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Non-Resident Assamese (NRA) Magazine

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An image of Zubeen Garg while performing the hit Bollywood song “Ya Ali” during Assam 2007 in Maryland. Sketch by Mahesh Baishya

Table of contents:

Assam 2007	1
Assam’s CM Tarun Gogoi visits Assam 2007	4
My Experience in Organizing Assam 2007	6
Self help in the time of insurgency	7
Deuta	9
Some Thoughts on Education and Immigration ...	10
Letters to the Editor	11
Trip to China (2004-2006):	
An Assamese American’s Perspective	12



Assam 2007

Assam 2007, the eagerly anticipated yearly Assamese get-together, was joyously celebrated recently by people from all over of North America. This year's event was held in the Mid-Atlantic city of Laurel, MD. Laurel is only 30 minutes from the US capital Washington, D.C. It is also 30 minutes from the famous City of Baltimore, Maryland, where the US fought one of her last battles with the British Army. Baltimore is also the place where the lyrics of the Star Spangled Banner were composed.

Like all previous years, this year also the event was celebrated during the first weekend of July. It was organized by a group of very energetic and independent young individuals from the Northeast part of the US. This was a gathering where every Assamese was invited irrespective of their organizational involvement or affiliation in the US. Assam Society of America and ASA Foundation embraced this celebration and supported the event organizers. Assam Foundation of North America participated, raising money for charitable causes. People came from all across USA including some visiting guests and relatives from India. Among the notable guests, the group had the honor of hosting the Chief Minister of Assam along with his beloved wife and an entourage of delegates from the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C. The other notable guest was the cultural spotlight of this get-together, Assam's beloved artist, very well known in India, Zubeen Garg, accompanied by his beautiful wife Garima.

Assam 2007 was very successful in spirit and reality! It was due to the relentless efforts of a hardworking organizing committee under the leadership of Niranjan Brahma and Prabin Dutta as the Chair and Co-chair. Rajib Barua was the Chair of Souvenir and Website committee, Sangeeta Dutta led the Chair of Reception Committee, and Utpal Borah was the Chair for the Cultural Committee. Ritu Sharma served as the Chair of the Fund Raising Committee last but not least Mukul Chowdhary was the Treasurer. Without Utpal's relentless hard work and perseverance, it would have been impossible to get a busy and demanding artist all the way from India to showcase as the main highlight of the cultural program. The Website was of such an



The Organizing Committee for Assam 2007. Photo by Niranjan Brahma

excellent quality that there were several thousand hits not only from folks in the US but also from India. There were many other hard working folks as members of various committees. Our heartfelt

gratitude and thanks to each every one of them. Everyone left Laurel with a very fun filled positive experience.

The event started in the evening of June



A Bihu Dance during Assam 2007. Photo by Niranjan Brahma



A Chorus during Assam 2007. Photo by Niranjan Brahma

29th when most of the host committee members and their families arrived. They decorated all the rooms reserved for the events and ended the night with a free-style group dance to various songs and music choreographed on DJ equipments by our multi-talented artists Marshilla and Mridu Brahma.

Each of the next two days started with a healthy breakfast followed by registration and various events during the day. Each registrant was given a souvenir bag filled with goodies: Assam 2007 Gamoshas especially woven and flown in from Assam, the event Souvenir publication and a directory of Assamese people not just only from the US and Canada but also few other countries.

There were too many activities and programs to mention them individually here. Some of the high lights are: the Trivia questions on Assam, the movie Jatinga Etyadi, the Assamese Fashion show where in many instances every member of a family participated. Many children participated in programs performing Bihu dance to Bollywood dances. We had many talented local artists. Given the right opportunities, some of them could be like Zubeen Garg in time. There were modern dances, Bihu dances, Sattriya dances, classical dances, Husori, Mukoli Bihu and many other dances. In the same way there were many different songs from Assamese modern, Hindi filmy ones to Gazals. Of course, the highlight of the whole get-together as we mentioned earlier was much-awaited performance by Zubeen that turned out to be truly electrifying. His songs were like dance-magnets

Husori during Assam 2007. Photo by Niranjan Brahma



when children and adults alike came forward filling up the large dance floor, dancing and bouncing with his various songs, including his all too famous Ya Ali. Zubeen is already great, but he is still so young and has so much potential! The audience enjoyed the song so much that he performed the Ya Ali twice. He definitely knows how to please an audience! Many of us believe if he tries, one day he can be a famous artist



Zubeen Garg at a party. Photo by Bonmayuri Kalita



Arpita Gogoi and Lola Bora during Assam 2007. Photo by Jugal Kalita

even outside India, especially in the US. He does have the potential.

The food and fellowship were excellent. People traveled from everywhere not only for the guest artist or for the cultural programs, but they also came simply to meet one another. Where would you get this once a year opportunity to meet so many Khar Khua Assamese in one place outside of Assam?! This group also came together to raise \$1500 dollars for the charitable cause of supporting Pranjalaya and Parijat Academy in Axom. In future years, hopefully we will be able to do more in the charitable fronts. We thank everyone who came and joined us in this celebration.



A Bihu Dance during Assam 2007. Sketch by Mahesh Baishya

Our best wishes to Zubeen and many thanks to him for taking the time off from his busy schedule to enliven our hearts and our get together. Everyone also enjoyed Zubeen and Garima's down-to-earth personality. We also thank our guest, the Honorable Chief Minister, Mr. Tarun Gogoi for traveling all the way from Assam. His presence, presentation and question answer session really dignified our get-together.

We wish we could name everyone who worked to make Assam 2007 a successful event. There were simply too many and we also don't want to miss any names. So, once again we thank everyone who worked and participated in Assam 2007 from the bottom of our hearts. Hopefully, next year we will be able to do even better, with more participation and may be just one joint event for all Assamese people in the USA rather than get-togethers in two in different locations on the same days!

By Dhruba Das and Niranjan Brahma



Assam's CM Tarun Gogoi visits Assam 2007

Laurel, Maryland, USA, July 1, 2007

The Chief Minister of Assam, Tarun Gogoi, attended recently concluded Assam2007 in Laurel, Maryland. This get-together of non-resident Assamese (NRA) was an attempt to bring together the disparate community together for celebration of the rich and proud culture and heritage of Assam and its people. Assam2007 started on June 29th and concluded on July 1, 2007. On July 1st, Assam's current CM, Gogoi, arrived the event

site at Ramada Inn in Laurel, Maryland around 4:15pm. He was accompanied by his wife Mrs. Dolly Gogoi; H.K. Sharma, Managing Director of AIDC; A.K. Sachin, Commissioner of Development & Planning, Government of Assam; Bipul Gogoi, Chief Protocol Officer, CM's office; and Dr. Naba Goswami, a well-known physician from St. Clairesville, Ohio.

The CM and his group were cordially received by Mukul Chowdhary of Edison, New Jersey on behalf of Assam2007 organizers. This reception included adorning the CM and his wife with the traditional "gamosa" and a "dhol" play by Utpal Borah of Glenmoore, Pennsylvania. Assam2007 Host Committee Chair, Niranjan Brahma, welcomed the CM, Mrs. Gogoi, and the rest of the invited guests to a seminar on the economic and social development of Assam. The CM was the chief guest in this seminar which was moderated by Dr. Sanjib Bhuyan of Franklin Park, New Jersey.

Gogoi thanked the organizers for inviting him to



Chief Minister of Assam Tarun Gogoi, during Assam 2007, Photo by Niranjan Brahma

Assam2007 and congratulated all those in attendance for celebrating the culture and heritage of Assam in the U.S.A. In his brief speech, Gogoi spoke about the need for involvement of NRAs in Assam for economic development, particularly in rural areas. He asserted that government efforts alone could not solve all the problems that exist in the State. There was also need for input from the NRAs who can provide both monetary and non-monetary input and investments in the State's various sectors. Gogoi particularly referred to the energy and industry sectors which could benefit from non-resident investment.



Chief Minister of Assam Tarun Gogoi, during Assam 2007. Sketch by Mahesh Baishya

The seminar had three presentations which followed the brief talk by the CM. One of the presentations was by Dr. Naba Goswami showing an example of investment by NRAs in Assam – it was a medical device production facility Dr. Goswami started in the outskirts of

Guwahati in collaboration with AIDC, Assam. Such investments are expected to provide valuable employment to people in the area as well as contribute to Assam's economy. Dr. Goswami's presentation was followed by a presentation by Dr. Jugal Kalita of Colorado Springs, Colorado on the need for expanding engineering education facilities in Assam, and how that may lead to both human development and economic growth in Assam. The CM acknowledged that Assam was far behind when it comes to education in general and technical education in particular; he mentioned steps taken in last few

years, including increasing budget for higher education, to revamp the education system in the State in general and higher education in particular. He informed the audience that further steps would be taken to bring the higher education system in Assam up-to-date.

Partha Gogoi of Fairfax, Virginia was the last presenter of the evening. Gogoi showcased various projects taken up by NRAs in the US through various Assamese organizations in North America, such as AFNA and ASA Foundation. Some of these projects were community projects, such as

Prajnalaya in Titabor and Parijat Academy in Pamohi near Guwahati – both of which are geared towards helping children who are less fortunate. Other projects included improving the skills and work potential of Assamese educated youth and involved collaboration with well-known institutions such as the Assam Institute of Management located in Guwahati. Another example of such involvement by NRAs in the development of Assamese manpower included NEPIF (North East

ern Professional Institute Forum) – a forum of 10 management institutes and engineering colleges from the NE India. Its objective is to promote training and placements of graduates of these institutions by inviting best companies from outside Assam. Gogoi offered some strategies regarding how best to receive help from the NRAs, and that included helping an image makeover of Assam by focusing on the positives, by providing technical skills in the areas of technology, power, infrastructure, and education, etc. Gogoi commented that in order for NRAs to contribute to Assam’s growth and development, the Government of Assam needs to make it easier to work with government agencies, and encourage government agencies and officials to support NRA efforts.

A Q&A session moderated by Dr. Bhuyan followed after the presentations. Although the audience had the opportunity to ask questions to all the presenters, all questions were directed at the CM. There were many questions directed at the CM who took all questions on stride and answered. There were several questions focusing on the CM’s position on the chronic flood problem in Assam and strategies to resolve it.

Gogoi acknowledged the chronic nature of the problem and pointed out that cooperation was needed from neighboring countries and states to find a long-term solution to the problem, and that his administration has been working towards that end. There were questions on the growing problem of dowry in Assam which was non-existent in Assam in the past (the CM assured that he was aware of the situation and steps were being taken to revert the problem), how to make Assam an international doorway to the SE Asia (Gogoi mentioned work in progress and recent visits by SE Asian dignitaries to assess Assam’s potential as an international window), dilapidated transportation and energy infrastructure and how it was hurting Assam’s economic development (Gogoi informed the audience that there has been significant improvement in roads and bridges in Assam since his administration took office and that he has been working to improve the energy situation in Assam), and on his administration plan to deal with corruption (Gogoi acknowledged the existence of corruption but denied that it was widespread and mentioned that perception of high corruption has put Assam next to Bihar as the most corrupt state in the country. He did not spe-

cifically address how to get rid of corruption.).

After the seminar the audience mingled with and Mrs. Gogoi and his party before everyone enjoyed a well-catered dinner of North Indian cuisine. After dinner the evening cultural show started around 8pm. Gogoi and his party left after enjoying a group “huchori” led by Mrinal Hazarika of Connecticut. The festivities continued after the CM left. Later that evening multitalented singer from Assam, Zubeen Garg, performed and thrilled the audience till late into the early morning hours. Please read the cultural report by Utpal Borah elsewhere in this issue of Posowa.

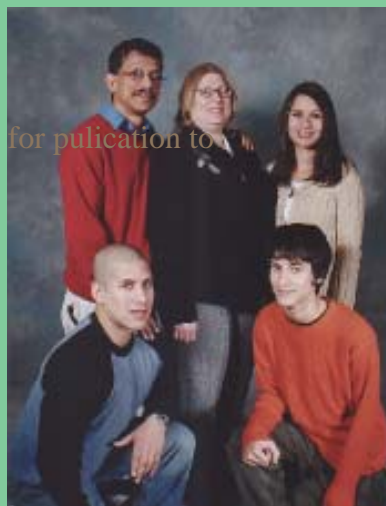
By Sanjib Bhuyan



Please send community news, event announcements, with photographs for publication to posoowa@assam.org . Please always mention your contact no., email etc. in case we need to clarify or may ask for further information. - *Editor*



Monmi Goswami, daughter of Deep and Anima Goswami of Fort Collins, Colorado, graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School of York University, Toronto, Canada in June 2007. She specialized in Immigration and Human Rights. Monmi has accepted an Articleship with Ontario Human Rights Commission in Toronto.



With compliments of the Das Family: Dhruba, Susan and Elora (standing), Rupam and Ronju (in front), of Coatesville, Pennsylvania, USA



Dr. Prasanta Kalita was honored by the University of Illinois for excellence in teaching and advising. Dr. Kalita, of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, was given the life-long title of University Distinguished Teacher/Scholar in May 2007. The award recognizes professors who display consistently excellent performance in the classroom, take innovative approaches to teaching, positively affect the lives of their students, and make other contributions to improved instruction, including influencing the curriculum.

My Experience in Organizing Assam 2007

Assam 2007, a get-together of Assamese people in North America, was organized by a group of people from Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. We were called on to take up this special mission and make the event a memorable one. I personally was not ready at the beginning to take the role of the Chairman of the Cultural Committee, wondering if I can fulfill the high expectations of the vibrant and talented North American Assamese community.

Deciding on an appropriate guest artist who is going to enthrall the attendees of Assam 2007 was the great challenge for all of us. Some wanted to invite a new face from Assam and others preferred to have someone who is already famous. While discussions were going on, I talked to Zubeen whom I have known as a friend for more than 15 years, and he graciously agreed to attend the Assam 2007 celebrations. Even after we had decided on Zubeen, there was some confusion and uncertainty among some of us: will Zubeen really come and perform in Assam 2007? He is famous not only in Assam, but all over India and around the world now; will he have the time for the Assamese community in North America? From the very beginning, I was a strong advocate for Zubeen; I was sure that he will come and will perform in our get-

together without any of his professional fees.

I followed up with Zubeen and his manager on a regular basis to keep the pot boiling. Even though Zubeen had agreed to come to Assam 2007 without any charge, still I faced tremendous pressure to develop a backup plan. I was also asked by some members of the committee to have a written confirmation from Zubeen; I actually got one from him. After the confirmation was received, the riddle of sponsorship needed to be solved: who will sponsor Zubeen so that he will get the visa without problems? Niranjan Brahma was a real optimist and he agreed to sponsor Zubeen. As the Chairman of Assam 2007, he wholeheartedly supported me on my decision to invite Zubeen.

I continued to court Zubeen even more aggressively as time passed. We bought electronic tickets and sent them to Zubeen. Finally on June 30th Zubeen arrived along with his wife Garima Garg. And on July 1st we all experienced his great show on the second night of Assam 2007. Zubeen rocked! Many of the Assamese individuals who had come to Assam 2007 had never danced as they did on July 1st. Many have told me that they had a wonderful time and that they had never experienced so much of fun in last 25 years. I finally feel vindicated and feel

that I have successfully accomplished my mission.

The cultural program was held over two days during the evenings of June 30th and July 1st. Whole evening was filled with attractive songs and dances performed by invited local artists. We witnessed some great children's talent expressed in songs and dances. We had the opportunity to listen to Rabin Goswami and Sankumoni Sarma. Both kept the audience fully involved and highly entertained. In addition, the evenings presented great classical dance performances the were greatly appreciated, by Bonmyuri Kalita, Amrita Baruah, Nilaskhi Thakuria, Sangeeta Dutta and Suravi Kalita. I want to thank Niraj Borbara for organizing the Husori. We also thoroughly enjoyed the great performance of young Assamese talents such as Rick Bhuyan and Nick Bhuyan, Mridu Brahma and Marshilla Brahma. I would like to thank the entire set of highly talented artists for their great performance.

The feedback from everyone has been overwhelmingly positive. I realize that if we can support each other, we can do even better in the future; we need to build upon the trust we have with each other, and we need to recognize the potential in each other. It will make our small community even stronger. I also would like to mention that I was very happy to see our first generation Assamese born in this country in Assam 2007. I was happy that they fully participated in the program and enjoyed it. Our Honorable Chief Minister Mr. Tarun Gogoi also made the long trip from Assam to join us for this special occasion. He even appreciated our Husori and Bihu performances; I hope we can continue working on to perform more quality Husori and Bihu in coming years.

I would like to thank every my cultural team for his/her support and understanding. Without their support this would not have been possible. I would like to mention that my teammates gave me enough freedom to work with Zubeen and gave me the space. My teammates took care of most of my other responsibilities so that I can have enough time to follow up with Zubeen's needs. This is real good teamwork. I am sure we can be better in future.

By Utpal Borah,
Glenmoore, PA



Sankumoni Sarma and Rabin Goswami performed at Assam 2007. Photo by Jugal Kalita

Self help in the time of insurgency

Quite often, the state of Asom garners media headlines for insurgency related issues. Surely, the northeastern state of India is home to many armed outfits including the United Liberation Front of Asom, fighting New Delhi for various demands from self-rule to sovereignty. But these gun-totting youth are not the only people in Asom. The oil and tea rich state has also given birth to many enterprising men and women, who are making valiant endeavors to earn dignified livelihoods. The poor workforce in rural Asom have started taking advantage of the few available Central Government schemes. Slowly but steadily, some have marked their points in the profession and have set example for hundreds of others.

Meet the members of Aditya SHG (Self Help Group), who have set a vibrant example of how a small band of men and women can change their lives and also those of others by simply organizing themselves and investing in their farms. Formed in July 2002, the SHG is based in Golaghat (Gomariguri Development Block) in eastern (Upper) Asom. Asom is known for repeated and devastating floods thanks to the untamed Brahmaputra River. Like other states in the region, Asom too does not boast of a strong industrial base, except for a few oil companies, which are located in the eastern part of the Brahmaputra valley.

Therefore, farming is the mainstay of the people.

The Gomariguri area is rural. Most inhabitants are small-scale farmers. The primary crop is rice, mostly cultivated once in a year. The region does not have any advanced health care or higher education facilities. Avenues for economic advancement simply do not exist. The average annual income of the villagers is very low and they survive hand to mouth. Merapani, the Asom-Nagaland border town is the nearest urban area. The district headquarters are located in Golaghat and it takes around three hours by bus. The state capital, Guwahati is an overnight bus journey away (over 300 km). Beyond Golaghat, next important town for the region is Jorhat.

The Aditya SHG emerged when 13 young men and women of the area decided to sell their agricultural products together. This decision not only helped them immediately and significantly cut transportation costs, but a larger product base also gave them better leverage in the market. The joint venture, though unplanned, started showing results soon. Earlier each of the individual farmers produced significant amounts of crop, but most of what each produced was sold at low price in the local market. The demand of the local market was (still is) low. Moreover,

some businessmen took advantage of the situation (abundant production but low demand) and bought crop cheaply and benefited by selling in bigger markets like Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Guwahati.

The Aditya group decided to transport its crop to bigger markets with high demand. Initially they transported the crop to nearby towns and sold to wholesalers. It turned beneficial for the members of the group. Soon they started networking with businessmen based in Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia for selling their crop on a regular basis. Today, the group employs its own people in these towns to sell and to take orders from the big buyers. It helps the group two ways. First, it can supply according to the demands in the bigger markets and secondly it can gain bigger returns.

As the informal group made advances on its own, an official from the District Rural Development Agency, Golaghat, told the members about the benefits of forming a formal self-help group, as defined by the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY). The idea looked interesting to the group and it kicked off the formation of an SHG by opening a savings account at the Asom Grameen Vikash Bank.

The group's first capital investment was in a tractor. It proved to be a good decision because it served dual purpose. First, the tractor helped till the land better and the group started growing Sali, a type of rice cultivated in summer season. The harvested quantity was also high because this particular area is not flood-prone, unlike other parts of Upper Assam.

Secondly, the SHG started renting out the tractor to other farmers of the area at a nominal charge. With the extra income and another bank loan, they soon bought another tractor. Around the same time, the group also started diversifying into new products, with high demand in the area, such as tomato, capsicum, cabbage, and ginger.

In fact, Aditya SHG is one of the hundreds of thousands successful SHGs formed all over India under the auspices of the SGSY. The Government of India



A farm run by Aditya Self Help Group. Photo by Nava Thakuria

launched the scheme in April 1999 with an aim to bringing about a paradigm shift in development strategy and for creating employment opportunities for the rural poor. The members of the SHGs are encouraged to undergo appropriate professional training and participate in economic activities with bank credit. The groups are advised to conduct regular meetings. They are encouraged to save regularly and also undertake internal lending activities.

According to Ministry of Rural Development (Government of India) sources, nearly 2.5 million SHGs have been formed in India, out of which nearly 500,000 SHGs are credit-linked with banks. Over 7.5 million rural poor families all over India (till January, 2007) have undertaken economic activities such as handicraft, mushroom, piggery, dairy farming, mechanized agriculture and various robi crops. Over Rs. 10 billion have been provided as bank loan to the SHGs against which National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) provided refinance assistance of around 8 billion rupees to the banks. The goal of NABARD is to credit-link around 10,00,000 SHGs by 31 March 2008.

According to Asom government sources, around 150,000 SHGs have been formed in Asom till December 2006. The program involves over a million Below Poverty Level families that encompasses around 16% of the total population (26 million) of Asom. The State Institute of Rural Development statistics disclose that more than 2000 SHGs have obtained loans from different banks in the last three financial years for a total amount

of Rs 250 million.

Till recently, the land owned by members of the Aditya SHG used to remain fallow in the winter because they did not have enough capital to invest in any new crop. As the group started profiting, it decided to roll a part of its profit to grow robi (cultivated in winter season) crops.

Four years after it started, products of the SHG are today sold in various parts of the region. In fact, their products have carved a niche in the region and are sold under a brand name - Aditya Vegetable Products. "Now we are well recognized in the markets. We try to maintain the quality of the products," said Durgeswar Saikia, a member of the group.

In addition to enjoying the financial benefits of success, the group also helps other farmers of the region. They buy products from other farmers and sell them under the AVP brand. For local farmers this has proved to be a boon because now they don't need to sell their produce individually and are also assured of a minimum price for their products sitting at home. This system has worked out so well that over 500 families of the region now depend on the SHG.

As a part of community service, the SHG often tills land of poor farmers and widows without charge. "Our tractors are hired by other farmers. Sometimes, we prepare the land of poor people and widows with the tractor. We only charge for fuel but often we do it absolutely free," said Biren Saikia, advisor to group.



Growing vegetables by Aditya Self Help Group. Photo by Nava Thakuria

irrigation projects, we use our ponds," Mr. Saikia said. He strongly argues for a larger-scale groundwater irrigation project to be undertaken by the state government and if that is not possible given the topography of the area, then he recommends that surface water be transported from the hill springs.

For expanding its business, the group has received Rs 10,000 as a "Revolving Fund" from the District Rural Development Agency, Golaghat. It also took out a loan of Rs 25,000 from a bank. With that and a subsidy of nearly Rs 100,000, it purchased the second tractor. Now the group is planning to buy a truck so that they can transport a larger quantity of what they produce to the market in one trip especially during the peak season. This will be an important move to strengthen its supply-chain management. "Since we have no facility for cold storages here, it is essential to send the products to the market as soon as possible. Otherwise, they can rot," asserted Nandeswar Saikia, another member of the SHG. The young entrepreneur also added that to overcome this problem, the group is planning to start a cold storage facility for the benefit of the farmers in the locality.

Though promoted and funded by New Delhi, the self-help group activities have never faced any problems from the secessionist leaders in the state. The SHG movement involves hundred of thousands youths and women, who otherwise remained sympathizers to the cadres of the outfits. But in the recent past, the armed outfits have lost mass support because of their many anti-people activities. Now the outfits do not possess the moral courage to put ban on such activities. More precisely, the separatist groups like the ULFA used to argue that their mission would bring economic upliftment to the common people in the long run. However, these enterprising villagers have already reaped economic benefits from government-endorsed schemes.

Despite its success, the group is facing problems that are inhibiting its growth. Irrigation facilities are almost non-existent in the region. "We have to depend only on rainfall. For small

By Nava Thakuria. Thakuria is a Guwahati based freelance journalist and may be contacted at navathakuria@gmail.com.

Deuta

Fathers and daughters share a special relationship. The year I was born, Assam Table Tennis won the first Nationals under his guidance and he was also at the peak of his business. He called me his lucky charm but I doubt that as Maa brought him his lady-luck when he married her and my sister, some additional.

When I got a little older, he often carried me to his office in Anuradha. I would sit there scribbling pictures and when my little self got bored he entertained me by showing a glimpse of whatever movie played in the hall. Unknowingly he guided me to the world of cinema which later became my profession. Another frequent visit in the evenings with him was Kanaklata Indoor Stadium. I loved the vibrant energy there. Despite the fact that he never pressured us to excel in games, all his children represented Assam in sports.

.....It was nearly midnight. I was in the middle of my 12th exams. He knocked at my room and walked in. A surprise visit. Leaning on the door next to my table he smiled and said, *Maa, if you want to study outside Assam, you need to get it on your own merit.* I never understood then, why he said that. Deta generally helped people whenever he could and never made a big deal out of it. I have seen Maa doing the same for our greater family too.

A fortnight later, I would be leaving home for the first time. As we sat for breakfast he looked at me in a casual way and said: *Maa, you are going to an unknown city. When you walk the road, stop and look back sometimes because that is what you shall see when you return. My first lesson in life: Till date, those words not only helped me in any city in the world but also help me when I look back in my life.*

New Delhi days: I was just out of my cocoon. Life was slowly unfolding in front of me. My sister accompanied and morally supported me while I played match after match to secure a seat in DU (sports quota). I finally bagged seats in St. Stephens, IP and JMC hence had a choice. Months later I bumped into a friend from Guwahati who was accompanied by a male friend. After befriending him he cheekily said, *"Your dad helped me a lot. He wrote me a reference which secured me a seat in one of the best colleges here".* (Deta was then the Vice President of Indian Olympic Association). Shocked, I wanted to squeeze his neck hard but refrained myself out of courtesy. I doubt



whether he played district let alone state or nationals.

Upset, the minute I got home, I picked up the phone and confronted *Deta. How could you do this to me? You helped some "nobody" while your daughter had to sweat it out?* I even remember tearing a photograph I had of him. But Deta, on the other side of the line was calm. *Fight back to me* I replied. *Hmm. Pise, Maa, kuwa-buwa korisa ne? Making few friends eh?* Smartly he changed the topic and left me even more frustrated. Years later I understood why he did that.

Lesson No.2: Fight your own battles. Get the confidence early in life and taste the thrill when you succeed in it. Daddy won't be around all your life to spoon feed you.

As a student I was given a fixed sum of monthly allowance and I always went over budget. *Deta* wouldn't budge. He was never rude to me but said *you are a student now; you should try and adjust with the amount provided.* He had a strange way to make us learn things. He pampered me with the best of things but at the same time taught me the realities in life.

Lesson No.3: Daddy is not just a cash machine and money does not grow on trees. Learn to value it.



By now, Deta was more of a friend to me. My opening words to him would be *Hey Baby, what's up?* Hearing this he would give me a coy smile, nod his head or roll his eyes as thou meaning here she comes. The house will be on fire now. Although Maa brought sophistication and class to our house she insisted that I write to her in Assamese. Ironically *Deta* spoke to me in English but he taught me to be an Assamese...in the real sense. He even taught me to dance Bihu, something that we both enjoyed watching and cherished every moment of it.

London Days: Whenever Maa and Deta visited us in London, I never had to search for him when I reached home from work. He used to sit in that same chair with the Naga shawl wrap around him either watching TV, reading the newspaper or calling Guwahati to take care of his business. I used to drive them around London but he enjoyed the countryside more. Sitting by a tree in a nearby park, I filmed him while he spoke about his earlier days.

The day I dropped them at Heathrow airport, I came back home and kept smelling his pillow in that empty room. I refused to change the bed sheets for a week. Something told me that might be his last visit.

It is slowly daunting on me that I won't be able to touch, feel or kiss him anymore. He won't be massaging my forehead when I run a fever or heal a cramp when I stretch my legs after a game...A silence and then his voice over the long distance call- *Maa..* That charming smile and the hug when he greet me at the airport.. but a strange sense of strength has engulfed me since he passed away emphasising he is by my side until eternity.

Be his son or daughter he always encouraged us to be independent, self-sufficient individuals. A constant motivator whenever I feel low in life: *Kiyo Nuwariba. Maa, Tumi Mur Suwali. Nichoy Pariba.* Those words were like a mantra to me and it gave me immense strength...always will.

While in the hospital and just out of coma, the nurse pointed to me and asked him- *Who is she?* He gave a vague look at her, took a deep breath and with pride in his eyes looked at me and said: **My Daughter** and then with great difficulty lifted his hand, did a thumbs up and said: **TOP ! TOP !**

By Sanchayita Sharma, on the occasion of her father, Phani Sharma's adya shradhha at Guwahati, on June 25, 2007.

Website of the Dr. Phani Sharma Welfare Trust -www.drphanisharmawelfaretrust.org - is under construction.

Some Thoughts on Education and Immigration

I have been thinking of writing an article for Posoowa magazine for sometime now, primarily on education (development) and illegal immigration (security) - in Assam.

Now the question is whether there is really something new to be said.

I suppose not.

Education

Everyone knows that Assam has one of the highest teacher-absentee rates in India and is not quite the most literate state in India. It is one of the less achieving states in terms of metrics such as student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. At a micro level, the state has nothing to boast of (when compared nationally) in terms quality of high schools (Dehradun in UP being a famous center) or colleges (the better

known being in the metros for liberal arts or in South India for engineering). Even the well-meaning Infosys chief Narayan Murthy said that Assam needs to improve its quality of high schools and have more of English speaking graduates - who can work in call centers in Guwahati - and only when such manpower is available that higher level info-tech businesses can be established - as in Hyderabad or Bangalore currently.

Illegal Immigration from Bangladesh

Of course, many would say that given the corruption in government and the ease with which ration cards and other citizenship documents are available in India (by greasing the palms of the willing), it would be a futile effort to try to nab illegal immigrants and send them back to Bangladesh. However, every journey begins with a single step. Once you start moving along, new ways emerge and there is no perfect thief

either. You have to be the Sherlock Holmes; then you can tackle every big or small illegal activist.

I wonder why Assam's Congress government wants to go against the Supreme Court in the matter of IMDT repeal (<http://news.indiainfo.com/2005/07/12/1207illegal-migrants.html>)? Hopefully, it has some reasonable or logical argument. I wonder what it is. I gather it is something to do with the cutoff date for migrants from Bangladesh to be declared illegal - either 1951 or 1971 — both dates seems pretty old. How about the current infiltration being stopped? What is the government doing about it?

Some might like to read this article of Politics of Infiltration - pertaining to Assam : <http://www.saag.org/%5Cpapers16%5Cpaper1557.html>

Any comments or answers?

Umesh Sharma
Ed.M. Harvard '05
Washington DC



The **India International Friendship Society**, New Delhi, felicitated Jayanta and Pranaame Bhagawati on 11 July, 2007, by presenting the **Rashtriya Gaurav Award** for meritorious service, outstanding performance and remarkable role in the field of performing arts. The occasion was graced by Honb'le former Governor of Assam and Tamil Nadu, Dr. Bhisma Narain Singh, and G.V.G. Krishnamurti, the former Election Commissioner of India as Chief Guests.

Visit: <http://bhangimaa.bihu.in> to know more about the Bhangimaa group

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Letters to the Editor



Congratulations on your publishing the in-depth report "A Need for Expanding Engineering Education Facilities in Assam for Economic Growth and Human Development" in Posoowa. Congratulations to the authors for the effort in preparing the report. This is a much-needed first a necessary step for the Assam in demanding any new engineering colleges be it in Dhemaji or elsewhere. Now that the first step has been done, let us proceed to do the required next step. The next required step in my opinion is for the people of Assam to use the report as a tool and forward it to the proper quarter of GOI and request additional engineering colleges in the state.

As a forward step we also look into the possibility of expanding the report to locate some ideal sites for engineering colleges in Assam with proper justifications. I am sure underdeveloped place like Dhamaji be justified to have an engineering college.

Taking a broader outlook, we also look into expanding the report to include the entire North East India which will make the justifications more attractive. In this respect, Friends of Assam & Seven Sisters (FASS) www.friendsofassam.org will be happy to cooperate and help in this endeavor.

Thanks
Rajen Barua, Houston

~~~~~  
First of all I would like to thank the authors of this article for presenting such a well-researched article. I too have felt that this is a problem for long time. Though the authors have pointed out the problem in the engineering field, the medical side is no different. Actually we need many technical higher education institutes in Assam. This article is timely and carries a lot of information with figures. So, I would like to request the authors to make a copy of it in Assamese too and get it published in major Assamese newspapers or periodicals so that more number of people is aware of the facts. On the basis of this document student organizations also act. Thank you once again.

Sonit Kumar Gogoi  
IIT Guwahati

~~~~~  
Many many thanks for the article "A Need for Expanding Engineering Education Facilities in Assam for Economic Growth and Human Development" in "POSOOWA, JUNE 07".

Buljit Buragohain
IIT, Guwahati

~~~~~  
Congratulations to Jugal Kalita and the co-authors for an excellent article. The suggestions are very pragmatic and doable. From your article, if I understand correctly, the basic thrust is to produce significant numbers of engineering graduates to be at par with other states. Number of engineering colleges is a corollary based on some assumed intake. Upgrade of existing ITI and diploma institutes spread all over Assam is an excellent idea and should be pursued immediately. Also at the same time while dwelling on this approach of establishing new colleges, immediate step should be to over-saturate the intake capacity of the existing two state engineering colleges. With an incremental expenditure this can be easily achieved. Also more B.Tech courses should be introduced in Tezpur University.

And at the same time during this conversion spree of existing polytechnics, new ones should be created at more remote sites. Just a small thought on the staggering number of new engineering colleges proposed-I think it is better not to scare the wits out of Assam Government by saying a huge number of engineering colleges are required. Instead of say 10 engineering colleges at X millions per college for an intake of 300 per college requiring 10X millions, another option could be having one or two single mega engineering college for say 2000-3000 student intake. The costs will surely not be 10X but may be 2 or 3 X. Just a question of balancing cost versus local aspiration to

have a college locally. Your suggestion of conversion of existing diploma institutes will any way lead to an equitable distribution of engineering colleges through out the state.

We have seen how lackadaisical the state government has been in running its two existing engineering colleges. On the other hand central government colleges like NIT, NERIST may not fulfill the "number" demand as only a small percentage of seats will be reserved for the state. An example is NERIST which must have produced more Bengali graduates than Arunachalis. Similarly private engineering colleges will appeal to only a certain section of the society due to higher fee structure. For the general people of Assam, new state engineering colleges with transparent admission policies offer the best hope. Establishing one mega engineering college like Jadavpur university (which has an undergraduate engineering intake of around 1000 students) at a central location like Guwahati or Nagaon and additional normal size engineering colleges at other places in Assam should be the way to go.

Only request is that this good article should reach those who are in a position to take things forward.

Regards

Chittaranjan Pathak

PS: Thanks to Umesh for letting us know that authors have made a forceful presentation to CM. Secondly a copy be forwarded to Education minister Ripun Bora and DTE and VCs of Tezpur/Guwahati/Dibrugarh universities.

*continued to page 14...*

## Posoowa wishes happy and prosperoud married life to Prasant and Ruchira

Prashant, son of Biraj and Hansa Bhuyan of Norristown, PA was married to Ruchira, daughter of Surajit and Anjana Chaudhri of Toronto, Canada on June 23, 2007. The grand wedding ceremony and reception were held in Le Royal Meridien King Edward Hotel in Toronto following a spectacular wedding procession the groom riding a horse to the hotel.



Photo by Umesh Tahbildar

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# Trip to China (2004-2006)

## An Assamese American's Perspective

**K**nowing that it had been closed to foreign tourists until very recently, Communist China – with its ancient culture, art and historical sites has always fascinated me. When an opportunity came my way to visit China, I was delighted. My husband, a Lucent Technologies Technical Director, had been chosen to head the Greater China Engineering Operations for Lucent/China as an expatriate for 2.5 years in January 2004.

I traveled to China for the first time in May 2004 by Northwest Airlines from Newark to Tokyo via Detroit and then to Shanghai, a total flight time of about 19 hours. The flight was delayed in Detroit, which led us (me and our son Vick) to miss the evening flight to China. We had to stay overnight in Tokyo, which delighted Vick, a fan of Japanese cartoons. The airline provided the accommodation at the Ramada Inn at Narita airport. The next morning, as we landed in Shanghai's gleaming new Pudong International airport, I looked out of the window and I saw neatly designed buildings and skyscrapers. There was a geometric precision about these square and rectangular shaped blocks that resembled the toy cities my little Vick used to build with Lego blocks. This weeklong stay was fascinating.

My husband was waiting at the airport with his driver Mr. Wang beside him. Wang knew very little English, but was very gentle and polite. We communicated by any means, from nodding our heads to making hand gestures. I soon learnt that in China it is impossible to communicate with the natives unless one has a working knowledge of Mandarin. In the course of my short stay I found out that the people were aware of this shortcoming and they were making all efforts to overcome it. Perhaps this accounted for the mushroom growth of English classes all over the city.

As I embark on my last trip to China on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006, lot of thoughts come to my mind. This is my 8<sup>th</sup> trip to China in a period of two years. The last two years were a mixture of joy and sorrow as well as stress and anxiety. Our family was scattered all over the world – Niren in China, our daughter Gargee, a M.D. candidate in New York City, and initially I along with 9 yr-old Vick were holding the fort in Bridgewater, NJ.

Extended families were all in India. It was quite a challenge, but we managed to survive by the Grace of God. I was proud to see my husband Niren, an Assamese in such a commanding position in China. This was my console. I honor his ambitions!

### Tour de Shanghai

As Niren had other activities with Vick including school tours, I boarded the tourist bus from the Yangtze Renaissance Hotel to take a whirlwind tour of Shanghai. Along the way, we picked up tourists at various hotels and we were finally at the Portman-Ritz Carlton Hotel on Nanjing Lu. This famous Nanjing Road (Lu means Road in Mandarin), for years Shanghai's principal shopping street is similar to New York's Fifth Avenue. Many of the buildings along Nanjing Road are still in the colonial style while others have been modernized. Lots of expensive boutiques line the road. A top-floor coffee shop charges 40 Yuan (\$5) for a cup of coffee. More expensive than the States.

The tour took us to the Shanghai Museum, the famous Bund (embankment on the Huangpu river, Pu means river in Mandarin), the Jade Buddha temple, Yuyuan Gardens, the People Square and other attractions in the Puxi section of Shanghai (Xi means west of the river). We had an English-speaking tour guide and had group lunch at the Shanghai Mansion in Chinese traditional style with "lazy Susan" dining tables. I was very selective in what I ate. It was an international group comprising of Americans, Australians, British, Koreans and Singaporean.

Our daughter Gargee, who visited Shanghai a month before me, recommended the tour. The tour gave me a very good flavor of Shanghai and Niren and I decided to make Shanghai our home-away-from-home for the next two years.

Niren took me and Vick to the Jin Mao

tower, which housed the Grand Hyatt hotel, the tallest hotel in the world. Inside the building is a glittering hollow and as we looked down, it felt like we were in a Star Wars Zone. The trip to the Oriental Pearl Tower, the first TV tower in Asia was fascinating and as we had tea at the revolving restaurant, the glimpses of nighttime Shanghai was inevitable.

Next few days were spent villa hunting and shopping at the famous Xian Yang Gift Market, which is similar to Calcutta's New market with varieties of articles from traditional Chinese tea-sets to Designer items. This market fascinated all of us.

Most of my trips to Shanghai were consumed in training our four different aiyas (maids) in the art of Indian cooking, with emphasis on Masar tenga anja (lemon fish). Since there are few Indian restaurants and no Indian grocery store, I had to make sure Niren and Vick (who joined Niren later) had a good home-cooked Indian meal every day like in the US.

During one of my several trips to Shanghai, Niren and I also attended the F1 Car racing event at the newly built Shanghai Circuit. I was fortunate to be part of this great event. The highlight of my last trip was the Huangpu river cruise in a night setting. The Shanghai skyline is marvelous in the night with glittering lights, and the scene including the Oriental Pearl Tower and the Jin Mao tower.

Everyone we met had an extra warm smile to share when we disclosed to them that we were Indians from America (Mei Guo). They admired my *mekhala-chadars/sarees*, the silk from which they were made and my *bindi*. They spoke about Hindi films and music. They spoke about a developing cordial relationship between the two countries. They mentioned that another name for Integrated Circuit (IC) is India-China. They pointed their index finger to their head and indicated by body language



Inside the Choudhury Home in China

that Indians are intelligent. They made us proud of being Indians.

In 2005, Niren and I were glad to host my parent's Dr. Jyotiprasad and Preeti Medhi, Niren's elder sister Ms. Nikulata (Gulu) Sarma, and my brother Dr. Deepankar Medhi and wife Dr. Karen T. Medhi as guests in our Shanghai home – a truly American home in Pudong (Shanghai), the so-called Manhattan of China. They all really enjoyed their stay in China.

#### **My ode to Shanghai and China...**

It was interesting to see a 5000 year-old civilization transformed into a modern society. As the first Assamese American family to be part of that society was remarkable and inspiring.

#### **Souzhou trip**

With a group of American tourists, I visited Souzhou, a small city on the Yanqzee delta famous for freshwater pearls. As soon as we entered the city of canals, it reminded me of Venice in Italy and Amsterdam in Netherlands. Surprisingly, it is called the Venice of China! As soon as we got off the tourist bus, we were off to pearl fishing. We boarded a small boat and picked up some oysters from the waters and rowed back to shore. The fisherman took us to the pearl/jewelry market along with the oysters. The pearl stores are awesome, but I have never seen such mountains of beautiful pearls in my life. In front of the spectators, the oysters were cut open. They were filled with 5-10 pearls each. The pearl in the center was perfect round and of natural color. Ones on the sides were shaped flatter and were colored pink or purple depending on the veins of the oysters. That's when I came to know about the various shapes and colors of pearls. I love pearls and this was a very memorable experience. The pearl shopping trip was exciting.



Namrata Gargee Choudhury on the Great Wall of China

#### **Hong Kong trip**

While in China in 2004, I was fortunate to visit Hong Kong, which is part of PRC China now. The Hong Kong trip was a business trip to visit AT&T's Asia-Pacific headquarters in Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. I flew from Shanghai to Hong Kong by China Eastern Airlines; the flight time was 2 1/2 hours. As the plane landed in Hong Kong, it was wonderful scenery to see the skyscrapers lining the mountains. It felt like the plane is landing on water, as the runway is a narrow strip of land bordered by the sea. Besides office work, I did not get to do any sightseeing. However, I had a stroll around Causeway Bay in the evening, where I saw shopping centers like Sogo and the famous Windsor Mall. These shopping malls are humongous compared to malls in USA or Europe. I had also seen Harrods in my past visit to London. It is a very cosmopolitan city and was relieved to be able to communicate in English, unlike rest of China. The streets were filled with smells of various kinds of food being cooked in the wayside eateries. It was a quite a memorable experience.

#### **My Beijing trip**

In June 2005, I visited Beijing for couple of days and stayed at the North Garden Hotel, near the famous Wulfoxing Lu. Niren, Gargee and Vick had visited Beijing earlier, so Niren arranged for me to visit the capital city and arranged for a private taxi and English speaking driver. Very little English is spoken in Beijing.

The Temple of Heaven built in 1420 AD during the Ming Dynasty was the first monument I visited. It was built by an agrarian society to make their agricultural offerings to Heaven. The temple has long stretches of corridors leading to a semi circular Northern part symbolizing the Heavens. The square southern part symbolized the Earth.

I was undoubtedly thrilled to witness first hand a piece of magnificent Chinese architecture but there was something else I saw that left a warm feeling of pleasure. As I walked up the long corridors I observed that they were filled with people, all belonging to the older generation. They were engaged in doing something or the other. Some of the elderly people were playing cards, others were making exquisite crochet handicrafts that they were selling to the numerous tourists who cared to show any interest in what they were making. Some of

them were staging street dramas and others were exercising.

Atop the Great Wall of China! Chang Cheng, the Chinese call it. This is the only man made structure to be visible from the moon, from outer space! I went to visit the section of the wall at Badaling. Famed for its sheer size, this imposing ancient and magnificent fortification runs across the ridges and deserts for about 7,300 Km from East to the West through Northern China. Our guide told us that the first man to walk across the length of the wall took three years. The construction of the wall began in the seventh century BC, and was completed in the third century BC. This feat of construction is impressive, considering that it was not simply built with earth but with finely trimmed stones and gray bricks. The wall averages 7.8 meters in height and 5.8 meters in width at the top, wide enough for five horses or eighteen people to walk along it abreast. One estimate has it that 80 million cubic meters of packed earth and 60 million cubic meters of bricks were used to construct the wall.

The Wall has about 10,000 towers at regular intervals. In the past soldiers used to stand guard on these towers. The news of the enemy approaching would be passed all along the Wall through smoke signals. Fifteen to twenty soldiers manned each tower. A whole army of soldiers was exclusively raised to protect the Wall. Standing on this magnificent man-made wall, which is a symbol of China's desire to protect itself from the outside world, a defence against foreign invasions for over 2000 years.

The Ming tombs are the mausoleums of the thirteen emperors of the Ming dynasty. We visited the tomb at Dingling, as it is the only tomb whose underground palaces have been excavated. At the entrance leading to the tomb I saw some giant sized pairs of stone statues of camels, elephants, generals and ministers. We were told that these statues represented the belief that even after death the emperors ruled the land. In the rear hall of the majestic underground palace, buried 27 metres below the surface, were the coffins of the Ming Emperor Zu Yijun and his two empresses. The valuables of over 3000 burial objects had been removed to the exhibition halls for preservation and security reasons. Our guide told us that a system similar to the Indian Sati was practiced during the time of the Ming dynasty when one of the many empresses would burn on the funeral pyre of her husband.

One of the must visit places at Beijing is Tiananmen Square. Built in 1952 it covers an area of 100 acres approximately. It is the largest monument in the modern history of

China and the world's largest public square. In 1989, this square was witness to a series of pro-democratic student demonstrations that were forcibly repressed by the government, resulting in the loss of the lives of hundreds of students. *The People's Heroes are Immortal* written by Chairman Mao is engraved on a two-tiered marble monument. West of the Square is the Great Hall of the People. Built in 1959, this building is the site of the National Peoples Congress meetings and other political and diplomatic activities. To its East is the Museum of the Chinese Revolution and Chinese History. To the South is the Mao Zedong Memorial Hall in which the body of Mao lies in state. At the North end of the Square is the Tiananmen tower, which was the gate to the Forbidden City – the imperial palace of the Ming and Qing dynasties. It had taken fourteen years to complete this largest palace complex in the world. The dominant colour here is yellow, the colour of the Chinese royalty. Twenty-four emperors ruled the country from here. The palace complex was called the Forbidden City because peasants living outside were not allowed to witness the life of the people living inside it.

The last place of tourist interest I visited was The Summer Palace, the largest imperial garden in the world. It is an authentic example of classical Chinese architecture. Spread over 290 hectares, it has a lake, hills, painted corridors and halls, towers, pavilions and kiosks. Emperor Qinglong built it as a gift for his mother's birthday. A panorama of the whole city can be enjoyed from the balcony on the top floor.

**Hanzhou Trip**

The most profound effect on the religious aspect of the art of the Six Dynasties in

China was Buddhism, which was brought to China from neighboring India. This is very prominent in Hanzhou, the seat of Buddhist learning in East China.

The first examples of Buddhist art to be seen in China were the small statues brought there by Indian Buddhists. By the 4th century, an influx of styles and subjects created a new category of Buddhist art and architecture within the Chinese tradition. In western China, important wall paintings based on sacred stories can still be seen at the monastery at Dun-huang. Monumental sculpture, a contribution from northern India, gained popularity and led to the creation of massive stone carvings of Buddhist deities in the mountains of Henan and Shaanxi provinces. By the 6th century, Buddhism had permeated nearly every facet of Chinese cultural life. Although Buddhist art dominated much of the Six Dynasties' achievements, secular traditions were also changing. Ku Kai Chi, considered the father of landscape painting, worked during this period.

No account of a travel through China will be complete unless something is said about their cuisine. Although noodles do form a part of their meals, it is plain boiled rice that is their staple food. Soup is not the first course of their meal. It is had all through it. Vegetables – boiled, stir-fried or simmered – form a substantial part of their meal. The non-vegetarian dishes made of various meats, including fish and chicken. Each region in China has its own special food and their cooking technique contributes to over 5000 well known dishes. Peking Roast Duck is another dish that one must try, although I did not dare to try. The duck used for this is of a special breed. After it is cleaned, the

duck is roasted over a fire made with the wood of fruit trees. The process leaves the skin crisp and the meat fresh, tender and rich. The old saying "when in Rome do what the Romans do" holds true in one's travel anywhere in the world. So when in China do what the Chinese do – eat with chopsticks. Though it might appear difficult, believe me, it is not so. With a little practice a Chinese meal will taste better if we had it with chopsticks and the finishing touch was with jasmine tea or green tea.

People here owned multiple storied apartments with all amenities. But there was none to live in them. The single child policy enforced by the government was successful. The problem of population growth had been controlled. Farmers are permitted to have a second child if their first issue was disabled or happened to be a girl. In spite of their modern approach to life, their deep-rooted craving for a male child was still there.

At the end, my statistical career forced me to leave a note on some statistics in China. According to the 2001 survey of OVERSEAS INDIAN POPULATION, only 305 Indian are in China, compared to 1.6 million in USA, 1.2 million in UK and 950,000 in U.A.E.

So I am very fortunate to be one of the few persons of Indian origin to visit China.

*By Shakuntala (Moonmoon) Choudhury (April 16, 2007).*

Photos by author.

**Letters to the Editor**

*...continued from page 11*

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Through Posoowa, I would like to invite Meenakshi to Assam for sharing her expertise and experiences for development of the community.

Thanks.

Manash Patgiri
manashjpatgiri at yahoo.co.in

Namrata, a Jewel among men and women. Congratulations! Hope You will spare a few days every year for rural Assam with your expertise. I would be pleased to help you in this mission in Assam if you so desire.

Manash Patgiri
manashjpatgiri at yahoo.co.in



Ashvin Das celebrated his First Birthday with family and the Assamese community of Colorado.



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The ASA Executive Committee is composed of Dhruba Das, President (Coatesville, Pennsylvania), Kabita Sharma (Hillsborough, New Jersey), Vice President, Mukul Chowdhary (Edison, New Jersey), Treasurer, and Ganesh Bora (Lake Alfred, Florida), General Secretary.

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