

History, Heritage and Husori: Marking London 2023 bihu celebrations



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Nina Goswami 18 April 2023 28685 views

Assamese around the globe continue to revel in the setting of a world record when more than 11,000 dancers performed together in Guwahati to mark this year's bihu.

By contrast in the UK, it was 4-year-old Jasmine dancing a solo that was one of the highlights at the 36th London Bihu held on Saturday 15 April 2023. She danced to the first two minutes of the music accompanied the world record breaking dance to an audience of more than 150 revellers.

Jasmine was among two dozen dancers and musicians to take part in the cultural programme at Campion Hall in Hornchurch, where this year's bihu was held. Her fellow young bihu dance performer Hiya Kalita described how she enjoyed watching the more experienced dancers during the Husori. She said: "I love to learn from them so I can make my dancing better."

Hiya had the opportunity to study many dance techniques including Xattriya from Chinu Kishore.

"This had to be one of the best cultural programmes to date," said Ms Kishore. "The dancers showcased at this year's bihu have been learning their styles since they were children and it is good to hear the younger generation are learning from them."

Among the singing highlights was a young sister duet by Mireya and Anaya Hazarika. They sang in Assamese and used traditional techniques, including call and response, to engage the audience.

Children showcasing what they know of Assamese culture and learning about Assam's heritage was a thread throughout this year's bihu celebrations.

Ruby Kakati Tank's daughters – Serena, Ria Rose and Raina – captivated the audience with their bihu dance. Ms Tank, second generation Assamese, explained that it feels important to be able share her heritage with her children and to teach them about Assam through the bihu celebrations.

History and heritage of bihu was also a cornerstone of the London Bihu Committee's welcoming address by its president Professor Jayanta Barua. He outlined how in the UK many traditions continue to be upheld to celebrate the Assamese New Year.

"Every year as people arrive, they enjoy jalpan, including a variety of pithas and larus, that are homemade and made by Committee members," explained Prof Barua. "Simply by giving our guests a taste of traditional snacks we are able to raise awareness of Assam's culture, which is rich, vibrant and full of colour - especially at this time of year."

Other traditions continued including some light entertainment with musical chairs and ending the cultural show with general bihu dance. This year partygoers danced to live music from Syed Nur Farnaz, Suraj Gogoi, Govind and Deetima Gayan.

As is custom, the London Bihu Committee's general secretary Manas Borah gave the vote of thanks which was followed by Bihu Bhoj.

"Bihu, once again, brought friends and family together," said Mr Borah. "Together we shared great food, performance and laughter. Creating yet more happy memories for us all to cherish."





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BY NINA GOSWAMI

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