

Contributions of Indian Women to Science

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Published by

SCIENTIFIC WORLD

College Street Market, College Street, Kolkata,
West Bengal 700007

Email: scientificworld1980@gmail.com

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Published by
SCIENTIFIC WORLD

Distributor
ANNAPURNA PUBLISHERS
College Street Market,
College Street, Kolkata,
West Bengal 700007

ISBN : 978-93-84387-75-4

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First Published : 17th October, 2020

Price Rupees : Three hundred only

Type Setteing by
Subodh Press
6, Dalimtala Lane, Kolkata-700 006

Printed by
Srikrinshna Printing Press

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Prof. Asima Chatterjee: Contributions to the Chemistry

Dr. Abhinandan Rana

Prof. Asima Chatterjee was the pioneer natural product chemist in India. She has made significant contributions to the chemistry of alkaloids, coumarins and other plant products. By her relentless research efforts, she was able to isolate a large number of natural products from many species of plants indigenous to the Indian subcontinent, unravel their structure by degradative, spectroscopic and synthetic procedures. There's no doubt that Prof. Chatterjee made significant contributions to the field of medicinal chemistry. She published around 400 papers in national and international journals during her lifetime. She was the first female recipient of India's most prestigious science award, Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize in 1961. She was conferred the prestigious Padma Bhushan in 1975. She also became the first lady scientist to be elected as the General President of the Indian Science Congress Association. Asima Chatterjee, was one of the first Indian women to earn a doctorate in science (D.Sc) in British India. She paved the way for Indian women to pursue organic chemistry and opened the world's eyes to the power of medicinal plants.

Introduction

In India, despite the increasing number of women in higher education in science, women's participation at higher levels of science in tenured research positions has shown little increase. Women constitute over one-third of the total science graduate and post-graduate degree holders, but comprise only 15-20% of the total faculty in research institutions and universities.