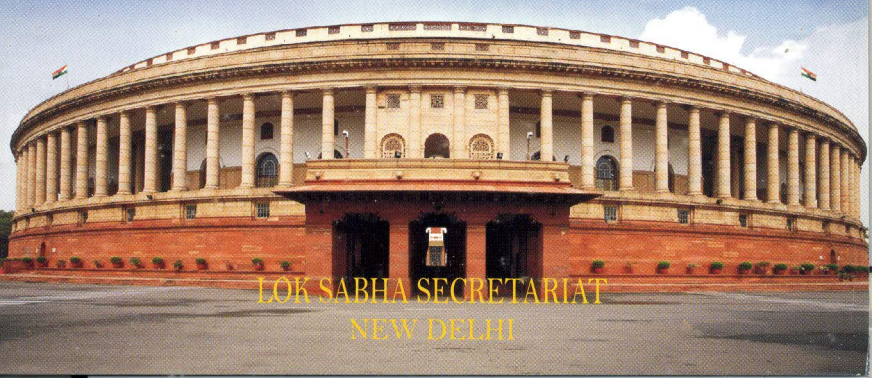
Biplabi Lila Roy



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

Biplabi Lila Roy

Biplabi Lila Roy was a multi-splendoured personality who left an indelible mark in the socio-political scenario of the country with her innumerable contributions. A women of extraordinary courage, active political and social worker, Lila Roy proved her mettle in whatever areas she was associated with, including politics, education and journalism. What added luster to her luminous self was that she blended all these attributes with her kind hearted nature, which, in fact, was marvelous unison of head and heart. She was indeed a symbol of integrity and humility.

Born on 2 October, 1900 at Goalpara, Assam, Lila Roy was the daughter of Girish Chandra Nag and Kunjalata Nag of Sylhet* in Bengal. Her idealist parents made a deep impression on her life from young age. She was conscious of the social problems and the sufferings of the people of her country under foreign rule. She was eager to play her role in social reform and in freedom struggle of the country.

Lila was educated privately at home and later she was sent to primary school in Assam and Eden High School. In 1921, she did her graduation from the Bethune College, Calcutta and received Padmavati gold medal in English. In her college days, her spirit of revolt was revealed on many occasions. She completed her M.A. in English from the University of Dacca in 1923, after winning a battle with the authorities to allow girl students to study in that University.

*Now in Bangladesh.

As an accomplished, educated and beautiful daughter of a well-established father, she had many avenues of life open to her but she chose for herself a thorny and uncertain path. The condition of women, their low status in family and society always pained her. She identified its root cause as the lack of facility of female education in the country.

Lila Roy took up the cause of female education in right earnest and started a high school for girls in Dacca*. It was a great achievement because there was only one girl's school run by the Government in Dacca at that time. Simultaneously, she established a women's organization named *Dipali Chhatri Sangha*. Among its activities were the establishment of some primary and high schools for girls, centres for teaching handicrafts which would make the girls economically independent to some extent. In addition, girls were taught martial arts to develop self-defence.

While pre-occupied with the spread of female education and the multifarious activities of *Dipali Chhatri Sangha* on the one hand, and political activities for the freedom of India on the other hand, Lila Roy made a new venture in 1930—the publication of "*Jayasree*", the first magazine edited, managed and wholly contributed by women writers with the blessings of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

In the same year, she took an active part in the anti-salt movement in Dacca and for this purpose, she formed the *Dacca Mahila Satyagraha Sangha*. For these causes, she was helped by a band of workers including Renu Sen, Bina Roy and Shakuntala Chowdhury. When Anil Roy, the leader of the Sri Sangha, was arrested in 1930, Lila had

*Now Dhaka, Capital of Bangladesh.

to take charge of the party. In 1931 she courted arrest along with her associates.

On her release from jail in 1937, she joined the congress and the Bengal Provincial Congress Women's Organization was founded in her leadership. Influenced by her capability and ability Subhas Chandra Bose made her a member of the Women's Sub-Committee of National Planning Committee. When he formed the Forward Bloc, she became a member of its Central Executive Body. In 1940, she was nominated Editor of the *Forward Bloc* weekly. Before leaving India for national cause, Subhas Chandra Bose gave complete charge of his party's activities in northern India to Anil Roy and Lila Roy. She was again arrested with her colleagues and kept in detention till 1946. On her release, she began editing the *Forward Bloc* and the *Jayasree*. In the same year, she was elected to the Indian Constituent Assembly from Bengal.

In 1946, she built up the National Service Institute for rescue and relief work. When riots of Calcutta and Noakhali broke out, she rushed to serve and help the distressed. Her efforts in saving many lives was highly appreciated by Gandhiji.

After the partition, she formed a women organization named *Jatiya Mahila Sanghati* in West Bengal. When the Forward Bloc was divided in 1949, she became the General Secretary of the West Bengal Forward Bloc (Subhasist). In 1951 and 1952, she was arrested in connection with the Squatter's Movement and the Food Movement, respectively. When the Subhasist Forward Bloc merged with the Praja Socialist Party in 1954, Lila Roy became one of its national executive members and in 1960, became Chairman of the party. Two years later although she gave up active politics but she continued to guide her old comrades. Lila Roy breathed her last on 11 June, 1970.

In the history of our freedom struggle, Lila Roy will be long remembered as an outstanding leader of dynamic personality. As a social worker, very few could match her contributions to the cause of female education. She rendered great service to the freedom movement by her own example and her percepts. A great women and exceptional human being, she gave everything for her country and the people.

[The Portrait of Biplabi Lila Roy, painted by Shri Samir Das, will be unveiled by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, on 22 December 2008. The Portrait has been donated by the Biplabi Lila Roy-Anil Roy Birth Centenary Celebration Committee.]