



RAJABALA DAS

Quiet Activism

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Dissemination of women's education in this part of colonial India would have remained a distant dream but for the singleminded effort of a woman visionary—she was Rajabala Das. Rajabala Das was born in Dibrugarh on 8th March, 1893 to late Rama Kanta Barua and Late Kamala Barua. She did her schooling in Giridhi and Bethuen, and passed matriculation examination in 1915 from the school of Bethuen. She passed I.A. Examination from Dabchechan College (Calcutta) one year later than due time because of her weak health. She secured B.A. degree from Bethuen college, Calcutta in 1920.

Rajabala Das joined the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1921. Following Gandhiji's principle of non-violence she encouraged and inspired the people of Assam, mainly women living in the villages. She was selected as the secretary of Dibrugarh District Congress Mahila Samiti. In 1923, she participated in Gaya Congress as one of the representatives of Assam.

After her marriage with late Dr. Jyotish Chandra Das of Guwahati, Rajabala Das came to Guwahati. She

was selected as the chief secretary of Assam Pradesik Mahila Samiti. She participated in two conferences of All India Women's committee held in Madras and Gwalior. She served as the secretary of the Assam Branch of All India Women's Committee. She also became the Head Mistress and secretary of Panbazar Girls' High School upto 1947. To meet the growing demand of higher education for women, Rajabala Das with her progressive outlook, great organizing capacity, untiring zeal and sincere effort succeeded in setting up a girls' college in Gauhati (Guwahati) with only two girls in 1939. The college was founded by Rajabala Das with the patronage of late Radha Kanta Handique. Rajabala Das served as the Founder-Principal of Gauhati College—subsequently known as Handique Girls' College. During her tenure in 1941 as the Honorary Principal, Rajabala Das did her M.A. in Assamese. She worked courageously to solve different difficulties and problems of this new college. She tried her best to bring it up with great care and devotion. She retired in 1965. Rajabala Das was also the president of the first Managing Committee of Asom Sishu Kalyan Sadan.

Rajabala Das is a name to reckon with in the field of journalism in Assam. Rajabala Das established the Guwahati Press and from this Press brought out one newspaper *Asom Batori* and one monthly magazine *Monideep*.

A number of literary works in a variety of subjects, spanning from the epical to the autobiographical, are demonstrative of Rajabala Das's forte in the field of creative and critical writing as well.

Rajabala Das was also the author of several books like *Stri Sikshar Babe Keiasharman* (1928), *Ramayanaar Katha*, *Mahabharatar Katha*, *Pauranik Adarsa Kahini*, and *Gita Bachan* (1967). Besides these, she authored *Sahitya Path* (4th Part), a text book and *Tinikuri Dahbacharar Smriti* (1971)—an autobiographical work.

The eventful life and the versatile career of Rajabala Das came to an end on 23rd April, 1985. □□