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## Amor Ekushey: International Mother Language Day

Kazi Liakat Hossain

IT is our pride that Amor Ekushey is going to be observed, today, all over the world. As we know the seed of independence was sown in 1948 when Mohammed Ali Jinnah said, "Urdu only Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan". But all Bangalees protested against it.

A literary discussion was held on 12 November 1947 many noted litterateurs, students and teachers, demanded Bangla language should be the state language at Fazlul Hoq Hall.

This discussion meeting was attended by many ministers. They also supported either language. Bangla should be the state language. The following elites of the city and ministers attended the meeting.

Habibullah Bahar (Health Minister). Opening discussion was spoken by Nurul Amin (Civil Supplier Minister). Speakers were: Prof. Abul Kashem, Poet Jashimuddin, Kazi Motahar Hossain, Dr. Enamul Hoq, Abul Hasnat (The then DIG), Syed Mohammed Aftab (Agriculture Minister), Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad, Shree Jukta Lila Roy and many Prof. of Dhaka University and Colleges.

February 21, 1952 the valiant soldiers of the language movement shed their blood for the recognition of our dear mother tongue Bangla. Prior to that in 1948 Mr. Nayemuddin protested against the opinion of Jinnah who uttered vehemently in a meeting at Karwan Hall "Urdu, only Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan. Nayemuddin was not a party leader or worker of any party, but he protested on behalf of general mass and general students. Language movement was started on 11 March, 1949. Congress leader late Dharendra Nath Datta (who was killed during liberation war) placed the demand before the parliament. He first demanded Bengali would be the state language.

Principal Abul Quasem and his organization "Tamuddin Majlis" also

played a vital role in language movement in 1947. In 1952 February 21, 144 was declared. The then General Secretary of Awami League Shamsul Huq showed some logical arguments not to break 144 at Amtala near DU. He delivered lecture near about one hour forty-five minutes. This is a historical fact. History should not be distorted, new generation must know the real history of Language Movement.

This was a prelude to our struggle for sovereign and independent existence. The Language Movement gave a new momentum to our crusade against all disparities perpetrated by the then regime. The blood of martyrs of the Language Movement did not go in vain. It helped carve out a separate and distinct entity for the Bangalees. Ekushey February instills in us the determination to fight for the right cause. The cause of mother tongue was dear to one and all. The sublime sacrifices of those who laid down their lives for the cause of the mother tongue shall remain ever green in the hearts of the people. Ekushey February (Aat Falgun) should not be observed as a yearly ritual as we continue to observe annually.

Why book fair on this Day only? Why seminars and meetings only in observance of the Day? why not observe all these round the year? Why we can't start Bangla in the highest courts of the country? Why don't we use Bengali Calendar year 8 Falgun (Aat Falgun). I was asked by a poor news paper seller, an uneducated fellow Shahajuddin at Motijheel near Shilpa Bhaban, why don't you, Journalists Community write against 21 February it is to be written (Aat Falgun) eight Falgun. He said language movement and killing took place on this Bengali Calendar day. Shahajuddin's argument was absolutely correct. To serve the cause of mother tongue we have to be above rituals. Those language martyrs proved beyond doubt that only through sacrifice, dedication, the goal can be

attained and undoubtedly they proved it.

The UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation) has proclaimed February 21, as the International Mother Language Day to be observed globally in recognition of the sacrifices of the martyrs for establishing the rightful place of Bangla. The proclamation came in the form of a resolution unanimously adopted at the plenary of the UNESCO at its headquarters in Paris, on November 17, 1999. The UNESCO in its resolution said unanimously, recognition was given bearing in mind that to spread mother tongue widely will not only add variety in language and encourage multilingual education but also develop fuller awareness and cultural tradition throughout the world and to improve unity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue. It is a great tribute and glowing homage paid by the international community to the language martyrs of Bangladesh. Now it devolves upon us and the future generation to carry forward the remaining task of consolidating our independent entity. Language is symbol of the state and a source of identity.

The government announced in Dhaka that the plenary of the UNESCO general conference unanimously adopted a draft of resolution tabled by Bangladesh for proclamation of "The International Mother Language Day" to be observed on February 21. Giving world recognition to Bangalees, scarifies of blood for their mother tongue, UNESCO proclaimed February 21 as International Mother language Day. The sacrifices of all the martyrs for championing cause of their mother tongue have received now a glorious recognition by the people of 188 states of the world.

We Bangalees also feel proud that in Bangla the very word "Mongol" was included with other main 17 languages of rich countries in the space-craft "Spirit and Opportunity" which were sent on the Mars.

On this Memorable Day we must ask ourselves to what extent we came up to the expectations of beloved martyrs? Have we followed the democratic path in governance? Do we sincerely adhere to democratic practices? Have we ever seriously practiced democratic tolerance and accommodation?

Ekushey tells us to shun differences, give up partisan politics and unite for the just cause. But on this day can we ask our politicians, whether they are following the path shown by our language martyrs? Those indefatigable martyrs did not hesitate the least in sacrificing their precious lives for the cause of Bangla language. Certainly we have drifted away from the path shown by them. The remedy lies in following their sense of dedication and selfless pursuits for a noble cause.

Their memory should inspire us to serve the nation in a patriotic manner. Real democracy, not plutocracy, must be strengthened and consolidated.

This is the way to realise the hopes and aspirations of the people. Our martyrs of the Language Movements adopted a democratic path in organizing movement. They were ruthlessly killed and suppressed by the forces of oppression, but they remained steadfast to the national cause. This is how selfless spirit yielded fruitful result.

Hence on this auspicious Day in the annals of our history, we must pledge to safeguard our hard-earned democracy, freedom, and sovereignty at all costs and help create an environment conducive to the flourishing of democratic ideals. Only then our tribute to valiant martyrs of the Language Movement will be meaningful.

(Kazi Liakat Hossain,  
Advisory Editor The Economy  
and Columnist Daily English  
News Paper 5/1),  
Sheddeshwari Lane, Dhaka  
Cell: 0181750816)