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Naamghar Association of America

NEWSLETTER

Volume 8/Issues 1

April - June 2025

MESSAGE FROM THE *BOR-MEDHI*

Dear community members and well-wishers of NAAM,

Now that the Spring season is over, we are preparing for the Summer. This Quarter-2 issue of the NAAM newsletter highlights several important matters as explained below.

A) Active Participation by NAAM at the Assam Convention-2025 in Chicago: New Book Launch - আমেৰিকাত নামঘৰ

Our best wishes to the organizers of the AC-2025 from July 3 to 5. We are seeking donations via book sale. The Assamese version of “Naamghar in America” / আমেৰিকাত নামঘৰ (the English version of which was launched at the AC-2023 in Philadelphia) will be released there. Suranjay Hazarika, Lalita Kalita and Priyadarshini Inman will lead the new book launch on behalf of NAAM representing our Executive Committee and Working Group members. We expect additional members to be present there as well.

B) “The Symbolic Significance of the Xorai (শৰাই) in Assam, India”: by Kimberly (Kim) Dodgson Labinger

Kim wrote the above titled paper on the Xorai way back in 1979. This two-pages

summary article along with a Table of Content are shown in a different section of the newsletter. The Table of Content is from an 80-page project report prepared by her on the Xorai, which is very unique in Assamese culture.

We came to learn about Kim in the past 6 months only. Her father, a retired surgeon Dr. Kenneth Dodgson, lives currently in upstate New York, and Kim lives with her husband in Southern California. Dr. Kenneth Dodgson was appointed as the surgeon at the Jorhat Christian Medical Centre in 1957, when Kim was only 16 months old. Her mother, Sally Dodgson, taught classes at the nurses’ training school and at the Eastern Theological College until their return to the United States in 1981 after serving there for 24 long years. While very young, Kim attended schools at Balya Bhavan (an Assamese medium elementary school) in Jorhat, Assam and later Kodaikanal School in Tamil Nadu and Woodstock School in Uttarakhand before leaving India to attend college and graduate school in California. She taught elementary school in the Los Angeles area for 34 years until her retirement in 2020.

C) Sutradhar :NAAM Annual Cultural Event: Performers and their Performances

Our guest speaker from Assam Dr. Bishnu Prasad Sarma, MD-Ph.D. gave a lecture on “Ayurveda: Health through Herbs” as part of our multicultural program in our fund-raising drive on May-17. The cultural program with photos on the various song and dance performances and the names of the artists are compiled in another section of the newsletter by our executive committee.

Our invited artist was Vandita Parikh from Dallas, TX. She was the recipient of the President’s Award, Smt Pratibha Patil in 2011. She was joined by two artists from Texas and the rest were local artists - children and adults from the NY, NJ, PA and DC areas.

D) “A Vaishnavite Dancer Duo’s Journey from Cauvery to Brahmaputra”: DviDala (Sridevi Jagannath and Rohini Ananth)

It is an article by DviDala, the dancing duo, comprising of Sridevi Jagannath and Rohini Ananth, a pair of Vaishnavite South Indian Dancers, on their journey to *Sattriya*. In their own words “In seeking the Lord, we found His many forms; in seeking His dance, we found many hearts.”. Sridevi is currently based in North Carolina

E) YTD Funds Update as Mentioned at the GBM of May-17: NAAM Treasurer

A brief note (1/2 page max.) from our Treasurer showing the year 2024 money collections and expenses are summarized in another section of the newsletter. Please

note that anyone can contact us via email at Naaminfo@naamghar.org for any Questions/Answers. This note is in compliance of the statutory matter of a General Body Meeting (GBM) to be held by NAAM, a non-profit 501(c)(3) trust, annually.

F) Status Update Seeking our “Temporary Community Naamghar Premises”

We are having active dialog at present exploring the rental for our Naamghar with another non-profit 501-c-3 entity at their premises located at the “Sanctuary + Seed” church in Martinsville, adjoining Bridgewater. In addition to the dedicated room and space for our *Guru-axon* for the temporary Naamghar, the facility also has an auditorium for organizing other functions. Children and adult activities may be organized in its outdoor premises as well. This facility is not far from the Balaji Temple of Bridgewater. We will be glad to update you with the outcome in our Q-3 NAAM newsletter in September-2025.

All the best for a pleasant summer.

Sincerely,

Dr. Binoy K. Bordoloi, *Bor-Medhi*

Chairman, NAAM

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 through payroll deductions), please add “Naamghar Association of America, Inc.” as one the beneficiaries.***
- NAAM is soliciting your donations via its website (<https://naamghar.org/>), NAAM Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/NaaamgharAssociationOfAmerica/>), and the “DONATE” button on this page to

fund a community Naamghar in North America.

- 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:



CONCEPT REPORT ON THE PROPOSED 'SANKARADEVA CULTURAL CENTER AND NAAMGHAR' IN NEW-JERSEY, USA

By NAAM Executive Committee

The proposed '**Sankaradeva Cultural Center and Naamghar**' in New-Jersey, USA, is an ambitious conceptual project envisioned on approximately 3 acres of land. This conceptually proposed complex aims to serve as a vibrant cultural and spiritual hub that preserves Assamese heritage while embracing for the broader community activities.

In addition to its cultural and social significance, the project emphasizes financial sustainability to ensure smooth operations and long-term maintenance. The inclusion of a banquet hall for weddings, festivals and social events along with a dining hall supported by a well-equipped kitchen, will create avenues for revenue generation.

The performing art hall may be used for Arts and varied exhibitions and workshops, further contributing to financial stability. A dedicated guest house will provide accommodation for visitors, artists and scholars to sustain the complex's upkeep and day to day expenses, while the library and administrative office will support educational and community activities.

Given the present fund constraints, the project is planned to be executed in a phased manner to ensure steady progress without compromising its core vision. As part of this approach, the

dining area and performing arts hall may be integrated with the banquet hall to optimize space and resources during the initial phase. This flexible design strategy will allow the complex to function efficiently from the outset while enabling future expansions as additional funds become available.

By balancing cultural aspirations with practical execution, the '**Sankaradeva Cultural Center and Naamghar**' aspires to be a self-reliant institution that continues to serve the Assamese community for generations to come.

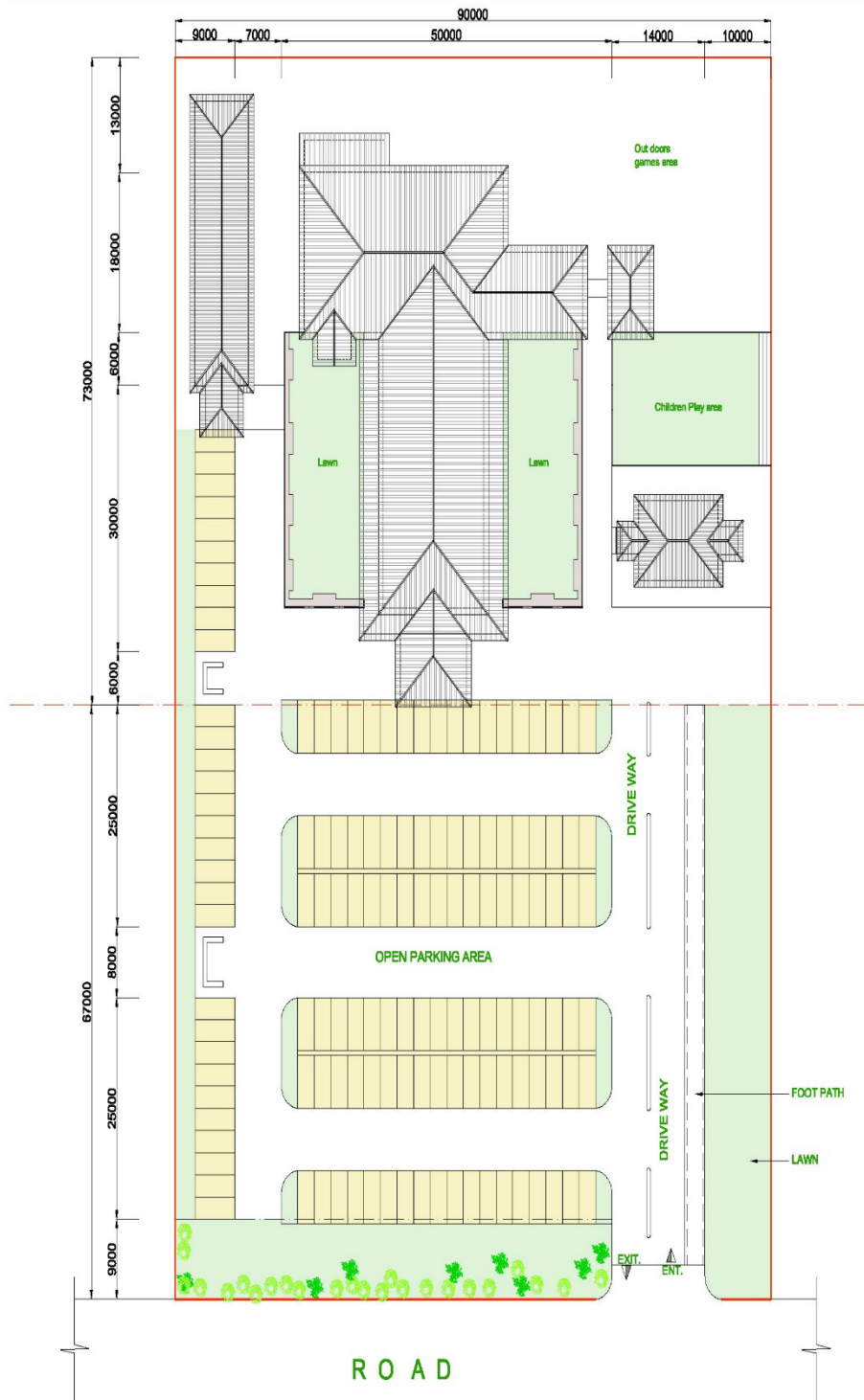
NAAM is very pleased to share some preliminary architectural designs created by renowned architect firm DESIGN PLENUM from Guwahati, India, in the next two pages.

Please note that these plans are their conceptual phases only and we are sharing them with you for information purposes only.

We hope that this information will motivate you to open your purses and donate to NAAM so that the dream of having a Naamghar in North America is finally realized. Thank you!



ROOF PLAN



PROJECT :-

Proposed Sankardev Cultural
Centre and Namghar in New
Jersey, USA.

TITLE :-

ROOF PLAN

ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN MM.
ONLY WRITTEN DIMENSIONS
TO BE FOLLOWED.

CONSULTANT

DESIGNERS PLENUM

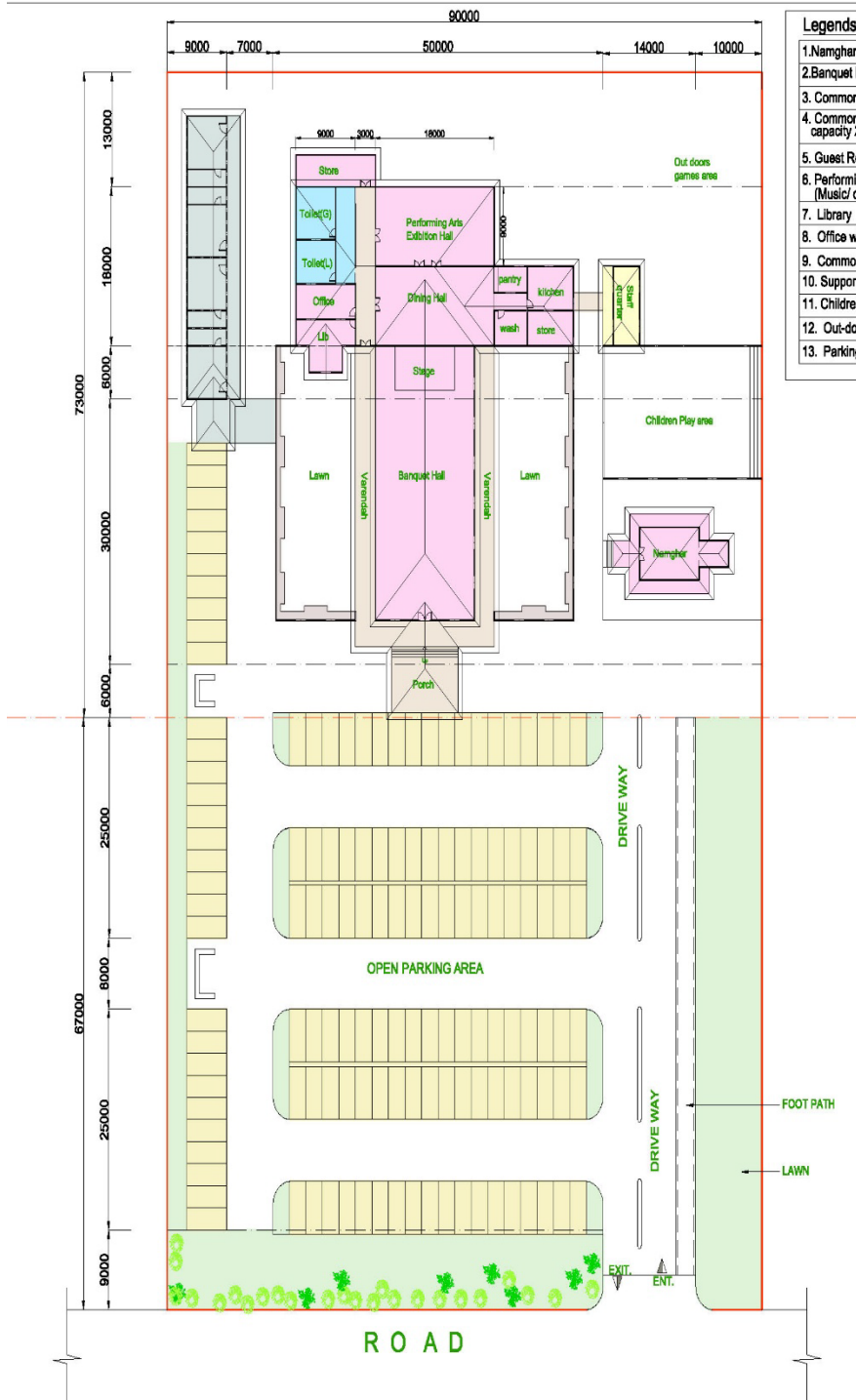
ASHIANA 1ST FLOOR, SARBOJAYA PATH,
ABC, GUWAHATI-781005

ARCHITECT:

MR. RANJIB BARUAH

DATE: 20-03-2025

FLOOR PLAN



Legends :-

1. Namghar / Monikut - capacity 100 persons	: 125.00 sqm
2. Banquet Hall --- capacity 400 persons	: 188.00 sqm
3. Common Toilets - Gents & Ladies	: 100.00 sqm
4. Common Dining Hall - capacity 200 persons / pantry/ Kitchen	: 301.00 sqm
5. Guest Rooms - 4 Nos.	: 285.00 sqm
6. Performing Art's Hall / Exhibition hall for (Music/ dance/ drama/ bhowne etc.)	: 189.00 sqm
7. Library	: 43.00 sqm
8. Office with toilet	: 38.00 sqm
9. Common store room	: 44.00 sqm
10. Supporting staff quarters	: 62.00 sqm
11. Children play area	
12. Out-door games	
13. Parking area	: Approx 160 cars

PROJECT :-

Proposed Sankardev Cultural Centre and Namghar in New Jersey, USA.

TITLE :-

FLOOR PLAN

ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN MM.
ONLY WRITTEN DIMENSIONS
TO BE FOLLOWED.

CONSULTANT

DESIGNERS PLENUM

"ASHIANA" 1ST FLOOR, SARBODAYA PATH,
ABC, GUWAHATI-781005

ARCHITECT:

MR. RANJIB BARUAH

DATE: 20-03-2025

DONATION TIERS FOR NAAM

There are many ways you can donate to NAAM, so please find the options suitable for you.

Donation and Membership Details:

1. \$10,000 (Cash and/or Asset)

- a) Category: Subha-anudhyayi
- b) Installments: 25 x \$400
- c) Additional Benefits: Reserved Seating & Life Membership & Blue Plaque

2. \$5,000 (Cash and/or Asset)

- a) Category: Subha-kamanakari
- b) Installments: 25 x \$200
- c) Additional Benefits: Life membership & Green Plaque

3. \$1,000 (Cash)

- a) Category: Mangal-kamanakari
- b) Installments: 20 x \$50
- c) Additional Benefits: White Plaque

4. \$100 (Cash)

- a) Category: Kalyan-kankhi
- b) Installments: N/A
- c) Additional Benefits: N/A

5. \$50 (Cash)

- a) Category: Hita-kankhi
- b) Installments: N/A
- c) Additional Benefits: N/A

Please click on the "DONATE" button below and/or contact Dr. Binoy K. Bordoloi at binoy.bordoloi@gmail.com for additional information.



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



IDEAS FOR FUND RAISING DRIVE

By NAAM Executive Committee

Please review the information below and give us your constructive thoughts in achieving and exceeding that target. Please contact Dr. Binoy K. Bordoloi at binoy.bordoloi@gmail.com for additional information.

- **Common Yearly Ones: ~\$80K**

- Regular yearly fund raising event
 - Dinner with celebrities - \$10K
 - Cultural functions - \$10K
 - Other (like in Sankardev Tithis) - \$10K
- Plaque placement for love ones (say 50 plaques/150) ~ \$7.5K
- Selling Sankardev Literatures : \$5K
- Misc: \$10K
 - Materials donation : 5K (like car/boat) – This has lots of legalities and formalities
 - Other - \$5K
- Special fund-raising events: \$30K (virtual/social media/in person)

- **Total for next 3 years : ~\$200K**

- **Initial Pledges: \$350K (Most important one)**

- 70% of NE families and 25% of across US/Canada (\$100/each as token): \$26.5K
 - $(200 \times .70) + (500 \times 0.25) = 140 + 125 = 265$ families
- \$50K x 1 = \$50K - Requires to develop benefits matrix
- \$25K x 2 = \$50K - Requires to develop benefits matrix
- \$10K x 15 = \$150K- Requires to develop benefits matrix
- \$2500 x 20 = \$50K- Requires to develop benefits matrix
- \$1000 x 50 = \$50K - Requires to develop benefits matrix

- **Construction Related : \$70K**

- Floor tiles (say 50/1000) ~50K (only applicable for new building)
- Brick (only possible for new building – Say \$100/200) ~ \$20K (applicable for new building)

- **Expected Total in 3 years : \$700K (we could get close to \$500K in reality if everything works out)**



NAAM FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2024

Naam collected/raised \$16,405.81 in 2024 through membership fee, general donation, earmark donation, May 18 multicultural fundraising event, and the sale of book “Naamghar in America” by Dr. Binoy Bordoloi. Out of which the highest amount was raised through earmark donation and the second highest raised through general donation.

Next, NAAM spent \$2,449.75 in 2024. The major expenses were incurred while holding the May 18 multicultural fundraising event. The second major expense was for the yearly premium of liability insurance.

So, we had a net surplus of \$13,956.06 in 2024. In the prior years 2017 through 2023 the cumulative surplus was \$68,193.68. As a result, at the end of 2024 we had \$82,149.74.

The detailed revenue collection and expenses can be found on the tables below.

Revenue Collection Type	Amount
Membership Fee	\$1,250.00
General Donation	\$4,315.65
Earmark Donation	\$8,540.16
May 18 Event Registration Fees	\$2,195.00
Naamghar in America Book Sale	\$105.00
<i>Total Collection</i>	<i>\$16,405.81</i>

Expense Type	Amount
Liability Insurance Premium	\$314.00
PayPal/Stripe Transaction Fees	\$71.46
Web Hosting, Government Fees	\$163.70
May 18 Event – All Expenses	\$1,577.64
Mayur Bora Program Expenses	\$312.37
Other Expenses	\$10.58
<i>Total Expenses</i>	<i>\$2,449.75</i>

Description	Amount
Net Surplus for 2024	\$13,956.06
Surplus from Prior Years: 2017 - 2023	\$68,193.68
<i>Total Net Surplus</i>	<i>\$82,149.74</i>

Note: this report was submitted by Dr. Purandar Sarmah, Treasurer, NAAM.



SUTRADHAR, NAAM'S ANNUAL CULTURAL FUND-RAISING EVENT

NAAM annual cultural & fundraising event was held on May 17, 2025 at the community hall in Dutch Neck Presbyterian Church, West Windsor, New Jersey. The event was well attended by community members and was also live-streamed online. The event also served as the statutory annual meeting for Naamghar Association of America Inc (NAAM), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit trust.

The event started with a welcome speech by the chairman Dr. Binoy K. Bordoloi (Bor-Medhi) highlighting the significance of the Naamghar in the Assamese community, the plan for building the Naamghar, the progress made so far on land acquisition and eventual establishment of the physical Naamghar. The treasurer of NAAM Dr. Purandar Sarmah presented the financial report and update to the community.



Pic 1: Bor-Medhi Dr. Bordoloi with performers

The cultural event started with a Banti Prajalan by Dr Nirode Das followed by a Borgeet by Dimpi Choudhury Alam. The highlight of the cultural program was the two-segment performance by our invited guest artist, Ms. Vandita Parikh and her team from Texas on folk dances of India. It was a mesmerizing performance showcasing the beauty, depth and vastness of the beautiful folk-dance forms from

the east, west, north and southern parts of India, as well as the "Bhakti Movement" dance. She was the recipient of the 2011 President's Award for her contribution towards folk art and culture from the President of India Smti. Pratibha Patil.



Pic 2: "Mure Jibonore Xokha Krishna" by Pennsylvania Satriya Dance Group

Invited guest speaker, Dr. Bishnu Prasad Sarma, retired Professor, Department of Kayachikitsa, Government Ayurvedic College, Jalukbari, Guwahati from Assam delivered a very informative speech on the health benefits of herbs and plants and Ayurvedic medicine. Dr. Sarma is an eminent Ayurvedic doctor, academician, and researcher from Assam.



Pic 3: Dr. Sarma speaking at the event

Community members, patrons and well-wishers of NAAM took part in the cultural program and made it a memorable event. NAAM is thankful to both Abhilasha Sharma and Malabika Brahma who were the emcees for this event.



Pic 4: A group pic of the local participants



Pic 5: "Aspects of Rasa in Folk Dance" - by Vandita Parikh, Manisha Naktode and Anuja Parekh

NAAM sincerely thanks regional artists Rabin Goswami, Arundhuti Goswami, Abhigya Sarmah from Maryland/Washington DC, and Abhilasha Sharma, Dimpi Choudhury Alam, Monalisa Mazumdar, Navanita DevChoudhury, Niraj Barbara from Pennsylvania, a dance team of young children of the age group of 4 to 7 years from the NY/ NJ/ PA areas, Aura and Aava Sharma, Ishanvi Bharali and Sonia Pazich.

We are pleased to share some additional pictures from the event here. Please join us in our next such event (please keep an eye out for

email msg from NAAM for such and other events).



Pic 6: Sonia Pazich performing Bharatnatyam



Pic 7: Dr. Bordoloi and Mr. Barbara with couple of performers



Pic 8: "Jhumur" - song by Arundhuti Goswami and Rabin Goswami



Pic 9: Jyoti Sangeet "Rupoh Konworor Suma Poroxote" by Aura Sharma



Pic 12: "Sabahua Boha Sahini" Khol by Niraj Barbara



Pic 10: Dance dedicated to all the Vaishnavite Saints of India by Vandita Parikh, Manisha Naktode and Anuja Parekh



Pic 13: "Damji Ma Nang" Group Dance by Aura and Aava Sharma, Ishanvi Bharali and Sonia Pazich



Pic 11: "Narayan Kahe Bhokoti Koru" Borgeet by Abhigya Sarma and Khol by Ritu Sarma



Pic 14: Dr. Bordoloi with singer Robin Goswami



FEATURED ARTICLE #1

The Symbolic Significance of the Xorai in Assam, India

By Kim Dodgson Labinger

I arrived in Jorhat in 1957 as a 16-month-old. My father, Dr. Kenneth Dodgson was appointed as surgeon at Jorhat Christian Medical Centre and my mother, Sally Dodgson, taught classes at the nurses' training school and at the Eastern Theological College until their return to the United States in 1981.

While very young I attended school at Balya Bhavan in Jorhat, and later Kodaikanal School in Tamil Nadu and Woodstock School in Uttarakhand before leaving India to attend college and graduate school in California. I taught elementary school in the Los Angeles area for 34 years until my retirement in 2020.



The author

The xorai, and its importance in Assamese culture and religion, was something I had long been aware of but about which I knew little. It was while completing my BA degree in anthropology in 1979 that I decided to

take a closer look at the beautiful and iconic symbol of Assam and to research and write about it for my thesis. While visiting my parents that summer I read what I could find on the subject of the xorai but, as there was not much by way of published studies, I relied on Assamese scholars and residents in and around Guwahati and Jorhat to guide me. I am indebted to many people who were helpful to me during my two months of research. I was introduced to Dr. Chandra Kataki of J.B. College in Jorhat, and through him had the good fortune to meet Mr. Mitradab Mahanta, Mr. Chakradhar Mahanta, Mr. Abdus Suttar and Mr. Rajkumar Singha of Jorhat, Principal Paragdhara Chaliha of Sibsagar College, and Dr. Nirmalprabha Bardoloi, Mr. Jugal Das, Mr. Benudhar Sharma and Dr. M.C. Goswami of Guwahati. Mrs. Maamoni Goswami of Guwahati University and Dr. B.M. Das, Mr. D.N. Barua and Mr. Jeoram Saikia and Mr. Siba Brata Goswami were also of great help to me, as were Mr. Satish Rajkhowa and Mr. Debeswar Sarmah from Jorhat who provided me with important feedback.

In addition to the scholars mentioned above, I interviewed men and women of various ages and religions: Christians, Muslims, and Hindus, craftsmen, merchants, priests, nurses, a lawyer, a politician, and teachers, all of whom provided me with their personal understanding of the meaning, use, and importance of the xorai. I was especially

grateful to the craftsmen of Noreshwar Deka's workshop where I was able to observe the making of bell metal objects. I also learned much from the priests at the Dhekiakhowa Namghar near Jorhat, Auniati Satra in Guwahati and from personnel and exhibits at the Department of Anthropology Museum at Guwahati University.

Besides longing to find out more about the culture of the place I called home, my purpose in writing about the xorai was to explore the possible reasons for, and effects of, its significant position in present-day Assamese society while also examining the historical contexts in which it had appeared in the past.

In my paper I provided a detailed description of the xorai, how it is made, and the significance of the designs engraved upon it. I provided a summary of the variety of ways it is, and has been, used in religious and secular occasions and in both private and public spheres. I noted, for example, that the xorai may be used to serve betel nut to guests, exchanged between the bride's and groom's families at weddings, displayed during important governmental or social events, during musical concerts or dance dramas, kept in homes as decorations or receptacles to hold jewelry, and how it is often painted on shop signs or gates to welcome dignitaries, carved on entrances to Vaisnava monasteries, or used by the priests to hold prasad at the altar, or to hold religious texts. No matter what the xorai was used for, it was clear that it involved the sentiments of honor and respect.

I was interested in the history of the xorai in relation to the rule of the Ahom kings from the 13th century. Apparently, the xorai was

used in Ahom marriages, for instance, to support the ancestral sword. In the State Museum at Guwahati, I saw a painting of the Ahom king, Jayadhwaj Singh, sitting beside a xorai partly covered by a cloth perhaps similar to a gamocha. Kings, ministers, and officials were given xorais during their time in office, the number of which would correspond to each individual's rank. Xorais were also carried by messengers who would go to the home of a potential guest with the offering of betel nut and/or a written invitation from the host.

The xorai came to be used more extensively in religious and cultural life during the 15th century when the reformer and saint, Sankardev, introduced Vaisnavism in Assam, establishing the institutions of the satra and namghar. The Bhagavata Purana, translated from Sanskrit to Assamese by Sankardev, was given a place of honor in the singhasan (an altar resting on carved lion's feet) by being placed on a taponā or a thoga, or on a xorai itself. It seems plausible that Shankardev could have borrowed the notion of the importance of the king's throne—a raised platform—to provide a place of honor on which to keep the scriptures. Anthropologists have noted that raised plates were commonly used by tribal people as well as by the Ahoms on which to serve food. The height of the pedestal would make the xorai stand out among other dishes. The taller the stem, the more room there is for its elaboration, and the taller the pedestal, the higher the status of the vessel. One craftsman explained the possible origin of the xorai as a place of honor for the texts by saying that while in the jungle Shankardev would have had nothing upon which to place the Bhagavata, so he stacked three pieces of

wood on top of each other to raise the manuscript respectfully off the ground. That is why, explained the craftsman, true xorais have three sections: the base, the stem and the tray.

As part of my thesis, I included illustrations of a variety of xorais, each of which I carefully measured and reduced onto graph paper at one third their original size. I also added illustrations of the common designs that artisans use to decorate each xorai's lid, dish, and base. The lotus petal motifs seen on most xorais is a symbol of purity and is said to be a favorite flower of Krishna as well as one of the four symbols held in the hands of Vishnu. One artisan described the circular pattern in the center of the tray as the chakra symbolic of Vishnu. Other motifs that commonly appear are *mas* (fish scales) *sela* (a chevron pattern said to resemble an insect) *pan* (a woven design) and *para soku* (pigeon eyes.) Artisans told me that they use the same designs that were employed in ancient times because they have always been used and that they are an integral part of the sentiment of the xorai. One young craftsman said that the style of the xorai has been the same since Shankardev and to change it would ruin its meaning.

The beautiful, stately image and form of the xorai continues to belong, uniquely, to Assam. It has survived for over 700 years and is found in all corners of Assamese life, in every social stratification and irrespective of religious affiliation. Its function and significance did not decline with the passing of the Ahom monarchy but found even more widespread use in the satras and namghars and in ordinary homes in every town and village. The xorai will continue to be exchanged among the Assamese as gestures of welcome, respect, honor, and reverence, and will, no doubt, continue to be offered to honored guests by way of saying, "As you depart from our land, take this xorai with you as a token of our friendship, and as a symbol by which to remember the people of Assam."

The author is resident of the USA and could be contacted at klabinger@gmail.com.



Editor's note: although NAAM uses different spellings for various Assamese words used by Ms. Labinger, no changes were made to her spelling of Assamese words because she used those spelling in her original research paper which is the basis of this article.

FEATURED ARTICLE #2

A Vaishnavite Dancer Duo's Journey from Cauvery to Brahmaputra

By DviDala : Sridevi Jagannath and Rohini Ananth

We were born with anklets on our souls.

In the incense-scented corridors of South India, where the echoes of temple bells mingle with the rustle of silk sarees and the whispered verses of the Tiruppavai, we began our life as Vaishnavite dancers. Lord Vishnu—He of lotus eyes and boundless compassion—was not a god we worshipped from afar. He was our breath, our rhythm, our rasa.

We found Him in the lines of the Gita Govinda, in Andal's midnight longing, and in the stillness after an Alarippu. Through every mudra and abhinaya, we reached for Him. But as the years passed, yearning stirred within us — not dissatisfaction, but a subtle call. We had traced His footsteps across temples and compositions, but now we longed to hear how others danced His name.

That desire took us far from the Cauvery's embrace to the green, Brahmaputra river-laced land of Assam. There, we encountered Sattriya.

Not in a grand sabha, not in a temple's shadow, but in the quiet of a Namghar—a place so humble yet glowing with sacred fire. We watched as the Sutradhar stepped onto the earth not as a performer, but as a vessel. No jewels, no elaborate costumes. Only devotion carved into motion.

It was unfamiliar—yet utterly familiar.

Here was Bhakti unburdened by hierarchy. Here was Krishna, not as royalty, but as beloved. Here, devotion was democratized. Sri Sankaradeva was the saint who wove art into the very fabric of Assamese life. Like our Tamil Alvars, he sang of the Lord with fierce love. But unlike the courtly polish of Bharatanatyam, Sattriya was born in a people's movement, in villages and monasteries, in a time when society was breaking, not blooming.

His was a revolution draped in rhythm.

He welcomed tribes and castes, into the fold of Ek-Sarana-Nama-Dharma—the singular path of

surrender to Krishna. As a dancer raised in the rigid traditions of lineage and margams, this inclusivity shook me. Could art truly belong to all? Could salvation be as simple as singing His name?

We remembered the verse from the Bhagavata Purana: "He who sees Vishnu in all beings, and all beings in Vishnu, is never deluded." That was Sattriya. That was Sankaradeva's dance. And so, we learned.

We learned the Borgeets, those haunting melodies that seem to rise from the earth itself. We learned the subtle precision of the mati akharas, the grammar of movement. We danced the Vandana. And in each gesture, we didn't just find Krishna—we found a piece of ourselves.

We found that Vaishnavism is not geography. It is not the temple spire or the order of an arangetram. It is the call of the heart to its Beloved. Whether sung in Brajavali dialect or chanted in Tamil, whether danced with a brass crown or jasmine braid, the yearning is the same.

We still bow to Vishnu with the same reverence we did as a child. But now, we bow in many languages. Our Bharatanatyam is richer because it has met Sattriya. Our Krishna dances not only on the banks of Yamuna, but also on the sands of the Brahmaputra.

And We —We dance no longer to find Him. We dance because we know He is already within.

The authors could be contacted at laasya96@gmail.com



Editor's note: This article is based on previous work by DviDala, the dancing duo (Sridevi Jagannath and Rohini Ananth) Vaishnavite South Indian Dancers, on their journey to Sattriya. "In seeking the Lord, we found His many forms. In seeking His dance, we found many hearts."

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Some of these activities, such as the recently completed fund-raising cultural event, etc. are reported above.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Please stay tuned!



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.

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.

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



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:

- Tutumoni Baishya, Assam
- Niraj Barbara, PA (EC member)
- Dr. Sanjib Bhuyan, NJ (Editor, NAAM Newsletter)
- Enakshi Baruah, IL
- Gautom Lal Baruah, IL
- Pranab Bora, WI
- Lolit Bora, PA
- Subhasini Bora, NC
- Dr. Babul Borah, OH
- Utpal Borah, VA
- Dilara Boruah, CA
- Dr. Binoy K. Bordoloi, NJ (*Bor-medhi*, Chairperson, NAAM)
- Manoranjan Bordoloi, NJ
- Monidipa Bordoloi, CA
- Susanto Bordoloi, CT
- Chirayu Kr. Borooah, CA
- Malabika Brahma, NJ
- Debojit Chowdhury, CA
- Niren Choudhury, NJ (EC member)
- Dr. Bikul Das, MA
- Namita Das, VA
- Dr. Pradip Das, MO
- Rupam Das, Assam
- Shyam DevChoudhury, PA (Secretary, EC member)
- 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 (EC member)
- Priyadarshini Inman, NC (EC member)
- Sridevi Jaggannath, NC
- Diganta Kalita, IL
- Dr. Jukti Kalita, NJ
- Lalita Kalita, IL
- Rashmi Kalita, CA
- Sangaurav Kaushik, NC
- Nilanjona Mahanta, CA
- Nabanita Mazumdar, WA
- Chayanika Mohan, NC
- Shakhyar Neog, NJ
- Dr. Yashwant Pathak, FL
- Lekhika Pathak, Assam
- Anu Perlmutter, VA
- Nilakshi Phukan, NC
- Gayatree Prasad, CA
- Dr. Purandar Sarmah, NJ (Treasurer, EC member)
- Vavani Sarmah, CA

Contact Us

Email: Naaminfo@Naamghar.org

Website: www.naamghar.org

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

