

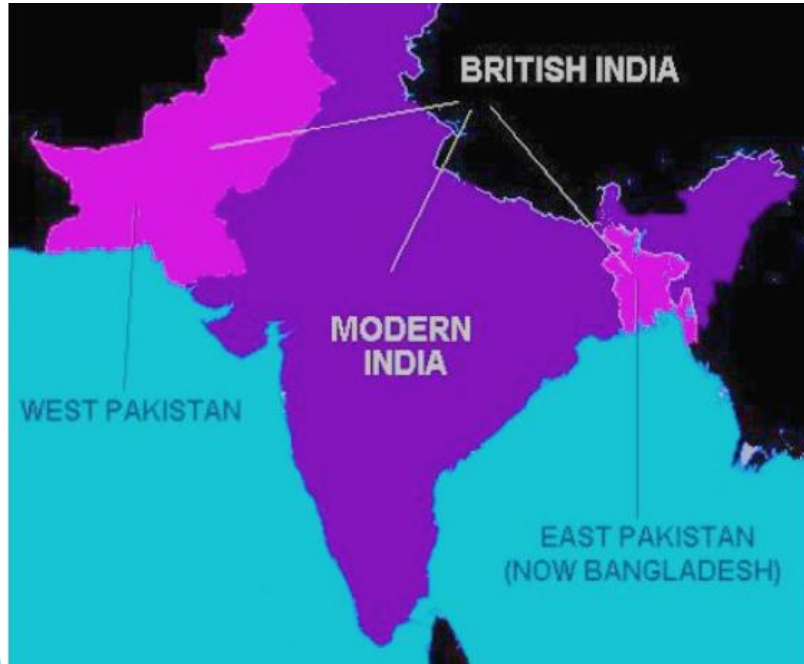
Language Movement (1948 and 1952)—Background—Role of Students—21st February 1952

Presented By

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□ Introduction

❖ **The Language movement was a political as well as a cultural movement of East Bengal. The movement was originated immediately after the birth of Pakistan.**



❖ **The movement began in 1948 and reached its climax in February 1952. The students of Dhaka University and other educational institutions in Dhaka acted as the torch-bearers of the movement.**

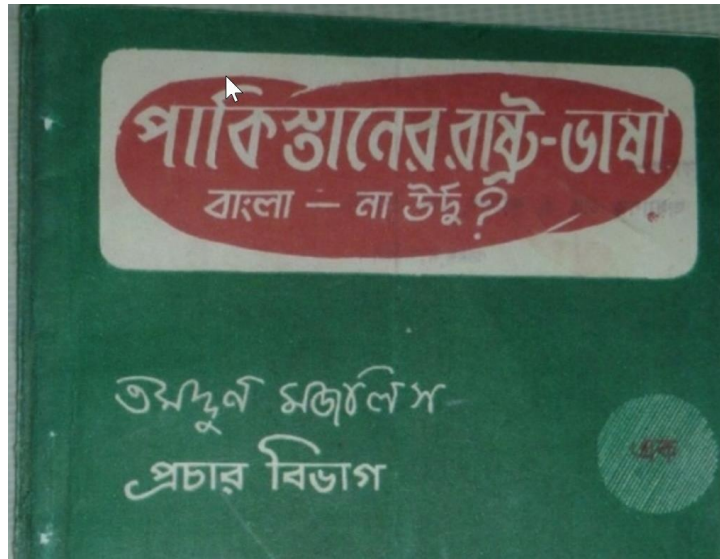
❑ Introduction

❖ Advocating the recognition of the Bengali language as an official language of the then-dominion of Pakistan in order to allow its use in government affairs, the constitution of its use as a medium of education, its use in media, currency and stamps, and to maintain its writing in the Bengali script.

Language Movement (1948 and 1952)—Background—Role of Students—21st February 1952

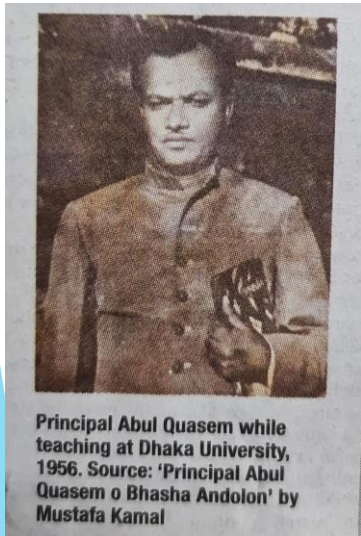


❑ The Beginning, Part 1 (1947): The Early Stage of the Language Movement and the Growth of Bangladeshi Nationalism:



❖ The first movement on this issue was mobilised by a cultural organization named Tamaddun Majlish headed by Professor Abul Kashem.

❖ With Students and Professors of Dhaka University this organization was founded on 2 September 1947. Gradually many other non-communal and progressive organisations joined the movement, which finally turned into a mass movement.



Abul Kashem

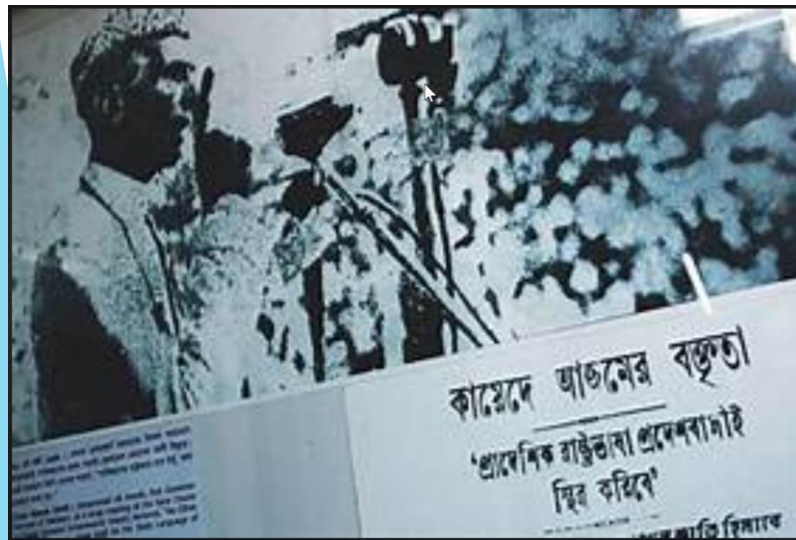
Language Movement (1948 ACE to 1952 ACE)

❑ The Beginning, Part 1 (1947): The Early Stage of the Language Movement and the Growth of Bangladeshi Nationalism:

❖ The question as to what would be the **state language of Pakistan** was raised immediately after its creation. The central leaders and the **Urdu-speaking intellectuals** of Pakistan declared that Urdu would be the state language of **Pakistan**, just as Hindi was the state language of India.

Major Events of Language Movement:

March 21: Md. Ali Jinnah, the Governor General of Pakistan, Declared, "Urdu and only Urdu" as the state language of Pakistan in Ramna Racecourse (Suhrawardy Uddan), Dhaka, East Pakistan.



❖ The movement reached its climax in February 1952 and finally the demand of the state language was **achieved in 1956.**

Language Movement (1948 ACE to 1952 ACE)



❑ Demand Bangla be made one of the state languages of Pakistan.

❖ On receipt of this information, East Pakistani students became agitated and held a meeting on the Dhaka University campus on 6 December 1947, demanding that Bangla be made one of the state languages of Pakistan.

❖ Establish Rastrabhasa Sangram Parishad

❖ The meeting was followed by student processions and more agitation. The first Rastrabhasa Sangram Parishad (Language Action Committee) was formed towards the end of December with Professor Nurul Huq Bhuiyan of Tamaddun Majlish as the convener.

□ The Beginning, Part 2 (1948): Language Movement in 1948

❖ **The Constituent Assembly** of Pakistan was in session at **Karachi**-then the capital of Pakistan-from 8 February 1948. It was proposed that the members would have to **speak either in Urdu or in English at the Assembly.**

■ Dhirendranath Datta

❖ Dhirendranath Datta a member of the Constituent Assembly from East Bengal brought a motion in the Assembly, demanding Bangla as one of the languages of the country. He noted that out of the 6 crore 90 lakh population of Pakistan, 4 crore 40 lakh were from East Pakistan with Bangla as their mother tongue.

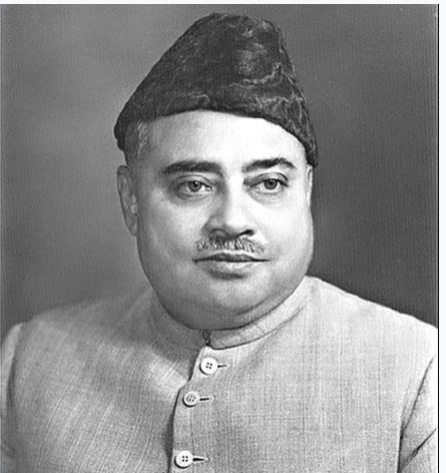


Dhirendranath Datta

❑ The Beginning, Part 2 (1948): Language Movement in 1948



1st Prime Minister of Pakistan



2nd Governor-General of Pakistan

- Liaquat Ali Khan and Khawaja Nazimuddin
- ❖ The central leaders, including Liaquat Ali Khan Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Khawaja Nazimuddin Chief Minister of East Pakistan, opposed the motion.
- ❖ On receiving the news that the motion had been rejected, students, intellectuals and politicians of East Pakistan became agitated. Newspapers such as the *Azad* also criticized of the politicians who had rejected the motion.



Sheikh Mujibur

- ❖ On 11 March 1948 a general strike was observed in protest against the omission of Bangla from the languages of the Assembly, **the absence of Bangla letters in Pakistani coins and stamps, and the use of only Urdu in recruitment tests for the navy.**
- ❖ Leaders such as Kazi Golam Mahboob, Shamsul Huq, Oli Ahad, **Sheikh Mujibur Rahman** and others were arrested.



(From right to left) Principal Abul Quasem, Md Toaha, and Dr Nurul Haque Bhuiyan pictured at the historic Amtala, a memorial to the Language Movement. Source: 'Principal Abul Quasem o Bhasha Andolon' by Mustafa Kamal



The Deal: Khwaja Nazimuddin signed an agreement

❖ The situation grew worse in the days that followed. Muhammed Ali Jinnah was due to visit Dhaka from 19 March.

❖ The provincial government became nervous and Nazimuddin under pressure of widespread agitation.

❑ The Deal: Khwaja Nazimuddin signed an agreement

❖ **Nazimuddin** enter into negotiations with the Committee of Action. An agreement was signed by Nazimuddin with the Committee.



❖ It is provided that the Provincial Assembly shall adopt a resolution for making Bengali the official language of East Pakistan and would recommend to the central government that Bengali should be made one of the state languages of Pakistan.





□ Muhammad Ali Jinnah

❖ Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan and its first Governor-General, while on a visit to East Bengal, declares in Dhaka University convocation that while the language of the province can be Bengali.

❖ “State language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Any one who tries to mislead you is really an enemy of Pakistan.”

❑ The Dacca University campus became the focal point

❖ The remark evoked an angry protest from the Bengali youth who took it as an affront: their language Bangla (Bengali) was, after all, spoken by fifty-four percent of the population of Pakistan.

❖ The Dacca University campus became the focal point for student meetings in support of the Bangla language.





Those who ask this question forget that the language movement does not mean one day on February 21, 1952.



❑ The Dacca University campus became the focal point

❖ Sheikh Mujibur Rahman,
then a university student,
was among those who
raised the protest slogan
and was placed under
detention.

□ Jinnah meets the student representatives



Jinnah meets the student representatives of Committee of Action to persuade them of the necessity of having one national language, but the students are not convinced.

- ❖ The discussion of Jinnah with the student representatives could not bear any fruit but blurred the difference between the student group led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Shah Azizur Rahman. The government resorted to repressive policies in order to crush the Bengali language and put its supporters behind bars.



কে কে যাবি আয় রে... চল যাই রে... আয় বাঙালি মুক্তি সেনা বাংলার মান বাচাই রে..

Rashtrobhasha Sangram Parishad



❖ The movement also restated the earlier demand that Bangla be declared one of the state languages of Pakistan and the official language of East Pakistan. Amidst processions, picketing and slogans, leaders such as Shawkat Ali, Kazi Golam Mahboob, Shamsul Huq, Oli Ahad, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Abdul Wahed and others were arrested. Student leaders, including Abdul Matin and Abdul Malek Ukil, also took part in the procession and picketing.



Birth place of Awami Muslim League



Birth of Awami Muslim League



❑ Birth of Awami Muslim League

❖ With the political crisis, the economic condition in East Pakistan also deteriorated. The people of East Pakistan started losing faith in the Muslim League.

❖ A new party, the Awami Muslim League-which would later become the Awami League-(21-23 October, 1955) was formed under the leadership of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani in 23 June 1949 at Rose Garden, Dhaka.

The Beginning of the Movement

► Muhammad Ali Jinnah publicly declared on 21st March at Racecourse ground "Urdu & Urdu shall be the only state Language of Pakistan". He did the same at Curzon Hall of University of Dhaka. At both places he faced huge agitation.



Abdul Matin



- ❖ Spread of the movement
- ❖ This declaration of Jinnah was instantly protested with the Language Movement spreading throughout East Pakistan. The movement continued under the leadership of different organization.
- ❖ The creation of Awami Muslim League in 1949 gave the movement a more organized political form. The Dhaka University Language Action Committee was formed on 11 March 1950 with Abdul Matin as its convener.



Figure 3: Meeting on the University of Dhaka premises on 31 February 1952

The Third Phase - Event of 1952: Final Stage of the Language Movement

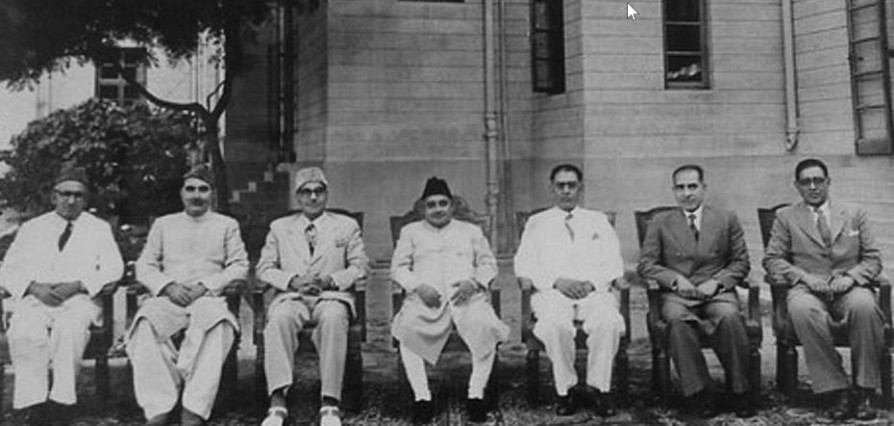


❖ By the beginning of 1952, the Language Movement took a serious turn. Both Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan died on 11 September 1948 and on 16 October 1951 respectively.



❖ Khwaja Nazimuddin had succeeded Liaquat Ali Khan and became the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

❖ There was a growing sense of deprivation and exploitation in East Pakistan and a realization that a new form of colonialism had replaced British imperialism.



❖ Under these circumstances, the Language Movement got a new momentum in 1952. On 27 January 1952, Khwaja Nazimuddin came to Dhaka from Karachi.

❑ Spread of the movement

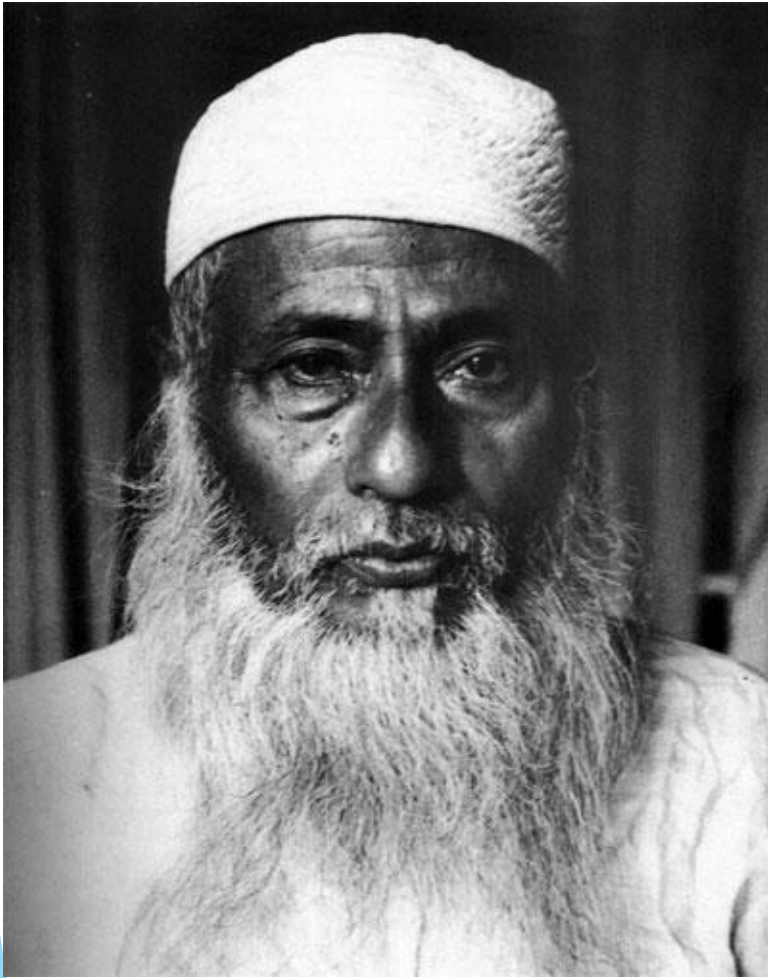
❖ Addressing a meeting at **Paltan Maidan**, he said that the people of the province could decide what would be the **provincial language**, but only **Urdu** would be the **state language** of Pakistan.

Language Movement

• First systematic attack was to declare Urdu as the state language, in his first trip to East Bengal on March 21, 1948 Jinnah declared:
"Let me make it clear to you that the State Language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan...so far as the State Language is concerned Pakistan's language shall be Urdu"

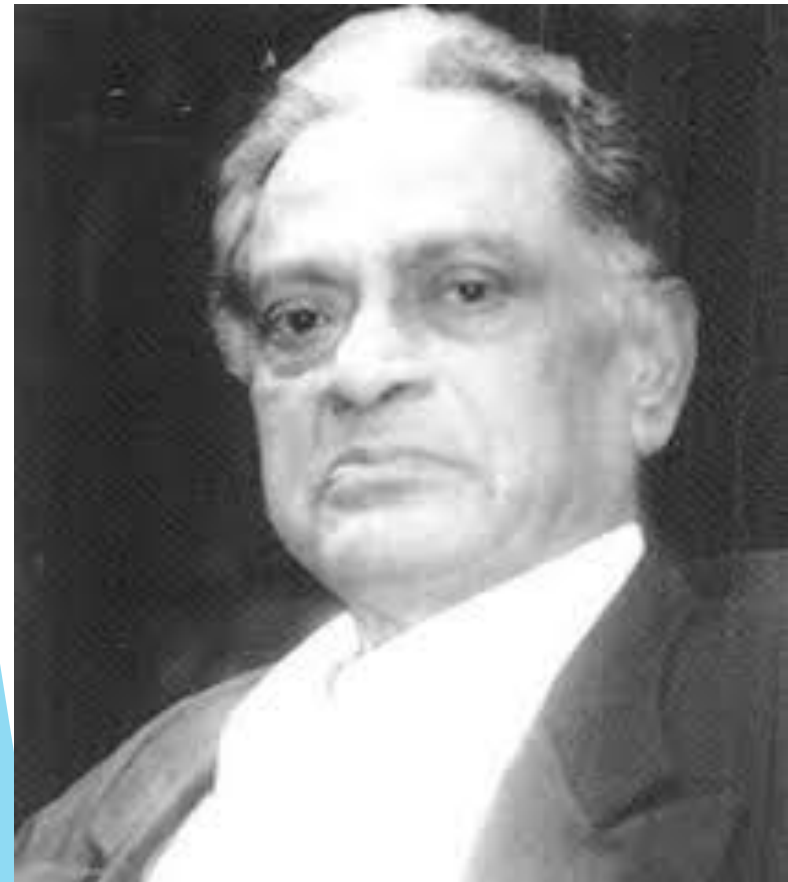


❖ There was an instantaneous, negative reaction to this speech among the students who responded with the slogan, **'Rashtrabhasha Bangla Chai'**



❑ Spread of the movement

- ❖ A strike was observed at Dhaka University on 30 January, 1952. The representatives of various political and cultural organisations held a meeting on 31 January chaired by Moulana Bhasani.
- ❖ An All-Party Central Language Action Committee was formed with Kazi Golam Mahboob as its convener.

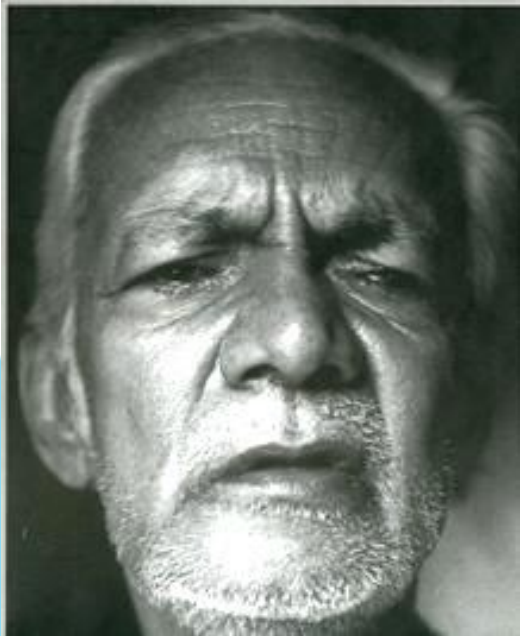


Kazi Golam Mahboob

- ❖ At this time the government also proposed that **Bangla** be written in **Arabic script**. This proposal was also strongly opposed.
- ❖ The Language Action Committee decided to call a **hartal** and organise demonstrations and processions on **February 21** throughout East Pakistan.



Figure 3: Meeting on the University of Dhaka premises on 21 February 1952



Abul Hashim

❑ Imposed Section 144 in Dhaka

- ❖ As preparations for demonstrations were underway, the government imposed Section 144 in the city of Dhaka, banning all assemblies and demonstrations.
- ❖ A meeting of the Central Language Action Committee was held on 20 February under the chairmanship of Abul Hashim. Opinion was divided as to whether or not to violate Section 144.



❖ The students were determined to **violate Section 144** and held a student meeting at **11.00 am on 21 February** on the **Dhaka University** campus, then located close to the **Medical College Hospital**.



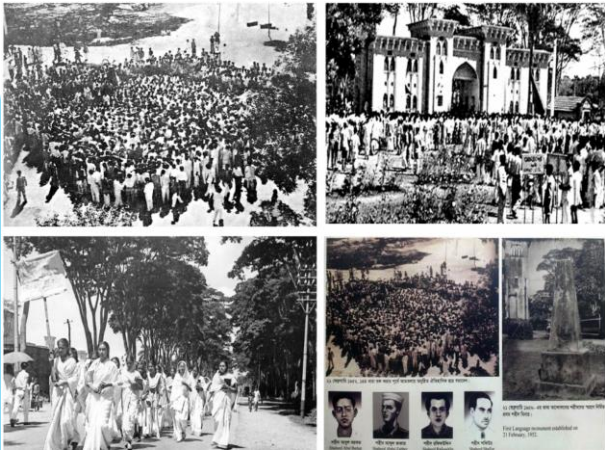
❖ When the meeting started, the Vice-Chancellor, along with a few **university teachers**, came to the spot and requested the students not to violate the ban on assembly.



❖ However, the students, under their leaders-Abdul
Matin and Gaziul Haque-
were adamant.



❖ Thousands of students from
different schools and colleges
of Dhaka assembled on the
university campus while armed
police waited outside the gate.



❑ Killing of Students and Condemnation

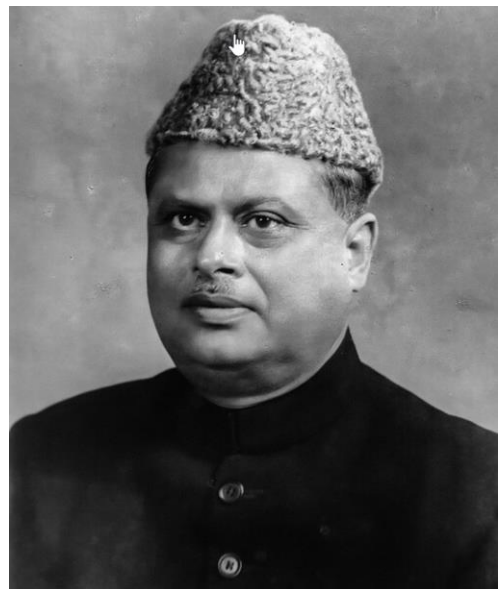
❖ When the students emerged in groups, shouting slogans, the police resorted to baton charge; even the female students were not spared. The police fired upon the students, who were proceeding towards the Assembly Hall. Three young men, **Rafiq, Jabbar and Barkat** (an MA student) were fatally wounded and later died.

❖ A nine-year-old boy named **Ohiullah** was also killed.





Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish



Nurul Amin

❑ Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish

- ❖ At the Legislative Assembly building, the session was about to begin. Hearing the news of the shooting, some members of the Assembly, including Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish and some opposition members, went out and joined the students.
- ❖ In the Assembly, Nurul Amin, chief minister of East Pakistan, continued to oppose the demand for Bangla.



❑ Shaheed Minar built.

❖ The next day, **22 February**, was also a day of public demonstrations and police reprisals. The public performed a *Janaza* (prayer service for the dead) and brought out a mourning procession.

❖ On **23 February**, at the spot where students had been killed, a memorial was erected. In **1963**, the temporary structure was replaced by a concrete memorial, the **Shaheed Minar**.



Shaheed Minar

- ❑ Bangla and Urdu were recognized as the state languages of Pakistan.
- ❖ The language movement continued until 1956. The movement achieved its goal by forcing the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in adopting both Bangla and Urdu as the state languages of Pakistan. The Constituent Assembly met with the Speaker of the National Assembly Abdul Wahab Khan to discuss the issue and, finally, both Bangla and Urdu were recognized as the state languages of Pakistan.
- ❖ Both Bangla and Urdu were thus enacted to be the national languages of Pakistan.

Women's contribution in the Language Movement



- ❖ It was women-most of whom were only schoolgirls at that time-who first defined the curfew under **section 144**, tore off the police barricade and assembled under the **Mango tree (*Amtola*)** in the **Dhaka University campus** premise to join the movement.
- ❖ However, their contributions are not yet written in details nor properly documented.

Women's contribution in the Language Movement



❖ There were a number of women including Dr Halima Khatun, Dr. Sufia Khatun, Rawshan Ara Bachchu, Sufia Ibrahim, Fazilatunnessa, Rani Bhattachariya, Pratibha Mutsuddi, Sofia Khan, Zulekha, Nuri, Sara Taifur, Sufia Ahmed, Safia Khatun and others among them.

❖ Police charged batons brutally and around 8 schoolgirls including Sufia Ibrahim and Rawshan Ara Bachchu got injured. A good number of female students were also arrested.

Significance

❑ Significance : Short Term

❖ Thunderous expression against oppression and success

- ❖ The East Bengal Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution recommending the recognition of Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan.
- ❖ The movement achieved its goal by forcing the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in adopting both Bangla and Urdu as the state languages of Pakistan.

Significance

❑ Significance : Long Term

❖ Awareness and the Birth of the Bengali Nationalism- Source of Inspiration.

❖ The Bangla Language Movement of February 21, 1952, popularly known as *Ekushey* (the 21st February), was a socio-politico-cultural movement in the then East Pakistan (now **Bangladesh**) advocating the recognition of the **Bangla language** as an official language of **Pakistan**. Such recognition would allow Bangla to be used in government affairs.

Significance

❑ Significance : Long Term

❖ In fact, the Language Movement seventy years ago catalyzed the assertion of Bengali national identity in the then Pakistan, and became a forerunner to Bengali nationalist movements:

- A). The emergence of self-rule consciousness in 1954 general election,
- B). Student movement in 1962,
- C). 6-point movement,
- D). Uprising in 1969 and, subsequently,
- E). The Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.

❑ Significance : Long Term

- ❖ The supreme sacrifice of the martyrs of the language movement on February 21st (1952) became an depth of the inspiration for sustaining self-consciousness and dignity as a nation.
- ❖ It established the only nation in the globe which is named after its language, Bangladesh.

Significance

❑ Significance : Long Term

❖ February 21st was such an epoch-making event that it has been immortalized by global recognition as International Mother Language Day.

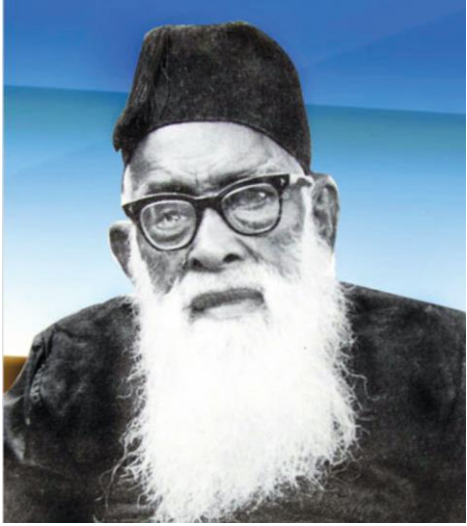
❖ In 2000, UNESCO declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day for the whole world to celebrate, in tribute to the Language Movement and the ethno-linguistic rights of people around the world.

Significance

❑ Significance : Long Term

- ❖ We as a nation feel proud today that Bangladesh, Bangla and the supreme sacrifice of our language movement are being pronounced, much-admired, gratefully remembered and honoured worldwide.
- ❖ The prestige and position of Bangla, the mother tongue of the people of Bengal, in day-to-day life can be traced back to the 17th century, as documented in the poems of Abdul Hakim (1620-1690) of Swandwip, Noakhali. The 17th century bard was hesitant to classify if not condemn those who were born in Bengal but hated Bangla.

Significance



❑ Significance : Long Term

❖ From the mid-19th century, Urdu language had been promoted as the *lingua franca* of Indian Muslims by political and religious leaders.

❖ Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah (1873-1965), an educationist and social reformer, wrote in 1918, *Bangabhasha o Musalman Shahittya* (Bangla language and Literature of the Muslims), that one must respect Bangla and recognise its incomparability over other languages like Urdu, etc. Ahsanullah made this observation because of the attempts by contemporary intelligentsias to establish Urdu as the *lingua franca* of Muslims in Bengal.

Significance



❑ Significance : Long Term

❖ As early as the late 19th century, social activists such as the Muslim feminist **Roquia Sakhawat Hussain (1880-1932)** chose to write in Bangla to reach out to the people and develop it as a modern literary language.

❖ Exactly twenty-five years before February 1952, two papers were presented on the second day of the Two-day First Annual Literary Conference (February 27-28, 1927) of the **Muslim Shahittya Shamaj** (Muslim Literary Society) on the appropriateness of the use of Bangla in Muslim society in general and education in particular. **Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) inaugurated the Conference.**

Significance

❑ Significance : Long Term

- ❖ Abul Hussain (1896-1938), the secretary and one of the founders of the *Shahittya Shamaj*, which led the *Shikha* Movement, wrote that the mother language barrier had been the major obstacle in the way of social development of the Muslim community in Bengal.
- ❖ The two wings (East Pakistan, also called *East Bengal*, and West Pakistan) of the state of Pakistan after its formation in 1947 split along cultural, geographical and linguistic lines. In 1948, the government of Pakistan ordained Urdu as the sole national language, sparking extensive protests among the Bangla-speaking majority of East Pakistan.

Significance

❑ Significance : Long Term

- ❖ Facing rising sectarian tensions and mass discontent with the new law, the government outlawed public meetings and rallies.
- ❖ The students of the University of Dhaka and other political activists defied the law and organised a protest on February 21, 1952.

Significance

❑ Significance : Long Term

- ❖ The movement reached its climax when police killed student demonstrators on that day. The deaths provoked widespread civil unrest.
- ❖ After years of conflict, the central government relented and granted official status to the Bangla language in 1956.

Significance

❑ Significance : Long Term

- ❖ The Language Movement not only laid the foundations for ethnic nationalism in many of the Bengalis of East Pakistan but also heightened the cultural animosity between the authorities of the two wings of Pakistan.
- ❖ In fact, *Ekushey* played an important role in making Bengalis aware of their cultural and national heritage and ultimately led to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. After 1971, even today, *Ekushey* has been a guiding philosophy for any movement against oppression, injustice, disparity and denying of civic rights, and in the comprehension of the socio-economic emancipation of the people of Bangladesh.

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Thank You