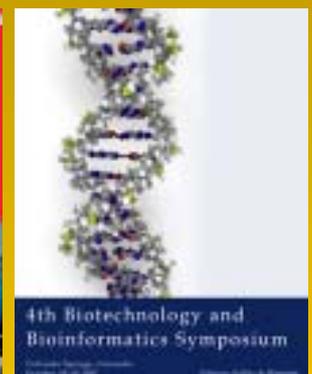




A Boro weaver demonstrates how to weave fairy tales in fabric at Bryant Park at 42nd Street in New York City between 9/24/2007 and 9/26/2007.
Photo by Dipak Chakarvarti of Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

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Gauhati University Deserves a Better Deal

The present Vice Chancellor and chief administrative officer of Gauhati University, Dr. Amarjyoti Choudhury planned to resign during the last week of September 2007, because he is unable to carry out his job under the circumstances prevailing at the University. The Governor of Assam, who is the formal Chancellor of the University, did not accept his resignation. I am not surprised!



The Vice Chancellor of the University is finding himself in the midst of a sea of problems and is desperately looking for rescue. Appeals to the Government of Assam for revival of the university have fallen on deaf ears. The politicians make tall promises but in practice nothing happens. To save the university from sinking to the bottom, the VC has extended his begging bowl to the NRAs (Non-resident Assamese) like a drowning man clutching a single straw.

This past summer when I was at Guwahati, I had an opportunity to listen to his emotional appeal to the public in a meeting titled "Save Our University". Sitting next to him was Mamoni Baidew (Mamoni Raisom Goswami) who was also appealing on behalf of the University in the same tune saying "Our students are wonderful, bright and intelligent; they certainly need help and support".

The demand for converting GU into a Central University has been made for a long time. The conversion can cater to the needs of students in a much better way. Enhancement of the standard of the

university will prevent brain drain of Assamese students to a considerable extent, as a very large number of students go out of the state every year to pursue higher education. A revitalized university under competent and entrepreneurial leadership can create a center of higher education that can attract students from other South- East Asian countries also, in not too distant future.

It is really sad to see the decaying condition of Gauhati University, and how negligence and misuse of the campus have led to such a degraded state. It seems that there are no sympathizers left to help this institution because the whole academic atmosphere has become so corrupted that money speaks louder than knowledge. The student community has become so used to the situation that they have no realization that they are the worst sufferers.

Perennial financial crisis has retarded the progress of the premier university of the North-East region. It is unfortunate that the university which has contributed immensely in enriching the educational scene of the region is now crying hoarse for funds. This university has shaped the destiny of the significant section of Assam's intelligentsia and can boast of producing a large number of scholars and researchers who have made laudable contributions to the state. But its academic performance has fallen short of what is expected of an institution of its stature.

Recently the university have come up with Rupees 180 crores (approximately \$4.5 million US) proposal for revamping its infrastructure. The reluctance of Assam Government to invest in education is not surprising. But again it maybe that the university authorities in the past failed to exhibit the kind of leadership necessary for making its case strongly before the Government. With the state Government attitude being negative, the university has no other option left except to seek donation from the public and corporate houses. At the same time, it requires a

greater responsibility and dogged persuasion on the part of the university to convince the government that big investment is a must.

The flippant attitude of those who are in the helm of affairs towards Gauhati University is causing great distress in the intellectual circles in Assam since GU is the mother of all institutions of higher education in Assam. This university deserves the treatment in Assam that the English has given to Oxford.

As part of its initiative to tide over the crisis, the Vice Chancellor Dr. Amarjyoti Choudhury has taken some innovative steps. An account has been opened in the State Bank of India branch on the university campus for anyone to deposit much-needed and much-appreciated donations for the development of the university. Even the smallest amount one can afford to donate is welcome. Today we have many millionaires and possibly billionaires in Assam, but not many generous donors

The key point is that is enough has been said, but what can we do? Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Like many colleges and universities around the world, the alumni of Gauhati University must come forward and contribute to the all round development of their alma mater.
- 2) The alumni community of Gauhati University, wherever they are in the globe, must organize themselves, and undertake relevant programs through institutions they are associated with. Funds can possibly be raised through overseas students unions and political parties like the Labour League of Friends in UK.
- 3) There are various international charitable societies known for their focus on educational causes. If they can be approached with the plight of the Gauhati University, it may bring some financial relief.

The involvement of its alumni and the people of Assam and Assam's diaspora around the world is absolutely crucial to help the university overcome its current crisis and embark on new plans and projects. Recently, a lady came forward to donate her life time savings to help the present VC in his quest. Her selfless example drives home the point that the challenge in front of us all is to make it a common cause to help Gauhati University rise to our lofty expectations so that it can work hard not only to re-attain its past glory but also to attain new heights.

*Rini Kakati, London
October 1, 2007*



Delhi Notes

A three day National Seminar on Tribes of India with Special Focus on Karbis of Assam (September 5 to September 7, 2007) was held at University of Delhi, jointly organized by the Department of



Manjeet Baruah, speaking on the occasion

Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi and Karbi Anglong Zila Sakharata Abhijan Samiti. The seminar was inaugurated by Prof. Indra Goswami (Mamoni Raisom Goswami) who was also the Chief Guest on the occasion. The seminar was the first that had brought the Karbi people to the centre stage of discussion at the national level. The organizers emphasized that the seminar was a success in another way as well. It was collaboration between two institutions, one operating at the level of higher education in the national capital of Delhi and the other that has been successfully engaged in adult literacy in Karbi Anglong, Assam. Today, Karbi Anglong is among two of the most successful districts in India in the field of adult literacy. It is collaboration of this nature that makes education more meaningful in a country where there is a constant gap between higher education and primary literacy and a gap between the centre and the distant regions of the country. The scholars who participated



in the seminar came from various disciplines such as Sociology, History, Anthropology, Social Work, Folklore, Culture Studies, Music and Performing Art and Literature. They came from Universities and research organizations spread all over the country. Another high point of the seminar was the published volume *Tribes of India: Culture, Identity and Lore*, edited by Dr. P. Pattanaik and Shri Debojit Bora. The volume contained all the papers that were presented during the seminar. The participants were given a copy of the volume during the seminar. The seminar concluded on a positive note, with the participants and guests congratulating the organizing team and on the note that more such collaborative ventures should be initiated to bring into focus areas, people and issues that have been understudied in academic discourses.

Review of Book: Pattanaik, P. and Bora D. (ed.), 2007. *Tribes of India: Culture, Identity and Lore*, Guwahati: Angik Publication.

The beautiful cover of the book is matched by its authoritative survey of tribal society in India with a special focus on the Karbi people of Assam. The essays include theoretical expositions on the issue of 'tribal' culture and identity as well as on how these categories operate at the functional level. Any concept operates at both ideological and functional level. The essays in the book insightfully bring into focus the dialectics of the twin operations. Some of significant questions that the volume raises are (a) rethinking 'tribal' epistemology in India with emphasis on North East India, (b) the concept and politics of 'tribe' in India with emphasis on North East India, (c) problems in documenting and preserving 'tribal' culture, (d) tradition and social change among tribal women, (e) Social Science disciplines and the problematic of 'tribal' study and (f) Tribal people and Art. One noteworthy point in the volume is that it includes several essays on the Karbi people and these essays can be read in the light of the other essays for a better understanding of the Karbi people of Assam. It is to the success of the book that it enables not only an understanding of a people or a region and of the ways to conceptualize them through the existing knowledge paradigms but also the limitations of these knowledge paradigms and possible methods to overcome them. A recommended volume for research scholars.

By Manjeet Baruah, University of Delhi



Sri Sri Shankar Dev Tithi Celebration in NE USA



Sri Sri Shankar Dev Tithi celebration is a yearly regular event in the Northeast US. Like other years, the Assamese community of the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic states came together to celebrate and honor our Mahapurush Sri Sri Shankar Dev on 29th September, 2007. With everyone's active participation, it was a great success! Thanks to all for your support for such community events that bring the Assamese people together from various neighboring states.

Kamna Das who sponsored the entire Tithi. A special dedication was given at the "naam" by Mr. Brojen Bordoloi. Our prayers are with the Das family and wish them all the best.

Also many thanks to the organizers for their dedications and all the people who showed up bringing many delicious food and help clean afterward.

We take this opportunity to thank the family of Shonit and

By Dhruba Das



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

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Highlights from ASA's October 14, 2007 Meeting

Present: Members of the Executive Committee, and other members of ASA; conference organized telephonically

Joint get together for all Assamese people in 2008:

The subject of holding the yearly get together of the Assamese people in USA on the same day but separately is always questioned by many community members and also by many younger ASA members. This was discussed thoroughly in the meeting and even though it's a little late to have a joint get together for next year, nevertheless the group felt we should always encourage this kind of discussion. ASA as a rule does believe in one joint get together for all the people. A couple of representatives on behalf of ASA will explore with appropriate member(s) from AANA to see if there is any possibility of holding the event together next year and

under what circumstances. Remember we have had these joint get-togethers several times in the past after some great effort by many; so it's not utterly impossible to do it again. We believe people in general enjoy very much for being able to meet a much bigger crowd. We hope AANA will entertain this request and something positive will come out!

Charitable Projects:

ASA has several charitable projects where ASA helps various needy groups in Assam. However lately other than one or two projects, nothing has been done much on the other projects. The question was brought up: should we identify one or two projects for the current year and at least try to do something real meaningful? Are the project leaders still interested in running the projects? The group felt as long as we do something, it's good for Assam; half bread is better than no bread. We will identify two projects (with a majority consensus) and try to raise some substantial dollars by July next

year.

Membership:

Except for a few folks, ASA members haven't renewed their membership for the current year. Membership forms were included in the ASA directories. In the current year, ASA has spent more dollars than what it received. The ASA Treasurer promised to mail out additional requests to members for renewal of membership and donation. Please do support this effort.

We not only need your support by renewing the membership but by also being active in a project or taking part in regional get-togethers such as Sankar Dev Tithi, and Bihus. It's your organization and without your help and support we can't survive as a group.



Submitted respectfully,

Dhruva Das, President

Grantha Baandhab and Jaatingaa Ityaadi

continued from page 7..

e) To establish the biggest book showroom of North East India at Guwahati

f) To set up a print and electronic media house and to project Assam and North East India correctly and professionally.

I wish Mr. Sanjib Sabhapandit and Mr. Rajkamal Bhuyan the very best in this endeavor. I am also crafting below a short introduction of Sabhapandit and Bhuyan. Interested readers may contact and communicate to buy the movie and also support 'GRANTHA BAANDHAB'.

Sanjib Sabhapandit, born in 1957, is a mechanical engineer and an MBA. An entrepreneur, who has always treaded paths of his own choice, has been instrumental in establishment of industries and academic institutions in Assam. An author of two books, he conceptualized and enacted the first Light and Sound show of the North East India. The engineer in him designed a unique

humane mode of transport of goats in the city of Guwahati, Assam. Mother Shelter, an all-in-one flood relief camp capsule and a three-wheeler rickshaw with a humane touch, are two of his other innovations. The sensitivity in him led to the world of cinema, and his maiden film "JUYE POORA XOON" won the National Award (for best film on environment conservation and preservation) in 2004. In his second film "JAATINGAA et al..." he has portrayed a love story, set in the extremist infested turmoil of the North East India in a forthright yet poignant way. This film has been nominated for the Indian panorama 2007. His contact information is Phone: 09864044470, and E-mail: kuhkhhal@yahoo.com.

Rajkamal Bhuyan, a post graduate in Economics and a Chartered Accountant by profession, is the founder director of Liv'in Apartments (P) Ltd, a pioneering Real Estate company of the North East India. He is also a founder director of Four Seasons Garden Resorts (P) Ltd, engaged in constructing



North East India's first Water park and a resort hotel in Guwahati and a theme holiday resort in Kaziranga. Ruchira Arts (P) Ltd, which is promoted by him, is engaged in audio visual productions, book publishing, and strives to contribute meaningfully to art & culture of the region. Jaatingaa et al... is the maiden venture of the company, and the company is now actively engaged in several cultural, literary and media projects. A Rotarian, Sri Bhuyan, is the spirit behind the noble road map of Ruchira Arts. His contact information is Phone: 09435013943 and E-mail: brajkamal@hotmail.com.

By Ankur Bora, Texas

ASA Foundation, Inc., Meeting Minutes

Date: 10/21/2007. Venue:
Teleconference

Attendees: Nomal Dutta, Jugal Kalita, Utpal Brahma, Jayantha Thakuria and Mukul Chowdhary

Key points Discussed:

1. The central focus was on disbursement of the money raised for various social projects in Assam, India during the annual Assamese Conference (Assam 2007) held on Washington DC, Maryland during June 30-July 1. Nomal Dutta mentioned that donations were received from attendees against the following causes Parijat Academy (solicited by Partho Gogoi), Pragyalaya (solicited by Ankur Bora), Hope Project (an old ASA project which was initiated by Malabika Bora Brahma), Flood Relief (A Core ASA Foundation project).

2. The members unanimously agreed that while the raised fund is to be used for the purpose it was contributed by the generous community members, for the purpose of book-keeping and compliance against the IRS guidelines (which a tax exempt organization like ASA Foundation is bound by law to comply with), the foundation must receive the legal and tax status of the recipient organization (in this case Parijat Academy and Pragyalaya) as applicable in the country (in this case India) where it operates before the fund can be disbursed.

3. Utpal Brahma will contact Parijat Academy and Pragyalaya directly to seek the pertinent legal and tax status of these organizations as applicable in the country where it functions (India)

5. Mukul Chowdhary and Nomal Dutta

will provide input to Utpal Brahma with respect to the exact information which will be required from these organizations before money can be disbursed to them.

To make our effort more meaningful and effective, it was decided that

a. A teleconference call involving AFNA members (which will invoke joint effort between ASA Foundation and AFNA for projects relating to Assam) and well wishers within the community will be a good starting point.

b. Seek the help of professional fund raising bodies to raise funds from Assamese and non-Assamese residents in the US for projects in Assam. Nomal Dutta volunteered to work with Dr. Sanjiv Bhuyan regarding this initiative.

Utpal Brahma



Thank You!

Dear friends,

During the recent fires in San Diego, the local Assamese families have received many phone calls and emails from their concerned friends from all parts of the country.

We are happy to inform everyone that none of the Assamese families have been directly affected. Most of us were evacuated from our homes for several days, but no one lost their home. The fires gutted over 1,500 homes and 7 lives were lost in these fires. However, the morale of the people of San Diego remains high and we are

28 October, 2007

bouncing back rapidly.

We would like to thank you all for your concerns and deeply appreciate your phone calls and messages.

Sincerely,

*Arup Barua
Bhaskar & Kajju Borthakur
Arindam & Rita Katakya
Kaushik & Rashmi Kalita
Bimal & Ruli Deka
Rabin & Kalpana Sarma
Panna & Loni Hazarika*

News from Colorado

Assamese residents of Colorado celebrated Sankardev Tith, Durga Puja, Lakhmi Puja and Dewali in Fort Collins with a fun-filled evening.

Photo by Bharat Baruah



Grantha Baandhab and Jaatingaa Ityaadi

The state of Assam is in deep distress and great disorder. Insurgency, terror and rampant corruption have created such a situation that common men are almost losing hope for a better tomorrow. The vicious cycle of unemployment causing insurgency and insurgency in turn causing instability has left our youth weary and frazzled.



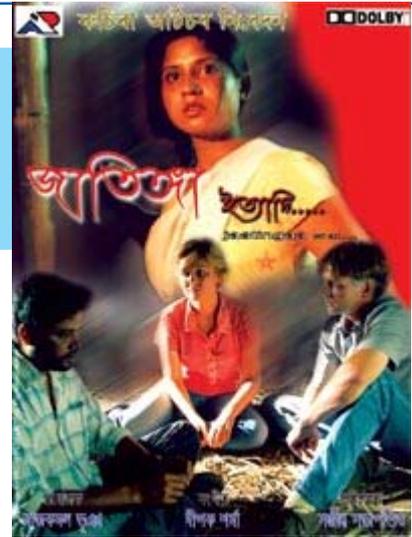
Despite such a hopeless and chaotic situation, we still come across men and women who are making a significant difference in peoples' lives. They, with their creativity, vision and will power have proved that there still exists light at the end of the tunnel. Sanjeev Sabhapandit is such a filmmaker, social worker and philanthropist who believes that an artist too is committed to the wellbeing of society. Sabhapandit through his award winning film titled 'Jaatingaa Ityaadi' has brought forth his concern about the maladies of society. At the same time he has made a conscious effort to arrest the downward trend of our moral ethos and to create a positive

ambiance in our troubled state with creative ideas and innovative schemes. He has started 'GRANTHA BAANDHAB' (a book lovers club) to promote and inculcate reading habits among the young and old alike and thereby help build the intellectual crest of our society.

His movie 'Jaatingaa Ityaadi' is a sincere and honest attempt to portray the anguish and suffering brought by deadly insurgency to our people. The film's protagonist Manab, an educated youth, is appalled by everyday corruption and general apathy in society. Demoralized and frustrated, he goes back to his native village and joins hands with a group of insurgents pledging to cure the ills of society through the deceptive path of insurgency. However, he soon realizes that insurgency has nothing to do with his dreams of uplifting a frail and feeble society. It is a masquerade, a disguise that the militants were using in running an extortion racket in the garb of fighting for a social cause. He tries to escape, but the escape route is thorny. Like many others, he too becomes a prisoner of insurgency; trapped and hence an involuntary accomplice.

'Jaatingaa Ityaadi' is a poignant depiction of insurgency and its devastating impact on hundreds of families. Mr. Sabhapandit skillfully shows how insurgency emerged as the hydra for the state's society. In NC Hills district there is a hill station called Jatinga where according to legend migratory birds come to commit mass suicide. The facts however are that local hunters use petromax lamps at night to lure and trap these birds. As I completed watching the movie, I felt that the title of the movie 'Jaatingaa' is a metaphor. Like the helpless birds, our youths have also been trapped in insurgency and its subsequent deathlike stagnation.

Sanjeev Sabhapandit is not only a filmmaker and artist but also a committed individual who has been trying hard for the intellectual growth of the Assamese youth. Mr. Sabhapandit has been aptly supported by Mr. Rajkamal Bhuyan who is the producer and financier of 'Jaatingaa Ityaadi'. Both Sabhapandit and Bhuyan together have started a literary movement titled 'GRANTHA BAANDHAB'. This is to arrest the downward fall of our socio-



cultural atmosphere. The last few decades have been traumatic for the people of Assam. The six years long Assam Movement, the miserable failure of the student leadership and subsequent emergence of insurgency have mentally crippled Assam's future generation. The 'GRANTHA BAANDHAB' is a bold and sincere attempt to guide our youths through the ruins. Books are our treasure house and book reading is a habit and practice that enlightens us with all the treasures that lay hidden for us to explore and understand. I have observed that in the United States people spend a lot of time reading books and highly emphasize the value of book reading. Oprah Winfrey, the famous television host of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" has a book club and books recommended by the club usually sell in millions. Oprah Winfrey's book club is a movement which has a deep positive impact in many peoples' lives. Sanjeev Sabhapandit and Rajkamal Bhuyan through their dream project GRANTHA BAANDHAB hope that their movement too will create a positive outcome in the coming days. The salient features of the project are:

- A target to create a readership base of 5 lakhs in 300 days from the date of launch of the website. The website www.ruchiraarts.com is operational now.
- To upload all available books from and on or about North East India in a website and make those available for sale.
- To create a direct book marketing network through a select band of about 350 youths scattered all over the region initially who are being named Mission Associates.
- Publication of a regular monthly journal exclusively to update the book publication front.



continued to page 5...

Looking into Panowa's World

My dear brother Nantu who is interested in ordinary people and how they live got more than interested in a person whom we would not even notice in our midst. He discovered some down-to-earth facets of the man's character and told me a whole lot about him – a lot more than I could assimilate in my early youth. But, what my brother told me stayed on my mind vividly for many decades. The man's name was Panowa who made his living like many of his working-class community did at a tea stall in Gauripur market. My brother made the discovery of the lovable man during his visits to the tea-stall. You would see that Panowa was man of conscience and a pillar of strength in the face of enormous multi-dimensional adversity.

I had seen Panowa on many occasions standing at the corner of a pan-shop smoking bidi and listening to others, while he hardly doing any talking. He had long curly hair which came up to his shoulder, and unkempt beard. His clothes were always dirty. He wore a pair of sandals made out of discarded automobile tires by an enterprising cobbler. He did not talk much except when necessary. But, he was a nice lovable person. Nonetheless, he stood out as a defiant non-practitioner of normal hygiene and cleanliness in daily living. And people loved that aspect of him simply as a point of reference when talking about degree of cleanliness and shabbiness of people in the town. Paniwa-10 was the highest one could get, not any higher. He knew that. But, that didn't bother him a whit. Because, there was a compensating skill in him and he was absolutely sure of that – he made excellent spicy 'singaras', the best in town in all seasons of the year for many years going. And the people had been lapping his singaras up for years in spite of his widespread reputation of uncleanliness, in attire to be sure.

He lived just on the edge of the town with his old mother sharing a single tin-roofed shack with some mango trees in the small yard and couple of milk cows which his mother depended on as her income. He didn't have any family of his own – he never married in his thirty five years of his uneventful life when I came to know about him. The owner of the tea stall where he worked left him alone to do his own things which he did well. So, he was his own boss at the tea stall and he loved that freedom of doing things as he liked. It gave him a measure of self worth and meaning. His mother asked him often to get a wife so that she could die in peace when her time came. He kept silent whenever the matter came up. But, she got on his nerves by repeating the same thing again and again. Finally, being able to stand her pestering no more, he exploded in uncontrollable rage as much as a rebuke to his mother as to his own situation in life, "Khach, khach. Buddi, the old irritating lady, you have seen nothing but poverty in all your life. You were born in poverty; you lived your life in grinding poverty. You want to die in peace so that many more could be born in more poverty. Remember, when your daughter comes to see you, you can't provide her and her children even with something to eat." and stormed out of the shack. The inner space for comfort, security and solace he built for himself over many years of his adult life was being penetrated by none other than his own loving mother and there was no excuse for that, he argued.

After his outburst of anger, he moved into a back room of the tea stall for some time. At the end, he was repentant for his rude behavior and cried in the presence of roomful of customers when he was asked why he lived in the tea stall instead of his house. He came home, looked at his mother and cried again. The old lady didn't raise the question again about his marriage or anything else. But, when Panowa was

not home, she just complained to others in the neighborhood at the top of voice about his son's rude behavior and errant ways of life without a wife while sweeping her already-swept yard. Not venting her displeasure would send a wrong message to her neighbors and she did not want that. She would not let a dead leaf from the mango trees stay in the small yard for long. That was her own way of coping with the harshness of a changing way of life for his son without being married. Every one else she knew was married when they came of age at fifteen or sixteen or even earlier. That was the natural law as enunciated by her religion. She could not understand why his son didn't understand the simple thing.

Panowa did his daily duties unerringly and with great devotion and precision and regularity. He never willingly missed his work. The first thing he did in the morning after getting up was lighting up a bidi and taking long leisurely puffs while in deep thoughts about what specialty of singaras he should make that day to keep his customers happy and coming back to his tea stall. Without that he would be unemployed and that would be a disaster. That brief interlude being over, he would take a stroll to a nearby bush by the river with a shiny multi-purpose metal container with a long spigot filled with water from their water-well to do his usual natural things. The bush was the communal lavatory used by both males and females with a simple code of conduct – no male would use the bush when a female was there. After coming back from the bush, he splashed fresh water drawn from the same well on his face and cleaned his water container with sand and a piece of coconut husk to give it a shiny clean gloss. He would that again for drinking water. He put on his lone shirt. He did not change any other clothes because he did not care to have any at the beginning of his adult life when his father was alive and took care of his family as best as he could, and now couldn't afford to have any. It was kind of minimalist view of necessary things of life born out of After taking a bath in the river, he would come home with a new sari which he bought for his mother along with his lungi. Without giving the sari to his mother, he would lay it on his mother's barren

wooden cot. Making sure that his mother was not anywhere near, he would stand before a big picture of goddess Durga, the goddess of destroyer of peoples' misery, the picture that he hung up years ago on the wall of his shack after obtaining that picture from a Bidi manufacturer. He would put a few sticks of incense into the mud floor before the picture and light them up. He would murmur a few words in memory of his father. Panowa thought up the whole simple ritual one night many years after his father's death when he was heading home after work thinking about his father, mother and little sister. His father was an honest and hard-working man trying to provide for himself, his wife, Panowa and his little sister Panchali. His father sold roasted peanuts, spicy cooked unshelled gram lentil and 'chanachur', all made in his shack, out of a small glass-enclosed box in a corner of the market on 'market-days' and roamed around in surrounding villages the rest of the week. He carried that box on his head cushioned by his gamcha wrapped like a ring, and a light wooden support on his back to prop up the box when he reached a destination. When it rained, he was out of an income and they all sort of starved. Mangoes, which they could not sell, provided some relief in the season. His mother hardly slept at night when mangoes ripened. She went out to collect mangoes when she heard a thud of falling mangoes in her yard. The meaty yellow mangoes were easy targets for early-rising neighborhood boys who were always on the lookout for something to eat. And stealing mangoes added an extra edge to their desire. For Panowa's family, mangoes were a precious commodity for the family's survival in the lean rainy months. But, Panowa did not want deprive the boys entirely. In the years when he helped his father in roasting peanuts, cooking lentils and doing other things for his vending business, he was home most of the day. Taking advantage of his mother's absence from the shack when she took their cows for grazing around the nearby school yard, Panowa called the neighborhood boys to their yard. He would climb up on a tree, selectively shook branches high up on the tree so that his mother's squinting eyes didn't miss those mangoes in her estimation of what she had. Then he gathered the

fallen mangoes and distributed them among the boys delighting them all. His father looked the other way all throughout the whole clandestine operation. The boys affectionately called him Panowabhai, brother Panowa. As a reciprocal gesture of good-will towards him, they followed him silently up to their side of the culvert over the drainage ditch as Panowa came out of his shack and headed to the market. Panowa, maintaining his stoic silence, never exchanged a word with them. He didn't want to be their role model.

If a sense of heart-felt solemnity graced the observance of Panowa's father's death anniversary, a sense of merriment and revelry marked the observance of the 'holi' festival. On that day he also had a hair cut, a shave, an elaborate bath in the river duly observed by a crowd of children, wear new clothes he bought for himself, and he gave a sari to his mother the usual way. After the bath, he would head straight to market to buy meat, a commodity which escaped his meals for most of the year, for himself and his colleagues at the tea-stall. The he would elaborately cook meals for them all including the owner. The meal was on him. A few drinks of strong country liquor and a good meal would prepare him and his friends for a night-long merriment and revelry. They wrapped their heads with 'gamchas', they would take out their 'dholocks', heavy brass-metal 'khanjaris' and little cloth pouches called 'khotuas' to hold abirs and buy red-colored fine talcum 'abir' to smear themselves and others who happened to be by. They would sing songs of extreme sexual fantasy and dance in circles in a frenzied spirit of liberation. They challenged onlookers to join in their fun and many did. There

was no boss, no class, no babus – all barriers came down. The revelers, their individual beings lost under liberal sprinkles and smears of 'abirs' and their inhibitions unburdened of any pretense, were joined by other revelers of the same make-up and spirit, and few 'hijras' added some spice to the festive spirit. The air would be filled with full-throated expressions of joy punctuated with 'chara rara, chara rara, rara rara, rara rara...' This was their day and they would make full use of it. And they did. They would go to the homes of people they liked and smeared the men with plenty of abirs and teased the womenfolk of their beauty and coyness in songs – all in fun and good spirit. When the revelry ended late in the morning, they revelers were too exhausted to go home. They slept wherever they rested. Some found a secluded corner by themselves to get warmth and affection.

Panowa would get up and go home. He had a job to do. Coming home, he would fill his lota with water and start his daily routine in the bush. But, he would not let go of the intoxicating flavor of the 'Holi' festivities of the night before. He would splash his face with cold water. But, he would not take a bath nor would change his clothes. If it was fine with Panowa, it was fine with people.

Some of the abirs from his hair, beard and clothes would fall off, and the rest would gradually be buried under layers of sweat, dust, grime and soot from the oven till it was time for Panowa to take hair cut, a shave, a bath and a set of new clothes to begin the cycle of his mundane life again.

*By Kalyan Dutta-Choudhury
San Francisco*



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BIOT Symposium in Colorado Springs

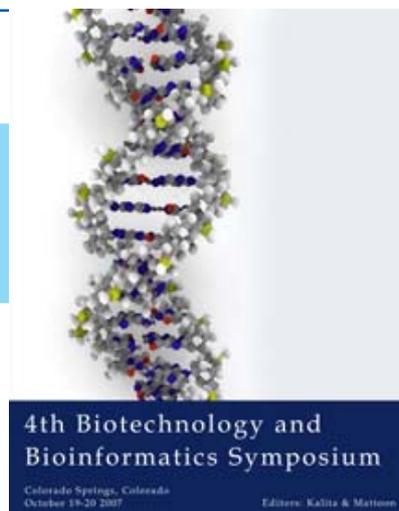
The Fourth Biotechnology and Bioinformatics Symposium, 2007 (BIOT-07) was held on the campus of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS) on October 19th and 20th, 2007. This year's symposium was a great success.

Jugal Kalita, a professor in the Department of Computer Science at UCCS is the founder of this yearly symposium and was a Co-Chair of this year's symposium. The small symposium started in Colorado Springs four years ago as a local event, then became regional and is transitioning to become national. The venues for the symposium during the past four years have been UCCS (years 1 and 2), Brigham Young University, Provo Utah (year 3), and UCCS (year 4). In 2008, it will be held in University of Texas at Arlington. In 2009, the Steering

Committee for the symposium accepted a site proposal from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

This year symposium featured 20 fully reviewed papers from across the US and abroad. Each paper was reviewed by 3-5 referees from an international panel of scientists. The symposium had four invited speakers including one from the National Institutes of Health. In summary, there were 28 presentations over two days by individuals from almost 20 different institutions including one each from India and Italy.

The acceptance rate of papers for the symposium has varied between 33% and 67% during the past four years. Selected papers from this year's symposium will be revised and published in the International Journal of Bioinformatics Research and Applications. Jugal Kalita



Cover for the proceedings of the 4th Biotechnology and Bioinformatics Symposium, designed by Gayatree Buragohain of New Delhi

will serve as the Guest Editor for this special issue of the journal.

The Web site for the symposium is www.biotconf.org. Gayatree Buragohain of New Delhi designed the cover for this year's proceedings.

By Babul Gogoi, New Delhi

Assam Convention 2007 Chorus Competition



Texas team won the first prize in Anima Chakravarty Chorus Competition held in Assam Convention 2007, Boston, photo by *Mano Hazarika, Sugar Land, Texas*

FASS Health Camp

A health camp was successfully organized on 9-23-07 at Parijat Academy, Pamohi Guwahati. About 50 patients from nearby area attended the camp. Three doctors from Guwahati offered their valuable service at the camp. They were Dr. Nripendra Nath Baruah, former Medical Superintendent, Central Hospital, NF Railway, Maligaon, Guwahati; Dr. Pranab Baruah, gynecologist, formerly at Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital, Guwahati; and Dr. Heramba Bhattacharjee, MMC Hospital. Patients were treated with free medicine. Uttam Teron from Parijat Academy gave full cooperation for the camp.

It is to be noted that due to the work of individuals such as Ankur Bora, Partha Gogoi, Nomal Datta and Sanjib Bhuya, Parijat Academy has received substantial support from the Assamese people in North America.

*Jayanta Barman and Rajen Barua
Friends of Assam & Seven Sisters (FASS),
Guwahati and Houston*



Ganesh Bora, Mallika Bora, Disha Bhuyan, Ajita Bhuyan and Satyajit Bhuyan are enjoying a visit to a recent Durga Puja celebration in Tampa, Florida

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Posoowa is published monthly. Dhruva Das, on behalf of Assam Society of America, has published this issue of Posoowa. The editors are Babul Gogoi (New Delhi, India), Ganesh Bora (Lake Alfred, Florida), Jugal Kalita (Colorado Springs, Colorado, Editor-in-Chief), Kaushik Phukan (Seattle, Washington), Rini Kakati (London, UK), Sanchayita Sharma (London, UK), Satyam Bhuyan (Ames, Iowa), Umesh Sharma (College Park, Washington D.C) and Umesh Tahbildar (Princeton, New Jersey). **Design and Layout:** Babul Gogoi.

The ASA Executive Committee is composed of Dhruva 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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