take a stand against not having Bangla as our state language. Living in Islamabad, the capital of the very country that was the villain during the Language Movement, and mourning the deaths of our brothers who sacrificed their lives so that we can enjoy the fruits of freedom, made me feel very angry deep down inside .... angry, because I was very well-versed as to how Pakistanis view us and our history to this day. The general public viewed us as "traitors" and "secessionists". In their attitudes, they refused to admit they did anything wrong.

As I grew up, I took an active interest in learning about the details of the history of Bangladesh during the turbulent period between 1947 and 1971. When we lived in Germany, (my father's next diplomatic posting after Pakistan) my father bought the Encyclopaedia Britannica. I used to read that profusely over and over again and by the age of 11, I could narrate the entire history of Bangladesh from the period between 1757 till the present day. However, Encyclopaedia Britannica being as it is, did not give a very thorough picture of our most vital historical events such as The Language Movement and the War of Liberation. In fact, in some areas it gave a very distorted picture of our history which my father pointed out to me when I read it out to him.

When we returned to Bangladesh in October 1989 after living three years in Germany, things went uphill for me as far as my knowledge of the true history of Bangladesh was concerned. I read many reputable books and interacted with many of my family members who have witnessed events like Ekushey February first hand. This helped me become a much more informed Bangladeshi. Then early morning on the 21st of February 1990, for the first time in my life I wore a plain white panjabi and walked all the way from our house in Kayettuly to the Language Movement Martyrs Monument known as The Shaheed Minar carrying a bouquet of flowers in order to pay my respects to the brothers who were killed on that historical day in 1952. Being a Bangladeshi who was raised abroad most of my life, this was a very new experience for me. As I walked on that chilly morning, I saw hundreds of other people dressed just like me heading towards the same direction as I was.

When I finally reached there, I saw a sea of people lined up to lay down floral wreaths and flowers and standing there in silence for a few minutes. Behind the monument, there was a stage of artists singing, "Amar bhaiyer roktey rangano ...." over and over again in chorus. It truly was a memorable experience... an experience that stays with you forever!

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Recently, I have been a voracious reader of Wikipedia and Banglapedia. Wikipedia, as many of you know, is a free online encyclopedia that gives you knowledge about anything and everything. Banglapedia is also a free online encyclopedia, but it focuses on everything about Bengal, Bangladesh, and West Bengal only. These two online encyclopedias are invaluable sources when it comes to gaining an accurate and a very thorough knowledge of The Language Movement. I strongly recommend every Bangladeshi (both expat and born in Bangladesh) born in the same year as me or after me to access these sources if they are as curious as I am with regard to gaining a thorough knowledge of the culture and history of Bangladesh, including the Language Movement.

I would like to tell you about an event which really moved me emotionally. In 2005, PriyoCanberra.com celebrated their 1st birthday. The birthday celebration took place in Canberra. On that day, we were very fortunate to have Sirajus Salekin as a guest from Sydney who made an invaluable presentation about his late father, Abdul Latif, a legendary song-writer who wrote the song "Shona shona shona lokey boley shona ... shona noy totho khati ... bolo jotho khati tar cheye khati Bangladesher mati re amar Bangladesher mati ... amar jonmobhumir mati ..." amongst his many songs. Abdul Latif, fondly known by many as "Latif Bhai", was a man of unimaginable talent! My father told me that he once saw him at a stage in a rural village in Bangladesh where he was asked to perform on stage to promote family planning to the rural masses. He apparently wrote and composed the music for an entire song from scratch and sang it in front of the villagers! Salekin, in memory of his late father, sang "Amar bhaiyer roktey rangano..." in the tune that Abdul Latif had given back in 1952. For the very short duration of that version of song that was sung by Saleki it took my mind back to 1952 where I could only imagine what our fore-fathers must have felt during that time when they took to the streets to take a stand against an unjust law that stated, "The state language of Pakistan shall only be Urdu".

To me, the Language Movement Day is a day which not only represents an event where we fought to have Bangla as our mother-tongue to have its rightful status in our Constitution. It is a day that showed the world that there are some things in life that just cannot be compromised no matter what the cost.

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