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“MUSLIM WOMEN CONTRIBUTION IN VARIOUS KIND OF PUBLIC SECTOR IN 20th CENTURY BENGAL”

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Abstract: Layla Samad is an unconventional person. She has overcome all the adversities of the hostile society and has become educated, politically and socially conscious, and has also tried to advance the people around her. She wants to sow the seeds of morality, faith and respect among them.

In fifteen century, Layla Samad was at the forefront of many creative works including not only literature and journalism, but also politics, social welfare, theater, cover art, modeling, publishing entertainment magazines. There is no doubt that she is a priest in this regard. Legend has it that we are still walking along the path that this woman made by removing the boulders. We can undoubtedly say that a woman is daring when she comes to create her own world of thought.

Keywords: *unconventional, adversities*

I. INTRODUCTION

Layla Samad was a very militant mind-consciousness and a personality inspired by the ideals of revolutionary movement. Her husband's name Samad was originally added to her nickname Layla. Her real name was Amina Haque. She was born on 3rd April 1928, in Kolkata. Her father's name is Khan Bahadur Aminul Haque. He is a descendant of the

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famous Mirza family of Dinajpur district. He joined the Home Department in Writers' Building as a registrar. He was the first Muslim Registrar in the Home Department. Her mother was a descendant of Shershah's chief commander Daniel Khan. Her mother's name is Tahmina Haque. At that time her mother used to sing Rabindra Sangeet. Esraj also gave him a good hand. She was involved in social activities. Begum Rokeya was a member of "Anjuman – a – Khawatin". Her essay was published in "Saugat". Layla Samad was the

third of the four honorees. She first attended Jalpaiguri Missionary School and later Sakhawat Memorial School in Kolkata in sixth grade. After passing the entrance, she studied at Ashutosh College and later at Lady Brabourne College. After passing BA in 1957, she completed a two-year postgraduate course in Journalism from Kolkata University and was awarded the 'Banshidhar-Jalal Gold-Medal' as the first in the first class. She is the first Muslim woman to receive this medal. In 1960, he formally received this medal from the hands of the Governor of West Bengal, Sarojini Naidu. This news of receiving the medal was prominently printed in Anandabazar and Statesman newspaper.²

While in school, she used to recite and perform songs in cultural events. She was primarily a prose writer, Journalist, politician, cultural activist, dramatist, philanthropist, housewife and master of cooking. The highly talented Layla Samad's writing were published in newspapers at an early age. Layla Samad could give good speeches right from her school days. She also addressed a few meetings with her father at the famous Nazimuddin Hall in Dinajpur. Social analysts think that Layla Samad is one of those geniuses who were born before their time. In English it is called ahead of times. She was born before there was a society to accept, hold and acknowledge. The society in those dark times, the dedicated communist leader Mirza Abdus Samad. Due to

political reasons, Mirza Samad had to leave Dhaka and live in Kolkata. In 1957. Contextual referent, Layla Samad's father was a good playwright. A close friend of Annadashankar. Close to Chittaranjan Das. When Chittaranjan Das died in Darjeeling on 16th June 1925- he brought his body to Kolkata.³

Newspaper is called our third eye. Food for the mind, it is also part of his work to make the human mind sharp and rational. Women and men are working together in all branches of newspapers.

But at one time it was very difficult for women to enter this media. Laiya Samad is one of the few women we can name in journalism against all odds. However, since 1947, her writings were published in the weekly 'Begum' and in 1950 she worked as an assistant editor of Begum. After leaving the weekly 'Kom' Layla Samad joined daily newspaper as the manager of the women's section. Later she also worked as a staff reporter. At that time, Layla Samad was the first Bengali Woman in a challenging profession like journalism.⁴

If we turn a little back page of women's movement in journalism, we will know that Bengali women's steps in journalism took place only in the opportunity of editing periodicals. The first newspaper edited by women was 'Parbic' and was called 'Bangamahila'. It was published in 1977 on 1st Baisakh i.e. 1870. It was edited by Mobradayini Mukherjee. After

that, the monthly women's magazine 'Anathini' was published in the month of July 1875 i.e. Shravan month of 1282 Bengal. Then on September 28, 1883, the first weekly newspaper edited by women 'Bangabasini' was published. This is how women march in journalism. At that time in 1947 we had a hard time finding these women, among them, the names of Layla Samad, Noorjahan Begum, Mafarnaha Chowdhury etc. are worth mentioning. During her stay at 'Begum', Layla Samad used to think about modern and advanced magazines for girls. So, with her own interests a beautiful magazine was born under her own editorship which was called 'Ananya'. Apart from editing the monthly magazine named Ananya, she served as the co-editor of two magazines named 'Kanti' and 'Journal'. 'Tamishra, the women's section of the weekly 'Chitrati', 'Chander Haat', the Children's section of the daily Purbadesh Patrika, managed it with skill.⁵

Layla Samad has written a lot in spite of various types of engagements. The number of books written by her is 12, of which six are unique stories. She had an endless world of thoughts about children. She believed that the world of possibilities he dreamed of had to be created in the inner world of children. So, she wrote a book for mothers titled 'Know your Child'. She is from Bangla Academy Kolkata, received 'Academy Award' in 1982.⁶

In 1950s, very few women achieved the feat of

being both a writer and a dramatist, Layla Samad being one of them. In 1951, she acted as an actress in the play 'Javanbandi'. Culture Sangsad of Dhaka University organized the performance of the play 'Jabanbandhi' based on the stories of Swadeshi Jailers. Layla Samad played a very impressive role in the play. Besides, she performed dramas like 'Chinnaratan'(1953) and 'Kafer'(1954) with unparalleled courage. It was unthinkable that Muslim conservative women would perform a drama on stage in public. But Layla Samad rose above all limitations and created a stir in the theater world. Layla Samad won a gold medal by acting in Tulsi Lahiri's 'Chera Tar' in Dhaka. In the fifties, Begum became a magazine cover model. She did not hesitate to do the work that she considered important in her reasoning. She did not consider any obstacle as an obstacle. Layla herself wrote dramas like 'Red Lantan', 'White Headed Girl', 'Ma', etc. She formed a theater group called 'Charuni'. She encouraged many women in the theater world by becoming lakhs of theater workers. She plays many times on radio. Layla Samad made outstanding contributions to the society in literature, culture and journalism.⁷

Due to 2nd world war, Layla Samad's father left Kolkata and was transferred to Jalpaiguri in 1939 as Assistant Commissioner of Sales Tax to raise war funds. That is where Layla Samad's political life began. During his stay in Kolkata, he was in contact with many

communist leaders, including one of the founders of the Communists Party of India, Comrade Mozaffar Ahmed. Layla Samad's husband Mirza Samad took responsibility for working in tea plantation and railway workers union. After marriage, Layla Samad also started working together with her husband in this party. She used to sell the Freedom People's War magazine from door to door. The Party was rewarded by her, to raise the most subscription for the Party. This is how this girl from a conservative Muslim family entered politics. She attended the Writers' Conference of the Soviet Union in 1973 as the only woman representative of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association. In 1980 he participated in the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Delhi and in 1982 at the invitation of the United States Government. In 1985, poets Sufia Kamal and Layla Samad visited Czechoslovakia at the invitation of the Czech Government. She received 'banga Academy', 'Lekhika Sangh Award', 'Nurunnessa Khatun Vidyabinodini', 'Hasan Hafizur Rahman Swarna Padak' and 'Sufi Motahar Hossain Padak'

for her special contribution in writing short stories. Eskaton Ladies Club has introduced 'Layla Samad Literary Award' to reward women writers. She joined Business and Professional Women's Club, Begum Club, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and did many developmental work.⁸

Her constant struggle was against all obstacles in the world of culture. Above all, she has

established other women's rights in this field by participating in all kinds of cultural activities. Today's culture must recognize her outstanding contribution in establishing the cultural rights of women workers. Her progressive socio-political and cultural activities need to be properly appreciated. Re-publishing of her published books, proper marketing arrangements and undertaking research and writing in newspapers to keep his activities alive is absolutely necessary.

On the eve of the formation of the United Front in 1954, he actively participated in meetings and other activities to support the formation of the Front. Maulana Bhasani nominated her as the United Front's Women's Association candidate from Dinajpur constituency but she could not participate in the election as her name was not on the voter list. She worked devotedly for the purpose of establishing democracy in the United Front elections. During that time, the Muslim league Government dissolved the United Front government by issuing Article 92 and issued arrest warrants against political leaders and workers. Her name was also in that list. But after getting to know about it through a friend of the IB Department, she moved to Kolkata with her baby daughter. In her spare time in Calcutta, she studied pottery design, learned Hindi and won a gold medal for standing first in post-graduation in journalism from Calcutta University. After winning the gold medal, he was stopped on his way back

home the same day after her visa was not extended and her passport was confiscated while crossing the border. Due to lack of this passport, she could not go to Stockholm despite being elected as a delegate to the World Peace Council conference.⁹

In 1971, during the difficult days of the liberation war, she formed a secret fund of the freedom fighters with sincere love for the country. Helped the freedom fighters in various ways. Government attention did not escape her name in the long list of the killings of intellectuals.

Layla Samad also actively participated in the national language movement in Dhaka. She put posters on the walls with her own hands. At that time, she also worked with Juiful Roy of the banned Communist Party.¹⁰

If women's and literary organizations forget this pioneer of theirs, if they do not give due respect, they will have to bear the responsibility of that failure. The example of Layla Samad's character accepting the challenge, breaking through the stagnant society amid the many experiences of tension, should be taken into our understanding.

Reading his writings, one feels that when a man dreams, he is a genius, fearless and pure. She said, Dreams, which rarely come true, are exclusively the product of human holy love. The inner man is also seen through this dream. One dream can be linked to another dream. So, we who are involved in writing and journalism can take inspiration and strength from it. This

noble woman died on August 9, 1989.¹¹

Layla Samad's personality and sense of humanity were developed in various ways by connecting her with the welfare of the society. She extended her work to the hungry, oppressed people of the country, as well as to the neglected, devalued women of the society. Poor meritorious students would bear the cost of education. She was not self-centered and was completely concerned about family, neighbors and relatives. In spite of her, hundred duties, she did not fail to take care for his sick mother and paralyzed brother. The contribution of husband Mirza Samad behind the success of Layla Samad's busy and diverse life is undeniable. She breathed her last at Holy Family Hospital at four o'clock in the morning on August 9, 1989, leaving behind a daughter, husband and family. She is an immortal soul, her work, devotion, and struggle will inspire the women's society for a lifetime.

Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury (1901-1986)

Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury, the first Bengali Muslim woman politician, was born in 1901 to a noble family in Assam. His father Sharafat Ali Chowdhury was a police officer. Nana Mir Khairat Ali got English education at that time, defying the conservatism of the family. Later he studied medicine and thus became his father's prodigal son. Jobeda Khatun's mother Noorjahan Begum did not study in school but practiced Urdu and Bengali at home. Jobeda Khatun's inquisitive childish mind developed from this family environment of Nana's

revolutionary attitude and mother's language education.

In 1906, Jobeda Khatun was admitted to Eden High School in Dhaka. At that time, she was the only Muslim student in the second class. Jobeda Khatun's school career ended when her father was transferred to Sylhet and she had to study with her mother.

She was married to Dewan Abdur Rahim Chowdhury, a famous lawyer of Sylhet, when she was 11 years old. Jobeda Khatun's husband was Public Prosecutor of Sylhet Bar. In addition, she was a member of the provincial Council for 19 years. She participated in politics with the encouragement of her husband. Active participation in politics was a big deal in an era when women were veiled and housebound. She was the first female politician. If her multifaceted activities and struggling life can be judged in the context of this era of women's awakening, then she can be imagined as a worthy successor of Bugum Rokeya. She was a housewife from a conservative family who combined politics and social service from the 1930s to the 1960s.¹²

Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury, the only Muslim women at that time, openly participated in the Women's Public Meeting held in Sylhet in 1922. Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Muhammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali and Begum Muhammad Ali were present in that meeting.

In 1927, Jobeda Khatun took a new initiative to abolish the veil system. Mr. AK Fazlul Haque, Kavi Nazrul and Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah

and his son Mr. Shafiullah were received in Sylhet by Jobeda Khatun and his sister. This is the first time that Muslim Girls took their seats on stage without veils in front of a huge crowd.¹³

In 1928, Jobeda Khatun entered politics after being elected as the first women member of the Congress from Sylhet. In 1930, he played a leading role in the movement to break the salt law. At this time, 'Shrihatta Mahila Sangh' was formed under the chairmanship of Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury.¹⁴ She took part in the civil disobedience movement against the British and marched in violation of Article 144. Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury attended a state conference of Suma Valley on behalf of Srihatt Mahila Sangh. Leaders like Netaji Subhash Bose, Jyotirmoy Ganguly, Urmila Devi attended this state conference that day.¹⁵ On that day, Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury was the first and only Muslim woman and the president in the meeting 'Shrihatta Mahila Sangh' under the Chairmanship of Jobeda Khatun supported and supported the Bhanu Bill movement.¹⁵ In 1930 Manipuri farmers stopped paying land tax in protest against the oppression of the landlords in this movement. As a result, the ruling group tortured them heavily. Congress sided with farmers in this movement. Jobeda especially helped in this movement and extended full support to Tevaga movement as well. However, 'Shrihatta Mahila Sangh' had a special connection with this movement of Bhanu Bill.

During this time, Jobeda could be seen in public streets. Along with Sarlabala Devi, Hiranyaprabha Dey, Naresh Nandini Dutta, Bilangamoyi Kar, Matangini Das etc.

Jobeda joined the Surma Valley Women's Organization and Student Movement.¹⁶ Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury joined the Muslim League in 1943 and it was on her initiative that the first Muslim League women's sub – committee was formed in Sylhet.

During the riots in 1946, Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury involved himself in the service of humanity at the relief camp. He contributed to the establishment of Women's College in Sylhet. When the country was partitioned, there was a shortage of students in Sylhet Mahila College and Education Minister Abdul Hamid Chowdhury decided to close Sylhet Mahila College. At this time, he went from house to house with Sirajunnecha to collect female students. Not only this, East Pakistan Governor Malik Feroze Khan along with other women leaders met Noon and defended the college. In 1948 she joined the Women's National Guard. It was in 1948 that the first meeting of women was held with the aim of language movement. In 1948, she along with Syeda Shaher Banu Chowdhury, Jahanara Matin, Syeda Najibunnesa Khatun, Sufia Khatun, Rokeya Begum and other women presented a memorandum to the then Union Minister of Communications of Pakistan, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar. She was only one of the leaders of

the language movement and was associated with the 'Nowbelal' 'Goshthi', the organizer of the language movement in Sylhet.

In 1954, she was elected the president of 'Apwa Sylhet' District Committee. In addition to this, his social service work also continues. He became associated with the 'Red Cross' and 'Matrimangal' during this time. she was the president of this 'Matrimangal' for a long time. In recognition of his services, he was awarded the 'Coronation' Medal and the 'Queen Elizabeth' Medal by the Red Cross.¹⁷

Although she was not actively involved in politics thereafter due to ill health, she remained associated with nationalist and progressive movements during the 1990s. In the mass uprising of 1969, a women's march took place on the streets of Dhaka under the leadership of Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury. After that, this leader also contributed for freedom during the liberation war. He went from village to village and helped the freedom fighters. Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury has struggled for women's liberation and women's rights throughout her life. Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury left a glorious contribution to the language movement of 1952, the beginning of the independence movement of Bangladesh. As the first Bengali Muslim woman of this country's freedom struggle, she is forever burning in the pages of history. This militant leader died on 25th January 1986.

Begum Mushtari Shafi¹⁸

Begum Mushtari Shafi¹ born on 15 January 1938 in Kaliachack, Malda district (India). Father late Khandkar Nazmul Hoque Ansari was employed in the police department in undivided India. He died in 1948. Grandfather late Khandaker Abdul Mahi Ansari (Sub-Registrar) indirectly participated in Sepoy Mutiny in 18th century. Grandmother Khan Bahadur kazi Azizul Haque (late) inspector (I,G), inventor of finger prints. The British government awarded him the title of Khan Bahadur. Mother, Marhuma Arefa Khatun died on March 13, 1938, three months after her birth. Paternal residence is village Gerda, District Faridpur, Maternal residence is village Payagram Kashba, District- Khulna. A very fragmental life beings when the mother and father are deprived of educational qualifications in childhood. As a result, she did not get formal education, so she does not have any formal certificate. On January 16, 1955, was married to freedom fighter Dr. Mohammad Shafi (Dental Surgeon). The anti-British Swaraj movement in the entire forties, Manantar in the fifties, 2nd world War, the Riots (Hindu-Muslim riots) of 1947, the partition of India in 1947, and the language movement in 1952, all these deeply trace her childhood perception. In the late 1950s, a close relationship with left-wing politics developed and a strong faith and trust in socialism was born. In first part of the sixties, with the aim of the women's liberation movement, she established an organization

called 'Bandhabhi Sangh' in Chittagong. She edited the 'Sangh's mouthpiece monthly 'Bandhabhi' continuously for ten years from 1964. In 1969, the 'Bandhabhi Nijasha Chapakhana', 'Girls' Press' was established, run entirely by women. During the Liberation War of 1971, the 'Bandhabi Office' and 'Girls' Press' were completely destroyed by the Pakistani army. In 1970, Bangladesh Women's parishad Chittagong branch was formed by convening her. Currently, she is the vice president of Mahila Parishad. She was a seventh grader Kamrunnessa School during the language movement. Participated in the procession once despite severe obstacles. She gave full support to the student movement of 1862 and gave speeches in various student meetings. Joined various meetings with full support of the 6-point movement of 1966.

She actively participated in the 1969 mass uprising by participating in speeches and marches in various meetings. In 1970, she organized women in the national elections, organized various ward-based elections, supervised, formed committees and held extensive campaigns and meetings for Awami League. In March 1971, she participated in various programs (including procession meetings) aimed at achieving Bengali independence and independence of Bangladesh in the non-cooperation movement. On April 7, her husband Dr. Mohammad Shafi and only younger brother Ehsan (a student of Chittagong

University) are captured by the Pakistani Army and after her martyrdom, she took refuge in Agartala in India with 7 children and participated in various activities of the liberation War. After that, she came to Kolkata to rejoin the 'Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra' as a soundman and dramatist under the name Umme Kulsoom (pseudonym). At that time, apart from regularly participating in Urdu plays on the radio, in the absence of the scheduled artist. She participated in the play 'Jallader Darber' and recited 'Eahiya Badh Kavya' in Amitrakhar' rhythm composed by Gaziul Haque in the 'Agnishikha' program and recited the Kathika titled 'Banglar Ranangane Nari' every week. She was also work in Akashbani named Dalia Mohammad 'Know what they want?'. She wrote and published short stories based on the liberation war in various newspapers and magazines. First of all, her father's motivation behind the participation in the liberation war, later on, from her husband she taught it. Although her father worked in the police department in undivided India, despite this, he left his signature of fearlessness through direct and indirect cooperation of the compatriots in the anti-British Swadeshi movement and also enjoyed the fruits of it by accepting extreme hardships with a smile. This was the teaching and inspiration of his love of country. Later the direct help of her husband make him brave to participate in any work of liberation war. She feels that she has done the greatest and most glorious work of her life.

Nurjahan Murshid¹⁹

Former Member of Parliament Mrs. Nurjahan Murshid was born in 1924 in Murshidabad district of West Bengal. She matriculated from Victoria Institution, I.A.B.A Passed and MA from Kolkata University, received this degree. She got involved in politics right from her school days. After she received her M.A degree, she worked for one year as the headmistress of Syeddunnesa Girls High School, Barisal. Then, she served as superintendent of hostel (Mannujan Hall) at Vivekananda Road for post-graduate Muslim girls in Kolkata. During this time, she got involved in the anti-British movement. When Gandhi started a hunger strike for peace, Suhrawardy Sahib used to travel around Kolkata, sometimes by car, sometimes by Zips car, to bring the situation to a favorable state. Nurjahan visited Gandhi several times along with Murshid Suhrawardy Sahib. While there she was overwhelmed by listening to Gandhiji's Queen of peace and became more inspired by the love of her country. When Manujan Hall was destroyed during the Hindu Muslim riots, the hostel was shifted from Vivekananda Road to Dargah Road in Parkcircus. She started an organization called Culture Center with some Muslim children. Barrister Latif was its president. They were female members of this center. Mrs. Nurjahan Begum, Hajera Mahmud, Rokeya Rahman, Hosne ara Rashid etc. The purpose of this

center was to discuss political issues. The politics of this party was different from the politics of the Muslim League. But after a few days, when the country was divided, she left her classmate Sukumari Bhattacharya in charge of the hostel and moved to Dhaka.

In 1948, she got married to Dhaka University English teacher Khan Sarwar Murshid. After marriage, she was admitted to the University of Kolkata at the behest of her father and got an opportunity to gain higher education and at the behest of his father-in-law she entered into active politics. In addition, Nurjahan Murshid played the role of Vijaya in Saratchandra's play Vijaya in 1951 under the initiative of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital Doctor's Club to help the flood victims. In those days it was unthinkable to act with a man on stage in the presence of mother-in-law. However, her father-in-law was overwhelmed by the performance of Mrs. Nurjahan Murshid that day. It was mainly the family environment that inspired her to develop talent in cultural and political fields. She was elected MNA in 1954. She was actively involved in Awami League politics from the birth of Awami League.

In the wake of Ayub Shahi's student-teacher massacre during the 1970s mass movement, Mrs. Murshid mobilized teachers' wives and mothers to form a strong women's resistance movement and demanded the withdrawal of the Agartala conspiracy case.

From 1969-71, she worked as the editor of the Pakistan Awami League Women's Branch to

organize and inspire women in the field of politics. In 1970, she was elected a member of the Constituent assembly.

Meanwhile, a parliamentary party was formed under the provisional government of Bangladesh. Mrs. Murshid joined this group. The purpose of the group was to visit important regions of India- Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Lucknow, discuss with the government and opposition parties in Delhi to raise the issue of recognition of independent Bangladesh and Mujibnagar government. Mrs. Murshid traveled to different regions and spoke strongly on behalf of Bangladesh in various meetings. She later met President V V Giri, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Speaker Dhillon, Defiance Minister Jagjivan Ram and Leader of Opposition Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed in Delhi.

Then they presented their speech in the joint session of both Houses of the Indian parliament at the Center Hall of the Parliament House in Delhi. Soon after, Pakistan Government tried Mrs. Murshid in absentia and issued a proclamation sentencing Mrs. Nurjahan Murshid to 14 years imprisonment and confiscation of her movable and immovable property. Mrs. Nurjahan Murshid was the only woman against Pakistan Government issued this sentence.

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