

Jaapi, Xorai and Gamosa

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In News: Primarily used to felicitate important people and guests, these important symbols of Assamese identity and culture are abundantly seen in political campaigns across the state.

Jaapi

- The jaapi is a conical hat made of bamboo and covered with dried tokou leaves.
- Used in official functions to felicitate guests, the landscape of rural Assam
- Features a more utilitarian version, which farmers wear to protect themselves from the harsh weather, both sun and rain, while working in the fields.
- The first possible recorded use of jaapi dates back to the Ahom-era buranjis, or chronicles.
- Jaapi was also seen and popularised in the first Assamese film, Joymati (1935) made by cultural icon Jyotiprasad Agarwala.
- Today, the bulk of Assam's jaapis are made by clusters of villages in Nalbari district.

Gamosa

- The Gamosa, which literally translates to a cloth to wipe one's body.
- Used at home as a towel or in public functions to felicitate dignitaries or celebrities.
- The popularity of the gamosa has now traveled beyond Assam and is often used by a number of public figures including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The gamosa is a "symbol of the Assamese nation" and its use in that context can be traced back to 1916 and 1917, when the Asom Chatra Sanmillan and Asom Sahitya Sabha (premier literary organisation) were founded

- Only during the anti-foreigner Assam Agitation of the early 1980s, when Assamese nationalism reached its crescendo, that the gamosa assumed a new role.
- Today, no public function can commence without the guest first being felicitated with the gamosa.

Xorai

- Made of bell-metal, the xorai essentially a tray with a stand at the bottom, with or without a cover can be found in every Assamese household.
- Primarily used as an offering tray during prayers, or to serve tamale-paan to guests, a xorai is also presented along with the jaapi and gamosa while felicitating someone.
- The bulk of xorais in Assam are made in the state's bell metal hub Sarthebari in Bajali district.
- Xorai has a long history, It was used during the time of Vaishnavite reformer Sankardeva.