

Bangladesh: Shamsun Nahar Khan Doli, a women cadre, and her fight for the rural poor

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Shamsun Nahar Khan Doli was born in 10 April 1964 in Dashmina sub-district in Patuakhali District. She studied in homoeopathic medicine after completion of secondary level education. Her father Abdus Satter Khan was a famous peasant leader who died in 1996 due to cardiac attack. Doli grew up in a political family because Abdus Satter Khan was the member of CBPML and previously EPCPML (East Pakistan Communist Party-ML) and also the founding President of Bangladesh Krishok Federation. Given their communist politics Abdus Satter Khan and his wife Jabeda Satter Khan were in jail for several times.

Abdus Satter Khan was in jail and lived an underground life for 17 years, when he was young enough. For this unsuitability of the family, Doli Khan was raised with little affection like other members of the family.

In 1990 Bangladesh Krishok Federation decided to organize rural women, especially the peasant women. Doli Khan as young leadership took the responsibility to raise organization. She devoted herself to public work wholeheartedly. In 1991 during the massive movement around the land, her organization contributed a lot. In the demonstration the majority participants were peasant women. Even in early 1992 when landless people went for massive occupation of land her organization played a pivotal role. Peasant women fought a tough fight against the local influential and musclemen who have been enjoining the fallow land illegally over the years.

After the death of Abdus Satter Khan in 1996, Doli Khan was very shocked and got involved in social work as well. She built Satter Khan Trust to serve the poor people in her own area. Both she and her husband also thought to establish a women's college to advance women's education in the rural community. Finally, it was established in Dashmina sub-district and called Doli-Akbar College. Mr. Ali Akbar is the husband of Doli Khan. He is an MBBS doctor who has been practising in the locality for helping the distressed rural people. He takes lump-sum amount of money as doctor's fee from his ideological point of view. It also increased Doli's image and popularity. By the way, the college they established is under way to be included as MPO (Money Payment Order) meaning the government will pay the part of the salary of the teachers in the college. She also established a Girls' School which is running well. All of this is a groundbreaking thing in the locality as women's leadership.

By the by, Doli was running the Female Vice-Chairman candidate in the local government system which took place on 30 April 2019 and achieved landslide victory beating all the other candidates. The difference of votes with her nearest candidate is 22000. This is the third time that Doli was elected Female Vice-Chairman. Basically, she was elected Female Vice-Chairman for the three consecutive times. Her popularity did not reduce in anyway.



Electoral draft poster for Shamsunnahar Khan Doli.

What is the building block of Doli's victory in the election again? Firstly, she has very good connection with poor communities in the electoral constituency. She visits the door to door of the people and is used to their cultural life. She stands by the people when they are in distress. If there is any death incident or accidents, Doli is there with her full strength and support. So, people like her very much. Secondly, she maintains a very plain life. She wore very chief clothes. She uses a very chief mobile phone. She does not use the touch screen digital cell phone; even she does not know how to use that. Thirdly, people who come to visit her house in the sub-district town never go back without hospitality. Fourthly, as a homoeopathic doctor she gives treatment to the poor people at free of cost. Fifthly, the political hegemony of Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF), Bangladesh Kishan Sabha (BKS) and CPBML help her achieve striking victory. There are four islands occupied by BKF and BKS in Dashmina sub-district, where Doli Khan is based. Most of the voters are living in the islands. Owing to party hegemony, the voters of islands voted for her monopolistically.

Doli Khan beat the others six women who contested for the post as the representatives of bourgeoisie political parties. They spent a huge amount of money for the propaganda and publicity. Even they gave huge amount of money to buy the votes to win the election. They tried to control the election booths in different ways. They tried to influence the presiding officers and polling officers but could not do anything finally under the pressure of the people. The polling agent of Doli Khan and other supporters were alert on any kind of vote rigging and manipulation.

On 30 April 2019, there were many other places where local government election took place with lots complaints about election manipulations. As for example there was another candidate for the post of Vice-Chairman of Bangladesh Krishok Federation in Bhurungamari sub-district in Kurigram District. His name is Arifuzzaman Roni. He could not win in the election because of the ruling party candidate's influence and money game. Whereas in the area of Doli Khan the ruling party candidate could not able to manipulate using cash money either. Doli spent only the money which is legally permitted. As for example, electoral fees, printing cost for posters/pamphlets as per design and color decided by the election commission, small cost for polling booths, etc. On the other hand, opposition candidate spread money at large, They spent money more than Tk.10000000/- to win the election, while Doli's legal expenditure is Tk.150000/- which is collected in different ways. CPBML also supported Doli's election a bit with the help of friends and well-wishers from home and abroad.

Shamsun Nahar Khan Doli has become a well-known figure in the local and national level also for her three consecutive times winning in the local government election. Her popularity always on the increase. She tried to engage herself with the work of people all the time. She is very much hopeful to run MP next election in 2024 as the nominee of the Communist Party of Bangladesh-ML(CPBML). Now she is the Central Committee Member of CPBML.

