

UNDERSTANDING HOSTEL AS A COMMUNITY IN COMPACT: A CASE STUDY ON SOCIAL LIFE OF THE HOSTELLERS OF GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: A hostel is an abode for the students who come from different places. Students live there with each other and learn the value of discipline and co-operation. The atmosphere of a hostel is conducive to study. It is a place where students constructively develop their personalities and character. Where children learn about their abilities and adapt to different cultures, languages, norms, ethnicities, and surroundings to be independent, self-sufficient, and responsible for their future. In light of the fact that sending a child to the hostel is a big decision for parents. They often worry about their child not being able to adjust to the changes. A hostel is undoubtedly a big change in a student's life, moving from home comforts to a new environment. In hostel, they live in a group with both mechanical and organic solidarity. Through this paper, we tried to study and examine the hostel as a community in compact.

Keywords: hostel, cultures, norms, mechanical, organic.

Introduction:- At birth the human infant is unable to take part in human society. The human infants gradually develop into more or less adequate members to fit in human societies. This development is largely a process of learning. Human personality is shaped by this learning process. This learning process is called as socialization. Socialization consists of the complex processes of interaction through which the individual learns the habits, beliefs, skills and standards of judgment that are necessary for his effective participation in social groups and Communities. It is a process of learning of social norms, values, attitudes, beliefs etc. which determine and mould a person's behavior. Human's lifestyle and personality are affected by his/her surroundings too along with the socialization process.

In student life, Hostel plays a pivotal role in shaping their life. The hostel is a place where students stay for passing formal education, away from their homes. We may call it as a human practical laboratory. Hostel life expands the social circle of the Hostel boarders, because Hostel is a combination of multiple social groups

In some countries of the world, Hostel can refer to the accommodation of individual or groups for short term stays. However, to be a place of residence that a school, colleges, or universities has, that all Hostels are supervised by the hostel wardens and other staff. In the case of Assam, meanings & nature of Hostel are same as mentioned



above. In Assam, there are varieties of Hostel such as Working people Hostel, different types of Women's Hostel. But in education ground, there are basically three types of Hostels: i) School Hostel (Including boarding school's Hostel), ii) the College Hostels, iii) The University Hostels. Apart from these Hostels, there are other types of hostel, namely "Paying-Guest (PG)."

As like other Universities, the Hostels of Gauhati University also have various impacts on boarders' life and on the socio-cultural environment of Gauhati University; although, there is an avid lack of democratic environment in the Hostel. At Hostel, it is seen that the Seniors often exploits the Juniors to some extent in various grounds, such as at the time of election, varsity week and other such occasions. Moreover, at Hostel, they persist many Gangs who are usually engaged in many unwanted & unnecessary work. However, like other Hostels, in the hostels of Gauhati University too, every hosteller has their own distinct culture who come from different socio-cultural backgrounds. When a student comes to the hostel as a temporary resident, they make a group and stay together like a family away from home. Hostel life is a combination of different socio-economic & cultural backgrounds, where the boarders learn how to live with different cultural background people. So, the Hostel allows them to live there as a member of a community. Although in hostel each boarder has distinct socio-cultural background, but they share common culture (values) in hostel which organize them as a community.

Objectives of the study :- Every scientific research study must has some objectives. To meet the needs of the present study, we have formulated the following objectives –

- (a) To examine and understand Hostel as a community in compact.
- (b) To study the social life of the Hostellers of Gauhati University.
- (c) To understand the inter-relationship and inter-conflict between juniors and seniors at the Hostels.

Area of the study :- For our study, we have selected some selective Boy's Hostels of Gauhati University. We have selected 4 Boy's Hostels namely RCC 1, RCC 2, AT 8 and AT 5. During our field study, RCC 1 Boy's Hostel had 98 boarders. Similarly, RCC 2 hostel had 120 boarders, AT 8 hostel had 109 boarders and in AT 5 hostel, there was 46 boarders.

Methodology :- Methodology is an inevitable part of every scientific research. Hence, to collect the dada, we used interview and observation method. Samples were selected on the basis of simple random sampling. To collect the authentic data, we distributed questionnaires among the respondents. Here, in below we have mentioned the selected number of respondents from each hostel –

Name of the Hostels	Number of selected respondents
RCC 1 Boy's Hostel	49
RCC 2 Boy's Hostel	60
AT 8 Boy's Hostel	55
AT 5 Boy's Hostel	23

Discussion:- Life in hostel offers lesson in community living, mutual adjustments, inculcates ideas of sharing and caring kindness and compassions. Hostel provides the atmosphere for study. Hostel life also teaches individuals to be independent, confident and capable of taking decisions on their own. It inculcates in the young ones team spirit and joint efforts, which are likely moulds their future lives too. Apart from these the most important thing is that Hostel life brings “we feeling” to all of the boarders. They act like a community’s member, although they are belonging to different status and religion, economic and social strata, and speaking different languages. Hostellers share a common value behavior, they are organized for similar purposes and have a common objective to achieve. Thus, Hostels provide the space to live together with the great feeling of togetherness, as “we” not as “I” despite their own distinct socio-cultural background, but in hostel they share common values, and live as community.

Hostel represents a cross-section of the population and the society. Although, the Hostel cannot be called as community, in its proper sense, but in many times, we can see certain patterns of community behaviour among the Hostellers. In our study, we made an attempt to understand hostel as a community in compact on the basis of certain parameters, which are necessary to call a group as a community. In this paper, we tried to understand, how hostel life promotes community life and the sentiments associated with it. It will bring the sufficient reasons to conduct an in depth study on hostel under the title “Hostel as a community”.

Hostel as a community:- Community is an area of social living marked by some degree of social coherence. Whenever the members of any group, small or large, live together in such a way that they share, not this or that particular interest but the basic condition of a common life, we call that group a community. In Hostel, people come from different socio-economic & religious background, but after entering hostel, they live there as a member of hostel community. In this regard, for a group to identify as community, it must have certain characteristics. Taking these characteristics as parameters, we have been trying to examine hostel as a community in compact –

- (a) **Definite Locality :** It is the first condition of a community. In our observation, we found that every hostel has been situated in a particular locality. In every hostel, they have playground, garden etc. Every Hosteller has some degree of sentiments with their Hostel and hostel locality. Although they usually stay at hostel for 2years (for past graduate students), or 4 years (for integrated courses’ students); they never witness away after leave the hostel. And after leaving the hostel, the ex-boarders will have the influence on their hostel.
- (b) **Likeness at hostel :** A Community is a group of people who may lived within a narrow or vast territorial area and share a common way life. In this way, the members of hostel as a community exhibits similarity and concurrence in language, customs, norms; besides many other things. Although, every hosteller have one distinct socio- cultural background, but in hostel they share common culture as well as common sentiments. In this regard, one of my respondent stated, “we are come from different place, having different culture and religious belief, but here we have formed a friend community. We are very helpful to each other. We share our problems to each other and also share a common culture & values.”
- (c) **Particular Name :** As for identification, a particular name is important. Every community has a particular name. For the requirement of particular name, Lumbey stated, “ It points identity, it indicates reality, it points

out individuality, it often describes personality.” In this regard, if we look into the Hostel within Gauhati University Campus, then we shall find that every hostel have been registered in Gauhati University’s authority. Apart from this official name, some of hostel have unofficial name also. In our study, we found that some of hostel of Gauhati University are known for their hidden co-operation with one/more political party. In this way, political party’s has a great influenced on hostel. Like political party, some of student’s organization has also influenced on hostel. In this way, some hostels are known for this influence. Thus, we have seen every hostel has some particular name which are required for a community.

- (d) **Naturality** : Communities are not created by an act of will or by the act of parliament but are natural. Every individual is born in a community. Before coming into hostel, every student belongs to their own distinct community. But after entering the hostel, they get a new environment. In the beginning. They have adjustment problem. They are new comers, so they don’t know each other personally. And then seniors help them to stay at hostel reducing their problem and bareness. They are socialized by their seniors through the hostel’s rules and regulations. Socialization is a basis of community life. In the process of socialization, every hosteller becomes a member of the hostel community with social solidarity, integrity and brotherhood;. Because no man live alone. “The man who can live alone is either an animal or a God (Aristotle’s philosophy)”
- (e) **Hostel Sentiments** : Community sentiment is essential in the people belonging to a community. Community sentiment is the feeling of unity among its members consequent upon this common life. In the absence of this sentiment, no human group can claim the title of community. Whatever the length of time for which it may have resided in one place. Community sentiment arises naturally among people who spread a common life, live together speak a common language, accept the same customs and traditions or share a common goal and interest. No individual can live unaffected by these feelings. Thus, in hostel all the members lend each other a hand in the event of need and necessity and in other socio cultural occasions. They take part in all important occasions which occur in their own hostel and their neighbor’s hostel. They are present when cultural programmes, sports programmes etc. take place in any hostel. They celebrate the festivals together and jointly face some calamities which descent upon the hostel environment. In this way, a feeling of brotherhood is generated among the members and they tend to identity another’s delight and distress as their own. This same complex of emotions in hostel is called “hostel’s community sentiment”. In hostel, due to the community sentiment, hostellers sacrifice their own little interests in the interest of community and begin to look upon the good of the community as their own good. Every member in hostel tie-up with a strong community sentiments. One of my respondent, in this regard, stated :

“Since hostel is our second home and it provides all our needs and wants. We live our hostel as the way we love our home. We have respect for our hostel and must show our concern live and dignity towards our hostel. I cannot forget my hostel even in my entire life and I will be helping all the hostellers who stay in my hostel in any form in future. I will stand for it whenever it calls me.

(f) We feeling in hostel :- Feeling of weness is one of most important features of community. In hostel, hostellers are bonded by we feelings. As a result of it a hosteller believe himself to be identified with them. All the hostellers look upon the pain or pleasure of every boarder of their hostel as their own pain or pleasure. The fundamental cause of this feeling is a similarity of interests of the hostellers who live in a same hostel. In this regard, one of responded stated :- “Before coming into hostel some hostellers have self-centered attitudes. But the hostellers’ community sentiment removes this self-centeredness attitudes. Hostel sentiments brings a strong feeling of weness apart from I, and through this feeling; we live in Hostel collectively. Feeling of weness of the hostellers, reflects in common participation of hostellers in cultural-programmes, sports programmes and making of hostel’s wall magazine.

(g)Role playing at hostel :- In the hostel community, every hosteller plays an important role in their specific sphere. In the hostel community, every hosteller has his own status and they have to make their own contribution towards the working of the hostel community in accordance with his status. The community sentiment inevitably induces this desire for contribution because this is a part of the community sentiments. As a result of this feeling, an individual looks upon himself as a specific part of community and shoulders his responsibility accordingly. In every occasion; every hostellers participate it as well as they take their own responsibility and they give their full effort to make it best.

(h)Sense of dependency at hostel :- The sense of dependency plays an important role hostel. At hostel, hostellers are dependent upon each other. As an element of community sentiment, the sense of dependence at hostel means that a hosteller believes himself herself to be dependent upon hostel community and devices his/her existence apart from community. Due to this feeling of dependency, he doesn’t object to any decision or designs which community imposes upon him and always tries to work in the favour those commitments. At the time of varsity week, Saraswati Puja and many others festivals and at the time of election the sense of mutual co-operation among hostellers must increased. In these occasions, all seniors and juniors work together, they depend on each other.

(i) Impact of Religion on the Hostellers :- In a community, religion plays an important role. “Religion refers to a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred thing that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite in one simple moral community called church all those who adhere to it.” (Durkhuim,1912)

Religions Occasions :- Like other educational institutions in Gauhati University also, students celebrate a few religious festivals such as Saraswati Puja, Christmas. But among these festivals Saraswati Puja is celebrated with great deal and enthusiasm. The celebration of Saraswati Puja is a tradition in Hostel of Gauhati University. There are no religions barriers to celebrate puja. Every boarders freely take part in such celebrations. A week before the puja, hostel wise an informal competitions are prevailing among the hostels. Therefore, all boarders give their best effort to make this puja successful. In this regard, Juniors takes an important role to make it best one. “Celebrating puja with making it best is considered as their Manifest functions, and it brings the feeling of unity, brotherhood and integrity (which are stay as hidden functions) that are considered as their Latent functions.”

(Merton's theory of Latent and Manifest functions.) Apart from Saraswati Puja, "Id-UL-Fiter" and Christmas are also celebrated in hostel. In this regard, one of my respondent stated:

"In Gauhati University majority of students belong to Hindu religion. And in Hostel, not only Hindu Students, but muslim students too have the believe that Saraswati is the "Goddess of Education" and they take part in same zeal to celebrate the puja. "He further said that in some hostel, approximately 95% boarders belongs to the Muslim community, but they also celebrate Saraswati Puja and in some hostel, there are no other religions community boarders except Hindu religious boarder. But in the time of "Id-UL-Fiter" and Christmas wish each other. From the respondents speech, it can stated that religious differences doesn't affiliation ones religions Identity. Each boarders shares common interest/feeling of mutual trust and brotherhood. There are no religions barriers at hostel sharing this feelings. In my study, I found that Religious festivals celebrated at hostel promotes "social cohesion" (Durkheim, 1912). At Hostels through various religions ceremony religion unites Hostellers with the feeling of brotherhood. Moreover, Hostel teach a good lesson on secularism to the borders. In my study. I found that in Gauhati University Campus, majority of the students as well as hostel boarders belong to Hindu religion. A few people are Muslims and few people belong to others (e.g. Christian). But the hostellers don't have any fundamental attitude, maintain a peaceful atmosphere of common brother-hood and they respect each other religious beliefs. Therefore it brings a secular atmosphere within hostels. One of my respondent said that he/she stayed in hostel in whole of his education life. So he got experience of staying in school hostel. Higher secondary and college hostel and University hostel. The Hostel respondent further stated that :

"Hostels have no religions Hostels don't see who comes from what religion. Sometimes a few students come from "the Char Area" who usually belong to muslim community having a conservation & orthodox outlooks regards their religions beliefs. But as they go on spending their life in Hostels and interacts with the other inmates, they gradually become successful in shedding their conservative attitude.

Conflict in Hostel :-

Social Conflict is also an inevitable part of each community. Conflict is a sole phenomena that can be found in each community. Hence, hostel as a community isn't free from Conflict. Since it is inevitable and cannot be eliminated; it must be accepted. In some circumstances it can increase individual or group performance and can acts as an agent of change. Conflict is not necessarily good or bad, but it must be evaluated according to the personal and organizational functions and dysfunctions. Conflict is like a safety value that makes the community responsible of the internal and external changes, mean while the essential elements, such as hierarchy within the seniors and juniors.

A flexible community always benefits from the conflict, because this behavior generates and changes standards, assists development in the circumstance of change [the pluralist (behavior) perspective on conflict].

As a community, the hostels of Gauhati University aren't free from conflict. Conflict at hostel, appear due to misunderstandings and confusion, personal factors, extra-organizational factors (where the organization has no control), misbehavior and because of the someone's (juniors & seniors) expectations, which seems to the environment sometimes inflexible.

Room-mates conflicts at Hostel :-

In Gauahati University hostel campus every hostel is two seater in its room format except AT8boys Hall and AT 3 girl's hall, AT 8 boy's Hall is a "single seater" hostel as well as AT 3 girl's hall is also a single-seater hostel. However, in some of hostels, three students allotted to a single room. Abubakar (2007) noted that student are supposed to be accommodated one per room and where two or more students shared a room often lead to conflict among them.

Conflicts are a common occurrence among roommates in Hostels. Roommate clashes occur directly due to fundamental differences among them. Most fresh students in University move into the hostels or rented accommodations and for the first time, live with room-mates who are a complete to them. They need to adjust to each other's quirks, habits and schedules. Without causing inconveniences. Chruden and Sherman (1994) opined that, students who experience conflicts feel tensed and uncomfortable a condition that is community referred to as society.

Adjusting to hostel life is easier when the expectation become realistic. Many students come into the hostel believing that their room mates will be their friends for life and he/she will be good enough but when one's find another guy as his/her roommate, who may use their room only as a place to sleep and using drugs. This bad to hurts chaos, confusion and tensions.

Main causes room-mates conflict:- In my study. I found that many factors that will lead to roommate conflicts in a hostel. There are some of main causes for roommates conflict, which are mentioned below :-

- (i) Use of Alcohol /smoking inside the room is one of root- cause of room-mate conflict.
- (ii) Another cause of the room mates conflict is the unacceptable prayer group activities by some members inside the room. When one is busy in his study, then if the another room mate makes a noisy circumstance with praying loudly it can roommates that leads to make quarrel between the roommates.
- (iii) One of the important cause of this conflict is that some- room-mates have same-sex orientation, which may create problem for the other roommates.
- (iv) Keeping room dirty and refusal to clean the room by some- room-mates is one of the important causes of conflict.
- (v) Another cause of conflict is the competition in the use of electrical appliances every time and refusal of some roommates to settle bills.
- (vi) Noise making in the room and cooking inside the room can also mentioned as the cause of room-mate conflict.
- (vii) Making use of room-mates properties without permission is one of the cause of room-mate conflict.
- (viii) During the time of election, the roommates conflict may be increased on various issues such as the selection of candidates impose to cast the vote to the candidate whom he doesn't like. In this regard seniors often tries to impose their decision radically upon one junior against their will.

Thus, these are the primary cause of room- mate conflict at hostel. Although conflict since prevailing between the hostellers as well as their room-mates, but it cannot affect the community life of hostellers in a long-term. They take conflict as a part of every human community. Peretomode (1995) further added that conflict among people with different backgrounds based on their needs, goals, skills, talent, status, prejudice, aggressiveness and

perceptions; that conflict is inevitable, natural and normal part of any relationships, so does among the members of Hostel community.

Issue of Management strategies that can be adopted to address conflicts in Hostel:-

It is observed that encouraging communication among conflicting boarders, bringing together to resolve a problem. Organizing special training on developing co-operative attitudes among the boarders and using diplomacy to suppress the conflict can be adopted to resolve roommate / boarders conflict. In this regard the finding of my observation agrees with the views of Residence life Apartment Area office (2005) which stated that a big part of living with roommates in communication which can be saving grace in a successful room mate relationship. Gillin (2004) also noted that diplomacy should be applied in resolving, boarders (room-mates), differences (conflicts).

Impact of Hostel Community on the Hostellers' behaviour :-

a) Impact on behaviour:

- 1) Hostel's community enhance the confidence and individuality in hostellers.
- 2) It enhances the management abilities of hostellers
- 3) It makes the hostellers emotionally strong and stable
- 4) It makes the hostellers punctual. It trains them to live a life in Discipline

b) Impact on Personality:

- 1) Hostel's stay and inculcation of community sentiments make the Hostellers realistic.
- 2) It helps them to attain maturity about the different aspects of life
- 3) It improves the goal orientation in hostellers and prepares them to deal with the future intricacies of life.

Negative Impacts:

- 1) Use of drugs by some of Hostellers.
- 2) Exploitations of individual freedom by the Hostel Seniors.
- 3) Health problem due to lack of nutrition balanced diet during hostel stay
- 4) Adjustment problem of room sharing. Those who have never had siblings will hardly understand the ordeal of room sharing. Suddenly, a boarder have to take other into account- their sleeping habits, whether they snore at night or listen to music too loudly. Living together requires a lot of compromise and if a boarder is not used to give and takes, they will be plenty of troubles adjusting.

Hostel's Specific Terminologies of Gauhati University :- Language is a system of communication used by a particular country of community. Language is the method of human communication either spoken or written consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.

In Hostels, Hostellers use some interesting terms which may not have Dictionary meaning, but at Hostel, these terms carry some meaning. These terminologies are mentioned below which were collected during field study :

- (1) PAHU : PAHU is a term specially used by Boy's Hostels. This term is usually used to refer to a fresher or new comer Hostellers who are defined as "Pre-Adult Hostel Union"

- (2) Maina : Maina is an Assamese term of endearment for a girl or a boy is largely used by students to call one another throughout the varsity. It is a gender neutral term, widely accepted and used “Maina Tumi Jui!” (Boys or girl you are like fire, gorgeous!) is a phrase common in Gauhati University Hostel Campus.
- (3) Maal : The term Maal usually used to refer a beautiful girl by the boys.
- (4) Maiki : This term usually refers to a boy who behaves like a girl.
- (5) Metal : The term Metal is used to refer someone who is comparatively intelligent among a group.
- (6) Mockel : The term Mockel. refers to someone who acts like a monkey or like a fool or when other makes fun of him
- (7) Dhop : Dhop refers to someone who usually tells a lie but pretend as he is speaking the truth..
- (8) Funda : Funda is a term usually used in a Hostel when someone tell a lie and his false statement has been proved by someone, then the false statement is considered as Funda.
- (9) Fokotia : The term Fokotia is usually used to refer to a boy or girl who fulfill their desired goals by the other without any cost and labour of itself.
- (10) Fotowa : “Fotowa” refers to someone, who are value less in Nature.
- (11) Senti-Phala : “Senti-Phala” is a term usually used when someone become sentimental and emotional regarding any matters related to their life.
- (12) Seeniram this is another slang addressed to guys who attract lots of girls with their butter will not melt in their mouth ways.
- (13) Maluwa : The term “Maluwa” refers to a person who often takes drink.
- (14) Dosti Dosti” is a term often used in the sense of friend.
- (15) Bro : “Bro” is the short form of the word “Brother”. When a boy is considered as someone own brother, then he often used the term
- (16) Kamur : The term “Kamur” refers to someone irritating behaviour. A boarder with irritating behaviour is chosen as “Kamur person” by the group.

Hostellers are considered that these terms are not a simple term, their emotions are also tied up with each of the term, which continuously specific to express certain emotions.

Conclusion:-

The study conducted on the social life of Hostellers of Gauhati University. understanding of community in compact. The study highlighted the experiences, behaviour at changes and personality characteristics of the Hostel boarders. It also reveals how Hostel's structured the socialization process at Hostels through Hostel rules and regulations The study also highlights the nature and patterns of Hostel sentiments among the hostellers which work to tied them as a member of a single community

As an impact of staying in hostels and becoming a member of the hostel community, positive behavioural changes can be identified in context of character and personality development of its inmates. It prepares the boarders to face the hurdles of future life. The negative behavioural adaptations included hosteller's become smoking and drug addiction (especially boys), porn addicted, wasting time with friends etc Moreover we have observed that there has been a dearth of democratic environment in the Gauhati university hostels. It often operates as an authoritarian institution with set patterns of rules and regulations which hinders the growth of a democratic

environment in the hostels. Democratic environment refers to an environment, where every individual have equal rights and have freedom. At Hostel, Democratic environment plays an important role which is required for development of boarders. Though we have found that there exists a certain degree of community living standard and we feeling among the inmates of hostels, such sense are intrinsically controlled and not spontaneous. Thus, I have found that there has been a pathetic lack of Democratic environment at GU. Hostels campus Most of time, hostels operates as an authoritarian institution, with little or less freedom being given to its inmates to act in university hostel. Authorities as well as the seniors impose control over the junior's aspects. Most of the time the seniors too lack freedom to act and interact at their will However the degree of such lack of freedom can be found more with the juniors boarders who come to stay in hostels. In this regard, one of my respondents stated "seniors use us to do work for them. Sometime, they impose us to wash their cloths, brings food & it has to provide their own room. Moreover, during the time of election and varsity week, they impose us in many ways, such as, collecting vote for their Hostel's candidate, to join in campaigning. They give us the responsibility to win the Hostel candidate by hook or by crook At that time, we never sleep more than one hour at night."

Thus lack of a democratic environment is another aspect of negativity that we have marked during my study. In Gauhati University Hostel Campus, there are certain Ideal rules and regulations which have been prevailing in every Hostel. And, through these Ideals rules, every boarders are re-socialized at Hostels. Although, there is a lack of Democratic environment at Hostel to some extent, but they stay at Hostel as a member of a Community. Further though, I have pointed out both the positives and negatives aspects of Hostel community, I would like to argue that there is essentially not anything intrinsically bad or good, but this is how life turns within community Because "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. (William Shakespeare)." In conclusion, it can be concluded that we can and certainly consider Hostel as a community on the basis of the parameters which is required to call a social group as a Community We can say that in the sociological study of community, we can certainly call and consider hostel community as a community in compact. Result shows that the Hostel boarders continue to live and act as the member of a community. They develop the sense of "we-feeling", they share common values and practices, lessons on brother-hood and unity. "At Hostel, this community sentiment therefore holds every boarder together and build the structures of community living.

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