

SUSAN DAS CHAUDHURI

A Successful Innings at the Tennis Court

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When one talks about tennis in Assam, the name which automatically comes to one's mind is that of Susan Das. In fact her achievements in the field of tennis remain unparalleled in the tennis history of Assam even today. Born in 1950, into a progressive and liberal family (Late Anil Mohan Das was her father and Late Niharika Das was her mother) she had the upbringing which provided every opportunity to nurture and develop her talents. If it was her father who taught her to play tennis, it was her mother who dreamt of making a tennis player out of her. They have been her source of inspiration all throughout.

Susan Das started playing Tennis in Tezpur, at the age of eight, which was considered to be quite early at that period. Her first tournament was at the Ordinance Club in Calcutta as a junior. She went on to play many National Championships and was the National Champion in the year 1973-1974. She played in many international tournaments, and won the championships at the Sri Lankan Open and Penang Open (Malaysia),

She was the semi-finalist at the Scottish Open in Edinburgh and runner-up at the Asian Open. She also played at the qualifying Wimbledon in 1974.

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Reminiscing on her days in Calcutta, she fondly remembers Akhtar Ali and Stanley Edwards, who had been her coaches and the warm words of encouragements of Adhip Mukherjee and General Cariappa who watched her play during her formative years. She is dedicated to the cause of tennis in the state and now enjoys her time encouraging and motivating the young players.

She is concerned about the erosion of values in society and strongly feels that parents should encourage children to take up sports where they learn the rules of fair play, which is the most important ingredient of character building. She underlines the need for mothers to prioritize character building of their children.

Expressing strong feelings about the empowerment of women she emphasizes on the importance of education for women's empowerment. She believes that only a woman of character can be truly empowered and that a society should be built on women's empowerment. Susan Das had her education in Calcutta (now Kolkata) at the Modern High School, Loreto College and the Calcutta University, from where she completed her L.L.B. Degree. She started her career as a lawyer but later joined the State Bank of India as a Probationary Officer in 1979. In doing so, she had created another history. She was the first Assamese girl to join State Bank of India as a Probationary Officer. She believes that, to break into a male domain a woman has to work twice as hard as men to prove herself. But, things have now got easier for the women who follow her.

She married Anup Chaudhuri, a lawyer by profession and has a son, Rahul.

Her emphatic message to the young generation is: You may achieve a lot in life but it is your character which keeps you at the top. □□