

FIRST EDITION, NOVEMBER 2021

MARCH

THE ANNUAL PERFORMING ARTS JOURNAL OF
THE ASSAM VALLEY SCHOOL



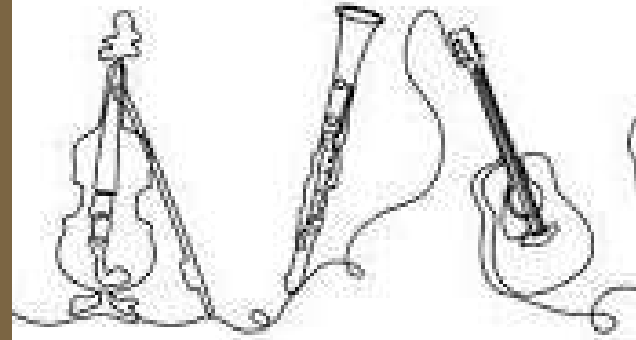
THE ASSAM VALLEY SCHOOL
BALIPARA, SONITPUR, ASOM, 784101



CONTENT

Music:

1. BORGEET



Dance:

1. TRIBHANGI

2. THE UNTOLD MEMORIES

Dramatics:

1. AND THE CURTAINS UNFOLD

2. A WALK THROUGH THE STAGE



Epistle from the editorial team:

Indeed, the year gone by has been cruel! Every single moment is filled with uncertainty. Our brains are now restless, adapting to new online norms. Civilisation is adapting to new protocols. Yet, humans still strive to be the better version of themselves to extend the life span of humanity. What motivates us! The aura of our being lies on beauty. The beauty of the ultimate source; the beauty of the universe. Our observation gives meaning to the sight. The eyes and the mind seek equilibrium among elements connecting to the utmost within. Art captivates the within. The soul quenches its thirst for disciplinary symmetry of zeal and passion practising and realising crafts. The reason that good art is eternal is that science and art chase each other in a parallel manner, and the moment they sync, magic is created.

Performing arts have always been an integral part of the life at AVS. The Music and Dance school and the Theatrical Society of AVS have had a special place in the community for treating the audience to mesmerising productions time and again. To be honest, I personally feel that the moment I am on stage, I become the most charismatic version of myself.

During the last summer holidays, the idea to publish a performing arts journal popped up. The editorial team was selected and the work started in October and having decided that this journal is going to be an annual publication. There is so much more than what you get to see on stage. People perform, people leave, but certain feelings are lost in transit. This journal will give you a glimpse into the hidden realm of the performing arts culture at AVS.

The first edition is filled with informative articles to reminisce about times from rehearsals and overcoming fears to art and caricature. We also have memoirs which have been sent in by two of our alumni as an added bonus. So, we proudly present to you the first edition of the annual performing arts journal of AVS, MANCH.

NOTE FROM THE MIC:

*I LOVE MUSIC DEEPLY,
BUT WHY?
TO PUT IT SIMPLY,
MUSIC MAKES LIVES,
SHAPES LIVES,
EXPRESSES ALL SHADES
AND STAGES OF LIFE-
AND EVEN SAVES
LIVES.”*

It has always been a dream to publish a magazine on dance, music and drama. I have been working in this school for 16 years now, and ever since then I have been planning to bring out the true essence of

Performing Arts to the school. I feel immense pleasure that after 16 years, this wish of mine has been fulfilled. I am very grateful to my entire team for constantly supporting me throughout the journey.

The Performing Art's Department presents before you, the first ever journal of Performing Arts “MANCH”.

Thank you,

*Rubi Borah Boroloi
Coordinator Of Dance
Department.*

MUSIC

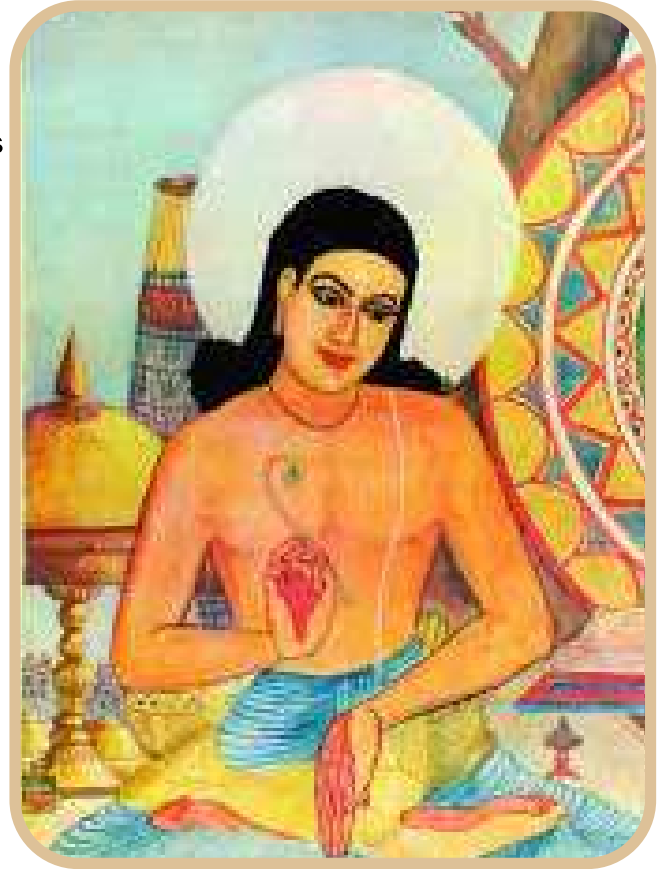


Borgeet

- Jyotishmoyee Charingia

The name Borgeet popularly refers to a special set of devotional songs, set in ragas mentioned in the ancient Indian musical treatises. They are believed to have been composed during the late 15th and the early 16th centuries A.D. by Srimanta Sankaradeva and his chief disciple and associate, Sri Sri Madhavadeva, the two prime exponents of Vaisnavism in Assam. Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva referred to their songs as geet only. The adjectival prefix Bar, meaning grand or superior, must have been a later reverential addition by their devout disciples, which might bear upon the musical grandeur of the songs too.

Borgeets are used to begin prayer services in Satras and Namghar associated with the Ekasarana Dharma; and they also belong to the repertoire of Music of Assam outside the religious context. They are a lyrical strain that express the religious sentiments of the poets reacting to different situations, and differ from other lyrics associated with the Ekasarana Dharma. Similar songs composed by others are not generally considered borgeets.



Sankaradeva established a community centre called Namghar for religious and cultural practices like Bhaona and Nam-Prasanga. Bhaona is the enactment of the dramatic works, popularly referred to as Anka, by Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. Even these Ankas are full of songs, set in ragas, like the Borgeets. A Bhaona is preceded by an elaborate group performance of percussionists playing the Khol (a barrel-shaped drum) and the Tal (the cymbal). The performance involves not only the playing of the instruments but also singing and varied footwork by the percussionists. Nam-prasanga is the common and the chief religious ritual of the Vaisnava cult in Assam which involves the singing of the devotional songs and verses composed by Sankara-Madhava. The Borgeets have been traditionally an indispensable part of this Nam-prasanga.

In its traditional style of performance, all the Pancha Dhatus (musical parts) of Prabandha, as described by Pundit Sarngadeva, viz., Udgraha, Melapaka, Dhruva, Antara and Abhoga, are distinctly exhibited. The traditional performance of Borgeet, in its ideal form, as a part of Nama-prasanga, is preceded by the Gurughat, a songless orchestra of instruments like Khol, Tal, Negera etc. This songless instrumental prelude corresponds to the Udgraha of Prabandha sangita.

Adau vadya Prabandhanang suddha kutadi nirmitah.

Yah khando vadyate prahurudgrahatang mahattamah. (Sangit Ratnakara)

This songless orchestra is followed by the singing of the Raga as such, that too with the accompaniment of a rhythmic composition of five strokes and one gap played in the Khol, Tal, Negera etc., variously known as Rag-Talani, Rag-Tal, Repani, Jundhara, Ghelani etc. This rhythmic elaboration of the raga may be compared to the Melapaka dhatu of Prabandha that establishes the link between Udgraha and Dhruva. The Tal (cymbals) is played by the singers themselves, while even the Bayans, playing the Khol and the Negera, often take part in the singing.

On completion of the rendering of the raga, there comes a break in the instrumental recital too and the chief singer (Gayan) of the group initiates the singing of the first line of a Borgeet, set in the raga already sung, without beats, repeated by the group. This is done twice and on the second repetition of the line by the group, the percussionists make their entry with the Ghat of the tala in which that particular Borgeet is normally started. A tala played with Borgeet comprises three parts: Ga-man (the main body); Ghat (the concluding part); Cok (an embellishment of the Ga-man), which is again followed by the Ghat.

The first two lines of a Borgeet are marked by the symbol Dhrung, the abbreviation of Dhruva. The singing style also differentiates the Dhruva from the rest of the song. As noted above, the first line is first sung beatlessly. Then it is accompanied by only the Ghat of the tala to be played first. The second line of Dhruva is then sung repeatedly in all the three parts of that tala itself. Thus the Dhruva part of a Borgeet is sung only in one tala, whereas each line of the rest of the song, marked as pada is sung with the accompaniment of at least two different talas. This unique style of singing each line of a song with the accompaniment of at least two different talas gives Borgeet a speciality that also reminisces Prabandha Sangita. The Astapadis of Jaydeva's Gita-Govinda are also known to have been sung in a similar style, where each pada was accompanied by a separate tala.

Just after the Dhruva, starts the choral singing of the pada part. The singing proceeds from one line to another without the burden (Dhruva) being repeated. The singing style again differentiates the last line of a Borgeet from the rest of the pada. It is sung repeatedly for several times with the accompaniment of a separate rhythmic composition called Thela-bajana, which in no way conforms to the structure and rhythmic pattern of the other talas played with a Borgeet. There end the song and the percussion. Hence the last line of a Borgeet may be said to correspond to the Abhoga Dhatu of Prabandha, and the rest of the Pada, differentiating the Dhruva from the Abhoga, may be called Antara.

Thus the traditional style of performance establishes Borgeet as a reminiscent of Prabandha Sangita. Unfortunately however, this style of performance is still confined within the Namghar, and in the process of bringing Borgeet out of the Namghar as a performing art, the style has been simplified and modernized to such an extent that Borgeet has lost all its special characteristics and has been relegated to the position of light-classical devotional songs. The need of the hour is to therefore teach and perform Borgeet in the traditional style itself, without destroying its musical specialities, though with some modifications can be brought about, only in the interest of making the performance musically impeccable.



DANCE

Tribhangi

"Dance is the joy of movement and the heart of life"

As The Assam Valley School continues to flourish and develop the students holistically, dance being part of this all, we would like to share the history of our prestigious dance school. The Dance School is now a major part of the production team at AVS. It has been a part of this institution for a long time, but it was only in 2006 that our dance school was officially founded. It was the brainchild of the two teacher-founders Mrs. Erica Nandi and Mrs. Rubi Bora Bordoloi, who got together to establish the dance school at AVS. In the early days, dance was only considered an activity but now it is pursued both as an extracurricular activity and a subject.

The dance school started its journey with three different dance forms- Sattriya, Bharatanatyam and Kathak. Through the years, our dance school has been successfully producing a number of talented artists and this would not have been possible without our eagerness to learn and for the guidance of our talented dance teachers. The dance school holds a truly significant part in our lives and a lot of emotions are entangled with it. It is almost equivalent to a place of worship to us. Each member of the dance school is connected to this place by their hearts and takes pride in calling themselves a part of the dance school.

Lastly, we the dancers of class XI on behalf of the dance community would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Ma'am Rubi Bordoloi for being our constant support and the backbone of the dance school since its foundation and we wish to see her at the helm of affairs for the many years to come.

The Untold Memories

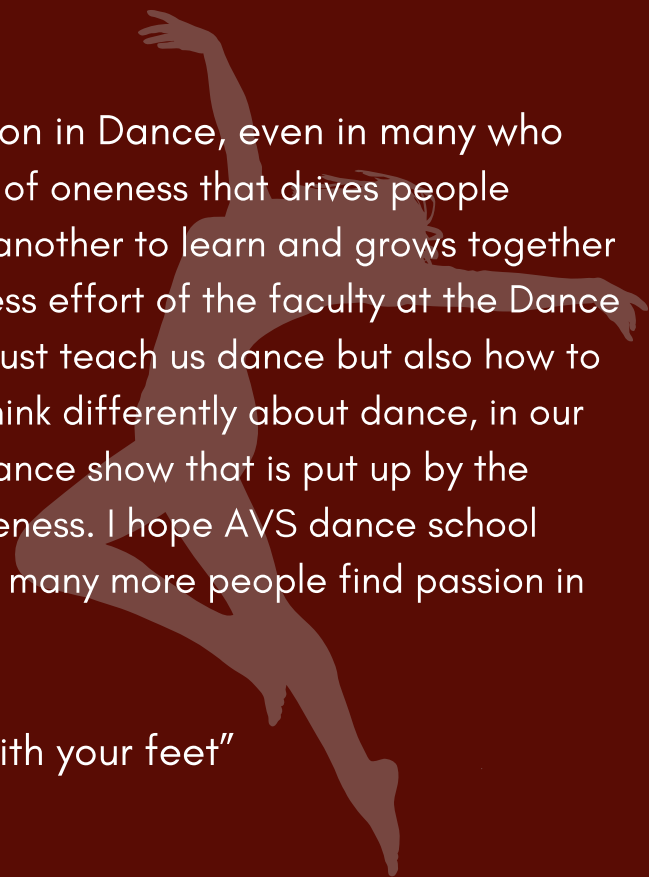
- Anuja Barooah
ISC Batch of 2021

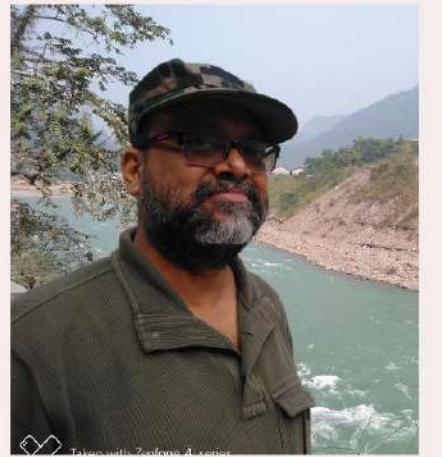
When I look back now, I realise that AVS Dance School has taught me so much, given me tons of memories and also a family. From being a small girl trying to learn a new form of dance in class 5 to being a girl who was able to choreograph dances by the time she left school, the Dance School at AVS has played a pivotal role in all of this. Ever since my first day of school I always used to look forward to my dance classes because every class had something new to offer.

I could also visit so many new places like Rajasthan, Sri Lanka and Thailand because of various dance competitions and each of these journeys had its own stories, fun, and secrets. These trips also taught me a lot and has helped me become more independent as a person. Today, the times that I miss the most about dancing in AVS are the practice times, preparing new choreographies with ma'am, putting forward our own ideas, craving for rest times after long practices and having our short tale-telling session during those rest times. I can never forget the Founders' practices; which was that time of the year when the dance school would be filled with people of all classes and when new friendships were formed between juniors and seniors.

Dance school has helped many people find passion in Dance, even in many who could not dance in the very beginning. It is a feeling of oneness that drives people towards dance school because everyone helps one another to learn and grows together as a team. All this was possible because of the tireless effort of the faculty at the Dance school, Ma'am Ruby and Ma'am Torali. They did not just teach us dance but also how to be creative and always allowed encouraged us to think differently about dance, in our own unique ways. It is because of them that every dance show that is put up by the Dance School has its own aura of beauty and uniqueness. I hope AVS dance school continues to grow, radiate the happy vibes and help many more people find passion in dance, just like my friends and I had found.

"Dancing is like dreaming with your feet"





FACULTY



DRAMA



And The Curtains Unfold

- Shubhajeet Dasgupta

The beginning of my school life saw a shy, apprehensive boy, who kept to himself and barely uttered a few words to the ones around him. He was nothing like the confident and expressive boy that you all see today. In the beginning of the Founders season of 2016, I auditioned for the annual, highly anticipated founders play, out of the sheer willingness to try something new, to break out of my shell. Luck being on my side, I got into the play with an albeit very small role of a Bengali man, but one that triggered the start of something that would shape my stay in AVS and essentially began the most spectacular years of my life here.



It was not a smooth sail from being a Bengali kid in class seven to where I am now in class twelve. There was a lot of hardship involved, like any other individual who is experiencing growth. After that one play I started putting myself out there a lot more, participating in inter-house plays, IPSC competitions, and other inter school events. I loved engaging myself in the skits during activity hours, as that would really help me in getting a grasp on how to act in different scenarios, moods and settings. Throughout the years, slowly, my personality evolved into someone who is sure of himself, unhesitant, bold and expressive. My years of experience and hard work led me to where I stand today, at the pinnacle, as the Dramatics Captain of the school.

My first ever inter house as the Dramatics Captain, was quite a whirlwind ride. Since we were back in school, everything was planned out to the T, from the date of hosting the event, to even the scripts of the houses, who in turn had planned out all the settings and presentation of their own plays. Unfortunately, the school shut down suddenly for an indefinite amount of time in the near future and I was at a complete loss of how to go about it. I was faced with a dilemma thinking of how to go about hosting the inter house. Then, with the help of the Master in-Charge, Mr. Debnath Pyne, we came up with the idea of hosting an audio play along with a monologue.

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This was a completely new concept and we did not have any such previous experience to fall back on, and all other houses were at a momentary standstill on how to go about things. But with Mr. Pyne's extraordinary outlook, we were able to have audio plays produced by the houses. He was there to teach us how to write scripts for audio plays, what are the details we can focus on, what will help us improve and better our drafts. He was always unbiased in his guidance and ever ready to read a script and give his inputs. At this point I would also like to thank Mr. Tushar Bharadwaj for supporting us in our endeavours' and encouraging us to never let no consequences set us back. Despite the semester being online, we managed to put up the first ever online play, and not to boast, but it was one of the best online inter-houses that the school had seen, proving the resilience and grit of the Dramatics society.

The numerous years spent in the art of Dramatics has taught me a lot. It is because of dramatics that I first stepped out of my comfort zone and started acting, and then leaving my comfort zone again to play the role of certain characters. I can improvise in situations when there is a sudden complication, instead of panicking and worrying about what to do. Dramatics teaches a person a lot about the importance of teamwork and coordination within your team, as the cast and crew work in close quarters for extended periods of time to get everything functioning smoothly on the main day.

I have nothing but gratitude for this school and what it has offered me and I am thankful to Mr. Abhinav Gogoi. From my first Founder's play, to my first inter- house, to my first IPSC, he has been there throughout it all, being a constant support and a guiding force. He taught me to persevere, improve and aim for excellence. I would also like to mention Anuraaj, Devansh, Nivranshu, Ngukivi and Shreyansh, who in their own way, at different times of my life, played their role in shaping me. Most importantly, I would like to say that dramatics has taught me how to be more independent in my thoughts and actions, how to be freer in my imagination, and how best to express myself as Shubhajeet Dasgupta.

Signing off,
Dramatics Captain(2021-22)

A Walk through the Stage

- Suhani Sighania
ISC Batch of 2021



I first entered the majestic iron gates of The Assam Valley School in the year 2019. My parents will remember my watery-eyed, pouty face on seeing the enormous campus for the first time. While they were wonderstruck, I carried a heart so heavy that only if I could, I would have jumped out of the car and ran my way back home. Well, it's the year 2021 and as I write this article being an alumna, it is at this precise moment that I realise how much the definition of "home" has quite turned on its head. I suppose it is a beautiful irony that the beginning and end of my journey at AVS were both tearfully similar.

Of all the days that I spent at The Assam Valley School, there are two that play over and over in my head, clear as crystal and as vividly as ever. One of them is the 15th of June, 2019. It had been a couple of weeks since I had become a part of AVS, but I still felt like an outsider. I mostly spent those weeks crying alone in the washroom, making heart-broken faces before submitting my phone, and constantly counting the days till I could finally go back home. It was also one of the days in those weeks, when a senior pushed me to go audition for an inter-house one-act play. I was already familiar with theatre, but perhaps, there was a niggling fear that I won't fit in with the fraternity here. However, being too shy and rather afraid to refuse, I entered the common room. I left an hour later with a script in my hand, and the responsibility of a role which I was definitely uncomfortable with. The post-dinner rehearsals were my first means of successfully socialising with my peers here at school. Getting a chance to miss morning conditioning was a blessing, but as we came closer to the day of the performance, the pressure seemed unimaginable. After a thousand mistakes, forgotten dialogues, and low confidence, I was pretty close to giving up but there was one thing that kept me and the others going, and that was the colours we wore.

Initially I had a hard time imbibing into the whole thing about house culture and house loyalty, until I went up on that stage for the first time, at the Williamson Magor Hall on the 15th of June holding a trophy earned for that very colour I wore too. Maybe it was my share of destiny, that the inter house one act play was my moment of falling in love with the blue of Bhoroli-Lohit, among so many other things.

The Dramatics Society was one of the first places at AVS that gave me a sense of belonging. I think, over the course of time, it made me realise how theatre was more than just a hobby, it was my passion. Being a part of the Dramatics Society, I felt confident. I felt challenged, yet safe. Perhaps those little struggles were the building blocks of my journey in the Dramatics Society and of little consequence in the greater scheme of things at AVS.

The second day that is seared into my mind is the 22nd of October, 2019 – my first ever Founders at The Assam Valley School, and also the last time that I took a bow there. A surge of nostalgia and emotions overcomes me when I fondly remember the Founders' play. I remember the fear and excitement I felt all at once the moment I knew I was going to be a part of this riveting theatrical performance, directed by Mr. Ranjeev Barua, whom I still can't seem to thank enough. As grateful as I was to have been chosen to be a leading part of the cast, initially, I almost dragged myself from classes to the AVR. I was so nervous about working with new people, people I never interacted with before. I was anxious about the role I was given, constantly worrying about not being able to keep up with the expectations but long story short, one month into rehearsals and I was a part of a new family. The Founders' Play formed the crux of my life at AVS and now at the end of it all, I realise that the memories attached to the preparation is what I treasure the most. It wasn't the play; it was the people I worked with who made it such a memorable experience. I think being a part of that cast, and working with those 7 wonderfully talented actors is something I'm most grateful for during my time at AVS. I believe that characters may sway and shift, but some people remain who they are – and I think that is the transcendental beauty of acting. Looking back now, the Founders' play changed everything for me. It helped me grow in so many different ways and it finally made me feel like an Aviator. It was my way of unknowingly finding my niche.

When I was on that stage, I wasn't nervous anymore. What I said or delivered might have been scripted, but as I spoke the view was entirely dark and for a moment it felt like it was just me and I was speaking to no one and everyone at the same time. It felt intimate yet so exhaustively profound.

Pardon me for breaking the fourth wall, but if you're reading this, and you are an aspiring dramatist, singer, dancer or even a debater for that matter, I hope you rid yourself of the fear, apprehension or hesitation and just go for it. My last year at school was unfortunately unconventional. To be candid, I couldn't do much with the badge I wore on my blazer but the little amount of time that I had, I will carry with me, forever. No amount of regret can begin to accommodate how much you will grow and love and reminisce with your art. All the late night practices, rehearsals - getting it perfect, those conversations about everything under the sun that may seem mundane and simple, is actually something so delicate woven into your heart for as long as you may cherish it.

Embrace the art, and everything that comes with it, live in the moment - for the moment is all you have. As every actor's first coach (read: God), The Bard has said,

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,"

Believe me, the best stage is set in the infamous Williamson Magor Hall, the best players are those who own their parts, and play them well. For when you have to make your exit, you want to be glad you entered, and remember why you did it all in the first place.



বহিমান মনৰ উৰন্ত সত্ৰা
কলাৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ সূক্ষ্ম অধ্যয়ন
আৰু মানৱতাৰ অন্তহীন চৰ্চা
আমি উত্তাল

এই মঞ্চত নতুন দিশৰ সন্ধান পাবলৈ ...

- *Kaustav B. Arya*





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Associate editors: Kaustav B. Arya & Adrika Borah

Design & Layout: Kuhu Bakliwal

Illustrators: Hiramoni Basumatary & Dhvani Deorah

Photo Credits: Zainab Ahmed Khan

Mistress in Charge : Mrs. Rubi Borah Bordoloi

Publisher: The Assam Valley School, P.O. Balipara, Dist.

Sonitpur, Asom-784101, India

Website: www.assamvalleyschool.com

Patron: Dr. Vidhukesh Vimal, The Headmaster of The Assam Valley School

The views and opinions expressed by the authors are their own and not necessarily endorsed by The Assam Valley School.