

**PROJECT  
BASED  
LEARNING  
PROGRAMME**

**Field Trip to Merbeel**  
**Faculty and Students**  
**Department of English**  
**Duliajan College**



**Acknowledgement:**

We, the students of English Department are thankful to our Principal Dr. Lok Bikash Gogoi for giving us the opportunity to work on this project. Your constant support and encouragement was incredibly valuable throughout the project.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our Vice Principal and HOD Mrs. Jyoti Singh Pathak for granting us the opportunity to organize a field trip to the nearby wetland, *Merbeel*. The trip was both enlightening and enjoyable. We are grateful to all the individuals who have contributed to the successful completion of our field trip project.

We would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our faculty guides Jyoti Singh Pathak, Pinky Sharma Saikia and Rajashree Boruah for organising and guiding us at every step from planning the trip to writing the report.

We are also grateful to our fellow group members and individuals who have directly or indirectly contributed to the success of the project.

**Aims and Objectives:**

- To explore suburbanization of the surrounding areas of the wetland *Merbeel* and its impact on the wetland.
- To interact with local communities and stakeholders, gaining insights into their perspective on suburbanization of *Merbeel*.
- To formulate recommendations that can enhance the conservation of the *Merbeel* wetland to safeguard its ecosystem.
- Using the folklore as a tool to critique and elucidate the complex dynamics of gender, power and its representation within the narrative.

### **Methodology:**

The project is based on the method of survey through questionnaire and personal interview. The primary data was collected on the basis of the above methods. The secondary data is collected from internet sources.



**Image: Students interviewing a local inhabitant of Merbeel**

**In the picture : (from left) Sijan Limbu, Priyanka khanikar, the local inhabitant , Jyoti Singh Pathak (HOD), Parismita Dutta**

### **Introduction:**

The *Sasoni Merbeel* is a wetland, situated in the Naharkatia Revenue Circle of Dibrugarh district, Assam which is a natural treasure that embodies a rich tapestry of biodiversity, cultural heritage, and environmental significance. Spanning approximately 1550 square kilometers, it is one of the largest wetlands in Northeast India and plays a vital role in maintaining the ecological balance of the region. The wetland attracts a variety of migratory birds, especially during the winter months when birds from colder region travel to this wetland for its favorable climate and abundant resources. It is a home to over 200 species of birds, including: -

- Bar-headed goose
- Ruddy Shael duck (Brahminy duck)
- Northern Pintail
- Common Teal
- Eurasian Wiegong
- Lesser Whistling duck
- Great Egret
- Grey Haro

Moreover, the wetland contains diverse aquatic life such as fish, amphibians and reptiles. Its dense vegetation, including water hyacinths and lotuses, serves as a habitat for wildlife and sustains the livelihoods of local communities. *Merbeel's* subtropical climate, with its warm summers, cool winters and abundant monsoon rainfall fosters seasonal flooding that replenishes its waters and enriches the surrounding agricultural lands.



**Image: Geographical location of Merbeel**

The *Merbeel* wetland is a heaven for diverse flora and fauna. Here are a few insights into the ecosystem in *Merbeel*. Although the wetland is a bird watching destination yet occasional sightings of mammals like wild boar, deer, and possibly leopards and even reptiles like cobra, turtles can be seen. Among plants, there are diverse kinds of lush greenery, including a variety of trees, shrubs and grasses including aquatic plants. Notable among them are Bamboo, Dipterocarpus tree. Many migratory birds visiting *Merbeel* in

different seasons are ducks, geese, waders, pectoral sandpiper and other waterfowls. And some the other birds that inhabit the wetland are Parrot, Hornbill, Woodpecker etc.

### **The Folklore on Merbeel:**

Through our interview with the local inhabitants, we have got to know that the name “*Merbeel*” is steeped in cultural and linguistic significance. In Assamese, “*Beel*” translates to “wetland” or “lake,” while “*Mer*” signifies ‘big’ or ‘large’, perfectly capturing the serene and mystical essence of the wetland. As per our interview with the local people including, Rasmirekha Borah, Deepali Gogoi, Ukha Handique, Jan Gogoi, Hemanta Handique, Bharat Bhuyan, Anil Saikia and the General manager of the Eco Tourism Park Monimanik Gogoi, local folklore ties the name to the deity *Jal Konwar*, a mythical figure deeply revered by the villagers who see him as the protector of the wetland. The link between the folklore and religion can be evaluated from different perspectives. *Sasoni Merbeel* plays a pivotal role in the socio-cultural lives of the villagers. Traditionally, it is believed that it is the home to *Jal konwar*, a very powerful deity. This mythological character is so strong in the belief system of the villagers that till today different kinds of rituals are practiced to offer respect to this deity. The main source that provides validity and vigor to this belief system is a folklore, which is linked with the *Neo-Vaishnavite religion*<sup>1</sup>. During our field trip we interviewed the locals who narrated the folklore like this:

Once there was a big flood, which submerged a large part of the *Soliha Bareghar Satra*<sup>2</sup> and its nearby villages. All the normal activities in the flood-hit villages came to a grinding halt. People were suffering and became restless as they were stuck in their water-logged houses. One day Shri Ram Dev *Gosain* (holy man), the *Satradhikar* (head of the Satra) who used to live with his family was reciting the verses from the holy book, *Kirtan*. But his little daughter *Diti Aidew* wanted to draw the attention of her father and so Diti was trying to climb onto her father’s lap, repeatedly disrupting him. An annoyed *Gosain*<sup>3</sup>, upset by Diti’s nuisance *shouted* at his daughter and in a fit of rage said: -“If you keep on disturbing me I will give you to the *Jalkonwar*”, pointing toward the flooded courtyard.

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<sup>1</sup>Neo-Vaishnavite religion: religion founded by Srimanta Sankardeva in Assam in 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup>Satra: The word Satra means a religious center.

<sup>3</sup>Gosain: a religious priest in Vaishnavism.

In due course of time, Diti grew up to be a beautiful young woman at the *Satra*. One day *Gosayani*<sup>4</sup> dreamt that the *Jalkonwar* asked her daughter in marriage. The *Jalkowar* also reminded her of her husband's long forgotten angry outburst against their little daughter and his thought of giving their daughter to him (the *Jolkonwar*). Terrified by the dream, the next day *Gosayani* told her husband and all other villagers and *Satra* people but they didn't believe her at all. But after a couple of days the *Jalkonwa* reappeared in the dreams of *Shri Ram Dev Gosain* and insisted on marrying Diti. Now, *Shri Ram Dev* became worried about his daughter's marriage to the *Jalkonwar*. The *Satra* people had never seen the *Jalkonwar* with their own eyes nor had Diti's father, so everyone was worried how would they send their daughter to marry a man they had never seen. So, they decided to not to abide by the *Jalkonwar's* request. After a few hours people noticed that the water level began to rise all over the area. This scared everyone.

Somehow the villagers managed to save themselves and got settled in a new place known as *Sasoni Moujar Merbeel Gosain Bheti*. The villagers slowly regained their composure and started to live their normal lives. *Shri Ram Dev Gosain* formed a new *Satra*. But again, one night *Gosain* and *Gosayani* dreamt of *Jalkonwar* where he again reminded them of their vow and requested to marry Diti. But once again they ignored the dream and didn't fulfill the request at which, the enraged *Jalkonwar* flooded the entire village and destroyed their home and belongings. As such, the *Satradhikar* was left with no other option but to make necessary arrangements for the mid-night marriage. When the time came, the *Gosain* and *Gosayani* took their daughter, draped in a beautiful bridal dress, up to the middle of the courtyard and offered her to the water. While offering they requested the *Jalkonwar* to appear and show the villagers his presence as the groom. Adhering to the request, the *Jalkonwar* made a condition that only pure hearted people who have pure intention will be able to see him with their own eyes. Agreeing to the condition the villagers offered Diti to the water. The *Jalkonwar* appeared amongst the cloud wearing the Assamese traditional wedding dress of a groom in a golden boat. Soon after the wedding, water withdrew from all the areas. People believed that after the marriage, the *Gosain's* daughter came to the *Satra* twice. But the *Jalkonwar* had asked her not to mention anything about the underwater world and about him and also not to eat anything offered to her in her village, but Diti didn't keep her promise and shared her experience. The *Jalkonwar* was annoyed with Diti for not listening to him and therefore when she returned underwater, he never allowed her to meet

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<sup>4</sup>Gosayani: Wife of a religious priest in Vaishnavism.

her parents again. But since Diti was offered to him by the villagers, the *Jalkonwar* in return, promised to protect the Merbeel village forever. With this belief, the villagers till this day pray to *Jalkonwar* with rituals and offerings.



**Image: The statue of Jalkonwar and Diti**



**Image: The inscription of the folklore at Merbeel Eco-Resort**

This connection imbues *Merbeel* with spiritual significance and earns it the epithet “Wetland of Mystery.” Rituals and traditions dedicated to the *Jal Konwar* are practiced till

the present times, reflecting the profound bond between the wetland and its surrounding communities.

However, the face of *Merbeel* is changing rapidly due to suburbanization. As nearby regions witness a surge in population and infrastructural development, the wetland is under growing pressure. Urban expansion, the construction of residential areas, and increasing pollution are encroaching on its boundaries and disrupting its delicate ecological balance. Households and commercial establishments in the vicinity of *Merbeel* discharge chemical pollutants, such as detergents, oils, and food waste, directly into the water body due to the absence of an efficient drainage system. This contamination leads to:

- Water pollution, affecting aquatic flora and fauna.
- Degradation of water quality, making it unfit for consumption and domestic use.
- The spread of waterborne diseases among local communities.

Water contamination from agricultural runoff and domestic waste has started to affect the aquatic ecosystem, while the fragmentation of habitats threatens its rich biodiversity. Suburbanization<sup>5</sup> has also brought social and cultural shifts. Traditional practices, which once revolved around the wetland, are being replaced by modern livelihoods and lifestyles, gradually eroding the spiritual and cultural heritage of *Merbeel*. Yet, this transformation presents opportunities for sustainable development. With better connectivity and rising environmental consciousness, initiatives like eco-tourism, community-led conservation, and wetland restoration can ensure that suburbanization does not come at the cost of *Merbeel's* ecological and cultural identity.

*Merbeel*, with its rich ecosystem, tranquil beauty, and deep cultural significance, stands at the crossroads of progress and preservation. As suburbanization reshapes its surroundings, the challenge lies in maintaining a striking balance between the protection of its natural and cultural legacy while accommodating the region's development needs. The story of *Merbeel* is not just about a wetland but also about the delicate interplay between tradition, nature and modernity.

### **Suburbanization Of *Merbeel*:**

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<sup>5</sup>Suburbanization: The establishment of residential communities on the outskirts of a city.

Suburbanization refers to the transformation of the rural landscapes or natural ecosystems into suburban areas, blending urban infrastructure with a semi-rural environment. This process is primarily driven by urban expansion, industrialization, improved connectivity and shifting socio-economic priorities. Suburban areas typically emerge on the fringes of cities, serving as transitional zones that cater to the residential, industrial and commercial needs of growing population. These areas are often characterized by the development of roads, transportation systems and public services that connect them to urban centers, making daily commutes and economic interactions more convenient.

While suburbanization fosters economic growth and supports urban expansion, it frequently comes at the expense of the natural environment and traditional livelihood. The process involves large-scale land clearance, deforestation and the conversion of agricultural or wetland areas into residential or industrial spaces. This not only leads to habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity but also disrupts local ecosystems and hydrological cycles. Wetlands, for instance, often face degradation as they are drained or polluted to make way for development which significantly impacts aquatic life and water quality. Increased human activity in suburban areas contributes to pollution from waste, noise and vehicular emissions further altering the balance of the ecosystem.

Moreover, suburbanization causes socio-cultural shifts within communities as traditional lifestyles, such as farming or fishing, are replaced with urban-centric economic activities. These changes may also lead to the displacement of local population as rising property values and infrastructure projects push communities away from their ancestral lands. Suburban development often creates dependency on automobiles and other urban amenities leading to increased carbon emissions, traffic congestion, and a heightened ecological footprint. Additionally, this spread of urbanization can fragment habitats, making it challenging for species to thrive or migrate and poses long-term risks to ecosystem stability.

In essence, suburbanization represents a complex interplay between human development and environmental impact. While it facilitates economic opportunities and better living standards for many, it also raises pressing concerns about sustainability. Addressing the ecological challenges posed by suburbanization, it requires thoughtful planning and the implementation of sustainable practices to ensure that development does

not compromise the health of ecosystems or the well-being of communities that depend on them.

As our topic of study was “A study of the suburbanization of *Sasoni Merbeel*” it has been observed in the survey that *Merbeel*, which was a rural area has become a suburb over a period of time. The study attempts to consider *Merbeel* as a suburb for the following reasons-

*Sasoni Merbeel's* transformation into a suburban area has been driven by the establishment of oil rigs in and around the region. The wetland's strategic location near industrial hubs such as Duliajan has made it an attractive site for the expansion of the oil industry. Over the years, oil companies have identified *Sasoni Merbeel* as a resource-rich area, utilizing its land for industrial purposes. The placement of oil rigs has brought industrial activities to the region, attracting workers, investments and infrastructural developments. While this has contributed to economic growth, it has also significantly altered the wetland's natural landscape, air and water pollution levels due to unchecked industrial and household waste. The destruction of wetland vegetation contributes to climate change by reducing carbon reduction and increasing temperatures reducing its ecological value and threatening its biodiversity.

To support the growth of the oil industry, a network of roads has been constructed, connecting *Sasoni Merbeel* to nearby towns and industrial centers like Duliajan. These roads facilitate the transportation of oil, machinery and workers, making the area more accessible and integrated with the urban economy. Since, there are no restrictions imposed by the authorities on land purchase within the boundary of *Merbeel*. One can purchase land within a certain distance from the *beel*. Individuals with legitimate financial means can purchase land in *Merbeel* without facing any specific restrictions. Over the past few years, the area has seen a gradual rise in new settlements, primarily driven by individuals seeking residential and agricultural land. Instances of encroachment on forest and government land have been reported. These are typically small-scale encroachments by locals or migrants using the land for agriculture or temporary housing. The region has also witnessed limited but noticeable infrastructure growth such as expansion of rural roads, improving connectivity to Naharkatia town, construction of small markets and retail shops to cater to the local population, etc. While new developments are improving quality of life, the locals emphasize the need for sustainable planning to avoid environmental degradation and ensure

fair land distribution. While improving connectivity, such developments have led to deforestation and habitat loss, further endangering biodiversity. The improved connectivity has not only boosted industrial activity but also encouraged residential and commercial development in and around the wetland. However, these infrastructural changes have introduced new challenges, including habitat fragmentation, increased pollution, and the encroachment of urban activities into natural spaces.

Another critical factor driving the suburbanization of *Sasoni Merbeel* is the socio-economic migration of people from the region. Nearby cities such as Dibrugarh and Duliajan offer better employment opportunities, healthcare, and education, drawing residents from *Sasoni Merbeel* and surrounding areas. The youth, who traditionally played a role in sustaining the wetland's ecological and cultural heritage, are increasingly shifting their focus towards urban lifestyles and city-based opportunities. As a result, fewer young people are choosing to stay in the region or pursue traditional livelihood such as fishing, farming or eco-tourism-based occupations which are crucial for the sustainable management of *Merbeel*. This migration has caused a shift in the region's demographics and economic focus with fewer people engaged in traditional farming practices. Once renowned for its fertile paddy fields, *Sasoni Merbeel* has seen a decline in agricultural activities with many fields left uncultivated. This abandonment of farming has disrupted the wetland's ecological balance, as the absence of agricultural maintenance has allowed invasive species and urban sprawl to encroach upon the land.

The development of urban-centric businesses has further contributed to the suburbanization of *Sasoni Merbeel*. With the decline in farming, many residents have turned to commerce, retail and other urban-oriented economic activities. This shift reflects the growing influence of urbanization on the region's socio-economic fabric. Adding to this transformation is the establishment of an Eco Tourism Park in *Sasoni Merbeel*. Designed to attract visitors from nearby cities, the park has become a popular destination for recreation and relaxation. While this has brought economic benefits through tourism, yet it has also introduced new challenges such as pollution from plastic waste, bottles and other discarded materials. Without a proper waste management system in place, this waste accumulates and leads to pollution. Dumping plastic and other non-biodegradable waste into wetlands not only degrades the water quality but also endangers aquatic species and disrupts the food chain.

Noise pollution is yet another critical issue arising due to the increased number of vehicles, tourist activities and loud gatherings. This disrupts the tranquility of areas that are home to migratory birds and other wildlife, driving them away from their natural habitats. *Merbeel*, has seen a decline in migratory bird populations over the past decade due to noise and human interference. Such disruptions harm the ecological balance and diminish the area's appeal as a serene eco tourism destination.

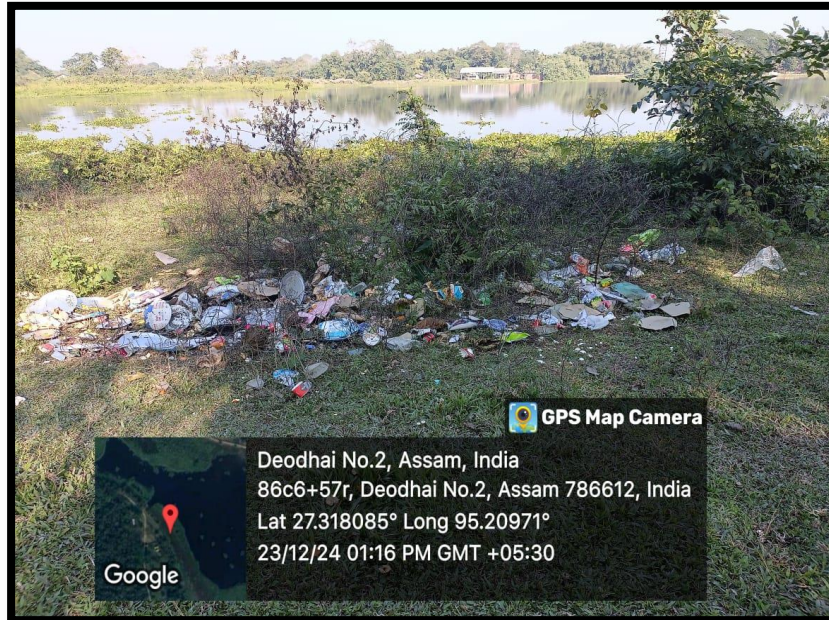
The water level in *Merbeel* has decreased time to time over the years. Residents attribute this to deforestation, unregulated ground water extraction and changing rainfall patterns. Seasonal water shortages are becoming more common and some smaller ponds and wells have either dried up or seen reduced in water levels. The decline in water levels has also affected the local ecosystem. Shrinking water bodies have disrupted aquatic life. Additionally, improper waste disposal practices including the dumping of organic and human waste pose a significant threat. In areas surrounding *Merbeel*, the lack of proper sanitation facilities has led to human waste contaminating in the water bodies, further deteriorating the ecosystem. This pollution affects aquatic life and diminishes the aesthetic and ecological value of the wetland, making it less attractive to eco tourists over time.

While ecotourism is often associated with minimal environmental impact, the rising popularity of these destinations has led to over-tourism in some cases. This phenomenon strains the carrying capacity of fragile ecosystems causing habitat degradation, deforestation, and increased carbon emissions from transportation. Furthermore, the socio-cultural fabric of local communities may also be affected as the influx of tourists can lead to the commercialization of traditions, loss of authenticity, and sometimes cultural insensitivity. The dumping of waste directly into the wetland has further degraded its ecological integrity, threatening the very natural beauty that attracts tourists to the area.

In essence, the natural ecosystem that sustained the wetland has been replaced by urban and industrial infrastructure, disrupting the delicate balance of flora and fauna. The noise and waste generated by human activity have made the area less hospitable for wildlife, undermining its ecological significance.

## Suggestion for addressing Environmental concerns due to suburbanization of *Merbeel*:

### 1. Plastic usage and waste management:-



**Image: Plastic and other waste generated by tourist seen on the land surrounding the water body.**

During our field trip we visited the Merbeel Eco-Resort where we observed that plastic pollution is a significant concern in *Merbeel*, particularly due to the use of plastic materials brought by tourist. It is suggested that the use of eco-friendly alternatives, such as biodegradable plates and cups should be introduced to reduce the dependency on plastic. Furthermore, setting up a structured waste management system with proper segregation and recycling facilities can significantly reduce plastic pollution. Moreover, regular cleanup drives involving both locals and visitors can also contribute to maintaining a clean and sustainable environment.

### 2. Implementation of Rainwater Harvesting

*Merbeel* is heavily dependent on nearby river water and there is no system in place for harvesting rainwater. To address this it is suggested that rainwater harvesting systems be installed in the residential and commercial establishments around *Merbeel*. These systems would not only reduce pressure on the river but also ensure water availability during dry

periods. Awareness programs should also be conducted to educate the local community on the importance and benefits of rainwater conservation for the sustainability of *Merbeel*.

### 3. Human Waste Management



**Image: Use of plastic to serve tourist were seen in the wetland of Merbeel Eco-Resort.**



**Image: Kitchen waste being directly discarded into the wetland at Merbeel Eco-Resort.**

The improper disposal of human waste from surrounding villages is a major concern for *Merbeel*, as it leads to the contamination of water in the wetland. It is suggested that eco-friendly sanitation facilities with installing of proper toilets in the villages to manage human waste effectively. Establishing small-scale sewage treatment plants (STPs) is another recommended measure to treat waste before it reaches the wetland. These steps will help protect the water quality of *Merbeel*, ensuring a healthy environment for both aquatic life and human use.

#### **4. Noise Pollution Control**

*Merbeel*, often referred to as an "*Island of silence*" has been facing increasing noise pollution due to the construction of a road leading to the wetland. The road which was initially built to improve accessibility marks the first step toward suburbanization in the area. Unfortunately, it has disrupted the delicate ecosystem of *Merbeel*. The road has led to a significant increase in the number of buses, cars, and tourists visiting the wetland, contributing to higher noise levels. Over the past decade, there has been a noticeable decline in migratory bird population caused due to this disturbance. To address these issues, it is suggested that vehicles, particularly buses, be stopped at designated parking areas away from *Merbeel*. Visitors should be encouraged to use bicycles or walk to the site, minimizing noise and preserving the calm atmosphere. Placing signs and enforcing noise control regulations will help maintain the peace that *Merbeel* is known for.

#### **5. Preservation of Biodiversity and Ecosystem**

The rich biodiversity of *Merbeel*, including its migratory birds and aquatic species, is under threat from overfishing, pollution, and human interference. It is suggested that limited disruptive activities, such as loud music or excessive fishing, can contribute to the protection of these species. Promoting eco-tourism through well-defined walking or cycling trails can allow visitors to enjoy nature responsibly while minimizing human impact on the environment.

#### **6. Community Involvement and Education**

The *gaon-panchayats* and *namghars* have a crucial role to play in the preservation of *Merbeel*. It is suggested that educational programs and workshops focusing on *Merbeel's* ecological importance be conducted to raise awareness about eco-friendly practices, waste reduction and conservation can empower residents to contribute to environmental preservation. Community-led initiatives, such as tree planting drives, cleanup programs, and biodiversity monitoring, should be encouraged to foster a sense of responsibility among residents. Recognizing and rewarding contributions to conservation efforts can further motivate the community to actively participate in preserving *Merbeel*.

## **7. Encouraging youth involvement in the sustainable preservation of Merbeel:**

One of the pressing concerns regarding *Merbeel* is the limited participation of the younger generation in its conservation efforts. Encouraging youth led initiative, such as tree plantation drives, clean-up campaigns, and biodiversity documentation, can provide them with hands-on experience in preserving the environment. Additionally, leveraging technology can make conservation efforts more appealing to the younger generation. For instance, developing mobile application or social media campaigns highlighting the importance of *Merbeel* can raise awareness and promote active participation.

## **8. Restrictions on purchase of land:**

It is a suggestion that provisions should be made by the government with regard to strict restriction on purchase of land and land rights in Sasoni *Merbeel* as it is implemented in reserved forests and wildlife sanctuaries etc. in other parts of the state.

## **Literary Perspective of The Folklore:**

The folklore on Merbeel can be interpreted to understand the status of women in medieval Assam. The sacrificing of Diti to the Jalkonwar for the wellbeing of the villagers signify the value assigned to a woman. The image of the *Jalkonwar* is a representation of male power through land ownership. A woman could be sacrificed without knowing her own opinion and desires. The notion of 'sacrifice' suggests the insignificance of woman as an individual. This complex dynamics of power and gender can be explored further. This opens a scope for further research on power politics & gender roles as reflected in folktales.

The folklore also throws light on the inculcation of neo-Vaishnavite religion during the fifteenth century in Assam. Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva propounded the Bhakti movement in the region. As a part of the neo-Vaishnavite culture *satras* have been founded in various places which functioned as powerful religious institutions directing the life of the common people. The folklore related to the *satra* established by Shri Ram Deva Gossain in Sasoni *Merbeel* belongs to that period. It represents the socio-cultural environment of that period when the neo-Vaishnavite bhakti movement was at its peak and was spreading all over the nation. As students of literature we would like to suggest that the folklore associated with Sasoni *Merbeel* can be interpreted in terms of its culture and gender

dynamics and may be used to understand the status of women in patriarchal society in medieval Assam.

### **Conclusion:**

Sasoni *Merbeel* stands as a remarkable testament to the harmonious interplay between nature, culture and history. With its vast expanse of wetlands, vibrant biodiversity and deep cultural roots, it offers invaluable ecological and socio-cultural benefits. The wetland is not just an ecological asset but also holds significant cultural and spiritual importance as it is associated with the deity of the *Jalkonwar*, the local folktale. However, despite its rich heritage, Sasoni *Merbeel* faces unprecedented threats from suburbanization, industrialization and environmental degradation. If not addressed, these challenges could lead to irreversible damage to both the ecological and cultural fabric of the region. One of the most pressing concerns is the rapid transformation of *Merbeel* from a serene rural wetland into a suburban area marked by industrial growth and infrastructural expansion. The increased human footprint in the region has disrupted the wetland's ecological balance, making it difficult for migratory birds and aquatic species to thrive.

Moreover, suburbanization has driven socio-economic migration particularly among the younger generation. Traditional occupations such as farming and eco-tourism which once provided sustainable livelihood are gradually being abandoned in favor of urban employment opportunities. This shift has resulted in the neglect of farmlands which were once crucial in maintaining the wetland's ecological balance. As the fields remain uncultivated, invasive plant species have proliferated, further altering the wetland's natural vegetation and reducing its ability to support diverse wildlife. The declining interest in traditional livelihood also weakens the local community's engagement in conservation efforts, making it even more challenging to protect the wetland from further degradation.

Despite these challenges, there is significant potential for sustainable development and conservation initiatives that can protect Sasoni *Merbeel* while ensuring economic opportunities for the local population. Ultimately, the story of Sasoni *Merbeel* is not just about a wetland; it is about the delicate balance between progress and preservation. While industrialization and suburban expansion have brought economic development to the region, they have also raised concerns about the sustainability of its unique ecosystem and cultural heritage. By adopting sustainable practices, enforcing environmental regulations and fostering community engagement, *Merbeel* can serve as a model for balancing growth with

environmental responsibility. The profound cultural and ecological significance of Sasoni *Merbeel* makes it imperative to protect and preserve it for the well-being of both its natural inhabitants and the surrounding communities. The wetland's mystical charm, historical importance and environmental value must not be sacrificed for its unchecked development. With collective efforts, policy-driven conservation measures and a commitment to sustainability, Sasoni *Merbeel* can continue to thrive as a symbol of harmony between tradition, nature and modernity. Its preservation is not just a responsibility but a necessity for maintaining ecological balance, cultural heritage and the well-being of future generations. In this report, we have provided several suggestions on the basis of individual survey of the wetland. We feel that if the suggestions are incorporated strictly and seriously, it would definitely help the preservation of the wetland in the contemporary period of environmental crisis.

# **TOPPER'S TAKE**

## Toppers' Take

**Gagandeep Kaur**  
**Batch Topper 2024**  
**CGPA: 7.52**

The journey from studying English literature as my post-secondary pursuit to earning my degree has been a profoundly enriching experience. As I navigated the transformative odyssey of studying English literature, I was fortunate to be anchored by visionary mentors, compassionate peers, and a vibrant academic community. Their collective influence not only refined my intellectual pursuits but also nurtured my personal growth, empowering me to evolve into a more resilient, curious, compassionate and well rounded individual.



My exploration of English literature has been a boundary-pushing journey, traversing the realms of classical mythology, literary theory, and human experience. From the iconic stories of ancient Greece, where Achilles' rage continue to captivate, to the poignant struggles of Shakuntala and the Duchess of Malfi, each new discovery has broadened my perspective and deepened my appreciation for the transformative power of literature.

As I delved deeper, I encountered the Gothic horrors of Frankenstein's creature, the haunting narratives of Sethe, Dopdi and Philomela, and the innovative narrative techniques of modernist writers like Woolf, who pioneered the 'stream of consciousness' style. Through Eliot's Theory of Impersonality and the lens of Post-structuralism, I gained new insights into the complex relationships between literature, culture, and human experience.

Throughout this journey, I've been struck by the unwavering beauty of English literature, which reserves space for every discipline mankind has ever explored. From the timeless themes of love, loss, and redemption to the cutting-edge theories of literary criticism, English literature has been a constant source of fascination, inspiration, and growth.

Our academic journey was significantly enhanced by the department's commitment to extracurricular enrichment. Through a variety of engaging activities – from cinematic adaptations of literary classics to thought-provoking seminars, environmental initiatives, and celebratory events like International Women's Day – we developed valuable skills, forged meaningful connections, and cultivated a deeper appreciation for the world around us.

*DiscourseZ* represents a shining example of the department's dedication to empowering students as writers and thinkers. This annual journal celebrates the diversity of student voices, providing a dynamic platform for them to engage with complex ideas, showcase their creativity, and develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work. By publishing their articles, *DiscourseZ* not only acknowledges students' intellectual curiosity and creativity but also encourages them to continue exploring, writing, and pushing the boundaries of their imagination.

As I reflect on my own journey, I've learned a thing or two that I wish I'd known earlier. I hope that by sharing these thoughts, I might be able to inspire or encourage my fellow juniors in some small way. Always stay curious, open-minded, and passionate about learning. Develop a growth mindset, engage with as many people as you can and seize opportunities to showcase your skills, for this beautiful college life won't come again. Participate in as many events and competitions as you can, not for winning, but for collecting the golden memories of your college life. Don't hesitate to seek guidance from mentors and peers. Most importantly, stay happy and celebrate your achievements, and the tiniest of moments that come along the way.

As I conclude, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the respected faculty members of the English Department for offering me a platform to share my thoughts in *DiscourseZ*. Here's to the enduring legacy of *DiscourseZ*, the English Department, and Duliajan College – may they forever remain beacons of knowledge and creativity.