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ASA Newsletter

News & events of the Assamese people living around the world

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Jitul Sonowal to Perform in Florida during Assam 2005

Assam 2005 begins in the Disney Coronado Resorts Hotel in Orlando, Florida, on the 1st of July, 2005. It will continue till the 3rd of July. It will be a fun-filled cultural, social as well purposeful get-together of Non-Resident Assamese (NRA) individuals from around North America, primarily the US. It will be held with Disney Magic in Disney World, Orlando, Florida. The focus of the meetings to take place will be the many volunteer, community projects, small-scale or large-scale, that non-resident Assamese people have taken, will take or can take in Assam. Then, there will be two nights of cultural shows where NRA talents will perform. However, the premier attraction of the two nights of cultural programs is performance by Jitul Sonowal. Jitul Sonowal is a popular Assamese singer who received the Best Music Director Award in the Prag Cine Awards of 2003, for the movie called Hepa~h, directed by Sankar Barua. He has directed music in movies such as



Xonghat, Xonghat, Xonghat (1999) and Bukur Majot Jwole (1999). He also has sung songs in many other Assamese movies. He has also brought out a large number of music cassettes and CDs.

The photo above shows Jitul Sonowal, popular singer of Assam being interviewed for a weekly show in the All Indian Radio, FM

Channel in Guwahati on 7-06-05. Photograph © by UB Photos, Guwahati, used with permission. The Web site for Assam 2005 is <http://www.assam2005.org> where all details and updates can be found.

By Babul Gogoi in Delhi and Jugal Kalita in Colorado

Sanchayita's The Passage to be Screened in Assam 2005!

Assam, is known as the gateway to the North Eastern states of India. With the Brahmaputra river flowing through it, Assam, has many aspects of international importance including tea, oil and the Kaziranga National Park (home of the famous one horned Asiatic Rhino).

The last two decade has brought in another element of international crisis to this peaceful land – insurgency.

"The Passage" is a short film about the beauty of Assam as the backdrop.

Two Professors from Delhi University visit Kaziranga for a seminar. During the return journey, their car breaks down and a completely different Assam reveals itself before their eyes.

Adapted from the original short story – The Journey, written by the renowned Assamese author Dr. Indira Goswami (a lecturer from Delhi University), this



award winning story is about a near real life encounter.

The Passage is director Sanchayita Sharma's attempt to reflect the beauty, the essence of the land and it's people amidst the crisis of insurgency.



Born and brought up in Guwahati (capital of Assam), Sanchayita Sharma now lives and works in London. With a family who is politically active, she was aware of, and at times witnessed the problems and terrorism in her state at an early age. Always passionate about film (he father owns cinema halls in Guwahati) she made her debut on television by hosting a Bollywood based programmes interviewing celebrities. On air for 7 years, the show was listed as the No.1 for more than 54 weeks in the North East. She also ventured into the theatre world and had remarkable reviews about her performances in plays like Romeo and Juliet; Street Car named Desire and participated in Nandikar International Theatre Festival with Seagull Group, a well known theatre company from Assam. When asked "why filmmaking and not a political career" she smiled and said, I guess we already have enough in our family. "For me, filmmaking is a much more creative and superior device than politics. My camera has more power to reach out to the world".

One photograph shows Sanchayita during filming. The other shows the brother hitting his pregnant sister for the out-of-wedlock bearing the child of an Indian soldier.

By Sanjib Bhuyan, New Jersey

Assamese in Leadership Hall of Fame in South Dakota

The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSMT) in Rapid City recently inducted Nandini Das in to their Leadership Hall of Fame. The Leadership Hall of Fame is bestowed to students, who, during their stint at the school displayed outstanding leadership qualities and

contribute effectively to campus leadership. Originally from Chandmari, Guwahati, Nandini came to USA in 2001 after her husband Chandan got admitted to SDSMT. Earlier she got her Bachelor of Architecture degree from University of Baroda.

Both Nandini and Chandan graduated with a Masters and PHD degree respectively in Civil Engineering in May. During her student life in SDSMT, Nandini was very much active with the Indian community and participated in

every major Indian function. Her tenure as a student included president of International Cultural Committee; member of Civil Engineering Department Student Advisory Committee and was the secretary of the India Club. She was instrumental in organizing Diwali in her campus that attracted more than 500 American visitors. She would often promote Indian culture in America by speaking at different gatherings, and as such has been invited to several area schools and boys scout meetings to speak on Indian culture. She was awarded Certificates of Outstanding Contribution to Campus Leadership for three successive years in 2003, 2004 and 2005.

In a phone conversation with me, Nandini said that she enjoys all the Indian flavors, cultures in Rapid City except for one thing. All that is missing there is an Indian restaurant. The Indian population in Rapid City mostly consists of doctors, university faculty members and students. However, the India Club in SDSMT actively maintains all the aspects of Indian culture and tradition. Chandan and Nandini have an eight year old son Jishu who is a third grader in school. "I was expecting him on Christmas Day, so I had decided to name him after Jesus Christ. But he arrived a bit early. Still I decided to give him the same name", Nandini says. At present, Nandini works in Dream Design International in Rapid City and the family, recently, have



moved to a bigger home from their apartment.

By Satyam Bhuyan, Ames, Iowa. The writer is a graduate student at Iowa State University.

Ganesh Bora Nominated for a Prestigious Award

We are proud to inform that Dr. Ganesh Bora, who recently completed his PhD from Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS has been chosen as one of the three finalists from USA and Canada for Best Graduate Student Research Award by American Society of Agricultural Engineers (ASAE) for the year 2004-05. The three finalists will present their research in ASAE's international annual meeting to be held on 17-20 July/2005. It may be mentioned that the machine he developed as part of his research received AE50 award

for development of innovative technology from the same organization last year. Ganesh is currently working as Precision Agricultural Engineer in University of Florida.

By Jugal Kalita, Colorado.



Bihu Dance Performed by Our Kids at Vasamtotsava

- A brief commendation Report for our kids

Once again, despite all odds like very few practice sessions, our kids (Rishov, Pongkhi, Arunabh, Deisha, Devika and Amit Ryan) excelled in their rendition of the Bihu dance in front of a large audience at the "Vasamtotsavam" organized by the Balabharti Cultural Center, NJ. The performance took place on Sunday May 8, 2005 where over 30 dance items from different parts of India were performed by kids of Indian origin. The program

not only allowed our kids to showcase their talent, but also provided them an opportunity to appreciate other dance forms from India performed by kids just like them. All in all, it was a great effort by our kids!!

This report was prepared for Community Kids Forum by Shravani Sarma.

Lecture cum Demonstration on Bihu Songs of Assam

On 13th of this month there was an impressive illustrated lecture by Ms Utpola Borah with film clips and recordings to illustrate her presentation. The was followed by Bihu Dance presented by participants consisting of Assam Battalion boys working at Assam Bhawan,



New Delhi and girls studying at various colleges at Delhi with Dhol, Pepa, Toka, Tal, Xutuli and Gogana.

Ms Borah has trained in Hindustani Classical vocal music having studied advanced Khayal singing under the guidance of Dr. Prabha Atre of the Kirana Gharana. She has also received training in light classical vocal (Thumri and



Dadra) from Mrs Malashree Prasad of the Benaras Gharana. She received her Ph.D in Hindustani Classical Music from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Delhi where her dissertation topic was A Study of Bihu Songs of Assam with Reference to its Musical Contents under the guidance of Prof. Debu Chaudhuri.

At present, Ms Bora has been working at the Archive & Research Center for Ethnomusicology, American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon, Haryana.

By Babul Gogoi, New Delhi

Abani Hazarika: The Unsung Hero of Assam's Cricket World

The unsung hero of Assam's cricket who was once an answer to Nawab of Pataudi - Mansur Ali Khan, but now a dejected forgotten hero, living within a shell of nostalgia.

He is Abani Hazarika - a legend and the sports icon from Assam known as "Thunu" in family circle, 75 year old the same tall handsome fair complexioned young cricketer of yesteryears. The heartthrob of many girls. He falls for single down to earth Manju. His wife - a true companion. Age could have drawn only a few lines in his face and a little bit grey hair. Incidentally he is one of my maternal uncle my most beloved "Thunu Mama".

During my recent visit to Assam in the month of February, he took me to view the venue of the proposed 33rd National Games 2005 at Sarusajai Sports Complex in Guwahati. We talked intimately strolling game village area, quietly walking down memory lane, the former cricketer was very sad and nostalgic. Undoubtedly cricket has been his first cardinal love. Growing up wielding the cricket bat from a very tender age, Abani Hazarika reminisces how sports had been in his hey days. The varied admirers in his humble abode showcases the heterogeneous mementos overflowed with his awards, trophies, certificates - all of which he had gathered with great

perseverance and resembling the depth and the magnitude of his intimate involvement in the world of sports.

Born in a joint family at Dharamtul now in Morigaon district on January 15, 1930. The family was headed by Rai Bahadur Bhagadatta Hazarika then Mouzadar of Dharamtul - a respected well known family. Ganesh Hazarika the father of Abani Hazarika was the youngest brother of Bhagadatta Hazarika. Abani and all the youngster of the family were staying in Guwahati with their paternal uncle, Krishnadatta Hazarika at the families Lamb road, Jorpukhuri par campus who was the secretary of

Assam Cricket Association (ACA) which was then headed by Late: Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed as a President, then Finance Minister of Assam.

Abani went to Kamrup Academy school in 1943. He captained the cricket team of his school. He joined the famous Guwahati Town Club as cricket captain. Due to his able sportsmanship in the game, he became the cricket captain of Guwahati District Team and led for a number of years in the Inter District Cricket Tournament. As a cricket organizer his skills have been highly exemplary exalted indigenous cricket into higher degrees of recognition. He played the big cricket match in Assam in 1947 between the then premier Gopinath Bordoloi's XI and Governor Sir Akbar Hydari's XI at Guwahati. He was dreaming to form a cricket association, took form into reality when in 1947 itself, the Assam Cricket Association was formed. Gopinath Bordoloi became the founder President and Pulin Das its General Secretary.

The main idea in forming the Assam Cricket Association was to get Assam affiliated to BCCI and to participate in the Ranji Trophy. The ignition of that vital spark of the much desired board affiliation made his dreams transpired into reality. He says it was all possible because of the hard work of Pulin da - the veteran sportsman of yesteryears. Assam affiliated to BCCI in 1948 and the year 1949, Abani Hazarika played in the Ranji Trophy against Holker at Shillong in 1947- 48, when he was a school student and scored 110 runs against Orissa at Nagaon in 1951. In 1953, he represented Assam in Santosh Trophy (Senior National Football). He played not for money but to bring back glory to Assam. He played Ranji Trophy since 1948-1973. In 1972-73, he was the captain of the Assam team in all the three matches against Bihar, Bengal and Orissa played at Guwahati.

The railway authority requested him to play for them by joining the service. He scored 175 in 1951 against N.E Railway in inter - Railway Tournament at Gorakhpur. Three big international matches were organized in Guwahati by Assam Cricket Association against Australia team in 1969, against England's School boys team in 1974 and against MCC (England) in 1976. He was equally good at football also. A reputed footballer and a member of the Assam Football Association formed 1948, he was playing regularly in Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi tournament which was formed in 1952. He was the one and only to call at net in Kolkata in order to select the Indian team for the final test match against New Zealand at Madras in 1955-56. He was the selector of the Indian Cricket team (Junior) Board of Control for cricket in India and was the Chairman of the East zone Selection Committee.

Mentioning the present sport scenario in Assam, he groans how the state of Assam suffers at the growing incoherent working in the National Selection level. The veteran laments, due to the neglect dirty politics and lackadaisical attitude because of which the gifted young players from this region have not been able to make to the National Team. It is also the lack of encouragement, economic instability, lack of funds, which are some basic hurdles in sports oday. International umpire should be invited to make the player understand the various rules and regulations. They should teach all the basics and fundamentals of cricket. If the government and ACA tries and make proper infrastructure,



Assam can produce another Ganguly or Sachin.

Remembering his time as a cricketer Abani Hazarika say's - " in our days coaching was practically nil. We practiced three or four times a day on our own at Judges Field. Preparing of match wickets, watering of pitch were also included in our list of duties. Initially we were coached by my elder brother - Prafulla Hazarika. We received one month training under D. Frank in 1958. One month under D. Phatekar in 60's and 15 days under Lala Amarnath. The main draw back of our time was lack of match practice. We used to play the District and then directly the Ranji Trophy - no other one day matches. That is why probably Assam has been playing in the Ranji Trophy since 1948, but has never been able to make the knock-out stage even for once. But still then we defeated each and every team except Bengal - the strongest team of our time. Neither the government nor the ACA helped us very much. The only thing that helped us was the strong team spirit, dedication and the will power of our player. Whereas these days most of the players play only for money, or for their personal fame with out any

consideration for the state performance".

The Hazarika's - at the Lamb road residence under the guidance of the elder Hazarikas, the young member of the family honed their skills in various fields of activities Abani was coached by his elder brother, Prafulla Hazarika. Pradip Hazarika, the youngest brother was the wicket keeper of Assam team. The elder ones use to provide the outliners only while the young ones hammered the instructions on the anvil of repeated practiced to acquire their desired skills. Perhaps because of this reason many of the Hazarika's could shine either as a footballer, cricketer or table-tennis player. While Abani Hazarika emerged as a renowned cricketer and footballer, two of his brothers Amar and Biju were lording the then table-tennis arena of the state. Both were Assam champion.

Hence there is nothing astonishing when one comes to know today that 6 of the Hazarika's are now recipients of the state government sports pension:

- 1) Pravat Hazarika
- 2) Prafulla Hazarika
- 3) Golap Hazarika
- 4) Pradip Hazarika
- 5) Abani Hazarika
- 6) Anil Hazarika

Till the 1980's the Hazarika's were virtually the house hold name in the state's sports circle. But today they are lost in oblivion, time - worn memories as have made the Hazarika's non-entitled.

Today he is lost in his own world. One encountering him with queries on his exploits in sports arena is bound to get the chilled touch of a dejected heart which becomes nostalgic at the drop of a hat. He

moans - " I can think even a second line except being a cricketer. Cricket was my blood. I gave everything to the game and even in my odd days, I played for the state. In return what have I got. I am yet to be recognized".

Voicing his comments on the 33rd National Games 2005 to be held in Guwahati, he is happy that different Sports Association are taking initiative in conducting coaching camps for the respective games to groom the players for such a top class event.

The photo shows Rini Kakati with Abani Hazarika and his wife: Manju. Abani Hazarika with the Indian Cricketer: Farookh Engineer during his hey days and also with Bishan Singh Bedi.

By Rini Kakati. London

Gay Marriage

I am rather hesitant to talk about an issue, which really does not seem to concern most Indians –and is a non-issue in I think all of the developing world. But I have been airing my rustic views on this topic and one of batch mates who is into Peace Education pointedly asked me and others to come out with our views on this issue. The animated discussion lasted well past midnight- despite a tiring evening baseball game that day.

†
Now yesterday afternoon, while walking from Harvard Square towards MIT (and going over Charles River with steam coming from the river!! And to watch Batman at Loews theatre amidst skyscrapers of Boston near the Common Park). I happened to see a middle-aged East Asian aiming his camera across the street – high up – on twisting my head I saw a new hoarding of two young men wrapped in a towel of American flag with a gay website. Asians



generally do not take pictures of buildings on the street after FBI etc caught some in Boston (before I came here) thinking they were terrorists.

So I think lots of Asians might be interested in the issue. From an educators point of view also –there is the question of children's books like –"Heather has two mommies" or "Daddy's room mate." My interest got piqued in the gay marriage issue –after I saw a picture of Boston University's Graduation

ceremony a few weeks ago. The young guy in his ceremonial robe was shown getting photographed –with his biological middle-aged mother –and her lesbian partner! Then I could relate to that young guy.

Imagine if my father or mother NOW became gay –and I had to introduce them along with their partners to my classmates at Harvard. The child's angle –with his/her gay parents really got my goat. Why should the child be

punished and discriminated against just because his/her parents are gay? Of course this guy in the picture cannot do anything about it –he is already born and bred by his parents –one cannot choose one's parents... But a couple can choose NOT to have a child. Why should a couple raise a child knowing that it will be persecuted-especially when the child does NOT happen to be biologically theirs.

I can relate to it –since I was 25 when my father ditched my mother for another and broke up my family—when in India belonging to a broken family is as bad a thing as belonging to a gay family in USA. I could not handle it and chose to get transferred from Jaipur to Bhopal. Even when I returned I had to face lots of flak – overt and covert. So as an offspring who has to pay the penalty of one's parent's wrongdoing – I can empathize with a kid –who was/will be persecuted if adopted and raised by a Gay couple in USA or elsewhere.

My female colleague pointed out that gay people want to have the same legal rights over each other's property, privacy, disclosure in courts –as those available to married husband and wife. Well I see no objection to that. Recently a man in India (?) married his aged grandmother legally –just so that she might have no trouble with property

issues – if he were to die. So also do people marry dogs and cats as well–or make such legal provisions-regards property for them.

So go ahead and get hitched to a person of your sex –if u want to have the same legal rights as a heterosexual couple (and what u do in your bedroom is not my concern) –but there is no reason for you to "ruin" the life of a child by adopting him/her and exposing it to persecution. Thus I see no need for gay couples to adopt any children at all—so no question of children's books like "Heather has two mommies."

Someone said that going by this argument even Blacks should also stop producing children since they would be persecuted too (in USA.) But Blacks are a race and are mere fulfilling their duty to propagate their race. There is no race of Gays – they are of all colors and ethnic origin – and no species have a gay species!! Just like there is no race of eunuchs. We do have lots of eunuchs in India –but not visible in USA. Why?

PS: I do have some theories about why in India gays are found mostly in Indian Jails and in Pak in female college hostels (as per a recent remark) –and why I might get raped

if put inside an Indian Jail –by the "Gays" there –as routinely happens.

I had read Desmond Morris's classic book "The Naked Ape" –on the suggestion of my father – as part of my teenage sex education. He spoke about lots of sexuality but none about permanent Gay Dom. Even those who are permanently gay –and proved scientifically or genetically so –can be explained by the remarkable control of the Mind over the Body. The kind of things you experience mentally –thru media or peer pressure – may create permanent change in brain (as per recent brain theories) and behavioral patterns. So those who are more bombarded to Gay-stuff –read in developed nation's media, clubs etc, forced single- sex groups (like Indian Jails) –are more likely to develop permanent Gay behavioral patterns.

It is similar to the phenomenon of loss of appetite for sex and fertility in high stress environments like city-nation Singapore recently.

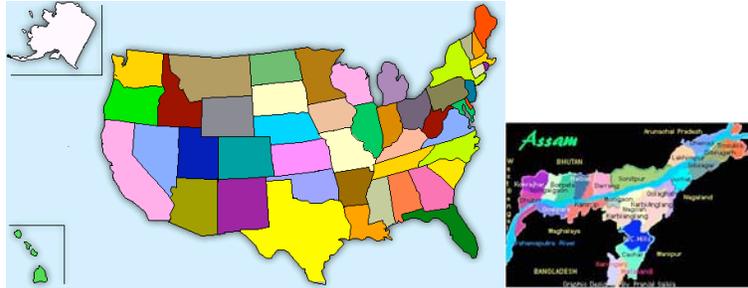
[The photograph shows Umesh – in the center at Professor Reimer's house, June 4th, 2005](#)

By Umesh Sharma. Mr Sharma is a M. Ed. graduate from Harvard Graduate School of Education Class of 2005.

The ASA Newsletter is published monthly. Sanjib Bhuyan, NJ, on behalf of Assam Society of America, has published this issue of ASA newsletter. The editors are Satyam Bhuyan (Ames, Iowa), Ganesh Bora (Lake Alfred, Florida), Prasenjit Chetia (Atlanta, Georgia), Babul Gogoi (New Delhi, India), Jugal Kalita (Colorado Springs, Colorado, Editor-In-Chief), Symanta Saikia (Wichita, Kansas), Vavani Sarmah (Secane, Pennsylvania), Ujjal Pathak (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), Rini Kakati (London, UK), Umesh Sharma (Cambridge, Massachusetts), and Ram Sarangapani (Houston, Texas). The ASA Executive Committee is composed of Sanjib Bhuyan, President (Franklin Park, New Jersey), Utpal Brahma, Vice President (Burlington, New Jersey), Ganesh Bora, General Secretary (Lake Alfred, Florida), Probal Tabhildar (Kendall Park, New Jersey), Mantu Baishya (Omaha, Nebraska), Kedar Bhuyan (Mays Landing, New Jersey), and Sangeeta Duorah (California).

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