



PREETI BARUA

Celebrating Creativity

“She was behind the establishment of Assam Lekhika Santha in 1976. It has now spread to every nook and corner of the state, playing a significant role in bringing into light the hidden creativity in many a woman writer in Assam.”

Preeti Barua, a woman with an amiable disposition, is a well known name in the literary, educational and social life of Assam. A multi faceted personality, Preeti Baruah is an author, an academician and a social activist.

Born on 3rd November of 1931 to Tirthanath Bhattacharjya and Snehalata Devi, she spent her childhood in the historic Tezpur town. She passed the matriculation examination from Tezpur with flying colours securing highest marks in Assamese and 1st position amongst the girl candidates. She graduated with 1st class Honours in Assamese from Handique Girls' College. She got 1st position in the M.A. examination as well. Starting her career as a lecturer in B. Barua College of Guwhati in 1995 she later joined Handique Girls' College and retired as the Principal of that college.

Preeti Baruah has contributed substantially to Assamese literature. She played a very active role in the unearthing of five priceless books, which had been lying in a state of near oblivion, by making arrangements for their publication through her home publication”

Chitraban Prakashan". These books are 'Pitrivitha', a novel by Chandraprava Saikiani, the pioneer of feminist movement in Assam, 'Chapaniya' authored by Hem Barua, the famous parliamentarian and travel writer from Assam, 'Saj Nisha', written by philanthropist Priscilla on the hard life of the nurses, which was the first novel by an Assamese woman writer, 'Adhunik Asomiya Kabita', edited by Yati Narayan Sharma and 'Tinikuri Dah Bacharar Smriti', an autobiography of Rajabala Das, who was the pioneer of women's education in Assam and the founder of Handique Girls' College.

Preeti Baruah is undoubtedly a very successful translator. She received Sahitya Akademi Award for translation in 2004 for 'Rathchakra', translated from Padmanarayan Rendsay's novel. Her other translation works include collection of Urdu short stories, *Sankirna Toran* translated from the French work *Straight is the gate*, *Paanch Powa Ghenhu*, famous work of Prem Chand, *Aghari Nadir Sote*, an autobiographical novel of Ajit Kaur. *Akash Nilla Stup*, translated from Mikhail Sholokov's book, *Rip Van Winkle* etc.

She is an able editor too who edited some invaluable books like the collection of short stories of 60 years written by Assamese women writers *Lekhikar Galpa*, *Mahila Kabya Grantha*, *Akash*, a child magazine etc.

She was behind the establishment of Assam Lekhika Santha in 1976. It has now spread to every nook and corner of the state, playing a significant role in bringing into light the hidden creativity in many a woman writer in Assam. Preeti Barua had great organizing skill that had come into fore through an exhibition of books authored by women writers in 1975, organized in consonance with the celebration of the International Women's year. In this noble venture she was assisted by luminaries like Suchibrota Roy Choudhury, Nilima Dutta, Samiran Das, Renu Devi, Lakshyahira Das etc.

Being a socially conscious person, she is particularly concerned about women's rights. Her edited books, articles, translation works-all are aimed at fulfilling her mission of uplift of women's condition as well as of the society in general.

As the President of Asom Mahila Sangha and Asom Lekhika Santha and Vice-President of Democratic Civil Society she had always been vocal against exploitation and injustice and was very active in addressing social issues.

As an academician she was very popular. Her speeches were very captivating and those who listened to her soft but forceful voice were genuinely impressed by the spark in it. Her daughter Nandini who is also a writer fondly recalls the organisational abilities and expertise as a mother, as a wife and as a home maker.

At present an ailing Preeti Barua is spending a quiet life with her family. She has been termed as *Nari Ratna* by well known writer of Assam Nirupama Borgohain who happens to be her close friend as well. Preeti Baruah is a 'nari ratna' in the real sense of the term. □□