செயலாக கருதப்படுகிறது.

அனைவருக்கும் இதிலிருந்து ஒரு சந்தேகம் தோன்றும் ஏன் பால் மற்றும் பழம் (வாழைப்பழம்) கொடுக்கின்றனர் என்று?

இதற்கான பதில் ..

- பால் - என்பது தூய்மை, ஊட்டச்சத்து மற்றும் செழிப்பின் அடையாளமாக கருதப்படுகிறது.
- வாழைப்பழம் - வாழைப்பழங்கள் பெரும்பாலும் சகோதரத்துவத்துடன் தொடர்புடையவை. அவைகள் கிளையாக வளர்வது போல் குடும்பமும் செழிப்பதாக வளரும் என்று நம்பப்படுகிறது .

திருமண நிகழ்வுகளுக்குப் பிறகு, மணமக்களுக்கு ஊட்டச்சத்தும் சக்தியும் தேவைப்படும். வாழைப்பழமும் பாலும் இரண்டும்

Translation

Paalum pazhamum

In Tamil wedding traditions, the post-wedding rituals are a beautiful blend of science and humor. These events play a vital role in helping the newlyweds understand each other better and in strengthening the bond between them. One such ceremony is the offering of milk and banana to the couple.

Right after the wedding, the bride's sisters, friends, and relatives come together at the groom's house and offer bananas dipped in milk to the newlyweds. Sometimes, in a playful twist, they pretend to give it but trick them instead, creating a fun and light-hearted atmosphere. The guests around often tease the couple with humorous comments during this time.

In truth, this ceremony serves a meaningful purpose. For couples coming from different regions and cultural backgrounds, it helps them understand each other, encourages compromise, and promotes a positive and clear-minded approach to their life journey together. Just as they share milk and bananas during the ceremony, the act symbolizes their commitment to sharing both the joys and sorrows of life with each other. The sharing of milk and banana marks the beginning of their shared life after marriage.

A common question that arises is: Why milk and banana specifically?

Here's the answer:

- Milk symbolizes purity, nourishment, and prosperity.
- Bananas are often associated with fertility due to their clustered growth, symbolizing a large family and abundance. Milk is a symbol of purity, nourishment, and prosperity. Offering them together can be a blessing for a fruitful and prosperous married life.

After the wedding ceremonies, the newlyweds need nourishment and energy. Both milk and bananas are rich in nutrients and provide quick energy, making them ideal for this ritual.



Architecture - Built by Beliefs

In this section, we set out to explore the lesser-known dimensions of vernacular architecture, not just as structures of shelter, but as quiet expressions of belief, identity, and tradition. Often overlooked in mainstream discourse, these local building practices reveal how communities embed meaning into materials, spaces, and forms. From sacred orientations to symbolic motifs, we discovered how architecture reflects deeply held values and ways of life shaped by environment, ritual, and collective memory. Through this lens, we invite readers to see architecture not as static design, but as living heritage rooted in the everyday practices of people.

Architects of the Dawn and the Dusk

There's something humbling about standing before a temple, especially one that's centuries old. You can almost feel the whispers of time in its stones, the echo of chants carried by the wind. Temples have always been a solace of solitude where we all connect to the Almighty. They embody a sect's spiritual beliefs and stand as engineering marvels and expressions of art. Keeping temples under the umbrella of ordinary architectural structures would be an injustice to them; they are not just ordinary buildings of worship, but places that have been designed to embrace the expressions of faith, wonder, and human brilliance.

Surya Dev is one of the “*Navagrahas*” (Nine celestial influences). It is a tradition in many homes including mine, to offer water to the sun in the morning; this practice is known as “*Surya Arghya*”. It is believed that offering water to the sun is a sign of showing gratitude for the energy and light he provides us with. *Surya Dev* occupies an eminent position in Hinduism; he is considered the supreme among the *Navagrahas* (9 planets), and according to Hindu scriptures, worshipping him will balance your harmony with the 9 planets. Hence, temples built in his honor reflect a unique reverence.

Sun temples of India are truly marvellous in their architectural styles. The Sun Temple at *Katarmal*, which is one of its kind, has been built at an



Credits- Wikipedia

altitude of approximately 2116 meters in the Almora district of Uttarakhand. You don't just see the temple-you feel it. Surrounded by 44 smaller shrines, it is said that the main temple is dedicated to *Buddhaditya*, the old Sun God. It would be hard to believe that this sun temple is built with the simplest of materials, stone and wood, which are sourced from the nearby forests. Yet the precision in its layout, the orientation towards the morning sun, and the way the light touches the deity as the day begins, feels anything but simple. The architecture prominent in temples of *Uttarakhand* is of one specific architectural style called “*Nagara*”, or the *Garhwali* Style of architecture. Following the former, the temple has *Shikhars*, curvilinear towers, precisely carved stone walls, and symmetrical, elaborate layouts. While standing there, you realize that this isn't just architecture. It was a prayer in stone.

Some striking features of the temple include its well-constructed complex, which is so oriented that the first rays of the morning sun fall directly into the heart of the sanctum. The architecture details indicate the great mutual connection and dependence of nature on divinity.

The architectural wonder is not just limited to the *Katarmal Sun temple*– the Konark Sun temple, located in *Odisha*, is one of the most famous sun temples in India. On my visit to the Sun temple, the shape of a huge chariot with precise details such as carved wheels or Chakras, and horses caught my eye. .

The *Chakra* is a unique kind of clock that tells the time according to how the sun's rays fall on the *Chakra*. As told by



Credits- Tripadvisor- Sun temple of Katarmal

the guide, the specific structure is symbolic of Surya's movement across the infinite sky.

The *Modhera Sun Temple*, located in Gujarat, is another famous sun temple, symmetrically built so that the sun's first rays fall directly on the main shrine, illuminating the shrine, similar to the *Katarmal Temple*. These temples not only act as centres of spirituality but also reflect how ancient India was brilliant in the fields of science and architecture.

And even though the *Martand Sun Temple* in Jammu and Kashmir now stands in ruins, its ambience remains undeniable. You can almost picture what it once was: a place of quiet power and golden light.



Credits- Incredible India-Martand sun temple

In today's world, surrounded by concrete jungles and fast-paced lives, these temples invite us to pause. To look up at the sky with the same awe our ancestors did. And perhaps to find, in a beam of sunlight or a whispering wind, the same sense of connection they once felt. Devotion meets astronomy, architecture shares with mythology; culture intertwines with nature in these temples. Preserving these temples is more than a duty. It's a way of staying connected to the earth beneath our feet, to the stars above our heads, and to the people who built beauty that still speaks across the centuries.



Credits- Gujrat tourism



Credits- Facebook- Sun temple of Gwalior



Aditi Verma
B.A. (H) Sociology
1st Year

Flood Resistance Architecture

When we talk about India in terms of its geography, one of the first pictures which captures our mind is that of the mighty rivers surrounding India. India being the land of rivers like the mighty Brahmaputra, the Ganga and the Godavari, experiences floods during the monsoon season. And this for centuries has continued to affect many indigenous communities residing along the riverbanks. According to the Central Water Commission, nearly 12 percent of India's land area is prone to flooding. However, in recent times with rapid urbanisation, cities have developed proper infrastructure to tackle such situations, but the worst impact are still being faced by the indigenous communities and tribes who have been residing near the riverbanks for generations to meet their livelihood. Places like the Sundarbans in Bengal, North Bihar, Majuli region of Assam continue to thrive in their battle tackling destructive floods for years. These people who have always lived closer to nature, are left to face the rising waters generations after generations, depending on their ancient architectural sagacity for survival.

While exploring the indigenous flood resistant architecture I came across a few communities who have adopted different styles of living sustainably with water.



Credits- Untold mag



Credits - Research Gate

1. The *Ekbari* Houses of the *Majhi* Community

In Bihar, there is an indigenous community called the *Majhi*, who have lived for centuries along Bihar's Ganga floodplains. They are known for their proficiency in boat building and have primarily associated themselves with fishing. These communities constructed flood resilient homes using locally available materials called the “*ekbari hut*”, “*ek*” means one and “*bari*” means home. They built these houses on raised earthen platforms called “*medh*” which are 5 to 6 feet above the ground so that flood water cannot easily enter the house.



Credits- Seeds India

Chang Ghar of Mising

2. *Chang Ghar* of the *Mising* Community

Similarly, the *Mising* tribe of Assam , built *Chang Ghar* on a raised platform which is supported by bamboo stilt or wooden poles which can prevent floodwaters from entering the house. These houses stand 8 feet above the ground. To enter the house there is a wooden ladder called a “*jokhola*”, which has five to eight steps as these numbers are considered auspicious by the tribe. The walls and floor of the *Chang ghar* is built using thin and long bamboo which are easily accessible at any time making the construction of *Chang Ghar* cost effective for them.



Credits- Seeds India

Chang Ghar of Mising



Credits- Avathi Outdoors

3. Puriyadam Houses

Another such architecture from South India is the *Purayidam*, which are houses built on raised mounds on earth in the Kuttanda Region. These houses are created using dredged earth from nearby rivers or canals. The high mounds prevent water from entering the field and this technique also helps them in fishing. The roofs of the house are designed in such a way so that rainwater can run off quickly. The walls are built with clay and plastered with lime. This makes their houses sustainable and cost effective.



Lonee Chetia

B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd Year

Did you know?

Thaipoosam

Kartikeya, the son of Shiva and Parvati, is worshipped at this festival. In the south, he is known as Murugan. It commemorates Kartikeya's acquisition of his celestial spear, which allowed him to decimate Tarakasura's army, the demon king. The celebrations are intense as well, to honour such an incredible feat. Thaipoosam entails a 48-day prolonged fast, following which devotees pierce their bodies with hooks, skewers, and lances. In certain regions of the state, devotees pull heavy objects—even tractors—while wearing hooks on their skin during road processions. Many of them dance in a trance-like manner to the sounds of other devotees' drums and piercings of the tongue and cheek.

Maluti Terracotta Temples: A Forgotten Village of Clay and Faith



Credits- india.com

Hidden deep in Jharkhand's Dumka district, a village named Maluti hides a secret treasure. This treasure will not make you rich though. Because it doesn't contain gold or precious stones. Instead, it's made of clay and faith. Once upon a time, this village was home to 108 terracotta temples, an unbelievable number for just one place. Now, about 72 remain, with their cracked walls and fading beauty.

The story of Maluti is from the 15th century, and it begins with a hawk. A royal hawk that was a pet to Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah of Bengal

(1494-1519), had flown away from his palace. A young brahmin named Basanta Roy stumbled upon it and then returned it to the palace. As a reward, the Sultan gifted him a piece of land free from taxes. Basanta became Raja Baj Basanta (Baj meaning hawk). But instead of building palaces, he and his descendants chose to build temples. Over time, when his lineage split into 4 clans, building temples became a competition amongst them. For generations, the families continued to build temples, trying to outdo each other. And eventually, the village was filled with over a hundred temples.



Credits- thehindu.com

The temples of Maluti are dedicated to many Hindu gods and goddesses. The main temple here is dedicated to *Maa Mauliksha*, who was also the main deity of the royal family of Baj Basanta Ray and Guardian Goddess of Maluti. Mauliksha comes from the words '*mauli*' meaning 'head' and '*iksha*' meaning 'vision.' It is said that this goddess is a form of the Goddess Durga, but interestingly, she does not have any resemblance to Durga and is not found in any Hindu scriptures. Therefore, she continues to remain a mystery.

The temples are made of terracotta, a material that was available in abundance in the area near rivers and distributaries, while stone is mostly absent.

These temples are not grand or massive. They are small but beautifully shaped. Most of them follow the *char-chala* style, where the roof has 4 curved slopes connected at the top. Some temples are built in the *at-chala* style, where an extra tier is added at the top. A few larger ones use the *Panchayatana* pattern, where one main shrine is surrounded by 4 smaller ones at the corners.

The outer walls of the temples are their most amazing feature. They are covered with terracotta carvings, and you can find depictions of *Ramayana* battles, dancing figures, and gods fighting demons. The carvings show the skill of local artists who worked with simple clay.



Credits- thefloatingpebbles.com



Credits- tripadvisor.in

Sadly, time has not been kind to these temples. Rain, plants, and neglect have damaged the whole area, as out of 108, only 72 temples survive. Some have had their carvings worn away, and others' structures are at the risk of collapse.

Today, efforts are being made to protect and restore these temples, but a lot more needs to be done. On top of restoration, a place like this needs visitors, awareness and respect, so that its legacy is not lost to time and ignorance.



Gunika Sharma

B.A. (H) Sociology

2nd Year

Did you know?

Natta Pratha

Under some parts of Rajasthan, a widow or abandoned lady is compelled to marry her late husband's younger brother or another male relative under a custom known as natita prtha. The tradition was historically followed to protect family lineage and property within the same kinship group. It has its roots in patriarchal traditions. Even though the custom is less common now, women in rural and semi-rural areas are nonetheless impacted by it.

Vijayalaya Chozheeswaram Temple



Credits : tntemplesproject.in

Every architectural masterpiece has its own story behind it, stories that resonate with the ruler who ruled that area and the people who lived there. Every other ruler that ruled different parts of this country is deeply influenced by the various symbols, norms and rituals related to the religion that is being followed in their area. In order to connect with people and to showcase their power, they started building temples.

Vijayalaya Chozheeswaram Temple is one of the temples located in Narthamalai town of Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu. *Chozheeswaram* is the name of the *Siva*. The temple complex comprises the main west-facing *Vijayalaya Chozheeswaram*, the east-facing *Pazhiyili Easwaram*, which lies opposite to it, and the *Jurahareshwar temple*, which is located inside the water body of the hillock. This place got its name from the members of the Nagarathar community who inhabited this area.



Credits- tntemplesproject.in

Various stories have been associated with the building of this Temple. *Muttaraiyar* (*Muthurajars*), one of the local dynasties that were feudatories of the *Pallavas*, ruled this place. A *Muttaraiyar* lieutenant named *Sattan Pazhiyili* built this temple and is dated to 862 CE, which is the seventh regnal year of the Pallava king *Nrupatunga Varman*. Another story states that the builder was *Ilango Adi Arayan*, who is also called *Semboodhi*.

The entire temple is made of granite and has gone through several renovations which were mostly done by the *Cholas*. The first two tiers of the three-tiered *vimanam* are square, while the third is circular.

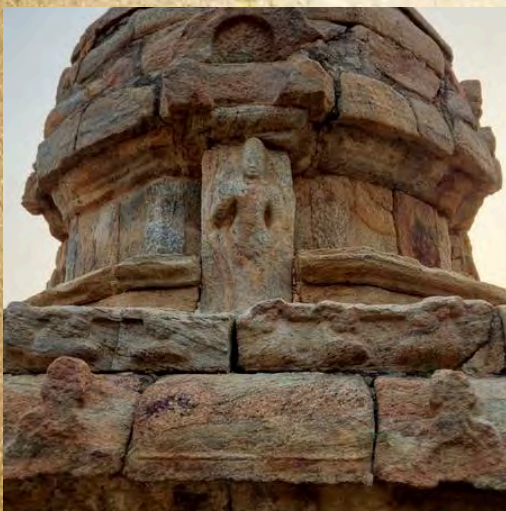
The main temple faces towards the west and has a *Nandi* in front of it and is surrounded by six shrines for *parivara devatas*. Originally there were eight shrines. The eight shrines were *Chandran* (east), *Suryan* (south), *Sapta matrikas* (south), *Vinayakar* (south-west), *Murugan* (west), *Jyeshtha Devi* (north-west), *Chandikeswarar* (north) and *Bhairavar* (north-east). Out of these, the *Sapta Matrikas* are a bit longer due to the requirement to accommodate the seven *matrika vigrahams*.

In recent times, this temple stands not just as an architectural masterpiece but as a rich source of information about the cultural heritage of that time.



Credits- tntemplesproject.in

Every intricate design speaks of the stories of how certain figures have come into the picture. It also speaks of the ideas that were implemented by the people who built these masterpieces. With time, the stories unfold which include different versions of the same architectural masterpiece. People usually have attached their own set of beliefs to these places, and these were followed with so much dedication and enthusiasm for years.



Credits- tntemplesproject.in

Every intricate piece that has been used to build these places is not mere pieces, but they signify something about how people perceive and form their beliefs and how these beliefs have flourished in other places and how they have been integrated into the building of temples. These serve as a reflection of our past and give us an opportunity to walk over the footprints of the people who lived in the past.




Disha

B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd Year



onal
e

ali



Dance and Music सुरों की विरासत

हमारी लोक नृत्य और संगीत की धरोहर हमें हमारी जड़ों से जोड़ती है और हमारी संस्कृति की सुंदरता को दर्शाती है। इस खंड में हम राजस्थान के चोलिया नृत्य और बिहार के लउंडा नृत्य जैसी पारंपरिक शैलियों के साथ-साथ क्षेत्रीय संगीत की विविधता का भी अनुभव करेंगे और उनकी सुंदरता को आपके साथ साझा करेंगे।



Beats From The Unknown

The relationship between people and music dates a long way back, and in ancient times it was considered an integral part of our culture. Chants from the Vedic period to the present day, high-pitched beats, and music have transformed in several ways. Music is a form of language, working as a mode of communication, and musical instruments act as the words of this divine language. If we move forward in discussing music and instruments, we need to broaden our horizons and not just limit ourselves to the soft music of a regular flute or a basic drum and guitar. We are still unaware of many peculiar and unusual instruments in our culture, but have lost their identity in the mainstream society because of the emergence of new instruments and forms of music.

Talking of one such fading and peculiar instrument- A “*Nagfani*” which means a snake hood and is also known as “serpentine horn”. The instrument traditionally belongs to the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand and is also found in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and the tribal parts of central and western India. The instrument’s structure symbolizes a “*Nag*” or snake and is shaped like a serpent’s expanded hood, followed by a long curved body made usually of brass or copper.

Contrary to the sweet melodies of usual known instruments, tune emitted by *Nagfani* is high pitched, raw and is symbolic of authority and power. The distinguishing fact is that *Nagfani* is not an ordinary musical instrument, but it is also closely associated with traditional beliefs and practices.



Credits- Indpaedia

If we trace the origin of this instrument, our scriptures have mentions of *Nagfani* in association with Lord *Shiva* as he is closely linked to serpents. The instrument also finds its roots from certain tribal communities, traditional practices. *Nagfani* is an integral part of the *Saperas* community, a community of snake charmers. Snake charming as a practice was prevalent before the passage of Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. With the slow decline of this practice *Nagfani* also lost its cultural heritage.



Credits- Pinterest

Even though the instrument is losing its identity but is still prominent in parts of Rajasthan among the Bhopa and Kalbeliya communities. For tribes of central India, *Nagfani* serves as a “Ritual horn”, and the sound of it is used to add more dramatic effect to traditional practices and performances. Not to forget that this instrument is also of value to some lower castes, specifically some Dalit and backward caste musicians like Manganiyar and Langa.

significant changes, modifications and what not, some that vanished all together and some that emerged altogether. Even after rapid evolution of Music and instruments, they will continue to serve their purpose of uniting emotions within the human culture.



Credits- wikipedia commons



Aditi Verma
B.A. (H) Sociology
1st Year

Chholiya Dance

A folk dance with a rhythm of belief and protection



Credits- Wikipedia

Every region has its own importance in terms of culture and traditions and these traditions speak about the rich cultural history they hold. A story that has imprints of how people have celebrated their moments, and what kept them in relation to each other. Every kind of dance form of folk art I have ever seen makes me wonder what kept this going for so many years, and the answer to this has always left me in awe. I feel it's the people who have carried them through several years. They are the sole bearers of every tradition a region holds.

Chholiya Dance is a folk dance which originated in the Kumaon division of Uttarakhand and Sudurpashchim province of Nepal. Uttarakhand is a region filled with stories of valor and courage and is divided into two parts – Kumaon and Garhwal divisions.

Both of these regions have their own culture and traditions which sometimes overlap with each other. *Chholiya* Dance has its origin in the warring *Kshatriyas* of Kumaon– the *Khasas* and *Katyuris*, where marriage ceremonies were performed at the point of the swords. The word *Chholiya* gets its name from the word '*Chhal*'. It is popular in the districts of Pithoragarh, Champawat, Bageshwar and Almora of Kumaon division and in Doti, Baitadi and Dharchula districts of Nepal.

The dancers of *Chholiya* Dance majorly come from Champawat and Almora. They are a team of twenty-two people, eight of whom are dancers and fourteen are musicians. They perform it with a sword and shield in pairs.



Credits- Gosahin

The drummers are usually *Harijans* called *Dholies*, while the Turi and Ransing are played by *Bairagis*, *Jogis* or *Gosains*. The *Turi*, *Nagphani* and *Ransing* are typical *Kumaon* instruments. The dress they wear consists of a *Churidar pajama*, one cross belt, one long *Chola*, one belt to be worn round the waist, pattis on the legs and a turban. They decorate their faces with sandalwood paste, *chandan* and vermillion, which is red. Furthermore, they also wear earrings, a bronze shield and a real sword to complete their costume.



Credits- Tripadvisor

During the performance, the atmosphere is beautifully set with huge red flags, containing various symbols of animals which convey a sense of fear, joy, awe and wonder. Through the eyes, eyebrows and shoulders, an impression of attack was created. They dress themselves in the material costumes of ancient war kings.

The shields and the flashing swords along with the music that plays in the background portray a war-like atmosphere.

Over the years, this dance form has been performed during marriage ceremonies in order to protect the newly married from evil spirits and demons, since it is believed that during a marriage procession, demons follow them and try to bewitch the newly married. Every region has its own significance and stories of beliefs that were performed in the form of folk dances, and these have been tied to occasions and will forever continue to speak of the stories that have shaped the faith of people living in these regions.



Credits- Dreamstime.com



Disha
B.A. (H) Sociology
2nd Year

Ravanhatta

The first time I heard about *Ravanhatta*, it was not in a museum or a concert, but in the middle of a street in Jaisalmer. A street musician was sitting cross-legged on a ragged mat, playing an instrument that looked like it belonged in a museum. Its sound was scratchy, but at the same time it felt soulful and ancient. There was something in it that felt older than the road beneath my feet. That was my first encounter with the *Ravanhatta*.

The *Ravanhatta* is a stringed instrument believed to be one of the oldest in India. At first glance, it doesn't look like much. There is a hollow sound box usually made from dried coconut shells. A neck made of bamboo or wood rises from it, and the strings are made from steel or horsehair. But the stories of its origin are no less magnificent than the sound produced from it. Its name itself is wrapped in legend. *Ravanhatta* literally means 'the hand of the demon king Ravana' and is a shorter version of '*Ravana Hasta Veena*.'

As the stories go, Ravana was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He showed his devotion through music, and would play the *veena* to please him. During one of the performances, the instrument began to fall apart. But the music, being a display of his worship, could not be stopped. So, Ravana detached one of his many heads to replace the body, turned

his hands into the soundboard, and used his veins to replace the strings. Such is the story of how the instrument came to life. And after the war in *Ramayana* between Rama and Ravana, it is believed that Hanuman brought the instrument to North India, where it found a home in parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat.



Credits- udaipurdarpan.com

For centuries, the *Ravanhatta* has been played by the Bhopa and Thori communities. They double up as wandering musicians and storytellers, but they don't follow a fixed tune. They narrate stories to the beats of the music.



Credits- lifeisavacation.wordpress.com

What fascinates me the most about this instrument is how unique and personal each *Ravanhatta* is? No two instruments are exactly alike. Some have just one melody string, others more, and each is adorned with accessories such as beads, colourful tassels or little *ghungroos*, all of which add to the charm of the storyteller. The materials used in the making of this instrument like bamboo, coconut shell, horsehair, are all simple,



Credits- dnaindia.com

humble things. And yet, they come together to create such a fascinating instrument. As I stood listening to the old man in Jaisalmer, I didn't understand every note, but I felt like I had just stumbled upon a voice from the past. The sound stayed with me. And even though I might not be able to come up with any fancy adjectives to describe it, I know that I have never heard something so special.



Gunika Sharma

B.A. (H) Sociology

2nd Year

Did you know?

Nuakhai is a harvest festival of Western Odisha where the first rice of the season is offered to the household deity before being eaten. Its date is uniquely determined by the ripening of crops, not fixed by traditional calendars.

लौंडा डांस

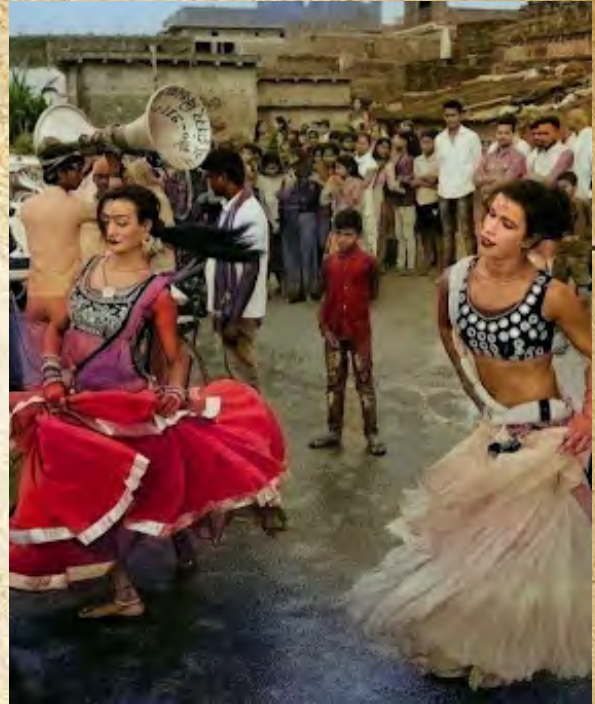
जब भी हम कभी नृत्य कला की बात करते हैं तो हमारे ज़हन में हमेशा एक नर्तकी के रूप में एक महिला की तस्वीर ही उभर कर आती है और ऐसा भी नहीं है कि हमारे देश में या दुनिया में पुरुषों ने इस कला में योगदान नहीं दिया है पर अक्सर उनके प्रयासों को नजरअंदाज कर दिया जाता है। ऐसा इसलिए होता है क्योंकि समाज में नृत्य और संगीत कला को हमेशा से ही महिलाओं की रुचि की वस्तु समझा जाता है और अक्सर इस कला को कम मर्दाना कहा जाता है।

पर यह लेख इस विषय पर चर्चा करने के लिए नहीं है अपितु यह लेख लिखने का कारण यह है कि आप सभी को बताया जा सके कि हमारे देश में कई इलाकों में पुरुष बढ़ चढ़ कर लोक-नृत्य में हिस्सा लेते हैं और सिर्फ हिस्सा ही नहीं लेते हैं बल्कि कमाल के नर्तक बनते हैं।



Credits- Village square

पूर्वी उत्तर प्रदेश और बिहार राज्य के कई इलाकों में पुरुष ही लोक मनोरंजन के लिए नृत्य करते हैं और यह कोई आधुनिकीकरण का परिणाम नहीं है बल्कि यह दो सदियों से भी ज्यादा पुरानी परंपरा है, इस लोक नृत्य को लौंडा नृत्य कहते हैं और यह बिहार राज्य की एक अनमोल धरोहर है।



Credits- thediplomat.com

‘लौंडा नृत्य’, जैसा कि नाम से ही स्पष्ट है, में पुरुष ही भाग लेते हैं और मजे की बात ये है कि पुरुष इन नृत्य प्रदर्शनों में जरूरत पड़ने पर महिलाओं के भेष भी खुद ही धारण करते हैं। यह लोक नृत्य अक्सर शादी-विवाह जैसे समारोह में देखा जा सकता है।

इस नृत्य कला की शुरुआत उन्नीसवीं सदी में भिखारी ठाकुर देव द्वारा की गई थी, वह महाराजाओं के दरबार में नृत्य किया करते थे। ऐसा कहा जाता है कि उस समय दरबारों में नृत्य करने की इजाजत औरतों को नहीं दी जाती थी इसलिए नर्तकों की कमी होने के कारण भिखारी ठाकुर देव जी और उनके नर्तक मित्रों को ही जरूरत पड़ने पर महिलाओं के भेष भूषण धारण करके दरबार का मनोरंजन करने के लिए नृत्य करना पड़ता था।

पर यह मजबूरी में किया हुआ नृत्य होते हुए भी वक्त के साथ इतना प्रख्यात और प्रचलित हो गया कि इस कला ने दरबार से निकलकर नागरिकों के बीच में भी अपनी पकड़ बना ली और यही कारण है कि आज दो सदी बाद भी यह नृत्य काफी प्रचलित है और इसके बिना बिहार के गाँव में शादी हो जाए ऐसा कोई सोच भी नहीं सकता।

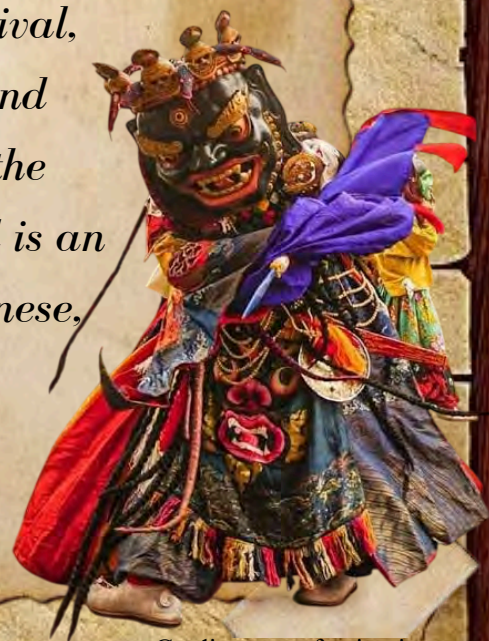
अब भले इस लोक नृत्य को उतनी इज्जत और सत्कार नहीं मिलता जितने का यह हकदार है क्योंकि यह अपने साथ दो सौ वर्ष से ज्यादा का इतिहास समेटे चल रहा है। अब यह धरोहर बस उच्च जातियों के लिए मनोरंजन का विषय और छोटी जातियों के लिए एक मजबूरी, फर्ज या रोजी-रोटी का जरिया बन कर रह गया है।



हिमाद्री प्रसाद
बीए समाजशास्त्र ऑनर्स
तृतीय वर्ष

Did you know?

Losar is the Tibetan New Year festival, celebrated with prayers, feasts, and cultural performances. It marks the beginning of the lunar calendar and is an important event for Tibetan, Bhutanese, and Nepalese communities.



Credits- www.femina.in





Popcorn and Pages

A space for what resonates—what lingers, provokes, or simply stays.

Editor's Choice, as the name suggests, features a piece—poem, prose, book, film, or excerpt—personally chosen and explained by the editor.

We Recommend offers a curated list of books and movies handpicked by the editorial board, alongside one detailed book and film review.

In tune with this year's theme, Vernacular India, our selections uncover the beauty of the ordinary.

They echo regional voices, rooted traditions, and lived beliefs beyond the mainstream.

A celebration of stories that speak not in one language—but in many.

Editor's choice

अपनी मर्जी से कहाँ अपने सफ़र के हम हैं
रुख हवाओं का जिधर का है उधर के हम हैं
पहले हर चीज़ थी अपनी मगर अब लगता है
अपने ही घर में किसी दूसरे घर के हम हैं
वक़्त के साथ है मिट्टी का सफ़र सदियों से
किस को मालूम कहाँ के हैं किधर के हम हैं
चलते रहते हैं कि चलना है मुसाफ़िर का नसीब

सोचते रहते हैं किस राहगुज़र के हम हैं
हम वहाँ हैं जहाँ कुछ भी नहीं रस्ता न दयार
अपने ही खोए हुए शाम ओ सहर के हम हैं
गिनतियों में ही गिने जाते हैं हर दौर में हम
हर क़लमकार की बे-नाम ख़बर के हम हैं

-निदा फ़ाज़ली

...I have chosen this poem because it beautifully expresses the pain and silence that is the main concern of our magazine. This is not just an emotional experience, but a political and social statement, a voice raised for people remain unacknowledged therefore unheard.

“Where are we the travellers of our own will?”, this first line expresses all those unnoticed lives that are being written off by power and time. Just like the vernacular beliefs, practices, and languages that are often side-lined and unrecognized and remain in the shadows of the ‘mainstream.’

“In our own home, we belong to another house”—this estrangement is not just a personal feeling. It is the truth of all those who, even while living in their own village, speaking their own language, or following their traditions, feel alienated.

Every line of this poem is an example of some marginalised culture, language, or identity. These are the people who are counted in the census, but not understood—“we are the nameless news in every writer’s account.”

That is also the purpose of our magazine: to give voice those silent stories that are often left behind on the margins of history. That is why I want you to not just read this poem—but feel it.

It is a symbolic text of that one language that is perhaps getting lost in the mainstream narrative of India, which should be understood.



Hadia Arif

गोदान

Book Review

गोदान मुंशी प्रेमचंद की एक अद्भुत रचना है, जो ग्रामीण भारत की सच्चाई को बयां करती है। यह एक किसान की कहानी नहीं है, बल्कि एक पूरे समाज की कहानी है, जिसमें परंपराएं, मान्यताएं और रीति-रिवाज शामिल हैं।

होरी महतो एक गरीब किसान है, जिसकी सबसे बड़ी इच्छा है एक गाय का मालिक बनना और मृत्यु से पहले गोदान करना। वह सोचता है, "हर एक गृहस्थ की भाँति होरी के मन में भी गऊ की लालसा चिरकाल से संचित चली आती थी। यही उसके जीवन का सबसे बड़ा स्वप्न, सबसे बड़ी साध थी।" लेकिन उसके रास्ते में कई बाधाएं आती हैं, जैसे कि सामाजिक परंपराएं, जातिगत पाबंदियाँ और आर्थिक शोषण।

होरी एक परंपराओं का पालन करने वाला किसान है, लेकिन सामाजिक परंपराएं, जातिगत पाबंदियाँ और आर्थिक शोषण उसकी राह में बाधा बनते हैं। उदाहरणस्वरूप, होरी की हमेशा से जो गाय पालने की इच्छा थी, जिससे मृत्यु के पश्चात वह गोदान कर सके, वो भी एक जातिगत परंपरा पर ही आधारित थी। जबकि उसकी पत्नी धनिया एक मजबूत स्त्री है जो सामाजिक पाखंडों को चुनौती देती है। जब ब्राह्मण दातादीन गोदान की मांग करता है, तो वह स्पष्ट रूप से कहती है, "महाराज, घर में न गाय है, न बछिया, न पैसा। यही पैसे हैं, यही इनका गोदान है।"

इस उपन्यास में ग्रामीण भारत की कई परंपराएं और रीति-रिवाज दिखाई देते हैं, जैसे कि पंच पर बैठकर न्याय करना, मृत्यु पूर्व गोदान की प्रथा, जाति अनुसार व्यवहार, स्त्री की शुद्धता को लेकर समाज की कठोर दृष्टि, और आर्थिक शोषण को धर्म का आवरण देना। प्रेमचंद इन परंपराओं की निंदा नहीं करते, बल्कि उन्हें यथार्थ रूप में प्रस्तुत करते हैं उदाहरणस्वरूप, उपन्यास में जातिगत पाबंदियों

का स्पष्ट चित्रण है। सिलिया, एक दलित युवती, ब्राह्मण मातादीन के प्रेम में पड़ती है, लेकिन समाज उसे दोहरे शोषण का शिकार बनाता है। दातादीन इस संबंध को शास्त्रसम्मत बताकर अपने बेटे के कृत्य को उचित ठहराता है।

प्रेमचंद की भाषा ग्रामीण, सहज और आमजन की बोलचाल की है। उदाहरणस्वरूप, होरी की स्थिति का वर्णन करते हुए प्रेमचंद लिखते हैं, "उसी की चिंता तो मारे डालती है, दादा। अनाज तो सब-का-सब खलिहान में ही तुल गया। जमींदार ने अपना लिया, महाजन ने अपना लिया। मेरे लिए पाँच सेर अनाज बच रहा।" उन्होंने स्थानीय मुहावरों, कहावतों और भावनाओं के माध्यम से एक जीवंत ग्रामीण संसार रच दिया है। उनकी भाषा में एक विशेष आकर्षण है, जो पाठकों को ग्रामीण जीवन के साथ जोड़ता है।

इस उपन्यास में प्रेमचंद ने ग्रामीण जीवन की कई समस्याओं को उजागर किया है, जैसे कि गरीबी, अशिक्षा, और सामाजिक अन्याय। लेकिन साथ ही साथ उन्होंने ग्रामीण जीवन की सुंदरता और आकर्षण को भी दिखाया है। प्रेमचंद की दृष्टि में ग्रामीण जीवन एक जटिल और विविध संसार है, जिसमें कई समस्याएं और चुनौतियाँ हैं, लेकिन साथ ही साथ कई अवसर और संभावनाएं भी हैं।

गोदान एक महान उपन्यास है जो ग्रामीण भारत की आस्था, संघर्ष, रीति-नीति और आत्मा को पाठक के सामने रखता है। यह उपन्यास आज भी उतना ही प्रासंगिक है, जहाँ हम आज भी धर्म, जाति और परंपरा के नाम पर कई अन्याय होते देखते हैं। यह उपन्यास हमें सवाल करने, सोचने और संवेदनशील बनने की प्रेरणा देता है।

हिमाद्री प्रसाद

बीए समाजशास्त्र ऑनर्स
तृतीय वर्ष



Movie Review

Kothanodi

“Kothanodi ” is a collection of four Assamese folk tales, intricately woven together by Bhaskar Hazarika, an Assamese movie director. Typically, folk tales are devoid of origin, so we can never trace them back to where they began. They are often associated with regions and communities and passed on as an oral tradition from one generation to another. The movie offers four captivating stories adapted from “*Burhi Aai'r Xaddu*”(Grandma Tales). An iconic collection of folk tales from tribes and communities of Assam, by a renowned Assamese author, Laxminath Bezbaroa.



credit -Film companion

The title “ *Kothanodi* (River of fables or stories)” draws an analogy between the course of a river and the stories of the movie. I believe the title is apt as the movie binds each tale together, each having its flow, and by the end, they all connect, depicting the river's flow. Seeing the vile and dark side of human facets, a blend of superstitions and societal norms was a little unsettling for me. The movie revolves around the same village,



Credit-Wikipedia

portraying mothers dealing with their own set of challenges.

It was disheartening to watch the tale of Tejimola and vindictive Senehi. The story featured an innocent teenage girl who lived with her father, Devinath, and her stepmother, Senehi. It was harsh to see Senehi torture and cause physical harm to Tejimola while she performed daily household chores. Her severe cruelty and daily abuse reminded me of how often women's aggression is a result of a cycle of competition and internalized patriarchy. In my opinion, the ultimate demise of Tejimola and her mysterious transformation into a blooming flower was a recognition given to her by nature itself for her purity and innocence.

The tale of Keteki and Outenga (elephant apple) deranged me to certain levels. The protagonist of this story is a weaver by profession, a quiet and



Credit- The Hindu

troubled woman, whose husband left her as she gave birth to an unusual child - an Outenga (elephant apple) in place of a human baby. The image of Keteki carrying her uncommon child and the outenga following her everywhere stayed with me. This story reflects how society ostracizes people if anything unusual is associated with them.

A mother forcing her child to marry a python was something I was unprepared for. The story of Dhoneshwari and the python groom is centered around a mother and her superstitious beliefs. Dhoneshwari, the wife of a wealthy merchant, believes that marrying her daughter to a python will bring her wealth and good fortune. People working under the influence of greed and blind faith was not new for me, but seeing the death of compassion for her own daughter was a real punch in my gut.

The story of Malati's infanticide was petrifying to watch. The tale introduces us to a man burying newborns, and it is evident that he was carrying out a specific type of ritual. It was hard to digest that people still supported the idea

of sacrificial rituals. The most appalling highlight of this tale was the courage and strength of Malati, who stood against the cruel traditions.

By the end of the movie, the director intricately weaves each of the four stories, and they flow together just as the title describes.. Through *Kothanodi*, what we actually see is how each tale reflects the social injustices faced by women in rural societies, underscoring how cultural practices unleash gender-based violence and social exclusion. Women in the movie are both the sufferers and the enablers of the injustices. They have internalized the societal norms and moulded their values and beliefs accordingly. "*Kothanodi*" makes me question myself: the more we participate in culture, the more it perpetuates harm to society. Watching the movie was a whole new testament to powerful sociological commentary, and it was intriguing to know how traditions and customs hold significant value in developing human values, revealing the hidden violence embedded in folklore and culture.



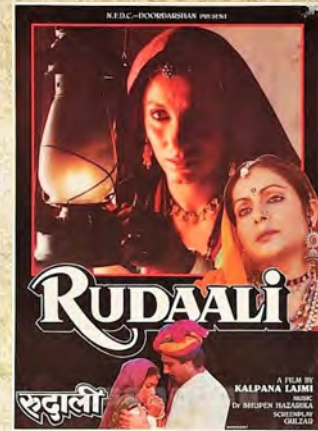
Aditi Verma

B.A. (H) Sociology
1st Year

We recommend...

Movies

Rudaali (1993, Hindi) – Dir. Kalpana Lajmi follows Shanichari, a lower-caste woman whose life of silent suffering contrasts with the tradition of hired mourners in Rajasthan. Adapted from Mahasweta Devi's story, the film explores caste, gender, and the societal suppression of grief.

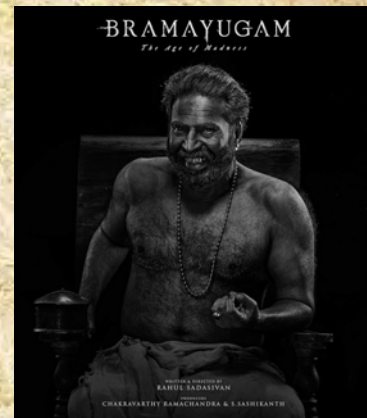


Kantara (2022, Kannada) – Dir. Rishab Shetty

Kantara is a gripping blend of folklore and modern conflict rooted in the Bhoota Kola tradition of coastal Karnataka. The film powerfully explores themes of land rights, spiritual heritage, and environmental preservation. With intense performances and striking visuals, it bridges myth and reality in a uniquely immersive way.

Bramayugam (2024, Malayalam) – Dir. Rahul Sadasivan

Set in 17th-century Kerala, this black-and-white Malayalam folk horror thriller follows Thevan, a singer who uncovers dark secrets of black magic and the spirit Chaathan in a mysterious mansion. Starring Mammooty, it explores caste, power, and the supernatural through eerie folklore.



Tumbbad (2018, Marathi/Hindi) – Dir. Rahi Anil Barve, Anand Gandhi

This horror-fantasy film draws from Maharashtrian folklore to unravel a chilling tale of a family's cursed legacy and hidden treasure. Blending myth, horror, and moral allegory, it delves deep into the consequences of greed. Its haunting visuals and layered storytelling offer a uniquely Indian gothic experience.