

Varsity pays tribute to 19th century PhD from Assam

GUARDIAN NEWS BUREAU

SHILLONG, DEC 12: Tributes were paid to a little known genius of Assam from 19th century, Dr. Radhikaram Dhekial Phookan (1854-1895), at Tezpur University on Wednesday.

Dr. Radhikaram (1854-1895), the son of famous Assamese literary genius Anandaram Dhekial Phookan, was definitely the first chemist to receive a PhD from Assam and perhaps one of the first from the country.

He received his PhD degree from Heidelberg University, Germany in 1890 and that his publications in Chemistry preceded those of Sir Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861-1944)!

A matriculate of both Calcutta University (Presidency College) and University of London, he spent time in Italy and Switzerland before joining Department of Chemistry at the University of Heidelberg, on October 21, 1886.

It is a special milestone in the history of Tezpur University to host the first ever commemoration of the birth anniversary of Dr. Radhikaram.

The Vice Chancellor, Tezpur

University inaugurated the Dr. Radhikaram Dhekial Phookan Hall in Department of Chemical Sciences, Tezpur University, Tezpur, Assam and lit the traditional ceremonial lamp.

In his welcome address, Prof. Ashim J Thakur Head, Department of Chemical Sciences, Tezpur University, Tezpur, Assam deeply appreciated the tribute to Dr. Radhikaram Dhekial Phookan.

He emphasized the importance of saluting the past and marching in time with the latest developments in Chemistry, Science & Technology.

Prof. V.K Jain, Vice Chancellor, Tezpur University, in his inaugural address, evoked a succinct profile of this unsung son and chemist of Assam and placed on record his happiness at this landmark commemoration. He noted with pride the achievements of Dr. Radhikaram in Heidelberg under Robert Bunsen and Victor Meyer, both acclaimed scientists of the era.

Prof. Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami, Prof of the Srimanta Sankardeva Chair at the Centre for



Dignitaries inaugurate Dr Radhikaram Dhekial Phookan Hall at Tezpur University on Wednesday. Guardian photo

Assamese Studies, Tezpur University, opened the seminar.

He spoke with gusto and zeal of the place and importance of History of Science. He was truly gratified that finally a fitting tribute had been paid to the scion of the family of Anandaram Dhekial Phookan.

His talk was illustrated with many undocumented examples

of Science and Technology in Assam from the Ahom times and he made a strong plea for inclusion of study of History of Science in Tezpur University.

Prof. Ramesh Chandra Deka used a power point presentation to bring alive the original documents sourced from Heidelberg University.

He had the audience captivat-

ed by his account of the controversy surrounding Dr. Radhikaram's doctorate degree. He concluded by saying dissimilarities in requirements for awarding a doctorate, cannot take away from the validity or negate the subsequent accomplishments of awardees.

The final speaker of the Seminar, Dr. Gaurangi Maitra, with the dexterity of a story teller, rounded off the entire discussion. She etched an in-depth, multifaceted and riveting description of consolidating the entire narrative within the twin frame works of Assam and Heidelberg in the 19th century.

On the 164TH birth anniversary of Dr. Radhikaram Dhekial Phookan, a hitherto missing chapter in the history of Chemistry and Science in India has now been established, documented and commemorated at Tezpur University.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Dr. H.P.Goswami. The programme was well compered by Ms. Saheen S Begum and the in house photo credit goes to Mr. Hridip Sarma.