

BIBHA CHOWDHURI: AN UNKNOWN INDIAN WOMAN SCIENTIST

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This is a pre-view of the book to be published on the life and works of Dr. Bibha Chowdhuri by these authors soon. Her life showed a lady with determination, with high intellect, devoted research worker and ready to accept challenges for the sake of science. In spite of her commendable research in cosmic rays, she is unknown to many including scientists. She was marginalized even by many of her professional colleagues.

Introduction

Bibha Chowdhuri (BC) was born at a time when higher education among women was almost non-existent in India. Having M.Sc. degree in physics and choosing a career to conduct research in physics at that time going against the normal flow of women of the society, required enough courage and conviction. No doubt, Bibha Chowdhuri (BC) had both the qualities. She obtained her Ph.D. degree from the University of Manchester in England working on the cosmic ray air shower in late forties. In spite of her significant work on cosmic rays at Bose Institute under the guidance of D.M. Bose, at Manchester with a Nobel Laureate P.M.S. Blackett, at University of Michigan, and at TIFR in Bombay and PRL at Ahmedabad after her return to India, she did not receive the recognition she deserved. Although while talking about cosmic rays and in particular about mesons her name pops up automatically, she was marginalized in the page of science in a male-dominated society.

Bibha Chowdhuri and Her Family

Almost nothing is known or available about Bibha Chowdhuri's life, except a brief life sketch published in a



Figure 1: Bibha Chowdhuri at the Bose Institute. Credit: Bose Institute, Calcutta

Bengali magazine by Ranatos Chatterjee.¹ Most of the information about Bibha Chowdhuri and her family presented in this article has been obtained from Ms. Rita Sarkar (*nee* Palit), wife of one of the authors' (Roy) physicist friend Dipak Sarkar. Rita Sarkar had been in close association with the family of Bibha Chowdhuri for a long time.

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