

## The Role of Bengali Women in the 1971 Non-Cooperation Movement Against the Government of Pakistan

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The Lahore resolution of 1940 and the bi-nationalism of Muhammad Ali Jinnah were considered as the cornerstones of the Pakistan movement. The demand for partition of India on the basis of the Lahore resolution sparked a firestorm among the Muslim community. India split seven years after the Lahore resolution was tabled. But the partition of the country in 1947 and the creation of Pakistan could not provide a state solution to the question of the Bengali nation. As a result, for twenty-three long years, the Bengalis were subjected to various forms of discrimination by the military rule of West Pakistan. Eventually they started a movement demanding the elimination of this inequality and the establishment of democracy. Pakistan's military government was forced to hold its first national elections in 1970. The popular East Pakistan Awami League, led by Bangabandhu, won a single majority in the elections. But even though the Awami League gained a majority, the military government did not hand over power to the majority party. As the leader of the majority party, Bangabandhu called for a non-cooperation movement. Men as well as women participated in the movement and played a vital role in gaining independence in the country. So, the present article highlights the participation of Bengali women in the non-cooperation movement and their role in the movement.

**Keywords:** Movement, independence, government, women, people, freedom, assembly

## **Introduction**

In 1966, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman presented to the people a six-point program demanding our survival in order to break the structure of the Pakistani colonial state and achieve the total liberation of the Bengalis. General Ayub Khan took refuge in torture by declaring it a separatist program. As the government's repression grows, so does the popularity of the 6-point program. With the addition of the 11-point program of the student society, a new impetus was created in the liberation struggle of the Bengalis. The 6-point and 11-point movements spread rapidly throughout East Pakistan. General Ayub Khan became frightened by this and filed the Agartala Conspiracy Case (1968) to suppress the movement. But this case has created panic in the minds of the people of East Pakistan. The tide of national liberation came in the consciousness of Bengalis. The result was the mass uprising of 1969. This wave of Bengali mass uprising also took place in the 1970 general elections. The Awami League under the leadership of Bangabandhu won a landslide victory in the elections. But the Pakistani ruling class chose the path of conspiracy without handing over power to the Bengalis and took the situation to the final end. Forced, Bangabandhu declared a non-cooperation program in the whole of Bengal. Therefore, at the call of Bangabandhu, non-cooperation was observed in the whole of Bengal from 2nd March to 25th March (1971). Men as well as Bengali women spontaneously participated in this non-cooperation movement. The government of Pakistan became obsolete after the participation of women. This article was originally written to highlight the role of Bengali women in the anti-government non-cooperation movement in Pakistan.

None of the published books and articles on the important role of women in the non-cooperation movement have found a place for research analysis. In other words, in the books and articles published on the non-cooperation movement, in most cases, some

issues are discussed sporadically from a general point of view. Therefore, I have written this article realizing the need for important research on Bengali women in the non-cooperation movement.

### **Research Methods and Data Collection**

Basically I collected data from primary sources. Newspapers and periodicals are important elements of the non-cooperation movement. Information has also been collected from various women's participation programs aired on Bangladesh Radio, BTB and BBC. Moreover, I have collected information by attending meetings and conferences of various women's organizations. For the purpose of providing information about the role of women in the non-cooperation movement, I have interviewed women who have directly participated in the non-cooperation movement.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of Bengali women's society at different stages of the non-cooperation movement against the government of Pakistan. Despite the positional weakness, exploitation, backwardness, disrespect and deprivation in the society, Bengali women society participated in the movement by establishing various women's organizations under different political parties. Among the women participating in the movement were progressive ordinary women of various levels, including school, college and university students. Therefore, the purpose of writing this article is to analyze various aspects of the participation of Bengali women in Bangabandhu's non-cooperation movement against the injustices of the Government of Pakistan General Ayub Khan.

### **Women's Participation in the Non-Cooperation Movement**

When the whole of Bengal awoke to demand independence against the military rule, the East Pakistan Women's Council was

formed under the leadership of Begum Sufia Kamal and Maleka Begum with women of all classes and levels rising to the top of all political parties, views and ideologies. Notable among the members of this women's council are Badrunnesa Ahmed, Johra Tajuddin, Amena Ahmed, Nurjahan Moshed, Selina Banu, Nurjahan Quader, Sara Ali and Razia Banu. All of them were almost non-partisan social workers and housewives. (Islam, 1994, p.34). Ayesha Khanam, Fauzia Moslem, Makhduma Nagis, Kazi Mamta Hena and Munira Akhter were notable in the formation of this Sangram Parishad. They were all students. Leading women and student leaders traveled all over Bengal, including the capital Dhaka, and continued their efforts to establish branches of the Mahila Sangram Parishad (Parveen, 2010, p.50).

On 4 April 1970, the East Pakistan Women's Council was formed with Begum Sufia Kamal as President and Maleka Begum as General Secretary. The members of the council were Mrs. Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury, Begum Abul Hasim, Mrs. Rahima Harun, Mrs. Anwara Bahar, Amena Ahmed, Sara Ali, Hamida Hossain, Nurjahan Quader, Rebecca Mohiuddin, Hurmatunnesa Wadud and Aziza Idris (Begum, 1989, p.187). The organization launched a movement to establish a sovereign parliament, direct election of women to reserved seats, release of political prisoners, equal pay for women workers, establish adequate maternity hospitals, ban food adulteration, reduce food prices and end violence against women (Chowdhury, 1998, p. 134). In addition, the organization organizes various meetings and gatherings with women with the aim of creating political awareness to free women from exploitation and deprivation (Begum, 1998, p.21).

In this context, the military-civilian ruling class of Pakistan did not accept the verdict of the people of East Bengal, so the organization, like other organizations, prepared for the struggle against the Ayub government (Islam, 1994, p.35). The women's wing of the Awami League led by Sajeda Chowdhury, Dr. Nurunnahar Zahur, Selima Rahman, Kamrunnahar Zafar and others joined the

struggle (Begum,1998,p.22). When the independence movement started, the processions, meetings and gatherings that the women society of Bengal joined almost every day were discussed in stages.

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Dhaka**

On March 1, 1971, when General Yahya Khan adjourned the session of the National Assembly for an indefinite period, a women's rally was held at Gulshan in Dhaka at the call of Matia Chowdhury. Speakers at the meeting called for unity in establishing the rights of the people of Bengal, regardless of party affiliation (Begum, 1998, p.37).

On March 2, 1971, a public meeting was held at Dhaka Paltan Maidan on the initiative of the National Awami Party. The president of the meeting Matia Chowdhury called for the formation of a women's struggle committee in the mahalla. He directed the movement with discipline through this struggle committee. At the meeting, she urged the people to continue the movement with patience and urged the women of Bengal to stay on the streets till independence is achieved. Freedom is our only goal," he said. And the women's society of Bengal is ready to give blood if necessary for this freedom (Rahman, 1998, p.59).

At the women's meeting at the Central Shaheed Minar organized by the East Pakistan Students Union on 4 March 1971, Matia Chowdhury directed to maintain communal harmony in order to achieve the goal of Bengal's freedom struggle. He called upon the people of all walks of life to build liberation forces in the villages (Biswas, 1996, p.100).“We wanted democracy and national rights,” Matia Chowdhury told a NAP rally. We voted on the ballot, but for twenty-three years the conspiracy against imperialism, feudalism, monopoly capitalism and democracy did not allow us to live up to that expectation. Men as well as women have come forward

for independence. We women society did not hesitate to break the curfew. We never waited for the guidance of the leaders (Rahmin, 1996, p.78). At the meeting, women leaders in Dhaka strongly protested the army's firing on unarmed workers, saying a single drop of blood would give birth to a new oath of struggle. People are no longer afraid of bullets. Women leader Selina Rahman said the army has been taken back to the barracks. That army should not be taken to the streets anymore. "I don't know what the president will announce today, I don't want to know. I just want to say you have closed the door to democracy, you will open it," he said.

Today 6 points, 11 points must be accepted. The independence of the Bengalis must be clearly acknowledged. We no longer want to be the victims of conspiracy. At the end of the meeting a procession came out. The procession went around different roads and ended at the central Shaheed Minar (The Daily Sonbad, 1971, p.9).

In a statement issued on March 4, 1971, 20 members of radio, television and film announced that they would not work until democracy was established. In support of this declaration, Laila Arjuman Banu, Afsari Khanam, Ferdousi Rahman, Laila Hasan, Rahija Khanam, Bilkis Nasiruddin and Hadida Atiq encouraged the people to join the freedom movement by addressing various rallies. Following their call, men as well as women took to the streets of Dhaka to demand their rights. The government also cracked down on women and men protesting in the streets. But the movement did not stop but spread all over East Bengal day by day (Matia, 1998).

On March 5, 1971, the East Pakistan Women's Parliament demanded a public trial of those responsible for the killing of unarmed students. On the same day, the Eastern Branch of the All Pakistan Women's Association strongly condemned the killing of unarmed Bengalis by the Armed Forces. The association called on women to be ready to accept any sacrifice to protect the country's independence (Jahan, 1987, p.72).

On 6 March 1971, the East Pakistan Mahila Parishad expressed solidarity with the mass movement. This council called a meeting of women in Dhaka city. At the meeting, tributes were paid to the martyrs of the freedom movement and sympathy was extended to their families. From this meeting, everyone was called to continue the movement with peace and order (Mascarenhas, 1986). On that day, a women's rally was held at the central Shaheed Minar on the initiative of the women's wing of the Awami League. At this meeting it was decided that Bengali members would not join the 25th March National Assembly (Umar, 2006).

The ruling party in West Pakistan has been making excuses for not handing over power to the Awami League, which won the election. In his 17-minute unwritten speech, he highlighted the history of 23 years of deprivation in Pakistan. Women were at the forefront of her public meeting. At the end of the public meeting, the women pledged to accept any sacrifice for the freedom of the country (Parveen, 2010).

On 15 March 1971, the East Pakistan Mahila Parishad organized a women's gathering. The gathering pledged to participate in the freedom struggle and establish an independent Bangladesh free from exploitation. At the end of the rally the women present took out a procession. At the end of the procession, they held two road rallies at Baitul Mukarram and Jinnah Avenue. Begum Sufia Kamal, Begum Nurunnahar Quader, Maleka Begum, Dr. Makhduma Nagiz and Ayesha Khanam addressed the rally. They called on the women of Dhaka to take to the streets to join the rally (Trivedi, 1997).

From March 16, 1971, at 4 pm in the garden at 10/C Segun bagicha, the Mahila Parishad organized women's gymnastics, parades and first aid education. Besides, volunteer forces were formed on the initiative of Mahila Parishad on that day. To strengthen the movement, women were encouraged to join the volunteer forces. Numerous school-college women joined the volunteer force in the campaign for women's councils (Haider, 1989).

The next day, the workers of Mahila Parishad took out a street rally from Dhaka New Market area. Speaking at the meeting, the East Pakistan Mahila Parishad members called upon the people to make all preparations for the establishment of an independent Bangladesh free from exploitation (Ullah, 2009, p.77).

On March 18, 1971, a women's rally of the Awami League's women's wing was held at Shankar on the outskirts of the capital Dhaka under the chairmanship of Farida Parveen. Addressing the women present at the meeting, Badrunnesa Ahmed said that the West Pakistani regime was killing the people of this country indiscriminately. Many young student leaders participating in the freedom movement are being killed. Mothers of Bengal have come forward today with a strong oath to avenge the blood of their children. The struggle of mothers will continue till the final goal is reached. At the meeting, women leader Sajeda Chowdhury paid homage to the martyrs killed in the freedom movement and said, "Bengalis are united today under the leadership of Bangabandhu. They will realize their freedom through any sacrifice." Begum Farida Rahman called upon the mothers and sisters to make the non-cooperation movement led by Bangabandhu a success. At the end of the meeting, Shankar Mahila Awami League was formed with Begum Afsarunnesa as president and Begum Farida Rahman as general secretary (Rahman, 1999).

On 19 March 1971, simultaneous procession rallies were held at Gulbagh, Dhanmondi, Hazaribagh, Azimpur, Central Road, Nayapalt, Jigatla, Rajarbagh and Palashi on the initiative of Mahila Parishad. From the gathering, women took an oath to take part in the struggle for an independent Bangladesh under any circumstances (Hossain, 1977). The next day a meeting of local women was held in Dhanmondi. The meeting decided to teach women first aid and parade to make the non-cooperation movement a success. According to the decision, local women

are given first aid and parade education every day from 4 pm (Shafiullah, 1989, p.23).

On 21st March 1971 at 3 pm a meeting was held at Azimpur Girls School on the initiative of Azimpur Women's Branch President Anwara Haque. Under the chairmanship of Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, other women leaders spoke on the importance of non-cooperation movement (Salik, 1978). The meeting pledged not to leave the highway until independence was won and an advisory committee was formed to continue the movement (Jacob, 1997). Moreover, in order to make the non-cooperation movement of Sajeda Chowdhury a success, women were given rifle tanning in front of her residence on Indira Road under the direction of Bangabandhu (Niaji, 1998). Rafia Akhtar Dolly, a woman leader from Dhaka, organized procession meetings as well as women's organizations in Different parts of the country to speed up the non-cooperation movement. She printed leaflets and called for women's participation in the movement (Ali, 1992). At this time, Mrs. Nurjahan Morshed, as an elected member of the Constituent Assembly in 1970, organized women to make the non-cooperation movement a success. She toured the districts and spoke on the need for women to participate in the freedom movement (Khan, 1983). Ayesha Khanam, VP of Begum Rokeya Hall at Dhaka University, formed the Chhatra Sangram Parishad during the non-cooperation movement. He called upon women to participate in the non-cooperation movement through the Student Struggle Council. However, in addition to the Student Struggle Council, she joined the Women's Struggle Committee and took part in meetings with other women leaders (Raja, 1993).

On 23 March 1971, Forkan Begum formed the Swadhin Bangla Biplobi Parishad to make the non-cooperation movement a success. Formed a suicide squad with members of this revolutionary council. Many students of Dhaka University joined this squad. In

addition to the students, leaders of various women's organizations joined the squad. Among the leaders in the squad were Shamsunnahar Eku, Mumtaz Begum and Farida Akhter Saki. On March 23, the students of Begum Rokeya Hall of Dhaka University celebrated Bangladesh Day. On that day, women from the Outer Stadium marched to Bangabandhu's house and handed over the flag of Bangladesh to Bangabandhu (Hassan, 1994). On the other hand, Dakshur vice-president Mahfuza Khanam rallied women in different parts of the country and took out anti-Yahya Khan Processions in the streets almost every day to make the non-cooperation movement a success. Numerous women took to the streets under his leadership (Kashem, 1992).

During the non-cooperation movement, Baby Moudud was a student of Bengali literature at Dhaka University. When the non-cooperation movement started, the university was closed and he immediately got involved in the movement. He published *Runner* with nine friends with the aim of building public opinion in favor of independence. Under the leadership of Begum Sufia Kamal and Maleka Begum, medical students were trained in self-defense in the neighborhoods and posters were made by eight college students and put up on the walls at night (Wolpert, 1993). Apart from the capital Dhaka, women's participation in the non-cooperation movement can be seen in different district cities of the country.

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Chittagong**

At a time when the whole country was agitating for independence, the women of Chittagong played a leading role in overcoming various obstacles to strengthen the movement. They encourage school-college students in the city to join the movement through meetings and rallies. As a result of their efforts, the non-cooperation movement intensified in Chittagong city (Kabir, 1990).

On 11 March 1971 a huge procession was taken out in the city on the initiative of Chittagong Mahila Sangram Parishad. The procession chanted slogans highlighting various discriminations of the Pakistani government. A large meeting was held at JM Sen Hall at 4 pm that day. Dr. Nurunnahar Zahur, Mrs. Selina Rahman, Khaleda Khanam, Rizia Sultana, Gulshan Ara, Jahanara Angur, Sabera Shabnam, Unme Salma, Majia Islam addressed the meeting. The devotees pledged to continue the movement till independence was achieved (Chowdhury, 1986).

On 18 March 1971 a meeting was held at JM Sen Hall on the initiative of Chittagong Mahila Parishad and Awami League. Poet Sufia Kamal was the chief guest and Maleka Begum was the special guest. Hannana Begum, Seema Sen, Dil Afroz Khanam, Jahanara Angur, Aarti Dutt, Nurunnahar Zahur, Ramadatta, Kundaprabha Sen, Mushtari Shafi and others spoke at the meeting. The speakers called for the overthrow of Pakistan's military rule and the establishment of democracy, and called on the women of Chittagong to take part in the movement on the streets, not at home. Later the procession for independence came out (Parveen, 2010). Inspired by the will of Bangabandhu at that time, Raihana Shafi was appointed the president of the railway branch of the Awami League and worked in the railway colony and Sramik Para in the early days of the movement. In this work, Dr. Nurunnahar Zahur encouraged him (Rahim, 1978).

A women's meeting was held in Chittagong on 21 March 1971 under the chairmanship of Begum Umratul Fazl. At the meeting, Begum Sufia Kamal said that women should be ready to face any situation in the current struggle. He added that meetings and processions are not enough for the target people, they need courage, mental preparation and motivation. He called upon the women community to break all ties and jump into the struggle and receive training (Sen, 1976). Saleha Chowdhury of Chittagong expressed her displeasure over not convening a session of the National Assembly during the turbulent days of the mass

movement. Outraged members of the Mahila Parishad and Bandhabi Sangha under his leadership organized protest meetings and rallies. He actively participated in all these activities and became disgusted with the military rule of Pakistan (Rashid, 1987).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Rajshahi**

On 20 March 1971, a women's gathering was held in the auditorium of the Sonar Bangla Patrika office in Rajshahi. At the rally, Mrs. Jahanara Kamruzzaman, president of the local Awami League's Sangram Parishad, said, "While our children are dying from bullets, we mothers and sisters could not sit within the four walls of the house." (Parveen, 2010, p.56). Speakers at the meeting called upon the women society of Rajshahi to continue the movement together with the student workers and peasants till the final victory of the freedom movement is achieved. At the end of the rally a huge procession of women was taken out. During the procession, slogans were raised highlighting the differences between the military rulers of Pakistan (Mujamder, 1989).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Narayanganj**

On 4 March 1971, a huge women's rally and demonstration was held in Narayanganj to protest the adjournment of the National Assembly and the massacre and to demand the complete liberation of the country. Thousands of women participated in it. The women who joined the protest march vowed to continue the movement on the streets until the country gained independence (Hossain, 1962).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Nabiganj**

In support of the non-cooperation movement, a procession of women came out at the call of Miss KananBala Biswas, the

female secretary of Nabiganj Union Awami League. The women participating in the procession protested with bash sticks, brooms, pots, swords and spears. At the end of the procession, Mrs. Kanon Bala Biswas expressed her determination to continue the movement till the independence of Bengal was achieved (Mankekar, 1976).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Khulna**

On 14 March 1971, a meeting and procession of mothers and sisters was organized in Khulna on the initiative of Mahila Awami League and Mahila Chhatra League in support of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of Bengal. This was the first procession of women in Khulna (Parveen, 2010). Hundreds of women from various remote areas, including the Khalishpur and Daulatpur industrial areas, wearing burqas, many joined the procession with their babies in their arms (Razia, 1981). At the end of the procession, they attended a meeting on Hadith Pak and took a solemn oath that if another shot was fired in Khulna, the mothers and sisters would leave the kitchen and take to the streets and the call was made to the men and women of Bangladesh to continue the struggle till the final victory (Gupta, 1978).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Jessore**

In March 1971, Raushan Jahan Sathi of Jessore organized students as women leaders in the non-cooperation movement and involved people from different walks of life in the mass movement. He continued his movement on the highways till the independence of Bangladesh was won (Ahmed, 1985). Saleha Begum of Jessore actively participated during the non-cooperation movement. She was involved in arms training management, training, arms procurement, propaganda campaigns, preparation for the war of independence,

etc. for the women of Jessore. He chose the garden house of Nazir Shankarpur Rashid for weapons training. There he trained about 200 women of the district in weapons. His training was conducted by Captain Zahid (Huque, 1991).

On the other hand, Ashrafunnesa, a woman leader of the district, formed a baton force of about 600 women. These battalions marched from Jessore to Dhaka on 7 March to support Bangabandhu's speech to the nation and on 7 March were inspired by Bangabandhu's declaration of independence and prepared to fight with arms. Ashrafunnesa convened an all-party meeting at Jessore Railgate on March 25. The meeting was attended by various political parties in Jessore. The political parties pledged to maintain communal harmony during the war (Shafiullah, 1989).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Cumilla**

Like other districts of Bangladesh, the women community of Cumilla district jumped into the non-cooperation movement. In response to the call of Miss Mumtaz Begum, countless women of Cumilla city took to the streets. When the 23rd Joy Bangla Bahini was formed, he led it and provided rifle training to the women. Under her leadership, she started a house-to-house women's movement in Cumilla (Bhattacharjee, 1972).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Brakshanbaria**

At the call of women leader Mamtaz Begum in Kasba area of Brakshanbaria district, women took to the streets in support of non-cooperation. They take part in procession meetings. Women's forces were formed in the neighborhoods. These women received weapons training. Mumtaz Begum organized women and trained them to create public opinion in the liberation war, to wield weapons and to provide first aid (Jahan, 20 November, 1997).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Patuakhali**

After the non-cooperation movement spread in Patuakhali district at the beginning of March. The movement, led by district women's leader Monowara Begum, was attended by men as well as women of different levels. Responding to his call, the school-college students united and joined the movement. They go from house to house to collect money for the management of the movement. The military government of Pakistan has issued arrest warrants for General Yahya Khan Monowara Begum District College students. But keeping in mind the government warrant, she led the movement with the women of the district (Begum, 24 May, 1997).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Barisal**

Begum TaibunNahar Rashid of Daulat Khan police station in Barisal district was the company commander of Jessore, Khulna, Kushtia and Barisal districts. In 1969, he joined politics at the instigation of Bangabandhu (Nesha,17 March,1997).

During the non-cooperation movement in March 1971, she gave weapons training to the women of the district and at the end of the training, she and her team gave Bangabandhu the Guard of Honor. On 29 March 1971, the women of Barisal organized a meeting at the local district student league office. Mrs. Sakhina Islam presided over the meeting. Speakers of the meeting called upon all to lead a non-cooperation movement and a united movement for the establishment of independence (Parveen, 2010).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Farajganj**

On 19th March 1971 at 5 pm a meeting of women was held at Rampur Girls School with the initiative of Farajganj Union Women's Awami League. Mrs. Hasna gave speeches by women from

different levels of the district under the chairmanship of Hena Sikder. The speakers all called on women to work for independence. At the end of the meeting, a women's council was formed by convening Mumtaz Shamsul Haque (Loshak, 1971).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Noakhali**

On 18 March 1971, a meeting of local women was held at Noakhali Maizdi Kot under the chairmanship of Nurun Nahar Rashid. At the meeting, he appealed to all, regardless of party affiliation, to support Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the Bengal independence movement. In response to his call, the school-college students of the district took part in the spontaneous movement (Ittephaka, 23 March, 1971).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Sylhet**

On the 16th day of the non-cooperation movement, a procession of women came out in the city at 9 am on the initiative of Sylhet Mahila Parishad. The procession went around the city. At 4 pm on the same day, another procession came out on the initiative of the women's wing of the Awami League. At the end of the procession, support was given to the program of non-cooperation movement and an oath was taken to continue the movement till independence was won (Parveen, 2010).

### **Participation of Women in Non-Cooperation Movement in Dinajpur**

On 19 March 1971, the women of Dinajpur staged a procession in full support of the freedom struggle of the people of Bengal. On the initiative of Awami League Students Union and East Bengal Students Union, women's street meetings are held almost every day with the aim of gaining independence. A

meeting of women was held at the local town hall in support of Bangabandhu in the Bengal independence movement (Ittephaka, 23 March 1971).

The meeting, chaired by Begum Nurun Nahar Rashid, adjourned the National Assembly session on March 3, declaring the mass movement to be the only way for the people of Bengal. And from this meeting, she called on women to work in unity in times of crisis in the country. The meeting was convened by Begum Azumand Banu and a 17-member women's council was formed (Parveen, 2010). Then, on 20 March 1971, a meeting of the Dinajpur Women's Association demanded the immediate withdrawal of military rule and the transfer of power to elected representatives. From that meeting, Mrs. Hasina Rahman in her speech condemned the genocide of army members in different parts of the country and demanded justice for the killings. The meeting called for continuing the non-cooperation movement of women in Dinajpur (Daily Pakistan, 19 March, 1971).

## **Conclusion**

East Bengal became a province of Pakistan under the Indian Independence Act of 1947. But even though East Bengal emerged as a province of Pakistan, it remained subjugated. Like the British rulers, the central rulers of Pakistan deprived the people of East Bengal of social, political and economic opportunities. Therefore, the people of East Bengal formed different movements and struggles at different times to realize their rights. Apart from men, women of Bengal also participated in these movements. The non-cooperation movement of Bengalis was very important in the struggle against the government of Pakistan. The participation of women in this movement shook the highways. The non-cooperation movement was transformed into the Bengali independence movement. Men as well as women

of Bengal participated in this freedom movement and wrote glorious chapters. After a long and bloody war of nine months, Bangladesh was able to gain independence. So it can be said this historic and unprecedented role of Bengali women's society in the non-cooperation movement has become a role model for every exploited and disenfranchised nation.

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