



Orbis



To **know** your world better

Geography Department
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Editor's Note

It is a delight to introduce the first issue of "Orbis", a publication that carries the soul of the geography department. A lot of people and their hard work went behind every page of this issue to ensure its perfection. Our main motive with the publication is to remove the cliché of geography being limited to memorising locations on maps or identifying temperature conditions of an area. Geography is the culmination of man, earth, and the intricate bond shared between the two. Through this publication, we want to show the various aspects of geography and how even the most abstract of things are always meaningful in the greater context. From the importance of the Himalayas from a geographical and a cultural aspect, to dance playing a role in highlighting a place in the world map, to travelling a city through a friend's eyes, to shedding light on an issue of our earth that is not that known in the world. These are a few examples of the things that are encased in this issue and will be in future issues too. We hope that through our publication everyone can see the riveting and engrossing nature of Geography and begin to appreciate its potential.

Also, I will like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy journey of 365 and one-fourth days around the Sun!

Thank you.

Sanjana Barooah

Class 11

RELIGION OF GEOGRAPHY OR GEOGRAPHY OF RELIGION

Religion and Geography are very divergent in nature in current times and one is often inclined to believe that they have nothing to do with each other. That is a myth. The fact is that they are inter-related in myriad of ways from time immemorial.

Early man was realised that his life was most affected by phenomena of nature like the sun, the rain, the wind or the overflow of a river. Hence the earliest religions gave personality to sky, wind, sun, earth, etc., and think of them as beings of some sort actuated by such motives as they themselves entertain. We have found that evidence in Greek, Roman and Hindu mythologies. According to Max Muller "religion grows out of man's sense of the Infinite as awakened by natural objects".

The annual overflow of a river was a matter of utmost consequence to the people of Egypt. The cause of the periodical rise of the Nile was a mystery, but the people knew that their lives depended upon it, and the adoration of the Nile inevitably became a part of their religion. Same was the case with the rivers in India. But there was no such river to influence the religion of Palestine.

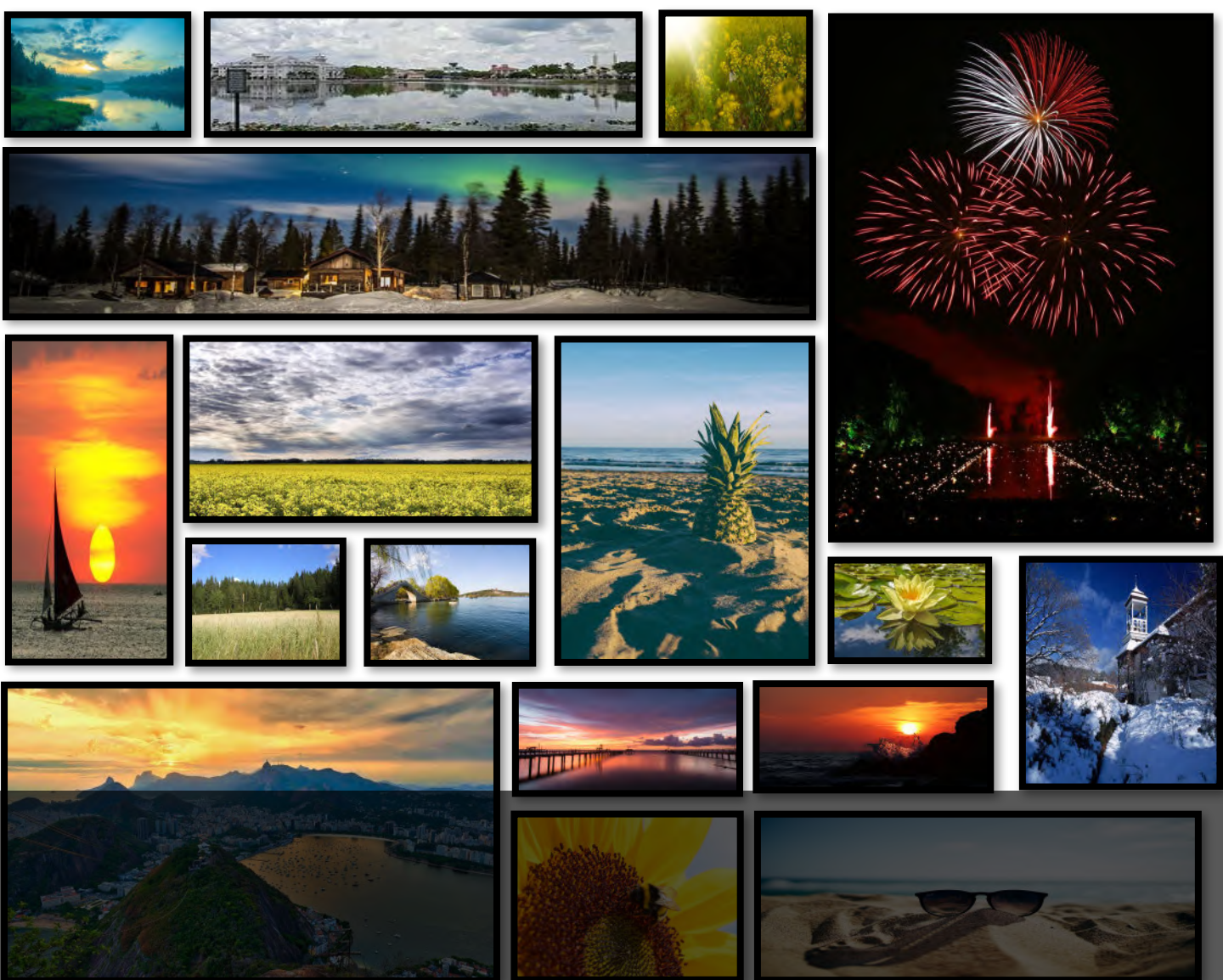
The occurrence or the failure of the monsoon rains is a matter of plenty or of famine to the people of India, and these seasonal rains could scarcely escape playing a part in the early religions of that country, but to the aborigines of the Amazon Valley, where the rain is so frequent so as to be an annoyance and the rain giver might easily be held in disfavour.

The metaphors used in religious teachings and doctrines are always related to the environment from where it originated. Jesus said, "I am the vine; ye are the branches." He probably would not have chosen that metaphor had he not lived in a grape growing region. Referring to his followers he said, "Feed my lambs," "The sheep shall be separated from the goats," "I am the good shepherd and know my sheep," "The shepherd giveth his life for his sheep," "I will send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves," and many such similar expressions. It refers to the animal husbandry practised in the region around Palestine.

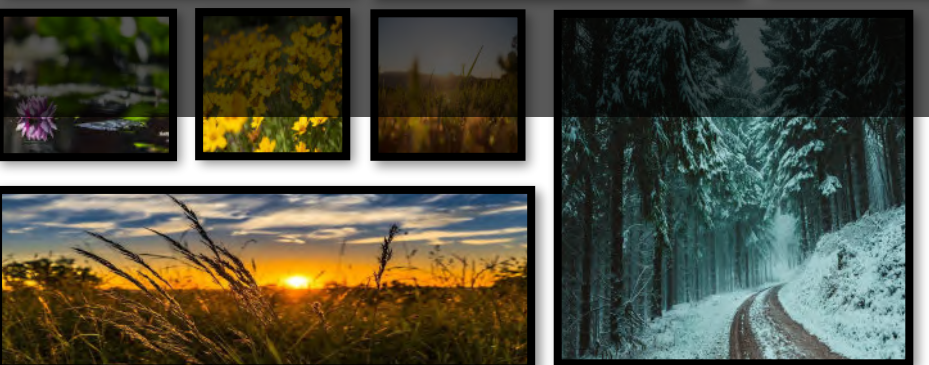
The reverse also evident in present times. Religion leaves an imprint on landscape, through culture and lifestyle. Religious structures - such as places of worship, and other sacred sites - dominate many landscapes. There are many ways in which religion affects people and places.

The fact is that geography rarely appears in books on religion, and religion rarely appears in books on geography. However, religion continues to be an intrinsic part in the study of Human Geography and it has not been overlooked during current times. Much research has been done and articles were published in journals on the topic. Highly divergent in nature the two topics has seen the light of a growing relationship.

Sahana Majumdar



Travel Vlog



Darjeeling



High up in the hills, lies a beautiful town, once the British summer capital, Darjeeling. The best way of getting there is either driving along the scenic winding roads or going uphill on the heritage toy train, chugging and whistling its way up allowing you to soak in all that nature has to offer. My reasons for going to Darjeeling were not touristy though. It's where my grandparents live. Very few get to see the town the way I do. Yes, the view you get off the Himalayan range is spectacular and incomparable.

The award-winning Himalayan Zoological Park houses all important animals living in that terrain apart from being a successful breeding centre for the endangered snow leopard and red panda. The Himalayan Mountaineering institute exhibits all the things brought back and the equipment used, by the first-ever conquerors of Mt. Everest, Tenzing Norway, and Edmund Hillary. There are old Buddhist monasteries to

visit and then there is that mandatory visit to the tea estates.

However, this is not the Darjeeling I want to share. The heartbeat of Darjeeling is in its people. The musically inclined and the soccer-crazy town. So stylish are its inhabitants that they can put our very own Bollywood divas to shame. Never have I been to a town where everyone knows everyone. You feel at home everywhere you go, be it the cafes, the touristy places or the streets. One look at you and all the dots get connected. Some will even know your forefathers and are very capable of drawing your family chart the way you also never knew.

Then, there is that one thing that connects all. If people were its heartbeat then this had to be the heart- the world famous momos of Darjeeling. Never did I let a day go by without treating myself to a plate full of steaming hot momos. I can even smell it as I write.

- Saumya Jindal

Class 11

Cherrapunji



Nohkalikai falls



With its abundant waterfalls and breathtaking views, Cherrapunji is a must-visit destination in the northeast. Also referred to as Sohra by the locals, Cherrapunji is located at a distance of 56 km from Shillong. It is a subdivision town in the East Khasi Hills district in Meghalaya.

The title of 'The wettest place on Earth' was held by Cherrapunji but has now been taken over by Mawsynram which is located 80 km away. It was very ironic to not witness any sort of rainfall when I visited the town but that was only because it was in the month of November. The town does not see much rainfall during the winters hence most of the waterfalls are dry during this time. If you wish to see rolling brown meadows and go hiking, I would suggest visiting between the months of October-February.

Winter in Cherrapunji is very pleasant and the chances of rain ruining your planned events for the day are bare minimum. But if you wish to see the waterfalls in their full form and lush green meadows then I would suggest you visit between the months of June-September. Cherrapunji has a very minimal population of locals, estimated to

be 14,816 in 2011, but the number of tourists still remains at a high. The people of the town live in small houses and lead very simple yet fulfilling lives. Children playing in the local football fields, some taking a dip in the stream, adults sitting around a bonfire or drying clothes on the rocks, everything has a very peaceful aura to it. The best way to get to Cherrapunji is to drive.

There are smooth functioning roads all the way from Guwahati to Cherrapunji . Along with the comfortable roads, another reason why I would suggest driving is because of the very scenic route. Rolling hills on either side and wildflowers growing all along the road, it would be a total miss if you decided to fly. Nevertheless, an option of flying is available from Mroi airport near Shillong. On the way to Cherrapunji, you are required to pass through Shillong. At this time of year, towards the end of November, Shillong has cherry blossoms blooming all over the town so you can imagine how gorgeous it must have been to drive through such a beautiful sight. Dawki is a very famous attraction in Cherrapunji estimated to be around 35kms from the city center. Boating facilities are available in the lake but in recent months the facility has been suspended due to the situation of Covid-19. The crystal clear water allows you to swim in it as well. I suggest that you do not plan anything else on the day you decide to visit Dawki, since it will take up most of your time. The double-decker living root bridge is also well known. The area in which it is located is famous for root bridges made of Indian Rubber Tree, but the Double Decker Bridge is the most famous of all due to its large size. It is located 25kms from the city centre. If you wish to visit the water falls, the must see ones include the Nohkalikai Falls and the Seven Sisters falls. The Nohkalikai Falls are the fourth highest waterfalls in the world. between the evergreen rainforest of the Khasi Hill, the falls plunge into a lagoon that is almost as blue as the afternoon sky. The Seven Sisters falls, also known as Nohsngithiang Falls, is called so because it has seven segments of waterfalls. These falls are rain feed hence the best time to visit is during the monsoons season between June and September to see its full beauty. There is a food stall right next to the viewpoint in case you wish to indulge in a cup of hot coffee or some freshly made Maggie while you enjoy the scenic beauty. For accommodation, I would recommend the Jiva Resort and the Polo Orchid Resort. The rooms of both these resorts give you a truly magnificent view. Hence, you can choose your accommodation according to your preference in facilities.

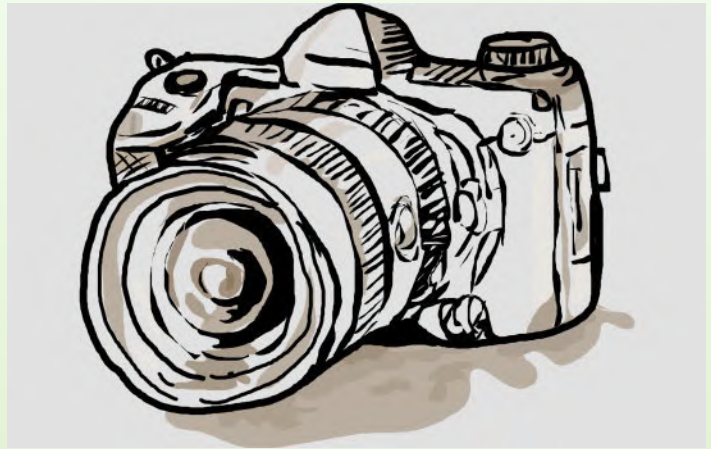
In my opinion, Cherrapunji is a perfect place not only for a one-day visit but also for a long stay. If you like adventure and appreciate natural beauty then I truly recommend this town. It gives you a break from the crowded streets and filthy city air. Cherrapunji should definitely be on your travel list!

- Aditi Thekedath (class11)



Dwiki Lake

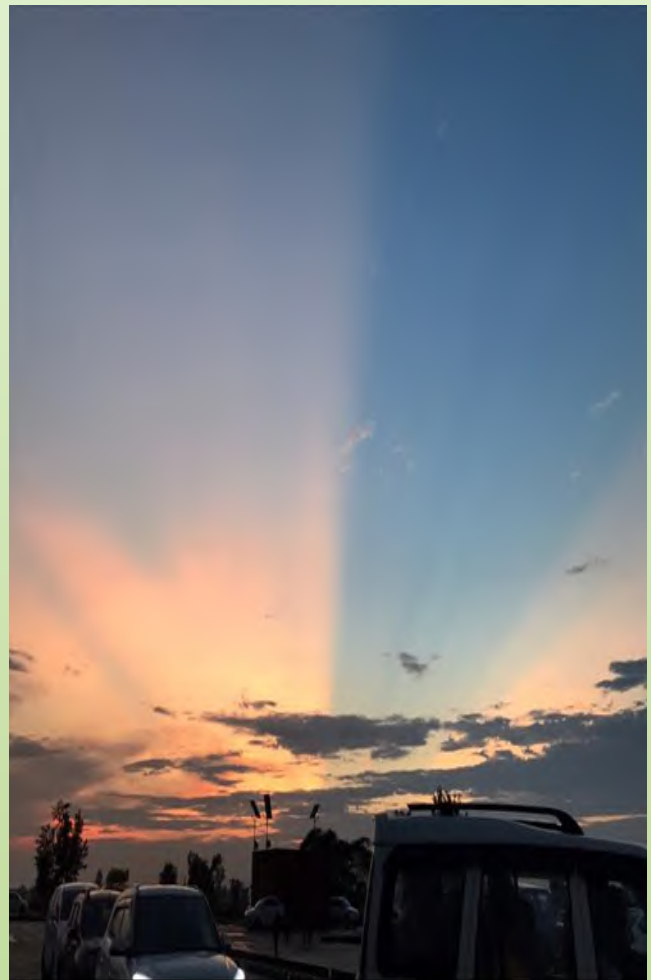
Imaginibus



The way towards the Valley of Flowers, Uttarakhand : Luqmaan Ahmed (Class 11)



Calangute Beach, Goa:
Nitya Saraf (Class 12)



Attari, Wagah border:
Saumya Jindal (Class 11)



Ms. Mahfuza Rahman has graduated with Geography honours from Cotton College, Guwahati. She has done her Masters from Guwahati University and was awarded a PhD in Medical Geography in 1982. She was the head of the Geography department of Cotton College, Guwahati. She has also served as the Executive Director of Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi which is a development support organisation operating in 14 states in India for four years.

In Conversation with.....

1. *How has your journey as a geographer been?*

My journey as a Geographer has been wonderful, more because of the field experiences that helped me to have a better understanding of the ground realities to see the world from different perspectives, as I moved from being a geography student to being a college teacher with 33 years in the field. I learned about the various branches of the discipline like Physical, Human, Social, Environmental, Political, Historical Geography, etc. My Ph.D. in Medical Geography (now known as Health Geography) was unheard of then, and I was the first in North East India to work in this field.

2. *What are the Career prospects in Geography in a country like India?*

Career prospects in India for Geographers are many. Students get absorbed in various areas other than teaching, like Town and Country Planning, Population Studies, Urban Planning, Hydrologists, Tourism Sector, Environmental Consultants, Cartographers, Rural Development Officers, Social sector, Climate Mitigation sector and as GIS experts. In recent years, geospatial technology has added a crucial dimension to geography. As a result, the job market for geographers is changing as well.

3. *What is, according to you the importance of studying Geography?*

Geographic literacy is a matter of national security so that the weak state of geographic knowledge constitutes a serious perhaps critical disadvantage in an increasingly competitive world. Geographic insights can be crucial in addressing geopolitical problems, they are also needed in decision making in spheres ranging from the cultural to the economic. People's lack of geographic understanding regarding North East India is a good example. Geography tends to come up with unexpected linkages- between climate change and historical events, between natural phenomena and political developments, between environment and behaviour – unmatched in other fields.

4. *How will you encourage and motivate someone wishing to pursue this subject?*

Geographers are especially well placed to assess the complicated relationships between human societies and natural environments. Geography's umbrella is large. Allowing geographers to pursue widely varying research. Geography as a subject broadens your horizon and trains you to face challenges in any environment. You will never regret pursuing geography as a subject. I worked as CEO for some time in a development support organisation and travelled across India into remote areas, and my background as a geographer helped greatly.

Interview conducted by Sanjana Barooah

Baghjan Fire 2020 (Assam gas and oil leak)

On 27 May 2020, a natural gas blowout occurred in Oil India Limited's Baghjan Oilfield in Tinsukia district of Assam, India. The blowout took place at Well No. 5 at the Baghjan Oil Field, resulting in the leak of natural gas. The leaking well subsequently caught fire, resulting in deaths, large-scale local evacuations, and environmental damage to the nearby Dibru-Saikhowa National Park.

On the 9th of June, unbelievable scenes of the fire that started at Baghjan gas well - 5 started flashing on television screens as it incinerated everything that stood on its way. Oil India vehicles and equipment parked at the site worth crores of rupees, small tea gardens, betel nut trees, vegetable gardens, houses, cattle, shops among others were reduced to ashes. It seemed like a stream of molten lava had come out from a volcano that had turned everything to ashes on its path. It was a scary sight with flames reaching for the sky going up a lot higher than the tallest of trees. The fumes created heat waves, releasing gaseous compounds like carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, oxides of sulphur and nitrogen, and toxic hydrocarbons. Smoke emitted by the flames reduced visibility and added particulate matter off different size ranges, which affected the airborne microorganisms, avian fauna, and respiratory health of nearby residents.



However, the ill-effects of the blowout were not just limited to health hazards. Agriculture, fishing, and animal rearing are the main occupation of most people in this area. But due to the oil spill, agricultural land became infertile and consequently farming will not be possible for many years. Fishes and domestic animals died in large numbers because oil had contaminated grasslands and water bodies.

On 21 June 2020, Assam's State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) ordered Oil India Limited to shut down all production at the Baghjan Oil Field, following an investigation that revealed that the company had begun drilling operations at the site, without obtaining prior environmental clearances. The SPCB also found that the company had failed to comply with continuing reporting and certification requirements under environmental laws.

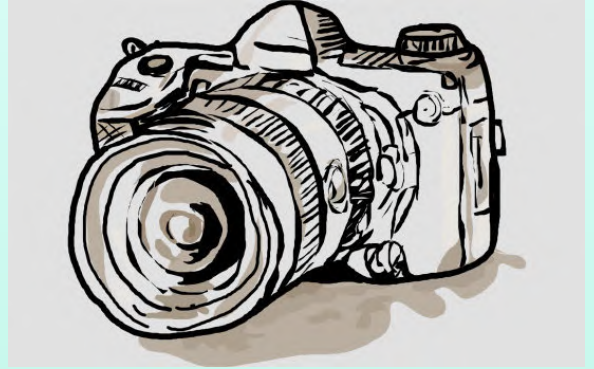
Oil India managed to douse the fire at the wellhead in August. The company brought in experts from Singapore, the US, and Canada to contain the fire and the well was blocked off by a process called snubbing, in which the well was laced with cement-laced chemical mud. The damaged gas well at Baghjan in Assam was successfully 'killed' and the blaze was fully doused after over five months of blowout.

- *Kaustav Garg (Class 11)*





Imaginibus



Dodital Trek, Uttarakhand: Luqmaan Ahmed (Class 11)



On the way to Meghalaya: Adarsh Goswami (Class 11)



Bhalukpong district of Arunachal Pradesh: Luqmaan Ahmed (Class 11)



The Himalayan Mountains

the highest mountain range in the world, are the result of tectonic plate motions that collided India into Tibet. These mountains, referred to as the Third Pole, are the source of some of Asia's major rivers like the Indus, the Yangtze, Ganga, Yamuna, Brahmaputra, etc. Within India, the Himalayas are divided into the Outer (Shiwaliks), Lesser (Himachal), and the Great Himalayas (Himadri). Mt. Everest with a height of 8,848.86 meters, is the highest peak of the Himalayas.

The Himalayas save our country from the cold and dry winds of Central Asia. It also prevents the rain-laden monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean from crossing over to northern countries and causes heavy rainfall in Northern India. Many beautiful hill stations like Srinagar, Nainital and Darjeeling are located here and visitors from all over the world come to these hill-stations to enjoy the grandiosity of the Himalayas. The forests provide firewood and a large variety of raw materials for forest-based industries. For thousands of years, the Himalayas have had profound importance in the South Asian

countries particularly in their literature, mythology, and culture. In Nepal, both Hindu and Tibetan cultures flourish, while Sikkim is occupied by mainly Bhutiyas, Lepchas, and Nepalis. The central Himalayan region of India is home to native tribes like the Doms and the Khasas.

When it comes to occupations, they can be categorised as nomadic pastoralists and subsistence farmers. In recent years, however, there have been many developments in their lives, with the improvement in communication and transport systems. This is especially evident in the frontier villages of Garhwal, Ladakh, Himachal, and Kumaon where there has been an increase in trade and tourism. An example of the diversity amongst the Himalayan peoples is handwoven textiles, displaying colours and patterns unique to their ethnic backgrounds.

In the Himalayan range, one would find that each valley and community has its own socio-cultural way of dealing with the harsh conditions imposed by nature. However, each of them is tied together by the mighty force, the Himalayas.

-Anushka Barua and Sanjana Barooah (Class 11)

The last time I visited this magnificent place, I was on a dance trip from school, escorted by our teacher, Mrs. Ruby Bordoloi. There's solely one reason, besides its enigmatic beauty, why Majuli holds quite a significant place in my heart. It is its history related to Sattriya - a classical dance form of Assam.

Majuli is the world's largest river island, located on the mighty river Brahmaputra which initially covered an area of about 800 sq km but due to constant erosion, it has shrunk down to 352 sq km. Majuli has been the cultural capital of Assam since the 16th century. The visit of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev to Majuli, who was a pioneer of medieval age Neo-Vaishnavite Movement, marked the birth of Sattriya dance and culture. He established hermitages, called 'Satras' to preach Vaishnavism. 'Manikanchan Sanjog' was the very first Satra to be established in Majuli by Srimanta Sank Sanjog', sixty-five other Satras were set up, however as of today, only twenty-one of the original Satras are operational. A few of them are Dakhinpat Satra, Auniati Satra, Kma Labari Satra, and Samuguri Satra.

Majuli has a diverse ecology with various rare and endangered flora and fauna. One will definitely spot a few pelicans, Siberian cranes, geese, and ducks on their visits. The island and its people mostly live off of tourism and agriculture. Fishing, dairying, pottery, mask making, and hand looming are amongst other occupations.

On one's visit, one would witness live mask making which is widely used in 'Bhauna' during Raas Mahotsav in Majuli. The island widely celebrates Raas Leela, part of the traditional story of Krishna described in Hindu scriptures.

This utterly picturesque place is suffering victim to constant erosion by the fast-flowing Brahmaputra claiming numerous lives, lands, and homes every year. The monsoon season causes the most amount of damage and the rate at which it is happening is only accelerating by the day. Some of it is natural, given its location and geography, but much of it is due to climate change and rising water levels. Not a single monsoon passes by when Majuli is not flooded, affecting huge numbers. Rain patterns, once relatively predictable, have become erratic than ever, leading to the loss of crops and property in Majuli's agricultural community. The neighbouring hydroelectric and dam projects by the Autonomous Region of Tibet contributes to flash floods in Majuli as well.

If Majuli's fledgling tourism industry continues to gain momentum, tourism could provide an alternative economic resource for the island's rural population, meaning to a future less prone to damage from severe weather than agriculture, and more profitable so people have the means to rebuild after each year's floods. Until then, Majuli's people will simply carry on.

-Ipsita Kashyap (Class 12)



Majuli

-a disappearing wonder



The Abode of Clouds



The Pnar people (settling in the Jaintia Hills), the Bhoi people (settling in the Khasi hills only sharing borders with Assam), the Wars in both the Jaintia and Khasi hills (which share the borders with Bangladesh), the Khyntiam (settling in the remaining parts of the Khasi Hills) collectively form the Khasi ethnic tribe.

The word 'Khasi' is used to collectively describe all of these 4 sub-tribes residing in both Jaintia and Khasi hills.

Most people are of the notion that the Pnars and Khasis are different. However, the Pnar people and the Khyntiam people are different. Even the state at present is divided into the Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills. This division has been done by the British as before that, we were just divided into kingdoms ruled by Khasi kings. The kingdoms even extended to present-day Sylhet (Bangladesh) and Nagaon (Assam). To date, the Khasis still reside there, however adding a slight twist to their accent when they speak.

When the British named the hills, they named them as 'Cossyeh' and 'Jyantea' hills due to their inability to correctly pronounce them. The relationship between the Khasis and nature is very close. To the Khasis, being nature worshippers, every acre of land, every tree, every living being is sacred.

The rooster used for rituals symbolises the ancient culture and tradition of the Khasis that when sin-darkened man's path, he crowed forth to bring out the sun that gave light so that man might proceed along the path of humanity, purity, and dignity.

There still exists a sacred grove (sanctified) in a village in Meghalaya known as Mazwphlang. To date, if a person wishes to destruct it, that person will not be fined by the people of the village or whatsoever but will be fined by the sacred forest itself which will result in many disasters. These have been so horrific to hear that many tourists are warned before entering the grove. Only a priest of the indigenous religion of the Khasis can remove such a spell. No, it didn't start from witchcraft or anything of that sort. This place too is a tourist spot which attracts a lot of people to visit the forest and the heritage site close-by(not within the circumference of the grove). Every year the monolith festival is held here in which people from all over the state, as well as foreigners, come to witness and participate as well. Local cuisine along with local rice beer and many more local drinks are sold on that day.

*-Mesan Laloo
Class 12*



Picture credits : Mesan Laloo.



Facts that will spin your world

- ◆ *Mount Everest is the tallest mountain on Earth, so it would stand to reason that the top of the mountain would be the highest point on Earth (and therefore closest to space). However, the earth is not a perfect sphere but an oblate spheroid. It means that the earth is flattened at the poles but bulging out near the equator. With this added elevation, the top of Ecuador's Mount Chimborazo (which is only 20,564 feet tall) is closest to the stars.*
- ◆ *In the Pacific Ocean, there's a point that is the most remote from any piece of land. It is popularly known as 'Point Nemo,' after the famous submarine sailor, Captain Nemo from Jules Verne's novel, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. The closest land is located 1,670 miles away. This place is also known as the 'pole of inaccessibility'. The nearest lands are Ducie Island, Motu Nui Island, and Maher Island. It is so far from land, that the nearest humans are often astronauts, as the International Space Station orbits the earth at a maximum of 258 miles away.*
- ◆ *The shortest border in the world is that which separates the Rock of Velez de la Gomera (Spain) from Morocco. It measures only 85 meters. Until 1934 it was an island, but a strong storm filled the space with sand, turning it into a peninsula.*
- ◆ *The largest city in the world is not Mexico City but Hulunbuir, located in the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia. It has 263,953 square kilometres, due to the fact that its entire jurisdictional area is considered a city.*
- ◆ *France covers the most time zones: "If you count everything, including overseas territories, then France claims the title by covering 12 time zones. The United States would be the runner-up with 11 and then Russia with 9."*
- ◆ *Africa is the only continent that is located in all four hemispheres. It is also the only continent that is crossed by both the equator and the prime meridian.*
- ◆ *Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey and the fifth-largest city in the world by population, is considered European, yet it occupies two different continents. One part of Istanbul lies in Europe and the other part lies in Asia.*
- ◆ *You could be born in Petersburg, go to school in Petrograd, get engaged in Leningrad, and grow old in Saint Petersburg and not move anywhere. The names of some Russian cities have been changed so often that it is easy to get baffled by which city you are in.*



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