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succeeded and Bangla became the prevailing language in East Pakistan.

Today, we look back and know 21 February to be just a memorable day. But what is 21 February really? What does it symbolize to us, Bangladeshis? I believe this day is the pillar of our whole society. We often take for granted the liberty to use, speak and learn in our own language. Ekushey February is an occasion to feel exalted over our rich Bangla 'bhasha'.

On this day every year, thousands gather to celebrate, yet if we think deeply for a few moments we will see that this is also a day of solemnity to honor the ones who have died for the sake of their country. When I reflect on these memories gratitude should fill my mind and pride fills my hearts.



Shahryar Rahman
Class: X
Scholastica

I lay dazed on the ground. I could still hear the gunshots at a distance. A banner lay beside me. It was covered in fresh red blood, which made the Bengali words printed on it almost unreadable. Just a few minutes back we were shouting slogans at the top of our voices. Suddenly, a few trucks loaded with policemen appeared in front of our procession. They threw tear gas at us, after which everything became hazy and confusing. However that did not stop us from shouting our slogans. 'We want our mother tongue! We want Bangla as the state language!' Then came the chaos and everything became red and painful.

Looking at the 'Shaheed Minar' painful memories of the 'Language Movement' of 21st February, 1952 come crowding into the mind. So much blood was shed on that day, but we did achieve our goal. We won back our mother tongue, Bangla.

Before constructing any building, a foundation is essential. The Language Movement of 21st February by the youth of this country, was the foundation laid down to build the freedom of the Bangalee people. In my opinion during the time of the Language Movement the people of Bangladesh felt only the desire to express their freedom by demanding their mother tongue. When they were deprived of this demand, the same fire ignited in all their hearts, which made them unite and gain back what they had lost, though at a terrible cost. As a result, in order to understand the true spirit of the Language Movement the people of this country need not necessarily have to go barefoot to the Shaheed Minar. The only thing they should achieve is an inner feeling, which would show them the true joy of freedom. They would be able to feel the pride of being a citizen of this country, which is a consequence of the supreme sacrifice of Ekushey's martyrs.



Faruq Hasan
Class IX
South Breeze School

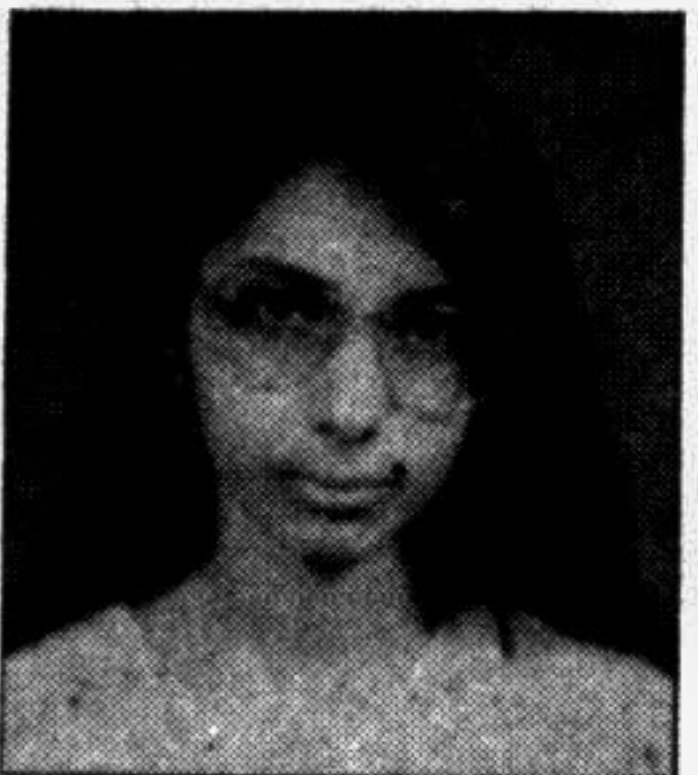
The coming of 21st February means a lot for the people of Bangladesh. The significance of the date can be discovered in any history book about Bangladesh. Already, book fairs, cultural activities and various other programmes are being held to highlight the occasion. But when I sit back for a moment and think a little about Ekushey, the one question that disturbs me is: Are book fairs, dramas and songs the only thing people should look forward to in commemorating this important event?

Let me make my statement a little clearer. The book fair for example at the Bangla Academy has been turned into a profit making event. For the sake of money, vendors have installed their food stalls and people are crowding them in hordes while visiting the fair. Hawkers even have the temerity to turn on the latest foreign pop songs in full vol-

ume to attract customers. Clearly, the spirit of 'Ekushey' is not the main concern of the people here.

If we travel back to 21st February 1952, we will find that our brothers and sisters did not spill their blood so that the future generation could attend book fairs held on the occasion to commemorate their deeds and go away with a full stomach and a few books, not once thinking about the real significance of the date. Our brothers sacrificed their lives for a common reason; they died for their country and their language. Today, with foreign customs and ways invading our culture, it seems that their sacrifice was in vain.

What 'Ekushey' really means to me is not about placing flower wreaths in the Shaheed Minar or singing a few songs in recognition of the noble martyrs. 'Ekushey' should make us aware of our proud history and the sacrifice of our brothers should be recognized. It should be an occasion where the bonds between our language and our country are strengthened and the love between fellow countrymen are deepened.



Nabeela Alam
class X
South Breeze School

To me 'Ekushey' is just a day, special in some ways. I know why it is special but I guess it's true significance and the gravity escapes me for I cannot feel as sad about it as most people seem to do. I take Bangla for granted - no one objects to its being spoken now. It is a bit difficult to comprehend what really took place. Why and how. What is obvious though, is the courage and patriotism of the Bangalees. They rebelled against oppression fought and finally achieved what they wanted. The price, unfortunately, was dear, as precious lives were lost.

This fight has been justifiably glorified and those who gave up their lives martyred. Bangladesh is proud of its triumph and shows immense respect to the martyrs. It always looks back or past glory and somehow makes it look sad. I am not saying that this is wrong but we should not contenting dwell in the past. Our 'blood brothers' have paved the path for the future and we should follow that path.

Being born after the Language Movement and after the independence war, I don't feel as strongly about 'Ekushey' as most people do. But I am thankful to be living in a free country. I am aware of its history, its struggle to become independent and am grateful to those who provided me with a free country where I can speak in any language I want to without fear.



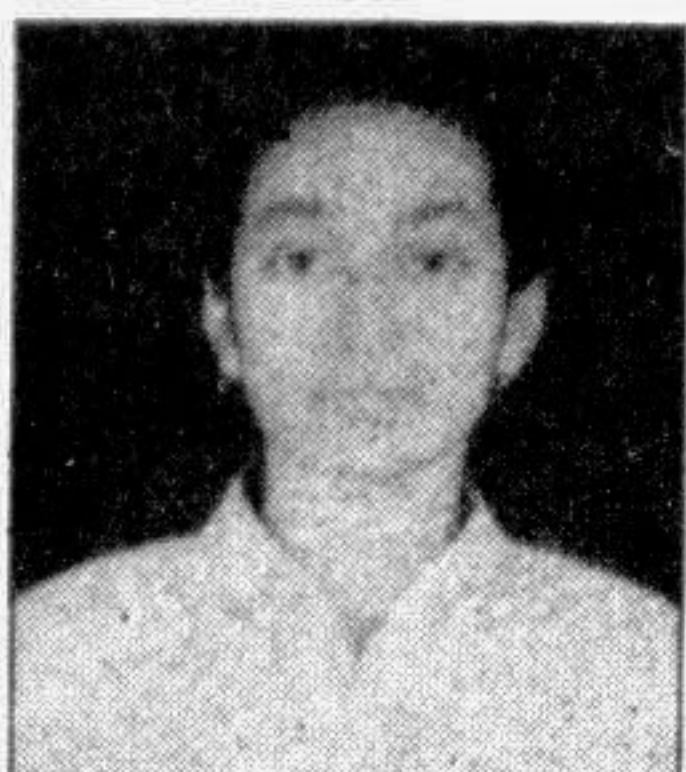
Imrana Iqbal
Class X
South Breeze School

I look at the word 'Ekushey' and a vision of girls and boys all dressed up nicely and performing in functions and plays rises before my eyes. And the first thing that comes to my mind is, 'is our school having a function? If so, then is our class doing anything and what are we going to wear?' Then I think about all the fairs that will take place and I think of new ideas about how to coax my mother to take me to one them.

Don't misunderstand me, it's not as if I don't feel anything for 'Ekushey'. I do feel for it - I feel a deep sense of pride. But the sense of sadness sanctified by the spirit of sacrifice, which surrounds it is fading. It will eventually fade a way completely. Not because I will forget, but because it is no use harbouring a sorrow. But the feeling of pride I feel is a great one. A great pride that the people of my country had such an immense feeling for their language, that they shed blood to be able to speak in it. The feeling is wonderful. And only another person who feels for our language the same way I do can know how wonderful this feeling is.

I feel sorry for those people who say, 'I was in another

country for a long time so I cannot speak in Bengali,' because they can never feel for this language the way I do. They can never share this wonderful feeling of pride.



Shafina Shehnaz
South Breeze School

The words 'Ekushey February' mean many things to many people. To some they conjure up pictures of glorified martyrdom, to some the faces of 1st loved ones. But 'Ekushey' means to me a storm of essays, poems and pictures at school, a flurry of newspaper articles and TV programmes. 'Ekushey' will never mean to me what it does to my parents and grandparents, for all I know of it, is gathered from what I have read and heard and it is hard for me to picture the reality of what must have been.

Ekushey to me means school holidays, barefoot girls in red and white saris carrying flowers. It means a period of painful questioning and guilt: Am I doing enough for my mother tongue? Or am I, as I see many others do, seeing Ekushey as an occasion to make flowery speeches about sacrifice and glory and holding book fairs.

Ekushey means to me the sound of 'Amar Bhaer Rokte Rangano...' being sung everywhere I go again through a torment of guilt and doubt: Am I doing my hardest to become knowledgeable about my mother tongue's history, its triumphs, its greatest works, its intricacies? Am I worthy of being a Bangali?

Through this storm of conflicting emotions two stand out, thankfulness that Bangali really is my mother tongue and a burning resolution to do something to know more about my language - they persist till next time.



Rafa Absar
Class X
South Breeze School

Before 'Ekushey' did not mean much to me. It was just a day when all those songs, would be sung on TV, particularly 'Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano...' and people would go to the Shaheed Minar and put flowers on it. In the past I had seen the Shaheed Minar but never on the 21st of February. The first time I went there on the 21st, it was on a bright, sunny morning. We stood outside and watched the big crowd slowly moving forward. Hundreds of people dressed in different colours were proceeding towards the white towers. At the foot of them lay beautiful garlands and bouquets. People went on adding more and more flowers. Some people were signing the well-known song and some had tears in their eyes. That day made a great impression on me - I realized that the 21st really meant something to the millions of people in this country.

I slowly started understanding the importance of this day. I understood that if it hadn't been for this day, we wouldn't be able to speak our language freely as we do today. Maybe we wouldn't even have learnt to respect it. The first words in our mouths may not have been 'ma' or 'baba'. Everything today could have been very different. It makes me wonder how something so immense hadn't meant anything to me before.

Anupam Kallal Das Udayan School

Ekushey is a milestone in our history. Ekushey imbues us with the spirit of an indomitable courage. The Language Movement of 1952 marks the resurgence of the Bangalees on that day the letters 'ক', 'খ', 'গ' were printed in blood on the streets of Dhaka. Ekushey since remained the guiding star for us to follow the course of history.

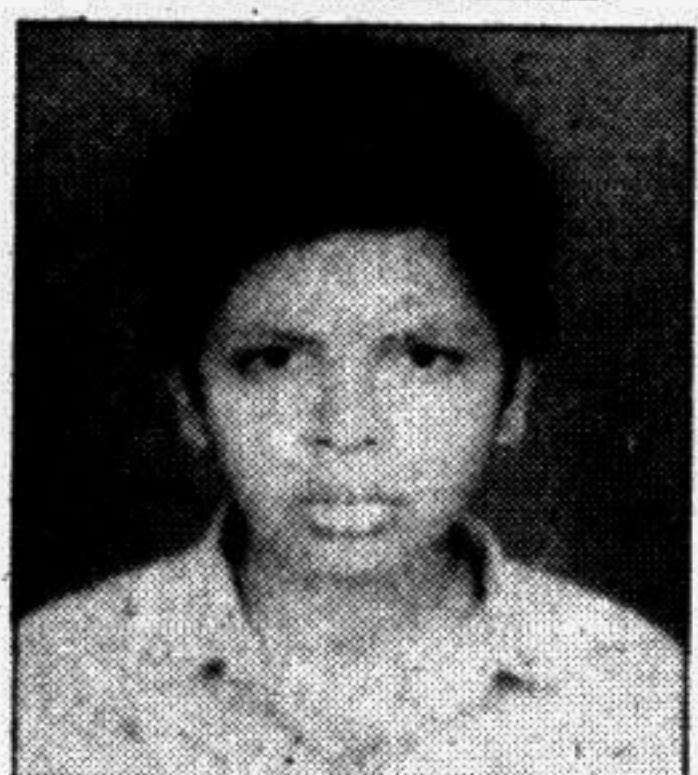
Ekushey is not just the typical paying of homage to the language martyrs, nor is it just a ritualistic holding of various functions. Ekushey means a whole-hearted commitment to

Bangla.

To make the nation aware of the spirit of liberation, the significance of this day is incomparable. Ekushey has facilitated the establishment of the people's rights. In the 1000 years of its history, Bangla perhaps never faced a more daunting challenge to its existence than it did in 1947. Rebellion is in the blood of Bangalees. It is in their life-force. The Bangalees have the distinct record of giving blood for their mother tongue. The lesson that Ekushey teaches is to liberate the spirit from all kinds of bondage and restriction.

Against overwhelming odds Bangla was made the state language of the then Pakistan, thanks to the righteous stand and selfless sacrifice of the martyrs.

(Translated from Bangla)



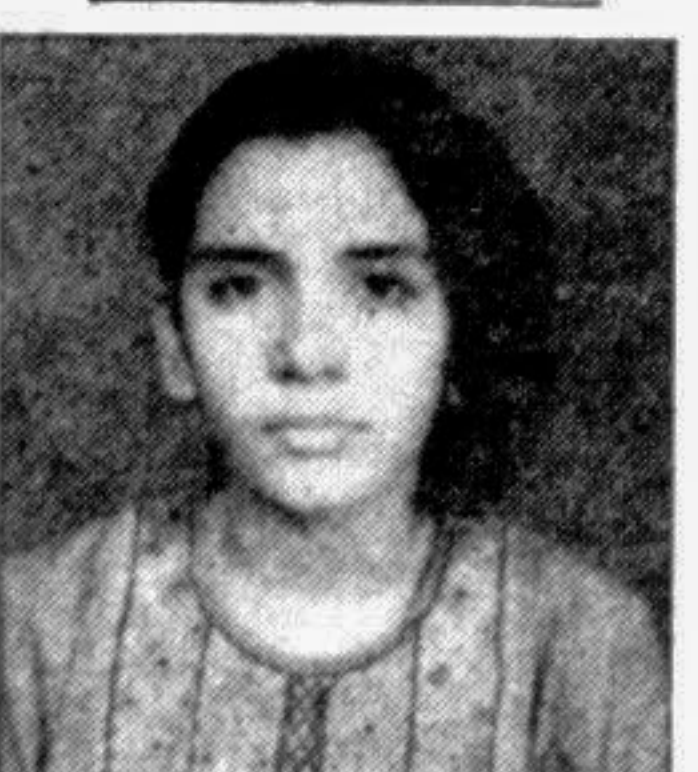
Adnan R Amin
Class IX
Udayan School

The 21st of February revives in our minds a memory of a tragic event and a great loss. The valiant youths who risked and laid down their lives for their language, are even today remembered with great respect and gratitude.

We realize that what was derived from 21st February was that it raised in us, the Bangalees, the spirit of nationalism and unity. We all became aware of our rights and realized we were one nation. This awareness eventually led to the public uprising in 1969. The event also inspired the people of East Pakistan, who were then being relentlessly exploited, to protest, to fight for their rights. Most of all, within a few days of the tragic incident the central government declared Bangla as a state language.

We all grieve and condole the untimely and unfortunate deaths; yet we are proud of the brave young men who's sacrifice has made it possible for us today to speak freely in our mother tongue. They shall never be forgotten by the people of the country. Every year to make the day, book fairs are held at the Bangla academy along with seminars and discussion meetings. Even today - thousands of people gather before the 'Shaheed Minar', the monument, which was built in the memory of the martyrs, to pay their respect and express their gratitude.

(Translated from Bangla)



Noushaba Nushanah
Class X
Agranali Balika Vidyalaya

To a Bangalee, February 21st is not merely a historical day, nor is it just a memorable event. February 21st is a spirit. It is the day that the rebirth of the Bangalee took place.

Initially, the Bengali Muslims aligned themselves with the Pakistani movement because at that time it was religion that had brought them together. But the Bangalees could not tolerate an attack on their mother tongue. When the marauders came to take their mother tongue, the Bangalees gave their lives to stop them. They gave their language its rightful status. Thus February 21st is the day of awakening and of breaking delusions. For me, Ekushey February has taught me to know myself.

No conscious person can live without speech. Without his mother tongue. The supreme sacrifice made on February 21st thus has fought me to be revolutionary. Salam, Barkat, Rafiq have told us how to fight for our self respect. They are this country's most prized sons. Our Liberation War has been won with the blood of thousands of shaheeds. They in turn took their lessons from the Language Movement Shaheeds. When it was a question of freedom, Bangalees did not hesitate to take up arms because ingrained in their tradition was February 21st as the most glorious day of all.

Throughout the millennium among those who have been the builders of the quintessence of Bangaleness, the shaheeds of the Language

Movement, have earned for themselves, the most coveted place.

'Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano Ekushey February, Ami Ki Bhulitai Pari'

Thus, everytime I hear this song it is as if I gain a new life, a new soul. The despair in the tune gives me new hope, the sadness makes me forget my sadness. I am a citizen of the poorest nation in the world but no disrespect or poverty can touch me. To me, February 21st is a golden day. A day of holding up one's head in pride and glory. I do not live with humiliation, I live with respect and joy. February 21st is that respect, that joy. To me Ekushey February means to live with dignity. When it is dignity that is at stake, it is not compromise, but revolution that is needed.

(Translated from Bangla)

Naela Ahsan Khan Class IX

Agranali Balika Vidyalaya

The month of February every year brings us the memory of the Martyrs of the great Language Movement which culminated in 21st February, 1952 (8th Falgun). The feeling is of profound sorrow and joy. I feel morbid and somber, because of the shaheeds of not only the Language Movement but also for all those who laid down their lives for independence, for democracy, for religious harmony, etc. At the same time I feel proud when I remember that ours is the only nation in the world who fought and gave lives for its mother tongue. The memory of February, regenerates every Bangali with strong resolution to fight back and resist anything that opposes its freedom, peace and harmony of life. The month of February every year comes with the promise of new life full of prosperity mingled with the spirit of Bengali nationalism.

Finally, I think we have to try to give this Bengali language a lot more respect and value.

Shanta Trivedi Class IX

Agranali Balika Vidyalaya

February 21st is an illustrious day in the history of Bangladesh. With it, is intertwined the Bangalee's pride and sad tale. To save the dignity of a mother tongue, this day was soaked with blood. With that blood was written the immortal words 'Rashtro Bhasha Bangla Chai' (We want Bangla as the state language).

No government could squash the spirit inspired by the commitment to uphold this most basic right. The reactionary government was therefore forced to concede to the demand of making Bangla the state language. Thus was established the nation's revolutionary spirit and courage.

Ekushey February is the Bangalee's very life source. It is no longer connected to only one particular movement, its identity is recognized as the basis for the nation's commitment and revolutionary spirit. Whenever the Pakistani government tried, for its own interest, to nullify Bangla language and culture, it was the undeniable Bangla nationalism of Ekushey that made them retreat. This spirit's explosive expression was manifested from 1969's mass upsurge till the Liberation War of '71. The blood-stained path that Ekushey had revealed was the same path through which the Bangalees reached their much desired independence.



Shahana Parvin
Class X
Agranali Balika Vidyalaya

Is there any nation in this world where the people sacrificed their lives for the dignity of their mother language? No, there is none except the people of our beloved Bangladesh. I am the son of that ever fighting, non compromising, rebellious nation. I am not only a citizen of a poor third world country, but a son of that country whose children will always be prepared to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the mother land & mother tongue, and I am proud of it. The brave sons of this soil gave their lives for their language - something that no other race has done. The very thought of this makes me feel proud. It is a feeling that cannot be expressed in words. 'Ekushey February' whenever I come across these two words I can see those fiery days of 1952 before my eyes. They flash in front of me like a movie. This small country of ours was ruled

& oppressed by the British for 200 years, and then it became a part of Pakistan going by the name of 'East Pakistan'. But it seemed that freedom had just slipped through our fingers. The other part of Pakistan which was known as 'West Pakistan' snatched that freedom.

They tried to force the people of 'East Pakistan' to speak Urdu which was not their native language. They had violated the most basic of human rights and tried to destroy the culture of Bengal.

But the ever fighting people of Bengal voiced against this injustice. They started mass uprising. The soil of Bengal trembled that day by the voice of the people. The students were the main force for the Language Movement that day. Denying section 144 they brought out processions marching towards the Parishad Bhaban. 'Rashtro Bhasha Bangla Chai' was the chant heard that day. As soon as the procession came in front of the medical college the police opened fire towards the procession killing Rafiq-Salam-Barkat-Jabbar and many others. The black road of Dhaka turned red with blood that day. But the mass uprising did not stop. The uncompromising attitude of the people was the central force of our Language Movement.

Even after 22 years of our Liberation War we have not been able to introduce Bangla the way we should in the daily life of our people. Then has this sacrifice been worthless? I remember the lines of a poem: On which martyrs should I write? Fifty two - sixty two - sixty nine - seventy one. Millions of Azads and Mufurs have given their blood To write the name of Bangladesh.

(Translated from Bangla)

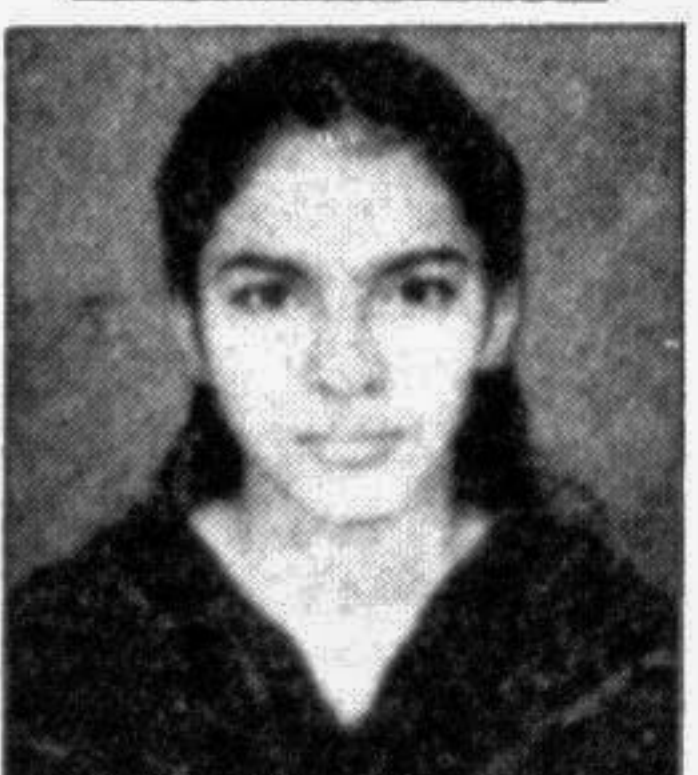
Marzia Haider Class X

Agranali Balika Vidyalaya

Days come and go, months come and go just as years do - all fade out for eternity. But Ekushey February is a day that is important to us for its own glory. It is a day in which Bangali pride and sorrowful tale are so intimately connected.

The 1947 British division of the country did not bring with it to the Bangalees, the much cherished liberation. Instead it brought with it the unholy conspiracy of making 'Urdu' instead of Bangla, the state language. It was against this unforgivable arrogance that the people began to protest and rebel, eventually reaching its full glory on February 21st. On that day it was Salam, Rafiq and Barkat and others who had stepped into the street defying the famous 144 Section of the Bangladesh Penal Criminal Code. To establish the mother tongue as the state language some valiant sons of the soil had to embrace martyrdom.

In the history of the world there is not a single instance of a nation that has split its blood for the sake of their mother tongue. Thus 1952's February 21st or 8th of Falgun is a date that signifies a blood-stained revolution. An upsurge whose consequence was Bangladesh. It is something that gave the Bangladesh the opportunity to discover his own importance. Moreover, with the establishment of Bangalee nationalism was the inspiration for later movements. It is this spirit that brought the Bangla cultural and political movement together into the arena of the fight for freedom.

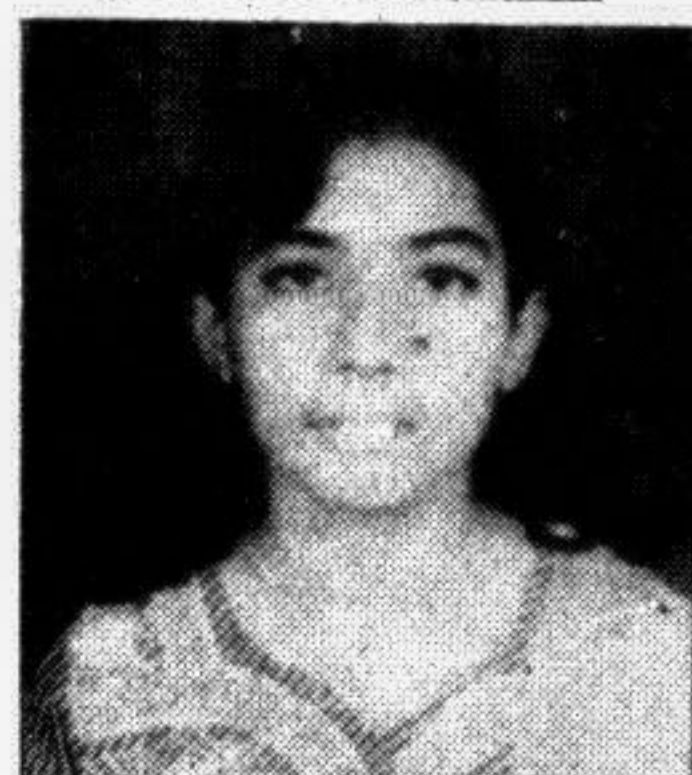


Aklima Haq
Class IX
Azimpur Girls' High School

February 1952. The autocratic ruler of Pakistan totally ignored the sentiment and opinion of the people of the then East Pakistan and declared Urdu as the only state language. The Bangalees were offended, they vigorously protested the decision in Dhaka and all over the country by arranging rallies, protest meetings and shouting slogans. We want Bangla as the state language, nobody can take away our mother tongue - reverberated all over the country. The Pakistani regime tried its best to quell the protest, but without success. The students took to the street, the brute juntas came down heavily on them on Ekushey February. Our brave sons shed their blood but succeeded to save our mother tongue. Ekushey February is a red-letter day in our history, no Bangalee can forget the day. Every year we observe Ekushey with due respect and

solemnity. People silently march towards the Azimpur graveyard, where the Ekushey martyrs had been laid to eternal rest, to pay respect. They walk bare footed and sing 'Amar Bhaer Rokte Rangano Ekushey February, Ami Ki Bhulitai Pari'. They have the promise in their heart - 'The blood of our brothers will not go in vain.'

(Translated from Bangla)



Farhana Samsad Sini
Class - X
Azimpur Girls' High School

On the blood-soaked day of Umar Ekushey, I did not arrive on this earth. But after birth the language I have started speaking relates me back to a momentous event that changed the course of the Bangalees' history. It was the language martyrs who have carved for themselves and the mother tongue they fought for a permanent niche in history.

No pen can write what I feel about Ekushey. Tears fill my eyes whenever I remember the day. On the February 21, 1952, all the blossoms in the garden fell from their boughs and all the birds stopped singing.

Those who laid down their lives on that day have become immortal in our memory. There is a sacrifice unrivalled by any. The Shaheed Minar stands as an immortal memorial to their sacrifice. I solemnly pay homage to Salam, Rafiq, Shafig and Barkat along with other martyrs.

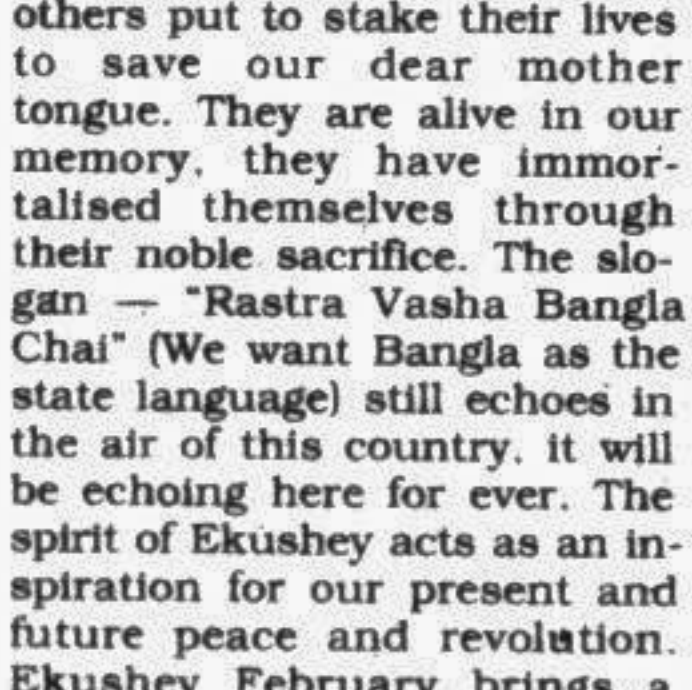
(Translated from Bangla)

Elora Barua (Shipra) Class - X

Azimpur Girls' High School

Ekushey means a noble spirit. Ekushey February is a great day, the day when the Bangalees rose against the conspiracy to undermine their mother tongue. Our brave sons like Salam, Barkat and many others put to stake their lives to save our dear mother tongue. They are alive in our memory, they have immortalised themselves through their noble sacrifice. The slogan - 'Rashtro Bhasha Bangla Chai' (We want Bangla as the state language) still echoes in the air of this country. It will be echoing here for ever. The spirit of Ekushey acts as an inspiration for our present and future peace and revolution. Ekushey February brings a sense of somberness and solemnity. Every year we observe the day by laying wreaths on the altar of the 'Shaheed Minar', paying tributes to our martyrs. We sing the song 'Ammar Bhaer Rakte Rangano Ekushey February, Ami Ki Bhulitai Pari'. No, we can never forget them.

(Translated from Bangla)



Momena Akhter Sumi
Class IX
Azimpur Girls' High School

Ekushey is not just a day of remembrance but one that was written in blood of the youths of this soil. The history of the language movement dates back to 1948 when governor general of Pakistan Jinnah on his visit to Dhaka declared at Ramna Race Course, 'Urdu and only Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan'.

This announcement was greeted with instant protests. But the Bangalees prepared themselves for a final showdown that culminated in the February rebellion of 1952. On Falgun 8, 1358, the rebellious students decided to break the section 144 of the Penal Act. In the ensuing police firing Salam, Rafiq, Shafig, Barkat and Jabbar embraced martyrdom.

Their sacrifice has earned for Bangla the status of one of the state languages. The Shaheed Minar stands before the Dhaka Medical College Hospital to the hallowed memory. It symbolises the Bangalee's protests and indomitable courage against all odds. It is a beacon that guides us through all our trials and tribulations.

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(Translated from Bangla)

Sonia Yusuf Class X

Azimpur Girls' High School

Every year Ekushey returns with a flood of love and new hope. Ekushey awakens the latent talents and hidden spirit in us. It fills our hearts with deep respect. Thanks to 21st February, today we can move about as free citizens and express our innermost feelings in our mother tongue. Ekushey is a sublime, beautiful dream that makes one want to remember it again and again. Ekushey is our pride and our sorrow. It brings with it a new stimulus, a new energy to live reminding us of a priceless time in our history. Ekushey is our eternal pride, our crowning glory.

Although Ekushey reminds us of a tragic loss, it also gives a deep sense of satisfaction. All kinds of duplicity and falsehood are washed away by its touch. Just as it has given the ultimate gift, Ekushey has also taken away. For is it not Ekushey that has taken the precious lives of our dear brothers, Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Shaheed. With their deaths they have become immortal. On one day of the year everyone shows their deep respect for them. They will remain alive forever, in our sense of dignity, love, freedom, among all the people of Bangladesh, in their dreams and their senses. Nobody can erase their memory from our hearts.

(Translated from Bangla)



Md Samiullah
Class X
Armanitola Govt High School

Ekushey is the mirror reflection of everything that this country stands for. Our national identity stems from this event. Everything that we enjoy today was bestowed upon us on that day.

Ekushey is almost synonymous with our national identity. The existence of this nation without Ekushey is unthinkable. With a lot of hope the Bangalee Muslims joined hands to build their 'dreamland' with Pakistan. But religion being the only affinity, with no other bond whatsoever, the Pakistani rulers didn't take any time to be skeptic and exploit our people. Language proved to be, among many other things, the actual bone of contention between the two, Pakistan being formed in 1947, only a year later, Jinnah announced that 'Only Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan'. The whole of East Pakistan, especially the students, burst into a rage on hearing this. After Jinnah's death, Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali also followed his predecessor's path and declared Urdu to be the state language of the country. But the population of East Pakistan was much more than that of the West and their medium of communication was Bangla. So, they simply could not accept this. The people of this country voiced their demands through the 'State Language Movement'.

On February 21, 1952, when the procession of the enraged Bangalees became unstoppable the Pakistani police used bullets to stop them. Rafiq, Shafig, Barkat, Salam, Jabbar and others laid down their lives in the streets of Dhaka. But the police action could not stop the crowd and their movement for 'Rashtrobhasha'.

Instead, their death gave more life and strength to the popular movement. As a result, in 1956, in the Constitution of Pakistan, Bangla was placed side by side with Urdu as the state language.

Because Ekushey was never a cultural revolution alone, its spirit worked as a catalyst force in all other democratic movements to follow after the language movement. It is actually Ekushey that prompted the mass upsurge in 1969 and finally the War of Liberation in 1971. So, the Central Shaheed Minar is the birth place of the spirits of Bangladeshi nationalism, the designer of which was the great sculptor Hamidur Rahman.

To commemorate this day, Ekushey is officially observed throughout the country as Shaheed Day. But just commemorating this day does not end our responsibility. We owe a great deal to this day. It was for this day that we can feel proud to be a nation, have a national identity and can tell the rest of the world with our heads held high, that we are the people of a free country.

(Translated from Bangla)

(Continued on page 8)