

What Does Ekushey Mean to Me

It is more than four decades now that the brutal killing on Ekushey February of 1952, stirred the hearts and minds of every Bangalee in the then East Pakistan. In every adult's mind, the event is etched by the blood of the martyrs. But what about the youngsters of today? What does Ekushey mean to them, if anything. Do they feel as fervently as the older generation? Are they aware how Ekushey galvanized the nation and helped form our nationalist aspirations. In order to find out, we went to the leading schools — both English and Bangla-medium, and private and government — and asked their leading students to tell us what this great event meant to them. Some schools answered, some could not, due to shortage of time and the Ramadan vacation. We reproduce here, the answers that we got. We express our sincere gratitude to the school authorities for their wholehearted cooperation in making our project successful.

We believe our readers will greatly enjoy the views expressed by our future generation.



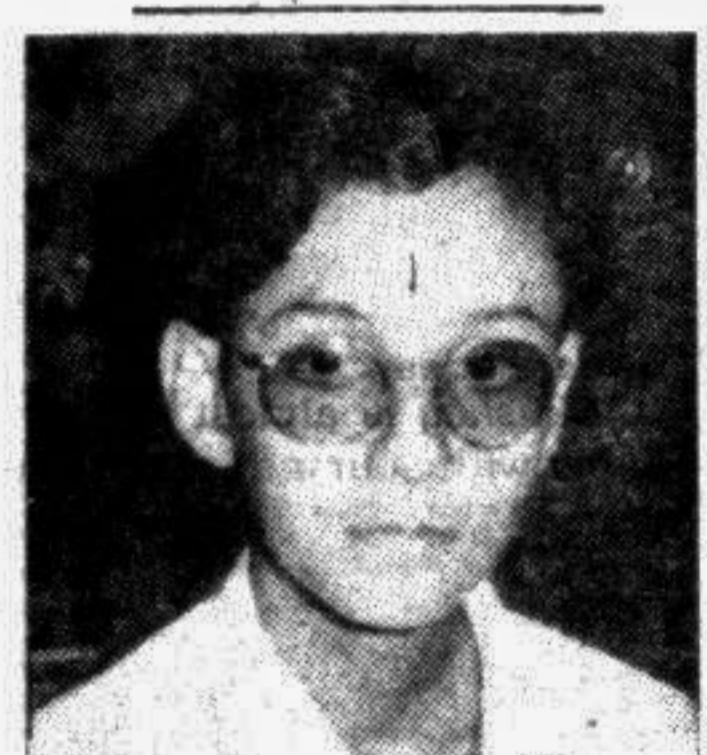
Shahed Masud
Govt Laboratory High
School
Class X

Days come and go, disappearing into oblivion. But to the nation there are some days which are illuminated by their own glory. Ekushey February is one of those glorious days of our nation. This day is remembered by the twelve crore people of Bangladesh. They will honour this day because the sacrifice made on this day in 1952 by the Bangalees has had a great influence on our liberation war of '71. The Language Movement of 1952 was the driving force for the younger generation to liberate our country. The commitment to the liberation war and courage of the people was inspired by the supreme sacrifice made on Ekushey February.

The coming of the great Ekushey February was the rise of the Bangalee people in support of nationalism and democracy against tyranny and exploitation. This awakened human strength is Bangladesh's symbol.

Ekushey February of today — the Ekushey of free Bangladesh, brings with it new hope and inspiration for us. The Language Movement of 1952 was spontaneous. Now it is time to carry out the message of Ekushey from door to door. We will speak in Bangla we will write in Bangla, we will read in Bangla, we will think in Bangla.

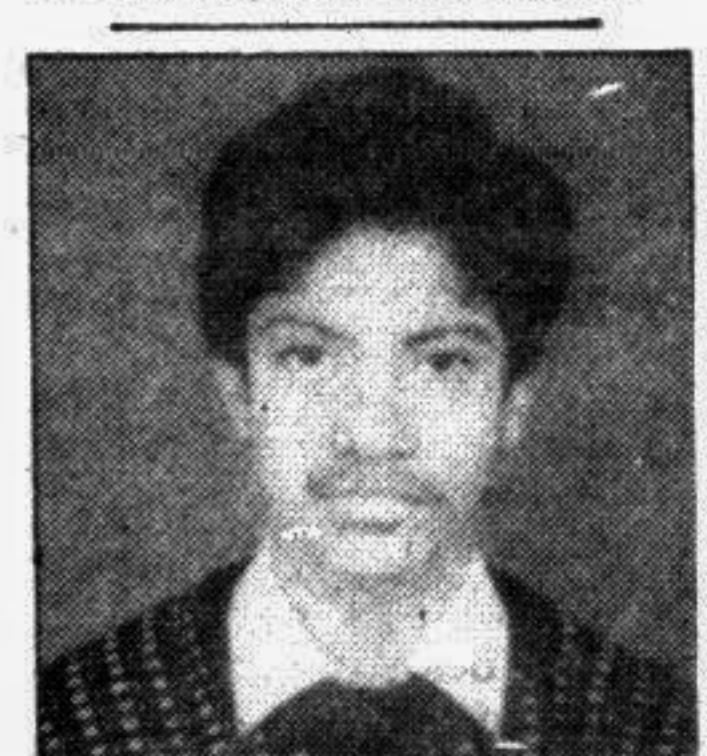
It is only if we enhance and enrich our language that we will be able to fulfill the dreams of those people who sacrificed their precious lives for us.



Sabigh-Bin-Masood
Govt. Laboratory High School
Class-X

To me Ekushey February is the greatest landmark of our history. The dignity of the nation was at stake on this day. I read with pride about the supreme sacrifice made by our brave youths like Salam, Jabbar, Rafiq and Barkat. The rallies of 1952 on this day, culminated in our independence in 1971.

Every year the day is observed with great enthusiasm. However, behind this, I find a certain lack of sincerity. The great sacrifices made by the martyrs should not be minimised with empty festivities. More constructive steps should be taken to fulfil the task of making Bangla a dynamic and scientific language. Steps taken by the government and Bangla Academy should be strengthened by all of us. We have to take adequate measures to put Bangla Language on its rightful place both nationally and internationally. This cannot be achieved in isolation. We have to work harder to make our political independence more significant by building our economy. Only in a stable economic system can we take steps to bring our language to its appropriate standing. Only in this can we show proper respect to our great martyrs. To me, every Ekushey February should bring more success in this regard.



Syed Mustafa Khelat Bari
Govt. Laboratory High
School
Class-X

"What Does Ekushey February Mean to You?"

February 21, 1952. Is it only a day when our brothers shed blood for our mother tongue? No, it is the milestone of our glorious history of independence. I believe that Ekushey February is an eternal source of

(Translated from Bangla)

inspiration to each Bangladeshi. It is his pride.

In 1948 the rulers of then Pakistan declared 'Urdu' to be the only State Language. The people and the students of then East Pakistan raised their voice and protested vehemently against this announcement. All the people of the country, men and women, young and old, rose to the occasion. The student community especially, was firmly determined to carry on the struggle until the government yielded to their demand. The students declared February 21 in 1952 as the 'Language Day'. The government imposed Section 144 and banned all meetings and processions.

The students defied the order and brought out a procession. Many brave sons of the country like Rafiq, Salam, Barkat and Jabbar made supreme sacrifices with their lives that day. The movement became so strong that the government was forced to recognise Bengali as one of the two state languages.

Since then the Bangladeshis have been paying homage to the martyrs of the Language Movement of 1952 every year on the 21st February. This day bears a great significance in the history of our nation. It is an eternal source of inspiration to us all. It is a part of our sensibility that has shaped our destiny and helped us to discover ourselves.

To me Ekushey should be reflected in the everyday activities of our life. We should enrich 'Bangla Bhasha' to such an extent that we can use it to learn all faculties of knowledge. We must all work hard to improve our mother tongue in order to show respect for Ekushey. We must try individually to teach our illiterate people how to read and write Bangla. We must remember that love for one's mother tongue is eternal and we must not forget that others too love their own mother tongues as much as we do ours. Thus while we love our mother tongue and must also learn to respect the mother tongue of others. Our love for Bangla must not blind us to learn other languages. We should learn other languages as well even English, Arabic, Hindi or Urdu if it is necessary to improve ourselves. It is only when we learn other languages that we can enrich our 'Bangla Bhasha' and show real respect to 'Ekushey'.

Before the Muslims invaded Egypt, the mother-tongue of the Egyptians was Coptic. But after the invasion of the Muslims the Coptic language ceased to exist and Arabic took its place. The Pakistani rulers also wanted to destroy our language. But valiant sons of our country revolted against this heinous conspiracy.

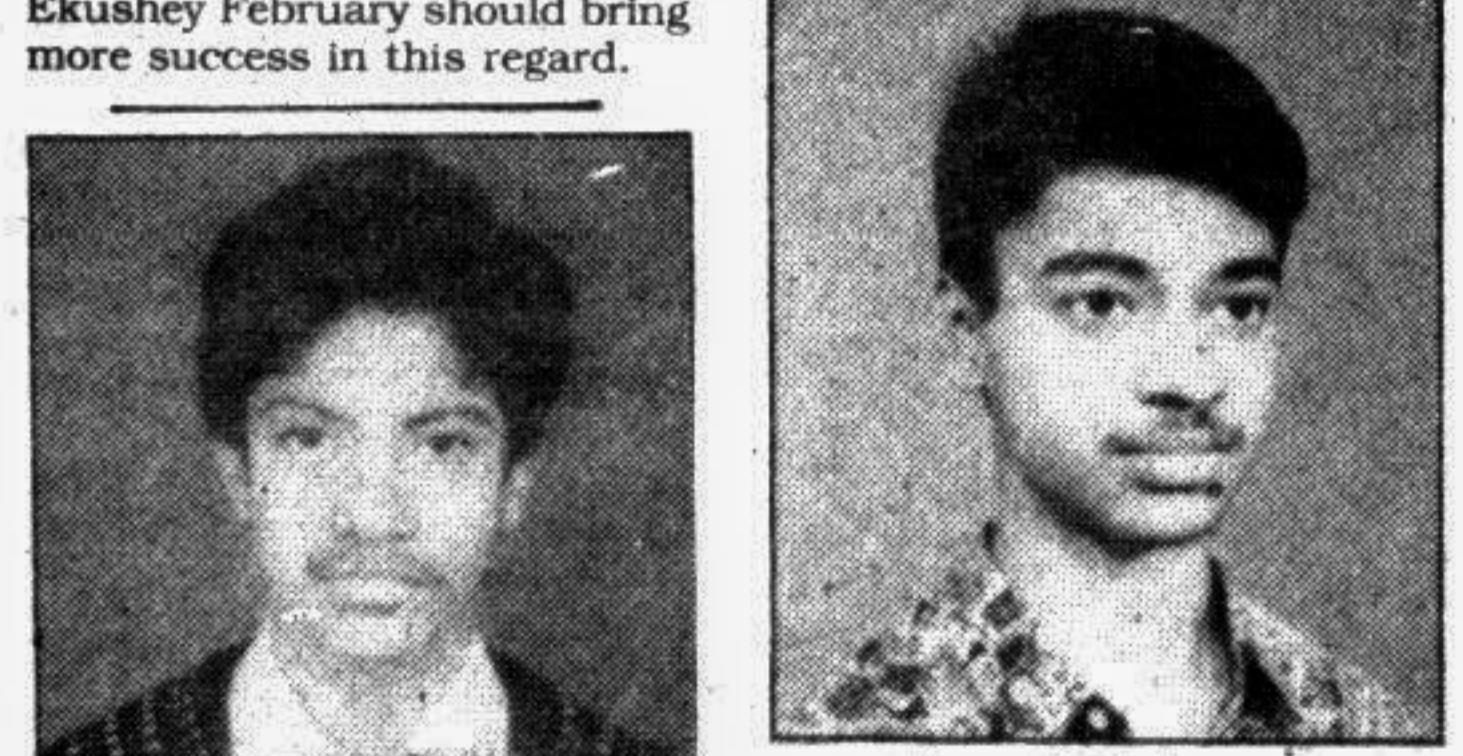
To me Ekushey is the source of my inspiration and nationalism. The country I live in, the language I speak, the language I sing in and above all the language through which I receive my education — everything is made possible through the sacrifices made on Ekushey February. So Ekushey influences my realization and sense of freedom. I am proud that I am a successor of a nation that fought to save its language. Ekushey is not an incident or a story to me. It is the inspiration that leads me to fight against all falsehood and injustice. Like so many students of various schools, I feel the influence of Ekushey in every sphere of my life. Infact 'Ekushey' is a great treasure in my heart and mind. My feeling about 'Ekushey' is that it defines the difference between being a Bangalee and not being a Bangalee. So I owe my very existence to these martyrs who sacrificed their dear lives on Ekushey February. I pay my greatest respect to them on this auspicious day.

Yet detect some disturbing elements while observing this sacred day every year. We first of all show our love for our mother tongue only on that particular. This is the only month, when we make a promise to establish our mother language in every sphere of our life. But we remain silent the rest of the year. We even remember this day according to the English Calendar. Many of us do not know the Bengali date of this event. Various cultural programmes including bookfair are arranged in this month. But there are not enough books on this day, perhaps these books cannot capture the market.

But fact remains that revolutionary spirit which led the insurrection, had no evasion, no doubt. We must, therefore, go ahead and build our nation remembering the victorious day of February 21st.

Ever since I was a boy of five, I saw my father put on a white pajama and panjabe

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Tanvir Zubayer
Govt. Laboratory High
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