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# PRONAAM

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# PRONAAM

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A blue Heron looking for its prey – Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

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Enakshi Baruah	

Nomoskar Raiz,

"If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" Welcome to the spring 2023 edition of Pronaam.

Our Assamese community has suffered tremendous loss with the passing away of two of our pioneering leaders, Mr. Barada Sarma and Dr. Debabrata Sarma. They have left voids in the hearts of many. May their souls rest in eternal peace. Our deepest condolences to their family and friends.

This edition of Pronaam is an attempt to bring you updates on significant events received from different pockets of the Assamese diaspora in North America. Tucked in these pages are glimpses of Magh Bihu celebrations in a few different regions, representative of the vibes and the essence of the traditions felt by all of us here and in our motherland. In this edition we are also bringing you a set of carefully curated articles as well as some magnificent artwork.

We will soon reach out to you soliciting content for the post Rongali Bihu / summer edition of Pronaam. We are eagerly waiting to receive updates from all the regions that are gearing up for Rongali Bihu celebrations. Wishing you a vibrant and colorful spring. May you welcome the Assamese new year with a lot of cheer.

We are also looking forward to the 44th Assam Convention at Philadelphia, June 30th - 2nd July. Best wishes to the convention committee who will leave no stone unturned in their quest to bring to everyone a spectacular convention.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy reading this edition of Pronaam. Please send us your feedback.

Thanks and Warm Regards,

Rakhi Baruah Borthakur

Chiranjit Bordoloi



# Message From President

*Assam Association of North America*



Hearty Greetings to all,

Everyone must be eager to say goodbye to the gloomy days of winter and welcome the spring with open arms. Here, in Texas we are seeing the early signs of spring with Blue Bonnets, Indian Paintbrush and Primroses blooming everywhere as if to remind us that “amar otikoi moromor Bohag” is just around the corner. I extend my advance “Bohag Bihur Xubhesya” to you all.

At the beginning of 2023, in the month of February we got the sad news that Mr. Barada Sarma, one of our core founders and Past President of AANA has passed away. Soon after that in the same month we were shocked by the news of the demise of Mr. Debabrata Sarma who too was an ardent supporter and a Past President of AANA. We were devastated by the news of losing two great leaders from our community whose contribution to the formation of AANA and continuous support till their last days cannot be overemphasized. Their passing has left an immense void to our Assamese community, and they will surely be missed at the upcoming Assam Conventions. Our sincere condolences to both of their families. May the departed souls find peace in heaven.

On March 5, 2023, we were fortunate to have the renowned Sahitya Academy Award winner Srimati Anuradha Sharma Pujari as our Guest speaker. Mr. Pranab Sarma graciously served as the moderator for this Guest speaker session. It was so well received by the members that the event had to go to overtime! Srimati Anuradha Sharma kept us spellbound with her eloquent speech and in-depth knowledge on each topic she talked about. AANA executive board would like to thank both of them for spending the Sunday morning with us.

Plans are underway for the 44th Assam Convention at Philadelphia from June 30th till 2nd July. The Convention committee is working hard to bring everyone one of the best conventions ever. Hotel reservation, Cultural registration and Competition booth are open for early registration. We encourage everyone to take this opportunity to do their hotel reservation and registration promptly.

Once again, I like to express my deepest appreciation to Chiranjit Bordoloi and Rakhi Borthakur for their continuous effort to bring “Pronaam” to you.

With warmest regards,

Pallabita Bhuyan, President – Assam Association of North America (AANA)

[www.aanahome.org](http://www.aanahome.org)

# Message From President

*Assam Foundation of North America*



Nomoskar Raiz,

We hope everyone had a great start to the year 2023 and looking ahead to the spring festivities & Rongali celebration.

We would like to take a moment to remember those who we lost in the last few months. Our AFNA family was shocked and heartbroken to hear about the sudden loss of the current Chair of Board of Directors (BoD), a founding member and long time AFNA volunteer Dr. Debabrata Sarma as well as another founding member & volunteer Mr. Barada Sarma. AFNA is a better and a stronger organization today because of volunteers like them. We will be ever grateful for the pivotal role they played. Our thoughts & prayers are also with the family of our past president Satyajit Nath & his family, who recently lost his mother Suprabha Nath of Assam.

As for the update from the AFNA desk, we wrapped up the year 2022 by completing another round of donations of warm clothing through our Weaving for Care program and also distributing the 2023 calendar. This year, the calendar featured artwork from winning artists from the art contest held to commemorate the 40th year of service for AFNA. We are hearing great reviews about the artwork that were submitted from all across North America & India. AFNA has also contributed to the relief efforts for the devastating earthquake in Turkey & Syria. We are also preparing for our next fundraiser "7 Days of Giving" during the upcoming Rongali Bihu & requesting everyone to contribute to make it a success.

Our next General Body Meeting (GBM) will be held on 24th June, please join the meeting to hear the details of our ongoing projects and continue to bless & support AFNA.

On behalf of everyone at AFNA, I once again extend our sincere thanks to the donors and volunteers. We always welcome new ideas and new members, please join & continue to help us serve! We would love to hear feedback from our donors, volunteers & well-wishers as we strive to serve the community in a more efficient & effective way. Please click the link below or scan the QR code to send us your thoughts & comments.

With warm regards,

Chandan Mozumder, President – Assam Foundation of North America (AFNA)

[www.assamfoundation.net](http://www.assamfoundation.net)

Donate at: <http://www.assamfoundation.net/give-back/donate>

# Message From President

*Asom Sahitya Sabha North America*



First, prayers for the Eternal Bliss of our dear community members, leaders of our Assamese community in North America, Mr. Barada Sarma Dada, and Mr. Debabrata Sarma Dada, who recently left for their heavenly abode. May God bless their family members here and in India with fortitude. In 2022, all Assamese were overjoyed with the Jnanpith Award to poet Nilmani Phookan Jr., only to mourn his death a few months later. It was very sad to see the untimely departure of Shrutimala Duwara, the well-known young writer, and journalist of Assam. Condolences to the family of Mr Satyajit Nath of Seattle, whose beloved mother Mrs. Suprova Nath expired in February. I was supposed to visit her, but it never happened. I could only visit their Guwahati home to offer condolences to Satyajit, who kindly showed me around the home Gallery, where I could see and feel what an extremely talented person Mrs. Nath was! Eternal bliss to this beautiful lady.

I take this opportunity to request all AANA, AFNA and ASSNA members to send for Lutor Pora Mississippi, 2023, articles, poems, and/or stories etc. in Assamese and/or English in word or doc files, with a brief note about self. We intend to send to the printer in the 3rd week of April, so we can have timely delivery. But the sooner we get the Submissions, the better. Thanks to those who have already submitted. If you have children in your family, please encourage them to contribute to the LPM 2023.

Wishing everyone everywhere a colorful, joyful future with the advent of Spring, 2023.

Thank you.

Syeda Jebeen Sabira Shah

President, Asom Sahitya Sabha North America (ASSNA)

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## 2023 Young Poet's Award Announcement

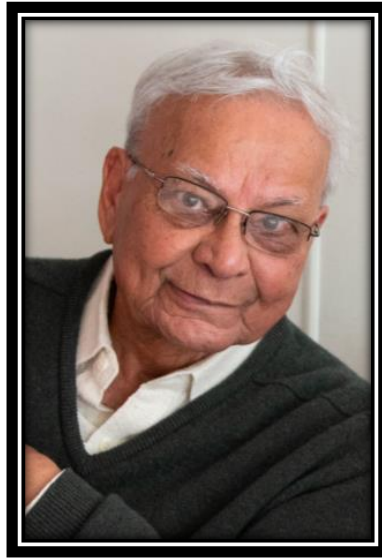
We would like to invite all children in elementary, middle and high school to submit their poems for the ASSNA -"Young Poet's Award" in memory of Late Jiten Chandra Dowerah. Please email the poem along with the child's name, grade, parent's name and address, state and contact email of the parent to: [acreativespark@yahoo.com](mailto:acreativespark@yahoo.com)

The winners will be announced at the Assam Convention, 2023. There will be a total of three prizes – one for a child in elementary school, one for a middle school child and the other for a child in high school. Each winner will be awarded a prize of \$75 and a certificate.

**All entries must be submitted by April 8th, 2023.**

With thanks and kind Regards;

Young Poet Awards Team



**Late Barada Charan Sarma (1940 ~ 2023)**

Barada Sarma passed away peacefully with his wife and children at his side on February 8th. He was a resident of Austin, Texas, for nearly four decades, but spent the last nine years in northern Virginia.

Barada was born in Kamakhya, Assam, to Sarada Charan Sarma and his wife Jnanada Devi. He moved to Shillong at the age of 9 and attended St. Edmund's School, a formative experience. The influence of his teachers at St. Edmund's remained with him throughout his life, as evidenced by his love of reciting from Shakespeare's works. Barada had many friends and many fond memories from his Shillong days. After completing his Senior Cambridge exams, he attended St. Edmund's College and then IIT Kharagpur. After graduating in 1962, he worked in Barapani for the Assam State Electricity Board (ASEB). Barada came to the US in 1964 to pursue graduate studies in civil engineering at the University of Colorado at Boulder. After completing his MS, he took a job in Albany, New York, and the next year he went home to Assam to marry Nandita (Kumkum) Barua. He moved to Austin with his wife and infant daughter Pria in 1968 and lived in Texas for 45 years. Barada and Kumkum followed their son Dr. Amit Sarma and his family when they moved to northern Virginia in 2013.

Barada started his career in the US as a civil engineer working for the State of New York and then worked for the Texas Water Rights Commission for nearly 20 years. Later he worked in the private sector as an expert in laws pertaining to water rates regulation. The company he founded, Gebhardt Sarma Group, was a pioneer in promoting reuse of wastewater for irrigation. He was also appointed by the Austin City Council to serve on and later to chair the Austin Electric Utility Commission.

Barada was passionate about bringing people together. He and Kumkum were founding members of the Assam Association of North America (AANA). Barada chaired 3 annual conventions—two in Austin and one in Woodlands, Texas. He always prioritized attending the annual Convention, missing only a few in the last forty-plus years, and he looked forward to

reconnecting with old friends and making new ones. He felt it was important for the Assamese diaspora, especially younger people, to feel connected to their roots and to have a strong sense of their Assamese identity even while learning to appreciate the values of American society. He also supported and promoted the Assam Foundation of North America (AFNA) and encouraged others to do so, as well.

Barada loved traveling to new places, meeting people, and trying different cuisines. He was curious about people and always wanted to find out about their passions and opinions, and he readily shared his. He was a self-taught student of American history and politics and a strong supporter of the democratic ideals of his adopted country. Barada loved music and was a founding member of the Asian Music Circle in Austin in the mid 1970's. He and Kumkum hosted many Indian musicians in their home over the years, including Ravi Shankar, Nikhil Banerjee, Parveen Sultana, Ranjan and Sajan Mishra, Rashid Khan, Mandira Lahiri, Birendra Nath Dutta, and Bhupen Hazarika.

Barada's greatest passion was his family: he loved spending time with his two children and their families, his extended family, and the friends who were like family. Barada is survived by his wife of almost 56 years, Nandita; daughter, Pria Sarma, and son-in-law, Firoz Antia; son, Dr. Amit Sarma, and daughter-in-law, Dr. Gillian Jacob; his five grandchildren, Gyaan and Jehan Antia and Sonali, Lyla, and Nathan Sarma; his sister Shobha Sarmah and brother-in-law Utpal Sarmah; niece Amrita Sharma, her husband Arindam Barkataki and daughter Ava; and nephew Prithviraj Sharma.

*Kumkum, Pria, and Amit are humbled and grateful for the many visits, messages, and phone calls from so many friends in the Assamese community.*



Late Debabrata Sarma (1943 ~ 2023)

*'People will forget what you said and what you did,  
but they will never forget how you made them feel.'* - Maya Angelou

For most of us, he was our "Dada"- the ever-smiling, affectionate, benevolent, and altruist gentleman. A doting husband to Joyashri (Juri Baideu), an exemplary father to Satyam (Tupul), and a loving and caring father-in-law to Julie. Born in the land of 'Blue Hills and the Red River' in India on the 1st of August 1943, he was Dr. Debabrata Sarma. It is only providence that he took his last breath in the same land, holding the hands of his beloved wife on the 21st of February 2023.

I was welcomed and introduced to the community by Dada in the summer of 2003; Dada and my father studied together at Cotton College, Guwahati, Assam. Dada finished his MS and Ph.D. in Electronics and Electrical Engineering at the University of Calcutta (1962-1970). Dada and Juri Baideu were married in 1974, lived a few early years in Calcutta, and spent a short time at IIT Kharagpur, India, before moving to the USA. Starting with an academic career at the University of Cincinnati in the 1980s, Dada spent a few years at Rutgers University in the early 1990s before accepting an offer from Microsoft Corp in 1994 and moving to Kirkland, WA. He had a long and illustrious career at the company, retiring in September 2017.

An avid social worker, he actively and enthusiastically participated in community events. Be it exuberantly leading a **Naam-Kirtan**, singing in a chorus, acting in **Bhaona**, nurturing the plants in his yard, or playfully competing with his wife's baking skills by making **Besan Barfis** and **Rosogolla** — he did everything with panache and dedication. In addition, for many years, he played significant roles in AASNA, AANA, and AFNA. Without his commitment and tireless efforts, we would not have been able to host the 37th Assam Convention in Seattle, WA, in 2016. We spent many evenings in his living room, where the curtains he stitched still hung, and the photographs he clicked on still adorn the walls, discussing many topics. Dada and Baideu opened their hearts and their doors to hosting many baby showers, welcoming new community members, holding cultural practice sessions for Bihu, and lavish dinners. A learned man of great intellectual prowess, he championed inclusivity and cohesion with his humble words. Members of the community, and for that matter everyone who knew him, would fondly remember that the strength of his character lay in his ability to stay calm under all circumstances. His mere presence, the tone of his communication, and his smile radiated soothing energy to the point where one almost forgot about their worries. A purist by nature and in the heart.

*Eulogy and sentiments of all Jetuka members - penned by Amlan Chakraborty.*



## ***Literary Section***

*Humanities With New Technology*

*Valley of Fire Trip – Nevada City*

*Don't Divide Black And White (Poem)*

*Sofia's Story*



## **Enhancing Language Skills and Cultural Awareness through Virtual Reality**

In the 21st century, America's melting diverse cultural landscape has influenced the education system tremendously and the use of modern technologies is designing the teaching and learning process student-oriented and enormously effective, especially, in the field of foreign languages and literature. Based upon the various types of research completed in the field of psychology, linguistics, and foreign language teaching and learning methodologies, the result shows that the main objective of foreign language education is – a sociological approach, real-life centered communication, mutual exchange, expression of equality, respectful understanding of various societies and cultures and expanding the global potential of practical knowledge and perspectives. Because of modern technological advancement and increasing high-tech compatibility, great success has been achieved in presenting true cultural natures, subtle elements, and attractive aspects of accurate world cultures and literature to the students. Therefore, teaching and learning foreign languages and literature have become more interesting, fun, and attractive in American educational institutions. Hindi-Urdu tutelage also effortlessly merged in this innovative technological stream process. Subsequently, the US government has declared Hindi-Urdu as one of the "critical languages" for national security and economic competitiveness, and also, as a result of the increasing number of overseas South Asians, the demand for teaching and learning Hindi-Urdu in American academic institutions is increasing.

Students of this current era are well versed in modern-day technologies ranging from computers to the internet, interactive videos, movies, DVDs, email, social media, text messaging, and trendy apps. Through the digital world, they certainly have the ability to open a treasure trove of online news, and entertainment platforms around the world along with their STEM-related course materials with their magic fingers 24 hours, a day. To cope up with the student's Tec-Chevy learning nature, it is becoming very important for the language instructors to provide the linguistic and cultural elements in a fun and engaged way, too. Technology is captivating a larger role in the education system day by day, and technology makes learning and communication more interactive allowing students to be more engaged with the subject. Progress in technology is also a sign of the future socio-cultural and economic development of any country. The common perception towards humanities courses, which is limited to only reading, writing, and discussion, has changed significantly in the contemporary environment of new technologies developed in academic disciplines. The purpose of education is to create a connection between different disciplines and craft a smooth roadmap to guide learners to develop the competence to communicate effectively. In the field of foreign language teaching and learning methodology, it is one of the main fundamentals as described by the ACTFL world-readiness standards for learning language.

Hence, keeping these essentials of the students in mind, the Hindi-Urdu language and literature program at NC State University is incorporating new technologies into the Hindi-Urdu language and South-Asian literature/culture teaching and learning process, which is not only making learning and communication more interactive by allowing students to be more engaged with the subject but also, generating fresh enthusiasm and attraction among students of this new generation. Projects related to technology such as virtual reality, 3D printing, green screen

(hands-on or interactive experience in or outside of the classroom), and 360-degree visualization lab are proving how language and literature classes can be integrated with computer science, engineering, graphic designing, and other STEM disciplines to create a fun project that not only allows each student to create their own design but also develop a deeper level of mutual understanding of cultural competence to participate in various societies around the world.



## *Virtual Reality Modules for Hindi-Urdu Language and South-Asian Literature*

Benjamin Franklin once made a statement to emphasize active and engaged learning education, which is the key to the success of any field, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." Language instructors should always keep in mind the foreign language learner's perspectives. What is the purpose of learning a foreign language? Since traditional grammatical construction-based learning topics turn out to be very dull topics to discuss and learners also don't seem interested in it them, how will students be encouraged to learn the linguistics significance?

On the contrary, virtual reality has now reached a significant developed stage with a variety of science-related adventures, it can be fully utilized in teaching and learning language and literature, as well. Through virtual reality modules, students can get an opportunity to use languages in an immersive linguistic environment, without even going to that specific region or country. Recently, the "Foreign Language Virtual Reality Project for Hindi-Urdu" was launched by creating language modules - immersive 360-degree visualization movies filmed (7-10 minutes long) in various South Asian communities in India and America. As soon as students wear the head-mounted display and hold the hand motion controller, they find themselves in an authentic Indian environment and experience an entirely vibrant, practical, realistic, and culturally rich terrestrial site. Actually, without any doubt, the students accept this artificial environment as the real environment and walk around the cities, conversing with native speakers as if they are traveling in Indian cities and alleys.

The main objective of creating such “virtual reality modules” for Hindi-Urdu and South Asian literature/culture students is to provide, the native environment of the language, linguistics dynamic, contextual narrations, and most importantly a contemplation and unbiased approach to a realistic experience of its cultures, customs and traditions, festivals, so that students can present themselves with confidence in the “real world.” Following are some selected responses/reflections sent by the students based on their "reality-virtual" experience as follows:

- Virtual reality is a wonderful resource for our university, which is making Hindi-Urdu language and literature teaching and learning more exciting and valuable. It is a very pleasant approach that our professor is trying to make her teaching techniques innovative and compatible according to the modern generation. I firmly believe that the future of teaching Hindi-Urdu depends on the use of such modern technologies. I am requesting all the language and literature professors to adopt this teaching methodology and make foreign language teaching and learning more attractive.
- I really enjoyed the virtual reality experience that our class got to take part in at the D. H library through the VR lab. My experience consisted of utilizing VR technology where I got a 1st person view of being in a Hindu temple and a cultural hall, where Hindi speakers came up to me and asked me questions. I thought it was an interesting experience because I have never been in a Hindu temple and cultural hall before, and the VR technology made me feel as if I was really there. I also got the first-hand experience of seeing actual Hindi speakers discuss everyday topics through the easy accessibility of D.H hill library. I also didn't feel any pressure or anxiety that I would normally feel trying to speak Hindi to someone because it wasn't in an actual human interaction while still felt like one. I really think that Hindi-Urdu students can greatly benefit from this kind of technology because it gives a fun, an easy, and useful experience that can greatly help their Hindi-Urdu while taking the learning experience from the sometimes-mundane classroom. If I could change one thing, I wish there was more video to interact in and more time given to respond to people asking questions. I really hope I get this experience again; it was a lot of fun!
- This was my most favorite and memorable experience in Hindi-Urdu class. The final module was, in my opinion, the best, interacting with a small family, which was the most interactive. Father asked us to answer any questions while in the module. I was able to think and answer those questions as if I was actually present in front of him inside the temple and cultural hall.
- This Hindi-Urdu virtual experience was very good and informative. When people entered the prayer area, some rang the bell and some prayed with clutches, which was a very unique experience for me at the same time, many questions arose in my mind regarding the various ways of praying methods. Later on, Dr. Phukan answered all my questions related to Indian religious procedures and rules and increased my cultural knowledge of various rituals and customs.

- Last week, my Hindi-Urdu class went to the library to work in the virtual reality lab to experience a Hindu temple and cultural event. It was interesting because wearing the goggles really did make it feel as if I was really in the same room as the people, I was watching. People would approach the camera and ask us questions. I think this tool could be very helpful in language learning and practicing because you are emerging in the language context but don't have any risks of saying something wrong. I would love to work more with the virtual reality room and practice my language skills there more often. Something I really enjoyed was being able to watch religious and cultural norms without actually being there. I think this would be very helpful to watch before going to a temple in person just so you know what to expect and can observe how other people are behaving and following the rituals. It was helpful because I could ask Nilakshi ji things that I didn't understand, such as people rubbing their head and she explained that first they touch the feet of elders and then head to honor that person and place blessings on their head. Overall, it was a very good experience, and I would love to go again.
- As my first virtual reality experience, this session was very fun! Being Hindu myself, I have visited many temples, but it was great to see what the temple experience in Cary is like. One of the things that I noticed at first was how loud the prayer area was. Like we discussed after the session, one of the things that differentiate Hindu temples is the chaos. In the midst of the chaos, I saw several different styles of prayer. Many people were praying with a priest in a structured fashion, while others were lying on the ground, devoting their full body mind and soul to their deities. Many of the people in the temple were dressed up and wearing colorful kurtas and Indian outfits. I was also able to catch bits of conversation with a man in a blue kurta. He said that he was a grad student at NC State university in a 2-year MBA program. He also mentioned that he was from Nagpur. It was a great experience to be able to have a first-hand account of the temple instead of looking at pictures and videos. It definitely gripped my attention more and was an immersive experience that helped me to better understand Hindu Culture.
- Once the equipment was on, I was no longer sitting at a computer lab in DH Hill. Instead, I was suddenly transported to a local mandir. Each direction I turned, there was something going on: people were worshipping, children were running around, and friends and families were chatting. Not only could I see everything happening around me, but I could also hear it too. Some people even walked up to me and introduced themselves and asked me questions which made it feel as if I were actually there as opposed to being just a quiet observer in the environment. This virtual reality experience was so cool! I'm not sure what I was expecting going into it, but it was a lot of fun. Since I have been to a mandir before it wasn't something new that I was seeing. However, I'm sure some of the other students in Hindi-Urdu classes haven't been to one so they were able to finally experience what it's like going to a Hindu place of worship. Some other locations that may be fun to visit are perhaps a mandir or a bazaar that are actually in India (though this may be difficult to accomplish).

- For our Hindi-Urdu class the other day, we had the opportunity to visit the Virtual Reality Studio at the DH Hill of NC State University. Of all the technology related events that we've done on campus, I believe this is my favorite one. I really liked the innovative approach Dr. Phukan is taking to engage the younger generation into learning Hindi and Urdu languages and literatures. I believe I enjoyed these modules even more because I have visited this temple on numerous occasions. The first module was just a full view of the temple and all the statues in the temple. People were walking around the temple all wearing traditional attire. The second module consisted of three college students that gave an introduction about themselves in Hindi/Urdu. This was beneficial because it allows us to become more familiar with the rhetoric and pronunciation of some of the words. They stated their name, major, and where they were from. The last module, in my opinion, was the best one. This one consisted of a small family speaking to the camera at the temple. The father asked us to answer three questions while in the module: if you visited the temple today, if you greeted your teacher, and when your birthday is. This was my favorite because it was the most interactive out of the three modules. I was able to think and answer the questions as if I was actually at the temple in front of him.
- The Virtual Reality Studio is an amazing resource at NC State, and it can be very beneficial in teaching Hindi and Urdu in a more exciting and different way. One of the improvements that I'd like to see however, is more interactive features for the user. The VR headset comes with two paddles that you can use as hands and those could be incorporated in the future. I think one idea that would be very interesting would be a Hindi Urdu VR video game. The user will be prompted questions and using the controllers, they can answer the questions, and if answered correctly, they would advance to the next level. It is incredible that we are trying to become more innovative with our teaching styles to adapt to the younger generations. Dr. Phukan has had these advanced ideas for a while, and by being able to first-hand experience this, I can confirm that not only is it effective, but also a lot of fun. Using technology like this is the future of teaching foreign languages to the youth. I would highly recommend that other professors try this as well.

*Dr. Nilakshi Phukan originally from Nagaon, Assam. Currently living in North Carolina and working as the Associate Teaching Professor at North Carolina State University.*

# The Valley of Fire - Nevada City

*Kamalakshi Hazarika, New Jersey*

The Valley of Fire is the first state park in the city of Nevada in the United States of America. One morning after we had attended a wedding in Las Vegas, I went to visit this park with my family. We travelled through the Mojave desert and reached the park. The entrance was unassuming, and we saw a few hikers pass by as we waited to pay the entrance fee. Looking at the hikers, I felt that it would be an area that we would cover in a few hours. We had not done any research of this park before our visit. We were pleasantly surprised by how much we had to behold.

The park stretches over 40,000 acres of land. The area has bright red sandstones over gray limestone mountains. It has many ancient petrified trees and petroglyphs which are carving and engravings dated more than 2000 years old. The sandstones are believed to be from the Jurassic period after the inland seas subsided and the land rose. The valley of fire was named in 1920 by a AAA official travelling at sunset when it seemed like the entire valley was on fire. It was established in 1935 as a state park. We drove into the park through a winding road. The road curved ahead to take us to small scenic stops by hillsides nestled against gigantic mountains. The view was awe inspiring. We waited in these rest areas and then walked through small hillocks. My husband pointed to a recess in a huge rock. It could have been a small cave -a place to meditate. I caught it in a picture, to remind us of the quietness that pulls you to meditate in mountains. Overall, the landscape surprised you with intermittent uphill driving and flat stretches of land in a terrain of beautiful hills and highlands.

We went deeper into the park until we came to the Arch rock in the Valley of Fire. The arch is a bridge of natural formation. It is a two-mile scenic loop in a rock. As we took pictures beside it, I suddenly became aware of the flora around us. I noticed a cactus plant with other desert plants. As I photographed it, a lizard suddenly sizzled past us. The lizard was not the only reptile we saw of animal life. Down the road, a herd of mountain goats climbed the rocks and stood unafraid among hordes of curious park travelers taking pictures of it. Our journey ended when we reached Meade lake. We returned after viewing the splendid white and red rock formation there. On our way back we said goodbye to the untouched beautiful landscape that only God had sculptured, a gift that America is indeed fortunate to hold.



**Valley of Fire**



**Valley of Fire**



**Arch Rock**



**Mountain Goat**

*Kamalakshi Hazarika is a resident of New Jersey. She is interested in meditation, traveling, writing and Tennis sports.*

## Translation:

Aryan Kashyap and Diganta Kalita

## Original Composition:

Lokman Hossain Fakir (Bengali)

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika (Assamese)

Song: Dr. Bhupen Hazarika

Give me a white person, With white blood  
Give me a black person, With black blood  
You will be rewarded as you wish!  
If you can!

From North to South, East to West  
People all around, Same blood, same flesh  
Heartfelt love  
Then why do you segregate them?  
Why do you discriminate against someone?

From birth to death  
Count what have you got to lose  
Justify all religions beliefs  
Will find nothing above humanity  
Feel proud doing so!  
Why do you fight among yourselves then?

We are none, Without God  
Everything shines under one sun  
Rains under one cloud, And all we are alive!  
Why are you racist then?

*Mr. Aryan Kashyap is a 4th grader from the school district St George Elementary School, Bourbonnais, IL 60914. He loves writing and skating. Dr. Diganta Kalita is a Food Science Research Scientist and loves to run for the awareness of social issues with nonprofit organizations and charities.*

Original: Lokman Hossain fakir (Bengali)  
আমায় একজন সাদা মানুষ দাও, যার রক্ত সাদা  
আমায় একজন কালো মানুষ দাও, যার রক্ত কালো  
যদি দিতে পার, প্রতিদান যা কিছু চাও  
হোক অমূল্য পেতেই পার !!!

উত্তরমেরু হতে দক্ষিণমেরু, যত মানুষ আছে  
পশ্চিম হতে ওই পূর্ব, দিগন্তে মানুষ আছে  
একই রক্ত মাংসে গড়া, প্রেমপ্ৰীতিতে হৃদয় ভরা  
সেই মানুষে কেনো তোমরা ভিন্ন করো ???  
ভেদা-বেদ সৃষ্টি করো ... !!!

জন্ম হতে ওই মৃত্যুবধি, তুমি হিসাব করো  
এই পৃথিবীর ধর্ম যত, তুমি বিচার করো  
দেখবে সেথায় একই কথা, উর্ধ্বে সবার মানবতা  
সেই কথাটাই বলে সবাই বড়াই করো  
আবার কেনো লড়াই করো ???

এই দুনিয়া হয় নিঃসৃষ্টি, স্রষ্টা ছাড়া  
একই সূর্যের আলোয় সবার দৃষ্টি ভরা  
একই মেঘ আর বৃষ্টিতে আল্লাহ তায়ালার সৃষ্টিতে  
সকল মানুষ বেঁচে আছি যদি ধরো।  
তবে কেনো গরব করো ?

Original: Dr Bhupen Hazarika (Assamese)  
মোক এজন বগা মানুহ দিয়া, যাৰ ৰক্ত বগা  
মোক এজন ক'লা মানুহ দিয়া, যাৰ ৰক্ত ক'লা  
যদি দিব পাৰা, প্রতিদান যি বিচৰা  
হওক অমূল্য পাব পাৰা !

উত্তৰৰ পৰা দক্ষিণ মেৰুত, পূৰ্বৰ পৰা পশ্চিম প্ৰান্তত  
যত মানুহ আছে, একে তেজ মঙহে গঢ়া  
প্ৰেম প্ৰীতিৰে হৃদয় ভৰা, সেই মানুহক কিয় তুমি ভিন্ন কৰা  
ভেদাভেদ সৃষ্টি কৰা ?

জন্মৰ পৰা তুমি মৃত্যুলৈ, তুমি হিচাপ কৰা  
এই পৃথিবীৰ ধৰ্ম যত, তুমি বিচাৰ কৰা  
দেখিবা তাত একেই কথা, উৰ্ধত আছে মানবতা  
সেইকথাকে ভাবি, তুমি গৌৰব কৰা তেনে কিয় যুদ্ধ কৰা ?

এই পৃথিবী হয়নিকৃষ্ণ, স্রষ্টা বিনে  
একে সূৰ্য্যৰ জেউতিতে দৃষ্টি ভৰে  
একে মেঘৰ বৃষ্টিতে বিশ্বপতিৰ সৃষ্টিতে  
সকলোৰে জীয়াই আছে  
যদি ভাবা তেনে কিয় গৰ্ব কৰা ?

There once was a girl named Sofia, she was 12 years old. "Hi, I am Sofia Gilmore, and I am going to be telling you about my story so let's get started".

"MOM", Sofia shouted, "what?" her mom said.

"Where's my essay?", she shouted as she rushed down the stairs.

"Well, it is your homework!" said her mom.

"Bernard?" her mom shouted.

Bernard was Sofia's little brother. "Huh!", said Bernard.

"Huh! what do you mean, huh? You have school today. Go upstairs and get dressed."

"I can't.", said Bernard, "My head and belly aches."

"Hmm! is that so?", said his mom. "Well, that's too bad. I guess you won't be going today."

"Alright I'll call your teacher and tell them you won't be coming today."

"Now go upstairs and rest". "I'll bring you breakfast up soon."

"Ok", shrugged Bernard as he went up the stairs.

"AHA!", said Sofia.

"Oh, dear you almost scared me, Sofia! But what now?"

"I found my Homework".

"Well good for you.", said her mom.

"Okkkk! Now, bye. I'm going to school." reacted Sofia .

"Wait, what about your breakfast?"

"Oh ! alright fine.", she ( Sofia) quickly grabbed a waffle and ran out the front door.

Sofia shoved the waffle in her mouth and unlocked her bike lock and took off. She quickly biked to school. When she finally reached the school, she parked her bike and skipped into the building.

"Oh hi!", said her friend Jessy, who was waiting at the doorstep of the classroom.

"Oh hi!", Sofia responded. She and Jessy walked in the classroom together.

"Class please quiet down and take a seat!", said her teacher Ms. Apple Bee.

So, Sofia and Jessy sat down in their seats next to each other, then they sat through class, recess, lunch and then next thing you know school is over.

"Yay school is over!!! Sofia exclaimed as she walked out of the classroom.

She walked over to her bike and put on her helmet and rode her bike back home.

"Knock! Knock!", as she knocked on her front door.

"Come on in.", said her mom. Sofia walked inside.

"So, anything interesting happened at school today?"

"Not really!", replied Sofia, "all we did was study, go out for recess, eat and play, that's about it.

"Really?", her mom asked, "nothing with your friends or anything?". "Nope!", Sofia replied.

"Alright, so do you want to eat your snack now or later?", mom asked.

"Hmm ... maybe later", Sofia replied. "So, how is Brenard?", Sofia asked.

"Well, we found out he has a fever but he's getting better. OK! remember Sofia you have to get ready for soccer soon.", mom said.

"I know, I know." said Soia. "You do, I'm just reminding you.", said mom.

"Hey mom! Can I play some Roblox before soccer practice?", Sofia asked.

"Are you sure? you want to play now and not finish your homework. So, you won't have to do it after soccer?"

"Well, umm ...", Sofia murmured. "No, you're doing your homework now. And no buts."

"Ughh ... fine!", Sofia walked up the stairs, sat in her soft comfy chair and did her homework .

"Sofia?", her mom shouted. "Time for soccer practice." "Phew ...", she said, "I just finished my homework in time. Yay !!! Now I can play Roblox."

"YES! you can, but after a quick shower. You were rolling in mud at soccer."

"Yah, but I don't smell that bad, ha! ha!"

So, Sofia took a shower and then played Roblox with her friends.

The next day was not well for Sofia. She had a bad hair day, she felt very sick, and every part of her body was hurting. Her mom advised her not to go to school, but she was very upset as today at school was a field trip. Sofia cried and cried but she still couldn't go, but later in the afternoon she felt a lot better, she felt very energetic and playful.

After that day Sofia always made sure to always follow a good routine and try to stay healthy so that she doesn't have to miss school on special days.

*Arshia is a 4th grader at Cougar Canyon Elementary School, British Columbia, Canada.*



## **Art**

*Art By Tora*

*Art By Rwxita*

*Art By Neelon*

*Art By Sumanta*





'Bihu' - Art by Tora Deka

*Tora is in Kindergarten at Old Yale Elementary School, British Columbia, Canada.*

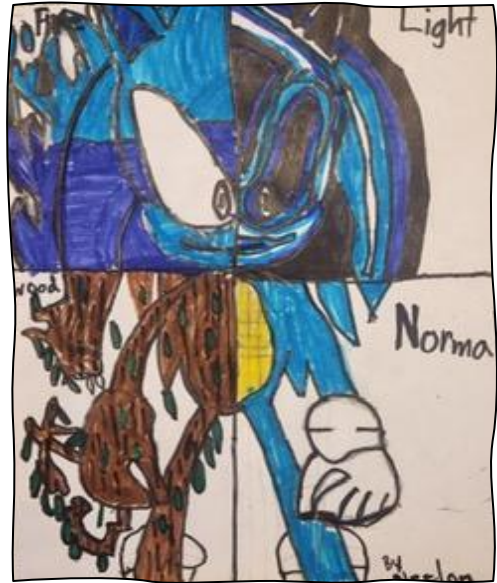


'Happy Winter' - Art by Rwxita Bordoloi

*Rwxita is in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade at Deerfield Elementary School, Michigan, USA.*



A Dragon Head



Sonic Character

Art by Neelon Baruah

*Tora is in 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade at Woodland Park Elementary School, British Columbia, Canada.*

# Expressions of Imaginations

Sumanta Baruah, North Carolina

**"Art is unquestionably one of the purest and highest elements in human happiness. It trains the mind through the eye, and the eye through the mind. As the sun colors flowers, so does art colors life." – John Lubbock**



*Sumanta Baruah, North Carolina*



*Sumanta Baruah, a senior solution advisor at SAS Institute by profession and artist by heart currently living in Cary, North Carolina, originally from Bokakhat, Assam and studied at Jorhat Engineering College.*



## ***Regional News & Announcements***

*USA Midwest North*

*USA Carolinas*

*USA South*

*Canada West*

*Canada East*



## Michigan Events

### AAMI Bogali Bihu 2023

The Assam Association of Michigan (AAMI) commemorated Bhogali Bihu on January 14th, 2023, in Bloomfield Hills. Compared to other years, the weather was quite favorable in January, warm and cozy to match our mood as we gathered in to celebrate. This year's event was held under the able lead of Angshuman Goswami, Sudipta Mukherjee and Chiranjit Bordoloi. The team did a fantastic job putting everything together and making it a very memorable and warm event.

There was a wide spread of tradition Bihu goodies like Til Pitha, Gila Pitha, Nimki, Laroo, Chira Doi. Ladies adorned in beautiful Mekhela Sador, the men dapper in various types of Indian ethnic outfit accessorized with a Gamusa and the Little AAMIs looking adorable in their outfits, brightened the evening. The celebrations started with honoring the senior members of the community, Mrs. Manujla Baroah, Mrs. Jeuti Sarma, visiting guests Mr. Chitendra Nath Goswami and Mrs. Gayatri Goswami of Guwahati, parents of Angshuman Goswami. This was followed by a few games for kids and

adults, art competitions and projects for the little ones. The highlight of Bhogali Bihu, besides the home cooked comforts!) is the Agni Puja, which was ably led by Chiranjit Bordoloi. After the offerings to the Fire God and Elements, we proceeded to enjoy some dance and music presented by the young and the young at heart. The Mukoli Bihu was an open floor event, led by Pallav Deka, supported by Bitoopan Saikia on the dhul, enjoyed by everyone!

As always, Bhogali Bihu was a spread of soul food, lovingly prepared at home by each AAMI member. It had a good combination of traditional Oxomiya delights as well as other delicacies to tease the palate, followed by a seemingly never-ending array of desserts.

The evening finally came to end with a few heartfelt speeches by our guests of honor, Mr. and Mrs. Goswami. They beautifully articulated how happy they were to see the traditions safely being carried on in Michigan. They remarked at how we are connected by a sense of family with each other reminding us of our love of our motherland (India) and our loyalties to our adopted homeland (USA). It was heartwarming to hear them speak ever so fondly of AAMI.





As is tradition, AAMI events always wrap up with a rendition of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika's "Manuhe Manuhor Baabe", which AAMI has adopted as its anthem, a concept and idea driven by Krishanu Kaushik. Before the song, we offered a prayer to the departed soul of Shri Paban Kumar Dutta, father of Meghna Dutta who passed away on January 7th, 2023, in Jorhat. Shri Paban Dutta was a retired civil engineer, Public Health Department, Government of Assam. A somber reminder of how fragile life is and to cherish the ones we love dearly.

Marching onwards to Rongali Bihu!

## New Additions To The Community



### Hrishikesh Dutta

Hrishikesh Dutta is from Guwahati. He is a PhD student in ECE department at Michigan State University (MSU). His research includes developing protocols for wireless communication.

He did his B. Tech from National Institute of Technology (NIT) Silchar in 2018. He first visited Michigan as a summer research intern in 2017. He then went back to India, completed his undergraduate degree and then returned to MSU in 2019 as a graduate student. He likes writing short stories, reading novels and clicking pictures during his leisure. Bhupen Hazarika's songs, Bhabendranath Saikia's writing, Jhnu Baruah's films and sunset at the river Brahmaputra are his favorites.



### Ajay Sah

Ajay Sah is a first-year graduate student in the Department of Chemistry at Michigan State University. He is from Margherita, also known as the Coal Queen of Assam. He completed his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science (BS-MS) Dual Degree Program in Chemistry at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhopal. His research interest lies in the synthesis of silicon nanowires. Apart from academics, Ajay loves playing different sports, of which cricket, badminton and table tennis are worth mentioning. He was a part of the IISER Bhopal Cricket Team for five years, where he participated in many collegiate and noncollegiate tournaments.



## **Nabasmita Talukdar**

Nabasmita Talukdar is a first year PhD student in the department of Biostatistics at Michigan State University. She moved to United States in August 2022, and currently lives in East Lansing. She graduated from Cotton College, Guwahati in Statistics and then completed her Master's from Hindu College, Delhi University. She worked as a statistical programmer in Hyderabad before moving to the States. Nabasmita is from Kokrajhar, Assam, where her parents and elder brother lives. She loves cats and she has left her pet back home.

Travelling is her passion and she used to travel a lot back in India, which she plans to continue here. She also enjoys dancing and doing crafts.



## **Kritika Ramchiary**

Kritika Ramchiary is doing her PhD from the Department of Chemistry at Michigan State University. She completed her undergraduate from Cotton University and masters from IIT BHU, Varanasi. She worked as a research associate in Primary Healthtech Pvt. Ltd., a startup incubated at IIT Guwahati for developing point of care testing devices targeting the rural health sector overall in India, before moving to USA. She is daughter of Monsuman Basumatary and Subhash Ramchiary, who works at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV). They live in Guwahati Assam. Kritika's loves to watch anime, good movies and series, and spend time with pets.

## Awards and Achievements



### **Dola Pathak - Faculty Teaching Prize**

The 2022-2023 College of Natural Science (CNS) of Michigan State University, Faculty Teaching Prize was awarded to Department of Statistics and Probability (STT) faculty Dola Pathak, Ph.D. CNS recognizes teaching excellence by awarding the Faculty Teaching Prize for their outstanding and wonderful contributions. Dr. Pathak's commitment to student learning, dedication to teaching excellence, and generous instructional mentoring are superb, which made her very deserving for the award.



### **Srutee Deka - Michigan Junior High Swim Champion 2022-2023**

The girls Okemos Middle School Team won the Capital Area Middle School/Junior High swim champion 2022-2023 (among 14 participating school districts). Srutee won three individual medals. She is daughter of Dola Pathak and Pallav Deka.

## Obituary



### **Paban Kumar Dutta**

Our Community member Meghna Dutta lost her father this January. Her father, Paban Kumar Dutta was a Retired Civil Engineer in the Public Health Department, Government of Assam. He is survived by his wife Rasmi Hazarika Dutta, their son and daughter-in-law, daughter Meghna and son-in-law Priyangshu, who are Michigan residents. AAMI offers condolences to the grieving family and prays for the eternal rest of his soul.

## Achievements

**Prithu Neog** from Raleigh, North Carolina, received first place in NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) classical student auditions/competition (State-level) at the North Carolina School of the Arts in UNC - Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

On the same day, he also received "Outstanding Performer Award" for formally recognized the diligent preparation and talents displayed at North Carolina Regional "Essentially Ellington" High School Jazz Festival by Dr. Stephen Anderson, Director of UNC Jazz Studies (The UNC Jazz Studies faculty and Essentially Ellington guest clinicians). Prithu played standing and electric guitars in this competition and his Enloe Jazz Combo Band also won First place at this festival on Saturday, February 18, 2023.



**Eshan Neog** from Raleigh, North Carolina, won gold medal in Men's Singles-B and Silver medal in Men's Doubles-B with his coach, Lasitha Menaka in Norther Virginia Open Badminton Tournament on January 29, 2023. He also won U17 Gold (Mixed Doubles) and U17 Silver (Boys Singles) Medals at Northern Virginia Open Badminton Tournament on January 8, 2023.



**Srinika Bora** from Apex, North Carolina, participated in American Taekwondo Association (ATA) Southern Regional Tournament in Charleston, South Carolina on 18 Feb 2023. She competed in two events, Traditional Forms and Sparring in 11 - 12 years age group. She got first place in both the events. Srinika is a red belt student in Apex Vision Martial Arts School.



## Wedding

The Southwest Assamese community is extremely grateful and busy with many significant events since the last edition of this newsletter.

Among the news, the year 2022 culminated with a grand and joyous union of Manish Baruah (son of Ashok and Roopa Baruah) and Christine Leyson. In Assamese and Filipino tradition-laden events, guests from all over the world came to shower their blessings! Congratulations to the happy couple!

Shortly following the American holiday season, the year of 2023 started out with auspicious celebrations including the January Magh Bihu which was recognized in individual homes. One celebration was completed at Rupesh and Probha (Monju) Saikia's home with Axomiya grand traditions complete with blessings around the meji and also another intimate family gathering in the home of Rabin and Jeena Mahanta. The guests from various Indian and American cultures enjoyed the gathering and proliferation of Assamese culture. This year the Texas Assamese community is also thrilled to include Naya Mukul (daughter of Mitra Kalita/Nitin Mukul and grand-daughter of Mahesh/Nirmala Kalita of New York/New Jersey) who is studying at Rice University. The windy day was marked with beautiful color, music, dancing and delicious food.



*Gorgeous Juroon marking the beginnings of the family union. The joy in their eyes was contagious!*



*Beautiful mother of the groom greeting the beautiful mother of the bride.*



*First Generation Assamese in America sharing traditions with the Third Generation.*

*Day or Night – Bihu festivities Continue.*



Also, in March, we welcomed our own Peha, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, one of Northern India's greatest musicians to Houston with his sons, Amaan Ali Khan and Ayaan Ali Khan, to celebrate Asia Society Texas Center's new performing arts series. This amazing artistic talent related to our own Assamese Baruah and Mahanta families filled the venue with his wonderful music!

We are also looking forward to seeing our youngest Assamese performing a Bihu dance in a greater Houston Community event. The children learning the dance under the tutelage of Rini Chakravorty Sharma include Samiksha Sharma, Aarini Dutta-Saikia, Devanshi Sarmah, Gaurav Baruah, Roan Baruah, and Ronav Mahanta. Looking forward to seeing the children on the stage!

## **Bohag Bihu 2023**

On April 22nd, the Houston Area Assamese along with friends and family from other regions will celebrate Bohag Bihu in Humble, Texas in the beautiful sport complex arranged by the Datta-Barua family. Excitement is filling the air to meet old and new friends.

The day will start out with a traditional flag hoisting and the day is planned for music to the ears of the playful children enjoying games and running throughout the lovely park. We cannot wait for the khela mela and introduction of new members to the community.

Of course, the Houston Bihu celebrations will not be complete without the annual Pitha-Pona contest with the Baby Bezbarua Memorial Running Trophy graciously organized by Ramgopal and Alpana (Mala) Sarangapani in memory of Mala's mother. Our mouths are watering already! We will also be practicing our Assamese language lessons at the event with our PGI School, Houston-based teacher, Dil Dekka! What a line-up 😊

Due to unusual circumstances, only the Houston community news is shared in this edition. Promises for greater Southwest community news next time!

## Bhogali Bihu Celebration

Assam Association of Alberta celebrated Bhogali Bihu on 14th of January 2023 at the Scandinavian Centre in Calgary, Canada. Day started with stage decoration followed by meet at around 4.30 pm with traditional Assamese Bihu snacks like "Til pitha", "Bora Saul", "Narikolr Laroo", "Tilor Laroo", "Gheela Pitha", "Dai-Chira", etc.

Solo Bihu dance, Goalporia folk song, Assamese, Hindi and English songs were performed by members, Guests and Kids were the main attraction of the Cultural program. After the first half of the cultural program, two rounds of BINGO added variety to the program. After the BINGO, traditional "Meji Prajalan" was done outside the auditorium.

Children's Games like " Koni Jooj", "Tekeli Bhanga" started at around 4.30 pm. which added to more excitement and fun to the celebration. Cultural program started at around 5.00 pm with a speech on "Bhogali Bihu" from MC followed by welcome speech by President.

Delicious dinner with "Machor Jool" " Sagalir Manxa", "Khar", "Dail", "Pitika" prepared by the members family was served at around 8.30 pm. New families, students from Assam studying in Calgary were introduced to all. Several songs were performed after dinner. Program concluded with the Mukoli Bihu celebration.

All the community members enjoyed the get together and rejoiced in the much-awaited harvest festival celebration. It was a very extensive celebration of our beloved Bhogali Bihu!





### Magh Bihu Celebration, Vancouver

AAVAN held Magh Bihu celebration and its AGM meeting on the 14th Jan this year. It was a great celebration with over 70 members participating on that day and we did get to see lot of new faces as we are growing bigger in number!

As usual, we had delicious food catered along with Bihu snacks and jolpaan and everyone literally enjoying the traditional "doi-sira". Many games were organized to be enjoyed by the elderly, young members and children that were present for the event.

The most interesting fact of the Magh Bihu this time has been that we were very fortunate to have a small video clip of our event to be telecasted by ND24 news Channel for Assam ! It was showcased right around the actual Magh Bihu celebrations of Assam which aligned with the true spirit of the joyous harvest season.



## AAVAN Fundraising Event, Vancouver

An excellent fundraising bake sale was organized by our amazing women's committee of AAVAN to encourage the community members to come forward to participate in the Christmas bake sale and support the donation drive . Members joined hands to make the event a great success. They not only opened their hearts and pockets but put in so much effort to to bake an array of delectable goodies! The donation received from the sales of the delicious homemade baked delights which consisted of lemon cakes, madeleines, cookies, breads, muffins, tea cakes and cake jars, and more were saved for future community events and a portion of the proceeds was also extended to the local community charity! Besides, members also made generous cash donations as well. It became a memorable event and everyone including adults and children enjoyed the evening. Snacks and tea were served to the visitors/ members present for the event.

Thank you to all the community members for all the generous support and participation! We look forward to having more of such events in the near future.



## Accomplishments

### Paran Jyoti Sarma

Congratulations to Paran Jyoti Sarma for being honored with a PhD degree for his outstanding research on Hydrogen fuel cell and clean energy technology as part of the IOCL-SFU collaboration program. Sarma's work is a testament to the importance of cross-border collaborations in developing innovative sustainable future. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors".



## New Members To The Community

### Zayn

With tiny two feet and a beating heart, I came into the world to celebrate the advent of life - Baby Zayn. On the day of Diwali, Oct 24th, 2022, Zayn Jamil Borborah the first-born child of Tahera Jamil and Sadat Taufiq Borborah came into the world. Sadat and Tahera moved to Vancouver from Bangalore in 2018 and became a part of the Axomiya family in Vancouver. They both hail from Guwahati.



### Prisha

We are thrilled to announce the birth of precious baby girl, Prisha! Daughter of Manisha Chetri and Paran Jyoti Sharma. She came into the world on October 29, 2022, and has already brought so much joy and love into their lives.



Edmonton, Canada

## Bhogali Bihu Celebration

This year the Assamese community of Edmonton was elated to host Bhogali Bihu for the first time in Edmonton in a community hall. It was a huge success with participation of the community members in their ethnic clothing. The event was started by serving authentic Assamese snacks like till pitha, ghila pitha, tillor laaru, loskora, chira-doi, maah praxad etc. This was followed by a meet and greet session for the newcomers. The cultural event was inaugurated with a welcome speech by Biren Choudhury. There were singing performances by Sumita Trigunayat, Amarjyoti Baruah and Meghna Das Gogoi along with her mother Moon Das. There were karaoke performances as well to the tune of some popular songs. There was a Quiz competition about questions related to our motherland, conducted by Ricky Raj Medhi. "Pukhuri-paar" competition for kids was conducted as well. The programme was beautifully managed by MC Anurag Kalita. Lunch was served with all bhogali specific items like duck curry, mati daali, masor tenga etc. Lastly, there was "mukoli bihu" where everybody joined the dance floor to the rhythm of Bihu songs. This beautiful celebration of Bhogali Bihu refreshed our connection to our motherland and we hope to keep the spirit alive for years to come.



## New Additions To Community

**Rahul Chetry**, from Jonai, Dhemaji. He has a deep love and appreciation for the culture and traditions. He is currently pursuing his masters in food and bioresource engineering at the University of Alberta, Canada. Apart from academics, he likes to play cricket, football and fishing in nearby rivers and lakes. He has a passion for preserving and promoting Assamese heritage and traditions and will look forward to continuing to contribute to it.



**Manish Sharma**, a visual designer hailing from Guwahati. With a passion for creative expression and a keen eye for detail, he has established himself as a sought-after professional in the design industry. Aside from his professional work, he has a deep love for cooking and enjoys experimenting with new recipes and sharing his culinary creations.



**Amar Jyoti Baruah**, from Mangaldoi, Assam. He is currently pursuing his PhD in Geophysics at the University of Alberta. He is also a good singer and likes to play various musical instruments.



**Kangkana Kalita**, from the cultural capital of Assam Tezpur, joined our community in September 2022 as a Graduate student in the University of Alberta. Kangkana holds a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from NIT Agartala & has worked as a Chemical Process Engineer in Cairn Oil & Gas for 2 years following her graduation. She's passionate about novel research in the field of Experimental & Computational Fluid Dynamics and aspires to work in the R&D Energy sector in her career. Apart from academics, Kangkana enjoys reading & travelling, and she's looking forward to enjoying the beautiful Canadian summer this year!



## Celebrating Bhogali Bihu- The Festival Of Abundance

The beginning of 2023, saw happiness and positivity with everyone being able to meet and greet each other in-person after fighting and standing strong during the pandemic for almost two long years.

As always, every Assamese household was getting ready to celebrate the auspicious festival of Bhogali or Magh Bihu to mark the annual harvest. To revive the in-person celebration of this festival, after conducting it virtually during the pandemic period, Asom Sangha Canada Community Association (ASCCA) started its preparation months ahead of the event. This year Bhogali Bihu was celebrated on 14th January 2023 (Saturday) at Anapolis Community Hall, Mississauga, Ontario with a huge number of people participating in the celebration. The active participation of our community members in the event truly exhibited that the spirit and flavors of Bhogali has its magic all around. On the 14th, the event started from 4:00 PM onwards however, the kitchen team reached the venue as early as 8:00 AM to prepare the food for the grand feast.



The celebration unfolded with a welcome message from the ASCCA president Jibeswar Talukdar followed by Bihu greetings and a short line up of fun activities from the hosts for the evening, Pranami Khaund and Smriti Rani Lashkar. Keeping up with the tradition of Magh Bihu, the fun activities included "Tekeli Bhonga" where everyone enjoyed to their hilt. This was followed by Bingo where the young adults of our community, Ashaz Rahman, Farhaan Ahmed, Maan Hazarika, Tvisha Thakur and Zeon Gogoi did an excellent job as Bingo Masters and skillfully navigated the tricky waters. The fun activities were followed by open Bihu dance and songs where everyone from kids to adults of our community danced to Bihu beats. Everyone had a great time connecting with other members of the Assamese fraternity and spending good time with each time. The variety of home-made starters which included Doi Chiraa, different varieties of Pitha, Cake, Ladoo, Nimkee, Samosa, etc. was a cherry on the top.

While people enjoyed dancing and singing, the kitchen team was busy preparing the dinner. With dinner being served at around 9:00 PM everyone could see that the hard work of the kitchen team did wonders, as the dinner spread was scrumptious and very delicious. The menu comprised of salads, sweet and sour tomato chutney (bilahi tok), rice, yellow daal, labra bhaji (mix veg with pumpkin), fish with mustard seeds (xhorihoh maas), khaar, muri ghonto (fish with daal), home style chicken, mutton, and desert. Awesome! Isn't it? But when it's Bhogali Bihu one cannot expect less items in the menu. Every item in the dinner was finger licking good and received great appreciation. Bhogali Bihu would have been incomplete with this delicious spread.

This year the event also saw a good food drive initiative conducted by the young adults Aayan Rahman, Treiya Thakur and Tvisha Thakur of our community which received great support from everyone. The people of our community generously contributed to this drive and made it a successful one.

Finally, the event came to an end with a vote of thanks from the cultural secretary of ASCCA Priyanka Talukdar, to all the volunteers and everyone who attended/participated in the event to make it a successful one. It was indeed a deliciously beautiful and memorable evening, and the delight of the evening was the participation of our enthusiastic community members especially our young members who always mesmerize us with their active participation and beautiful performances. The event concluded spreading the message of hope that the people of the community will meet again very soon to celebrate life together.

"Let the smiles and laughter be highly contagious, such that everyone gets infected with it."

- Dr. Priyanka Talukdar.

## PERFORMERS

PERFORMERS is a group of artists showcasing their talent in Greater Toronto Area, Canada. The group has performed Assamese Folk Fusion in Taste of Asia, Carabram, Taste of India and Panorama 75th Independence Day Celebration. They also performed a patriotic song at Panorama's 75th Independence Day Celebration.



Last year on October 16th at Rose Theater, Brampton, a group of girls and boys performed the Husori-Bihu dance in the event India@75 Dance Festival organized by Impact Media and Events Corporation (IMEC).



Aadoroni (welcoming) by Sukalyan Talukdar

The participants for Husori were Sukalyan Talukdar, Washim Imdad, Arpan Konwar, Aditya Bora, Saurabh Deka and Digvijay Shaw. The bihu dancers were Nitumoni Saikia Sharma, Kakali Boruah, Nilakshi Barooah, Priyanka Talukdar, Bandita Nath and Rimlee Bayan.

Sukalyan Talukdar did the Aadoroni (welcoming) of the Husori groups with Gamusa and Bota. Digvijay Shaw was playing the dhul (drum).



*Digvijay Shaw with Dhul, Nitumoni Saikia Sharma, Priyanka Talukdar, Dipika Shaw and Rimlee Bayan*

The husori part was choreographed by Arpan Konwar and Bihu part was choreographed by Priyanka Talukdar & Rimlee Bayan. In the end, Nitumoni Saikia Sharma did a wonderful portion with her spinning dance moves. All dance practices happened on the Zoom Platform. This way it saves time in communication and artists are getting a way to showcase their talent and keeping their interest alive.



*Husori Boys: Sukalyan, Arpan, Washim, Saurab, Digvijay and Aditya*

I appreciate the efforts of every participant in making these performances a success. In summer, there will be more events and we will be able to see more skills and talent.

Joi Aai Axom!

Dipika Shaw

Coordinator, PERFORMERS, Ontario, Canada

## Republic Day Celebration (Panorama India)

Nomoskar Everyone!

I am Advaita Chakraborty, a thirteen-year-old who has a passion for dance. I am at Grade 8, Orde St. Public School. I am so grateful to Panorama India for giving such a beautiful opportunity to represent my home state. The constitution of India was accepted on 26th January 1950. It was written by Dr. B.R Ambedkar, who was one of the prominent leaders of the backward community. The essence of republic day is to define India as a sovereign, democratic, republic nation. To commemorate this occasion, Panorama India celebrated republic day at Toronto on 28th of January. There were different representatives of states from India there who performed colorful dances and patriotic dances. There was also a variety of Indian cuisine available. Representing one of the most beautiful states from northeast India, Assam, Advaita Chakraborty, Priyanka Talukdar, Nitumoni Saikia, and Nilakshi Barooah performed a folk fusion from the various parts of Assam. The fusion is unique to the varied ethnic population of Assam. Starting with Bihu, the main dance of the state and adding along with it, Jhumur Nach pertaining to the tea garden folks, Bagarumba dance (the butterfly dance) from the Bodoland people and the exotic Tiwa dance from the hilly tribal population of the Tiwa people. I am also very thankful to all my team members as well. Without their contribution, we might not have been able to perform. One of our members unfortunately had fallen sick a day before our performance, yet still performed with full energy on the stage. Due to far distances and time availability, it was much harder to co-ordinate and practice together in-person. We would set up a zoom meeting almost daily to practice at least for an hour. We just had one in person rehearsal a week before the actual day of the performance. I'd also like to thank Dr. Mousumi Mahanta, my Ma, for her contributions. Though she might not have danced, she helped us learn the choreography and gave us feedback. She also had picked our outfits and beautifully did my makeup. Every experience teaches us something new. This one defined the meaning of unity more. Overall, I was delighted to be a part of such an adventure, truly amazing. I would like to congratulate the winners and all the participants, you all were amazing, and I enjoyed all the performances. Hopefully in the future, we are again able to be a part of another performance, another adventure, another lesson.



Ontario, Canada



## Wedding

We would like to share the news of our wedding which took place in India this February. This was a bond between two different cultures. We got the opportunity to celebrate our wedding with ceremonies organized in both styles: Punjabi Sikh Wedding (Jago, Haldi, Mehendi, Anand Karaj and Reception) in Delhi as well as Assamese Hindu Wedding (Juroon, Pani Tula, Haldi, Biya and Reception) in Guwahati.

Thank you very much for your blessings as we look forward to the new chapter in our lives.

Regards,

Ishween Kaur Bedi & Raj Bezbaruah

Toronto

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## New Arrival

### *Agnay Medhi*

Gayatri and Abhijit Medhi welcomed baby Agnay on the 1st of March 2023. Big brother Arjun and sister Ayahna were thrilled to welcome the baby together with pet brother Thunder.

Congratulations!



### *Namay Purai*

Our family has grown by two feet! We are thrilled to welcome baby boy Namay to our family. His big sister Nysha is already over the moon about his arrival and loving him to bits.

- Priyankita, Manthan, Nysha

## Obituary



Pradip and Purbalee Das lost their mother/mother-in-law Sabitri Das on 16th of Feb 2023. She was predeceased by her husband and leaves behind her five children and their family. Deepest condolences to the entire family. May her soul find eternal peace.

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## Introducing the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Rhinos



Cricket runs in the veins of every Indian and we “Khar khowa Axomiya” are not to be left behind. Some of us have been playing competitive cricket across various cricket leagues in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). For the very first time, we all came together under a single umbrella and formed the first Assamese cricket team to compete in one of the Ontario Canadian Cricket leagues.

Introducing the “Greater Toronto Assam Rhinos Cricket Club!

The GTA Rhinos Cricket Club is a brand-new cricket team that has been formed in the year 2023 comprising mainly the Assamese community in Toronto and GTA areas. Our club consists of around 30 players with a mix of both experienced and young talents. We have some experienced players who represented Assam in various age levels.

This is the first time in North America where an Assamese cricket team would be competing in one of the major competitive leagues in Toronto. We would be playing around 14 games. We are very excited for the first season. Stay tuned for more information about the club and players in the next edition of the Pronaam newsletter.



ল'হ ল'হৰি প্ৰাণৰ ভাই

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ফুলত ভৰ দি নাও মেলি যায়।

