



THE NORTHEAST SOCIETY  
MIRANDA HOUSE



# LEI APOMBA

BEYOND THE EXOTIC



THE ANNUAL JOURNAL

*Photographed by: Kshetrimayum Jobalaxmi Devi  
B.A. Multidisciplinary, II Year*

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# Principal's Desk



**Dr. Bijayalaxmi Nanda**  
Principal, Miranda House

As we eagerly anticipate the forthcoming edition of our cherished magazine, "Lei Apomba", I extend warm greetings to each and every one of you.

Our society thrives on the rich tapestry of culture, knowledge, and collective wisdom that each member brings to the table. "Lei Apomba" serves as a testament to our shared values and commitment to fostering a community that celebrates diversity and unity.

In the upcoming edition, our contributors have explored the diverse facets of our Northeastern heritage. Let us delve into the stories that define us, the traditions that bind us, and the innovations that propel us forward. This magazine is a canvas for our collective expression, a platform where we showcase the myriad talents, achievements, and aspirations that make our society truly exceptional.

I am confident that the pages of "Lei Apomba" will come alive with the vibrancy of the Miranda House community's spirit. From academic achievements to artistic endeavors, from cultural celebrations to social initiatives, a vivid picture of the Northeast Society's dynamic tapestry is painted.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the editorial team and all those who contribute their time and efforts to make this publication a reality. Your dedication ensures that "Lei Apomba" remains a beacon of inspiration and a source of pride for our entire community.

Dr. Bijayalaxmi Nanda  
Principal  
Miranda House  
University of Delhi



**Photographed By: Didikshya Kakoty**  
**B.A. (H) Geography, II Year**

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# Convenor's Desk



**Dr. Bashabi Gupta**  
Convenor, NESoc MH

I am pleased to welcome you again to "Lei Apomba - Beyond the Exotic", the Annual Journal of North East Society Miranda House. This is the fifth edition of the journal.

North East Society is open to all students at all levels of disciplines. Each section has a specific thematic focus, particularly on various topics in the North Eastern Region. It is a fascinating and thought-provoking read that offers a wide range of possibilities for exploring various aspects of the North Eastern Region.

The magazine encompasses a vast array of topics, ranging from the diversity of cultures, languages, and traditions to the socio-economic and political landscape of the region. The contributions of the students and faculty of Miranda House on this magazine will undoubtedly provide us with a nuanced understanding of the North Eastern Region's complexities and challenges.

I would like to thank all those who have been engaged in creating this journal and the students and faculties involved in writing, editing, designing and presenting this e-journal. The photographs published in this journal are also by the students and faculty of Miranda House.

My gratitude to the student council, who have worked tirelessly to give shape to this journal.

My sincere gratitude to Prof. (Dr.) Bijayalaxmi Nanda, our Principal, whose constant support and encouragement have made this endeavour possible.

I invite you all to read this year's editing, "Lei Apomba - Beyond the Exotic," 2023-24, and I very much hope you enjoy this year's collection.

*Bashabi Gupta*

Dr. Bashabi Gupta  
Convenor, North East Society  
Miranda House  
University of Delhi  
Delhi- 110007  
India



**Lenthobi Thokchom**

President, NESoc MH,  
2023-24

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# President's Note

*“In the halls of academia, unity in diversity creates a symphony of ideas that resonates with the spirit of our college.”*

The Northeast Society, Miranda House, is an inclusive community and extends its membership to all the students of Miranda House without limiting it to only its northeastern students. The society aims to explore, educate and aware ourselves of the unexplored diversities of North East India; and endeavours to delve into the varied aspects and challenges present in the region. Indeed, the Society serves as our joyful haven, a home away from home.

As I embarked on this journey, starting as a member-cum-volunteer in my first year, progressing to the PR Head in my second year, and eventually serving as the President in my third year, I observed society's continuous growth. In these past three years, I've worked together with different sets of enthusiastic fellow students every academic session, who equally yearn to contribute to the steadiness of the Society. This has been a testament to our shared passion for the welfare of our society. From captivating workshops to insightful speaker sessions to inter and intra-college competitions, your enthusiasm has been the driving force behind the society's success.

It is yet another significant achievement that we could publish the fifth edition of our annual journal “Lei Apomba”. As I pen down this note, I'm filled with immense gratitude to the editorial heads, the creative head, the student volunteers, the council members of the NESoc, our convenor ma'am and our Principal ma'am for bringing out this beautiful dream into reality. I trust that readers will relish each page of this magazine, crafted with a blend of love and passion. Here's to a future filled with endless possibilities and hope!

Lenthobi Thokchom  
B.Sc. (H) Botany, III Year  
President  
Northeast Society, Miranda House (2023-2024)

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# Editorial Desk



***Lalrinzuali &  
Didikshya Kakoty***  
Editorial Heads,  
NESoc MH, 2023-24

Everyone searches for their safe space as they navigate through new environment and adjust to college life, and that's what the Northeast Society has been for us- A Home Away from Home. Our journey with the Society has been nothing short of extraordinary, an experience we wouldn't trade for anything else. Being surrounded by young, smart and enthusiastic ladies dedicated to representing their roots and culture has been an impeccable experience and we've felt empowered and uplifted every step of the way.

We feel privileged to have been part of the Fifth edition of Lei Apomba. Consider this magazine as our best attempt in striving to represent our roots and culture in the otherwise ever-changing world of globalization, in general, and the dominant culture of the country, in particular. As you immerse yourself in the pages of this publication, we hope to ignite within you a sense of intrigue and curiosity about the region that extends beyond mere surface impressions.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Council, our team members, especially those who have been continuously involved in the creative design of the magazine, and all the members who have graciously submitted their remarkable entries.

Furthermore, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Principal, Dr. Bijayalaxmi Nanda, and the Society Convenor, Dr. Bashabi Gupta, for their unwavering support, advice and guidance throughout this endeavour.

And finally, to our readers, indulge yourselves as you see fit.

Sincerely,

Lalrinzuali

B.A. (H) Sociology, III Year &

Didikshya Kakoty

B.A. (H) Geography, II Year

Editorial Heads

Northeast Society, Miranda House (2023-2024)

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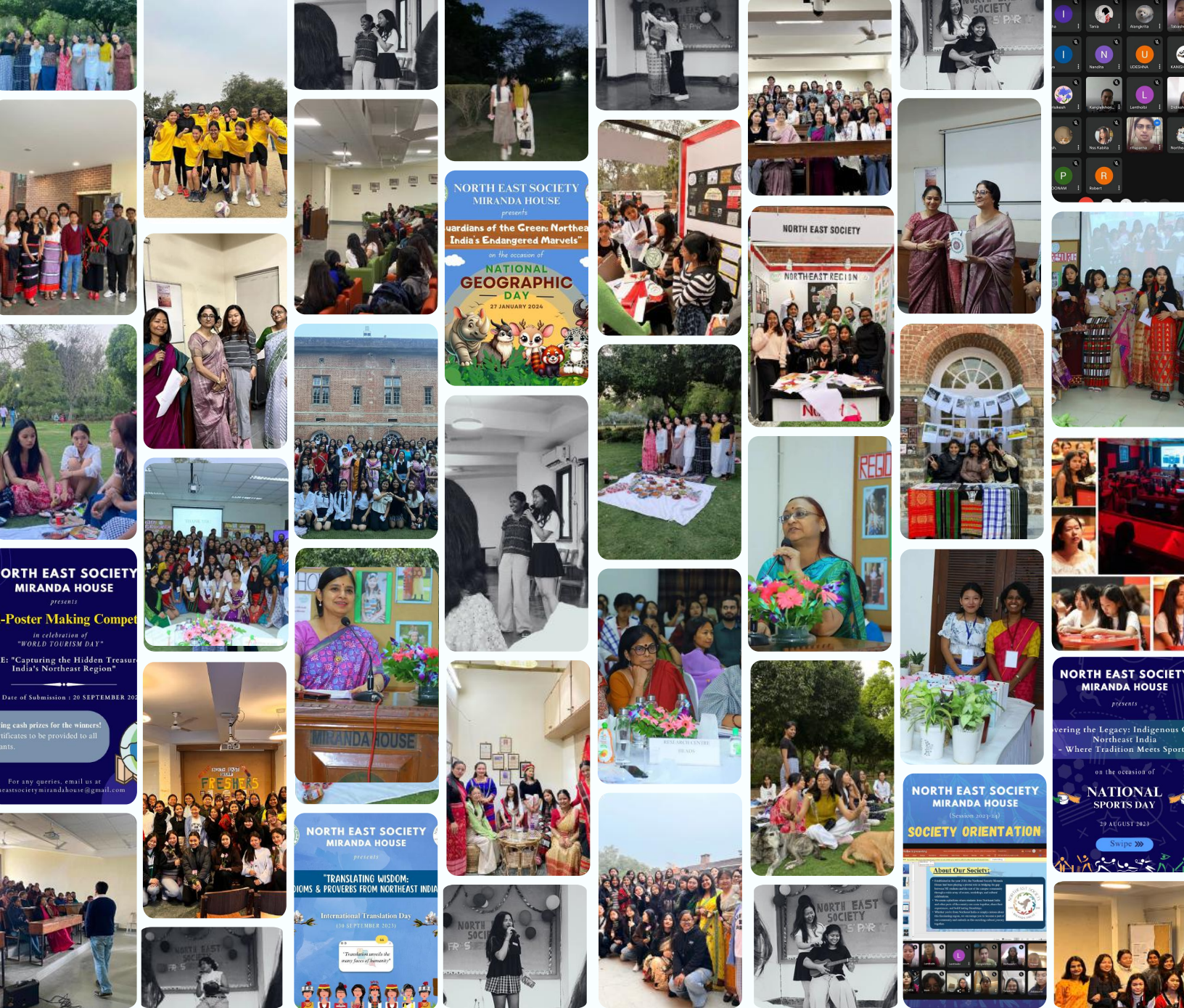
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# YEARLY REPORT

A Year in a Glimpse

# Session 2023-24 in Review

## Farewell

As a gesture of bidding farewell to our beloved seniors, a gathering was organised on 22nd April 2023. It was a warm evening filled with games, music, and goodbye gifts as we bid farewell to the senior batch.



## Indigenous Games of Northeast India

On the occasion of National Sports Day, The series attempts to showcase the incredible power of sports in shaping individuals, communities, and nations and elucidate how indigenous sports, which have been handed down over generations, play a pivotal role in fostering community ties.



## Orientation

The Northeast society conducted an online Orientation session to welcome the Freshers to the society and familiarise them with the functioning of the society and acquaint them with the various core teams of the society.

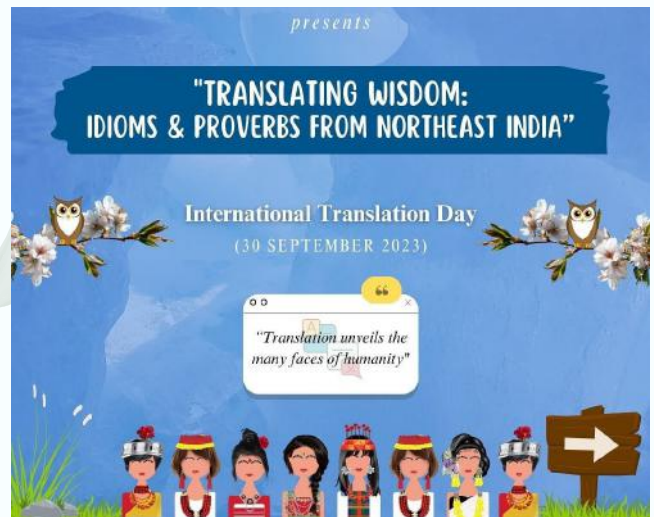
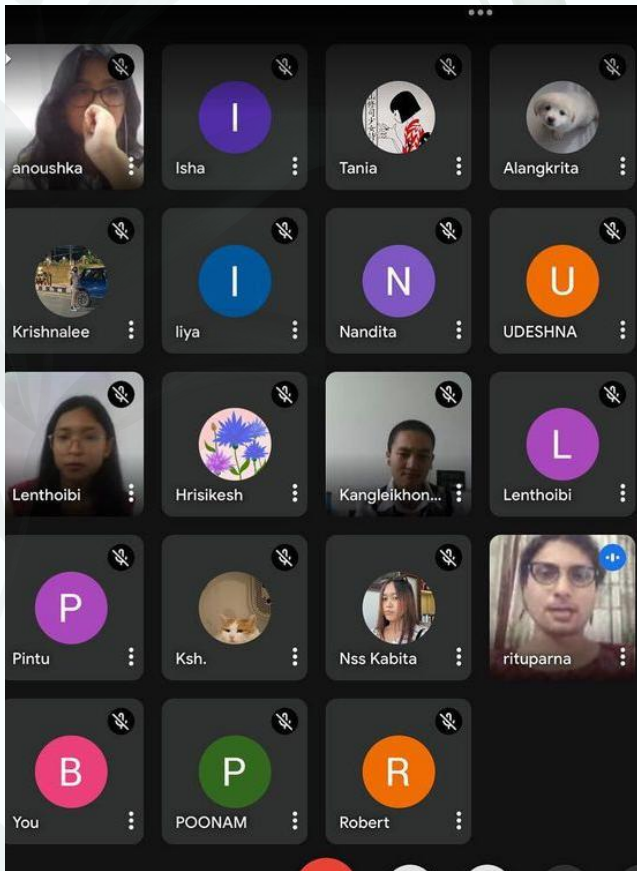


## Freshers'

The Freshers' event for the academic year 2023-2024 at Miranda House was organised to warmly welcome the new students into both the college and the Northeast Society. It was a day filled with unforgettable moments marking the beginning of an exciting journey for all.

### Idioms and Proverbs Translation Series

On the occasion of International Translation Day, the Northeast Society curated a series of translations of various idioms and proverbs as a tribute to the magic of words, cultural exchange, and the artistry of translators worldwide.



### Panel Discussion - LGBTQIA+ Acceptance and Position in Northeast India

On the occasion of Pride Month, a Panel Discussion was conducted on 25th June 2023 on the topic 'LGBTQIA+ Acceptance and Position in Northeast India'. The Guest Speakers were Rituparna Neog from Assam, Founder of 'The Akham Foundation', a queer feminist and library educator, and Robert Naorem from Manipur, a fashion entrepreneur, designer, and makeup artist. The discussion was conducted through the online platform, Zoom, and saw a turnout of more than 30 participants.

### Ad- Poster Making Competition

On the occasion of World Tourism Day, an Ad-Poster Making Competition was conducted on 2nd September 2023 on the theme 'Capturing the Hidden Treasures of India's Northeast Region'. The competition was met with an enthusiastic response with over 50 entries from individuals belonging to different Delhi University colleges.



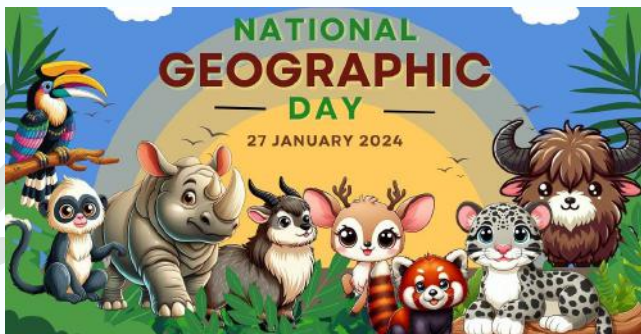


### Workshop on “Basics of Portrait Photography”

The North East Society, Miranda House in collaboration with Delhi College of Photography and Canon India conducted a one-day workshop on the topic, “Basics of Portrait Photography” on the 26th of August 2023 at the auditorium of Delhi College of Photography. The workshop was attended by a total of 35 students from Miranda House College. The workshop was led by Mr. Abhimanyu Pandey, faculty at the Delhi College of Photography. The main focus of the workshop was to acquaint the students with the basics regarding the use and handling of cameras as well as to familiarise them with the basic techniques of portrait photography.

### Speaker Session

The North East Society Miranda House organised a talk as part of celebrating Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas on 30th November 2023 by inviting Dr. Achingliu Kamei, a widely anthologised poet, is a short story writer and ultra-runner and teaches Literature at the University of Delhi. She spoke on the riches of tradition- of orality and the importance of epistemology. She delved into mainland and northeastern India's cultural and educational differences. From a captivating folktale narration to a thought-provoking lecture and insightful discussions as well as a Q&A round, it was a session that was intellectually stimulating, enriching, and educational.



### National Geographic Day

On the occasion of National Geographic Day, the society posted an instagram series on the endangered animal species found in the states of Northeast India on 27 January 2024. In addition to highlighting the exquisite species, it also touched upon the need to conserve them.



# IN HER OWN WORDS

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Interviews with Empowering Female  
Entrepreneurs of Northeast

# Crafting Tradition: A Discussion with Jonali Khargaria

*Interview of Jonali Khargaria hailing from Assam, the owner of Kaxhori, a business venture led by a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law duo. Their enterprise specializes in presenting elegant and enduring designs through a range of silk Mekhela Chador, catering to women who have a fondness for and value handwoven ethnic attire.*

**Can you share the story behind the inception of Kaxhori and how your journey influenced its establishment?**

**A Legacy of Craftsmanship:** Since 1997, my incredible mother-in-law, alongside talented silk weavers, has been crafting magic in the form of Mekhela Chador. The intricate designs tell stories of tradition, weaving together the rich cultural tapestry of Assam.

**From Assam to the World:** Having experienced the allure of Mekhela Chador during my Delhi University days, I knew the world needed to witness these exquisite handwoven creations. From freshers' day to office festivities, the attire stood out, sparking curiosity and admiration.

**A Pandemic Spark:** The challenging times of COVID shook our worlds, and I saw an opportunity to not just sustain but also uplift the artisans and their craft.



Thus, Kaxhori was born – a bridge connecting the heritage of handweaving with the world, preserving and protecting a unique art form. Mekhela Chador Unveiled: Mekhela Chador is more than just attire; it's a piece of Assam's soul. Yet, it hasn't found its national spotlight. With Kaxhori, we aim to change that narrative, offering you a chance to embrace the elegance and authenticity of this ethnic women's outfit.

**Quality & Exclusivity:** Our belief in the quality and exclusivity of our products is unwavering. Kaxhori promises to excite not only those from Assam residing outside but also saree lovers who appreciate the beauty of handwoven treasures.

At Kaxhori, where tradition meets modernity, each piece tells a story of craftsmanship, resilience, and the vibrant spirit of Assam. We believe in spreading the love for handloom and sharing the tradition!



***In a rapidly changing market, how does Kaxhori balance traditional craftsmanship with modern trends to stay relevant and appealing to a wide audience?***

The enchanting world behind Kaxhori and our commitment to preserving the magical art of handweaving.

**Weaving Dreams into Reality:** Our traditional silk weavers are the true magicians, turning our design visions into breathtaking realities. The entire process is a heartwarming journey where threads become tales, and each creation is a masterpiece. **Timeless & Unique Designs:** At Kaxhori, we believe in offering designs that stand the test of time. Each piece is a testament to the rich traditions of handweaving, making it not just an outfit but a piece of art that transcends trends.

**Artistry in Colours:** The colour palette is not

just a choice; it's a commitment. We invest significant time and effort in curating colours that speak volumes, adding depth and character to every weave. It's a dance of hues that tells a story of its own.

**Tradition Meets Modernity:** While the craft is rooted in tradition, we keep pace with the contemporary. Our designs embody a minimalist, chic, and elegant aesthetic, ensuring that each piece is a perfect blend of heritage and modern flair.

**Standing Out in the Crowd:** In a world brimming with fashion choices, Kaxhori has found its own space. Our commitment to uniqueness and exclusivity has allowed us to stand out in the crowded realm of apparel, and we're just getting started!

**Understanding You:** We see this as a continuous dialogue. Understanding our audience is key, and it's an ongoing process. We aim to offer you that special touch that resonates with your uniqueness and personal style.

Kaxhori offers the opportunity to explore the world of handwoven elegance where tradition meets contemporary, and every piece carries the warmth of craftsmanship. Your style, our creation!

***Kaxhori, a celebration of the timeless art of Mekhela Chador from the heart of Assam, Guwahati.***

***What are some of the challenges you might have faced as a woman entrepreneur in the industry?***

Personally, I consider myself fortunate to have faced minimal challenges as a woman entrepreneur. However, the entrepreneurial path, regardless of gender, is a rollercoaster ride filled with its own set of challenges.

**Grassroots Realities:** Working closely with weavers at the grassroots level has opened my eyes to long-standing issues. From inadequate wages to rising raw material costs and a lack of suitable markets, these challenges have persisted for too long. One leading to the other but ensuring a consistent flow of work and fixed earnings for the weavers becomes paramount to preserving this rich heritage remains our primary objective.

**Funding Hurdles:** Like many entrepreneurs, the initial challenge for Kaxhori is securing funds. Building a sustainable business model that prioritizes quality over quantity often doesn't align with the expectations of traditional investors focused on scaling up.

**One Step at a Time:** The entrepreneurial journey is not a race, but a steady climb. Kaxhori is taking it one step at a time, focusing on delivering excellence and staying true to our vision. We're in no rush to climb the ladder; we'll get there with patience and persistence.

***How do you envision the future of Kaxhori? Are there any upcoming projects or initiatives that reflect your vision for the brand's growth and impact?***

Kaxhori is committed to building a niche audience. Quality is our priority, even if it means slower growth. While it might not attract investors immediately, we believe in the long-term impact of our commitment to craftsmanship.

**Beyond Selling, We're Storytellers:** Kaxhori was born not just to sell products but to weave stories around the timeless attire, Mekhela Chador. Our vision goes beyond borders as we aspire to showcase the elegance of this attire nationally and globally through our platform.

**Inclusivity in Every Drape:** We believe in the power of diversity. Our platform serves as a canvas where Mekhela Chador is not just an outfit but a piece of art that embraces various styles, jewellery, and traditions from different communities and states, making it an inclusive part of India's Women Ethnic Attire.

**Reaching Hearts Across States and Borders:** The response has been overwhelming! From the heartlands of India to distant shores abroad, Kaxhori has touched the lives of many. We're honoured that our clients have trusted us with their first Mekhela stitching, and the love and appreciation received fuel our passion.

**Tutorials & Tales:** Our brand's page isn't just a shop; it's a treasure trove of inspiration. Clients have gracefully draped their Mekhela



Chador following our tutorials, making it a collaborative journey where tradition meets modernity.

**Empowering Women Weavers:** As a brand, we are proud to have initiated partnerships with women-led weaving centres. This step is not just about sustaining a craft but also about offering livelihoods and contributing to the preservation of this beautiful art.

**Preserving Heritage Hand in Hand:** Together, we are on a mission! With every drape, every stitch, and every partnership, Kaxhori is contributing to preserving the richness of handweaving craft. We are building an ecosystem where tradition and modernity flourish hand in hand.

***What advice would you give to other women who aspire to become entrepreneurs in this industry?***

To all the aspiring dream-weavers! While I may not claim to be the guru of entrepreneurship, I've walked a few steps on this exciting path with Kaxhori. Here are some personal musings that kept me going:

**Craft a Vision:** Your brand is more than just products; it's a vision. Envision where you want it to be and let that guide every stitch, every decision. A clear vision is your North Star.

**Purposeful Solutions:** Reflect on your product or service. Does it solve a problem? Is there a genuine need, or can you create one that's sustainable and relevant? Be the solution, not just an option.

**Uniqueness in Approach:** Not every idea has to reinvent the wheel, but how you execute it can be a game-changer. Find your unique spin, create your niche, and remember, there's room for everyone in the vast landscape of entrepreneurship.

**Instincts Over Rules:** As a leader, you'll face decisions where the rule book might not help. Trust your instincts; there's no definitive right or wrong. It's about the path you choose, and sometimes, the unconventional leads to the extraordinary.

**Embrace Failure:** Failure isn't the end; it's a stepping stone to success. Each stumble is a lesson, each setback a chance to rise stronger. Embrace failure, for it will make your eventual success all the more fulfilling.

Remember, the entrepreneurial journey is as much about self-discovery as it is about business. Keep dreaming, keep creating, and enjoy the dance of challenges and victories.



## Empowering Women Through Threads: An Interview with Malsawmtluangi

*Interview with the Founder of Zo-Weaves - Malsawmtluangi, a mother of four whose entrepreneurial distinctiveness lies in employing 62 women weavers spanning across Mizoram, showcasing a profound commitment to women empowerment.*

***Can you share the story behind the inception of Zo-weave and how your personal journey influenced its establishment?***

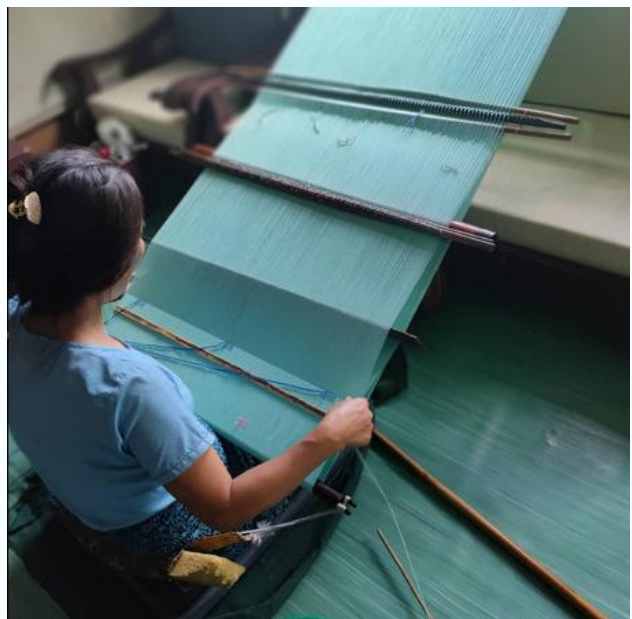
During my teenage years, I had the chance to come across passionate female weavers through my relatives. My mother and aunts would get their Puans customised for special occasions and this sparked my interest in hand-woven puans. Zo-weave was established in 2017 and the reason behind the name Zo Weave is that we work with weavers from different places /villages who belong to different tribes under the ‘Zo Umbrella.’

***Traditional handwoven textiles often hold cultural significance. How does Zo-weave honour and preserve the cultural heritage of the puan through its designs and techniques?***

Weaving is a part of our culture. In the olden days, young ladies wove their own Puan which they wore with pride. It is customary for a Mizo woman who is getting married to gift Puans



to her in-laws. Puans were woven for various occasions. Different designs and techniques, which were mostly self-taught, were incorporated into these Puans. Zo Weave has always made an effort to continue weaving the patterns and techniques used by our foremothers using traditional backstrap/loin- looms while aspiring to remain relevant and



being innovative in blending with modern taste.

***In a rapidly changing market, how does Zo-weave balance traditional craftsmanship with modern trends to stay relevant and appealing to a wide audience?***

Zo weave engaged only in the traditional loin loom/backstrap loom weavers. It has focused attention on these weavers and constantly encourages more women to enter the weaving community as it provides a means to sustain their families from the comfort of their homes. Zo Weave has been promoting traditional textiles, especially the Puan and Nau Puakpuan (baby sling) prioritising versatile products blended with contemporary trends. In essence, we re-invent, adapt our traditional textiles, and foster relationships to appeal to a wider clientele.

***We've read that Zo-weave employed weavers from different parts of Mizoram to empower them. Could you please elaborate on how this has impacted the local artisan community and contributed to their empowerment?***

We have weavers from Mizoram and Manipur. All our weavers, except one, are women. Mothers are teaching their daughters/nieces to weave, thereby passing on their weaving skills and art. We support them with the necessary supplies, and materials required and provide their earnings. These weavers are earning their livelihood from the comfort of their homes. Most of them are capable of sustaining their family through weaving.



## Celebrating Culinary Heritage: An Interview with Alemjungla Jamir

*Interview of Alemjungla Jamir, a chef and restaurateur, owner of Naga Bowl Express with over 2 years of experience in the food industry who is dedicated to preserving the authenticity and richness of Naga cuisine through her culinary creations.*

***What motivated you to become an entrepreneur in the culinary industry?***

I've always wanted to be an entrepreneur because it gives you the opportunity to realise your dreams and the freedom to go about it the way you want to. After returning home from abroad in 2008, I got involved in several tourism initiatives dealing with the promotion of Naga cuisine. Chief among them was the Naga Chef Competition which has been held annually during the Hornbill Festival since 2013. I got a first-hand and in-depth experience of the diversity and richness of our Naga cuisine. This spurred my interest into a passion, and I learnt as much as possible about the various ingredients and culinary practices of the various Naga tribes. I wanted to open a restaurant where people could savour all these Naga dishes which I had learnt, and this led to the Naga Bowl Express restaurant in Dimapur.



***Could you describe the concept and vision behind your restaurant? And how do you integrate and promote the local cuisine of Nagaland in your restaurant?***

The idea behind Naga Bowl Express was to have a place in Nagaland where you could experience authentic Naga cuisine in a modern setting. Whenever my friends or colleagues from outside used to ask me where to visit to try out Naga food I used to say “For Ao food visit this place and for Lotha food visit that place...”, so I thought, why not have a place where you could get some of the popular Naga dishes under one roof. Also, Dimapur being the gateway of Nagaland, I decided that I would open Naga Bowl Express here. We promote Naga Bowl Express as a multi-tribe Naga cuisine restaurant. Our modus operandi is two-fold. One - Provide authentic Naga dishes. Two - Use Naga ingredients and condiments that are sourced from local Naga farmers and villages.

***We've learned that you employ workers who are school dropouts and those from less-privileged families. What inspired this unique approach?***

Being from a village myself, I know the struggles which our youth have to go through to get a decent job. Moreover, every ad for a job always gives preference for qualifications and job experience. Unless one gets some training and a job first, then only the qualification and experience would follow. So I had decided from 'Day One' that I would hire individuals from any background who have the passion to learn even if they have no qualifications or experience. Of course, this means that I have to spend a great amount of time and effort in training them. But I can proudly say that today, my staff is among one of the best.

***In the face of ever-changing globalization, how do you ensure the authenticity of Naga dishes is preserved in your restaurant? Are there specific challenges you've encountered, and how have you overcome them?***

The impact of globalization on the food habits of today's Naga society is that we now have access to a much wider selection and choice of ingredients and cuisines. I take this as both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity is that I can source my ingredients from all parts of the state as well as from other states, which gives me immense flexibility and variety in my menu. The biggest challenge that we face from globalisation is the competition from other cuisines especially Pan-Asian and fast-food chains.

We have tried to obviate this by offering a wide selection of Naga dishes including some fusion food items and by maintaining a comfortable and hygienic environment.

***What challenges have you faced as a woman entrepreneur in the culinary field, especially in promoting local cuisine?***

Starting something on your own from scratch is not an easy task irrespective of a woman or man. The biggest challenge as an entrepreneur in Naga cuisine is sourcing the regular supply of ingredients. Almost all our vegetables and condiments are seasonal and sourced from specific regions of the state. We have tried to overcome this through tie-ups with specific farmers & suppliers, and resorting to age-old methods of preserving specific items which are available only for a very short duration.

***As an entrepreneur dedicated to promoting local cuisine, how do you envision proceeding further in upholding the rich Naga tradition through your dishes? Are there specific initiatives or strategies you plan to implement in the future to strengthen the connection between your restaurant and Naga cultural heritage?***

Naga cuisine is an acquired taste, but that is how all global cuisines like Chinese and Indian started out in the beginning. Our USP is that it is unique, healthy, simple to prepare and tasty. We are focusing a lot on preserving the age-old traditional ingredients and recipes, and on increasing the coverage on social media platforms.

## Empowering Communities: A Conversation with Akshya Shree

*Interview of Ms Akshya Shree, an entrepreneur from Tripura, who has received the prestigious 'Women Transforming Awards' for innovatively utilizing bamboo products to generate rural employment conferred by NITI Aayog. Akshya is the founder of 'Silpakarman' and 'BeYouTea - The bamboo leaves tea' brands.*

*We deeply admire your entrepreneurial journey and the unique focus on bamboo crafts. We're particularly curious about the inspiration behind venturing into this specific niche. What drove you to start a business centred around bamboo crafts?*

Bamboo was suggested by my father while I was looking for a material to work with. The reason I picked it was its versatility. While working with international clients and market I reasoned that bamboo can be used in so many different ways and India has the second largest resources of bamboo! That was the moment where I felt that I can work with bamboo long term and in many different ways. Also, bamboo plantation leads to reduction of carbon and benefits the local community for income generation. So this one material could generate social, economic and environmental impact.



*As a woman entrepreneur in this industry, you must have encountered distinctive challenges. Can you tell us some of the hurdles you've faced and how you've navigated them in your entrepreneurial journey?*

My initial hurdle was just getting around the whole entrepreneurial space and understanding what to do and what not to do. I trust people easily and due to this I got fooled often. But I never gave up and made my way. Then being young and inexperienced would cost me dearly in terms of money, deals, associations etc. But I overcame this challenge by honing my skill and gaining expertise in what I do. I pursued Export management alongside bamboo workshops just so I can understand what is it that I can do to create my own niche where I become unavoidable. Then when my business began to grow there were hurdles with respect to compliances for which I hired a team. Thereafter, as our brand gained popularity we had troubles getting the brand value chain right and I am still in the process

of solving it. We are hiring people and getting our brand language correct to make a uniform messaging for our clients.

***In what ways do you involve or collaborate with local community or artisans in your business operations?***

We mobilise clusters or engage with active clusters who are working with bamboo thereafter we conduct training and design workshops with them to create innovative products. Once this is done we place bulk orders with them and buy-back whatever they produce without negotiating on prices. We also connect these clusters to other vendors so that they remain in business through the year.



***How do you see your business contributing to the promotion of Tripura's cultural heritage through bamboo crafts ?***

The bamboo crafts Tripura has the unique gift of Kankaich which is a unique species found only in very few places. They are great for making functional furniture pieces and with our brand we don't just want the craft but the whole of Tripura and its stories to reach to our customers. To do this we share postcards with our artisans' pictures on them with our customers so that they know they are not just buying a product but a whole experience.

***Lastly, for aspiring entrepreneurs, especially women interested in entering a similar field, your experience and guidance would be invaluable. What advice would you give them as they embark on their entrepreneurial journeys?***

Be clear why do you want to be an entrepreneur. If the reasons are due to external factors I suggest stop and look inwards to find the right reason. Once you find that it will become easier for you to find meaning in what you do and face challenges with determination. Also, if you are looking to explore similar field, try to find your customer base first and then build your brand from customer back. This way you will be able to take your product and solution to people who really need them and expand gradually.



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# ARTICLES & ESSAYS

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# — “Yaiskulgee Pakhang Angaoba: — A Feminist Take On Manipuri Cinema.”

*From Linda Chanu  
B.A. (H) History, 2nd Year*



**D**espite its late arrival to the global film movement, Manipuri cinema is arguably one of the few dynamic film industries in North Eastern India, rivalling Assam. The evolution of cinema in the tiny pristine state has come a long way - from black and white to colour, from 16 mm and 35 mm format, non-feature short and documentary films to feature films, and achieving recognition at national and international levels. Not unlike the global media movement, film has inextricably played an important role in shaping the social fabric and consciousness of a minuscule population such as that of Manipur. Manipuri cinema, therefore, warrants careful scrutiny as a sociological agent that has significant influence over the masses.

Films produced in the Manipuri industry have been long dominated by family-centric plots in a melodramatic fashion. As a result, it has garnered a mass audience due to its simple narratives and conformity to traditional values. Such family-centric narratives especially employ female characters as core movers of the plot, yet significantly lack plot centrality around them. Female subjects on screen are often seen less for their character potential and more in relation to their male counterparts, thereby rendering them as secondary and less significant subjects. It is in this context, that Manipuri cinema significantly lacks women-centric narratives, and overall, a feminist perspective on film that renders the industry incredibly lacking in media literacy and social awareness. It should be unfortunate that a feminist take on Manipuri cinema is seen as a new, intrusive and even unorthodox venture, further implying the lack of social progressiveness in the film industry. However, there exists a point of inception that triggers greater discourse over subjects typically neglected and this article can only hope to be one of such points.

‘Yaiskulgee Pakhang Angaoba’ is a good place to start from - a 2011 super hit Meiteilon language film written and directed by the late Homen D’Wai featuring Gurumayum Bonny as the titular protagonist with Bala Hijam as the lead role. The film, whose impact can still be felt today, garnered wide critical acclaim upon its release and became a cultural icon amongst popular Manipuri masses in the early 2010s. The cultural repercussions of popular vogue like ‘Yo’ and phrases like ‘Dasanihe’ can still be



felt in present-day popular youth culture and humour that further establishes the film's position as a powerful social instrument that has shaped an entire generation.

The film follows Sanatombi, a recent high school graduate who, having spent his entire life in boarding school, returns to his hometown Yaiskul and crosses paths with a Kabui girl, Majaru in the adjacent Keishamthong Kabui village. It is to be noted that Sanatombi originated from a very traditional family setup with its typical patriarchal setting - a hot-tempered, misogynistic father and a subservient mother who were hell-bent on keeping their son strictly away from the "bad influences of society" to achieve the ultimate profession that all Indian parents seem to have a strange fetish for, a doctor, of course. All of this would directly contribute to Sanatombi's character as a painfully awkward simpleton with zero social awareness sprinkled with the classic hint of passive misogyny. Majaru, on the other hand, is an easy-going, cheeky teenage girl who has a knack for not taking life too seriously and drawing fun out of people and situations in general. It is interesting to note that the role of a Kabui protagonist is played by a Meitei actor, in addition to a Meitei-dominated cast as well as production crew who may or may not have consulted experts adequately in the construction of the Kabui identity in the film, especially those of women. This selective dominance, unfortunately, performs a disservice to the Kabui community and their portrayal on screen. Majaru's identity as a Kabui woman acts out to be more or less a product of Meitei creation, catering to a predominantly Meitei audience.



To add to the character study, Sanatombi's popular transformation into a hyper-masculine man through the so-called 'Yo' culture (or roughly translated into present-day popular phrases like 'drip' or 'hip') in order to woo Majaru interestingly points towards an understanding that men are only capable of being wanted when they brand themselves as hyper-masculine and dominant, if not normalising it. This understanding creates a social expectation for men to be adherents to a toxic, sexist youth culture that

functions not only on aggressive dominance over women but also the destruction of one's individuality. Any deviation otherwise is deemed emasculating. Unfortunate cases like Sanatombi's character symbolise the systematic indoctrination of young men by society into becoming active contributors to the patriarchy.

On the other hand, the character portrayal of Majaru and her friends is stereotypically juvenile, or better described as a 'a bunch of cheeky minxes' whose entire purpose is to aid the character arc of the male protagonist in some way or the other. This is where we see yet another example of the classic villainisation of femininity in media where hyper-feminine characters are subjected to intense critique and scrutiny, if not resentment, from the audience. As Carlin & Winfrey (2009) postulated, they are usually framed as negatively feminine, where such stereotypical attributes have anchored them with no ability to take up active and leadership roles.

The character execution of Majaru and her friends, who while being bearers of such femininity, are written in a way that mongered hatred from the audience and instead channelled sympathy for the male protagonist whose naivety they exploited. While the fact that they were essentially bullies cannot be excused in any way, it further raises questions over the purpose, intent and motive behind how female characters are generally written and portrayed.

As the plot advances to the crucial juncture of confrontation (after of course, a painful sequence of eve teasing, constant pestering, blatant ableism, adolescent angst and undisguised parental physical violence and emotional abuse), the film presents a subtle yet powerful ultimatum to both Sanatombi and Majaru to confront their respective moral arcs after the former goes into what the writers call “intense depression” as an aftermath of the terrible prank by Majaru and her friends.



Sanatombi goes through an existential crisis over his identity after an intense period of suppressing his authentic individuality, even going so far as to harassing Majaru in public. Meanwhile, Majaru is forced to confront her moral compass and condemnable choices as she quietly, albeit helplessly, observes Sanatombi slowly spiral down a pit of emotional crisis. This is where the critical question of mental health arises - apart from the blatant stigmatisation of mental health and problematic, reductionist depiction of what depression physically looks like, the discrimination in the consideration of the mental well-being of women as opposed to men becomes awfully pronounced. While Sanatombi's case warrants some degree of sympathy, the film is overall tailored in such a way that the male protagonist is freed from any question of accountability for his earlier actions on the grounds of his compromised mental health. Meanwhile, the female protagonist is forced to not only take accountability for her mistakes but also bear the societal blame of ruining a “perfect young man”.

The so-called emotional crisis was never explored from Majaru's perspective - what she felt when she was grabbed without consent and constantly pestered throughout the entire time Sanatombi pursued her. The only perspective we get to see as an audience is when she starts feeling guilty for her actions and repents them, further reiterating the insignificance of a female character's point of view unless it is directly in relation to the male protagonist. This is also a particular example of how the media subconsciously puts out the message that there are, in fact, consequences to a woman saying ‘no’ and that they are not permitted to own a rejection without feeling intense guilt and shame. With of course, due acknowledgement of Majaru's humiliating prank, the film seems to enable the popular notion that men are socially permitted to act poorly after a rejection, further excusing their lack of maturity and emotional intelligence in the face of such predicaments.

The film is overall yet another product of patriarchal media centred around the male protagonist written in such a way that the audience is manoeuvred into sympathising with him while simultaneously justifying all his actions. The female lead becomes a mere catalyst of character advancement for the male protagonist with little to no development of her own, the phenomenon of which is known in popular culture as the 'manic pixie dream girl'. It is a significant consequence of the imposition of the 'male gaze' in the process of construction of female characters. Laura Mulvey's (1975) theorisation of the 'male gaze' as a phenomenon of depicting the world and women from the perspective of heterosexual male pleasure is further extended to the construction of a character identity of women as authentic subjects with agency. Majaru's character suffers an unfortunate blow at the hands of heteropatriarchal imposition in the process of development, as if destined to be attached to the male protagonist with no agency to own a narrative of her own.

Relative stagnation of female characters throughout the plot is a common trope seen frequently in Manipuri films and 'Yaikulgee Pakhang Angaoba' poses no challenge to such trope. It is a repetitive pattern that has been observed in almost every Manipuri production that has shown no signs of exit. It becomes a prompt reminder of the absence of a feminist discourse in Manipuri media that poses harmful stereotypes and narratives for the youth to mimic and root their thoughts in.

In summation, the film itself unfortunately plays out in a freshly recycled take on the conservative values of our society through its orthodox outlooks and counter-feminist narratives. The cultural craze that entailed the release of this film can no doubt be attributed to its popular appeal to the younger audience, as seen in the age range of the protagonists as well as its creative and catchy soundtracks that took over mp3 music folders of the young and old in the early 2010s. Despite its regressive writing, 'Yaikulgee Pakhang Angaoba' certainly brought about a shift in Manipuri cinema towards the rise of more youthful themes and humorous writing, if not further cementing the centrality of family-based themes and traditional ideals of valuing hard work over idle pursuits like love. It should be noted that the film stands as a poignant reminder of the conformist nature of Manipuri cinema which has sustained over decades with overused melodramatic devices that have consistently failed to directly challenge the patriarchy. Whether or not our films are an indication of our values as a society is an obvious question that answers itself - the only way forward is to hope and work for reform in Manipuri cinema that employs not only socially sensitive production but also a sense of fearlessness in asking the questions that matter.

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# DIRANG

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**N**estled within the Himalayas, this hidden valley is a stunning yet undiscovered tourist destination, surrounded by the vigilance of the Service Selection Board (SSB), Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) due to its border location. Locals witness military helicopters practising in the valley at various times throughout the year, creating a unique experience once you arrive and are embraced by the finest weather. Blessed by a river and the majestic Himalayas, the valley offers breathtaking scenery in Dirang, capturing the essence of an artist's ideal landscape with mountains, rivers, and snow-capped peaks. Profoundly known as the Rising Land of India, mornings reveal radiant snow-capped mountains resembling

a blend of slur and golden jewellery, accompanied by various shades of the sky during sunrise and the perfect reflection of water and a complete blue sky at noon.

Summer graces the town with optimal weather, reaching a maximum of 26°C, and an abundance of fruits and vegetables, attracting numerous tourists. The river roars, signalling the imminent rainy season, and emphasizing the locals' commitment to environmental cleanliness. Adhering to the belief that disrespecting Mother Nature results in floods and earthquakes, the natives are meticulous about nature's cleanliness, imposing heavy fines for unauthorized tree cutting.



As days shorten and deciduous forests shed leaves, those leaves get collected by women for field manure, and the winter begins. The occasionally harsh winter experiences snowfall, covering the valley like a white blanket. The hilltop monastery, adorned with a five-colour flag, symbolizes the Buddhist influence. Winter marks LOSAR, the eagerly awaited Buddhist New Year which is grandly celebrated for 15 days with preparations, sweets, and traditional games.

Preparations for LOSAR begin a month in advance, with meticulous cleaning, house repainting, and the creation of the local treat KHABSES. The bitter cold and gusty winds signify the arrival of LOSAR, celebrated in every town with children receiving new outfits as gifts. For migrants, it is an ideal time as they leave work and family members return for the celebration. After 15 days of festivities, the entire family gathers for a picnic, eagerly

welcoming spring as trees sprout new leaves and the valley transforms from brown to green.

For a rejuvenating getaway, this is an ideal destination - a natural hot spring where individuals can bathe to alleviate body pain as believed by the locals. News of this healing water attracts people from distant places. Positioned just above the hot spring is a hill under the National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports (NIMAS), a centre training mountaineering students for Everest climbs and offering activities like paragliding, river rafting, snow skiing, and other mountain sports. Venturing 14 km from the town reveals the enchanting hidden Sangti Valley, housing black-necked cranes. Abundant natural wonders include waterfalls and hiking trails deep within the forest. Thus, this Land of the Rising Sun offers a diverse range of experiences.

# CONFERRING THE MODISH FOREST ACT IN NORTHEAST INDIA

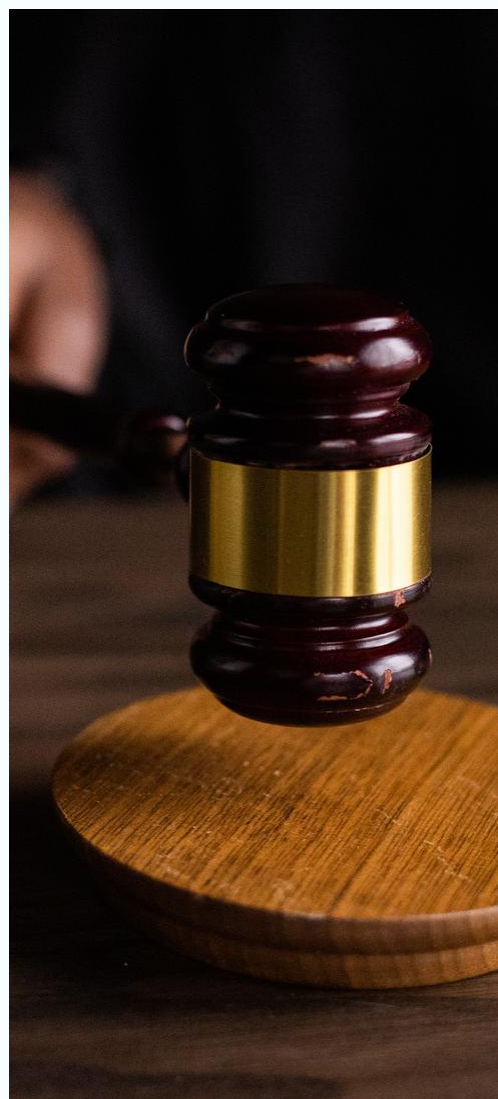
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In the lush and diverse landscapes of Northeast India, a region globally celebrated for its unique flora and fauna, a disheartening oversight unfolds. The Forest Conservation Amendment Act of 2023 has slipped under the radar, receiving minimal attention and sparking limited discussions about its potential impact on the vibrant forests and the communities intertwined with them. This legislative journey, spanning from the colonial forest law of 1865 to the present Act, weaves a complex tapestry of over fifteen laws and policies connecting forests with legal frameworks.

A troubling trend emerges as the rights of indigenous communities, the rightful stewards of forest lands, remain conspicuously absent from these legal narratives. Despite the invaluable traditional knowledge and sustainable practices rooted in the history of these communities, the legislative landscape seems to overlook their pivotal role and rights in the realm of forest conservation. Northeast India is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including changes in temperature and precipitation patterns. These changes can affect the distribution of flora and fauna, disrupt ecosystems, and potentially lead to the loss of certain species.

This oversight raises profound concerns about the repercussions for both these communities and the ecosystems they have safeguarded for generations. Indigenous populations, with their unique insights into resource management, ecological balance, and biodiversity conservation, find themselves excluded from legal frameworks meant to guide comprehensive and effective conservation strategies. Addressing this gap becomes urgent, calling for advocacy to explicitly recognize indigenous rights in the Forest Conservation Amendment Act of 2023 and related legislation. Engaging in dialogue with policymakers, raising public awareness, and fostering



collaboration with indigenous communities are some crucial steps to ensure their voices are heard and their rights protected. Only through an inclusive and equitable approach can the forest conservation legislation genuinely achieve its goals, contributing to the well-being of both the environment and its diverse human inhabitants. The aftermath of the legislative process reveals a disregard for dissenting voices, with critical remarks from committee members and the public relegated to minority viewpoints on the Bill. The Bill smoothly sailed through both houses of Parliament without substantial debates, leaving a void in collaborative discussions with southern states on location-specific issues.

Beyond the surface, the legislation, while appearing straightforward, unfolds complexities during implementation, particularly for forest-dwelling communities and government agencies. Northeast India is a biodiversity hotspot, hosting a wide variety of plant and animal species.

Despite the challenges, there are various conservation initiatives in place. National parks and wildlife sanctuaries, such as Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park, aim to protect the region's biodiversity. However, effective implementation and enforcement of conservation measures remain crucial. Moreover, factors like deforestation, habitat fragmentation, and climate change pose threats to this unique biodiversity. Loss of habitat due to developmental activities and human encroachment contributes to the decline of many species. The construction of roads, highways, and other infrastructure projects often lead to the fragmentation of forests. This fragmentation disrupts wildlife corridors, making it difficult for species to move freely and affecting overall ecosystem health. The concept of afforestation, with its financial incentives, clashes with forest governance principles and challenges the notion of decentralized forest governance. Governance practices deviating from federal norms and the intricate definition of strategic linear projects add to the ambiguity. Internal environmental security, often overlooked, emerges as a significant concern, especially in states prone to natural disasters.

The proposed exemptions in the 2023 Forest Conservation Amendment Bill, especially those tied to strategic projects near international borders, amplify worries about potential clearances in ecologically sensitive regions like the Himalayan, trans-Himalayan, and northeastern areas. The bill's passage raises the spectre of jeopardizing the rights of indigenous communities residing on India's borders, with clearances lacking "assessment and mitigation plans" potentially posing threats to biodiversity and triggering extreme weather events.

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## RITUALISTIC MANIFESTATIONS OF THE MEITEI BELIEF SYSTEM: *LAI HARAOPA*

*Irom Linda Chanu*  
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Lai Haraoba is a traditional festival of the Meitei community of Manipur that involves performative art in a sophisticated combination of dance, prayer, rituals, and performance of mythical beliefs. Lai Haraoba literally translates to "pleasing the god" or "rejoicing of gods." As the name suggests, it involves the summoning of "Lais" i.e. gods in the reenactment of creation through rituals, ceremonies, hymns, dances, and songs to please the deities. The entire process of creation of the living being, according to the myths of the Meitei belief system, is embodied through the ritualistic performance of Lai Haraoba. Very scarce sources regarding the tradition of Lai Haraoba are available after the majority of the preserved ones suffered destruction in war or religious persecution. Hence, most knowledge of the festival available today is extracted from surviving "Puyas" i.e. ancient Meitei religious scriptures and secondary information from priests to whom it was generationally passed down to.

The festival is an antique tradition that has survived centuries of socio-religious changes retaining the majority of its authenticity, thus invoking active discourse on its origin. The name Lai Haraoba has been argued to be derived from the phrase 'Lai-Haoi-Laoba' (shouting of 'hoi') of the Leisemba creation myth of the Meitei tradition. According to the myth, Atiya Guru Sidaba, after the creation of the Earth, was in a plight on how to inhabit his new creation. Atingkok Sidaba, who was the Supreme God, opened his mouth and revealed the world of living beings. Atiya Guru Sidaba then entered his father's mouth and discharged all living beings, who shouted 'hoi' in joy. Known as Lai-Hoi-Laoba, it later came to be known as Lai

Haraoba (Kulachandra, 1963:1). Despite the lack of credibility in this theory, traditional scholars have popularised it, as the origin and evolution of the Lai Haraoba generally tend to be discussed within the ritual and mythical framework of the Meitei belief system.

Paratt argues in her case that the Lai Haraoba may have originated as the worship of ancestral deities of various yeks (various clan-like divisions of the Meitei society whose origins can be traced back to an Apokpa who is believed to be the ancestral father of each clan). The prefix 'Lai' in Lai Haraoba is not limited to gods in the formal sense but could also apply to the Apokpa. Thus, the possibility of Lai Haraoba originating as an ancestral ritual cannot be ruled out.

There are also two divergent views regarding the geographical origin of the celebration. The first view puts forward that Lai Haraoba initially originated from the Koubru hills. However, when the celebration took place at Koubru, the main deities symbolising the Pa (Male) and Pi (Female) principles i.e., Nongpok Ningthou and Panthoibi, were absent and thus, the sequences of the performances of Lai Haraoba were regarded as incomplete.

The second view opines that the festival was first celebrated at Langmai Hill based on the texts of '*Panthoibi Khongul*' (archaic Meitei text that narrates the romantic encounter of the principal deities - Panthoibi and Nongpok Ningthou). Accordingly, the first performance of Lai Haraoba was traced back to the pre-Christian, pre-Pakhangba (the first Meitei monarch according to the Meitei canon) era of the supreme guardian deities i.e. Nongpok, Ningthou and Panthoibi. One significant drawback of this theory is that it applies the Panthoibi Khongul as the sole authority and the primary source. The lack of diverse sources presents a deficiency of a more holistic approach to the subject.

The Lai Haraoba typically commences on auspicious days in the month of Kalen according to the Manipuri Lunar Calendar. Lasting a little over a week, propitious days are chosen such as the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 8th days of the month and so on. The original depiction of the deity was never physically manifested as an image, although later developments depict the deities in brass or wooden masks. The absence of a concrete image indicates that Hindu iconography had not influenced Meitei worship at the time when this rite acquired its present form.

There are various regional variations of the Lai Haraoba as well, although the philosophical essence and main rituals remain the same. There are three broad categories i.e. Kanglei Haraoba, which is performed at the royal palace; Moirang Haraoba, performed at Moirang, especially in honour of the local deity Lord Thangjing; Chakpa Haraoba, which is basically the Loi (refers to communities under the Meitei fold who were not Hinduised during the Vaishnavite movement and are often accorded a "lower status") observance. While there are many other variations under these three broad categorisations, the main rituals remain the same:



- Lai Ikouba: the ritualistic invocation of the deity from a nearby water body.
- Laibou Jagoi: a dance portraying the life cycle of the Lai from conception.
- Panthoibi Jagoi: a dance depicting the romantic encounter of Panthoibi and Nongpok Ningthou.
- Lairen Mathek: a communal dance in the curve of a python, which signifies the sexual union of the divine father and the divine mother.
- Ougri Hangel: a communal dance designed to bestow wealth and prosperity to the local community.
- Thabal Chongba: a celebratory dance under the moonlight which follows after the Ougri Hangel.
- Nongkarol: sending the Lai to heaven through various rituals performed by the Maiba and Maibi.

The Lai Haraoba is an antique tradition that enforces a sense of community and unites individuals from all walks of life. Till today, it is still celebrated with vigour in each local community, although later variations of rituals and traditions have been introduced due to its ever-evolving nature. Lai Haraoba has its chief and internal motivation in procreation, vitality, abundance and healthy community life. It embodies the entire process of cosmological creation to human inhabitation on the earth. Due to its authentic roots in archaic Meitei beliefs, Lai Haraoba also becomes an invaluable source for the study of Pre-Hindu Meitei religious traditions. Its unadulterated fusion of sacred hymns, traditional music and dance gives it a unique feature of Manipuri culture.

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**Photo Credit:** Rekha Konsam

# MOBILE THEATRE OF ASSAM : An Industry on Wheels

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The origin of theatre can be traced back to ancient Greece, especially in the festivals that honoured Dionysus, the God of wine. When we think of theatres in modern times, we imagine it as being confined to a fixed place like an auditorium. However, there exists a form of theatre that travels through the towns and villages of Assam, called the 'Mobile Theatre'. It is unique and features a makeshift pandal or tent which is 125 feet in length and 90 feet in width. Within the pandal, there exists a stage of 72 feet in length and 24 feet in width; and a gallery with seats for over two thousand people. The Mobile Theatre tours on a three-day interval basis, on its own buses

and trucks, providing entertainment to the people of Assam. In a day, more than fifty thousand people view shows from all of the troupes. Mobile theatre is the pride of Assam and continues to grow in its popularity. It promotes the art of drama and performance in Assam through its pursuit of mass entertainment. Despite facing the challenge of competing with modern television and movies, the mobile theatre and its tradition have continued to flourish and develop. This industry has sustained over 4000 families and has financially aided more than 3000 organisations.



## ORIGINS

This form of performance art was introduced by Srimanta Sankardeva as Ankia Bhaona in the fourteenth century. Nearly 150 years later, Natyacharya Brajanath Sarma also played a major role in propagating this authentic art form. Sarma introduced the concept of touring theatre called Jatra. Jatra or Yatra literally means travel or mobile. In 1924 he formed Ganakbari Opera Dol. In 1929, his Assam Kahinoor Opera Party was established in collaboration with Bipin Chandra Barua from Puranigudam, Nagaon. It marked the beginning of mobile Jatra groups and is said to be the inspiration for the birth of Mobile Theatre.

In 1959, Nataraj Opera was set up by Sada Lahkar from Pathsala in the same form as Jatra. His brother Achyut Lahkar, hailed as the father of Mobile Theatre, instituted Nataraj Theatre in 1963, making it the first mobile theatre group in Assam. Radha Govinda Baruah officially added the term 'mobile' to the theatre. In 1963-64 the Guwahati Town Club invited Nataraj to perform in the city wherein Radha Govinda Baruah was overjoyed with the performance and immediately coined the term. The Mobile Theatre performed its first show commercially on 2nd October 1963, in Pathsala called Bhogjora by Phani Sarma. There have been over 215 troupes to date which have performed not only in Assamese language but also in Bodo, Nepali and Bengali.

## HERITAGE

Mobile Theatre has entered its 61st year of inception and has faced its fair share of ups and downs ever since then. Following the footsteps of Achyut Lahkar, the Suradevi Theatre in Samota and the Purbajyoti Theatre in Hajo were established. This journey witnessed the emergence of many new playwrights. Phani Sarma, Uttam Baruah and Atul Chandra Hazarika were some of the early names in this field which has birthed over a hundred playwrights to date. Over 8000 plays have been created and successfully staged by the Mobile Theatre including Othello and Cleopatra, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, Hollywood movies like Titanic and Bollywood movies like Sholay. Besides these, there have been thousands of original works. These plays are not only visually enticing but also involve deliberations on important aspects of society, culture and politics.

The first troupe began performing with a budget of a mere 29 thousand rupees and now this budget exceeds 150 crores. Backstage workers like electricians, carpenters, cooks and the committees that invited troupes to perform also contribute greatly. A careful division of work and the use of the latest technology has kept this industry alive.

Without the contribution of the audience, Mobile Theatre would not have reached this stage. Research and development on the stage, pandal and other technical aspects are still going on. It started with a single stage. Then the Trolley Stage, Double Stage, Triple Stage, ALSOM-T, Cine Theatre, etc. came along. There are several techniques with which planes, trains, buses etc, are shown on stage. Even without a single drop of water, it has staged the Atlantic Ocean in the play Titanic.

This performance earned worldwide fame. Nataraj Theatre performed in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa. Kohinoor Theatre performed in the premises of the Indira Gandhi National Centre For Arts in 2010. There they earned appreciation for the production of the play Titanic. It was an invitational show by the National School of Drama, New Delhi. The school even planned to include this art form in its academic syllabus.

## LIMITATIONS

Mobile theatre presents a good amount of limitations, such as a lack of adequate information and research on the industry, a lack of focus on its commercial aspect, the absence of an archive of mobile theatre, the reluctance of producers to provide their annual audit and the lack of knowledge of the industry among the masses. The Assamese people are unaware of the need for promotion of this local industry.

## CAUSES OF POPULARITY

Despite the challenges, Mobile Theatre is incredibly popular. There are many reasons for its popularity such as its ability to come to the courtyards of people from all across Assam, the many elements it contains which entertain the audience, the shows being held at festival-like areas, the proximity at which the audience can watch their favourite artists and the reasonable price of tickets.

## WHAT MOBILE THEATRE HAS PROVIDED AND WHAT IT NEEDS

Mobile Theatre has provided a livelihood to over four thousand families. Every year, more than three thousand public, religious and academic institutions benefit from theatres. In its 61-year-old legacy, more than two hundred troupes and eight thousand plays have been created. Mobile Theatre has given birth to many artists and provided them with financial security.

Certain improvements are necessary for this industry, such as providing guidance regarding business administration to the producers. More and more people need to be aware of this art form and its rich history. Artists and backstage workers need formal training. Producers need to be mindful of their social responsibility towards the people along with the business aspect of it. Mobile Theatre needs to be motivated to cross the geographical border of Assam and perform in different areas across the world.

Mobile Theatre is the most powerful form of mass media in Assam. This indigenous industry in its long 61 years of heritage has done justice to its audience, artists, and organization. Even with the hurdles it has faced, the drive of the people involved has made it possible for Mobile Theatre to break free from the constraints that limit theatre. Learning from experts and developing existing technology could greatly improve the state of the industry. There is also a need for the Government to empower Mobile Theatre.

# OUR CULTURE OUR PRIDE

*Baishali Deb*

*B.A. (H) Geography, I Year*

*'My culture is my pride and all the other cultures form the base of this joyful pride.'*

'Culture' – a word indispensable to an individual's life, is of great importance in itself. Plurality, in general, is synonymous with the variety and variability around us. As such, the nation is bound to be preoccupied with not one but several lifestyles reflective of different cultures.

## THE TURN OF THE CIVILIZATIONS

Around some 12,000 years ago, civilizations started developing all around the world. Primitive societies were nature-oriented and less intertwined. Different types of practices and values developed due to human interaction with their immediate environment. About the time of the civilizations, new and enhanced cultural practices were adopted. We, the descendants of our ancestors, who practised these cultures have modified them in accordance with the dictates of modernity. How beautiful and appreciable it is to conserve ancient cultures against the backdrop of changing times. The spark, born in bygone age, had managed to produce an even brighter light spread out in a much larger area. This is the power of culture, which is both well-defined and vague at the same time.



## THE CULTURAL STAND OF DIFFERENT NATIONS AT PRESENT

The world is a giant that encapsulates the cultures of different regions. Advancements in technology have enabled mankind to reach the stars. But despite new developments, human beings are not completely detached from their traditions. Culture is not a new life, but a way of life. And this present generation is well acquainted with the idea of culture. Indigenous communities lead the way in this regard and have been able to sustain their cultural identities through modernity. Most cultures seem to get diffused in one another with adoption of ethics, values, mores and customs from others. Nevertheless, we find heterogeneous cultures around, with people from each culture holding pride and highest sentiment with it. Culture in today's date is a mixed conception.

## INDIA AND ITS CULTURE

India is well known for its diversity. No other country in the world is as diverse as India. At the time of independence, this fact was a cause of worry for our national leaders and freedom fighters. Because cultural differences seemed to threaten our unity, our leaders were reluctant at first to recognise this difference and eventually decided to give in. And today, it is proved that if cultural differences are dealt with with maturity and relativism, there will be no instances of conflict or cultural erosion. Indian culture is vibrant, colourful and vivid. It contains languages, religions, original traits, ethnicity and much more. From habits in the North to rituals in the South, customs in the West to traditions in the East, the cultural practices that prevail are deeply Indian. If we belong to one group, the other group is significantly distinct but necessarily attached. We are lucky to experience such variety, to enjoy this thrust in life and to take part in various cultures. It is a blessing indeed. We must realise that our affinity with all the cultures of the country and not be dogmatic about one.

## THE THREAT TO CULTURE AND ITS EXISTENCE

Despite culture playing a significant role in our lives, we often encounter incidents where one culture is being eroded by the pressure of the others. Cultural differences are bound to exist given its vast dimensions and branches but if that leads to chaos and riots resulting in violence, that won't leave a good impression on ourselves and do justice to man, the highest of all animals. Our inner conscience should restrict us from taking any extreme step which could even cause destruction. Differences can and should be resolved through discussions and debates and not through any violent means. And why should differences be seen as a danger? It should be treated as a boon which enables us to communicate with a larger community of people.

Culture is also seen to be under threat due to the advent of new innovations. The mindset of people has changed quite a lot, resulting in the negligence of a united, syncretic culture. Culture is perceived as an outdated structure which has no meaning in the present day. Culture is our origin; we have our roots in our culture. Without culture, we have no meaning – our existence is vague.





## **CULTURE AND US**

We are born in different cultures but that doesn't make us different from others. What we need is a change to accept our culture and the culture of each community residing with us and bring justified modifications over time, in new contexts and situations. The cultural urge is the desire to preserve our culture. The recognition of different cultures is an achievement and the energy for development and growth. Indian culture is significantly different from others and unique as well. It is a culture that we have to hold on to and not let go. A proud Indian doesn't just take pride in their own culture but in the rich tapestry of cultures that collectively form India. Respect for other cultures is the underlying spirit of pride amongst people of every culture. Let culture be stored, protected and spread to a larger whole.

## **ASSAM - THE LAND OF DIVINE CULTURE**

The culture of the state of Assam is a rich and exotic one which is deeply guarded by its people. We have a variety of festivals accommodating many different people with different cultural heritage. Bihu, which is famous worldwide, is an extremely beautiful form of dance as well as a festival. Our 'Mekhela Chador' has gained international importance on account of its quality and material. We have huge and splendid monuments dating hundreds of years back which have turned into tourist spots today. Our cuisine is varied and includes the tastes, spices and styles of all ethnic groups of Assam. We have exquisite cultural practices and the people here are always warm and hospitable to their guests. The purity and divinity of the Land of Beauty - Assam, acts as a magnet attracting people from all over the globe. Much of it will remain unknown if Assam is left unexplored. Once a person sets foot in Assam, it is sure to leave a lasting impression, making their visit all so meaningful and worthwhile.

# Sikkim

*Sonam Choden*

*B.A. (H) Political Science, II Year*

The place where I took my first breath, the place that is a part of me, the place that I call my home- Sikkim. A cultural hotspot where you meet people from different cultures and communities, Sikkim is located in the Northeastern part of the country, in the eastern Himalayas. It is one of the smallest states in India and is bordered by the Tibet Autonomous Region of China to the north and northeast, by Bhutan to the southeast, by the Indian state of West Bengal to the south, and by Nepal to the west. The mesmerising town of Gangtok, located in the southeastern part of the state, is the capital of Sikkim.

Sikkim is notable for its biodiversity, including alpine and subtropical climates, as well as being a host to Kanchenjunga, the highest peak in India and the third highest on Earth. Almost 35% of the state is covered by the Khangchendzonga National Park.

The predominant communities of Sikkim consist of three ethnic groups- Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali. Communities of different hues intermingle freely in Sikkim to constitute a composite blend. Hindu Temples coexist with Buddhist Monasteries, Churches, Mosques and Gurudwara. These myriad of cultures have produced a quintessential Sikkimese Culture that encompasses all ways and walks of life but has also managed to preserve its own identity. The various places of worship, festivals and cultural dances that are celebrated throughout the year stand as a testimony to its encompassing, rich culture. The official languages of the state include English, Nepali, Sikkimese (Bhutia) and Lepcha. Additional official languages include Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Mukhia, Newari, Rai, Sherpa and Tamang for the preservation of culture and tradition in the state.

Located 78 Km from Gangtok is Namchi, the district headquarters of South Sikkim. The best time to visit is during February, March, October, and November. Namchi hosts a variety of tourist attractions. With a stupendous view of the Khangchendzonga range, the south of Sikkim is a fairy tale land of picturesque villages and high hills. Situated nearby is Samdruptse Hill, the site of the 135-foot-tall statue of Guru Padmasambhava. To the south are Tendong Hill and Maenam Hill which are of mythical importance to the Lepchas and Bhutias. Also in close proximity, is the tourist destination of Ravangla, which hosts the annual Pang Lhabso festival with great pageantry.

Sikkim has become India's first fully organic state, which serves as an inspiration to other states and countries around the world to embrace sustainable practices through organic food production. For reasons cited above and beyond, Sikkim has many untouched tourist potential which are yet to be tapped.



## The Enchanting Symphony of Cultures: Nagaland's Hornbill Festival

*Deskyong Tsomo*

*B.A. (H) Geography, II Year*

Nestled in the northeastern corner of India, Nagaland stands as a testament to the country's rich cultural tapestry. Among the many vibrant celebrations that adorn the state, the Hornbill festival holds a special place. This annual extravaganza is not merely a cultural event but a manifestation of the Naga people's identity, pride and unity. In this essay, we will delve into the significance of the Hornbill Festival, exploring its cultural roots, the diversity it showcases, and the impact it has on preserving and promoting Nagaland's unique heritage. The festivities of the Hornbill festival are characterized by a vibrant showcase of traditional dances, sports and songs from various Naga tribes.

The initial three days of the festival are highlighted by cultural dances, indigenous to a culture that is both mysterious and captivating. The festival features remarkable elements such as warrior log drums, vibrant headgear, soulful war cries and exquisite costumes. The first three days are particularly noteworthy for their display of the rich cultural heritage of the Naga tribes. The festivities include delicious local cuisines and specialities unique to each Naga tribe, all served in their respective Morungs (community dormitories) alongside the finest rice beer. This culinary aspect adds a delightful gastronomic dimension to the festival.

Over the years, the Hornbill Festival has transformed from a celebration exclusively focused on Naga culture and traditions into a grand cultural event that encompasses all eight Northeastern states. Cultural troupes from across the region participate in this week-long celebration, providing a splendid opportunity to witness the convergence of diverse cultures under one roof. It becomes a unique and enriching experience to explore the cultural diversity of Northeast India during this festival.

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The Hornbill Festival, inaugurated in 2000, takes its name from the Great Indian Hornbill, a bird revered by the Naga tribes for its majestic appearance and symbolic significance. The festival was conceived as a platform to bring together the diverse Naga communities scattered across the hills and valleys, fostering a sense of unity among them. Over the years, it has grown to become one of the most celebrated events in Northeast India, drawing visitors from across the world.

### **CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA**

Held annually from December 1st to 10th in the Kisama Heritage village, near the state capital Kohima, the Hornbill Festival is a kaleidoscope of Naga culture, tradition and heritage. The festival provides a unique opportunity to witness the diverse customs, rituals and art forms of the various Naga tribes, each with its distinct language, attire and practices. The Naga tribes, such as the Angami, Ao, Lotha, Sema and others, showcase their traditional dances, folk songs and indigenous games during the festival.

The rhythmic beats of tribal drums, the vibrant colours of traditional attire, and the mesmerizing performances create an atmosphere that immerses visitors in the rich cultural heritage of Nagaland.

### **CULTURAL UNITY**

The Hornbill Festival serves as a unifying force for the Naga people, promoting a sense of solidarity and pride in their unique identity. With over 16 major tribes and numerous sub-tribes, Nagaland is a mosaic of cultures, and the festival becomes a symbolic platform where these diverse communities come together to celebrate their shared heritage. The event reinforces the idea that despite their differences, the Naga tribes are bound by common threads of history, tradition, and a collective identity.



## ECONOMIC IMPACT AND TOURISM

Beyond its cultural significance, the Hornbill Festival has become a major economic driver for Nagaland. The influx of tourists, both domestic and international, contributes significantly to the local economy. The festival has spurred the growth of hospitality, transportation and handicraft sectors, providing economic opportunities to the people of Nagaland. Moreover, the exposure generated by the festival has put Nagaland on the global tourism map, attracting visitors eager to explore the state's natural beauty and cultural richness.

## PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONS

In a rapidly changing world, where traditional customs often face the threat of extinction, the Hornbill Festival plays a crucial role in preserving and promoting Naga traditions. The festival provides a platform for the passing down of ancestral knowledge, skills and crafts from one generation to the next. Traditional practices, such as bamboo crafts, handloom weaving and indigenous culinary arts, are showcased, ensuring their continuity and passing them to the future generations.

## CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING

The Hornbill Festival acts as a bridge for cultural exchange, fostering a better understanding of Naga heritage among people from different parts of India and the world. Visitors get an opportunity to engage with the Naga way of life, witness traditional ceremonies, and partake in the festivities. This cultural exchange promotes mutual respect and appreciation, breaking down stereotypes and building connections that extend beyond geographical boundaries.

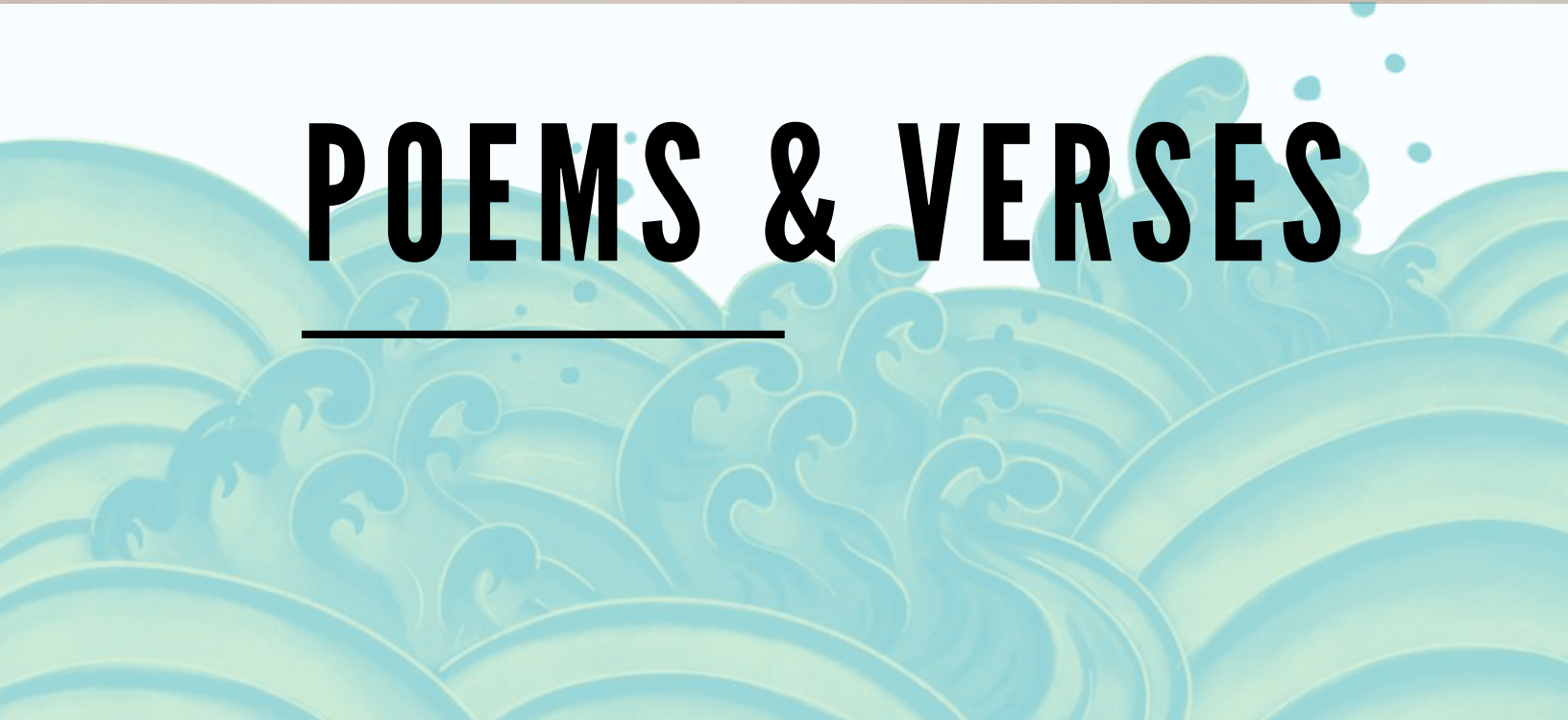
The Hornbill Festival stands as a vibrant testament to Nagaland's cultural richness, diversity and the resilient spirit of its people. Beyond the colourful displays and festive atmosphere, the event serves a higher purpose-preserving, promoting and celebrating the unique heritage of the Naga tribes. As the Hornbill Festival continues to evolve and capture the imaginations of people worldwide, it ensures that the cultural legacy of Nagaland remains not just a part of history but a living, thriving tradition for generations to come.





# **POEMS & VERSES**

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## BLISS FULL RETREAT

*Namegy Chomu*  
*B.A. (H) Sociology*

Amidst the winter morning,  
In the realm of Dawnlit mountains.  
A brisk breeze flows through the valley as chimneys  
burn continuously.  
I'm completely serene, savoring the crisp, refreshing air.  
I observe a stunning landmark,  
Bathed in the vibrant hues of the rising sun – almost  
overwhelmingly joyous.  
In this moment, I disconnect from everything,  
Embracing the view with no distractions.  
Time seems to dissolve into my elation,  
Accompanied by the coos of owls, signaling longer days  
ahead.  
It feels almost spiritual,  
A simple, unfiltered connection with nature,  
Providing more moments for reflection and  
appreciation.  
In my happy place, I sit, witnessing the valley come alive,  
Listening to the soothing sounds of the breeze and  
cuckoo birds.



## কেচা মাটিৰ গোক্ৰ

*Haridra Bora*

*B.A. (H) Geography, II Year*

এটা গোক্ৰ পালোঁ

চিনাকি!

বসন্তৰ নে?

ফাগুণৰ নে?

সোণসেৰীয়া

আঘোণৰ?

বসন্তৰ নহয়- নহয় ফাগুণৰো,

নহয় আঘোণৰ ৰূপোৱালী গোক্ৰ

বৰষুণ জাকৰ পাছত, কেঁচা মাটিৰ গোক্ৰ।

গোক্ৰটো বৰ চিনাকি,

মোৰ নাকে ভালদৰে চিনিলে তাক ॥

কৃষকৰ গাৰ ঘাম মিশ্ৰিত, শাওণৰ ভৰদুপৰীয়া

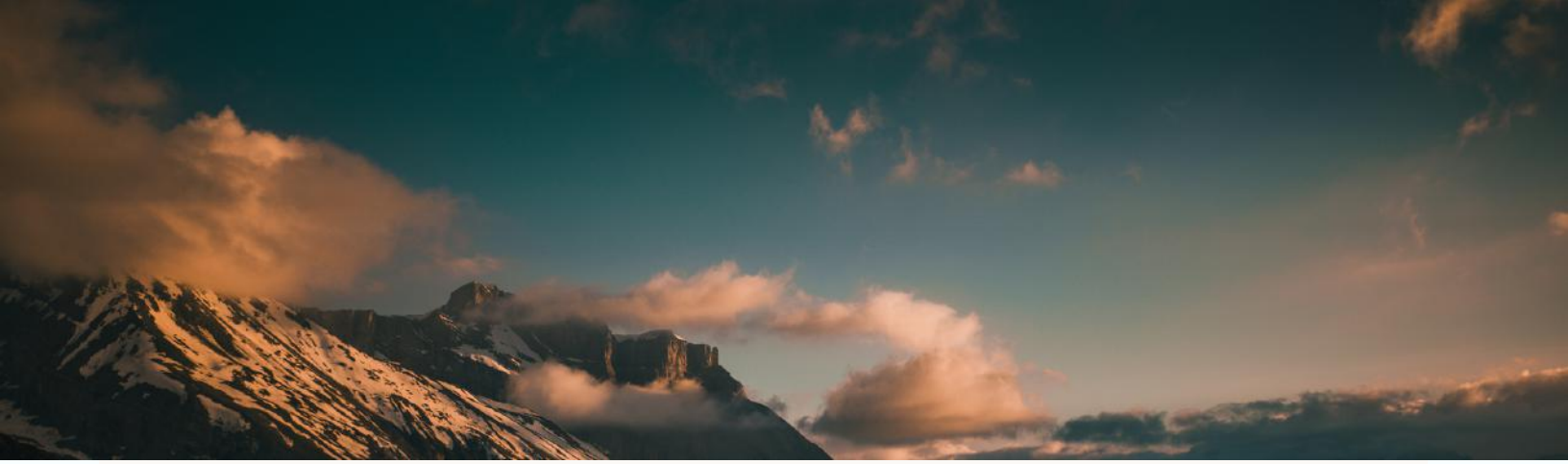
উঠন বুকু আৰু খামুচীয়া কঁকালত মেথনি মাৰি

ভুঁই ৰোৱা ৰমণীৰ, ডালিম গুটিয়া হাঁহিৰে

উপচি পৰিছে শাওণৰ পথাৰ-----

চিনাকী গোক্ৰ এটা নাকত লাগিছেহি।

*Whenever I travel to my hometown now, a one day visit to my grandparents' home is a must. Their house is situated amidst the green fields, surrounded by enormous trees and a pond. Everything about that place shouts the 'ethereal village life'. As I go to the backyard, the green fields, which now bear the change of time, remind me of the bygone days of my childhood.*



## A Symphony of Seven Sisters One Brother: Verses from Northeast India

*Chinglembi Haobam*

*B.Sc. (H) Botany, III Year*

In the heart of India's eastern grace,  
Lies a jewel of diverse space,  
Northeast, a land of beauty untold,  
Where nature's wonders gently unfold.

A tapestry of cultures, rich and deep,  
In this corner of the world, they meet,  
From misty hills to rivers so clear that gently glide,  
A land of enchantment where secrets hide.

Arunachal's peaks touch the sky so high,  
Majestic mountains that seem to touch the night.  
Assam's tea gardens, a lush green sea,  
Where leaves are plucked with care and glee.  
Meghalaya's abode of clouds, a mystical shroud,  
Cascading waterfalls sing songs so loud.

Mizoram's hills, with a vibrant hue,  
A kaleidoscope of colours, forever anew.  
Lush forests cloak the rugged terrain  
In Mizoram's heart, a verdant domain.  
In Manipur's embrace, nature's wonders bloom,  
A land of vibrant colours, where flowers consume.  
Where Loktak's floating islands sway and glide,  
And Manipuri dance, an art, with grace, takes pride.  
In Nagaland's hills, where tribes unite,  
A tapestry of cultures, a mesmerizing sight.

Nagaland's landscape, a lush green  
embrace,  
Terraced fields, in nature's grace.  
Tripura's palaces, a regal sight to see,  
A history of kings, a rich legacy.  
Sikkim's monasteries on mountain peaks,  
Where spirituality and tranquillity speak.

Biodiversity in its truest form,  
Flora and fauna in every storm,  
Rhinos roam in Assam's embrace,  
And Sangai deers in Manipur,  
Hornbills soar with elegance and grace.

The Brahmaputra's majestic flow,  
Through these lands, it does bestow,  
Life, sustenance, and a mystical thread,  
Binding hearts in its watery spread.

Northeast, a treasure, both old and new,  
A testament to nature's vibrant hue,  
In the embrace of the Himalayas' might,  
It stands as a beacon of India's light.  
Oh the Land of Seven Sisters and one  
brother, so dear  
A treasure trove of cultures, crystal clear,  
where diversity thrives.  
In the heart of this land, a nation survives.



## Echoes of Unrest: Manipur's Lament

*Melody Phijam*

*B.A. (H) Philosophy, III Year*

The ink-stained pages of my diary bearing a testimony  
To the virid beauty and scenic landscapes of my homeland—  
Of Loktak Lake, Shirui Hills and myriad festivities  
Painted with vibrant hues and diversity in peaceful accord;  
A place of solace for all people, young and old  
But now her splendor dimmed by shadows of unrest,  
A new chapter to be added about the stories held in her teardrops—  
On her verdant canvas, a portrait of disquiet takes shape  
Leaving thousands in shatters, a murder to the harmony that existed afore  
While the skies lose their blue to gray, no rain to douse the fire of hatred  
Even the air, once fragrant with the scent of belonging  
Faces a painful defeat from the smoke of burning houses,  
Unfolding a tapestry of horror in my homeland, Manipur.  
Laden with unspoken worries, the hills and plains exchange a fearful gaze  
Through the mortal eyes once bound by shared memories and dreams, sorrow cascades  
Into a stream of blood bringing mothers to the necropolis of their children  
While the living continue to walk astray in the somber arms of uncertainty  
As if wilfully surrendering to the tides of a monstrous tempest.  
My Manipur is in flames, she witnesses a bloodshed.  
Through the nine hills that jewel the heart of this land of lush  
Now reverberate the echoes of laments and mourning,  
Leaving behind tales of gloom, death embraces one after another  
For how long will her rivers bring home sanguine waters?  
For how long will her fields be soaked in tear glaciers?  
For the return of peace and her glory, I pray for an end to Manipur's grief.

# LOST INTO THE DIASPORA

*Bishwashri Majumdar*  
*BSc. (H) Physics, I Year*

Time flies,  
Pictures jitter,  
Memories clutter,  
Nothing matters now.

Have been away since,  
I left for college.  
From a small town up the hills  
Of the rendezvous east.

Naharlagun, my hometown,  
The warmth and the friendliness,  
Never shook the fact even once  
I was only a stranger to this unknown land.

I wonder how it would be now,  
Surely, the dense greenery has faded out  
And the bridge I once used  
To go to school has been shut down.

People there were miles ahead  
Of their time (it was the 1990s),  
Real-life K-dramas and night outs  
Shared equally by both genders.

I do miss those times,  
Where I grew up, such open societies  
Have started to perish as we  
Moved on towards the geographical west.

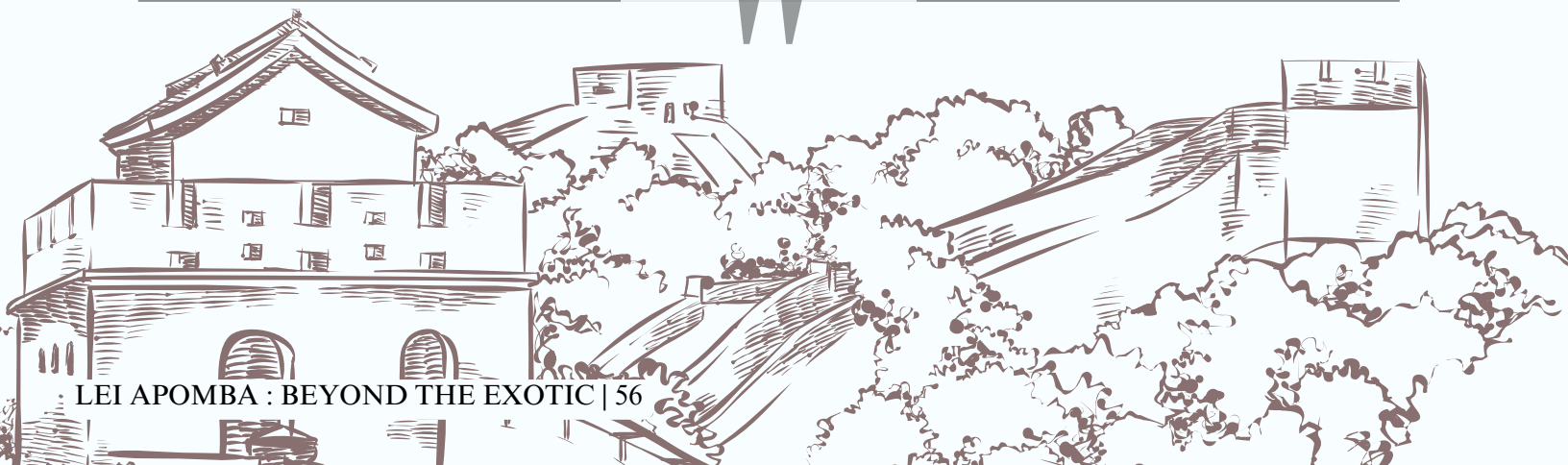
I am permanently settled now,  
With family, far in the east  
I have a soulmate now,  
And I fancy us together travelling back in time.

Us, alone, driving in a car,  
Into the serene world,  
Into my long-forgotten abode,  
The hiraeth rose inside of me.

This was her dream too,  
I decided to wait no longer,  
And we sat down to sketch a plan,  
Here's what she told me:

We'll go, weave our distant fables into one,  
Our silly, young, and innocent souls  
Is going to be sealed into a long-lost memory forever.

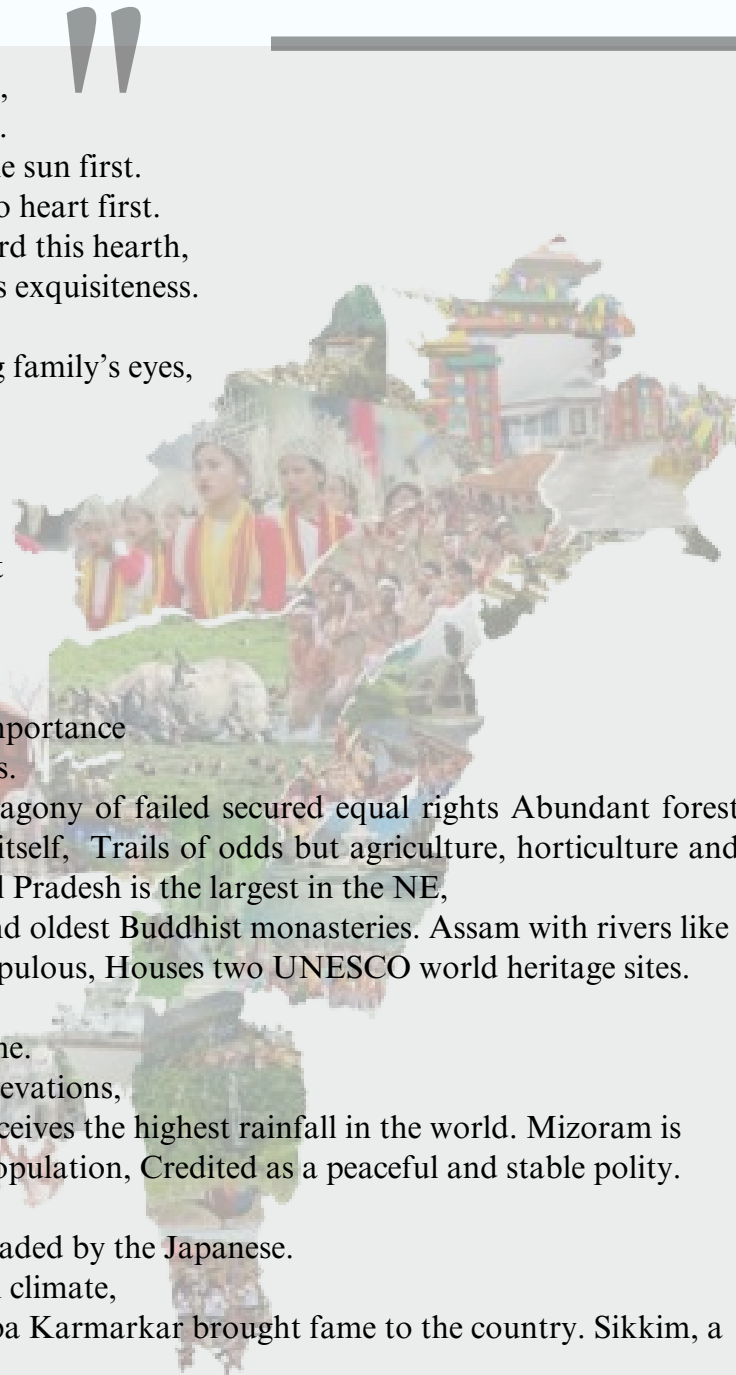
I'm starting afresh with you,  
"And you?", I asked him with a smile;  
"Will you be lost into your old diaspora?"



# ESSENCE OF NORTH EAST INDIA

*Bhawna Jha*

*B.Sc. (H) Chemistry, II Year*



A set of seven sister with a dear brother,  
No such ever found to be dear brethren.  
The land of beauty that lays down to the sun first.  
An undulating scenic beauty that gets to heart first.  
A land full of chirps, that incense upward this hearth,  
A crucial part of India that called for its exquisiteness.  
A culture that is symbolic of its kind,  
A no dowry tradition that opens the big family's eyes,  
A land with inter-cultural tribes.  
A land with more hills than valleys.  
Although the people look different  
That's an addition to the diversity.  
The indo Burma region extends the east  
With a great festivity.  
Fight with the misconception of aloof  
Northeast is the region of nations faith.  
Of greater geographical and political importance  
It is the land that invites nations' friends.  
Even though it had gone through the agony of failed secured equal rights  
Abundant forest resources, petroleum and tea manifest itself,  
Trails of odds but agriculture, horticulture and handloom continues to hike.  
Arunachal Pradesh is the largest in the NE,  
Tawang in its lap with India's largest and oldest Buddhist monasteries.  
Assam with rivers like Brahmaputra and Barak is the most populous, Houses two UNESCO world heritage sites.  
Manipur is the most beautiful state,  
Reportedly developed the polo- the game.  
Meghalaya is a plateau with different elevations,  
Known as "Scotland of the east" and receives the highest rainfall in the world.  
Mizoram is characterized by homogeneous tribal population, Credited as a peaceful and stable polity.  
Nagaland is a tribal state,  
Being the landmark of British India invaded by the Japanese.  
Tripura has a warm and humid tropical climate,  
Musician SD Burman and gymnast Dipa Karmarkar brought fame to the country.  
Sikkim, a small bowl-like state,  
distinguished by its Himalayan flora and fauna and Buddhist monasteries.  
Diverse ethnic origins of people inhabiting the eight states of the North East make it truly a wonderful region.  
Though the legends, myths, folklore and customs of the area are woven with those of the neighbouring regions of the nation.  
The patriotism of people is a festival  
Beyond the chicken neck they live with nationalism.

# THE CRAZE WITHIN

*Baishali Deb*

*B.A. (H) Geography, I Year*

I opened my eyes slowly and gently,  
The view in front of me amazed me intently;  
No, it was a shock which later turned to admiration,  
My gaze went from left to right, in love with God's creation.

I saw the sky pink, and clouds in an artistic motif,  
And the sea was green, the waves being the chief;  
I could feel the depth of the waters—oh, so intense!  
Surely the horizon is breathtaking and full of pretense.

The place was empty, and being the only visitor,  
But wait! Here's someone gaping without an utter;  
I turned around curiously and was forced to close my eyes,  
Profound golden rays were looming; I adjusted my view to rise.

I saw a damsel; she was not fair but still beautiful,  
I adore her, for she smiled at me, and it was graceful;  
We exchanged no words, but just smiled casually!  
Everything was so nice and fresh, I felt at ease naturally.

But my bliss wasn't everlasting; dark clouds came and peace left no trail,  
The once comforting breeze in a flash turned into a gale!  
Complete darkness surrounded me; there was no hope for glow,  
Black was at its peak; I was sinking and sinking; where? I don't know!

I opened my eyes again, but this time hastily and swiftly,  
A pillow lay next to me in my bed; so it was a dream; I sat back stiffly.  
I mused all about the panorama, beauty and tranquillity I had left behind;  
But then the sudden experience of violence and ferocity showed up in my mind.

With the passing of time, the memories of my dream are fading away.  
Just like that, our human values and morals are dwindling in dismay!  
Nevertheless, I had fun experiencing an unrealistic reality,  
And now my thoughts are pondering a strange morality...

# TIMBER GODS

*Nikita Pegu*

*B.A. (H) Sociology, I Year*

*(This poem delves into the issue of displacement of tribal communities from their place of residence and how it affects them. It's reflective of industrial projects that take place in Odisha and other mineral-rich areas and their negative implications for tribal communities in terms of habitation, economy, identity and the rest. )*

Your powers have unnerved me, I will admit.  
Save face with paper dreams but you're still a disgrace.  
At daybreak, the chainsaw leaves a bitter aftertaste.  
My moons never came,  
I had to make myself scarce.  
This is no home for the spirit of the green and the sun,  
But seven summers ago, I swear there were happy sounds from home-grown fires.  
What a unique crime!  
The past, I won't romanticise.  
But the glory of my land and people cannot be denied.  
Sadly, honest stories about home have no stage in a world full of spiels.  
So I'll save them for a better day.  
This winter, there will be no homes or fires.  
Just dour dinners and plastic hope at darkened factories.  
Sir, I have so many qualms.  
How do I keep my ménage warm?  
At the risk of sounding like a cynic, Machiavelli was on the mark, I think.  
The answer to prosperity can't be destruction.  
If those foundries can't feed my child, then what's the point?  
If the pay can't sustain a starved old woman, then what's the point?  
Oh Timber Gods, nature will one day avenge.  
Preachers of humanity, realpolitik or whatever you like to call it never cared for us.  
And the lawyers, the lawyers won't open their mouths till someone gives them the heavy  
coffers.  
So many are oblivious, the rest are quiet.  
It's this indifference that kills a family of three.  
With or without Ghurye, the plan was always to be in the saddle.  
You won. Cleverly, slowly and then all at once.  
The good of most is not the good of all.  
Now this isn't some kind of resignation, just a reflection.  
Hope is the distant light that warms our makeshift beds.  
Your powers have unnerved me, I'll admit.  
But life for me has just begun and I won't quit.



## Under Smoke and Fire

*Hazel Pamei*

*B.A. (H) English, II Year*

my home is not where my heart is.

my heart is bound by bamboo and by strings of stones.  
my heart sings of chains,  
woven by rivers of old.

my heart, my heart.

my mind seeps of rain and smoke,  
of meat and of charcoal.  
my mind is bound by fae and by fortune foretold.

my mind, my mind.

my home is of dust, rain, sundew,  
of storm and hail,  
of kittens and grassfields,  
of wrinkles on my grandmother's hands and eyes,  
of the river banks and tents I remember not laying in,  
of the bewilderment of the children as they witness a city girl walking by.

my home is not where my heart is,  
for my home is in sky up above  
and my heart is buried with the stories of my grandfather,  
buried under smoke and fire.

# Usha and Aniruddha

*Trandali Kashyap*  
*B.A. Multidisciplinary, I Year*

I vividly remember the warm evenings at my grandmother's house in Nagaon, surrounded by the comforting aroma of চাহ (tea). As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a golden glow, my আইতা (grandmother), a repository of cultural tales, would gather me and my sister around.

It was during one of these enchanting storytelling sessions that she told us about the captivating love story of Usha and Aniruddha which I present below.

Usha, the daughter of the powerful demon king Banasura, was an exquisite beauty. Meanwhile, Aniruddha, the grandson of Lord Krishna, was a prince of the Yadava dynasty known for his handsome appearance and valour. The story unfolds when Usha dreams of Aniruddha, whom she has never seen but falls deeply in love with.

In her dreams, Usha sees a handsome youth and becomes enamoured with him. The dream is so vivid and intense that Usha's love for the mysterious prince grows stronger each night. Intrigued by these dreams, Usha confides in her friend Chitrlekha, who possesses magical powers and the ability to draw portraits.

Chitrlekha, determined to help her friend find the mysterious lover from her dreams, uses her magical artistry to sketch the faces of various princes from neighbouring kingdoms. Usha recognises Aniruddha's face among the sketches, and Chitrlekha sets out to find him.

Chitrlekha employs her magical powers to transport Aniruddha from Dwarka, the city of Lord Krishna, to Usha's palace. Aniruddha, initially bewildered by the sudden change in surroundings, soon realises the reason for his presence in Usha's chambers.

Banasura, upon discovering Aniruddha's presence, becomes furious. He is a devout follower of Lord Shiva and considers Aniruddha's connection to the Yadava dynasty a threat. A fierce battle ensues between Banasura and Aniruddha.

As the conflict intensifies, news reaches Lord Krishna in Dwarka about Aniruddha's predicament. Lord Krishna, along with Balarama, rushes to Banasura's kingdom to mediate and resolve the conflict.

Understanding the deep love between Usha and Aniruddha, Lord Krishna persuades Banasura to accept their union. The story concludes with the marriage of Usha and Aniruddha, symbolising the triumph of love over adversity.

Artwork By: Kunga Oetso  
B.A. (H) Political Science, II Year





# **MOVIE REVIEWS**

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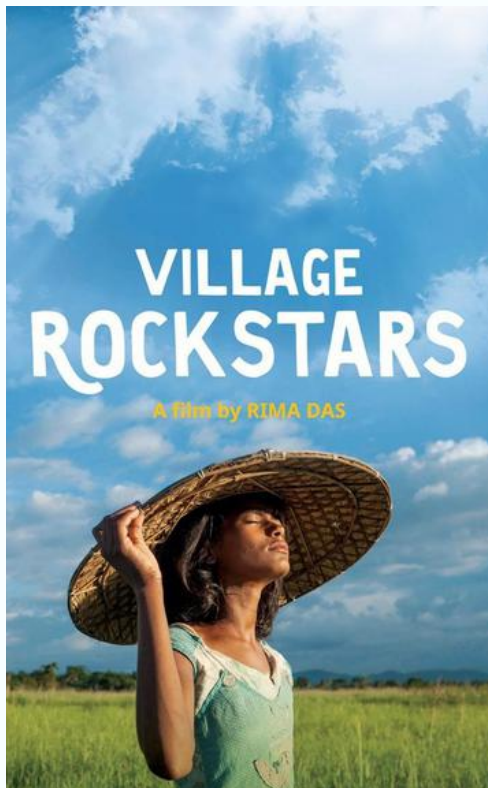
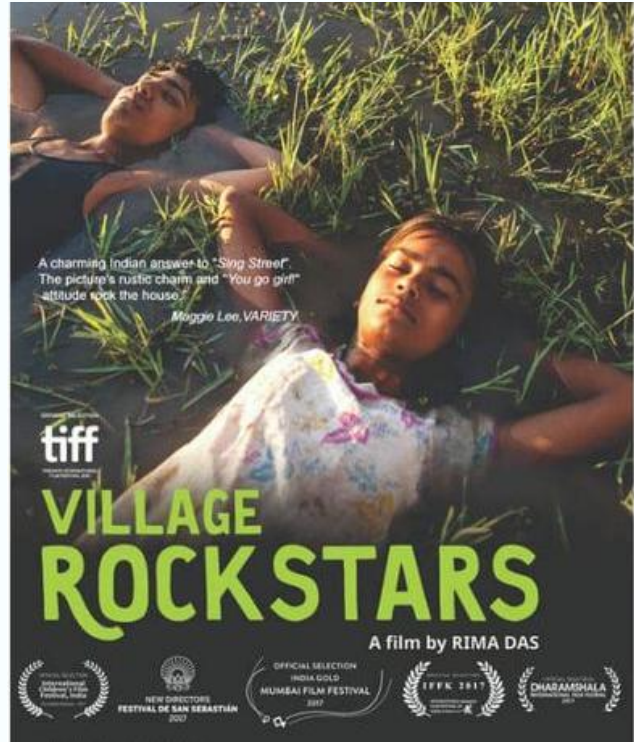
# “Village Rockstars: Resilience to Rock”

*Didikshya Kakoty*

*B.A. (H) Geography, II Year*

“Village Rockstars” is a critically acclaimed film directed by Rima Das. Set amidst the heart of rural Assam, this 2017 film presents a heartwarming and authentic story about struggle and adolescent aspirations.

This slow-paced movie, free from any dramatic plot twists, brings out the monotony as well as the inescapability of life in rural Assam. The lack of a conventional, linear narrative might be challenging for some viewers, but it adds to the film’s organic and raw feel. The movie successfully and authentically portrays Assamese village life, through its stunning visuals and a poignant storyline. It encapsulates the simplicity, resilience and vibrant spirit of the people, their customs and the serene landscape of the region.



Another feature of the film which sets it apart from its counterparts: it’s raw and unfiltered cast. The roles have been solely assigned to the village folk of Das’s village-Kalardiya near Chhaygaon. It is a one-crew film, owing to the fact that the surname of almost the entire cast is ‘Das’. This brings an incredible sense of authenticity and realism to the story.

The movie follows Dhunu, a young girl in rural Assam, who passionately dreams of owning a guitar and forming a rock band, despite poverty and societal constraints. She lives with her mother, older brother and a pet goat in a shanty hut beside their paddy fields, their sole source of income. During a brief exchange between Dhunu and her mother, it is known that her father had drowned in the floods because he was not capable, or in the mother’s words, ‘dared’ to learn swimming. That must have been the reason why she diligently taught her daughter to swim in a local pond.

Shot over a period of two years, Rima Das successfully captures the floods that rampage through the state every year, as well as the woes it brings along with it. The submerged trees, huts, swimming cattle as well as dingy boats loaded with belongings, all stand as symbols of the devastating nature of the flood. However, Das also manages to highlight a different and contrary side of it- joyful, naïve children playing in the floodwaters, oblivious to the fact that they are playing in the same waters that possibly might have robbed their families of their livelihood. The spectacular cinematography depicts that even in the face of loss and tragedy, nature tends to have a mind of its own and presents itself with such beauty and serenity that surprises its beholders.

The dynamics of gender in rural Assam is also reflected aptly through the film. The scene showing Dhunu's 'tuloni biya' or 'growing up wedding', when she gets her period for the first time, is in stark contrast to the ones where she's seen running around and climbing trees with the boys. The ladies of the neighbourhood make Dhunu go through a series of immaculate rituals and warn her that the time has come for Dhunu to transform into a 'woman' and 'her days of carelessly hanging from trees are over.' However, she is seen doing the exact thing which she was warned against the next day, highlighting Dhunu's carefree as well as daring nature.

Though Dhunu was saving up to buy a guitar for herself, she selflessly gave up the meagre sum of money to her mother to help her in any way possible during the floods. This further adds depth to Dhunu's character, showing her authenticity as well as sincerity. However, in the end, when Dhunu's desire to own a guitar seems like an unattainable dream, her mother steps in as a beacon of hope and resilience and buys the guitar herself. It's a powerful moment that showcases the depth of a mother's love and her commitment to nurturing a child's dreams and ambitions.

Notably, the film has made history as the first Assamese film selected to be India's official entry for the Best Foreign Language Film category at the Oscars, which underlines the film's universal appeal and its ability to resonate with audiences worldwide. 'Village Rockstars' Is a cinematic experience which has touched audiences worldwide. Through its emotional depth and authentic portrayal of rural life, this film leaves an indelible mark, showcasing the power of resilience, dreams, ambitions as well as the unwavering support of a mother's love.



# “AXONE”

*Lalrinzuali*

*B.A. (H) Sociology, III year*

"Axone," directed by Nicholas Kharkongor and released in 2019, intricately delves into the lives of individuals from Northeast India who find themselves navigating the bustling lanes of Delhi. The film draws its name from a traditional dish, the pungent fermented soybean preparation called Axone. At its core, the narrative revolves around the experiences of migrants from the Northeast, highlighting the challenges they encounter in a city far from their homeland.

One of the film's standout features is its commitment to cultural representation. It shines a spotlight on the lives of people from Northeast India, a demographic often overlooked or underrepresented in mainstream Indian cinema. Through the lens of the characters attempting to prepare Axone for a friend's wedding, the movie unravels a rich tapestry of cultural intricacies, showcasing traditions and customs that may be unfamiliar to many.

Thematically, "Axone" bravely tackles pressing social issues. It doesn't shy away from addressing discrimination and stereotyping faced by individuals from the Northeast, offering a nuanced exploration of the challenges associated with living in a region where cultural differences may lead to misunderstandings and prejudices.

Nicholas Kharkongor's directorial prowess comes to the forefront as he skillfully weaves social commentary into a narrative that seamlessly blends humour and emotion. This delicate balance allows the film to maintain a lighthearted tone while addressing serious issues, making it accessible and relatable to a broad audience.



While the film has received acclaim, some critics have noted potential shortcomings. Some express a desire for a more nuanced plot, while opinions on the effectiveness of the humour vary. Nevertheless, "Axone" stands as a testament to the power of cinema in humanizing its characters. The audience is prompted to empathize with the struggles and triumphs of the protagonists, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Northeastern communities.

The film also ventures into the realm of mental health, portraying moments of vulnerability and stress experienced by those subjected to racism. Additionally, "Axone" explores the communal aspect of food, showcasing how it becomes a shared experience that not only provides a sense of place but also serves as a means to bridge tensions among migrants.

In its totality, "Axone" is a thought-provoking cinematic endeavour. Beyond its narrative, it serves as a broader commentary on cultural diversity and the necessity for understanding in a multicultural society. The film prompts viewers to reflect on their preconceptions and biases, encouraging a more inclusive perspective. Ultimately, "Axone" is a testament to the ability of film to promote empathy, foster inclusivity, and contribute to societal dialogue on complex and relevant issues.



## Chuckles and Kicks: The Comedy in Kung Fu

*Udeshna Borgohain*

*B.Sc. (H) Physics, II Year*

Amidst all the Assamese films that have come and gone, there was one that hit the theatres on a Friday dated September 21st 2013, that went on to achieve 'cult hit' status in the state. Shot on a shoestring budget of less than a lakh, the film had garnered a loyal legion of fans even before its release-the hype was uncanny! Unfazed by the limited access to technology back in 2011, the entire film was shot on a Canon 550D HD camera, which in itself is laudable. With a 125-minute run time, in the words of the director, the film was not supposed to deliver any message as such but was meant to entertain and it does so amply. The plot revolves around Charlie 'an ordinary boy from Guwahati with a delicate stomach', his girlfriend and several madcap characters.

The entire cast was one big extended family, quite literally. The deoris (maternal family of the director) make up ninety per cent of the cast and crew. Here's a guy who would break into

musical notes amidst training, a guy eager to try out a few kicks on onlookers and passers-by because he landed his first white belt, and a girl threatening a boy that she'll have him kidnapped by her boyfriend and thrown away in the jungles of Singapore. From the uncle who has been teaching martial arts for twenty years to a young chap who has set out to become a 'number one under eighteen don', the movie sure has given us characters that stayed. In between all the conversations in broken Hindi, these are normal guys, podgy and not, fighting in their hoodies and sweatpants in courtyards and grasslands. As such, besides the humour, the enthralling action sequences are in perfect justice, putting the Kungfu in the 'Local Kungfu'.



The one feature that stands out has to be how the director managed to shoot a full-feature film on such limited resources. The creators planned five to six fights and strung them together in an entertaining story. Even though there was a script that was followed at all times one can't help but notice how most of the acting looked improvised and indeed most of it was. All such changes were made along the way depending on real-time situations, ideas or gags that friends and family came up with or the director picked up. The song, 'Number one under eighteen don' is an outcome of the same. Although it is such a slapdash comedy, as the director said, there are elements in the film which point his anger at certain social evils, all let out in a comic rather than a preachy manner.

With all that's said and done, the makers weren't unaware of the fact that screening a local film alongside the colossal budget and star power of Bollywood had its own set of challenges. Naturally, the film had a bad run with a disappointing turnout and its sales couldn't even begin to compensate for all the distribution and promotion costs. However, according to an article in the Times of India, the film hit a barrier in the general perception of Assamese films as cliched, dull and even boring and offered hope for the allegedly dying Assamese film industry and in due time it became the second Assamese film to have a nationwide release. From contemplating on a 4GB/8GB SD card for the shoot camera owing to budgetary issues to being dubbed as India's first Kungfu film, it had come a long way.

With the teaser of 'Local Kungfu 3' already released, the team is gearing up for the next big film to add to the franchise. Ahead of its release, this is an ode to a decade of a film that gave us punchlines that became a part of local lingo and hilarious antics that would still tickle our funny bones. 'Local Kungfu' is an emotion, a laugh riot and is undoubtedly a movie worth watching.



*Photographed By:  
Milu Maria Jose*

*Beki River, Manas  
National Park, Assam*



*Photographed By:  
Milu Maria Jose*

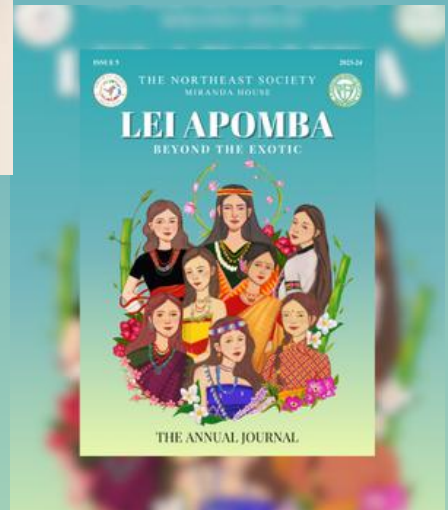
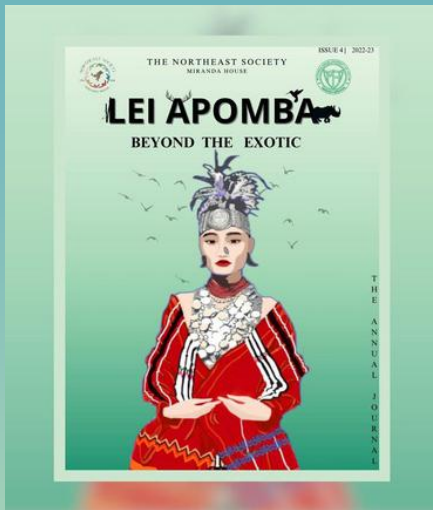
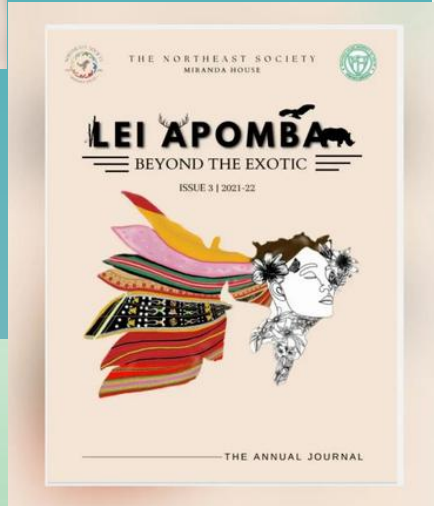
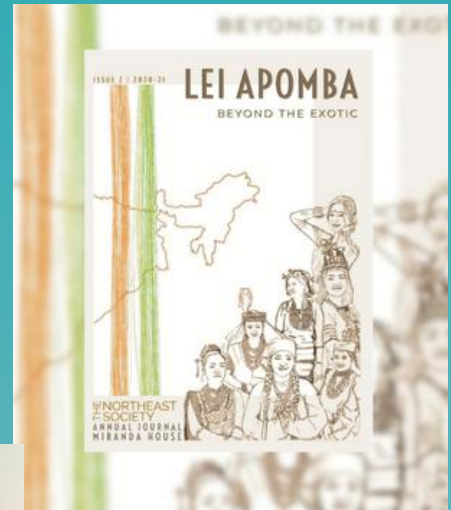
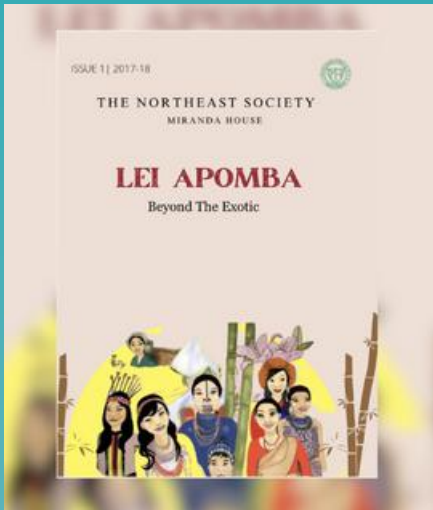
*One-Horned Rhino in  
Manas National Park,  
Assam*

# DAWKI

Meghalaya



*Artwork By: Navyasha Sarania  
B.A. (H) Political Science, I Year*



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