

The Assamese Diaspora - a few success stories

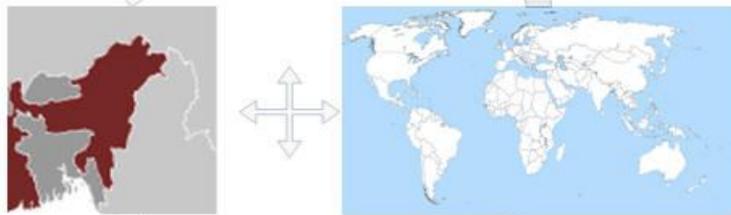
-Wahid Saleh

Session : "Diaspora role models from North East,
Success Stories"

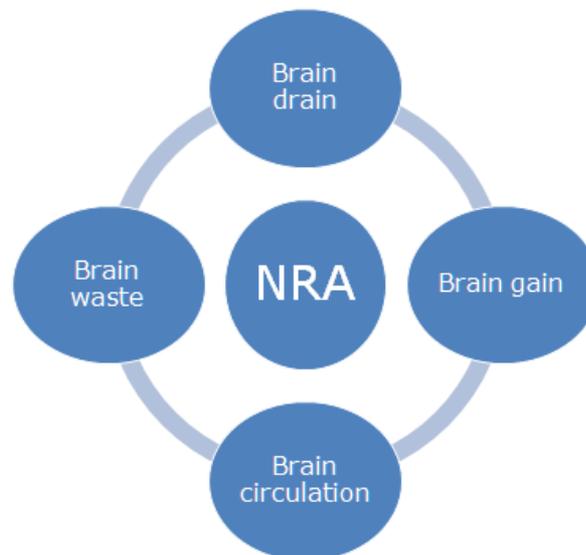
Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2011

The context...

Assam - the land of green valleys and blue hills



The world stage - opportunity leads the way



The Assamese Diaspora - a few success stories

Interaction with students/youth of the North East

Background paper prepared by Wahid Saleh, The Netherlands

Compared to NRIs/PIOs from other states of India, the number of Assamese who settled abroad is small. But there is a global presence of Assamese Diaspora and most members of this community are doing well. The Assamese Diaspora, on an individual basis is active in supporting people back home, be it by paying the tuition fees of brothers and sisters, medical bills of parents, regular financial support of the family and support of an educational institution. The handful of Assamese expatriates, mostly wage-earners in private industry, or in academia, and a few professionals who have done relatively well are hardly in a position to become investors and entrepreneurs in Assam.

When we speak of investment – we speak of money, however there has been a shift in perception in the term "investment". In this age of information and technology, what one holds between the ears is as valuable as the traditional monetary investment.

Today the educated youth with their degree's and diploma's have a choice. The choice is to go away from their home in search of a greener pasture elsewhere. This helps them to enrich their prospects in life in a rich society and to use their capacity fully. This many may term as brain drain. It is considered brain drain for the mother country when persons go abroad and get professionally & financially well established, they and the country of their residence gains but not the motherland.

The other choice is to stay at home but because of limited number of well paid jobs matching their qualifications and experience they may not be able to contribute substantively to national development. Some scholars call this a brain waste. But why do many of these same people do very well when they go abroad? According to me significant reasons why they excel once they leave India are as follows (in random order):

Disciplined job environment, recognition and reward for good performance, motivation, dignity of labour, reasonable tax structure, defensible property rights, reliable conflict resolution processes, freedom from onerous governmental restrictions, absence of interference and corruption, fair labour laws and regulations, reliable infrastructure and utilities, good transportation, uninterrupted power, water and waste systems, and rule of law for all citizens.

While the scholars still argue about brain drain or brain gain there are two new possibilities in which the Diaspora can contribute to the development of their homeland.

First, it is brain gain – when the emigrants after their study and a few years experience return to the motherland either to establish their own business or to be employed either in the public or in the private sector. This way their experience and know-how are of extra importance to the homeland.¹².

¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/20/india.globaleconomy>

The second group is the “brain circulation” - persons who have left the country and are now professionally & financially well established in a foreign country. But they are fully engaged with and are contributing towards development of their motherland. The vitality of emerging India attracts skilled immigrants homeward. Even when they choose not to return home, they are serving their motherland, by linking businesses from their country of residence with India. Movement of talent and skill benefits both the *Karmabhumi* as well as the *Janmabhumi*.

Here are few examples of Assamese Diaspora who went abroad and have made their mark in a foreign country. These are random examples. Some of them have returned home. Some have settled down abroad. Some of them are contributing through investment by establishing factories, production capacities etc. Others are contributing through their expertise and ideas. Some examples are from contribution from Assamese Diaspora as a group and other examples are of individuals who have climbed up the social ladder.

1. Assam Foundation of North America ³

Assam Foundation of North America, Inc. (AFNA) is a publicly supported non-profit organization with foundation status serving since 1982. AFNA encourages and facilitates organizational and individual efforts to further mutual understanding and co-operation between Assam and North America (USA and Canada).

Projects supported by AFNA:

AFNA has been supporting a number of educational institutions and orphanages for the underprivileged children. Some of the projects supported are:

- Friends ⁴ - A magazine for the students and youths of North East India, in cooperation with FASS.
- Support a Child ⁵
With this program, an individual can sponsor educational cost of a child, who without the sponsorship may not be able to complete his/her education. The objective of this initiative is to build a bond between the expatriates and the people back home.
- Society for Social Transformation and Environmental Protection (sSTEP) ^{6 | 7}
Society for Social Transformation and Environmental Protection (sSTEP) is a development organization working on both urban and rural poverty issues in Guwahati. The organization is formed by some conscieinsous Gauhati University student volunteers in the District Primary Education Programme (Sarva Siksha Abhiyan). The experience of extreme deprivation of the poorest they interacted with during their field work across Assam has motivated them to establish this society.

² http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/5290494.stm

³ www.assamfoundation.net

⁴ http://magazine.assamfoundation.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=3

⁵ www.assamfoundation.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67&Itemid=66

⁶ <http://www.sstep.org.in>

⁷ http://www.assamfoundation.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=55:sstep&catid=37:rural-development-project&Itemid=28

2. Friends of Assam & Seven Sisters⁸ | ⁹

Friends of Assam & Seven Sisters (FASS) is a non-profit international think tank of Assamese Diaspora. FASS offers a common platform for the people and all friends and well-wishers of North East India to respond and work for the common good of the people of the North East.

Some of the activities of FASS:

- The Audio Video Children Story has Assamese recording and Assamese script and will help the children with learning the language and increasing (the) vocabulary. The online version of the story of the “First well” is available at.¹⁰
- Flash Cards is a unique way to learn the basics of the Assamese language. The cards are designed to teach the basics of the language through Roman as well as Assamese script. A company from Guwahati has taken over the marketing of the product in Assam.
- Besides two International Seminars organized in Assam where many NRA's participated, FASS also organizes seminars in Assam on subjects like:
 - Exploring the US market for local entrepreneurs
 - Job opportunities in the Middle East¹¹
 - School psychologist's role in grooming children¹²
- Spectacular live interactions of school children from Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur with Space Astronauts from their shuttle.¹³
- The live interaction with astronaut Mike Fincke with different school and college students who during his visit to Assam laid the foundation stone of a guest house at Parijat Academy near Guwahati.¹⁴ | ¹⁵
- Friends - A magazine for the Students and Youths of North East India
 - in collaboration with AFNA.It is a publication with an objective to connect the NRIs hailing from the North East India with the students and youths presently residing there. Friends is a knowledge sharing network involving experts in diverging fields spreading across the globe to share their stories, work experiences and knowledge. Through their writings they try to inspire, guide and encourage the youth, to help them explore new territories in their career paths, providing inspiration and direction in their educational fields. The

⁸ www.friendsofassam.org

⁹ <http://fass.infoedindia.com/>

¹⁰ http://www.bookbox.com/view_online.php?pid=164&free=Y

¹¹ <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=sep0108/City3>

¹² <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=aug0808/City1>

¹³ <http://friendsofassam.org/mitro/Mitro1.pdf> Page 7

¹⁴ <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/article18809.ece>

¹⁵ <http://www.assamtimes.org/hot-news/3374.html>

first issue of “Friends” was published in January of 2010. Last year Friends supported the following projects:

Jeevan magazine¹⁶ | ¹⁷

Jeevan is a unique effort to spread a positive message in an environment of despair and anguish. Most of the articles in Friends are translated and published in Assamese by Jeevan. Mr. Suresh Ranjan Goduka, the founder of Jeevan has been recently honoured as one of India's 35 youth icons by the India Today group.

Mr Uttam Teron¹⁸ | ¹⁹

Friends is actively supporting Mr Uttam Teron by publishing several inspiring news of Parijat Academy, about the volunteering work undertaken by scores of gifted volunteers from all over the world, who came and spent valuable time with the children.

Friends covers information of various scholarships awarded by different organisation.

- Assam Foundation of North America – support a child.
- Scholarship by North South Foundation, USA²⁰
- Scholarship by Foundation for Excellence , USA²¹

Friends is collaborating with team “Xomidhan”.

- Promoting the site “Dwindlings”, a knowledge portal of career information.²²
- Promoting “Sakori.org” a portal for job information.²³

- FASS also supports several schools in Assam.

3. AssamNet²⁴

AssamNet is the oldest Assamese electronic mailing list in the world. This list is for general discussions concerning Assam, Assamese and the Northeast of India. The mailing list was started in 1985 by Dr. Jugal Kalita with the help of Babul Gogoi and Dipankar Talukdar. It is primarily an intellectual forum for discussions on Assam and related topics. AssamNet and assam.org began as two separate mailing lists during a time when the word “Internet” was still in its infancy. AssamNet (1985) was pioneered and maintained by Dr. Jugal Kalita and assam.org (1990) by Deepankar Talukdar. The two mailing lists merged in 1998, and a unique and expanding mailing list was born.

¹⁶ <http://www.assamtimes.org/knowledge-development/3915.html>

¹⁷ <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/Story/113874/Cover%20Story/suresh-ranjan-goduka-for-better-or-for-verse.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.parijatacademy.org/>

¹⁹ <http://www.parijatacademy.blogspot.com>

²⁰ www.northsouth.org

²¹ www.ffe.org

²² www.dwindlings.net

²³ www.sakori.org

²⁴ www.assamnet.org

4. North East India Research Forum ²⁵
 North East India Research Forum is for all the researchers who hail from beautiful north eastern part of our country and who are involved in scientific research in various institutes in different parts of the globe. This forum was created on 13th November 2004. It mainly comprises of the researchers belonging to North East India .

5. 'XOBDO' ²⁶
 Xobdo means sound or word in Assamese. Xobdo is a registered society. It is a non-profit organization formed by a group of volunteers located in various parts of the globe. Their common interest is to promote the languages of North-East India in the cyberworld. Members of Xobdo are collaborating to construct and maintain this website. Xobdo is open for discussion with interested parties in similar projects.
 In March, 2006 the Xobdo team began working on the online English and Assamese bidirectional dictionary. Currently, Xobdo has a number of North-Eastern languages like Bodo, Dimasa, Garo, Karbi, Meereilon, Mising, Nagamese, Tai etc.,. The Assamese dictionary has now more than 32000 words. As of now, members and the total number of volunteers registered with Xobdo is more than 1350. Xobdo has started an online course to learn Assamese.

6. Xomidhan ²⁷
 Xomidhan is a group of enthusiasts from Assam who have come together to contribute meaningfully and in a concerted way for the development of the youth of our region. Their mission is to bring the non-residential Assamese community on one platform and leverage their experience and expertise in developing the careers of the youths of Assam - help them take informed decisions about their careers, become more employable and so on. Their core activity is Career Counseling of the students and they urge professionals to register with them and offer suitable career advice to students seeking advice in their respective areas.

7. Xophura(সঁফুৰা) ²⁸
 The Web-Site of Xophura(সঁফুৰা) , is a digital archive on Assam, and Assamese culture and literature. Xophura in Assamese means "Treasure box". It is an effort to build up an archive to reflect and preserve the vast socio-literary heritage of the North East. Xophura is the brainchild of Pallav Saikia and his wife Maitreyee Das, IT-specialists, working in the USA. It was first developed in Assamese ASCII fonts. To make it accessible to the public Pallav redesigned the site and uploaded the contents in Unicode.

8. Indian Cancer Care Network ²⁹
 Indian Cancer Care Network is dedicated to helping Cancer patients with Cancer Care and Treatment information in India and abroad. ICCN offers 24x7 email support and

²⁵ www.neindiaresearch.org

²⁶ www.xobdo.org

²⁷ <http://www.xomidhan.org>

²⁸ www.xophura.org

²⁹ www.cancercare.net.in

physical support in a few centers. It Organizes awareness and early Cancer detection camps. ICCN is based upon an idea initiated by Mr. Vavani Sharma, an entrepreneur from the USA. ICCN is supported by both NRI's as well as local people of the North East. It started its activities on 10th January 2010. In one year ICCN has achieved the following:

- ICCN has five physical support centers (three in Assam, one in Bihar and one in Karnataka). Currently they are working to start one support center in Gujarat, one in Orissa and one in Manipur, another one in Assam with collaboration with local NGO).
- ICCN has 79 doctors (Providers) from 10 different hospitals.
- Volunteers of ICCN have consulted 500 plus patients in 2010, most of them were from NER and Assam.
- ICCN organized 5 awareness and detection camps in 2010. Two of them were in cooperation with others. ICCN has participated in another 3 camps organized by other organizations.
- So far ICCN provided online support to one patient from Bangladesh and two from Bhutan. This is outside their boundary.
- In ICCN.TV, provides approximately 10 hours of multi-language video contents and the plan is to create 300 hours in the next two years in Indian local languages.

9. Simanta Das, The Netherlands³⁰ | ³¹

Mr. Simanta Das is an entrepreneur at heart with financial engineering skills. He is the founder and chairman of Ayursundra, a low cost, high quality healthcare delivery system in India and CEO of the Stalhmarg Group, which he founded with three partners. Mr. Das's last position was the Chief Strategy and Technology officer for Kempen & Co, a boutique investment bank. Prior to this, Simanta was the Global Head of the Healthcare Innovation Group, ABN AMRO, responsible for developing a cross-industry multi-disciplinary platform for clients across the healthcare space, including companies such as Philips, Tata and BUPA. He also played an active part in several M&A transactions across sectors including Healthcare, Technology (Information and Mobile) as well as FMCG and Energy, often focused on financial engineering of the deals and strategy setting.

Prior to ABN AMRO, Mr. Das worked in Strategy and Finance in Arthur Andersen., where he over the years carried out several M&A scenario planning sessions, corporate due diligences and change management roles across sectors including Healthcare

³⁰ www.stalhmarg.com

³¹ <http://www.ehealthonline.org/articles/article-details.asp?Title=Ayursundra%20to%20open%20first-of-its-kind%20lifestyle%20clinic%20in%20Guwahati&ArticalID=2408&Type=NEWS%20REVIEW>

Technology, Renewable Energy & Digital Media and Streaming. Simanta is an eternal student of Quantum Physics, while having his management skills sharpened at the MIT, Sloan School of Management in Boston.

Ayursundra has gone live with its 21,000 sqft state of the art One Stop Medical Centre in the heart of Guwahati with spokes in some of the suburbs, with the focus on making quality healthcare affordable. Shortly in the coming months, Ayursundra will bring one of Philips most advanced Cath labs for Cardiac care in Guwahati. Further, Ayursundra is also in the process of opening their first multi-super specialty hospital in the region with many others to follow.

10. Mrs. Rita Saikia, UK ³²

Mrs. Saikia is based in the UK. She established Genesis Printers & Publishers Pvt. Ltd. at Guwahati. This is a high end printing press and exports printing jobs. She was the first to bring in latest technology in printing in Assam.

She setup in 1998 North East Graphics, the first Process House in the North East India. With the installation of this unit, the colour jobs going outside Assam stopped considerably. The company created fresh business for colour printing within the region. North East Graphics has acted as a catalyst in generating all kinds of quality printing throughout North East India. As a sequel to the formation of North East Graphics, Genesis Printers was incorporated in 2001. The company commissioned the first 4-colour Printing Press in this region towards the end of 2001. Genesis Printers is the first Printing Company from this region to export printing services abroad.

11. Yasobanta Mahanta, Austria ³³

The motto of Yasobanta Mahanta, managing director of a four star hotel in Austria is "Thinking big, a dream costs nothing". He is thinking big and also realizing his dreams. Yasobanta Mahanta from Assam worked as a trainee chef in a Chennai hotel for a few months before flying off to Austria with just US\$ 20 as capital in his pocket. After training, he earned a Master Chef award from the Austrian Hotel Association. In 2002, he bought his first four-star hotel with an Austrian partner. Now he owns his own four star Dorfpark (Trend Hotels) in Götzis, a charming and scenic village in Vorarlberg, Austria. With Dorfpark, he maintains the local flavour and introduces Indian dishes that have become very popular. He has worked hard to achieve his dreams. Mr. Mahanta is now an excellent ambassador of Indian culture and cuisines abroad.

In Assam, Mr. Mahanta is opening a 30 bedded hospital and road side amenity in Helem (near Gohpur – on NH52) in his native place. The project is under construction and completion target is April 2012. Assam Finance Corporation is financing the project and 40% is his own equity. The second project is his TV serial TRIPTY. TV channel DY365 is broadcasting his program every Sunday at 15:30 and Wednesday 21:00. This serial about the life style of local people and tourism related industries of Austria is the meeting point

³² www.genesisprint.co.in

³³ <http://www.hotel-dorfpark.at>

of four countries – Germany, Lichtenstein, Switzerland and Austria.

12. Amulya Baruah, UK ³⁴

“Plus One Design” is a privately owned, independent design company in London, U.K. The company was established in 1998 by Amulya Baruah, an internationally reputed graphic designer of Assamese origin. The company is known today especially for “Branding and Packaging”. They have designed a wide variety of products and packaging which are enjoying success in many countries e.g. USA, South America, Europe, Middle East and recently in India.

In India, they have redesigned packaging for 2 of the biggest brands: SERVO Engine oils (Indian Oil) and FEVICOL adhesives (Pidilite Industries).

The success behind Plus One Design is their unique ability to provide high-class designs at an incredibly low cost.

Due to the rising cost of design development in the U.K., Plus One Design has set up a production studio in India in 2004. Today, they have a team of 30+ highly skilled people who are producing precision artwork, graphics, 3D drawings and prototypes etc. at a much lower cost. They provide the Creative Concepts & Directions from the U.K. and the Indian studio takes care of the production & final deliveries. This has proved to be the winning formula for their clients, as they are continuing to receive the same guaranteed quality of creativity from the design head Amulya Baruah in London, but now, at half the cost. Recently they have received an invitation from a Brazilian company to redesign their products and brands. Plus One has also entered the Israeli market last year to design food packaging.

13. Dr. Tonmoy Sharma, USA ³⁵

Dr. Tonmoy Sharma of Guwahati, has specialized hospitals Sovereign Health of California for treatment of concurrent behavioural health issues known as Dual Diagnosis or Co-Occurring Disorders. He started the Sovereign GEMS Hospital situated at Mavelikara, Alappuzha, Kerala ³⁶ and plans to start one in Guwahati. Dr. Sharma also started the Cognition Group which is a global company that provides CNS scientific knowledge, technological innovation and project management expertise to the biopharmaceutical industry with offices in Delhi and Guwahati.³⁷

14. Dr. Pervez Ahmed, CEO & Managing Director Max Healthcare Institute Ltd. ³⁸

Dr. Ahmed was born in Shillong. After his MBBS and one and half years residency at a hospital in New Delhi he left for New York. Since 1977 he has been involved in academic

³⁴ www.plusone-design.com

³⁵ www.sovhealth.com

³⁶ <http://www.sovhealth.com/sovereingems/location.html>

³⁷ <https://www.cognitiongroup.com>

³⁸ [http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/che.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/2009HealthConferenceBios/\\$FILE/Speaker_bios-05.05+1pm_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/che.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/2009HealthConferenceBios/$FILE/Speaker_bios-05.05+1pm_FINAL.pdf)

Medicine at SUNY, Downstate. He has been Physician In-charge of ICU and been Director of Critical Care Medicine at Brookdale Hospital Medical Centre. Dr. Pervez Ahmed has been an active participant in healthcare related fields especially in development of standards of critical care medicine in New York. He has been Course Director of many Internal Medicine and Cardiology review courses at Brookdale and participant in clinical studies. He was also responsible for a start up extended care Rehab facility in New York. He has extensive experience in Healthcare Management. Dr. Perez Ahmed was a Board Member of Max Healthcare Institute Ltd. from 2005 to 2007, and then Executive Medical Director from 2007-2009, and now CEO & Managing Director of Max Healthcare Institute Ltd.

15. Iftikar Ali Ahmed, USA

Mr. Iftikar Ahmed, General Partner of Oak Investment Partners. He currently focuses on investing across the technology sector, with an active interest in communications, clean energy, and consumer internet companies. He currently serves on the board of Affinity Media, (USA), Giosis Gmarket (Tokyo), Kayak (USA), Tikona Digital Networks (India), and Wonga (UK).

Prior to joining Oak, Mr. Ahmed worked as an investment professional at Goldman Sachs, in Hong Kong and New York, with their Special Situations and Private Equity groups. He also spent a few years with the venture capital arm of Fidelity Investments in Boston.

After receiving his undergraduate degree in engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, he held a number of operating and business positions with Schlumberger-Wireline & Testing across the Middle East, North Africa and the North Sea Region. Mr. Ahmed earned his MBA from Harvard Business School, where he graduated with High Distinction and was selected to be a Baker Scholar.

Mr. Ahmed and his wife Mrs. Shalini Ahmed, who is also a graduate of Harvard Business School, have sponsored a Fellowship (The Shalini and Iftikar Ahmed Fellowship) at Harvard Business School to financially support and encourage women to undertake higher education in business.

Mr. Ahmed also chairs and supports a philanthropic foundation established in the memory of his father, the Julhash Ali Foundation (JAF) that offers financial and non-financial support to the financially disenfranchised people of Assam in pursuing both professional and vocational education.

On the 8th October 2010, His Excellency, the Governor of Assam Mr. J. B. Patnaik, inaugurated the Julhash Ali Library of the Don Bosco Institute of Management (DBIM), a post-modern library meant precisely for the B-students, incorporating the latest technologies. The Library and its ongoing operations are supported and sponsored by Mr. Ahmed and the JAF.

On 9th October, 2010, the Hon'ble Minister of Industries in Assam, Mr. Pradyut Bordoloi, inaugurated the MouiZori Business Incubation Center (BIC) at the DBIM. The BIC ³⁹was a brainchild of Mr. Ahmed and he matched the aggregate contribution of his fellow classmates (from the Class of 1987 of Don Bosco School, Guwahati) in financially supporting the establishment of the BIC. The goal of the BIC is to encourage entrepreneurship amongst the youth of Assam and the North Eastern Region (NEI).

Currently, Mr. Ahmed is engaged with the Father V.M. Thomas (his Principal from High School who is currently the Director of the Don Bosco Institute of Management) in developing plans for a multi-purpose conference center and a hostel for underprivileged youth in Assam.

16. Dr. Musahid Ahmed, USA

Dr. Musahid Ahmed is a scientist hailing from Assam and is presently working as a senior scientist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, California, USA. In 2010 he has been elected as a fellow to the American Physical Society for his outstanding contribution to physics. Dr. Ahmed is in the USA since 1995 and his research encompasses fundamental studies which are relevant to energy and environmental processes. With his research Dr. Ahmed achieved accolades in the USA.

He was born in Digboi and did his schooling at Scindia school in Gwalior. Later he obtained his bachelor's degree in chemistry from Delhi University in the year 1985 and the same year he joined for the Ph.D. programme in Cambridge University in the UK and obtained his Ph.D. in 1989. He did his Post Doctoral research in University of Leicester, University of Manchester in UK and at Max Planck Institute in Germany.

Dr. Ahmed has published more than 80 research papers in various Scientific Journals including "Science". He has been invited for talks in his field of interest by various scientific communities for conferences and seminars held in the USA, Japan, Taiwan, Jordan, China, Germany, Greece, UK, India and France. In March 2009, he was a visiting lecturer at the Abdus Salam International Center of Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy.

Dr. Ahmed is also a member of American Chemical Society, American Physical Society and American Association of Advancement of Science.

17. Dr. Jayanta Madhab, India

Dr Jayanta Madhab had his early education in Jorhat. He did his M.A. in Economics from Gauhati University. After a stint at The Assam Tribune he went to the London School of Economics and Political Science. He received his doctorate in economics in 1962. After a short stint at LSE he came back to India and joined the West Bengal Government as Fiscal Scientist. After working for five and half years and going up the ladder he joined the Asian Development Bank in Manila. Moving up the ladder, first he became the Country Manager, then when the energy crisis erupted he was appointed as Energy Advisor and after a few years he was appointed as Director General of a Department.

³⁹ <http://mouizori.com>

Upon retirement from ADB, he came back to India and set up a private sector bank. Soon after he focused his attention to the less developed North Eastern India leaving the bank to be managed by others. He was chosen as the first Chairman of the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. to steer the new organisation. Having established the organisation which became the main financing organisation for the North East, he worked as Economic and Financial Advisor to the Chief Minister for six years (2003-09). He was a member of the Prime Ministers Commission on the North East. He served in a number of committees and commissions on the North East and Assam. He wrote and still contributes extensively on North East Economy. Currently he is the Chairman of the National Mission on Bamboo application, Rashtrya Grameen Vikas Nidhi, Foundation for Social Transformation, and Astha Bharati.

18. Abhijit Barooah, India

Mr. Abhijit Barooah is the founder and managing director of Premier Cryogenics Ltd and Assam Air Products Pvt. His company produces liquid nitrogen medical and high-altitude oxygen, and other industrial gases which are used in sectors from oil to hospitals. He opened his first factory in 1986 in Sivasagar to supply liquid nitrogen to the public sector exploration and production firms. Assam Air Products operates in Sivasagar and North Lakhimpur. Premier Cryogenics in Guwahati started operation in 1996. Apart from supplying liquid nitrogen, Premier Cryogenics also bottles oxygen for high altitude use by the aviation industry and the Indian Air Force. Nitrogen is also used by food processors and packagers.

Mr. Abhijit Barooah is exploring new areas. He has bought a franchise of VLCC Institute of Beauty, Health and Management, and training and educational institute NIS Sparta Ltd, a division of the Reliance-Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group.

Mr. Abhijit Barooah is the leading example of Assamese entrepreneurship who encourages fellow entrepreneurs and investors in the North-East to rid themselves of a defeatist mindset. He chairs the state council of industry body Confederation of Indian Industry and is a member of the governing body of Assam Institute of Management, Guwahati.

19. Mr. Sandy K. Baruah (Mr. Santanu K. Baruah)

Sandy Baruah served as President George W. Bush's last Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Prior to leading the SBA, Baruah served as U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

Prior to his service in the Bush Administration, Baruah was a corporate mergers and acquisitions consultant for the Performance Consulting Group. He also served in the Administration of President George H. W. Bush (1989–1993) and was on the staff of U.S. Senator Bob Packwood (Oregon).

After leaving his most recent government service in early 2009, he was a Distinguished Fellow at the U.S. Council on Competitiveness, a Washington, D.C. – based think tank comprised exclusively of corporate CEOs, university presidents and labor leaders. In 2010, Baruah was named President and Chief Executive Officer of the Detroit Regional Chamber. The Detroit Regional Chamber is the largest local chamber of commerce in the United States.

20. Dr Najeeb Rahman , UK

Dr Najeeb Rahman was born in Dubai and moved to England to study Medicine in 1995. A graduate of Leeds Medical School in the year 2000, Dr Najeeb is now working as a Specialist Registrar in Emergency Medicine, based in West Yorkshire. In addition to his professional medical qualifications, Dr Najeeb has also obtained a Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance, as well as a Diploma in Public Health.

He has been engaged in international humanitarian assistance over the past 10 years with the medical charity Doctors Worldwide ⁴⁰, of which he was chairperson between 2004-2010, and remains on the Board of Trustees. In this capacity, he has helped in the medical response in post-conflict Kosova, refugee crisis in Ingushetia, Russia, after the tsunami in Sri Lanka, the earthquake and more recent flooding in Pakistan, the Haitian Earthquake ⁴¹ and following cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. Apart from disaster response, Dr Najeeb has been keenly involved in pushing forward the development agenda, where local partnerships and skills exchange have been the cornerstone for other projects in Africa and Asia, and has visited Niger, Uganda, Congo (DRC) to help with project development. In August 2010, he coordinated the flood aid from Leeds, UK to Pakistan.⁴²

In other activities, Dr Najeeb was closely involved with the Leeds Faiths Forum ⁴³, a local interfaith group, and helped organise their successful conference on Faith and the Environment. He also sells 'Zaytoun'⁴⁴ ethically-traded Palestinian produce from his garage, in keeping with the philosophy of trade being better than aid. He aspires to bring some of his skills, thinking and experience back to Assam in the near future, along with his wife and three children so that they can gain an understanding of their heritage, and the value of a more comprehensive world view.

21. Dr. Karuna Sagar Das, UK – Promotion of Indian Culture

Dr. Das is in the UK for more than 32 years. He is a medical doctor by profession and a philanthropist. Dr. Das left Assam but Assam never left him. He has taken a number of reputed artistes from Assam to perform in front of audiences in the UK. Dr. Das took Assam to England. He gave a taste of Assam to the NRIs and Non-Resident Assamese as well as to the Britons. Dr. Das not only invites the artists and the groups to perform in UK, but he also sponsors the events from his own pocket. He is a torch bearer of

⁴⁰ www.doctorsworldwide.org

⁴¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/leeds/hi/people_and_places/religion_and_ethics/newsid_8483000/8483235.stm

⁴² http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/leeds/hi/people_and_places/newsid_8918000/8918770.stm

⁴³ <http://www.riponleeds.anglican.org/interfaith2.html>

⁴⁴ <http://www.zaytoun.org/distribution/regional-distribution/#WestYorkshire>

Assamese culture and traditions. Without sacrificing personal comfort, security and life-style one can still help others when support is needed. In this area Dr. Das is an example for others.

For the last 12 years Dr. Karuna Das is publishing "Luit to Thames", a yearly journal. The idea is to build a socio-cultural bridge between the river Thames and Brahmaputra (Luit). This is also a medium for the exchange of ideas, culture, information and knowledge between the two very distant lands and different civilizations. The entire cost of this literary venture is also borne by Dr. Das.

Dr. Karuna Das is an example of a success story of an Assamese Diaspora who is promoting the culture of India in the country where he lives.

These are some of the examples of successful Assamese Diaspora.

There is a saying "Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand." So get involved. Get as much exposure as possible. Keep abreast with current trends and be flexible with your career and dare to take risk.

But there is also another India – the modern India where a person with dreams, motivation and determination can make his dreams come true. He can make it happen here in India. For this he does not have to cross the seven seas.

Ms. Indrani Medhi, India ⁴⁵ | ⁴⁶ | ⁴⁷ | ⁴⁸

For me Ms Indrani Medhi, a young innovator is an example of modern India. Ms Medhi was featured in the coveted list of "50 Smartest People in Technology" in 2010 by Fortune magazine. She was named a "Global Forum Visionary" by Fortune. She won IBN18 Network's "Young Indian Leader" award. Lately Ms. Medhi was listed in the MIT Technology Review's TR35 list of "outstanding innovators" under the age of 35. Ms. Indrani Medhi is an Associate Researcher in the Technology for Emerging Markets Group at Microsoft Research India in Bangalore. Her current work has been in User Interfaces for Illiterate and Semi-Literate Users.

Parijat Academy and Uttam Teron

Another role model for me in India is Mr. Uttam Teron of Parijat Academy from Pamohi, near Guwahati. Mr. Teron, a young man graduated in 1999. He had saved Rs. 800/- from the fees he received from private tuition. With that amount, he got a pair of desks and benches and set up to start a school. He started Parijat Academy on 18th January 2003 with 4 students, one boy and three girls - a school for underprivileged children.

⁴⁵ <http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/people/indranim>

⁴⁶ <http://www.technologyreview.com/TR35/Profile.aspx?TRID=983>

⁴⁷ <http://tech.fortune.cnn.com/2010/07/09/the-50-smartest-people-in-tech/>

⁴⁸ http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2010/fortune/1006/gallery_global_forum_visionaries.fortune/7.html

Parijat started with the aim of educating the poor and to create awareness on the eradication of

Year	No. of Boys	No. of Girls	Total	Number of teacher	Free School uniform
2003	10	8	18	2	0
2004	12	13	25	3	0
2005	22	17	39	4	32
2006	28	26	54	5	30
2007	102	90	192	9	35
2008	260	218	478	17	50
2009	249	248	497	18	180

Growth of students

child labour by providing free education irrespective of caste and creed. At the end of the school year of 2003 number of students increased to 18 - ten boys and eight girls and two teachers. Today Parijat has more than 500 students. Due to lack of infrastructure he cannot enrol more. Parijat is getting recognition from different parts of the world. Volunteers are coming also from abroad to assist Parijat. There is no looking back for Parijat Academy. "India Today" selected Mr. Teron as one of India's 35 youth icons of 2010. ⁴⁹ | ⁵⁰

Note:

In order to present a background paper at the Pravsi Bharatiya Divas 2011, at a short notice, I had to compile a few examples of Assamese Diaspora who went abroad and have made their mark in a foreign country. These are random examples. Some of them have returned home. Some have settled down abroad. Some of them are contributing through investment by establishing factories, production capacities etc. Others are contributing through their expertise and ideas. Some examples are from contribution from Assamese Diaspora as a group and other examples are of individuals who have climbed up the social ladder.

The idea is to collect more information and add them to the above list. If you know of any of other success stories of Assamese Diaspora, please send the information to [wahid.saleh at gmail.com](mailto:wahid.saleh@gmail.com).

⁴⁹ <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/Story/113864/Cover%20Story/uttam-teron-right-vision.html>

⁵⁰ www.indiawijzer.nl/tourism_travelling_to_india/northeasternindia/assam/assam_mixedbag/schools_supported_by_us/parijat_academy_of_%20pamohi_120110.pdf