

## Living her dream – C. Nouzia Bhanu

The choice of a political career is usually one passed to a scion. However, this woman, C. Nouzia Bhanu, chose to be a political leader and to stand up for the poor and for women. Deciding to pursue these causes as a politician was not an overnight decision! It was an ambition nurtured since childhood.

C. Nouzia Bhanu was born and raised in the town of Hindupur, district Anantpur. Her inspiration came from speeches given by visiting political leaders and other successful people. Words of motivation from those speeches, and her desire to help people, inspired her to study hard in preparation for her career. She completed school in Hindupur, subsequently pursuing her intermediate (10+2). Even after her marriage and motherhood, she did not give up studying. Family support remained by her side, encouraging her to achieve her dreams.

Bhanu plunged into the political arena with her nomination to the Mandal Parishad Tutorial Constituency (MPTC) in the 2014 elections in Chilamathur Mandal, Anantpur district, Andhra Pradesh. She won by a decent margin of 700 votes. Soon after, another opportunity came knocking: to stand for election to the Mandal Praja Parishad (MPP). Since the Chilamathur Mandal MPP seat was reserved for women candidates, and she was the only female candidate among all MPTCs who had completed a secondary education, she was chosen by all fifteen MPTCs in Chilamathur Mandal. She became the leader of all eleven-village presidents and the fifteen MPTCs across the Mandal of sixty-three villages and eleven village panchayats.

Says Bhanu, “The happiest thing for me is working for people, making them aware of their rights, and helping them avail entitlements.

Our team has sanctioned 1,044 old-age pensions, 1,500 houses with *pattas* (title deeds), and obtained new ration cards for all eligible candidates. I receive a lot of support from everybody: from the MPTCs, village presidents, government officials, and MLAs (members of legislative assemblies). Activities close to my heart include working for the prevention of child marriages.”

Since the area is highly water stressed, coupled with low crop yields and crop failure, agriculture is unrewarding and in addition, the absence of

industries in the region leads to distress migration to nearby metros. In this scenario, Nazia strongly advocates building water conservation structures such as check dams for groundwater recharging and is eager to collaborate with government departments, corporate, NGO/voluntary groups for execution of such projects to ease the life of people of her region.

Right now, Bhanu is busy learning the nuances of good rural governance. She has participated in various government conferences such as the National



Panchayat Raj Day festival organized in Delhi. She has also submitted proposals for the Bangalore-Chennai Corridor, the Handrineeva Water project, and for input subsidies to farmers. Bhanu

was awarded "Best MPP" on the 69<sup>th</sup> Republic Day by the district collector, Mr. Veerapandiyan, IAS.

"No dream is too big if one decides to follow it with perseverance and courage," says Bhanu with a smile. The fulfilment of her dream now serves as a role model for many young girls and boys to be what they dream to be.

*(Compiled by Sarah Berry, communications and media consultant, S M Sehgal Foundation)*