



NIRMAL PRABHA BORDOLOI

The Lone Crusader

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‘Moi nathakileo sajar tarai morei kathake kobo’ (The twilight stars will keep telling about me and me alone/ even after my exit from here). Indeed modern Assamese songs would not have been that rich without the compositions of ‘Saraswati’-Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi. An illustrious alumna of Handique Girls’ College and doyen of Assamese literature, Dr. Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi was a poet, lyricist, educationist-a multi faceted personality who enriched Assamese literature and culture to a very great extent. Born on 20th June, 1933 to Dharmeswar Sharma Bardoloi and Mukta Bala Bardoloi of Sivasagar, Dr. Bardoloi was a living example of how sharp intellect and strong determination triumph over all the adversities of life.

‘Darling daughter’ of the family, a very brilliant Nirmal Prabha stood first in all her school examinations. She wrote her first poem in Class-IV. She was an expert in household works including handicraft like weaving. However, she was married off at the age of eleven to a boy who was 20 years older than she. A girl who was completely in the dark about the ways of the world

became a mother after one year. A victim of a broken marriage, Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi with an iron will and active support of her family, started her life anew and continued her studies at her maternal home. She stood first in her middle school leaving examination in the state. After passing matriculation with star marks, she first joined a local College and then Handique Girls' College. She graduated with highest aggregate marks in the University securing 1st Class 1st Position in Assamese. Under the supervision of Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma, later she obtained Ph.D Degree on *Asomiya Kabitat Prakriti*. Starting her career as a lecturer in B. Baruah College, Guwahati, she retired as Jawaharlal Nehru Professor of Guwahati University. The U.G.C. recognized her as 'Jatiya Prabakta'.

She served different news papers in different capacities and was also very closely associated with various programmes of All India Radio, Guwahati. From early childhood, she was involved with all types of cultural and social activities. She believed in service to humanity and was actively associated with 'Chatra Congress'. A promoter of social awareness, she had to court arrest for her involvement in the Assam Agitation of 1980s. Nirmal Prabha had a very sweet God-gifted voice and won medals not only for singing but also for acting. She was fondly called as 'Nightingale of Assam' by K. K. Khullor, an eminent Administrative Officer. She bagged many awards and honours for her literary works. These include 'Sahitya Akademi Award for her poetic work *Sudirgha Din aru Ritu*. 'Assam Sahitya Sabha Award' for creative book *Dinar Pachat Din* and also for best research work *Devi*, 'Prabina Saikia Award', 'Kanaklata Barua Award' besides the coveted 'Saraswati Sanman' conferred by Asom Sanskrit Samaj.

Dr. Bordoloi was the first woman President of Assam Sahitya Sabha. She was a member of the Advisory Board of National Book Trust for five years, a member of Governing Body of Eastern Zone Cultural Conference, Calcutta, for 5 years and presided over quite a good number of international conferences. She attended numerous National and International Seminars in different parts of the world and in an international conference of Indian literature, music & paintings held in Massachusetts of the U.S.A. She was fondly named 'Darling India'. She was the founder of 'Asom Kalatirtha' for the preservation of rich cultural heritage of Assam and with the help of a few likeminded persons, she took it to a new height. She even directed a documentary film *The Masks of Assam*. Her literary works also include *Bon Faringar Rang*, *Antaranga*. She penned down some immortal and all time hit Assamese songs. In her personal life, she was very simple, endearing to all and outspoken. Helping people in distress was the motto of her life. This noble soul departed for her heavenly abode on 1st June, 2004. But her songs, her creative writings would keep her alive in the Assamese psyche for all time to come. □□