

## Women of the river, from the floodplains of Assam

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Assam has a diverse group of communities, and the role of the women within these communities also sometimes remain the same in the private while changing constantly in the public. The women of the tribal communities in Assam (specifically Deori and Mishing) are engaged both at the private and public space from household activities and looking after the family to agricultural activities (Picture 1 – Women in the agricultural field in Majuli), fishing, and fetching wood for cooking. This often overburden the women. Especially during the harvest season, they barely have time left for themselves. The mornings are for household work of cleaning and cooking, then spending the entire day at the field, and then coming back home and engaging in domestic chores again. But within the public sphere, there is a clear gender divide in the public. Women engage in the activities of sowing and reaping in the agricultural field, while the men engage in ploughing and carrying the reaped harvest from the field (heavy load). Women use the *jakoi* (Picture 2 – Women from Sadiya with jakoi) as an equipment for catching fish, while men generally use fishing nets. The men usually row the boats, while the women are often discouraged and unless absolutely necessary (Picture 3 – Man and woman in a boat in Majuli). While the women from the lower reaches of Assam don't really engage in the public sphere as much, fishing (Picture 4 – Woman engaging in fishing, from 2017 flood, while on the way to Dhubri) as an activity during the flood season diminishes the gender roles as both the genders engage in it as an alternative source of livelihood. Within the char communities, the engagement of women with the public space tends to be even less with their mobility being restricted often to the compound of their house, but like the other communities within the private space they are the primary caretakers (Picture 5 – Woman simultaneously conducting chore and taking care of her child during flood, from a char in Goalpara), often left with trauma upon loss.