



HERSTORIES

ADVENTURES OF SUPERGIRLS*

* SET IN BANGLADESH & TOLD BY AMIYA



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Janet LaFollette | Liza Hossain | Amreen Bashir | Bangladesh Air Force

First Published || November 2017
First Edition || December 2017 | Second Edition || November 2019

ISBN || 978-984-90752-3-3

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The proceeds from this book support the HerStory Reading Fellowship Program to
read to children from undeserved schools and communities.

Project Founder || Zareen Mahmud Hosein
Project Sponsor || Energis Limited
Publisher || HerStory Publications Limited
Publishing Consultant || nokta || www.noktaarts.com

www.herstorybd.org

International Distributor || Monfakira, India
Bangladesh Distributor || HerStory Publications Ltd | boobook

Printer || Progressive Printers Pvt Ltd.



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THIS BOOK IS INSPIRED BY THE LEGEND OF KHANA,
A FEARLESS, UNSTOPPABLE GIRL,
WHOSE WISDOM LIVES ON.

TO ALL THE GIRLS AND WOMEN OF THE WORLD
AND OF COURSE, MOM.



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THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

HERSTORIES TIMELINE

STORIES ARE SET IN THE DELTA REGION OF PRESENT DAY BANGLADESH



C.800 - 1200

1650 - 1600

1880 - 1932

1911 - 1932

1911 - 1999

1912 - 2007

1925 - 2002

1929 - 1994

1930 - 2014

1930 - 2015

KHANA
ASTROLOGER

CHANDRABATI
STORYTELLER

ROKEYA
SAKHWAT
HOSSAIN
EDUCATIONIST

PRITILATA WADDEAR
REVOLUTIONARY

SUFIA KAMAL
POET

DR. ZOHRA
BEGUM KAZI
PHYSICIAN

ILA MITRA
ACTIVIST

JAHANARA IMAM
WAR CRIME
INVESTIGATOR

FEROZA BEGUM
SINGER

NOVERA AHMED
ARTIST



800-1757

ANCIENT BENGAL
Pal, Sena, Sultanate, Mughal Rules



1757-1947

EAST INDIA COMPANY / BRITISH INDIA



1857-1947

INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT



1947

PARTITION
British India separates into East & West Pakistan
and India



1952

LANGUAGE MOVEMENT



1971

INDEPENDENCE OF BANGLADESH



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1931-2002

1937

1942

1947

1957

1968

1974

1981

1990 & 1993

1999

RAWSHAN JAMIL
DANCER

SAYEDA KHANAM
PHOTOJOURNALIST

FERDAUSI
MAJUMDAR
ACTOR

SHEIKH HASINA
POLITICIAN

TARAMON BIBI
FREEDOM
FIGHTER

MARINA TABASSUM
ARCHITECT

KALPANA CHAKMA
ADVOCATE

NISHAT
MAZUMDER
SUMMITTEER

NAYMA HAQUE
TAMANNA-E-LUTFI
COMBAT PILOTS

MABIA AKHTER
WEIGHTLIFTER





OUR SUPERGIRLS

KHANA

Illustrated by Rokeya Sultana

THE ASTROLOGER

8

CHANDRABATI

Illustrated by Inshra Sakhawat Russell

THE STORYTELLER

10

ROKEYA SAKHAWAT HOSSAIN

Illustrated by Saiq'a S. Chowdhury

THE EDUCATIONIST

12

PRITILATA WADDEDAR

Illustrated by Najmun Nahar Keya

THE REVOLUTIONARY

14

SUFIA KAMAL

Illustrated by Kavayra (H. K. Ava)

THE POET

16

DR. ZOHRA BEGUM KAZI

Illustrated by Farah Khandaker

THE PHYSICIAN

18

ILA MITRA

Illustrated by Saria Saguaro

THE ACTIVIST

20

JAHANARA IMAM

Illustrated by Tahmina Hafiz Lisa

THE WAR CRIME INVESTIGATOR

22

FEROZA BEGUM

Illustrated by Anika Mariam

THE SINGER

24

NOVERA AHMED

Illustrated by Kavayra (H. K. Ava)

THE ARTIST

26

RAWSHAN JAMIL

Illustrated by Najmun Nahar Keya

THE DANCER

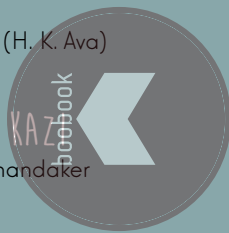
28

SAYEDA KHANAM

Illustrated by Saria Saguaro

THE PHOTOJOURNALIST

30



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FERDAUSI MAJUMDAR

Illustrated by Tahmina Hafiz Liza

SHEIKH HASINA

Illustrated by Najmun Nahar Keya

TARAMON BIBI

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Illustrated by Dhakayeah

MABIA AKHTER

Illustrated by Tabassum Salma Islam

SUPERNOVA

Illustrated by Inshra Sakhawat Russell

THE ACTOR

32

THE POLITICIAN

34

THE FREEDOM FIGHTER

36

THE ARCHITECT

38

THE ADVOCATE

40

THE SUMMITEER

42

THE COMBAT PILOTS

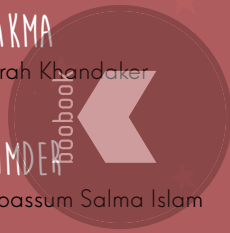
44

THE WEIGHTLIFTER

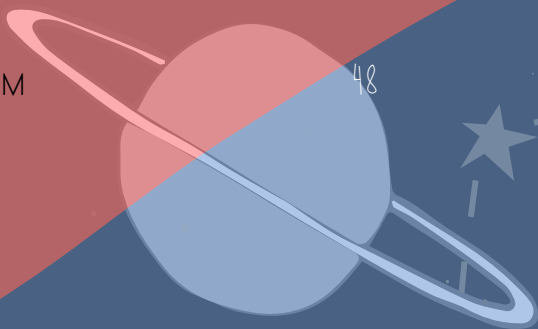
46

MY MOM

48



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KHANA

THE ASTROLOGER
circa 800 - 1200*

HerStories begins a long, long time ago. In the land of the Bengal tiger, there lived a little girl named Khana. In the daytime she was always running around in the forests and fields. At night she spent hours looking up at the stars, reading them like a book.

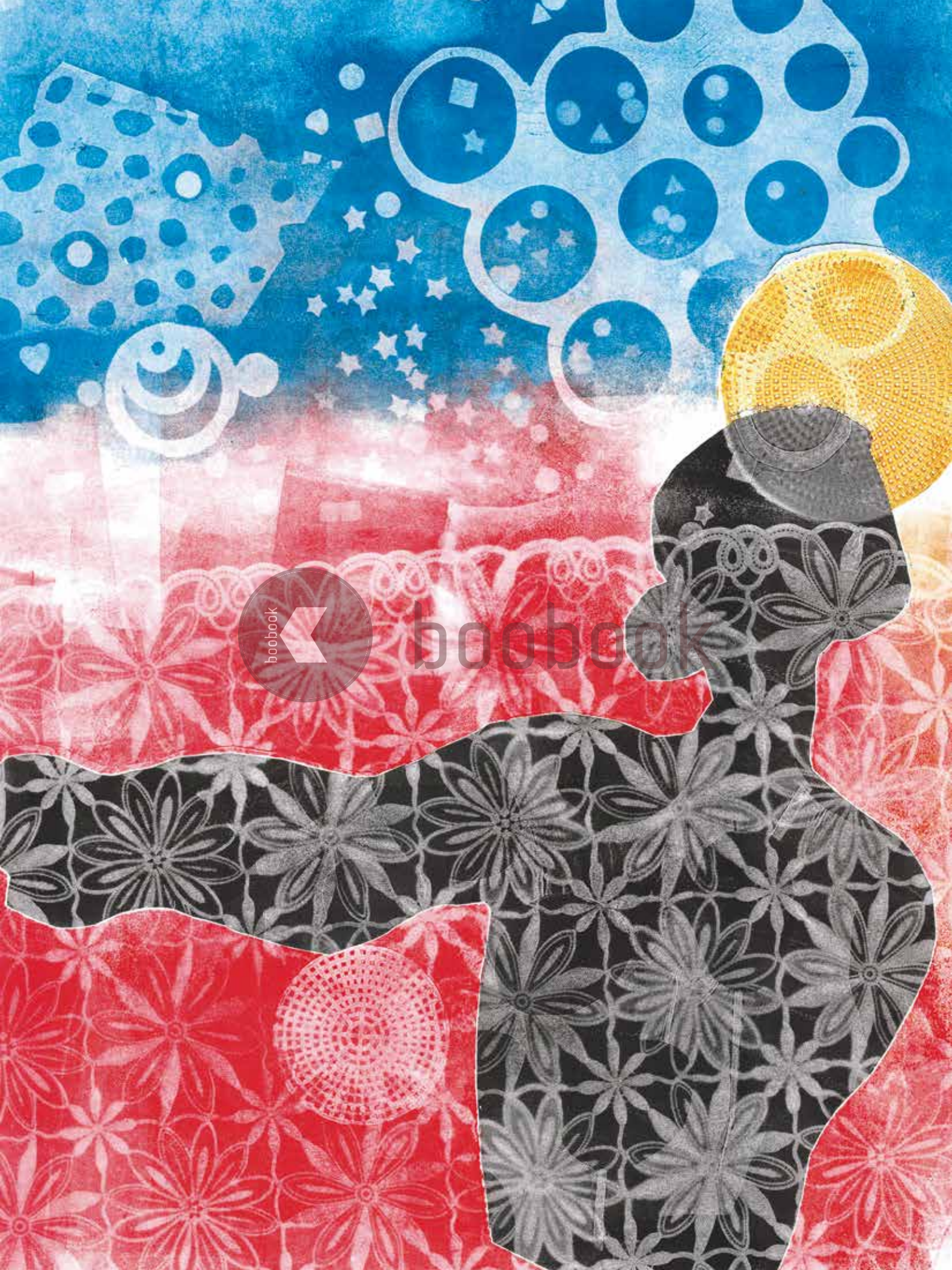
Back in those days, girls were supposed to do all the chores, and there were so many that it left no time for learning. However, Khana was a Supergirl, unstoppable and passionate, and she learned from everything around her.

Khana had a very special gift, the power of super observation. She could see things that other people did not notice. By listening to the birds, she could tell if it would rain. She knew what seeds to plant in which season by watching the sky and many other things.

Khana became an astrologer, a star reader. There was no Internet or newspapers in those days, and people would go to astrologers to get important information and news. Khana became so famous, that it made another astrologer, Varahamihira, very angry and envious.

Varahamihira could not stand that a girl was proving him wrong all the time and ordered to have Khana's tongue cut off. However, Varahamihira did not realize that when a Supergirl is faced with a problem, she only gets stronger! Even though Khana was not able to speak anymore, she could still listen and communicate through signs. She never stopped sharing her wisdom with everyone around her.

*We are not sure of her exact date of birth, only that it was sometime in that period.



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ROKEYA SAKHAWAT HOSSAIN

THE EDUCATIONIST

1880 - 1932

One fine morning, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain woke from a wonderful dream about a place called LadyLand. It was a place where Supergirls were in charge and could do anything they pleased.

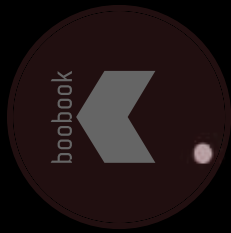
The world Rokeya lived in was very different from the one in her dream. In real life, girls were constantly being told they could not do what they wanted. Rokeya could not forget her dream and she wrote a book about it called *SULTANA'S DREAM* and dedicated her life to building LadyLand!

Despite being born into a wealthy family, Rokeya felt deprived of knowledge. In those days, many girls were kept at home and not allowed to learn. Rokeya was not given the books or lessons she so passionately wanted. It made her very sad, especially because she saw how much her brother was enjoying school.

Seeing her passion for learning, Rokeya's brother shared his lessons and taught her to read and write. Rokeya was a quick learner and her essays were so good that they were often published in newspapers. She mostly wrote about girl power and rights and became known as a fierce and honest writer.

In time, Rokeya did build her own LadyLand, a school for Muslim girls called Sakhawat Memorial School in Kolkata. It was the first school of its kind and started with just eight students; however, with every year the number grew. Even though Headmistress Rokeya never went to school herself, she made sure that future generations of girls could learn. It was a dream come true.

To this day, Rokeya is loved throughout the land for her spirit and dedication. She lit the way for many of the Supergirls of this book. Always remember that *SULTANA'S DREAM* belongs to us all!



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PRITILATA WADDEDAR

THE REVOLUTIONARY

1911 - 1932

Meet Pritilata Waddedar, a fearless revolutionary. This Supergirl grew up in the hills of Chittagong, which were part of British India. Pritilata had a wild and free spirit and she thought it was terribly unfair that outsiders ruled her land.

Everyday Pritilata would pass the European Club, on the door of which was the disrespectful sign DOGS AND INDIANS NOT ALLOWED. Her cheeks would burn red with anger when she saw how the British colonial rulers were treating her people.

All across the country people were talking about freedom. Some people were doing more than talking they were planning attacks. A brave rebel leader, Masterda Surya Sen, noticed Pritilata's bold character and asked her to join his Indian Independence Movement. Pritilata did not need to think long before saying yes.

She soon became widely known as one of the most fierce revolutionaries in the land. British officers were ready to pay a big bounty prize to anyone who caught her and her face was on WANTED! posters everywhere. But Pritilata was not scared or worried, she did not care about having a normal life anymore, all she wanted was freedom from British Rule.

At the age of 21, Pritilata led a group of rebels to the door of the European Club and set the sign on fire. The flames grew and soon the whole building was ablaze. The British officers came running out to fight the rebels and Pritilata was wounded. Choosing death over prison, she drank poison and died that night.

A fearless fighter, Pritilata is a legendary agent of justice. The fire of revolution that she and other rebels started, forced the British to leave in 1947. In that year British India divided into India, West Pakistan and East Pakistan. A rebel with a cause, Pritilata continues to inspire courage!



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SUFIA KAMAL

THE POET
1911 - 1999

Sufia Kamal was born in the same year as the rebel Pritilata and she too wanted freedom, but not just from colonial rule. Inspired by the writing of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, this Supergirl wanted to be free to pursue her dreams and ambitions. She became one of the great Bengali poets.

Growing up, Sufia was told to stay at home, do her chores and study religion. She could not understand why the same rules did not apply to boys, so she broke them. Girls were not allowed to learn. She did. Girls were not allowed to walk alone. She did. Girls were not allowed to work. She did. Girls were not allowed to speak their minds. She did and very loudly at that!

In life and in writing, Sufia was gentle but radically bold. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore called her the North Star, because she was like a guiding light. She was the founding editor of the first Bengali magazine for women, *BEGUM*, and a role model for many. The very first issue came out in 1947 with a photo of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain on the cover - it was full of information for girls written by girls. In *BEGUM* you could find a recipe for daal and an essay on equal rights to good education. It was loved throughout the land.

All her life, Sufia was very righteous and wholeheartedly defended what she believed in. During the Ekushey February Language Movement in 1952, Sufia was one of the loudest voices demanding that her mother tongue, Bengali, be made a national language.

Her story is an example of how words can change the world. Sufia Kamal's spirit-fire and determination were superpowers, and through her poetry, activism and work as editor of *BEGUM*, she really did make the world a better place to be a girl.

DR. ZOHRA BEGUM KAZI

THE PHYSICIAN

1912 - 2007

In a time of great changes, a Supergirl with a big heart was dreaming of becoming a doctor. Zohra Begum Kazi was born as British India was starting to fall apart; there was a lot of fighting, illness and hunger. With every year, the situation was getting worse and there was a great need for doctors. Sadly there were no girls studying medicine, because people thought it was a male profession!

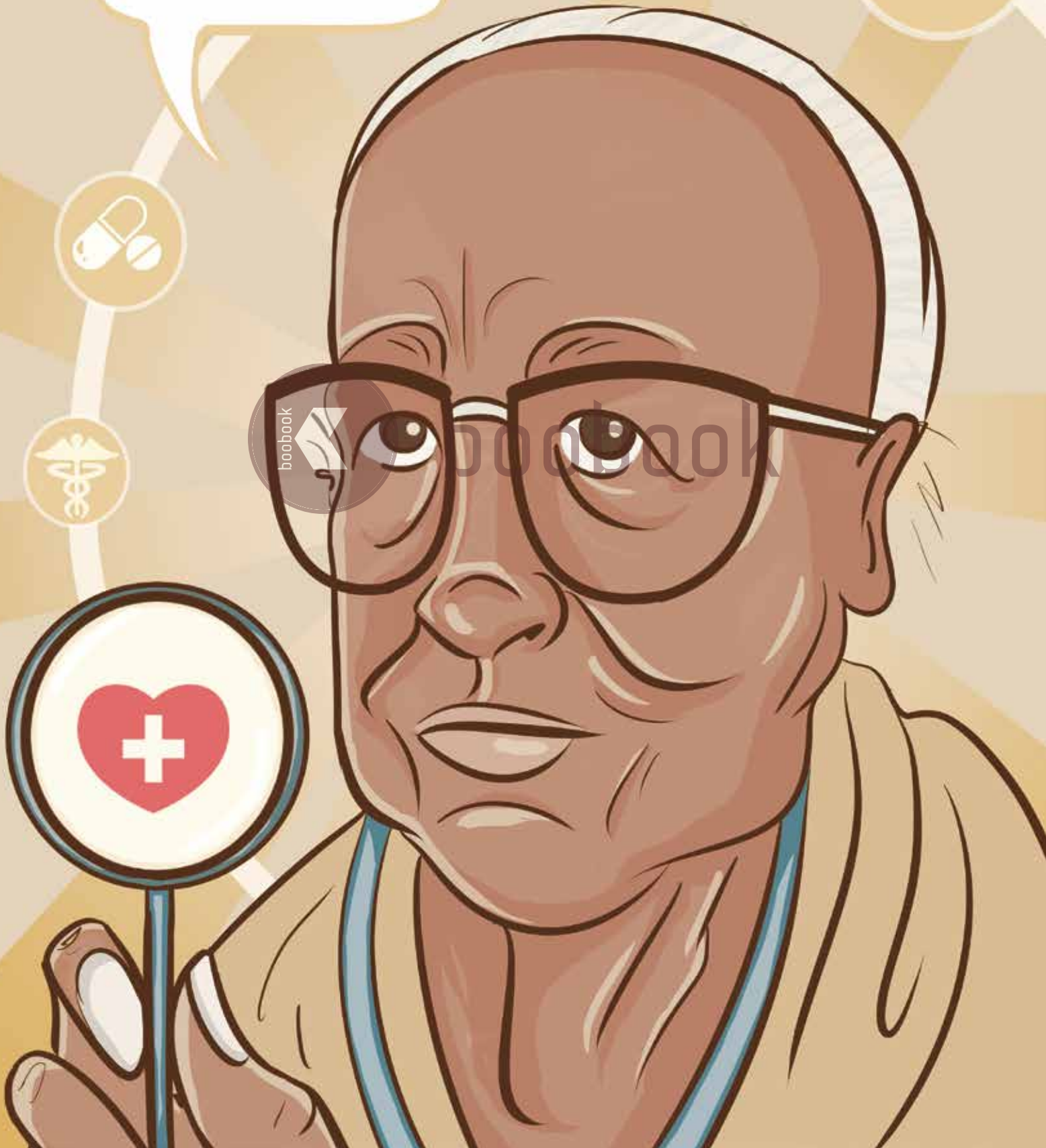
However, Zohra's parents taught her that she could do anything she put her mind to. Her father was a doctor and she spent a lot of time by his side watching him diagnose and cure patients. She dreamed that one day she too would wear the white lab coat.

After many years of study, that day finally came. Just 23 years old, Dr. Zohra became the first female physician in all of Bengal. She traveled to distant villages and towns, curing the poor and the stricken. She never asked a patient what religion or class they were and treated everyone with the same respect.

Dr. Zohra spent a lot of her time trying to teach people about human anatomy. She noticed that many women refused to go to a doctor because they were embarrassed. Instead they would go to witchdoctors to buy strange and smelly medicine. These potions would often make them even more unwell. Dr. Zohra gave long talks about germs and cleanliness to help people understand that medicine is not magic but common sense.

During the difficult times of famines, riots and war, the good doctor was there with her big medicine case full of bottles and instruments, ready to help and heal!

DUTY FIRST,
DUTY LAST,
DUTY ALWAYS!



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