



PADMASHREE HEMA BHARALI

A Visionary

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Envisioning a modern India empowered at the grass root level, Padmashree Hema Bharali was one among those dedicated followers of Gandhian ideology whose untiring efforts and selfless devotion to duty brought about revolutionary changes in rural India. Noted Sarvodaya and Social activist Srimati Hema Bharali was born in Dhakuakhana (District Lakhimpur) on 19th February, 1919. Her father Late Dhaniram Bharali was a government servant in the Revenue Department and her mother Late Ambika Bharali, was a staunch follower of the Gandhian ideals. Only daughter and youngest of the four siblings, her main source of inspiration was her mother.

Prominent leaders and social workers- to name a few, Sarbeswar Barua, Mahananda Bora, Ananda Dutta, etc frequented her home during the freedom movement. As such in 1940/ 1941 she got the opportunity to take part in the Satyagrahya Movement and in 1942 she worked as a student volunteer in the Bharat Tyag Andolan. Srimati Bharali had a desire to acquire "Buniyadi Siksha" (Basic Education). So she left for Wardha to undertake the training in Gandhiji's Ashram,

in 1942. Thereafter, she returned to Assam and started imparting this training and involved herself as a full fledged constructive worker in the villages of Assam. Because of her selfless service and noble sacrifice, she has been a guide, an inspiring force for many young minds to follow in her footsteps in this field throughout Assam.

She was a member of the 'Padayatra' programme organized by internationally reputed social activist Vinobha Bhave and travelled throughout India for twelve long years. She promoted Bhoodan and Gramdan movements amongst the villagers in Assam and played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the rich and the poor through the land redistribution programme.

In recognition of her service towards humanity, social uplift, development of the standard of living and welfare of the people of the country, particularly of Assam, based on Gandhian ideals, she was conferred one of the prestigious awards of the country, "Padmashree" by the Government of India in 2005. She was also the recipient of the National Communal Harmony Award (for the first time from the North East) in 2006. She has to her credit a number of other awards; significant among them are Swahid Kanaklata Barua Award in 2003 (for her contribution towards Gandhian and Sarvodaya works) and Assam Sahitya Sabha Award, 2010. For her role in the freedom struggle in India, she was felicitated by the Government of Assam in 15th August, 1997 (Golden Jubilee Year Celebration of India's Independence).

She is presently associated as a member with Assam State Legal Services Authority and Life Member of Mahatma Gandhi and Martyr's Memorial Trust, Gandhi Mandop, Guwahati. In 2011, Hema Bharali was conferred the Fakharuddin Ali Ahmed Memorial award for National Integration by the state government for the year 2009.

At the age of ninety one, she still strongly believes that material affluence, awards, etc are immaterial but as an individual one must work with a pure mind and spiritual heart to reach out to the poor and the down-trodden in order to achieve a purposeful life. She is also of the opinion that law cannot make people better but can only give protection when and where the necessity arises. We wish and hope that Srimati Bharali would be a guiding source to our younger generations in rendering their service for the cause of society and humanity at large. □□