

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



NEW AGE ACTORS' THEATRE FOUNDATION

A journey to preserve and promote Assam's traditional performance arts as a living heritage and a catalyst for social change and empowerment.

ABOUT NAAT FOUNDATION

New Age Actors' Theatre Foundation is a puppetry and theatre group dedicated to reviving and preserving Assam's traditional folk puppetry, Putola Naas, and theatre forms like Ankiya Bhaona. Beyond cultural preservation, we actively use puppetry and theatre as alternative media to drive social change, addressing crucial issues such as gender equality, education, domestic violence, disability inclusion, and environmental conservation.

PuppetPeople Assam, the puppetry wing of NAAT, was founded in 2013 by Drishana Kalita. Manash Protim Neog, an alumnus of the National School of Drama, New Delhi, began his theatre group New Age Actors' Theatre in 2009. Both the puppetry and theatre wings were combined and formally registered as the New Age Actors' Theatre Foundation under the Trust Acts of 1982 on June 2, 2023, by Drishana Kalita and Manash Protim Neog. Through our chapters viz. NAAT Academy of Acting, PuppetPeople_Assam, and NAAT Studio, we continue to nurture talent, create thought-provoking performances, and amplify voices that often go unheard.

Over the last decade, NAAT Foundation has reached over 15,000 people annually through performances and workshops across Assam, raising awareness on key social issues. Our ongoing efforts focus on reviving traditional folk arts while empowering rural youth and women through puppetry and theatre.

Currently, NAAT is working to sustain and promote Assam's cultural heritage arts including Sattriya mask making, Putola Naas, and Ankiya Bhaona, exploring their immense potential as a tool for social change and economic empowerment. Under the Puppetshala initiative, children and adolescents in seven villages of Kamrup district are receiving training in traditional puppet making and performance. Another important aspect of our work is retelling folklore through folk puppetry to initiate discussions on the portrayal of women in traditional narratives and the normalization of gender-based violence and early marriage.

Through Putola Naas, NAAT aims to create a new generation of puppeteers, with young girls and women leading the way. They will receive training in all aspects of puppetry while using the art form to tell their own stories of resilience and empowerment. We envision a socio-cultural movement where heritage meets activism, ensuring that Assamese performing arts retain their glory while becoming powerful tools for gender equality, storytelling, and grassroots change.

Chapters of NAAT Foundation:

- New Age Actors' Theatre
- PuppetPeople Assam
- NAAT Studio
- NAAT Academy of Acting
- NAAT Squad

MISSION STATEMENT:

New Age Actors' Theatre Foundation is dedicated to preserving and promoting the traditional performance art forms of Assam as powerful tools for social change and awareness. Through theatre, puppetry, and storytelling, we strive to engage communities, address critical social issues, and inspire positive transformation while keeping Assam's rich cultural heritage alive.

VISION:

New Age Actors' Theatre Foundation envisions a society where theatre, puppetry, and creative arts serve as powerful tools for education, empowerment, and social transformation.

We strive to create a world where creative arts empower individuals regardless of gender or background with knowledge and freedom for artistic expression, driving equality and social transformation.

Through our performances and community-driven initiatives, we aim to foster critical thinking, inclusivity, and lasting social impact, making art a driving force for a more just and compassionate world.



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

“At New Age Actors’ Theatre Foundation, we believe in the profound power of theatre, puppetry, and creative arts to spark conversations, challenge perspectives, and drive meaningful social change. Since our inception, our journey has been fuelled by a passion for storytelling that not only entertains but educates, empowers, and transforms communities.

Over the years, we have travelled across Assam, using our art to advocate for girls’ education, women’s health and nutrition, gender equality, and the prevention of gender-based violence.

Our mission is to make art a catalyst for change, bridging gaps in society and inspiring a future built on inclusivity, awareness, and collective progress.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our artists, supporters, and audiences who have been part of this journey. Together, let us continue to harness the power of creativity to shape a better tomorrow.”

Manash Protim Neog

Co-Founder & Chairman, New Age Actors’ Theatre Foundation



MESSAGE FROM THE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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“It has been an incredible journey propelled by our vision for utilising theatre, puppetry, and creative arts to inspire change, ignite conversations, and empower communities. Our team has been committed tirelessly to using performance as a tool to address critical social issues from promoting girls’ education and gender equality to advocating for women’s health and the prevention of gender-based violence.

Our work would not be possible without the unwavering dedication of our incredible team, the support of our well-wishers, and the collaboration of our partner organizations.

Each performance, each workshop, and each initiative we undertake is a testament to the collective passion and hard work of everyone involved. Your belief in our mission fuels our creativity and strengthens our resolve to continue making a difference.

As we move forward, we remain committed to using art as a force for social transformation, reaching new communities, and amplifying voices that deserve to be heard. Thank you for being part of this journey—your support and encouragement inspire us every day.”

With gratitude,

Drishana Kalita

Co-founder & Executive Director, New Age Actors’ Theatre Foundation

LOOKING BACK AT THE YEAR

2023-2024

The year 2023-24 has been a remarkable journey for NAAT Foundation, marked by impactful performances, community engagement, and the preservation of Assam's rich theatrical and puppetry traditions. Through our diverse initiatives, we reached schools, universities, villages, and theatre festivals, using performing arts as a powerful tool for education, awareness, and social change.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR:

Expanding Outreach – Conducted puppetry and theatre workshops across Assam, reaching diverse communities, including children from economically challenged backgrounds.

Raising Awareness through Performances – Addressed critical social issues such as girls' education, menstrual hygiene, road safety, gender violence, economic literacy, and environmental conservation through puppet shows and street theatre.

Engaging Young Minds – Organized training programs in storytelling, puppet-making, and performance art for school and university students, fostering creativity and confidence.

Preserving and Promoting Traditional Art Forms – Showcased Assamese folk tales and indigenous theatre forms, ensuring their relevance for the next generation.

Building Partnerships – Strengthened collaborations with government agencies, educational institutions, and social organizations to maximize impact.



CAMPAIGN: “OU KUNWORI-A NEW TALE”

Date: 13th September 2023

Venue: Morigaon, Assam

PuppetPeople Assam, the puppetry wing of NAAT Foundation launched a new campaign that presented a fresh take on an age-old classic from our beloved folk story collection, Burhi Aair Xadhu. The heroines of our folklore need narratives that empower the younger generation. No longer resigned to her fate, Ou Kunwori now has a new voice, a new ending or rather, a new beginning.

Children are often overlooked in awareness efforts, but shaping mindsets starts young. Through this initiative, we aim to inspire not just the old but, more importantly, the youngest among us.



STORYTELLING & PUPPET-MAKING WORKSHOP FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS :

Date: 10th to 12th October 2023

Venue: Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra, Guwahati, Assam

As part of our commitment to nurturing creativity and confidence in young minds, NAAT organized a Storytelling & Puppet-Making Workshop for children from three schools in Guwahati. The workshop was held at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra, Guwahati, and conducted by NAAT Founder Manash Protim Neog.

The workshop aimed to:

- Teach storytelling techniques to students from Class 5 to Class 10, encouraging them to write and perform their own stories.
- Enhance confidence and creativity through performance-based learning.
- Introduce puppet-making with recycled materials, fostering sustainability and hands-on creativity.

At the end of the workshop, students created their own puppet productions on important social and environmental themes, including:

- Plastic Pollution – Highlighting the dangers of plastic waste and the need for sustainable alternatives.
- Forest Conservation – Emphasizing the importance of protecting forests and wildlife.
- Awareness on Bullying – Addressing the impact of bullying and promoting kindness and inclusivity.

Through these performances, students not only showcased their artistic talents but also became advocates for social change, using theatre and puppetry as a medium for awareness and education.



PUPPET SHOW ON ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS BIS VISHWA MANAK DIWAS

Date: 14th October 2023

Venue: Viswa Manak Diwas Celebration Event, Guwahati, Assam

On the occasion of BIS Vishwa Manak Diwas, the NAAT team performed a puppet show to generate awareness on the importance of wearing helmets and following road safety rules. The event was organized by NEAID on behalf of BIS and was attended by eminent citizens and school students.



Through engaging storytelling and puppetry, the performance highlighted key aspects of road safety, including:

- The importance of wearing helmets to prevent head injuries.
- The necessity of following traffic rules for personal and public safety.
- Encouraging responsible behavior on the road among students and community members.

The interactive session helped reinforce crucial safety messages in an engaging and memorable way, making theatre an effective tool for spreading awareness.



PUPPETRY & THEATRE WORKSHOP AT TEZPUR CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

Date: 31st October to 8th November 2023
Venue: Tezpur Central University, Tezpur, Assam



An 8-day Puppetry and Theatre Workshop was conducted for students of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at Tezpur Central University. The workshop aimed to equip students with essential skills in performing arts while using theatre and puppetry as tools for impactful storytelling.

During the workshop, students received training in:

- Body movement for stage performance.
- Voice acting and expression to enhance character portrayal.
- Scriptwriting for impactful storytelling.
- Puppet making and manipulation, integrating visual storytelling with performance.

The workshop culminated in a grand performance, where students showcased their learnings through two powerful shows on:

- Mental Health – Addressing stigma, self-care, and emotional well-being.
- Gender Violence – Highlighting issues of discrimination, abuse, and the importance of gender equality.

This immersive experience helped students explore creative expression while using theatre and puppetry to raise awareness on critical social issues.

PUPPET SHOW ON HEALTHY FOOD, NUTRITION & GIRLS' EDUCATION

Date: **1st December 2023**
Venue: **Kachikata, N. Lakhimpur, Assam**

As part of its ongoing community outreach, PuppetPeople, a wing of NAAT Foundation, conducted a puppet show in Kachikata village, North Lakhimpur, to raise awareness about healthy food, nutrition, and the importance of girls' education.

The event featured two engaging puppet plays: "Pinkur Jadoo" – A fun and informative story highlighting the importance of nutritious food and healthy eating habits. "Ou Kunwori- Ek notun xadhu" –



A compelling puppet play based on a popular folk tale of Assam, retold as a medium to advocate for girls' education and empowerment.

Both plays were well received by the audience, effectively delivering crucial social messages in an entertaining and accessible manner. The initiative successfully engaged the local community, using puppetry as a creative medium for education and awareness.

PUPPET THEATRE ON GIRLS' EDUCATION, PREVENTION OF EARLY MARRIAGE & SAFETY

Date: **26th December 2023**
Venue: **Dengrali, Sonapur, Assam**

As part of the Dengrali Theatre Festival, NAAT Foundation organized a puppet show in villages across Sonapur to raise awareness on girls' education, prevention of early marriage, and safety for girls.

The event attracted a diverse audience, including local villagers and attendees from various parts of Assam, highlighting the significance of these social issues through engaging storytelling and puppetry.

Key themes addressed in the performance:

- Girls' Education – Emphasizing the importance of learning and empowerment through education.
- Prevention of Early Marriage – Highlighting the risks and negative impacts of child marriage.
- Safety for Girls – Advocating for safer communities and the need to protect girls' rights.



By using puppetry as a medium, the event successfully sparked discussions and awareness, making complex social messages more relatable and impactful for the community.

STREET PLAY CAMPAIGN ON ECONOMIC LITERACY & WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Date: 14th March 2024
Venue: Chayygaon, Assam



The NAAT team conducted a street play campaign across different parts of Chayygaon, focusing on raising awareness about economic literacy and the empowerment of rural women working in key sectors such as handloom and agriculture.

The campaign aimed to:

- Educate women about financial independence, savings, and self-sustainability.
- Highlight the importance of economic empowerment in improving livelihoods.
- Encourage rural women to access resources, training, and opportunities for growth in their respective fields.

By performing in public spaces, the street play successfully engaged local communities, sparking conversations on economic self-reliance and gender equality in rural workforces.



INAUGURATION OF NAAT ACADEMY OF ACTING, PORUWA CHARIALI, TEZPUR , ASSAM ON 21ST MAY 2023

PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS :

As we reflect on another impactful year, we extend our gratitude to all our partners, collaborators, well-wishers, and supporters who have been instrumental in our journey. Your unwavering encouragement, contributions, and shared vision have helped NAAT Foundation reach more communities, preserve traditional performance art, and drive meaningful social change through theatre and puppetry.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to:

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)
Northeast Centre for Equity on Integrated Development (NEAID)
Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)
Tezpur Central University, Napaam, Assam
Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra, Guwahati, Assam
Dengrali Theatre Festival, Sonapur, Assam
Villagers of Chayygaon, District Kamrup, Assam
Villagers of Niz Kachikata Gaon, Lakhimpur
Villagers of Morigaon, Assam



LOOKING ONWARD

As we move forward to the next phase of our journey, NAAT Foundation remains committed to expanding our reach, preserving Assam's rich traditional theatre and puppetry forms, and using them as powerful tools for social change. Our key goals for the future include:

- **Reaching More Communities** – Expanding our theatre and puppetry initiatives to new regions, engaging with diverse communities, and addressing pressing social issues through creative storytelling.
- **Preserving Traditional Art Forms** – Actively working to document, revive, and sustain Assam's indigenous theatre and puppetry traditions, ensuring they remain relevant and impactful.
- **Empowering the Next Generation** – Taking Assamese performing arts to young artists and students, nurturing new talent, and increasing awareness about the cultural heritage of Assam.
- **Expanding Popularity at Regional & National Levels** – Strengthening our presence in theatre festivals, workshops, and collaborations to showcase Assamese performance art beyond local audiences and bring it to the national stage.

Through continued innovation, partnerships, and dedication, NAAT Foundation will keep using theatre and puppetry as transformative mediums for education, awareness, and cultural preservation. As we look ahead, NAAT Foundation remains dedicated to expanding its reach, preserving Assam's traditional theatre and puppetry, and taking Assamese performing arts to a broader audience at regional and national levels.






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