



Naamghar Association of America

NEWSLETTER

[HTTPS://NAAMGHAR.ORG/](https://naamghar.org/)

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MESSAGE FROM THE *BOR-MEDHI*

Dear community members and well-wishers of NAAM,

While the communities in North America are gradually opening after Covid-19, we still hear about a few cases and in addition about RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), an old and known virus, more prevalent with younger children. We express our gratitude to all the people who are working in this environment, putting their own well-being at risk, to help others. Let us all follow the prescribed guidelines not only for our own safety but also for the safety of all others around us.

Now coming to this last quarter newsletter of 2022 from NAAM, it is my pleasure to highlight a few key points:

- A. At the end of our 2022 virtual Janmotsav celebration and Annual Fund-Raising drive in October, I had announced at the request of Auniati Satradhikar that he was organizing *Naamghar Xamaroh* at their North Guwahati branch of the monastery on December 2, 2022. Several senior members of our New Jersey community showed interest to join, including Dr. Umesh and Pronoti Tahbildar, and Dr. Kumud and Kabita Das. However, they were unable to actively participate. Then we were very pleased to hear from Satyen and Namita Das of the Washington DC area, who offered to visit to represent NAAM and actively participate at the *Xamaroh* event. Please see details report on the event elsewhere in this newsletter.
- B. Thai people is building a Buddhist Temple in Chino Hills of California, a suburban town

of Los Angeles in an hour drive from Downtown LA. Its construction started after 26 years, while its land was acquired and owned in 1996. The land was acquired from the Chino Hills Baptist Church, that owned the premises from 1987 to 1996.

The Buddhist Temple is a very significant development with the following attributes:

- 3100 sq ft Buddha Hall (Phase-I)
- 300 Parking spaces (Phase-I)
- 9026 sq ft Monk Dormitory (Phase-II)
- 1900 sq ft Kitchen and Restrooms (Phase-II)
- 3600 sq ft Meditation Area (Phase-III)
- 5775 sq ft Classroom and Office Building (Phase-III)

The Buddha Hall or the marble temple will have gold plated embellishments. Monks already came from Thailand and continue to occupy the premises. The site contains aging modulars, shrines, statues, garden areas and enclosed prayer houses. In the early 2000s, the temple struggled with mortgage payments, but managed to stay afloat.

It seems that some communities or their respective overseas motherland donate whole heartedly. Our Assamese community has something to emulate from these successful examples. We have been exploring land acquisition by NAAM as the first step towards our Permanent Naamghar in America, while we currently operate from our Temporary Naamghar in New Jersey in about an hour drive from New York City.

- C. We are pleased to announce that NAAM organized our first Naam-Prasanga Workshop on November 13, 2022, led by Dr. Purandar Sarmah along with Naamgharia Anjan Saikia at our Temporary Naamghar. Participants included Dr Bikul Das from Boston area and a visiting doctoral student from IIT-Guwahati, Lekhika Pathak. Please see elsewhere in this newsletter for more details.
- D. We are also very pleased to include an article here from Dr. Pabitra Bharali, a faculty member of the Digboi College, Assam, for your reading pleasure as this issue's Featured Article.

Please consider making a year-end monetary donation to NAAM for potential tax benefit for your 2022 tax year.

Finally, I wanted to wish you all the very best for the Joyous Holiday Season, a Brighter New Year, and our বাপতি সাহোন *Bhogali Bihu*.

I am looking forward to your feedback and continued co-operation to drive the processes for our Naamghar mission.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Dr. Binoy K. Bordoloi, *Bor Medhi*

Email: binoy.bordoloi@gmail.com



UPDATE ON FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

- **DONATION TO NAAM FOR TAX BENEFIT:** Consider making NAAM as one of the beneficiaries of your estate planning and/or donate for potential tax benefits for the current tax year (please consult your tax adviser for details).
- ***If your employer matches your donation to a charitable organization (direct or thorough payroll deductions), please add "Naamghar Association of America, Inc." as one of the beneficiaries.***
- NAAM is soliciting your donations via its website (<https://naamghar.org/>), NAAM Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/NaamgharAssociationOfAmerica/>), and the "DONATE" button on this page to fund a community Naamghar in North America.
- We encourage our well wishers who shop at Amazon, to use the link <https://smile.amazon.com/> and add

"Naamghar Association of America" as the designated charity. By adding a charity at Amazon Smile does not cost you additional charges. It is free.

- NAAM is looking forward to an active participation of the community (Assamese diaspora) for realizing a common dream of building a Naamghar in North America. Please use the "DONATE" button below and/or contact Dr. Binoy Bordoloi at binoy.bordoloi@gmail.com for additional information. Thank you!



Please contribute to NAAM's effort to build a naamghar in North America:



RECENT AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Naam-prasanga and Naam Workshop in NAAM's temporary Naamghar

NAAM and Naamgharia sponsored the first Naam-proxonga and Naam Workshop on November 13, 2022. Since most of the active participants were out of town, the attendance was low. However, NAAM Working Group member, Dr. Bikul Das and his guest, Ms. Lekhika Pathak from Assam, who was in the US to attend a conference, came from Boston to attend the event.

Lekhika sang a Borgeet accompanied by Dr. Das for khol and by Anjan Saikia for taal. Puran Sarmah lead the Naamchanda and Prarthana. Anjan Saikia also recited from the Srimodbhagawat. Dr. Das led the singing of two Naams as a part of the Workshop. The entire event lasted for slightly over two hours.

Naamghar Xamaaroh (gathering), Auniaati Satra, North Guwahati, Assam (reported by Satyan K. Das)

My wife Namita Das and I were blessed and fortunate to be able to take part in a Naamghar Xamaaroh (gathering), organized by the Auniati Satra (monastery) of North Guwahati, Assam on December 2-4, 2022. We represented NAAM and received a very warm welcome.

The first day's program (December 2nd) included performance by over 2,000 Naamghorias (male devotees, including this reporter) who played the Taal (a pair of clash cymbals) in unison. On the second day, the main event was a performance of Dihaa Naam by over 3,000 Bhakatanis (women devotees), including this reporter's spouse. (Diha Naam is a type of congregational prayer sung in Assam. The songs are derived from religious scriptures like the Kirtan-ghosa which was written by Mahapursh (Saint) Srimanta Sankaradeva. Musical instruments like the

Nagara and Khol, both percussion instruments, taal, and hand-clapping accompany the singing).

The third day's (December 4th) main event was another Diha Naam performed by over 2,000 young boys. The atmosphere created by singing of the Kirtah-ghosa by several thousand devotees everyday transformed the location into a Baikunthapuri (a heavenly abode) for everyone present there.



L-R: Namita Das, Ms. Keerthi Jalli (DC, Kamrup), and other Bhakatanis at the event.



Satyan and Namita Das (center) with Satradhikar Dr. Goswami (R, in golden kurta), and other organizers of the event.

This event, organized first ever by the Auniati Satra brought the community together and raised the feeling of spirituality among people reflecting how Naamghar plays an integral part of people's lives in Assam. Naamghar creates community togetherness and spirituality among people and we are grateful to Gurujana, Sri Sri Sankaradeva for creating Naamghar.

From our experience of attending this Xamaroh, the Satradhikar of the Auniati Satra, Dr. Pitambar Deva Goswami is following Srimanta Sankaradeva's philosophy, and we are all immensely grateful to him.



VAISHNAVISM IN MAJULI: CULTURE AND ACCULTURATION

By Dr. Pabitra Bharali

The two most important facets of Majuli's identity in front of the world are her physical uniqueness as the largest human habited river island and the spiritual ambience of Vaishnavism emanating from the historic union known as the "Mani-kanchan Sanjog" between Assam's pioneer Vaishnavite saints Srimanta Sankaradeva and his disciple Sri Madhavadeva. While as regards the first people did/have done nothing, the second has rooted, grown and spread because of human and humane propagation and acculturation. This article is a brief address to the culture and acculturation of Vaishnavism in present day Majuli with oblique insights into certain trends in its development since the historic 'Sanjog'.

The unique and incomparable union of Srimanta Sankaradeva and Sri Madhavadeva, well-known as the 'Mani-kanchan Sanjog', took place in 1522 A.D. (1444 Shak) while Sankaradeva was staying a couple of months at Belaguri in west Majuli. The catalytic agent was Ramadasa who, being a disciple of Sankaradeva, did not comply with the order of his brother-in-law Madhavadeva to procure a goat to sacrifice to the goddess. Annoyed Madhavadeva, the staunch believer of "shakta pantha" or 'pravritti marga', set out for a religious dispute with Sankaradeva. Sankaradeva's victory in the debate led to the conversion of Madhavadeva who not only accepted the Vaishnava faith but acknowledged Sankaradeva as his Guru. "This unique union gave a renewed momentum to the progress of Vaisnavism in Assam." (Sarma: 14) and acted as the spring for spread of Vaishnavism in Majuli. The crowning aftermath was the establishment of sixty five satras for propagation of ethics and socio-cultural ideals

amongst the people. The sign of the success story is that Majuli emerges as hub of Vaishnavite culture of Assam.

Vaishnavite institution: Sankaradeva and his disciples established satras in Majuli to nurture and propagate Vaishnavite philosophy and practice of life. The establishment of the satra institution has been the most important factor for the spread of Sankaradeva's Vaishnavite faith. Of six hundred sixty five satras in Assam, sixty five satras were established in Majuli itself. Of course devastation in the form of flood and erosion has minimized the number to twenty two (thirty six, according to Asam Satra Mahasabha, quoted by Sarma:246) in the present time. Again, of the four 'Raj-satras' in Assam, three (Auni Ati, Dakhinpat and Garamur) are in Majuli itself. These are suggestive of the prestigious place of Majuli for spread of Vaishnavism. Notable among the extent satras are Auni Ati, Kamalabari, Dakhinpat, Garamur, Bengena Ati, Samoguri etc.

The satra institution to a certain extent resembles the Buddhist monastery and the matha institution of the medieval period. Generally situated on quadrangles surrounded by palisades, each principal satra in Majuli, as in the rest of Assam, is marked by the existence of a 'namghor', a 'manikuta', a 'batchora' and two or four 'hatis'. The centre of the main activities of a satra, the namghor serves the purpose of the prayer hall as well as the hall for holding religious meetings and discourses. The Manikuta adjoining to the eastern end of the namghor is the actual shrine where the idol of the deity, the sacred scripture and precious

things are kept. The District Gazetteer of Sibsagar, 1905 accounts Garamur satra in the following words:

“The buildings of the satra are approached by a good road which is constructed at some expense. The namghar is a huge structure, the roof of which is supported on huge wooden pillars and the great floor-space is entirely bare save for one or two lecturns on which the sacred writings are reposing. The actual shrine is a separate building closely adjoining the eastern end of the namghar. The shrine is very different from the penetralia of the sakta temple. There is no trace of blood or grease; there is nothing disgusting or grotesque and the whole place is dominated by the note of decency and propriety which is so marked a characteristic of Vaishnavism of Majuli. In a square around the gardens stand the lines of huts in which the resident monks live. They consist of well-built rows of rooms which are much more spacious than those ordinarily occupied by village folk and are kept scrupulously clean. There is singularly gracious and pleasing in the whole atmosphere. Everything is fresh, neat and well-to-do. The well-groomed smiling monks are evidently at peace with themselves and with the world at large and even little boys that flock around them are usually clean and well-behaved. The children are recruited from the villages and are trained to be devotees, but if at any time they find the restraint of celibacy irksome they are at liberty to return to the outer world.”(Quoted by Sarma, S.N:101-102)

Though during Sankaradeva's time the satras did not take the shape of a regular institution of a permanent nature, attempts of his disciples and royal patronage gave it stability and pomp and glory. The satras turn out to be the centre of Vaishnavas, the believers of Vaishnavite faiths – Adhikar/Satradhikar, his deputy Deka Adhikar and bhakats residing in the hatis and the 'sisyas' (disciples) who reside in the villages and the towns.

Notably the namghar along with its manikuta and batchora is a common feature of the villages also. Moreover in most Vaishnava houses a mini namghar known as “gurughar” is a common sight.

Rejuvenating steps in the line in the recent times are noticed in the establishments of Sankardeva charcha kendras. Mention may be made of “Majuli District Palnaam Thaan and Krishti Charcha Kendra, Silakala, Majuli” established at the auspices of Acharya Ilaram Das, founder of Ek Saran Bhagawati Samaj, Assam.

Vaishnavite rites and rituals: Vaishnavite rites and rituals are piously and wholeheartedly observed in the satras and the villages of Majuli. The common rites observed are-

- (a) *Sarana*: This is the rite of initiation of a person as a vaishnava by the Adhikara and by the Rajmedhi of the satra, or by the Acharya or Upacharya in case of the modern revivals like Ek Saran Bhagawati Samaj, Assam.
- (b) *Conferment of mala*: It refers to the conferment of a duly consecrated rosary carved out of basil plant or sandal wood prevalent in the Purusha and Brahma samhatis. In satras affiliated to Brahma samhatis a vaishnava mantra consisting of eight or twelve or eighteen syllables is offered to a disciple in course of conferring a rosary (quoted from Harideva Goswami's “Dakhinpat Satrar Itivritta” by S.N. Sarma:123).
- (c) *Worship*: Though image worship is not inspired in the Mahapurushiya cult, many a satra contain one or more images of Vishnu, which may be due to the fact that Sankardeva installed an wooden image of Vishnu at Dhuahat Belaguri satra. Devotional scripture has

replaced the image/idol in the namghars and the satras established by Ek Saran Bhagawati Samaj, Assam.

(d) *Daily prayers/prasangas*: These are congregational services continued from morning till night. Known as prasanga/namprasanga and observed in the morning, at midday, at afternoon and at evening, it includes singing of hymns and songs (eg. *jagaran geet* and *chalanar geet* depicting Krishna's wake-up and start for Vrindavana with cows), the chanting of prayers and reading and explanation of the 'Bhagavata, the Gita, Namghosa, Bhakti Ratnavali, Bhakti Ratnakara, Bhakti Pradipa and Gunamala' in the satra namghars and Krishti Charcha Kendra of 'Ek Saran Bhagawati Samaj, Assam'.

In the village namghars normally a namghoria carries out the prayers/prasangas in the mornings and the evenings. Regular nam prasanga in the month of Bhada is a common phenomenon in the namghars of Majuli.

Vaishnavite festivals: Majuli is famous for two of its Vaishnavite festivals – Raaslila and Paalnam. Not that these festivals are not observed in other parts of Assam, but its observance at Majuli has its uniqueness and socio-cultural and spiritual values. In Vaishnavism, Sri Krishna has marked as the perfect incarnation of God, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent and Lord of the unending universe. Raaslila festival is that ceremony where the life of the perfect Incarnation is wholeheartedly and devotedly enacted. The spiritual value transmitted through its art is beyond any question. Raaslila is a very great festival in Majuli as well as in Assam. Notable thing is that Raaslila is enacted not only in the historic/established satras e.g. in the 'rangamanchas' of the satras, but also in the

permanent and temporary stages built for the purpose in small areas – at village level or area level centering a cultural centre/society amidst two or more villages. Raaslila thus tunes and transmits the very spirit of Vaishnavism to the children since they actively become part of the production. Virtually every single person of Majuli gets involved in the three day long raas festival depicting the life of Krishna. Majulians staying outside Majuli return home during this time to take part in song, dance, theatre and merriment. Outsiders throng Majuli during this time. In Majuli this festival was initiated at Dakhinpat by Sri Sri Basudeva Goswami who not only wrote its script but acted in it in 1840 A.D. The revolutionary freedom fighter and Adhikar Sri Sri Pitambor Devagoswami started the Raaslila at Garamur. He not only wrote a script but built an auditorium and opened the path for co-acting of the male and the female. Of course in the satras of the udasin bhakats (celibate devotees), the female roles are acted by the males even today. In the village areas and cultural centres, there is the system of co-acting. Among notable cultural centres performing Raaslila mention must be made of Banshigopal Nityamandir(Garamur), Srimanta Sankaradeva Kisti Sangha(Garamur), Majuli Milan Sangha(Kamalabari), Milan Kisti Mandir(Totoya) etc. The three day Raaslila is notable not only for the religious feeling and ambience but the communal harmony that it brings which Sankaradeva preached and propagated and which Garamuria Adhikar Sri Sri Pitambor Deva Goswami practised and spread to a great extent.

Paalnam at majuli was started by Sankaradeva at Dhuahat-Belaguri satra. This festival of singing the hymns or verses of the holy scriptures continuously carried out by the Vaishnavas by turns is observed in the satras and the village namghars as special ceremonies. Notably at Auni Ati and Garamur satras it is observed annually on fixed dates. While at

Garamur it is observed on the last day of Kati month, at Auni Ati it is observed for five days from 25th to 29th of Kati. Thousands of devotees throng to Auni ati during these days and pray to Bishnu offering *bonti*(oil or ghee lamp) and lighting the incense sticks. Communal harmony along with religious ambience is again a very notable feature here.

Performance of 'Bhaona', i.e. performance of religious drama, is a common phenomenon in Majuli. While in the satras 'ankia bhaonas' are performed, in the village namghars, bhaonas based on scripts written by various Adhikaras depicting Vaishnava's /Bishnu's supremacy are performed. In recent times bhaona competitions and festivals have been organised by Auni Ati Satra. Other common Vaishnava festivals ceremonised in Majuli satras and namgharas are tithis of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, 'janmotsav' of Sankaradeva, 'Krishna Janmastomi' and 'fakua' etc.

Vaishnavite Music/Performing Arts:

Inculcation of Vaishnavite music is another notable feature in the context of Majuli. The dances created by Sankaradeva for preaching his 'bhakti' dharma and extended by his disciples including Madhavadeva have been carried and spread by the satras. In-depth and devoted training of the dances is a regular feature in Majuli satras and some cultural centres set up for the purpose. The Dasavatar nritya is truly representative of the Vaishnava spirit. Again, inculcation of 'raaga' or training and singing of 'Borgeet', 'Ankia geet' and verses from the 'Kirtan', 'Dasam' etc. and tuning of the 'khol' and clashing of the cymbals represent Vaishnavite music of Majuli. Of course in certain satras like Dakhinpat, discourses are based not on Kirtan, Dasam, Ghosa as versified by Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva but on songs, verses and plays written by their Adhikars.(Mahanta:135) On the whole, of course, they are Vaishnava music which is so unique in case of performers from Majuli.

Adorations and honours received by Majuli performers at national and international levels are worth remembering here.

The satras are the treasure house of "Borgeet", 'Matiakhara', 'Jumora' dance, 'Chali' dance, 'Notua' Dance, 'Nande Vringee', 'Sutradhar', 'Oza-Pali', 'Apsara' Dance, 'Satria Krishna' Dance, 'Dasavater' Dance etc., which were contributed by Sankaradeva. A notable fact is that in most places of the rest Assam, the persons trained in performing arts at Majuli are found to be preferred and appointed for instructing the young minds in the Vaishnavite and cultural centres.

Vaishnavite art and sculpture: The namghars along with the manikuta and batchora and entrances/gates to centres of Vaishnavite culture represent Vaishnavite art and sculpture. While the manikuta may include a shrine or idol of Vishnu, the doors to it may be carved with Vaishnava images. The pillars of the namghar are normally carved or painted with Vishnu or Vaishnavas. Sometimes they are so painted or engraved that they present the skeleton of a story from the scripture. An ornate gateway engraved with religious motifs, animals and flowers forms the entrance while inside similar sculptures and paintings with divine overtones adorn the walls of the Namghar. Sometimes the satra batchoras and special gateways represent Vaishnava rites or festivals. Mention may be made to the gateway at Garamur Tini Ali suggestive of Gajendra Upakhyan. The altar of the God known as the 'Singghasan' at satras and village namghars are representative of Vaishnavite art work.

The pillars of the namghars are usually decorated with 'phulam' gamocha where 'Ram, Hari, Narayan', the peacock suggestive Krishna, or some holy figures are beautifully inscribed. A noticeable fact is that Majuli weavers consider it a sacred activity to inscribe the above mentioned in their first attempt at a 'phulam'

gamocha and offer it to the satra or the village namghar. This is suggestive of how Vaishnavism is imbibed in the very spirit of the Majulians.

Vaishnavite writings: Majuli satras have been centres of much Vaishnavite literature. Sankardeva's versification of 'Pashanda Mardan' written during his stay at Dhuahat Belaguri is the beginning of satria Vaishnavite literature in Majuli. Following him Adhikars of Majuli throughout the times have written holy songs, verses and dramas etc.

The publication of the Assamese monthly "Assam Bilasinee" by Auni Atia Satradhikar Sri Sri Duttadeva Goswami through establishment of Dharmaprakash Jantra (the printing Machine) is really a very strong step taken by a Vaishnava Guru. It was a fitting reply to Arunnudoi which turned out to be an expression of Christianity and which published things insulting to Hindu Religion. Moreover this Adhikar wrote thirteen religious dramas and seven books of verses. Adhikars, Deka adhikars and other notable vaishnavas of satras like Auni Ati, Kamalabari, Garamur, Dakhinpat etc. have contributed sufficiently to Vaishnavite literature. Keeping in mind the scarcity of space a very selective list is provided here:

- A)** Auni Ati satra:(i) Niranjan Deva Goswami- *Mahamoha* (drama); (ii) Dutta Deva Goswami- *Kaliya Daman, Raaslila, Kansanbadha* (dramas); *Govinda Gunamala, Dhruvacharita* (verses); (iii) Kamal Chandra Deva Goswami- *Prahlad Charita* (drama); (iv) Lila kanta Deva Goswami- *Tripurasur badha* (drama); (v) Hemchandra Deva Goswami- *Sri Krishna Kirtan* (verse), *Sri Krishnar Balyalila, Trishankur Swargalabh* (dramas); (vi) Bishnu Chandra Deva Goswami- *Priyabratar Dharma Porikha, Samudra Manthan, Balichalan* (dramas); (vii) Pitambar Deva Goswami (present Adhikar)-

Ajamil(pabitra-papi), Biswamitrar Brahmatta labh (dramas); (viii) Devananda Deva Goswami (Dekadhikar)- *Guru Dakhina* (drama).

B) Kamalabari Satra:(i) Narayan Chandra Goswami - *Satria Sanskrit Swarnarekha* (history, Criticism); (ii) Krishna kanta Dev- *Rukmini Haran* (drama).

C) Garamur Satra:(i) Pitambar Deva Goswami - *Sanatan Dharma Mukhapatra* (reformative journal), *Dharma Siksha Samaj Raksha, Dharma Bani* (essays).

D) Dakhinpat Satra:(i) Sukh Deva Goswami - *Sesh Dasam* (verse); (ii) Basu Deva Goswami- *Raas Kirtan* (lyric for Raaslila), *Arjun Geeta* (verse).

E) Bengena Ati satra:(i) Ramakanta Deva- *Partha Parajoy, Karna Parva* (dramas); (ii) Purnanda Deva- *Krishnar Janmalila, Harichandra Upakhyan, Ramar aswamedh Jajna* (dramas).

Non-observance of Durga puja: Non-observance of Durga puja, a 'sakta' worshipping festival, is a noticeable feature of Majuli – a fact endorsing the acculturation of Vaishnava faith. At a time when the rest of the country or the rest of the state get involved in the pompous and ceremonious autumn festival worshipping Durga, Majuli is found to solemnly yet ceremoniously observe Vaishnava festivals of Sankarjanmotsav, Raaslila and Paalnam. This is suggestive of the width and breadth of Vaishnavite faith at Majuli.

Influence of Vaishnavism on the tribes: Sankaradeva wanted to establish equality and harmony among all tribes of Assam-“ Kirat Kachari Khasi Garu Miri/ Javan Kanka Gowal/Asom Muluk Rajak Turuk/ Kuvasha

Mlecha Sandal”. Forty percent of Majuli’s population belongs to the tribes especially the Mishings. Vaishnavism has touched these people in such a way that they have inculcated the very spirit of Vaishnavism. The Mishings have established namghars in their villages. They also observe various Vaishnava rituals. They make offerings to namghars and satras while somebody undergo ailments. Most of them take pride in introducing themselves as Vaishnava bhakats. They undergo Vaishnava ‘sarana – bhajanas’ and enact Vaishnava dramas. They have even staged Vaishnava dramas in the recent ‘bhaona’ festivals. The Majuli Deuris have also accepted the Vaishnavite faith and rituals. Their visits and offerings to Basudeva Thaan Naruwa satra (Dhakuankhana, Dhemaji) suggest their firm Vaishnava faith. In the same way the Sonowal Kacharis, in spite of their faith on their traditional God Bathou, have established Namghar in their village. They observe not only namprasanga but also the tithis of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. All these are suggestive of the Vaishnavite influence on the tribes.

To sum up, a true Vaishnavite devotion has been inculcated by the Majulians. This is not to underestimate the other faiths, nor to say that there is nobody who follows a different faith. In recent times, many small ‘Shiva mandirs’ have come up. Threats were there to convert the Mishings into Christianity. The existing Auni

Atiya Satradhikar was seen taking positive measures in this regard. On the whole, there is no denying the fact that Vaishnavite humane spirit has been cultured with solemnity, depth and devotion at Majuli. Again, the Vaishnavite cultural ambience is not confined to the satras alone. The Nomination for World Heritage Site, (Majuli’s craving!), under cultural head denotes its cultural richness which is basically founded on Vaishnavism.

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Q&A

Q: What is NAAM?

A: Naamghar Association of America, Inc. (NAAM) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit spiritual and cultural organization formed to construct and manage a Naamghar for the Assamese diaspora to celebrate and perform the spiritual traditions and philosophical teachings of Srimanta Sankardeva. With strong ties with all the *Satras* of Assam, NAAM seek to provide a forum for learned spiritual leaders and traditional artistes to share their knowledge and talent with the current and future generations of the Assamese diaspora.

Q: What are the immediate goals of NAAM?

A: Some of the immediate goals of NAAM include spreading awareness on NAAM initiatives, build a digital media platform, plan for fund raising, and participate regularly in Naam-proxongo. NAAM seeks volunteers from the large Assamese diaspora across the United States to achieve these goals. Please join us (details at the bottom of this newsletter). In our planning activity, the first

priority is to identify what is needed to establish a temporary *Naamghar*. This will make the *Guru Axon*, consecrated by the Sri Sri Auniati Satra Satradhikar, more easily accessible to the public, while we work on the longer-term project of building a permanent *Naamghar*.

Q: Does NAAM collaborate with other organizations?

A: NAAM is actively seeking to collaborate with all community organizations which are willing to help achieve NAAM's mission. NAAM plans to have meaningful discussion with all organizations in our community; please contact us if you would like to be a part of this conversation (contact details at the bottom).



HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH NAAM?

JOIN THE NAAM WORKING GROUP (WG): We need your help in achieving the dream of building a Naamghar in North America. Therefore, NAAM is open to everyone who is interested in building the Naamghar.

If you are interested in getting involved actively in NAAM's mission, please join the NAAM by

sending an email to: Naaminfo@Naamghar.org. The WG meets regularly via teleconference/video conference to discuss various issues that are related to NAAM and its mission and goals.



NAAM WORKING GROUP TEAM MEMBERS

Following individuals comprise the current NAAM working group (WG) team. ***We invite all individuals who are sincerely interested in the Mission and Goals of NAAM to join the NAAM team.*** The current WG members are:

- Iswar Agarwalla, NC
- Tutumoni Baishya, Assam
- Niraj Barbara, PA
- Dr. Sanjib Bhuyan, NJ
- Pranab Bora, WI
- Lolit Bora, PA
- Subhasini Bora, NC
- Dr. Babul Borah, OH
- Utpal Borah, VA
- Dr. Binoy Bordoloi, NJ (Bor-medhi)
- Manoranjan Bordoloi, NJ
- Monidipa Bordoloi, CA
- Susanto Bordoloi, CT
- Chirayu Kr. Borooah, CA
- Malabika Brahma, NJ
- Debojit Chowdhury, CA
- Niren Choudhury, NJ
- Dr. Bikul Das, MA
- Namita Das, VA
- Dr. Pradip Das, MO
- Rupam Das, Assam
- Shyam DevChoudhury, PA (Secretary)
- Dr. Saswati Datta, OH
- Hemanga Dutta, NJ
- Panchali Dutta, NJ
- Sawmick Dutta, CA
- Prandeep Gogoi, NJ
- Ajoy Hazarika, NY
- Kamalakshi Hazarika, NJ
- Suranjoy Hazarika, NJ
- Priyadarshini Inman, NC
- Dr. Jukti Kalita, NJ
- Lalita Kalita, IL
- Rashmi Kalita, CA
- Sangaurav Kaushik, NC
- Nilanjona Mahanta, CA
- Nabanita Mazumdar, WA
- Chayanika Mohan, NC
- Rachna Nath, AZ
- Shakhyar Neog, NJ
- Dr. Yashwant Pathak, FL
- Lelkhika Pathak, Assam
- Anu Perlmutter, VA
- Nilakshi Phukan, NC
- Gayatree Prasad, CA
- Dr. Purandar Sarmah, NJ (Treasurer)
- Vavani Sarmah, CA

Contact Us

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Website: www.naamghar.org

Facebook: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NaamgharAssociationOfAmerica>

