

## ROLE OF PROMINENT MUSLIM WOMEN IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BENGAL

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### **Muslim Women- In context of Medical Profession**

Development of a country crucially depends on the social status of women of that country. Discussion on its relevance had begun since few countries and it is still important in the development discourse. The present socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural standing of the women and their seduction, tyranny and social negligence reminds us the condition which has continued for over the centuries. Although, there are huge barriers in the Muslim Society, a class of enlightened Muslim Women folk had brought about a social resurrection by their participation in various fields of social development. Even though this movement could not completely remove the social, political and economic bondage to which they were subjected but it ensured a stable future and revival of the movement.

This emancipation of Muslim women towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about a new sense of responsibility among Muslim women in India. message to the women of the country was clear enough that to live within the four walls of the home and looking after the house keeping work is not all. It was prerogative for the women that her duty towards her country and society had to be discharged through their assertion in the public sphere. Muslim women had a perception that they had to do something for the country and for the society themselves by coming out in public sphere and interact with society at large regardless of caste and religious differences. In the following paragraphs we discuss a series of contribution of medical profession of perception by the enlightened Muslim women towards the society and the nation building.

### **Anwara Khatun (1911-2003)**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when a large section of Muslim women in Bengal could not completely free themselves from the shackles of the blockade, another of Bengal did not hesitate to challenge the society by taking up any kind of profession to gain economic rights. One such famous woman was Latifunnesa, who earned the crown of medical pass from Kolkata Medical College in the nineteenth century. But whether or not she was ultimately able to devote herself to this profession remains unknown for lack of sufficient information. Latifunnesa was born in 1877 in Shahjadpur, East Bengal. She loved to study poetry and write poetry. A poem titled “ To Bengali Muslim Women” was published in the June 1897 issue of ‘Bamabodhini’. In this, she called upon the Muslim women to break through the fence and perform their duties. Latifunnesa was a very talented student expressing her idea of women’s liberation through this poem.<sup>1</sup> She passed with distinction in medical school examination. She was the first Bengali Muslim women to study Vernacular Licentiate Medicine and Surgery Course with a monthly scholarship of Rs 78. It is surprising to think that Bengali Muslim society at that time staying away from modern education and keeping girls trapped in illiteracy, Latifunnesa’s courage and self- confidence brought her out of the trap and educated her in modern scientific education. Kadambini Ganguly, the first Hindu woman in Bengal to graduate from the Kolkata Medical College, engaged in the medical profession in 1888. Kadambini and Latifunnesa joined the profession roughly 10 years apart.<sup>2</sup> What did Latifunnesa do next? That is, whether she engaged herself in the medical profession, or she succumbed to the pressure of society, it was not possible to analyze it due to lack of sufficient information. But after about a decade I came to know about Anwara Khatun, who was born to become a doctor. Among the Muslim women of Bengal, the first Known woman who passed medicine and devoted herself fully to this profession was Anwara Khatun, one of the fortunes of Bengal in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She is a symbol of the pride of Muslim women on the one hand and the progress of the entire women’s world on the other.

Anwara Khatun was born on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1919. Father Habibur Rahman was a Zamindar of Rajpur in undivided Bangladesh and mother Mohsina Khatun was a resident of Dinajpur. Anwara Khatun's academic background came from a small girls' school in Dinajpur. In 1923, Anwara Khatun's father migrated to Kolkata from North Bengal with his children. After coming to Kolkata, she studied at Sakhawat Memorial for a few months. She did not like the conservative environment there, so she was admitted to Beltala High School from that School. From here she passed matriculation in the first division and got admission in science department in Bethune College. In 1936, she passed with honors from Bethune College and was admitted to Kolkata Medical College. And brightening the faces of the Muslim women of Bengal, she passed her medical in 6 years.<sup>3</sup> At a time when the women's society in Bengal could not be completely freed from behind the veil, a girl from the Muslim society passing her doctorate is nothing but an illusion. But Anwara Khatun not only showed the courage to make that dream a reality, she tried to bring this truth to the public and set herself up as a symbol of this truth. Naturally, this is the reason why she had to face various sarcasms from her admission to medical college till passing her doctorate. An example of this is found in the fact that after admission to the medical college, the Lt. Governor asked her, "It will not take much time to pass your doctorate in our Howrah Bridge will it take long to make?" at that time, Anwara Khatun said in her reply- I will pass the medical in 6 yrs before you build the Howrah Bridge. It is through this answer that one can find evidence of her courageous and strong character.

A small yet important fact about Anwara Khatun's medical studies hides their family history. Her grandmother's child died to the lack of a female gynecologist during childbirth while paying the price of conservatism. In the wake of this incident, Anwara Khatun's father said that if he gave birth to a daughter, he would be taught medicine, and accordingly he taught her medicine, ignoring family barriers and social pressure. However, she had to fulfill a condition to study medicine. The condition is that the society will never accept a girl from Muslim society to pass medical without a veil, that's why Anwara Khatun's father told her to go for medical with a handscarf to satisfy the society. Anwara Khatun had a simple and straightforward nature, so she followed her father's condition to the letter and passed her doctorate. After passing medical, she completed her house surgeon training and was appointed as BMS Senior House Surgeon in Eden Hospital. For some reason, during that time the health department did not promote her to the post of resident surgeon despite being an eminently qualified candidate. After that, she resigned from the government job and decided to practice medicine independently. Even though she was denied promotion, the government could not hinder her enthusiasm, passion for education and scientific being. He was invited by the President of Pakistan to join the post of Head of the Gynecology Department of East Pakistan Medical College.

Anwara Khatun passed her medical and trained under two famous doctors, one was Dr. Yogesh Chandra Banerjee and the other was Dr. Monindranath Sarkar. Besides, Dr. Saraswati Mitra was her classmate and good friend. In 1955, a nursing home with modern equipment and facilities was opened at Darga Road. Renowned surgeon Dr. Panchanan Chatterjee inaugurated the nursing home by performing an appendix operation on Anwara Khatun's brother Anisur Rahman. In 1960, she went to England and returned home after passing the MRCOG examination in London. After returning home, she opened a modern medical center called 'Park View' Nursing Home at 109 Park Street in 1964. This was the first Muslim women's nursing home in Kolkata. While at London, she met the famous English doctor John Michael Brugnell (Brugnell was the family doctor of Queen Elizabeth of England and the Queen's son Charles was born by him) and the two developed a good friendship. Due to this friendship, Michael crossed the seven seas and came to Anwara Khatun's house in Kolkata.

Thus Anwara Khatun remained unmarried for most of her life and devoted herself to the service of others. In fact there are very few successful Gynecologists like her. No one knows how many children she has taken in her arms, how many labors have been freed from pain, not even Anwara herself. She wears a saree of Atpaure type like a Bengali mother, with a simple- smooth personality from that college life, and when she comes to her nursing home near the pain of childbirth, she regains her morale. Renowned people like famous anthropologist Nirmal Kumar Bose, Syed Ayub, Muzaffar Ahmed, Debobrata Biswas etc. came and treated Anwara Khatun's nursing home. Even Mujibur Rahman of present day, Bangladesh had his wife treated by him. He used to say, 'The birth of life is auspicious for me. Therefore, even if the society or the law makes someone clingy, I

welcome every child, judging by the scientific vision and the human mind. A child is the product of the desire of any two women. Why should the responsibility of not having social recognition of parents as husband and wife fall on him?" she believes in family planning but does not support killing fetuses. "If the natural birth rate is slightly reduced without birth control through abortion, there is nothing but gain and loss". "What a pain to give for a life. I have absolutely no support for this mass killing of fetuses there". Anwara doesn't want to think too much about the success of the test tube baby, 'Do we need him in our poor country? If a childless couple adopts an orphan child, society's problems can be reduced a lot, but the birth of a test tube baby is definitely a significant success in terms of scientific research'.<sup>4</sup> Anwara Khatun's modern thinking and usage can be identified from these sayings.

Apart from studying medicine, Anwara Khatun was fond of literature since childhood. She loved to read Rabindranath Tagore's various poems, literature, Sarat literature etc. she also loved to watch Ramayana-Mahabharata on TV. At the same time, she could also cook very well. But she loved to study the most. She studied till the last day of her life. This extraordinary woman died on July 1, 2000. But her fame and bravery as a secular and free-spirited man will forever be immortalized.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Dr. Zohra Begum Kazi (1912-2007):<sup>6</sup>**

The Bengali Muslim female physician of the subcontinent. Dr. Zohra Begum Kazi was born on 15 October 1912 in a noble family in Raktangaon, Madhya Pradesh, India. Her ancestral home is the famous Kazi family in Gopalpur village of Kalkini upazila of Madaripur district. Father Dr. Qazi Abdus Satta was a physician by profession and a well-known subcontinental politician. Kazi Abdus Sattar was born in 1875. LMF from Mitford Medical School in 1895 and MBBS in 1909.

He himself was a Hafez of the Qur'an and after his retirement from the service of the medical office, performed medical services as well as Imamat (Imamoti) in Mosques. Zohra Kazi's mother deleted Anjuman Un Nisa was born in 1886 in Bilbilas Village of Bauful police station in Patuakhali district. Shere Bangla AK Fazlul Haque was his cousin. Mother Anjuman nesa was a very simple working woman. Anjuman Un Nisa was a prominent philanthropist and politician. She was elected as the Women Commissioner of Raipur Municipality.

During the entire period of 'British khedao' and movement, the humanitarian father Dr. Kazi Abdus Sattar spent his childhood and youth at his workplace kazi Abdus Sattar was a modern man with a non-communal spirit. Her father Abdus Sattar had the full support of the ideals of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, who was strongly opposed to the partition of India and the establishment of a Muslim state called Pakistan. He was not a believer for the politics of discrimination between people. As a result, the contemporary secular humanist political values began to be written in the human sense and consciousness of the extraordinarily intelligent teenager Zohra. Dr. Zohra begum Kazis mind slowly took shape as a professional medical scientist with modern thinking. Rani Suryamukhi of Rajnangaon established girls' toll 'Putrishala', where was 'Chalk in hand' of Zohra.

As a brilliant student, Zohra Begum Kazi has cleared all levels of final examination by securing first position since childhood. In 1929, she became the first Bengali Muslim Aligordian to pass matriculation from the Aligarh Muslim Women's Collegiate School. He passed IA from Aligarh Muslim University and College in 1931. She was the first Bengali Muslim women who obtained her MBBS degree from Hardinge Mahila Medical College, in Delhi under Punjab University in 1935, tooping the first division. For this rare meritorious achievement he was awarded the Vice Roy Medal awarded by British- Indian Viceroy Thomas Freeman (1866-1941).

In 1944, Hopping to spread education, then Zohara Begum got married at the age of 32 to social worker and former MP Rajuddin Bhuiyan, a member of the zamindar family of Hatirdia village in Narasindir Raipur (now Manohardi). Schools and colleges were built there under his patronage. Apart from spreading education, his role in various movements was unique. She became a widow in 1963. Although she did not have any children of her own, she raised students and children from various orphanages as her own children. Then, she adopted Abid Iqbal, the nephew of a family friend, as his son at the age of two months. She established Hatirdia High School and College in Narasingdi to preserve the memory of her husband.

She was the second Bengali Muslim woman to obtain the DRCOG degree from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in London in 1955. After that he got FRCOG and MRCOG accreditation from London. Incidentally, earlier in 1951, her younger sister Shireen Kazi received the DRCOG degree as the first Bengali Muslim woman from London. After that Zohara Kazi joined her former workplace as Professor and Head of Department. Then retirement from government service, She also served as Senior Consultant (Honorary Colonel) at Holy Family Red Cross Hospital and Combined Military Hospital.

Before the partition of India in 1947, Zohra Kazi worked as a doctor in various hospitals in India for about 13 years. After the partition of the country, he moved to East Bengal.

The post-forty-seven period is a significant period in the process of building a human welfare society. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this period was before the formation of medical science in Bangladesh. Zohra Begum Kazi is one of the pioneers of Bengali women doctors in medicine, humanitarians, social reformers, whose name floats in everyone's mind in that extraordinary period of shaping the outline of the future Bangladesh state. By joining Dhaka Medical College and Hospital in 1948, he established the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics. During that days, pregnant women were reluctant to come to the Hospital and seek treatment from male doctors for this reason Zohara was the first to provide separate treatment for women in Dhaka Medical College Hospital so that pregnant mothers can come to the hospital for medical care. Because, proper treatment of pregnant mothers and children is interrupted resulting in death incidents were relatively high then. She was the Head of Gynecology Department and Honorary Professor at Mitford Medical College Hospital and Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

While working at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, she also served as an Honorary Colonel at the Combined Military Hospital during his free time. After retiring from service in 1973, she provided medical services as a consultant at Holy family Red Crescent Hospital for several years. Later she worked as Honorary Professor in Bangladesh Medical. She was quite strict as a teacher but taught the students with great interest. Zohara Begum Kazi loved the students very much. But if the students ever broke the rules, she disciplined them severely. She personally followed the rules. Seven o'clock classes will start at exactly seven o'clock, never a second late. She always wanted to teach students. She had no qualms about teaching students. She was never bothered by the students' questions. She was highly admired as a physician. She provided medical care with great sincerity. She was a very diligent doctor. She cooperated in various democratic student movements. But any student involved in politics had to pass after studying. At that time many students who were known centrally and all over the country were studying in Dhaka Medical College. After Ayub's martial law in '58, many of them contributed but as students they could not pass anything if they gave less time than other students. That was the rules then and she followed this rule successfully. Students used to listen to him very attentively in her class. Dr. Zohara Begum Kazi used to go the hospital at night without telling anyone. Her aim was to see whether the patients were receiving proper treatment. She had no free time. She did not spend time in certain rooms of professors. When she got time, she used to discuss the class content with the junior teachers. She always said that there is no room for evasion or negligence in this profession. She did not have any luxury. To indulge in luxury was anti-moral to her. Although she was educated in western education, she was aloof from foreign culture. She was averse to publicity. She has taught medicine to many people. She has provided the education expenses of many poor children. She has helped everyone in danger. She has personally helped many patients with money, if patients do not have money to go. Helped them with money. She taught medicine to many children and sent them abroad. She devoted herself to the service of poor and backward communities. She was also very popular with her neighbors. If neighbors suggested any work, she would do it immediately. Dr. Zohra Begum Kazi studied a lot. She had no interest in anything but studies. At the end of his life, she used to go to the village and tell the Madrasah students, "You will read everything, I am a doctor, it does not mean that only medicine should be studied. All of you will read".

Although Zohara Begum was born by paternal domicile and several years of her career were spent outside Bengal, she could read and write Bengali. Besides English, Hindi, Urdu and Arabic, he could also speak Bengali fluently. She herself was a cyclist, famous badminton and table tennis player.

Zohra Begum Kazi played a unique role in the awakening of the backward women's society, especially in preparing the field of higher education for women in medicine.

Today, many women continue to play their extraordinary role in the field of medicine by following the ideals shown by Dr. Kazi. Starting from the early period of life, in the course of time, Mahatma Gandhi and his wife Kasturaba's beloved Zohra Kazi later became Sherbangla AK Fazlul Haque, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad, Dr. Kazi senior professor Kazi Ashraf Mahmud, Dr. Anuja, Shirin Kazi, Prof. Kazi Motahar Hossain, one of the workers of Mahatma Gandhi's Congress Dr. Susheela Nair gained closeness to humanitarian strugglers like others.

Zohra Kazi's active role in the language movement proves that she was not just a physician, she associated herself as one of the active agitators of those fiery days committed to motherland, mother tongue. She also played an important role as a history-conscious person. Mahatma Gandhi's personal letters to her were carefully kept as souvenirs for a long time. It is a very valuable document in building the socio-cultural history of Bangladesh. On July 11, 2001, Professor Kazi gifted Mahatma Gandhi's personal historical papers, viceroy's Medal, Sanads and other important memorabilia collected by her to the National Museum for preservation.

Various organization honored her with numerous awards. Notable among these are 'Rokeya Medal', 'BMA Gold Madal'. In 2008, the government honored Zohra Kazi with the 'Ekushey Padak (posthumously, 20 February 2008), the highest national award, in recognition of her overall lifelong contribution.

This great woman breathed her last on November 7, 2007 at the age of 95. She was buried in Banani Gorastan.

### **Johura Khatun (1925- 1997)**

Human effort makes the impossible possible. Man's indomitable will, concentration, discipline establish real truth and justice. Johura khatun made life's impossible possible with her incredible willpower. Society cannot function without women. But in the modern era, despite the progress of civilization, when a girl child is born in the family, the laughter of the family ends. Various tortures and discrimination started on girls. This rule has been around since the dawn of civilization. A large section of the society still considers it a sin to have and properly nature a girl child. Bad practices like dowry system which are polluting women the most. About a hundred years ago, in such a discriminatory and neglected society, M.B.B.S, her parents played a very supportive role. Johura's life story is a shining example of this. Zohura Khatun fought tirelessly to improve education and health among Muslim women.

Johura Khatun established herself in the society by overcoming all the opposing ideas prevalent in the society of that time. A disabled woman was addicted to saying 'yes' to everything 'no' in life. She didn't want to live life as a bride of parents' kindness, grace, neglect. Ever since she learned to understand a little in her childhood, she vowed to moved forward with an indomitable will. The dream and desire to establish himself haunts her. Sitting in a remote village of Hooghly, the disabled girl wove a web of dreams. By making that dream a reality, Johura achieved success in life.<sup>7</sup>

Johura Khatun was born in the Sheikh family in Bynan 1<sup>st</sup> block of Bagnan village panchayat in Howrah district. Her father was Tasodek Hossain, mother Mafuzan Besa. Father was an employee of the British Government Coal Company. Johura was the eldest of the siblings. Her two brothers- Sheikh Elias and Sheikh Ismail. Johura's father himself donated land and ran a school in the village. Modern Bengali, English, Arabic, Mathematics and Science were taught in the school. He used to collect contributions from some people of the village for children's education. He used to pay the honorarium of two teachers with some money from his salary every month. The children of the said village received their primary education in the Maktab of Sekh Para. When there was no government initiative for education, Johura's father arranged children's education in this way for the development of education.

Johura was born in 1925. Her first hand was chalked in Maktab. When she was only three years old, she went to bathe in the Pond with her mother. There was a big stone. Johura tripped and fell hard on the rock. The surgery required the complete removal of one leg's knee, and the ankle was severely damaged. Johura lost the ability to walk from the age of just 3 years. Johura's mother was tormented all her life by her carelessness and the pain of Johura's disability.

When almost all the children in the village finished their maktab and entered primary school, Johura's mother took her to the doctor every week. How to get a fake leg was tried day and night. Fake legs were not as readily available as they are today. Johura's parents became very worried. They were worried that their daughter's education would almost stop. Then her father brought her to her uncle's house in Khidirpur. For the convenience of seeing a doctor. Many doctors were seen for two years. Finally a Doctor arranges a Crach for Johura. But he says how much will fit her body cannot be said. Doctor put Crach in spite of various fears. Slowly Johura got used to walking in Crach. Then she received primary education at home. After that her father enrolled Johura in Bynan Bamundas Primary School. In a short time, this disabled student won the hearts of the teachers with her intensive studies. In 1935, Johura Khatun, the first Muslim woman, stood first in the scholarship examination in the entire district. Her father was very happy when the disabled girl stood first in the scholarship examination. From then on she gave special importance to her daughter's interest in education. The father could not take care of his daughter's education even though she attended the village school. Because he had to come to office very early in the morning. Thinking Johura's education purpose, Johura's father moved to maternal house in Mominpur with his little daughter. As there was no educational environment there, his father eventually rented a house. Then Johura admitted in Mominpur High School. Johura used to get good result in class. From class eleven, Johura studied hard for the Intermediate examination, and passed. Passed in the first division. She was then admitted to Bethune School. Zohura also got good results in the examination of I.A.

From a very young age, Zohura insisted on becoming a doctor no matter how difficult it may be to treat herself. She also expressed that desire to her father. She failed the medical examination in the first year, but did not break. She passed the exam the next year Carmichael College Hostel. started studying MBBS from Carmichael College Hostel.

Muslim women of that time were veiled. The door to higher education for women was almost closed under the strict rule of Islam. Zohura's father used to come to town with her disabled daughter. Everyone in the village, society and her uncle's house taunted and reprimanded her father. Zohura's father's financial resources were not that much. There was only the indomitable spirit of father and daughter. Seeing that boys are less interested in education, a girls' interest is strong and her father is determined to make her a suitable person. Clearing all hurdles, Zohura Khatun passed the medical examination. Zohura Khatun passed LFT first. She passed LMF in 1955 and obtained her doctorate. Gained experience in gynecology. She passed MB(Bachelor Medicine) in 1957. There was no MBBS then. A few years later, MBBS was started by combining Bachelor of Medicine with Bachelor of Surgery. Then she again passed MBBS in 1960. (Received Academic Record)

Zohura's incredible intelligence, sheer stubbornness of mind, gives her the ability to stand on her own feet. Her desire to be self-reliant and her sense of self respect help overcome all obstacles. Her sense of patriotism and humanity was impossible. The Superintendent of Carmichael Hostel and various professors gave him help, support and encouragement in many ways. Influenced by the ideals of Comrade Bhupesh Gupta, Indrajit Gupta, Chittaranjan Das and others, Zohura took part in active politics. In the complicated vortex of the politics of that time, she witnessed the wave of mass awakening for the freedom of the motherland, the stormy wave of Gandhiji's Quit India movement, fascinated by the Second World War. To create awareness, in village women education, child health, gynecology, to activate the villagers in the freedom movement, to unite the youth and make them aware against the British. Primary teachers in her village used to take Zohura to classes and encourage them to improve the quality of children from primary and get more scholarships. Communist movement became active in the area under Zohura's leadership. Just as the disabled extraordinary student inspires other students in the school of independence, she also encourages active movement in the area. She

became an active supporter of the national movement inspired by Gandhiji. With the encouragement of Fazlul Haque, the peasants gradually took part in the movement. She was influenced by communist ideals.

After completing her education, Zohura started her first medical practice in Chitpur. Her classmate was Doctor halder. He had a drug store. There are two started, medical career. Zohura's father could not afford the chamber. So Zohura started treatment to collect scraps and stand on her own feet.

Partition shook the entire Muslim education society. But no matter how many employment opportunities there were for the patriotic educated Muslims in the other side of Bengal, they did not go. After 64 long years of independence, many non- Muslims asked why the country was divided while the Muslims remained in Bengali. That is why the Muslims here have been victims of riots time and again. A victim of state terrorism. But to those who love country and motherland, all worldly greed has become useless. So mother-loving, patriotic Muslims did not go to Bangladesh. Dhaka Medical College has just started after partition. There is a greater need for women- specialist doctors. The newly established state of Pakistan. Zohura moved to Dhaka on the advice of the year. After the riots, she started working in the women and child welfare department. She returned to Kolkata after just two years. As opportunity-seeking Muslims migrated to Pakistan for employment, Zohura returned to the land of her birth. Zohura's family and many friends left for Pakistan. But the pull of her own village, the people of the village, became too great for Zohura. She couldn't stay even though she tried hard. This shows how deep Zohura's love for her country was, she left her permanent job and moved to India. Remaining after the partition of the country Muslims are no longer employed in this country. They survived by biting the soil. Zohura took care of the education of her two brothers. Zohura's father lost his job after the British left in 1947. At that time all the responsibilities of running the family fell on the eldest daughter Zohura. Zohura wanted to leave her job and return to the country to be with her family in happiness and sadness. Zohura started working at Ranaghat maternity service center.<sup>8</sup> Gradually this disabled woman worked at various places in Chitpur, Ranaghat, Parkcircus Mominpur, Central Avenue Islamia Hospital, Lady Dufferin Hospital. As there was no permanent job, this disabled woman had to work tirelessly to support the family. She started public service work.

In the field of medicine, the impossible sincerity and selfless human love made her very high. She was a true devoted communist in private life. Selfless patriotism was the main theme of her life. She was a little angry by nature, but the epitome of discipline. She used to get very angry if there was a slight mistake in the operating room. She used to give birth with great care in the operation room of the expectant mothers. As she was a female doctor, there was a large crowd of women. Women are the most ignorant. So she made the workers aware with pen in hand. How a little carelessness can kill a man – about. Her brothers said their father was very brave and dutiful. But she was afraid of father and sister . in medicine, she was always aware of the subtle unconscious, carelessness that can lead to loss of life in a moment.<sup>9</sup>

Zohura was very publicity averse. If you donate with the right hand in Islamic ideals, the left hand would not know- that was what she obeyed. One day a week, she used to visit village patients on Sundays. She used to pray Namaj early in the morning. After taking a bath, from 6 am to 8pm, the patient would see the patient with concentrated mind. She had no food then. If she had the medicine, she would only take the price of the medicine. She did not charge any medical fees. People from far and wide flocked to her house Sundays. She gradually built a small operation center at her own expense on the 77 cent land given by her father. She started the selfless vow of human service. She used to drop everything when the patient was at home and see the patient. She gives more importance to service the treatment than eating and drinking. Medicines given to patients with care almost never had to coming a second time. Gradually, Zohura became a bride of great love, affection and respect to the people of the village.

Zohura was modeled after her father. Every night she would return home and take good news from the villagers. Zohura was a doctor by profession and a Muslim by religion, but she believed that there is no religion except human beings. People are the last thing. She claims to have fulfilled the ideals of Islam and communism by serving the poor people. She always told the Muslim wealthy class you should make more Muslim women gynecologists. Gynecologist is very much needed in the society.<sup>10</sup>

Zohura being disabled, never married again in her life. Zohura's father did not interfere with her daughter's freedom. In 1946-47, her own maternal uncle and aunt were victims of caste riots in Mominpur. The neighbors handed over the two minor brothers to Zohura. Sheikh Ali Ahmed and Sheikh Jamal were very young then. Keeping these two brothers to herself, Zohura raised them. Zohura says to father don't marry me anymore, I got two brothers. On one hand, Zohura has the responsibility of taking care of everything including her father's retirement, her brothers' education, her family's financial responsibility, her cousins' education, and on the other hand, she has the great responsibility of education and treatment of the poor villagers.

Everyone called Zohura 'Kanai's mother'. She takes great responsibility for the development of all the siblings. Once Zohura saw a woman arriving home with her 4 children covered in blood. When Zohura asked, she replied that the husband has married another, does not allow us to eat, when I report, he brutally tortures my child and me with alcohol. My periods are not stopping. All the blood in the body is being drained. Zohura started treatment immediately. She stayed at Zohura's house for three days with her children. Within a few days Zohura operated on her uterine tumor and cured her. Her husband never came looking for her. When the woman recovered after a few days, she went to her father's house. Zohura took the responsibility of bringing up her eldest son. She named the son Kanai alias Badruzzaman. Zohura love to Kanai, is like a son, who has a calm and gentle nature. In 1977, Zohura gave Kanai a room. Kanai's mother used to come and stay. Married Kanai in 1982. Thus, many helpless, distressed, poor oppressed people were directly and indirectly impressed by Zohura Khatun's companionship and hospitality. To them Zohura was an embodied goddess.<sup>11</sup> She was a doctor at Islamia Hospital on Central Avenue for 15 years.

In 1985, she left Islamia Hospital and went to Howrah on her mother land. Due to disability and age it was no longer possible to travel. In 1990, she deeded all the wealth including 77 decimal of ancestral land and 55 decimal of paddy land in the name of her pet son. Her own brothers were displeased. But she did not pay attention to it. She always takes brave decisions by the side of helpless people. Her brothers were all established then, their prosperous life. So, she bequeathed all her wealth to her pet son.

Finally, it can be said that a disabled woman has overcome all obstacles with a very stubborn and courageous step, making the impossible possible, and a great responsibility of human service is a very rare event in the society. It is natural that society will take care of a disabled person. But with her life she set a shining example of courageous motivation to a healthy person and to a disabled person. There was a shortage of female doctors at that time. Devoted her life to communist ideology. But the government job was not found. Abandoning the lure of a permanent job in the land of Pakistan, she returned home and set a shining example of patriotism and humanity. She was disabled, but being a Muslim did not get due respect from the communists and administrators. There was no permanent job vacancy for her in any government hospital. But she became a disabled doctor and engaged in human service far and wide with impossible pain. A very flamboyant, yayaswi was renowned as a patriot. Above all anger and sorrow she succeeded in the great feat of humanity. If you get a little money, if you get a chance, many more poor people, many helpless women could benefit more.

On Tuesday, April 8, 1997, Zohura Khatun retired permanently from all duties.<sup>12</sup> She cares more importance about human suffering than her own suffering. She was seventy-six years old at the time of her death. She believed in the Communist ideals, but not only did the communists in Bengal not give due respect to the disabled doctor Zohura, but many talented men and women like Zohura, who were minorities, did not get due respect. Society cripples their talents, under various pretexts, so that they can longer stand up. In this civilization, the development of minorities is being hindered gradually. This is the harsh reality, which is reflected in Zohura's life.

Thus, it can be seen that the Muslim women of Bengal engaged themselves in the service of the people irrespective of caste and religion. At the same time, they had also tried to bring the women's society, especially the Muslim women's society, from darkness to the path of light. An inquiry into the history of the development efforts of these enlightened Muslim women reveals that they never showed any divisiveness or bigotry in their



work. As a result, they fulfilled the purpose with which they came to the masses through their work and the aim of the present paper is to revive the history of this long struggle to the next generation.

#### REFERENCE

1. Bamabodhini Patrika, No. 384, June 1897, pp:77-78, quoted in Anwar Hossain(ed), Muslim Women of Bengal in the Freedom Struggle (1873-1947), ibid, p.111.
2. Ibid, pp 111-112.
3. It should be noted that the course duration of the medical college was 6years, not 5 years like now and another thing to note is that in those days a person who passed medical was awarded M.B. it was said that M.B.B.S. not.
4. Chitra Dev (eds), 'Mahila dokter bhin graher basinda' (Female Doctor Aliens), 1994, Ananda Publicers, p-117-118, 179.
5. I got detailed information about Anwara Khatun through personal interview Ayesha Bibi (sister of Anwara Khatun and current owner of Park View Nursing Home) 25-9-2009 and personal interview Hosnur Rahman (brother of Anwara khatun), from 03-11-2009 and 22-12-2009.
6. [https:// www.ourislam24.com](https://www.ourislam24.com) and [https:// www.newsg24.com/feature-news/4845](https://www.newsg24.com/feature-news/4845) , October 15,2020.
7. Mention in Saleha Begum (ed), 'Prathikrit Musalman Nari' , she inspired by Dr. Sheikh Ahmed Ali Sahib, Pragarisil Prakasak, p-136.
8. Islamia Hospital, Central Avenue, 1985. Ibid, p140.
9. Ibid, p140.
10. Finding information from brothers Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas and Ismail, ibid, p-141.
11. Information from foster child Badruzzaman, ibid, p-142.
12. Data obtained from "Bainan Bamundas Primary School", ibid, p-142.