



## TILOTTAMA ROYCHAUDHURY

### For the Wretched of the Earth

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Dr Tilottama Roychaudhury was born in the year 1908 in Guwahati to famous Gandhian Dr Harekrishna Das and Hemoprava Das. Her sister was the famous Gandhian Amalprabha Das. She along with her sister was deeply influenced by the Gandhian ideology followed by her parents and it had long lasting influence on her life. Tilottama was a very brilliant student. She secured fourth position in Matric examination conducted by Calcutta University. She was also inspired by her parents to become a physician like her father for serving the humanity. Brilliant Tilottama got herself admitted to Calcutta Medical College. She successfully completed her medical course in the year 1933. After becoming a doctor, she joined her father in his private hospital which he set up in Guwahati after resigning from Government service for joining the Independence movement actively. Dr Harekrishna Das constructed a new wing in his hospital for female patients which was taken care of by Tilottama. While she started practising in Guwahati, she faced two peculiar problems. One was that common public did

not believe her to be a qualified physician as there was no female doctor at that time. Besides, the existing midwives of Guwahati, who had all along been taking care of child births, felt threatened by the arrival of the new lady doctor as they felt their services would no longer be required due to this doctor's arrival. However, soon they became friendly with Tilottama for her charm and helpful attitude towards the midwives. She taught them to maintain hygiene during child birth and was successful in reducing the child birth mortality which was very high during that time due to unhygienic practices adopted during child birth. After working in Guwahati for 3-4 years, she got married to Dr Prabhat Kumar Roy Chaudhury in Calcutta in the year 1937. As per wish of Dr Tilottama Roy Chaudhury, her husband Dr Prabhat Roy Chaudhury also decided to move to Guwahati and start medical practice in Guwahati. In 1950, she went to London along with her husband and her daughter Manju and underwent a 3 months training course on Gynaecology and Obstetrics.

Besides being a dedicated doctor, she was also actively associated with Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust. She took classes on health for *Gram Sevikas*. During that time Guwahati Civil Hospital which was not yet a ten bedded hospital was required to start a training course for midwife. At the initiative of Dr Tilottama Roy Chaudhury, the hospital was upgraded to a ten bedded hospital and it was possible to start a training programme on midwifery. As there was no provision for hostel, she provided facility to the trainees to stay in her house. She retired from charge after providing service to the needy and downtrodden for long fifty years. Her husband Dr. Prabhat Roy Chaudhury expired in 1983.

She along with her sister, inspired by her father's Gandhian ideal, donated 983 bighas of land to landless people in accordance with the ideology of Bhudan Movement launched by Binova Bhabhe. Besides they donated 32 bighas of land and property in Sarania and their parents' residence along with valuable books collected by Dr Harekrishna Das to the Kasturba Trust.

After serving the society in all possible ways, she left for heavenly abode in the year 1994. She was a true example of sacrifice and service in the true Gandhian tradition. □□