

Muktomona with Sultana Kamal

It may not be required to speak much about Sultana Kamal, former Adviser of the Caretaker Government and Executive Director of Law and Arbitration Centre. She is popular with the people of Bangladesh by her own name and image. She was born in 1950. Renowned poetess Begum Sufia Kamal was her mother and her father was Kamal



Uddin Ahmed Khan. She had to overcome a lot of hurdles and threats for speaking about the fundamental rights and for struggling to restore democratic rights of the people. But those hurdles could not drive her back. She is committed to build a secular country where the fundamental human rights are well protected. Recently when she came to the Netherlands to attend a seminar on “Vulnerable Women of Bangladesh and Child Rights” organized by BASUG she came across Muktomona in a bright sunny morning.

Muktomona: Many people think that the things which AL and BNP could not do during their long tenure, this caretaker government has succeeded to accomplish much more than that only in few months. Apprehension of the big shots of corruption, improvement of law and order situation, separation of Judiciary are among many things worth mentioning. What do you think?

Sultana Kamal: This government has surely taken much more courageous steps which the past governments could not do. Political consideration used to play prime role in steering the country. Their prime consideration in taking any step was - how much that would affect their next election. When they can keep themselves away from this sort of idea, they can really take courageous steps. But this will never be possible on their part until the political environment is changed.

Muktomona: Do you think that a third stream is necessary for Bangladesh Politics?

Sultana Kamal: In a democratic political system not only the 3rd or the 4th streams - but lots of political streams should be there. The more the options the better will be the performance. Opportunity of good work will emerge. If the options are limited, they will hinder democratic process. Politics will get stuck up into undemocratic powers which will not help the country to stay on democratic track.

Muktomona: Would you please explain the necessity of changing the long-standing traditional political system i.e. political background?

Sultana Kamal: We had hope and expectation for democracy for last 37 years, but the democracy could never flourish in our country due to lack of democratic attitude, familism, lack of opportunity to select leaders on the basis of competence, non-realisation of the underlying spirit of the war of liberation, lack of equitable distribution of wealth, lack of secularism and above all lack of opportunities for a man to live with self identity. Being a human is not the only identity of a man; a man may have a lot of other identities, viz. religion, caste, education, self thinking, etc. A man is the sum total of all these things. A man wants to live as a full human being.



Muktomona: What is your impression about terrorism in Bangladesh after the six terrorists have been executed?

Sultana Kamal: People have got the message that - their existence was true, their network was extended. Temporary blow has been given to the network, but those who patronized terrorism and the people who have got entangled with this circle have not been eradicated. Their faith is that our leaders, our pioneers have got the dignity of martyrs - we shall also follow their footprints, if we are caught we shall also be martyrs. Mere execution of the terrorists cannot really keep terrorism under control. To eradicate terrorism it is essential to keep fundamentalism away from politics, worship of individuals should be put to an end. Until religious influence and worship of individuals in politics are eliminated and a blow at the root of the problem can be given terrorism will continue to exist.

Muktomona: How is Bangladesh in respect of free-thinking?

Sultana Kamal: The people of Bangladesh believe in free-thinking. They think freely and also speak freely. But the people in power always tried to suppress free-thinking whenever it went against them. But that could not diminish the interest of people in free thinking. For example – now-a-days nobody really feels interested in BTV - because of the

expansion of private news media and private TV Channels. The people of Bangladesh always have deep interest and confidence in free-thinking.

Muktomona: Very recently the Chief of Army Staff has expressed his skepticism about the traditional democracy of Bangladesh. Do you agree with him? Does the problem lie in democracy or in the absence of democracy?

Sultana Kamal: The problem lies in the absence of democracy. Till today democracy could never set its root deep in Bangladesh. Although we had hurdles at every step, Bangladesh has advanced so far due to endeavours of some patriotic people.

Muktomona: How much are the big political parties respectful of democracy? Do they practice democracy within themselves? Or under the veil of democracy, autocracy and monarchy prevail?

Sultana Kamal: They could not demonstrate any visible example of their respect for democracy. They didn't even practice democracy inside their parties. They did not take any steps to liberate democracy which could have earned people's confidence. They always took advantage of the existing systems and circumstances.

Muktomona: Nobel Laureate Dr. Yunus has expressed his interest in coming to politics. What is your evaluation about it?

Sultana Kamal: Winning Nobel Prize doesn't have any bearing with political competence. As everybody needs to prove his worth in his own field, Dr. Yunus will also have to prove his competence in political arena. He has to demonstrate to the people – how much political capability he has.



Sultana Kamal with Mukto-mona, holding the brochure of MM

Muktomona: Do you know anything about Ajoy Roy and his platform for educational movement?

Sultana Kamal: I know Dr. Ajoy Roy, I have also heard about his platform for educational movement. But I am so awfully busy with my own work that it is not always possible for me to know everything in details although I have always interest in these things.

Muktomona: Do you know anything about Muktomona website and books of the Muktomona authors published? What is your comment?

Sultana Kamal: I don't really know much about computer beyond writing my own email, getting my own paper ready or doing my own jobs in computer. So my movement in the computer world is limited. Besides, it's not always possible for me to look for new writers and new books due to my pre-occupation.

Muktomona: Please say something about working ladies in Bangladesh.

Sultana Kamal: 'Working ladies' is not a separate terminology to me. All women are working women. Those who are house wives cook, wash and take care of the youngers and elders of the family. Some women, of course, work inside and outside home. Those who work outside home also have to work inside their houses when they return from their work. This puts a lot of pressure on their body and mind. For example - 5 pm is the routine office time of a lady, but if she, any day, needs to work upto 6 pm – she has to be in tension about whether she can finish her household work in time. She has to cook food for everybody or she needs to teach her children, etc. This sort of anxiety keeps her under severe mental pressure - which gradually impair her physical condition. Society and family, therefore, have to provide support to the ladies who work both inside and outside home.

Muktomona: Occasionally you write for the papers/magazines, will you please send writings for our forum?

Sultana Kamal: I cannot promise - but I'll try. I am not really comfortable with computer- as I have already mentioned. In a few days my article on women will go to Daily Star and Prothom Alo - both in Bengali and English. You can provide that article to the readers of Muktomona. Lots of greetings to the Muktomona website and its readers!

On behalf of Mukto-mona
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