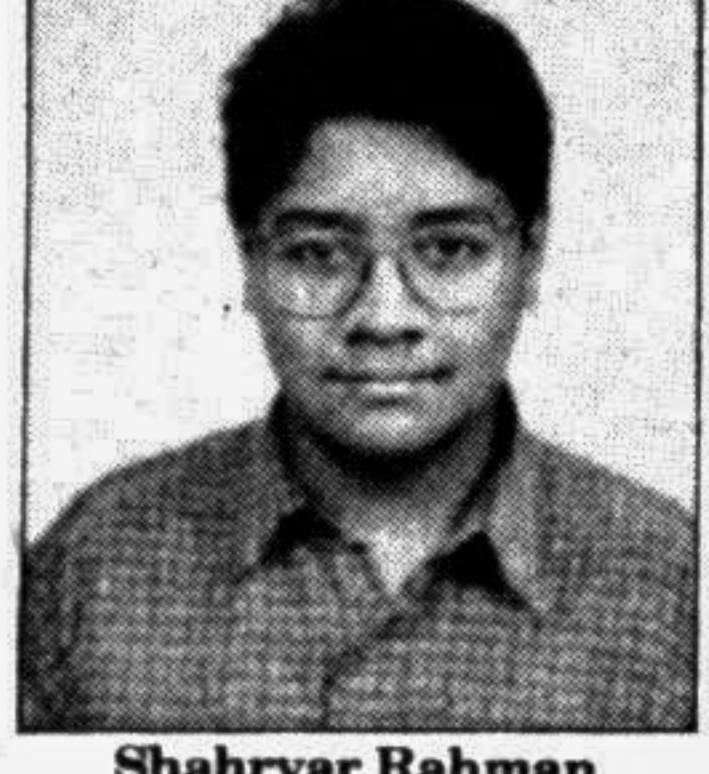


Continued from page 6
succeeded and Bangla is not the prevailing language in East Pakistan.

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, Bengalees? 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 heart.

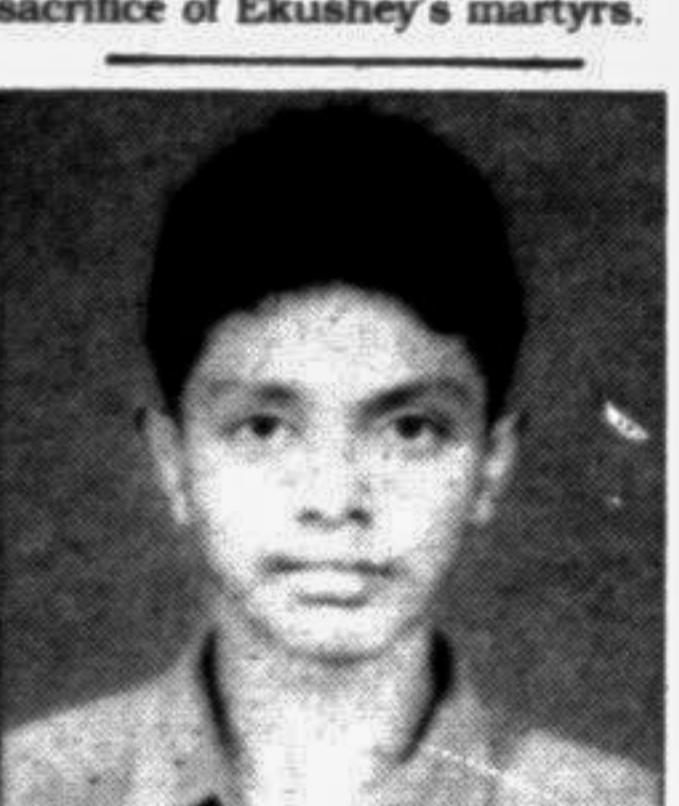


Shahryar Rahman
Class: X
Scholastica

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 tear gas 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.

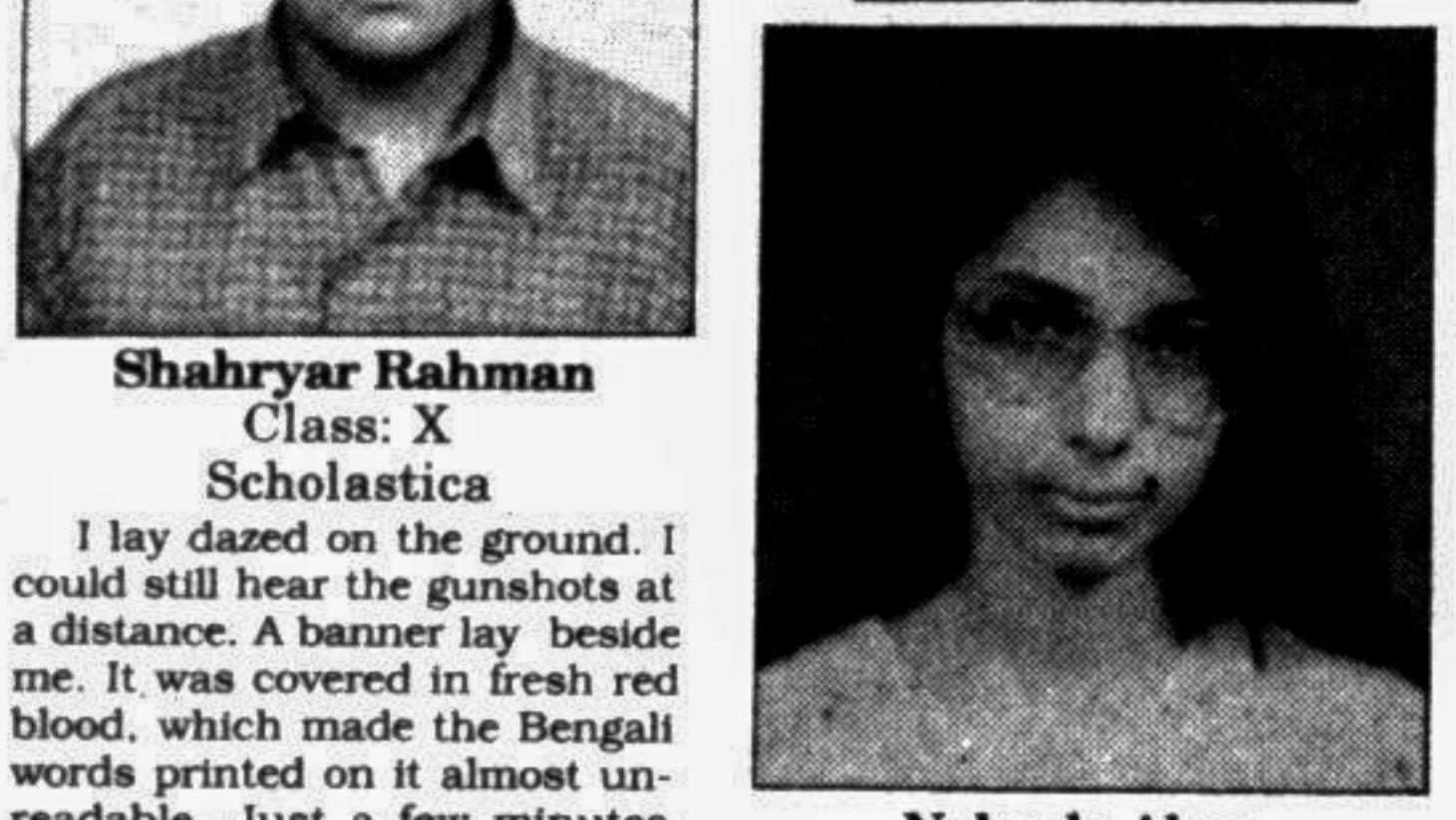
Before constructing any building, a foundation is essential. The Language Movement of 21st February, by the youth of this country, was the foundation laid down to build the freedom of the Bangalee people. In my opinion during the time of the Language Movement the people of Bangladesh felt only the desire 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.



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.

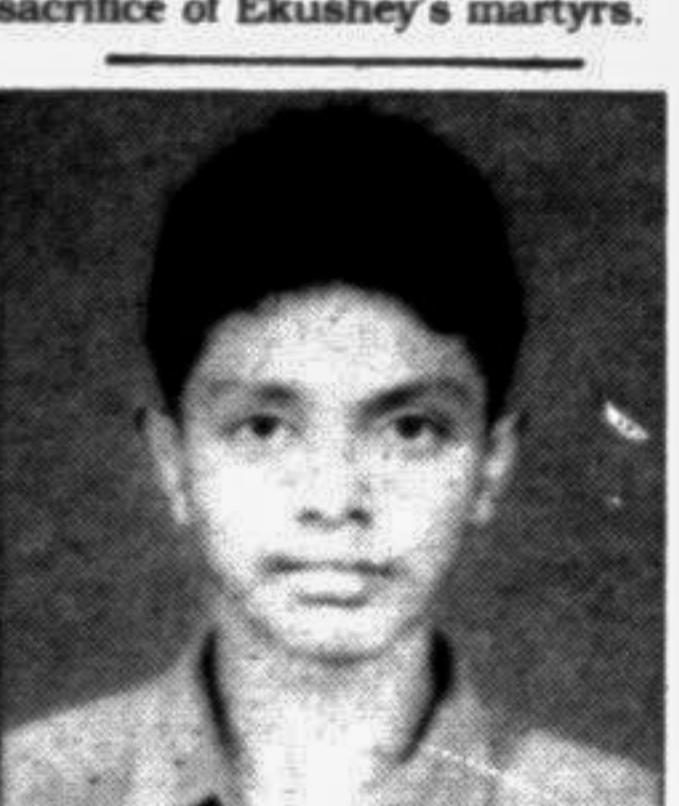


Nabeela Alam
class X
South Breeze School

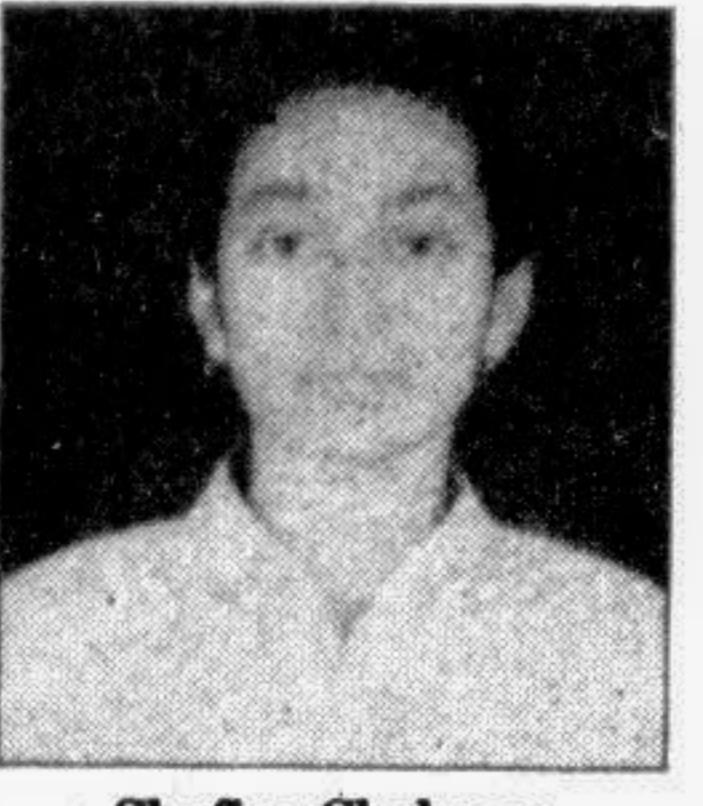
To me 'Ekushey' is just a day, special in some ways. I know why it is special but I guess it's true significance and the gravity escapes me for I cannot feel as sad about it as most people seem to do. I take Bangla for granted - no one objects to its being spoken now. It is a bit difficult to comprehend 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, unfortunate, 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 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 consent 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.



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 lost 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 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 sarees carrying flowers. It means a period of painful questioning and guilt: Am I doing enough for my mother tongue? Do I truly appreciate Bengali? 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 Bengali?

Through this storm of conflicting emotions two stand out, thankfulness that Bengali 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 bhaer 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 singing 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 Kallai 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 'ঁ', 'ঁ', 'ঁ', 'ঁ' were imprinted 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)



Ekushey

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

'Amar Bhaer Rokte Rangano Ekushey February Ami Ki Bhulitay Par'

Thus, every time 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 it is at stake, it is not compromise, but revolution that is needed.

(Translated from Bangla)

Naela Ahsan Khan

Class IX

Agrani 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

Agrani 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 'Rashtriya 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.

Noushaba Nushanah

Class X

Agrani Balika Vidyalaya

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.

Anupam Kallai Das
Udayan School

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

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. 'Rastra 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 Mutuhs have given their blood

To write the name of Bangladesh.

(Translated from Bangla)

Marzia Haider

Class X

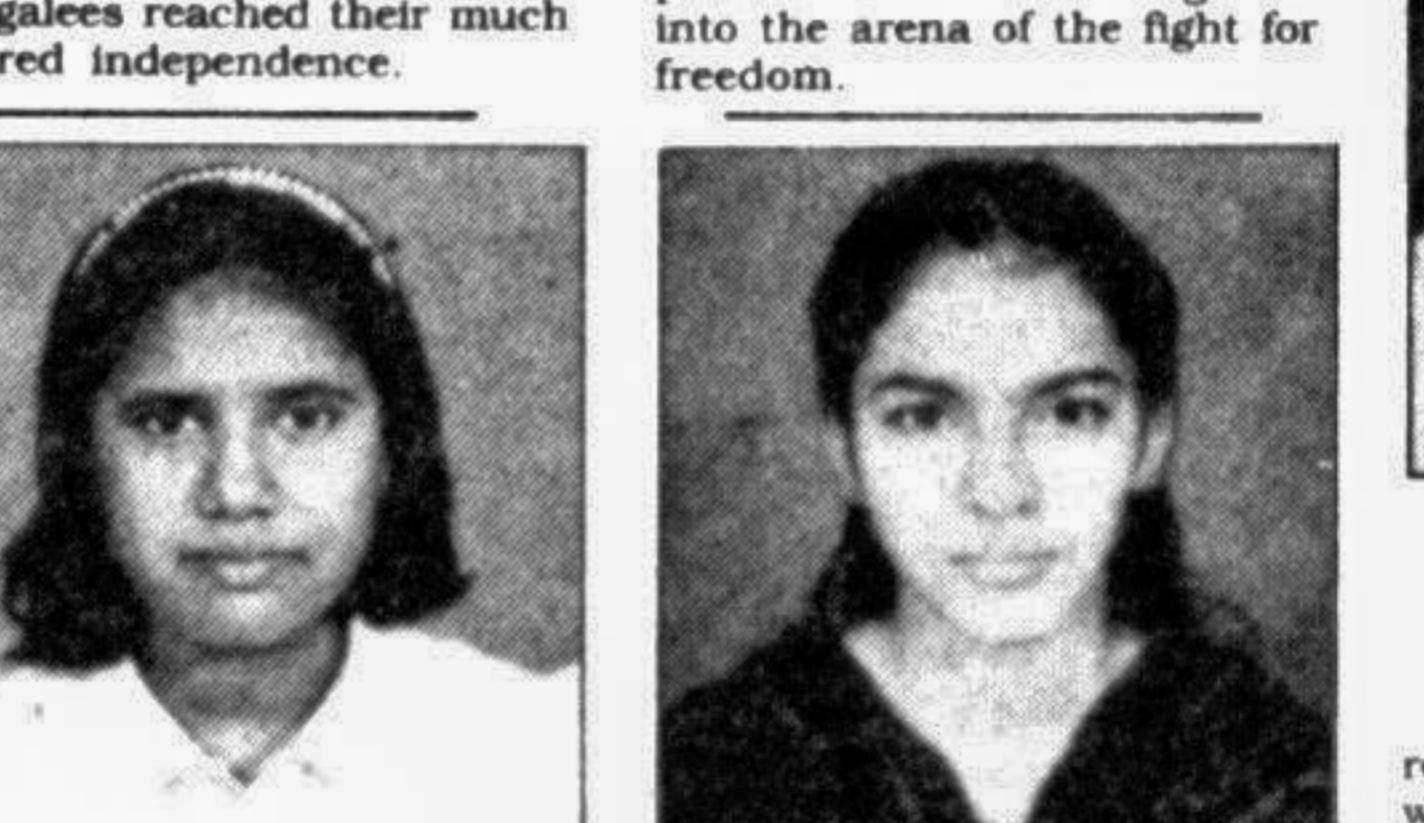
Agrani Balika Vidyalaya

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 Bengali 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.

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 immortalized themselves through their noble sacrifice. The slogan - 'Rastra Vasha 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 Bhulitay Par'. No, we can never forget them.

(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 skeptical 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, Shafiq, Barqat, Salam, Barkat and others laid down their lives in the streets of Dhaka. But the police action could not stop the crowd and their movement for Rastrabhastra.

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 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 are 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

Sonia Yusuf

Class X

Azimpur Girls' High School