

THE RIVER OF HOPE AND SORROW - BRAHMAPUTRA

THEMES: Living with the River; River infrastructure

The mighty Brahmaputra has been the harbinger of life for the city of Guwahati to the point that the city cannot even be imagined without it. Despite the destructive annual floods which lead to loss of land, life and livestock, the river remains the most cherished attribute of the city. For a state dependent on rice cultivation and fishing, the river is undoubtedly the primary source of life and livelihood. One cannot easily comprehend the magnitude of the Brahmaputra's impact on the lives of the people of the city of Guwahati, and the state of Assam at large.

Settlements by the banks of rivers are a common phenomenon across the world. Given the alluvial soil around the Brahmaputra, it is only natural that populations have settled very close to its shores. For the people who have settled in colonies just by the banks, the river means more to them than a mainstream city dweller could ever imagine. Their day begins with a prayer to the sun, taking a holy dip in the water. Their livelihood depends mostly on the river; some belong to fishing communities, cloth washing communities, boating communities, and vendors who bring produce from their remote villages in the ferries to be sold in the city.

These images depict similar instances; life in the river. They reflect how these people mark a positive beginning to their day - taking a holy dip at dawn, invoking the blessings of the sun and the river god; and setting off to work for the day. All these images offer the Saraighat bridge at the backdrop, which is one of the most remarkable pieces of infrastructure built on the Brahmaputra. Built between the years 1958 and 1962, this bridge connects North and South Guwahati, which are otherwise separated by the Brahmaputra. Considering its rich history, the Saraighat bridge poses as a mark of culture and is a major part of the heritage of the city and the state.