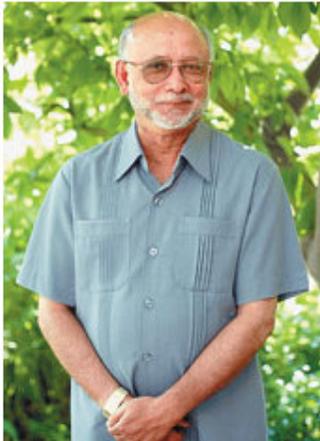


Wahid Saleh - The Netherlands

64, Social worker and retired IT professional, Berkel en Rodenrijs



When Wahid Saleh boarded his ship in Bombay for the long journey to Europe, the Jorhat-born student of aircraft maintenance had a two-anna coin in his pocket. It was an experience he recalled with amusement when, nearly 40 years later, Queen Beatrix of The Netherlands knighted him with the Ridder va de Orange in 2002.

His journey to distinction began when his college in Ernakulam selected him for higher training in Germany. But when he eventually got to his workplace, BMW, in Munich, he discovered he had been taken on not for training but as an unskilled labourer.



But there was no going back, so he forged on, determinedly and, some jobs — and disappointments — later, joined Lufthansa in Hamburg. And then he fell in love with a new phenomenon. It was the computer, for it was the dawn of the computer age. And so he joined the computer industry.



And then love of another kind happened. A penfriend he used to correspond with in The Netherlands came to visit him and romance blossomed. As she was studying medicine back home, he decided to join her there, and eventually joined a Dutch company in Rotterdam as a computer programmer. He excelled at it and, by 1983 was able to implement one of the biggest PC networks in Europe. The couple have two children. Tasnim has an MA in law and another in pedagogy. Qauthar did his masters in financial economics and works with the Amsterdam city council.

(From top) Wahid Saleh; with grand-daughter Yara; receiving his knighthood of the Order of Orange-Nassau

Saleh is a board member of the Netherlands-India Association and has developed an Internet site — www.indiawijzer.nl.

Indiawijzer-India — a guide to India. He now has some fellow Assamese to meet up with, speaks and writes in his native tongue and even has an Assamese font in his computer. For a man who grew up in a house without electricity and 'news' meant a man in a rickshaw who announced events over a loudspeaker, his life has seen some dramatic changes. He misses the old country, but when he visits 'home' and faces the lack of infrastructure, the bureaucracy and the corruption, he wants to take the next available flight back to The Netherlands.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050510/asp/bihu/story_4626967.asp