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Dudul Saikia and Annu Malik

Two Elephants walking on the highway near Bedeti in Sonitpur District of Assam on the 29th of December 2007



FRIENDS OF ASSAM AND SEVEN SISTERS (FASS) GOES PUBLIC

Recently, some of us, members of the Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters (FASS), made a pilgrimage to Assam, and frankly speaking, we achieved more than what we expected during the trip. Some of our achievements are already reported partly in the press. As a name, FASS is still unknown to most; as an organization, FASS is still a child. However, from what we achieved in our first inaugural international meet in Guwahati on January 10, 2008 and after, we may rightly say that the child has manifested great potential along with promises for the future for all of us. One of the reasons of our success may be the fact that we have presented the NRIs not as someone there to lecture the people what is wrong with Assam and what they need to do but rather how we the NRIs can help to work for a brighter North East India together. I think it is for this reason that everybody, starting from AASU to NEDFi and beyond, came forward seeking to work with us. We have presented our case to the public, to the Assam Chief Minister, to the other sister state officials, to the CII and the DoNER Ministry, and explained how we the NRIs can help in the development of a modern North East India; and everybody welcomed us. This is a preliminary summary report of that epic journey of what we achieved and how interested NRIs can follow up and work on the common platform that we have built.

The idea of an international think-tank welfare organization for the development of the North East India was originally conceived only about two years ago among a few like minded friends here in the USA and other countries. We settled on the name 'Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters', being a global non-profit, non-political NGO, a public platform of the people of the eight states of the North East India. A website was created

If sustaining the members united in this noble mission was found difficult, arranging the first inaugural international meet was even harder to deal with. The Guwahati FASS office, the India HQ was just registered hardly a year ago. However, timing was the essence. We tried to coincide with the NRI Investment Meet in Guwahati in January, which was organized by the



A part of the NRA individuals present at the FASS meeting. Photo shows Rajen Barua of Texas (third from left, sitting) and Ankur Bora of Texas (first from left, sitting).

www.friendsofassam.org with noble mission and vision statements, our motto being 'Inspiration, Encouragement, Motivation, Enlightenment and Empowerment' of North East India. The idea was to go beyond just fund-raising for general welfare but to think and find ways to bring some basic changes in our thinking and act for the development of the North East India in all spheres.

DoNER Ministry, the CII (Confederation of Indian Industries) and the Assam Government. The CII has in the meantime requested me to chair one of the sessions of the NRI Investment Meet. Even then we were not sure. Many of our key members could not attend the FASS meet due to previous personal commitments. Personally, I was going through the worst phase in my life; I was just recovering from the worst life threatening disease. Normally a person in my status would think everything else





FASS office bearers with students and faculty of Handique Girls College

other than of welfare for Assam at this time. However the call from Assam was difficult to ignore. Moreover, my favorite poet Emily Dickinson constantly buzzing in my mind, "Because I could not Stop for Death, He kindly Stopped for Me", actually gave me the required spiritual courage. We had ample indications from initial responses to know that the people of the North East were looking for such a common platform badly. Finally, Bidyananda (Rintu) our FASS India Secretary General put it boldly in right perspective, "Rajenda, there are certain things that happens only once in a lifetime; for the FASS Meet now is such an event." I had great faith in Rintu's organizing skills and sense of timing. It was not too long ago that we fought successfully together against the huge intellectual resistance for the case of retaining the name of 'Assam', and it was mainly due to his untiring efforts in Assam that we were able to awaken and mobilize the media and the public and eventually won the case. Rintu now took the responsibility of organizing the meet. We decided to take the plunge against all odds. Dumon came forward with all her unqualified supports. At the last moment, my doctor gave me the required clean certificate to travel to India. We settled on 10th January, 2008 as our D-Day.

The D-Day, the FASS International Meet happened to be more than success. People came from far off places like Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Tezpur, Tamulpur, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Shillong and other places. Ankur, one of our strongest lieutenants, came loaded with electrons in his boss's laptop. Ignoring her own father's serious ill health, Momi gave him all the supports.

We split the sessions into morning and afternoon, and both the sessions were packed. The morning session was in Assamese addressing to the Assamese psyche. My critical speech, 'Ek Notun Dristi Uttar-Pub Bharot' (A New Vision of the North East) was taken in the right spirit, my speech on the basics of the Assamese language, *Oxomiya Bhaxar Moulik Bisar*, presented in front of such Assamese scholars like Dr Golok Ch Goswami, Dr Nagen Saikia and others was hailed by many. We discussed many things, from the importance of using the X letter for Assamese letters s, S, L to retain the originality of the Assamese phonetics to the need of the people of Assam to take a new path to the future along with the other sister states together for a brighter future. Mr Rupesh Saikia presented his new innovation of teaching Assamese through 'Flash Cards' in schools based on this new phonetics. Two versions of online Assamese dictionaries were presented. Ankur's presentation of the first Assamese audio-video Assamese short story was praised by the audience. Our afternoon international session was even more success. The FASS perspective of the critical situation of the North East was presented through power point presentations. Rini Kakati not only came in time from the UK, but also was able to bring Lord Adam Patel of Blackburn to the FASS meet; it inspired us all. Yassuvant Mahanta came from Austria with full of life and with his own success story of an ordinary village boy from Halem in Shonitpur; he is an inspiration for all. Anurupa Medhi, our million dollar lady from Australia, frankly declared that it must be her lifetime 'karma' that she found FASS to work for the development of the North East. Jayanta Madhab Barua, from Singapore inspired the audience with how we can transform the North East into hundred success stories as those of Vietnam and Thailand. Bandita Deka from Thailand spoke eloquently on the lessons that we can learn from that Tai country. Anjana Bora spoke on the roots and strengths of the basic American civilization. Ajanta Barua explained how people can participate on various FASS projects and how one can come up with their own projects to our platform. Ankur made a presentation of the Toast Masters public speaking model and how FASS is planning to implement the idea all over the North East in order to build leaders. The colorful FASS international synergy was in full display.

Various dignitaries spoke in the FASS meet. Dr Jayanta Madhab, the chief Guest who himself was an NRI, spoke of his own experience. Dr. Golok Chandra Goswami, who was conferred the title 'Bhaxa-Guru' by FASS, praised the presentation of the Assamese phonetics (with x & w) and assured the audience that the Assamese language is not going to die unless the Assamese people commit suicide of the language. Mr. Sanjoy Hazarika spoke on Vision 2020 for the North East India and more. Mr. Samujjal Bhattacharjee, adviser to AASU welcomed FASS and explained how AASU's network with ground level realities and the FASS international network can empower each other to work



together. Patricia Mary Mukhim from Meghalaya welcomed us all with open arms and promised that we will have more participation from our other sister states in future. Words of encouragement from friends and well wishers who could not attend, gave us spiritual courage; Garvin Brown from Australia wrote, citing Gandhiji, "If your motive is pure then there can never be any question as to the eventual success of your Mission". Dr. Audrey Cantlie from London wrote, "I consider myself a daughter of Assam.... It gives me great pleasure to express my warm support for this splendid enterprise." Dr. Nagen Sakia, our Chief Guest put our efforts in right perspective when he compared our efforts with those of the Assamese living in Calcutta during the early nineteenth century contributing towards the Assamese language and culture in the time of need, and declared that the day 10th January, 2008 will be remembered in future history as the start of a new epoch for the future of the North East. We were humbled by the candid summary that Patricia Mary Mukhim put two days later in the Telegraph, "Although the CII and the ICC meets were pretty much hyped up, what was interesting was the meeting of the Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters. Those of us who attended this meet were elated at the keen interest shown by the NRIs to put their money where their mouths are. What they want and need is perhaps a roadmap as to what and how they can do things here."

It is exactly this road map that we tried to explore in our pilgrimage this time. This we tried to do by discussing with many individuals and organizations. Our meeting with AASU turned out to be more than a meeting of minds. They have given us a hearty Assamese Bihu welcome with 'phulam gamwsa and kahor xorai' for all our members that we cannot forget in life. They also presented us a perspective of the real problems in the North East which ran from lack of school syllabus to the porous Bangladesh border. Our exchange of ideas were so effective that we ended up signing an MoU with about 14 points of areas where we can help each other for the development of the North East.

The NRI Investment meeting organized by CII was attended by many NRIs. It however seemed more of mechanical talks

from governmental officials without much real substance, and it is not known if there was any real sign up of any contracts. We from FASS had a chance to present our perspective for requirement for development of the North East. We presented a 20 point investment strategy for the region. Our perspective was simple; during the last 60 years since independence Assam has been lagging behind the rest of India in progress by as much as 45% now, and unless special status and provisions are given to the North East with proper tax incentive, one should not expect any real change in development of the region. Insurgency has rather been a scapegoat for underdevelopment. We told that among other things, all flights to and from the North East should be made tax free for the next 50 years and that the flights like Delhi-Ghy-Bangkok or Delhi-Ghy-Kunming etc must be cheaper than Delhi-Cal-Bangkok and Delhi-Cal-Kunming for effective tourism and development of the region. We intend to continue our dialog with the DoNER ministry.

We also met with several premier educational institutes like Handique Girls College, Cotton College, Gauhati University, Assam Jatiya Bidyalaya and many others and had heart to heart talks how we can help. We also met with NEDFi (North East Development & Finance Corp), NECCI (North East Chamber of Commerce & Industries), FINER (Federation of Industries of NE Region) and many other key organizations who offered their unqualified help to work with us.

Details of many of these meetings and the outcomes will be published and discussed later. In the meantime, we would like to put the following words to each and everyone of the NRI community. During our various discussions, we found out that it is not money that the North East needs from the NRIs. What they need is our expertise and ideas and our attitude to help. We have specifically identified the following areas where we can help: [career guidance to school and college students](#), [building information centers](#), [information about study and training abroad](#), [information about new skills and trades](#), [development of technical training](#), [identifying student exchange programs](#), [information about job opportunities abroad](#), [providing entrepreneurship skills](#), [information about small scale industries](#), [arranging seminars and workshops etc](#). There are many more areas. In order to participate in any of these programs, one

does not have to join FASS. If you are visiting Assam next time, simply let us know, and we will connect you with the right institution anywhere in the North East where you will be able to give your presentation to the right group in a workshop or seminar. For this and other purpose, we have developed the following FASS information hotlines. USA (Tel: 281-701-3267-Rajen; 512-258-2922-Ankur; 703-867-0062-Partha) and India (Tel: 91-94350-46211-Rintu; 91-94351-46880-Jayanta). Or you may simply write to either fassusa@gmail.com or fassghy@yahoo.com with your program to help. You may also donate to our various programs through any non profit organizations like AFNA, ASAF, UAONA or through FASS in Indian Rupees or any other currencies.

I would like to conclude with the words that we concluded the FASS meet on 10th January 2008. "Religions may differ, but we believe that the highest goal of human life is the pursuit of happiness"; this was taught by the greatest Indian leader the Gautama Buddha thousands of years ago; which has been also one of the main pillars of the American Declaration of Independence. Long years ago, we the people of the North East India made a tryst with destiny. About 200 years ago, in 1826 to be exact, when David Scott marched, with guns mounted on elephants, to take Assam, we were the most unhappy people on earth. At that time, we made a secret pledge to meet one day together and to contemplate our own path for the pursuit of happiness. Friends, today is that defining day in history when we all from the North East India meet to redeem our pledge, to reclaim our happiness. Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters (FASS) is a platform of Happiness with three pillars; it is a ship of Happiness with three propellers. These are Health, Habitat and Humanity. Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters (FASS) will seek these three basic H elements of human life for the people of the North East India in their pursuit for Happiness. We appeal to you all to come and join us in this platform, to guide us, help us, teach us and participate with us to achieve our common goal. Let us hope that one day we will be able make the North East shine in its own glory and make it a pride of Asia and the world. Thanking you all;

*by Rajen Barua, CMD, FASS.
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WINDY WELLINGTON: A CITY EXTRAORDINAIRE

For someone who is fond of clear blue skies, lush green fields and rolling hills, Delhi is indeed a hard place to live. So when I got the chance to present a paper at an international conference in faraway New Zealand, I lapped it up immediately and almost broke into an impromptu *Bihu*, only to see my wife giving me a startled look. I had read, heard and seen a lot (on TV and in movies) about New Zealand and had always dreamt of visiting it someday and I knew this dream of mine was to become a reality soon. 100% Pure New Zealand is how Tourism New Zealand advertises the country and indeed, there are very few places on earth that are as scenic as New Zealand. I took a Thai Airways flight from Delhi to Bangkok and then another Thai Airways flight from Bangkok to Auckland in New Zealand. Auckland is New Zealand's biggest city. The flight from Bangkok to Auckland is painfully long (around 12.5 hours) and I kept on strolling in the plane at regular intervals to prevent the onset of DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis) or what is known as Economy Class Syndrome. From Auckland I took an Air New Zealand flight to Wellington, the capital of New Zealand where I was to present my paper. Wellington is located at the southern tip of the North Island of New Zealand. The city has earned the epithet "Windy Wellington" because of the strong winds coming from the Cook Strait that lash the city and due to its location in the "roaring forties" latitude.

Wellington is named after Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington. It is home to the Parliament of New Zealand, the offices of government departments and diplomatic missions. Wellington is a new city as compared to many Indian cities. European settlement in Wellington began with the arrival of settlers in 1839. A multicultural city with people from countries around the world, Wellington is breathtakingly beautiful. As soon as I came out of the airport, a cold wind took me by surprise. Many a times during my stay, the strong cold winds billowing across the city had me running for cover.

Wellington has hills as well as a splendid harbour! What more could I have asked for? Travel within the city limits is very easy and convenient. It is not a very big city and one



Author in front of the New Zealand Parliament Building

of the best ways of exploring the city is by foot (of course, with a map in hand). During my stay in Wellington, I came across quite a few Indian restaurants, including a Hare Krishna vegetarian restaurant right in the heart of the city. I had visited the Hare Krishna restaurant in Wellington on *Janmashthami* Eve and the staff was busy making preparations for a function to be organized to celebrate *Janmashthami*.

The people of Wellington are very friendly and willing to help. One noticeable difference from India is that cars and other types of vehicles give way to pedestrians in New Zealand (just as in many foreign countries). Another thing to be noticed is that drivers rarely use the horn unless extremely necessary, just the opposite of what goes on in India. The streets are clean and the parks are well maintained. One place not to miss out in Wellington is Te Papa, New Zealand's national museum that provides a unique insight into the life of New Zealand and its people. A trip to Wellington cannot be complete without a ride on the Wellington Cable Car, which allows a beautiful view of Wellington and the harbour. I hopped on to the Wellington Cable Car one fine morning and headed to the Wellington Botanic Gardens. The Botanic Gardens are a treasure trove of the flora of New Zealand and houses many of the lesser known and endangered species of flora found in New Zealand.

Wellington has been hit by a series of earthquakes including one in 1855, which raised a large tract of land out of the harbour. This land was then reclaimed. The Karori Sanctuary in downtown Wellington houses many endangered species of birds and animals. Wellington's waterfront is spectacular and allows one to stroll around in leisure while feeding the seagulls. The

Wellington Zoo is another attraction. The total population of Wellington, including the suburban areas would be around 450,000.

Courtenay Place is the hub of Wellington's cultural and nightlife and buzzes with life till the wee hours. Once you have seen the major attractions inside the city, you can have a dekho at the suburbs. The Hutt Valley is around 10-15 minutes from the city and is famous for its parks, gardens and walkways. Just 40 minutes from Wellington is the Kapiti coast, which is home to miles and miles of sandy beaches, the Kapiti wildlife sanctuary and plenty of shopping areas.

Wellington is undoubtedly New Zealand's cultural capital and has a rich music and professional theatre scene. It houses major arts organizations like the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the New Zealand String Quartet among others.

Accommodation is a not a problem and Wellington has a range of accommodation options to suit every budget.

How often does it happen that you meet complete strangers on a local bus and then they invite you home for dinner? Well it happened to me in New Zealand. Gavin, a Kiwi was taking his son Matthew to a local theatre on a Sunday and I happened to be on the same bus as them. I had asked them a

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FASS NEDFi JOIN HANDS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH EAST

A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) was entered on 21st day of January, 2008 at Guwahati **BETWEEN North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NEDFi)**, incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956, with its registered office at Guwahati, Assam, for the development of industries, infrastructure, animal husbandry, agri-horticulture plantation, medicinal plantation, sericulture plantation, aquaculture, poultry and dairy in the North Eastern States of India. After the creation of DONER, NEDFi has come under the administrative control of this Ministry **AND Friends of Assam & Seven Sisters (FASS)**, a non-profit, non-Governmental organization, an international think-tank which is aimed at providing an inspirational energy and a motivating force for overall revival and development of the Northeast India in all its spheres. FASS offers a common platform for all friends and well wishers of Northeast to respond and work for the common good of the people of the Northeast and make the Northeast shine in its own glory which is its due. FASS is registered under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 with its India HQ at 24 A.K. Azad Road, 2nd Floor, Rehabari, Guwahati 781008, Assam and International Headquarter at 20501 Katy Freeway, Suite 138C, Katy, Texas 77450, USA. FASS has International Directors in many countries across the globe.

WINDY WELLINGTON

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few things about Wellington and they were happy to help me. I ran into them again while they were coming back from the theatre and this time they invited me to their home for dinner. Gavin's wife is a Chinese from Shanghai and she treated me to some lovely dumplings. When I met Gavin's wife, I felt as if I was somewhere in the Northeast. Lady Luck smiled on me again when Gavin told me that he had a friend Chris who has visited Assam. Early next morning, I met Chris Bishop who has visited many places in Assam like Majuli, North Lakhimpur,



L-R : Jayanta Barman (Vice-President FASS), Bidyandana Barkakoty (Secretary-General FASS), S.K. Baruah (General Manager, NEDFi), Jayanta Madhav Barua (International Director, FASS), K.N. Hazarika (CMD, NEDFi), Dilip Dutta (Vice-President, FASS), Rini Kakati (International Director, FASS)

The MOU signed by Mr.Kashi Nath Hazarika, CMD of NEDFi and Mr.Rajen Barua, CMD of FASS (not in picture) agrees to pursue the following objectives:

- 1) to explore the areas where North East Non Resident Indians (NR-NEIs) and Resident Indians can provide support for development of the North East region.
- 2) to identify technologies which are best suited to tap the resource potential

Jorhat, Sibsagar and Golaghat and had some very nice words to say about Assam and its people. He gave me a lift in his motorbike and when I thanked him for the lift, he said that it was nothing compared to the help and hospitality he received from the people of Assam during his visit.

The clear blue skies and the gentle waters of the Wellington Harbour have a soothing effect on your body. It was soon time for me to leave Wellington for my journey back to Delhi. As I left Wellington, I could not help feeling nostalgic about Wellington, which during my short stay had embraced me with its welcoming arms and left a lasting impression on my mind. I felt sad thinking of what we could have made out of

available in the North East.

- 3) to identify products which has potential for export, refine production process for consistency in quality, standardization and finally to provide export linkage.
- 4) to identify new streams of vocational learning which can provide livelihood support for the rural as well as urban poor.
- 5) to facilitate visits and exchanges by businessmen / consultants / industry

associations of different countries to North Eastern states to attract investment and promote industrialization.

- 6) to undertake initiatives for upliftment of weaker sections specially in the field of education, health, sanitation, income generation activities on sustainable basis.
- 7) review meetings atleast once in six months.

By Rajen Barua, CMD, FASS

Guwahati or maybe Tezpur, which like Wellington are also ringed by hills and have the mighty Brahmaputra flowing by them and the mess we have created. As they say in Maori, who are the indigenous people of New Zealand

“Ki mai koe ki a au,
He aha te mea nui tenei ao:
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.”

“If you should ask me what is the greatest thing in the world, the answer would be: It is the people, it is the people, and it is the people”

By Rupakjyoti Borah

ANOTHER ASSAM LAD SHINES IN BOLLYWOOD

Music lovers from Assam are proud with the success of Alaap a.k.a. Dudul Saikia in Bollywood after legendary Dr Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg. Dudul joins the select group of Assamese with Zubeen, Debojit Saha, Banajyotsna who are recognized as the voices of India.

Dudul's music in the latest release of State's music sensation Zubeen Garg, Zindagi, is receiving critical applause in Bollywood. He has done the composing, music arrangement and audio concepts for Zindagi.

To celebrate this success, Dudul, now a Mumbai based music director and a composer, flew back to Guwahati.

"The audio album Zindagi, is a very close association of my own feelings expressed in a musical manner. It contains songs and ballads of various emotions punctuated by good musicians through their skill and expressively articulated by singers like Zubeen, Chitra and Safaquat Amanat Ali," said Dudul Saikia.

Apart from his works in Zindagi, Alaap has a number of achievements in his kitty. He has composed and provided background music for many television soaps with the Star Plus and Zee TV among others. He has worked for a Bollywood movie and composed jingles for many advertisements.

Apart from these, Alaap has also created and composed music for more than twenty audio albums in Assamese and other regional languages.



Zubeen Garg and Dudul Saikia



Dudul Saikia and Annu Malik in Saikia's studio

"It has been fifteen years from now, when I went to Mumbai in the pursuit of my dream and from then, I have been constantly working in this field to carve a niche for myself," Saikia said.

Lately, he is arranging and programming music for the music directors like Annu Malik and Adesh Srivastava. His list of recent releases

include songs composed for Vaisali Samant's album titled 'V' and yet to be released songs for albums of Sunita Rao, Roop Joharie, Shafaquat Ali and MS Abeer.

Apurba Bora, Prescott, Arizona

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ASSAMESE LAST NAMES IN AMERICAN CENSUS OF 2000!

According to Wikipedia, the first census in the world was conducted in Babylon in 3800 BC. There was a census conducted in Persia around 500 BC. The Maurya Dynasty in Northern India conducted a census in around 300 BC. There are several references to counting people or censuses in the Bible including command from God to King David of Israel to “Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring me the number to me, that I may know it.” The first modern census in the UK was conducted in 1801. The first census in India was completed in 1872; it took more than ten years to complete. The first US census was conducted in 1790; it has been conducted every ten years since.

From what I can tell from my research, the US Census, starting 1850 has collected data on surnames or last names of individuals living in the US. However, it has not regularly published the last name data due to reasons of privacy and accuracy. The last name data from the 2000 census were recently published. The 2000 Census data on last names was published in November 2007. The top ten last names in the US are given below (Table 1).

The most common last name in the US in the 2000 census was Smith. In fact, Smith has been a perennial top last name in the US. Out of every one hundred thousand people in the US, more than seventeen hundred have Smith as the last name.

Table 1

Last name	Rank	Total	Per 100K
SMITH	1	2376206	1727.02
JOHNSON	2	1857160	1349.78
WILLIAMS	3	1534042	1114.94
BROWN	4	1380145	1003.08
JONES	5	1362755	990.44
MILLER	6	1127803	819.68
DAVIS	7	1072335	779.37
GARCIA	8	858289	623.8
RODRIGUEZ	9	804240	584.52
WILSON	10	783051	569.12

Johnson is the second most common last name with almost thirteen hundred and fifty out of every one hundred thousand people carrying it. As you can see, among the top ten surnames, seven are of British origin: Smith, Johnson, Williams, Brown, Jones, Miller, Davis and Wilson. However, the big surprise in the 2000 was that two Hispanic last names rose to the top ten. Garcia is the eighth most common last name and Rodriguez is the ninth most common last name in the US.

Garcia moved up from 18th and Rodriguez from 22nd in the 1990 Census (Table 2).

The number of Asian last names also has gone up substantially in the 2000 Census compared to the 1990 Census. For example, Lee is the 22nd most common last name in the US. Lees are almost equally divided between whites and Asians. Lee is a common last name among Korean and Chinese immigrants. Nguyen, which is a Vietnamese last name also ranks quite high.

Among Indian last names, Patel is the most common last name in the US. It ranks 172nd. There were 145,066 Patels in the US in 2000! Singh

ranks 396th with 72,642 individuals. Here is a small list of most common Indian last names in the US according to the 2000 Census.

I spent several days looking through the list that contains all the last names that have one hundred or more individuals with that name. The list is long with 151672 last names. I spent many hours looking at “Worldwide

published by ASA in 2007 and looking at the last names and searching for them in the last name Excel file I downloaded from the US Census site. Since, it’s possible that I may miss some last names, I looked through the file line by line also. Here are the most common Assamese last names in the 2000 US Census data.

Table 2

Last name	Rank	Total	Per 100K
PATEL	172	145066	105.43
SINGH	396	72642	52.8
SHAH	831	37833	27.5
SHARMA	2247	14870	10.81
KUMAR	2293	14517	10.55
GUPTA	3172	10376	7.54
MEHTA	3377	9691	7.04
RAO	3872	8423	6.12
JAIN	5348	5996	4.36
JOSHI	5781	5478	3.98
PARIKH	6170	5113	3.72

The entries in the table (Table 3) need some explanation. Das, the top Assamese last name, is the 7091st most common last name with 4348 individuals having this last name in 2000. However, we all know that Das is not only an Assamese name, but common among Bengalis and others too. Choudhury, the second most common Assamese last name, is also common in North and East India, and Bangladesh and Pakistan too. Similarly, Nath, Pathak, Datta, Dutta, Goswami, Bhattacharjee, Adkhikari and Talukdar are common in other states of India besides Assam. One can say what about the last names Borah and Bora? Of those having the last name Bora, according to the US Census data of 2000, 69.93% are white and 21.99% are Asian. It’s quite likely that the Asian portion is all Assamese. Thus, according to the US Census of 2000, there are possibly 128 Boras of Assamese origin in the US. Similarly, of all the individuals having the last name Borah, 87.33% are white and only 4.52 are Asian; this gives us possibly a total of 41 Borahs of Assamese origin in the US in 2000. Possibly, the only pure Assamese last name that occurs in the list is Barua with 414 individuals with this last name. However, this count sounds too large to me after perusing the directories of Assamese people in the US, published during the past few years by ASA and AANA, this number looks a little large. There are Baruas one can find in Bengal and Bangladesh, but they are usually considered

MY TRIP TO YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

I set my alarm for 5:30 in the morning. A shower followed by a quick breakfast and then I drove down to my university campus at 6:30. As we gathered in the Outdoor Recreation Program building, our van was parked just outside. Nikki, our trip leader, called me and asked me to stow my luggage in the trailer. The rest of the participants soon arrived. There were Paul, Mark, Samantha, John, Holly, Candice, Kristin, Caitlin and Elli, the second trip leader. Finally, we had our entire luggage, our skis, boots, and snowshoes in the trailer and we all sat in the van. The van left Ames at 7 in the morning, headed southwards to Des Moines and then westwards on Interstate 80 to Wyoming. I slept until Omaha, mere 180 miles from where we started. Then we stopped at Lincoln for lunch. I must say Nebraska is wide; the journey never ends! When darkness fell we watched a movie, Finding Nemo, in the van. Our first stop was Rawlins in Wyoming. We reached there around 8 pm Mountain Time. We checked in to our hotel. All of us were tired and hungry. So, we drove to a Ranch House. Quite stunning, I must say! I had a taco salad and a beer, and dashed back to the hotel after dinner. We were instructed to assemble at the lounge before five the next day. The journey from Rawlins to the foot of the Yellowstone National Park was totally overlaid by a breath-taking beauty of pine trees near the Grand Teton National Forest. After a pancake breakfast at a small town called Dubious, we reached Flagg Ranch at the southern entrance of Yellowstone at around 11:30. There we had to wait for more than an hour to load our luggage and skis in snow coaches that would take us to our lodge. The coach left at 1 in the afternoon. Each of these can carry about 10 passengers plus the driver. They are cozy as we were nicely warmed up inside. The guide stopped at several places on way to our lodge. We stopped at a fall, near a bridge, besides a frozen lake and a few geysers. The geyser area is called West Thumb. It had hot springs as well making it a tourist attraction. The whole area was blanketed with snow except for the hot spring and geyser locations. We spent some time there as we walked around the thermal features, which were described to us by our guide. From there we started heading towards the Old Faithful Lodge.

We reached our lodge at 5 pm and immediately checked in. Our cabins were few minutes walk from the lodge. Paul, Mark and I decided to room together. After

mark. Once we came down to the river we were able to see another herd of bison. We saw a few geysers around that area. We skied back towards the lodge through the plain although parts of our trails were little bumpy. Often, we would get dehydrated a lot. So, occasionally, we would stop to drink water and bite a granola bar. Finally, after about 5



getting freshened up, we headed for dinner. That night I had salad and mushroom ravioli. We crashed in bed early. The next day we had complimentary breakfast at the lodge. We soon dressed up in our ski attire for cross-country skiing. We had maps of all the trails and decided that we will take the easiest trail. As we left the lodge, we skied around the Old Faithful Geyser followed by a plain patch of land where bison were gazing in dense snow. We took numerous pictures of the bison. Incidentally, the bison were introduced in the park a while ago after being extinct and now the herd has grown to 4000. We quickly entered the dense forest shrouded by woods and fern until we came to a little hill, which was a mere 40 feet in elevation. All we needed was to walk our way through to get to the top of the hill. From the hill we could see the entire Firehole River basin, which was our halfway

hours covering around 5 miles of cross-country terrain we reached back where we started. I dashed back to my cabin and took a much needed hot shower. We had an early dinner that night. After dinner, Mark and I took a night tour of the geysers and the mud pots. We had to use flash light as we walked through these thermal features. The beauty about this night tour is that you get to hear incredible natural noises. Our tour guide was narrating colorful stories; we were quite enchanted by his nightly tales. We returned to our cabin and played a game of 'clue' with others. That night as I slept in the bed I was incredibly sore.

The next day we decided to ski another trail. This time we skied around a hill. It was more difficult than the previous day and we had to struggle our way through. I lost my

Bisons in the Snow



balance on a few occasions. The approximate elevation of this hill was around 250 feet. We skied through fern as we glided round the hill and up the hill. We saw some beautiful sights. There were supposed to be some falls that we could not find! Several times on our trail, we had to ascend and descend a few steps and those were fun to do. The last stage was even more fun. We had to glide down the hill back to our cabin and a few of us fell on the way down! Overall, we skied three miles that day; it took us four hours. Once, we got back, since there was still daylight remaining, we decided to walk around the Old Faithful Geyser and take some snaps of the bison. Paul is a professional wild-life photographer and he took some amazing pictures. As we were returning to our cabin, we saw a coyote on our way. It was shy and ran away as we approached. Nevertheless, Paul managed to get his lens on it. We returned to the cabin, took our showers and headed for dinner. That night I watched a few movies on my laptop while others started playing clue.



A View of Old Faithful

The next day we had to leave the lodge. So, after a heavy breakfast we packed our skies, boots and luggage in the snow coach. Since there were eleven of us so we had to split into two coaches. We left the lodge at 9 for Flagg Ranch. We stopped at Kepler Falls, another breathtaking sight. Took some pictures and headed towards Flagg Ranch with a few minutes stop-over at West Thumb Geyser which is halfway between Old Faithful area and Flagg Ranch. We also halted near the Yellowstone signboard for a group picture. At Flagg Ranch we did not have to wait long. It was already noon. We immediately removed the snow off our van and loaded the trailer with all the stuff. It has been snowing continuously all the time

we were there. The return journey was quite splendid. We drove through Grand Teton National Park. We drove past the frozen lake and very close to the mountain range that ascended to almost 14,000 feet. We stopped at the Visitor Center and bought souvenirs. We were also able to spot some moose and elk. Our destination for that day was the old cowboy town of Jackson. By the time we reached there it was three in the afternoon. We checked into our hotel and then went around town for shopping. We were looking for a restaurant for an early dinner but most of them were not opened as yet. Finally, I found this nice Thai restaurant and Mark and I decided to eat Thai food for a change. Just to pass the time that evening, I decided to watch a movie, *The Kite Runner*. Gosh! The ticket was expensive then what it would normally be in Ames. But, I enjoyed the

movie. That night I went back to the hotel and spent some time browsing the Internet.

The following day we left the hotel at around 7. Our destination was North Platte in Nebraska. The journey took us 10 hours and we stopped several times for meals. There wasn't much to do in North Platte. We had dinner at Taco Bell and crashed early. The next day we had to leave at 5 in the morning and reached Ames at noon. I transferred my entire luggage to the trunk of my car and drove home. Following a much-needed shower, I thoroughly enjoyed a home-made lunch that afternoon. Overall, we had lots of fun during the excursion and I'll cherish it in my memory for a long time.

by Satyam Bhuyan, Ames, Iowa.

ASSAMESE LAST NAMES

(continued from page 8)

Last name	Rank	Total	Per 100K
DAS	7091	4348	3.16
CHOUDHURY	13067	2149	1.56
NATH	14622	1866	1.36
PATHAK	19852	1253	0.91
DATTA	20599	1195	0.87
BORAH	25547	908	0.66
DUTTA	25724	900	0.65
GOSWAMI	34114	629	0.46
BORA	36328	582	0.42
BARUA	48021	414	0.3
KALITA	51583	379	0.28
SARMA	52500	371	0.27
BHATTACHARJEE	61544	305	0.22
ADHIKARI	65492	283	0.21
BHUYAN	12105 8	132	0.1
TAKUKDAR	12794 8	123	0.09

to be Assamese who fled there during the Myan or Burmese. Kalita is a last name common in Assam, but according to the US Census, 88.13% of the Kalitas are white and only 7.65% are Asian; this gives us possibly 29 Kalitas of Assamese origin in 2000 in the US. This number looks acceptable. There were 132 Bhuyans in 2000 in the US. Bhuyan is a common last name in Assam, but is common also in Bangladesh and even Orissa, I believe. So, how many are Assamese, it's difficult to tell!!

By Jugal Kalita, Colorado



ANITA SHARMA

Anita Sharma is a well-known Sattriya dancer in Guwahati. She started learning Sattriya dance at the age of nine years under the guidance of Late Guru Roseswar Saikia Barbayan, awardees of Sangeet Natak Akademi. After that she received training in Odissi dance under the maestro of Odissi, Padmabhusan Late Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra at Bhubaneswar.

At present, she has devoted herself to learning Sattriya dance under Nrityacharya Jatin Goswami, an awardees of Sangeet Natak Akademi, India.

She is the founder of a rapidly growing Sattriya & Odissi dance institute namely "Abhinaya Dance Academy" in the heart of Guwahati city with many upcoming talents.

Anita performed in various dance compositions under the guidance of Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra .She is an 'A' graded artist of Doordarshan Kendra, New Delhi.

She has been awarded a two year Fellowship by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Culture, Government of India for the year 2005-2007.

CREATIONS:

Besides all these, Anita has cut a niche for herself also in the field of choreography. She created "Anubhav", which is an effort to bring some similarities of Sattriya with Odissi dance. Recently, she made an effort to bring together Sattriya & Kathak dance forms to stage with a new outlook.



PERFORMANCES:

- Performed in Beach Festival, Puri –1994
- Performed in Basistha Festival, Guwahati—1996.
- Performed in Swarnotsav organized by Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi—2000
- Performed in Indian Habitat Centre, New Delhi—2002
- Performed in Khajuraho Festival—2002
- Performed in Uday Sankar Dance Festival, Kolkata—2002
- Performed in Sattriya Dance Festival, Guwahati—2001 and 2002
- Performed for DVD making of Indian Classical Dance, organized by Invis Multimedia, Kerala—2003
www.affiliatesexcel.com/catalog/product_info.php/products_id/257
- Performed in Nritya Parva organized by Sangeet Natak Akademi, Guwahati—2003
- Performed in Mahabalipuram Dance Festival, Chennai—2004
- Performed in Sankarajayanti , London, UK—2005
- Performed in World Music Festival organized by Paige Aimi World Peace Foundation, USA—2006
www.paige-aimi-world-peace.org/anita-sharmah.html

MAGH BIHU CELEBRATION AT NAGAON

Magh Bihu was celebrated all over Assam on January 14th and 15th, 2008.

It was celebrated all over the world wherever Assamese people are. In Nagaon, Assam, it was celebrated in a special way. There was a show called "Amaar Oxom" where large-scale models of religious and buildings were built on Nehrubali, right next to the Bihutoli. The most impressive were the models of Kamakhya, Rong Ghor, Borduwa Kirtonghor, Puwa Mokka Mosque, and Dhumbri Gurudwara. The pictures show a few of the models.

Photos by
Jugal Kalita and Bonmayuri Kalita.



ASSAM 2008



July 3-July 5, 2008
Sheraton Park Ridge Hotel & Conference Center
480 North Gulph Road
King of Prussia,
Pennsylvania 19406
(610) 337-1800

On behalf of the organizing committee it gives us great pleasure to invite you with your family & friends to Assam 2008 celebration. As in the past we are celebrating Assam 2008 over the 4th of July weekend. Dates are July 3rd - July 4th. We will be hosting the event at the Sheraton Park Ridge Hotel & Conference Center in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. The hotel is conveniently located from several major highways for easy access by car or by plane. It's minutes from historic Valley Forge Park and from the second largest shopping mall in USA.

Assam 2008 is part of an on-going effort to bring together the scattered Assamese community in North America for a celebration of our heritage and culture. You will be entertained by the creative talents of the Assamese artists in North America as well as sparkling performances by a few renowned artists from North America and Assam. We are confident that your presence will add to the exuberance of the greater Assamese Diaspora!

Please plan to add a few additional days to this event to make it a perfect summer vacation for your whole family. There are many things to do around King of Prussia to make this event a one-stop vacation. Some attractions are: Dorney Park & Wild Water Kingdom in Allentown; Strausburg Train Museum; outlet shopping center and Amish County in Lancaster; Independence Hall & Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, the shore and the casinos in Atlantic City NJ. There are too many places to mention all in here. We will list all of them in our Website, (<http://www.assam2008.com/>) which is currently under construction. All these places are about 45 minutes to an hour from King of Prussia.

We will have a link to the Hotel for reservation for online booking but until then you can use the following personalized website created for Assam 2008 by the hotel for immediate reservation: <http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/Assam>

We are looking forward to seeing you with your friends & family.

Best regards,

Utpal Borah & Saurav Pathak
On behalf of the Organizing Committee

ASSAMESE HOLIDAYS

for 2008

January

15th, 16th: Magh Bihu and Tusu Puja
17th: Silphi Divas
20th: Muharram
31st: Me-Dum-Me-Phi

February

11th: Saraswati Puja
21st: Bir Chilarai Divas

March

6th: Shiva Ratri
21st: Fakuwa-Douljatra

April

13th, 14th, 15th: Rongali Bihu

May

6th: Damodoar Deva's Tithi
21st: Janmotsav of Madhav Deva

June

20th: Bishnu Rabha Memory Day

July

4th: Rath Jatra
28th: Tarunram Phukan Smriti Divas

August

21st: Tithi of Madhav Dev
24th: Janmastami

September

1st: Tithi of Srimanta Sankar Dev
17th: Biswakarma Puja

October

1st: Id-Ul-Fitr
5th, 6th, 7th,
8th, 9th:
Sasthi,
Saptami,
Astami, Navami, Dashami
9th: Sankar Deva's Janmtosav
14th: Lakshmi Puja
19th: Kati Bihu
28th: Kali Puja and Dipandita



November

24th: Lachit Divas

December

2nd: Asom Divas
9th: Id-ul-Zuha

MINOTI KHAUND

50 YEARS OF HER MUSICAL CAREER

Minoti Khaund celebrated 50 years of her musical career as a violinist on the 29th of December 07. It was a grand evening with a packed audience full of her friends, family and fellow musicians.

The program had performances by Minoti's sister Pronoti Khaund on bhajans, her junior students and senior students on the violin, a vocal performance by well known writer Mitra Phukan (she is Minoti's sister in-law) and also a raag based song composed by Minoti herself by her nieces upcoming singers Anshumala and Sanjana.

The grand finale was a duet by Minoti and daughter Sunita Bhuyan and a historic moment was created when 8-year-old Panchami Khaund, Minoti's granddaughter, joined them. Three generations of violin reigned the music lovers that evening.

The audience cheered and was moved by this presentation which also a dream come true for Minoti. It was the best gift that she could have got on her 50th anniversary as a violinist.

Minoti and Sunita performed Raag Hanswadhani and Bharat Darshan a folk medley which also has the Bihu in it. The recital ended with a raga to bollywood fusion by Sunit on bhimpalashri.

Something about your earlier days. How did the orientation to music happen?

I started playing the violin at the age of 10. I expressed my desire to play with the fiddle to my maternal grandfather. Mr Sarma, who being a connoisseur of the fine arts himself could sense the passion in the girl child's eyes and bought me a violin. This is when my journey started with classical music..

I took my early training in violin from Shri Indreswar Sarma of Jorhat, in the music school of late Darpanath Sarma.

Which are the Gurus under whom you have learnt and sought guidance?

The turning point in my life came when I was performing at the All Assam Music Conference in 1972 and violin maestro Pt. V.G.Jog heard her on stage and offered to teach me. Thereafter started the traditional Gururshisya Parampara with Guruji. In some time I started my parallel studies in music theory and got associated with vocalist Pt. A.T. Kanan of the Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata and imbibed the "gayaki ang" in my performance style. I also underwent music studies in the field of raga improvisations and rhythmic patterns of "tala" from sarod maestro and musicologist Pt. Buddhadev Dasgupta.



Where all have you performed?

The Rising Talent Conference at Kalamandir Calcutta in 1978 introduced me as a new artist in the circuit in front of the knowledgeable gurus and music hungry audience of Kolkatta. There has been no looking back since then. The Amir Khan Music Conference at Rabindra Sadan Calcutta, Benaras, Burdwan, Cuttack, Bhubaneshwar, Tatanagar, Rabindra Natya Mandir Mumbai, India International Center Delhi, Mehta Memorial Hall Allahabad, IIT Festival, Shankardev Kalakshetra Guwahati, National Gallery of Modern Art Mumbai, India Habitat Centre Delhi, Women's International Forum Goa, Madhusudhan Manch Kolkatta etc have been my memorable concerts which have got critical acclaim by both the audience and press

Tell us some notable thoughts / moments of your career which are good memories now.

In 1972 I restarted my music after a gap of 10 year at the Assam Music conferences. It was the most fulfilling stage in my life as I was happily married to Kabindra Ram Khaund and had become the mother of two beautiful children. At this juncture I happened to meet Guruji Pandit V.G. Jog. God could not have been kinder.

My convocation and performance at Prayag Sangeet Samitti Allahabad for topping the Sanget Visharad course at a stage when I was already a performing artist.

When my daughter shared the stage with me for the first time. Guruji had tears in his eyes and said to my husband "This is the fruit of her devotion towards music".

Today I cannot stop thanking the divine intervention when I see my grand daughter Panchami (my son's daughter) play the violin. She is 8 years old and confidently puts the notes together.

It was my dream for the three of us to perform together. And we did it last month when my family celebrated 50 years of my musical career.

Do you play both light music and classical or both?

I play mainly Hindustani classical. And I enjoy

playing bhajans and other kinds of devotional music. My daughter plays all kinds of music from classical to fusion, folk as well as Bollywood. She specializes in classical influences in popular bollywood numbers.

Music seems to run in the family. Thoughts on your daughter

I grew up with all my siblings pursuing some kind of music. My brothers sing and play the tabla. My younger sister Pronoti Khaund is an established singer. All my nieces and nephews sing.

Music has been like a religion in our family and both my children have inculcated this discipline. My daughter has a full fledged HR career but pursues it as a serious passion. In fact she uses music as a management development tool and her Life Enrichment workshops through music as attracted a lot of interest in the corporate world.

We listen to all kinds of music. All music in this world is based on the 7 notes and cannot be disregarded. My son uses it as a tool to de stress and bond with his family and friends.

Message to aspiring musicians:

Hard work perseverance and above all training in the classical forms shall give you sustainable success.

Message to people of Assam:

Embrace peace. Please realize that contentment of the soul is what we have to aspire for. Let us teach our young generation to pursue life enriching skills like music, yoga, understanding the value of education and relationships. The world will be a better place to live.

The academic development of Assam is very impressive. Am not too sure of the all round development of mind, body and soul of our young generation.



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