



RENUKA DEVI BORKATAKI

No Full Stop For Her

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Renuka Devi Borkatoki , a name to reckon with in the post-independent Assam began her tryst with active political life in her very school days when the country was still under the colonial regime. Born in 1932, Renuka Devi Borkataki was actively involved with the Congress party as a student activist and even became the Seva-Dal Commander of the Assam Congress when Gandhiji visited Guwahati. Later, she also held the responsible position of the convenor of Mahila Congress and devoted herself to active political life as the youth Congress activist of the Assam congress. In 1957, she visited Moscow as the member of the Indian youth delegation to Moscow and remained in charge of the women Seva-Dal as the Secretary of Pradesh Congress Committee up to 1962.

In 1962, a new chapter in her political life began with her getting elected to the Parliament from the Barpeta constituency. When the congress party split in 1967, she remained with Congress (O) and became the general secretary of the Assam Congress (O). Renuka Devi_Borkataki also got elected to the state Assembly

in 1972 and became the Deputy leader of the opposition in the Assembly. During the emergency in 1975-77, Borkataki was detained as a political prisoner for as long as 19 months. In 1977, Congress (O) got amalgamated with the Janata party and Borkataki became the general secretary of the state Janata party and member of the National Working committee of Janata party. Emergency came to an end in 1977 with the formation of the Janata party led government at the centre and Renuka Devi Borkataki, elected to the Parliament for the second time, was appointed the Minister of state for Education, Social Welfare, Culture, Youth and Women's welfare in the Morarji Desai led Government. She was the first woman minister from Assam in the Union Cabinet. The Janata party disintegrated in 1980 and Renuka Devi Borkataki shifted her field of activities from the political to the social by concentrating more and more on social work and trade union activities and remained unattached to any political party. As a parliamentarian, she took particular interest in such issues as the relief and rehabilitation of refugees, social security, community development, local self government, education, welfare of women, schedule caste and schedule tribes and information and broadcasting. She was one of the members of the select panel of consultants set up by the Planning Commission to consider the social welfare and social security under the 4th Five Year plan. She is the first Nabaratna director of ONGC from Assam and first woman director of the Oil sector. Renuka Devi Borkataki also served the Indian National Trade Union Congress in different capacities such as treasurer, Vice President and now President of its Assam Wing. In 1997, the Prime Minister of India conferred the *Shield of Honour* upon her for her distinguished services to the working class. Renuka Devi Borkataki is currently the honorary general secretary of the Assam branch of the Indian Red Cross Society. Her role as a social worker extended to different field of philanthropic activities run by such organizations as Bharat Seva Mission, Bharat Sevak Samaj, Deaf and Dumb Association, Children's Home etc. besides being associated with other women and children welfare organizations and educational institutions.

In a world crippled by political corruption, Renuka Devi Borkataki could rise above petty political interest by engaging herself in philanthropic works rather than hankering after political portfolio. □□