



Ekushey February

# International Mother Language Day

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Today at least 118 countries all over the world will observe the Mother Language Day. It was on this historic day, fifty years ago, the ethnic struggle for Bengali Nationalism, language and literature, art and culture, tradition and history began. The date of Gregorian calendar has been converted into Bengali nomenclature as "Ekushey February"; dyed red with blood of our brethren. The then Pakistani ruling clique unilaterally thrashed upon the majority of the population, the alien language 'Urdu' as the only state language, of the then Pakistan. The 54 per cent of the total population then were Bengalees. So this unilateral decision was not to go unchallenged. The ever-oppressed, ever-deprived, ever-protesting and ever-fighting Bengalees rose to the occasion and challenged the unjust and undemocratic decision of the ruling clique. Had the Pakistanis been a little tactful, democratic and tolerant to the sentiments of the majority population of the country, probably the immortal 'Ekushey' would not have found a root in history. The blunt intellect of the West Pakistanis was won over by the sharp intellect of the Bengalees. Thus the immortal 'Ekushey' come into being.

Of course, the Bengalees had to pay heavily for upholding the prestige and honour of their mother tongue. As a result blood flowed out of the vein of Salam, Barkat, Rafiq and Jabber, who like immortal 'Ekushey' have also become immortal in the history of Bangladesh. It was for the first time that streets of Dhaka were dyed-red with blood of these four brave sons who have embraced martyrdom for the prestige and honour of their mother tongue. Since then 'Ekushey' has become part and parcel of Bengali culture. Now it is a matter of great pride for the Bengalees that at least 118 nations of the world are observing

this "Ekushey February" as the International Mother Language Day.

"Ekushey February" was the precursor of our War of Independence. Ekushey, with its advent in every year, reminds us of the supreme sacrifices of the martyred ones. The sacrifices was of such significance and high magnitude, that in no time, poem was composed and given tune to be calminated into age-long preamble song. It has found its root in our history and tradition. We all know that the poem was composed by famous self-exiled poet Abdul Gaffar Chaudhury and tuned by another famous lyricist Altaf Mahmud, for which act of his, he had to accept martyrdom at the hands of Pakistani Army. "Amar Bhai-er Raktey Rangano Ekushey..." the words and melodies contained in the song can ever be forgotten? Never. It will always stir our feeling and imbibe us with the spirit of sacrifice, with the ideals and thoughts and with the dreams for which our brothers laid down their lives.

While the entire nation is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of "Ekushey February", it creeps into our minds that the noble ideas and thoughts for which the people of Bangladesh have given an ocean of blood, could be transformed into reality. It is true that Bengali has been accepted as one of the official language in all government offices and organisations. New Bengali Calendar has been introduced after Independence though prepared long-time back under the chairmanship of Late Dr. Mohd. Shahidullah, the famous linguist of the country. It could not be used because of ban imposed by the then Pakistanis. After liberation of Bangladesh, it has become official Bengali calendar for the nation. Now that we are free, we should use it more profusely and profitably. But alas! it has not been so.

During the month of February, we become somewhat, a little alert and alive to the issue and

then fall "back" to English again. The usage of Bengali Language in private sectors and non-government institutions are very sporadic. In private banks and other financial institutions, English has been chosen as medium of expression and communication. Internal work is also done in English, which could be avoided. Of course, for international relation, English is essential, which does not mean that we should ban Bengali Usage in private banks and other financial institutions. Beside this, if an educated Bengali is asked at random to mention the date of Bengali month, they are taken aback. As a teacher I often ask students in the classroom to mention the date of Bengali calendar along with English calendar; 95% of them cannot answer. Believe me, they are not schooling ones, they have had, to their credit, the highest educational degree from university and do work in responsible position in their professions. They mostly come in contact with me during their professional training. They even do not know the number of days contain in each Bengalee month, not to speak of the origin of Bengali calendar. All these are hard facts; yet we are Bengalees and observe "Ekushey" with all its eclat.

Having remained in British yoke for two hundred years, we have memorised the day and date of each Gregorian month but being a Bengali for thousand years, we have not learnt the days of our own Bengali calendar, what a shame! Our popular government should take measures to remove this apathy on the part of the Bengalees. All concerned which are not practising usage of Bengali Language may see to the fact that Bengali Language is put to use side by side with the English Language.

Recently, it is painfully noticed that there has been craze among well-to-do section of the people to put their children in the

so-called English medium schools, colleges and universities. To meet the demand of this section of the people which will be hardly 12% of the total population, but owner of 85% of the total national wealth, many mushroom growth of English medium schools and universities have sprang up in the country. To add to this misery, our political mentors, who are the votaries of Bengali language and literature and quite often inaugurate 'Ekushey Fair' and other cultural functions indigenous to Bengali culture and advocate inculcation of Bengali Language in all walks of life, do send their children to get education from abroad in London, Darjeeling and at times, to so-called Private Universities set up in the country. The teacher who teaches in these universities do not have adequate training in teaching the students. They often lack in writing correct English. This I say from my own experiences, which I do not want to elaborate any further.

Why do I say all these? Not assuredly to boast, not assuredly to give the slightest countenance to complacency, because everybody has the right to know what is happening within the country. A new polarisation in education is being created, a section is being created within the section, middleclass people who comprise major portion of our population are being deprived from education which is universal. The 12% of the population holding 85% of the national wealth have a duty to perform for the well-being of the nation, have a duty to accomplish to materialise the dreams of the martyrs have sacred duty and obligations to become Bengalees first and the last.

These people including the teachers in those so-called English medium schools, I am sure, if they are asked to mention the date of Bengali Calendar on any particular day or time, will hide their faces in shame and lower down their heads in disgrace.