

## The Shifting Chars of Brahmaputra

Chars or sandbanks in the Brahmaputra are home to approximately twenty-five lakh people whose lives are like shifting sand

When Amitav Ghosh, in the title of his book, *The Hungry Tide*, personifies the tide to hunger, it extends beyond its literal sense to show how islanders fight with calamitous environment each day, yet choose to live with it. He writes:

“...transformation is the rule of life: rivers stray from week to week, and islands are made and unmade in days.” (Ghosh, 2005)



LIVING WITH THE RIVER  
Lakhipur char, Barpeta district, Assam 2021

*Pagla Nodi or 'mad river' is a song of the boatmen. It captures the many moods of the river—as a ravaging force during the flood, as a nurturer and as the only reality of people for whom land and water is the same.*

*"You have broken someone's land  
You have broken someone's tin house  
You have broken my new love  
You mad river..."*



## RIVER PEOPLE

Lakhipur char, Barpeta District, Assam 2021

*'Where else will we go. We dismantle our house during flood, carry it on a boat. We rebuild after the water recedes.'*

*Xxxxxxx name?*

*The story of river people is also the story of the poorest of the poor. Those who cannot afford to live in cities or even villages, those for who life and livelihood is water.*



## HOME AND HOMELESSNESS

Lakhipur char, Barpeta District, Assam 2021

*"In 38 years of my life I have changed my home 14 times. Once the flood was so bad that with each swirl of the wave, the river would devour half a bigha of land."*

Xxxxxxxxname?

*The river is more than mere physical channels of water. It is a womb of stories. A world intricately stitched by ties of identity and familiarity.*





WOMEN AND RIVER  
Lakhipur Char, Barpeta District, Assam 2021

*Ayesha was drying chillies on the sand while her son was crying in hunger.*

*Women on the char bear disproportionate labour; from walking kilometers to fetch water and fuel, taking care of children and household. Their work extends to planting and harvesting in fields and sometimes they work as daily wage labourers in cities.*



## LIVELIHOOD

Lakhipur Char, Barpeta district, Assam 2021

*Man crossing the rivulet, carrying the final produce to the market. In Sontoli village where vegetables are sold, the market is almost exclusively a male space.*