



Unit 4 (Lesson 02)

The Great Women

In 1921, Leela Nag (also known as Leela Roy for her marriage with Anil Chandra Roy, an Indian National Congress leader) was the first woman to be admitted (ভর্তি হওয়া) to the M.A in English at the University of Dhaka. Breaking **patriarchal barriers** (পুরুষতান্ত্রিকতা ভেঙে/**Breaking Male Domination**), Leela Nag established (প্রতিষ্ঠা করেছেন) the identity of the Department of English from the very beginning as a platform for progressive and liberal ideas (প্রগতিশীল এবং উদার চিন্তাভাবনা দ্বারা ইংরেজি department এর পরিচয় তুলে ধরেছেন) . Although her decision to join the Department of English was initially (প্রাথমিকভাবে বাধা-বিপত্তির দিকে পড়েছিল) met with resistance (**obstacle**), she achieved her goal with a special permission from the then Vice Chancellor Philip Hartog and fulfilled her dream of graduating from the University of Dhaka. In 1923, she was the first woman to receive an M.A. from the Department of English. But Leela Nag's legacy (impact) goes beyond (উর্ধ্বে) the confines of classrooms. While she was a student, she **formed (established) the Dhaka Women's Committee** and raised funds for the 1921 Bengal flood victims. She was actively involved (তিনি সক্রিয়ভাবে যুক্ত ছিলেন) in the empowerment of women (নারীদের ক্ষমতায়নের জন্য) in society. In 1923, she founded (**established**) Deepali Sangha which served as a training institute for anti-colonial activists (ঔপনিবেশবাদ বিরোধী প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্র হিসেবে কাজ করেছিল). Between **1927 and 1928**, she established the **first self-defense institute for girls in Bengal**. Then, at the 1928 Calcutta Congress Session, she presented (উপস্থাপন করলেন) a paper on the history of women's movement in Bengal as a delegate(part), and by 1929, Leela Nag had successfully founded 12 free primary schools for girls. Apart from her contribution to women's emancipation (নারীদের মুক্তিতে অবদান দেওয়া পাশাপাশি), Leela consistently voiced her opinions in politics as well. She had been imprisoned (তাকে কারাবন্দি করা হয়েছিল) on several occasions (many times). When the Subcontinent was embroiled in turmoil (যন্ত্রণায় নিঃশেষিত) during the Partition (দেশবিভাগের সময়), Leela Nag set up camps for victims of Noakhali riots in 1946, and for abandoned women (অবহেলিত মহিলাদের) and refugees from East Bengal in 1947. In 1946, she was the only Bengali woman elected to the Constituent Assembly of Bengal. Leela Nag broke the glass ceiling (breaking the obstacles) on so many levels that it is very difficult to limit her to being only a feminist. She fulfills all the criteria(তিনি সকল মাপদণ্ডে নিজেকে সম্পূর্ণ করেছেন) of citizen, rebel, reformer, social activist and a change agent. Looking at the other women who studied in the Department of English much later, we can trace these features (আমরা এসকল বৈশিষ্ট্য চিহ্নিত করতে পারব) of social activism (সামাজিক প্রতিবাদ) in them as well. *



Important Information:

- 1) she was the first woman to receive an M.A. from the Department of English.
- 2) she founded (**established**) Deepali Sangha which served as a training institute for anti-colonial activists
- 3) Leela Nag had successfully founded 12 free primary schools for girls.



While Leela Nag made headlines (যখন নিলাকে হেডলাইনে দেখা যাচ্ছিল) during the 1947 Partition, **Nadera Begum**, another student of the Department of English, was making headlines in 1949. Coming from an affluent political family, Nadera Begum was a strong Marxist (মার্ক্সবাদী) who was among the leading women rebels (মহিলা কবি) of her time. In 1949, she **was expelled** (তাকে বহিস্কার করা হয়েছিল) from the University of Dhaka for fighting for the rights of the fourth-class employees (চতুর্থ শ্রেণির কর্মীদের অধিকার নিয়ে কথা বলার দায়ে তাকে ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে বহিস্কার করা হয়েছিল) of the University. She was the only woman seen standing near Sheikh Mujibur Rahman during those protests. In Cheman Ara's article entitled "The Women who broke the barricades" (যে মহিলা বাধা-বিপত্তি দূর করে ফেলেছে) (published in The Daily Star, Feb 21, 2020), it is stated: "Names of Nadera Begum, Hamida Khatun, Nurjahan Murshid, Afsari Khanam, Ranu Mukherjee and Lili Haque also shine through in the history of the Language Movement." Nadera Begum was a shining example of the multigenerational feminism (বহুপ্রজন্মের নারীবাদী) that was evident among the women - both students and teachers of the Department of English. This is why, during the tumultuous (আবেগপ্রবণ) 60s, soon after the Language Movement, we can find yet another woman as a valiant fighter (সাহসী যোদ্ধা) against oppression. Razia Khan Amin, who joined as a faculty member of the department in 1962, showcased her activism (তার প্রতিবাদ দেখিয়েছেন লেখনির মাধ্যমে) through her writing and her cultural interests. She had completed her B.A. and M.A. in English from the Department of English, University of Dhaka and proceeded to do her M.A. in English from the University of Birmingham on a scholarship from the British Council. She was simultaneously (তিনি একাধারে একজন শিক্ষাবিদ, একজন শিল্পী, একজন সাংবাদিক, একজন কবি, একজন বিশিষ্ট লেখক) an educationist, a theatre actor, a journalist, columnist, a poet, and a celebrated writer. Among the prestigious awards (প্রতিষ্ঠিত পুরস্কার) she received are the PEN Lay Writing Award (1956), the Pope Gold Medal (1957), Bangla Academy Literary Award (1975), Ekushey Padak (1997), and the Anannya Literature Award (2003). Amin exposes the brutality (তিনি ১৯৭১ এর বর্বরতা তুলে ধরেছেন) of the 1971 Liberation War through stark images (স্পষ্ট ছবি) in her poems. In her poem, 'Argus Under Anaesthesia', she writes:

"A mother frenzied by the roar of mortars

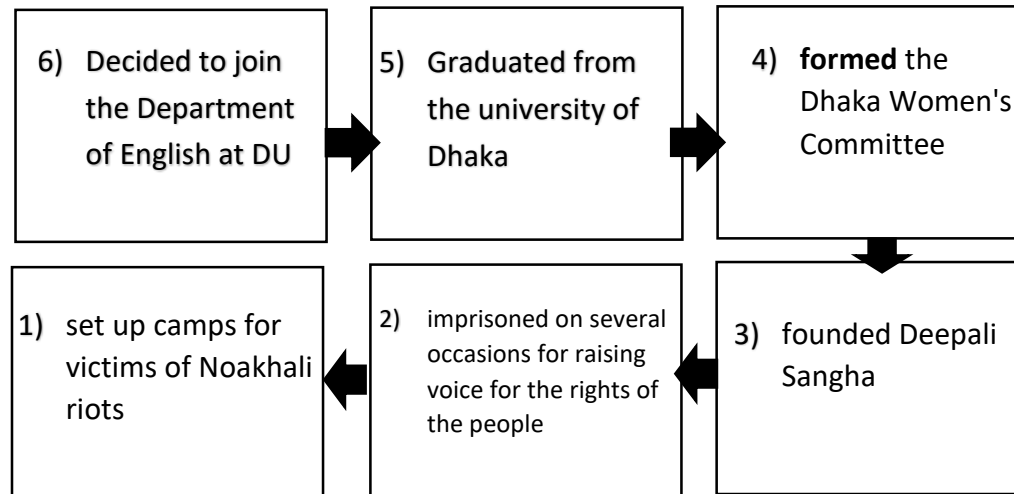
Throttled her whining infant;

Its life for the life of millions"

"একটি Mortar-এর গর্জনে অস্থির এক মাতার কাঁদতে থাকা শিশুকে শ্বাসরোধ করল;

এর জীবন লাখে জীবনের বিপরীতে।"

Questions: Read the above text and make a flowchart showing Leela Nag's struggling life.



2) Question Answer:

1. Who was the first women to be admitted to the M.A in English at the university of Dhaka?

Answer: Leela Nag was the first women to be admitted to the M.A in English at the university of Dhaka. Moreover, she was also the first women to receive an M.A Degree from Dhaka.

2. What year did Leela Nag graduate with an M.A. from the university of Dhaka?

Answer: Leela Nag graduated in 1923 with an M.A. from the university of Dhaka.

3. Why did Leela Nag need special permission to join the Department of English?

Answer: Women are unable to get admitted to join an educational institute at that time. They remain confined within the four walls. But Leela Nag wanted to study and she broke the patriarchal barrier and joined the Department of English. To join there she needed special permission of Vice Chancellor Philip Hartog.

4. Why was the Dhaka Women's Committee formed by Leela Nag?

Answer: Leela Nag formed the Dhaka Women's Committee so that she along with his friends could raise funds for the flood victims and help them in 1921.

5. When did Leela Nag establish the first self-defense institute for girls in Bengal?

Answer: Leela Nag established the first self-defense institute for girls in Bengal between 1927 and 1928.



3) Write a summary from the above passage about Leela Nag.

Being the first woman to be admitted to the Department of English and receiving the M.A., Leela Nag had achieved a milestone. She established Deepali Sangha, Dhaka Women's Committee and so on. Moreover, she established 12 primary schools. She was not only involved in educational development but also involved in politics as well. For raising voice for the people she imprisoned several times. She did her best for the betterment of the people of our country.

Thank you so much

Manik Sir