



PARUKUTTY BARUA

An Academician Par Excellence

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Born in the year 1920 to a family in the far off Kerela and fortifying the edifice of education in Assam, Dr. Parukutty Barua's personality, academic contributions and literary interests may rightly be termed as emblematic of the very Indian ethos of cultural unity amidst diversities. Dr. Parakutty Barua was born in Thiruananthapuram in Kerela, but after her marriage, she got assimilated into the Assamese society and contributed immensely to the development of education in Assam, particularly the higher education. She was the first Assamese lady to get Doctorate of Philosophy from Cambridge University, the first Assamese Professor of Rangoon University and the first lady Principal of prestigious Cotton College.

This outstanding lady scientist was the daughter of well known philosopher Madhab Rao Kutty who was the first recipient of Dr. Sarbapally Radhakrishnan Philosophy Award. She passed BSc examination with gold medal from Benaras Hindu University in the year 1937. In 1939 she completed MSc (Botany) from the same university with brilliant result. After post

graduation, she concentrated in her research works for some time. Soon she joined as the head of the Botany Department of Lady Brabronne College. She also worked as lecturer in Bethuen College from 1941 to 1948. This was the golden period in her life. She met Dr. Hitendra Nath Barua of Assam during this period and got married to him. After marriage, she joined Cotton College in the year 1948 as lecturer. In 1949, she joined Cambridge University and got her MA degree in 1953 and completed Ph.D from the same in 1956. She was selected as the Whaledel on Slogh Fellow of Newham College under Cambridge University. It was a rare distinction and she happened to be the first Asian lady to get the honour of this fellowship. While in London, she became the first Asian Lady to become a member of prestigious Linnaean Society. In 1956, she returned to Assam and joined Cotton College. She acted as DPI, Assam for a brief period from 1961 to 1962. Teaching was the first choice of Dr. Barua and so she returned to to Cotton College. In the year 1973, Dr. Barua became the Vice Principal of Cotton College and in the year 1974, she became the first lady Principal of Cotton Colege. During that period, Botany Department of Handique Girls' College was in a budding stage. She nurtured the young department of Handique Girls' College as a part time teacher. She retired as Principal of Cotton College in the year 1975.

After superannuation, she was appointed as a Professor in the Department of Botany of Gauhati University under the scheme of University Grant Commission for five years. During that period, she published more than 80 research papers in National and International journals. Under her guidance, 23 students completed PhD degree. She was the Principal Invesigator and guide in many research projects funded by ICAR, IARI, UGC and NEC.

Dr. Parakutty Barua was also associated with Manipur and North Eastern Hills University. She was not only an educationist, researcher but also innovator of some great ideas. She wrote some textbooks on Botany which enriched the field of science education. Although science was her abiding passion in her life, she also demonstrated her deepseated aesthetic sensitivity through her serious engagement with creative literary pursuits including translation works. She wrote a novel in "Chemeen" in Malayalam and then translated it to Assamese. The name of the Assamese Novel was "Micha Mach". She also published an anthology of poems in English named "Mirror and Maze". National Book Trust published her book "Nallu Kuttu" which was translated from Malayalam.

She led an active life as a researcher and educationist till she succumbed to a massive heart attack on 5th September, 1988. Her demise was a great loss to Assam, particularly to the student community. The life of Dr. Barua is source of inspiration for the upcoming botanists of our state. □□