

"Magh Bihu or Maghar Domahi" by Dr. Prafulla Dutta Goswami

TEXTUAL QUESTION ANSWERS

1. Choose the correct option:

a) What is the original meaning of the word 'Domahi'?

→ *Meeting of two months*

b) What is the meaning of Uruka?

→ *The last day of the month of Puh*

c) What is 'Meji'?

→ *A structure of wood and hay set on fire during Bihu*

d) What does the word 'Bhelaghar' mean?

→ *Huts made of straw where people eat and sleep*

e) Which season does the Magh Bihu festival celebrate?

→ *End of winter and harvest season*

2. Answer the following questions in brief:

a) What is the time of the Magh Bihu festival?

Answer: Magh Bihu is celebrated in the Assamese month of *Magh*, which falls in mid-January. The festival marks the end of the harvesting season and the arrival of the new season.

b) What is the meaning of the word 'Uruka'?

Answer: *Uruka* refers to the eve of Magh Bihu, the last day of the Assamese month *Puh*. It is a night of community feasting and celebration.

c) What do people generally eat on the night of Uruka?

Answer: On Uruka night, people enjoy a feast that includes rice, meat (like pork or chicken), fish, curd, and a variety of traditional Assamese sweets and pithas (rice cakes).

d) What do people do with the Bhelaghars next morning?

Answer: On the morning of Magh Bihu, people set fire to the Bhelaghars (temporary huts made of straw) and Mejis as part of the ritual.

e) What sports are traditionally associated with the Magh Bihu?

Answer: Traditional sports like buffalo fighting, egg fighting, wrestling, and other indigenous games are associated with the festival.

3. Answer the following questions in about 30-40 words:

a) What are the other names of Magh Bihu?

Answer: Magh Bihu is also known as *Bhogali Bihu* due to the abundance of food and feasting, and *Maghar Domahi* as it is celebrated at the junction (Domahi) of the Assamese month *Puh* and *Magh*.

b) How is the night of Uruka celebrated?

Answer: On Uruka night, community feasts are organized. People gather in Bhelaghars made of hay and bamboo, cook food, sing Bihu songs, play games, and spend the night together in merriment.

c) What is a Bhelaghar?

Answer: A *Bhelaghar* is a temporary hut made of straw and bamboo, constructed by villagers, especially youths. It serves as a place for the feast on Uruka night and is burned the next morning.

d) What do people do early the next morning?

Answer: Early on Bihu morning, people take a bath and then burn the Meji and Bhelaghar. They offer prayers to the fire god, seeking prosperity and good harvests.

e) How do the villagers prepare for Uruka?

Answer: Villagers prepare for Uruka by collecting firewood, vegetables, fish, meat, and ingredients for the feast. Young people

build Bhelaghars, and everyone contributes to preparing traditional food.

4. Answer the following questions in about 80–100 words:

a) Describe the significance and activities of Magh Bihu.

Answer: Magh Bihu, or Bhogali Bihu, is a harvest festival celebrated in Assam marking the end of the harvesting season. It is a time of feasting and merriment. The celebrations begin on Uruka night with community feasts held in Bhelaghars. People enjoy traditional Assamese dishes and spend the night singing and celebrating. On Bihu morning, they burn the Meji and Bhelaghar, offering prayers to the fire god. The festival also features traditional sports like buffalo fights and egg fights. It symbolizes unity, prosperity, and gratitude to nature.

b) How is the Meji related to Magh Bihu?

Answer: Meji is a central structure in the Magh Bihu celebration. It is made of wood, straw, and bamboo and symbolizes the culmination of the harvest. On Bihu morning, people light the Meji as part of a sacred fire ritual. Offerings like pithas, betel nuts, and other edibles are made to the fire. This act is believed to purify and bring prosperity to the household. Burning the Meji marks the end of the previous year's harvest and the beginning of a new season.



ADDITIONAL SHORT & LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

◆ **Short Answer Questions (30–50 words)**

1. What does Bhogali Bihu mean?

Answer: Bhogali Bihu means the "festival of feasting." The term comes from the word *Bhog* meaning enjoyment or feast. It signifies abundance and joy after a successful harvest.

2. What is Domahi and its relevance?

Answer: *Domahi* means the junction of two months. Maghar Domahi marks the end of *Puh* and the beginning of *Magh*, symbolizing the transition from one season to another, particularly the end of winter.

3. What types of food are prepared during Magh Bihu?

Answer: Various traditional dishes like rice, meat curries, fish preparations, pithas (rice cakes), larus (sweet balls), curd, and jaggery are prepared during Magh Bihu celebrations.

4. Who builds the Bhelaghar and why?

Answer: Bhelaghar is usually built by the youth of the village using straw and bamboo. It is used for the community feast on Uruka night and later burned as part of the ritual.

5. What are some post-Bihu sports enjoyed by villagers?

Answer: Traditional games like buffalo fights, egg fights, wrestling, and other indigenous sports are enjoyed during the post-Bihu period in rural Assam.

6. Why is fire important in Magh Bihu rituals?

Answer: Fire symbolizes purification, warmth, and divine blessings. People offer prayers to the fire god while burning the Meji, seeking health, prosperity, and protection.

7. How do children take part in Bihu celebrations?

Answer: Children participate by helping in collecting materials for Bhelaghar, singing songs, lighting firecrackers, and joining in traditional games and festivities.

8. What role do women play during Magh Bihu?

Answer: Women prepare traditional food items such as pithas and larus, help in organizing the feast, and participate in the celebrations with songs and cultural activities.

9. How does Magh Bihu promote social unity?

Answer: The festival brings together people of all ages and

backgrounds to feast and celebrate, fostering a sense of community, equality, and shared joy.

10. What is the religious or spiritual aspect of Magh Bihu?

Answer: The burning of the Meji and offering of food to the fire symbolizes thanksgiving to the fire god and ancestral spirits, highlighting the spiritual gratitude for a good harvest.

◆ **Long Answer Questions (120–150 words)**

11. Describe the customs and traditions followed during Uruka night.

Answer: Uruka night, the eve of Magh Bihu, is celebrated with great enthusiasm. It is a night of community feasting, marking the end of the harvesting season. Villagers, especially young boys, build Bhelaghars using straw and bamboo. Families and neighbors gather, cook together, and share traditional dishes like fish, meat, rice, and sweets. Singing of Bihu songs, playing traditional games, and storytelling are common. People stay up all night enjoying the warmth of the fire and companionship. It reflects the joy of plenty and togetherness in the community.

12. What is the symbolic significance of burning the Meji and Bhelaghar?

Answer: Burning the Meji and Bhelaghar is symbolic of bidding farewell to the old and welcoming the new. It represents purification, gratitude for the harvest, and prayers for future prosperity. The fire is seen as divine, and offerings made to it are believed to appease gods and ancestors. It also marks the end of the winter season and serves as a community ritual that fosters social harmony.

13. How does Magh Bihu reflect the agricultural lifestyle of Assam?

Answer: Magh Bihu is deeply rooted in the agrarian traditions of Assam. Celebrated at the end of the harvest, it reflects the joy and

gratitude of farmers. The festival includes rituals of thanksgiving, sharing food, and enjoying the fruits of labor. Traditional dishes, fire rituals, and sports all revolve around the agricultural cycle, making it a cultural celebration of rural life and nature's bounty.

14. Why is Magh Bihu also known as Bhogali Bihu?

Answer: Magh Bihu is called Bhogali Bihu because it centers around *Bhog*, or feasting. After a successful harvest, people have plenty of food, which they enjoy together with family and community. The feasts, pithas, larus, and meat dishes highlight the abundance and celebratory spirit of the festival.

15. How do traditional games contribute to the festive atmosphere of Magh Bihu?

Answer: Traditional games like buffalo fights, egg fights, and wrestling add excitement and community participation to the festival. These games are entertaining and keep alive Assamese rural traditions. They encourage physical activity, social bonding, and provide a platform for local talent and celebration.