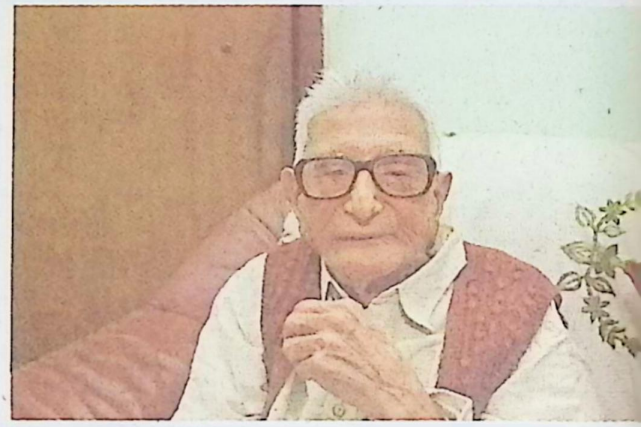
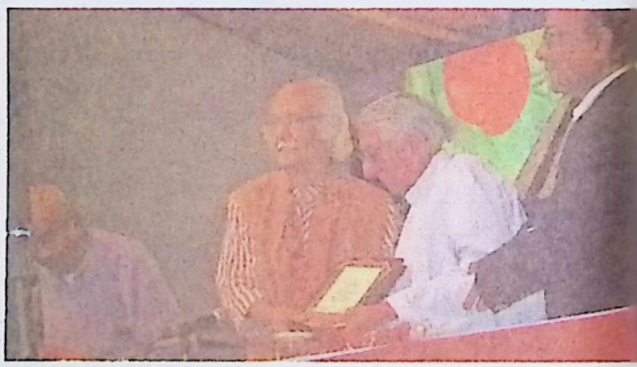
Of Valour and Glory

Eighty-seven-year-old Urdu speaking Bhasha Shoinik Dr Syed Yousuf Hassan recalls his illustrious life and his historic role in our Language movement

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Dr Syed Yousuf Hassan



Dr Hassan receiving the Bangla Academy Award for his contributions during the Language Movement (1952).

Syed Yousuf Hassan's name might not sound familiar to many of us. Partly because he never wanted to come into the limelight for the significant contribution that he had made almost half a century ago for our language, and mostly because we, as a nation have failed to give him the recognition and respect that he deserves.

Dr Yousuf Hassan supported the demand to make Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan in 1952. What is more surprising is that Bangla is not his mother tongue, in fact his native language is Urdu. Despite that, he fought for what he considered was right.

Born in Patna, India, Yousuf Hassan completed his post graduation from Aligarh University. After completing his studies, Yousuf started working on a weekly magazine called *Naya Zamana*. In 1950, young Hassan decided to come to East Bengal, where he formed a close friendship with Dr Muhammad Shahidullah.

Hassan played a vital role in the cultural revolution of East Bengal. A writer himself, he was one of the pioneers who established the Writer's Association (WA) which worked as an encouraging force for the progressive and emerging writers writing in Urdu. He was the general secretary of the organisation. Eminent Urdu writers like Shamim Fulwarbi, Khaja Mohammed Ali, Arshad Afjali, Kamruddin Kamar, Arif Hosiarpuri, Anwar Hossain, Ahsan Ahmed Ashk also played significant roles in organising the WA. He also worked as the editor and publisher of an Urdu monthly magazine called *Raftar*. This association paved his way to establishing a good rapport with poets Jashimuddin and Hasan Hafizur Rahman, artist Jainul Abedin and writer Shahidullah Kaisar.

When the central government of Pakistan was taking the initiative to make Urdu as the only state language of Pakistan, and the agitated East Pakistani students kept on demanding that Bangla be made one of the state languages of Pakistan, Hassan, on behalf of the WA, published a statement advocating East Pakistani's demand as a logical and democratic plea that needed to be fulfilled. It said that Bangla and Urdu could both enjoy the status of being state languages. He further added in his statement that other languages like Pashtu and Panjabi also have the potential to be state languages. When the Pakistan Writer's Association discovered this statement in the national newspaper, Ahmed Nadim Kasmi, the general secretary of the association demanded an explanation from Hassan. He was able to explain why his plea for making Bangla a state language was a democratic right of all Pakistani citizens. Being convinced with Hassan's narratives, Kasmi decided to broadcast this demand throughout Pakistan.

"I was a central member of *Rashtrobhasha Shongram Parishad*. The first leaflet distributed by the committee was written in both Bangla and Urdu. The Urdu portion was written by me," he recalls. "In the morning of February 21, I went to talk to Dr Muhammad Shahidullah regarding the movement. Following that session with Dr Shahidullah, I joined the meeting and proces-