

A life well lived

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- (These reminiscences were written by *Sudhir Kumar Pawha*).

Tehrim Dass, popularly known as **Gypsie** among friends and family, passed away a year ago on June 25, and continues to be deeply missed by her family, friends and all those who knew her.

She was a lady of immense talent and gifted with a multifaceted magnetic personality. Born into a prominent family of Delhi, she married the handsome **Amarjit Dass**, who went on to become the first DGP of UP. The police were her family and she relentlessly worked for their welfare.

As secretary and president of the Police Welfare Association, she encouraged the training of constables' wives for the making of police uniforms to supplement their family income. She played a pivotal role in the establishment of a well-equipped maternity hospital for the wives of the police personnel in Meerut. As president, she had to oversee 70 police welfare centres. She was also associated with the *Retired Police Officers' Association (RESPOA)* and the police service remained close to her heart.

At the tender age of 15 years, she embarked on the field of social work as a member of the *YWCA, Delhi* -- a journey which was to lead her to great heights!

Owing to her compassionate nature and her strong desire to alleviate the suffering of the destitute and the poor, she became an active volunteer and co-worker of *Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity*.

It was her strong commitment to this noble cause backed by her quest for perfection that she with the help of a friend was successful in getting land for *Mother Teresa's Leprosy Centre* in Jyotinagar from the government. This is the largest piece of land the Sisters of Charity have in the world. Doing everything with her characteristic quiet and unassuming dignity, she also established the *Cheshire Homes* in Lucknow.

She was the founder director of the *Centre for Women's Studies and Development (CWSD)* at *Isabella Thoburn College*.

Under the aegis of CWSD, she set up an educational and vocational training centre for women and girls at Chinhat, near Lucknow. She also participated in several international workshops organized by the *Asian Women's Institute* in Penang (Malaysia), Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo, where she presented papers on women's education and equal rights for them. She was able to achieve all this because she worked assiduously and selflessly for the cause of women's empowerment.

Tehrim Dass also had the unique distinction of serving as a member on the management committees of several charitable organizations.

In 2012, the *Lucknow Management Association* honoured her with a *Lifetime Achievement Award* for “outstanding social work spanning six decades”.

As a keen sports person, Tehrim Dass won prizes for cricket, badminton, tennis and table tennis and was the president of the *UP Women’s Cricket Association* in 1980s.

She was a connoisseur of western classical music and was instrumental in spearheading the *Lucknow Christian Chorus*. She was an impeccable hostess, and a gifted pianist with a mellifluous voice. Her interesting insights of eminent personalities she had interacted with-- *Jawahar Lal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Suchita Kripalani, Queen Elizabeth, Prince Phillip*, and innumerable foreign dignitaries and scholars --were fascinating. Her wit and sense of humour always captivated those around her.

She nurtured her family lovingly and caringly, bonding with them, taking time out for her own as well as her extended family and friends. This bore rich dividends and all her children – *Amrita, Ranjit, Sunita, Kavita* and *Ajit* --occupy places of eminence.

Tehim Dass was a stalwart who walked tall and did the city of Lucknow proud. She leaves behind a rich legacy for many to be inspired. *Kahlil Gibran’s lines best sum up her life - “You strengthen my faith in humanity”.*