

Indian subcontinent / Bangladesh: A brief life history of late Comrade Abdus Satter Khan

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The great steersman of the oppressed peasant masses and dauntless outstanding senior leader of the peasant movement in Indian subcontinent Comrade Abdus Satter Khan breathed his last breath in a clinic 'Al-Jebel-e-Nur' in Dhaka on November 7, 20'clock at noon in 1996 as a result of cardiac disease.

This outspoken renowned leader was born in a dignified tenure holder family in a backward village named 'Dashmina' in Dasmina Thana in the coastal district Patuakhali in 1925. He lost his father early in life. Then, in the absence of his father, he was brought up by his paternal uncle. He was not highly educated in the traditional academic system, and he had no confidence in the prevailing educational system as well, because it was crystal clear to him that the existing educational system did not give lessons for the freedom of oppressed people.

When he was born, the peasantry of the country was bewildered due to the repression by the feudal landlords. No one dared to challenge the power of British supported landlords. Such an inhuman oppression inflicted upon the innocent people wounded his tender conscience, and inspired him, upon the encouragement of his school teacher, to join (very secretly) the Communist Party of the still undivided Indian subcontinent. This was an underground party at that time. He was convinced by the ideology, spirit and goal of the party. So, he seriously started protesting in his early life against the extrajudicial torturing of peasant people by the feudal tenure holders. Sometimes, he waged a direct fight against the injustice and oppression of the landlord. That is why he had faced several false cases filed by his political opponent. Later he received membership of East Pakistan Communist Party, when the Indian subcontinent achieved independence and was divided into two parts; India and Pakistan during a continuous struggle against British privileged landlord, moneylenders and collaborators.



Through his best effort during the fifties, he organised a peasant movement in his own locality in his working time in the party. He tried to expand the movement throughout the national level. He led a movement for reduction of government revenue in Patuakhali district in the sixties. He took a stance

that differed from that of the party's outlook and spirit in 1971, and resisted and started heavy fighting against the occupying Pakistani armed forces. During the liberation period, he was one of the 7-Member Action Committee organised for leading the war in the correct direction in Patuakhali district against the occupying army. The courageous and militant contribution of this illustrious leader is highly praiseworthy and ever remembered. For his sharp intelligence, talent as well as his far-sightedness in the liberation war he would be ever living.

He became able to bring in support from national bourgeoisie under the framework of the Action Committee by dint of his wit and wisdom, and he pulled all together in the war field.

Later he received membership of Purba Bangla Communist Party (East Bengal Communist Party) which turned into the Communist Party of Bangladesh (M-L) after the country had been liberated in 1971.

Immediately after the independence of the country in 1971, he was arrested and thrown into prison by the government. He was charged with conspiracy against state sovereignty. While he was captive, he was poisoned to make him permanently disabled. As a consequence, he became paralysed for a long period. Later he was again arrested under false charges and thrown into the jail. This time again, it was a similar lame excuse as in 1974: his supposed involvement in an underground party. After four years' imprisonment, he was released in 1978 through an order issued by the High Court in favour of a writ petition. During his stay in jail he became frustrated with the existing pro-left organisations. So, he himself formed Bangladesh Krishok Federation (Peasant Federation). He took a long march program from Dashmina to Patuakhali in the demand of Khasland (untenanted land) distribution among the landless people. More than 10 thousand Kishan, Kishani (Peasant men and women) participated in 1979.

The landless people occupied at least three Chars (unused lands) in Dashmina Thana. These are: Char Hadi, Char Basbaria and Char Borhan and they brought those under their control under the leadership of comrade Abdus Sattar Khan in 1980.

He was arrested and imprisoned again under General Ziaur Rahman's Government while the landless people were being uprooted from the Khasland through police violence. After having been released by the High Court by writ petition in 1982, he started a Khas-land movement again. In 1983 he staged 83 hour-long hunger strike to death [\[1\]](#) program demanding the rejection of illegal land-occupation of Khasland and to give these lands to the real landless people. Later he staged a hunger strike to death program on the same demand, in 1986. This strike continued up to 87 hours.

He staged a hunger strike to death program again in 1991 in protest against vacillation of concerned revenue department officials to Khasland distribution, and settlement. This hunger strike lasted around 8 days long. Simultaneously, the Bangladesh Women Peasant Association (Bangladesh Kishani Sahba) staged a sit-in strike in front of the TNO (Thana Executive Officer) office along with more than 10 thousand peasants.

He organised a seminar in 1988 in the auditorium of T.S.C (Teacher-Student Centre) in Dhaka University entitled "Farmer and his problem, open discussion".

He staged a heroic long march program from Barisal to Dhaka, demanding a 7-point program, along with several thousand Kishan-Kishani (peasant men and women) from southern Bangladesh on 14 March 1989. The participant gathered at the alter of the Central Martyr Monument passing 180 km path on foot during six long days, thanks to his irrepressible valour. They stayed in front of the National Press Club and submitted a memorandum to the then President on 20 March. This Long March is considered a 'mile stone' in the history of the movement of Bangladesh Krishok (peasant)

Federation. Bangladesh Kishani Sahba (Bangladesh Peasant Women Association) was formed on 27 January 1990 under his direct care. Several thousands landless men and women kept residing on the Khasland in Dashmina Thana Char Hadi, Char Borhan, Char Basbaria, Char Shahjalal on 1st January 1992, motivated by his announcement for capturing Khasland during a huge public gathering on 27 December 1991.

He did not stop his movement at occupying only small number of fallow lands. He looked for another strategy for capturing new fallow land areas and to maintain the occupation. A number of Chars (fallow land) has been captured in Patuakhali and Bhola districts in 1996 by dint of his outstanding reflection, his capability of taking timely and rapid decision and action, and his deep knowledge regarding land issues. The movement gradually spread out to several districts. Moreover, 9 shrimp cultivation centres came under the control of the landless people. Members of landless people of the organisation in Northern Bangladesh like Dinajpur, Rangpur, Kurigram have been residing on the captured land area with their family. He organised a seminar against World Bank's Flood Action Plan in the auditorium of T.S.C (Teacher-Student Center) in Dhaka University on 25 October 1992. Later about 16 thousand men and women from rural areas came and gathered in front of the National Press Club under his leadership. The meeting continued two days long on 11-12 April 1992. There are many other actions taking place in his lifetime in different parts of the country which he pioneered.

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Footnotes

[1] The hunger strikes were total. He never drunk anything. That is why his hunger strike was genuine. In long run it damaged his physical health. He received cardiac attack later and died in 1996.