

# A booklet that changed the course of history

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

The article penned by Abul Mansur Ahmed was an excellent manifestation of our spirit of language and nationalism.

Overall, the booklet did not only explain why Bangla should be made one of the state languages of Pakistan but also contained guidance for the nation, stating that if the demand was not met, the only recourse would be waging a mass movement and resistance. The booklet outlined how a possible movement would be carried out. It even hinted that any failure to acknowledge the demand might lead to the independence of East Pakistan.

Commenting on the booklet, *The Daily Jugantar* noted, "The influence that the booklet has had on not only our language movement but also our independence struggle and national history is undeniable...In fact, the proclamation of the language movement laid the foundation of our liberation."

"It is imperative that the *The State Language of Pakistan: Bangla or Urdu* edited by Principal Professor Abul Kashem is recognised as the basis of the language movement," assessed M. R. Akhtar Mukul, an eminent writer, journalist and historian, in his book, "The Morning of the Storm." (*Ghurnijhorer Sokal*)

Dr Serajul Islam Choudhury, an emeritus professor at Dhaka University, said, "It is obvious that the language movement began with the publication of the aforementioned booklet (*The State Language of Pakistan: Bangla or Urdu*). Oli Ahad, a language movement veteran, was quoted in a book, "The Language Movement, 1947-1952," as saying, "Principal Professor Abul Kashem, on behalf of the Majlish, published the first booklet of the language movement titled *The State Language of Pakistan: Bangla or Urdu*. The booklet clearly put forward the demand to make Bangla a state language."

Mohammad Toaha, a renowned politician and language activist, wrote, "The Majlish published on September 15, 1947 a booklet entitled *The State Language of Pakistan: Bangla or Urdu*. In the articles published in the booklet, strong arguments and views were presented in favour of making Bangla one of the state languages in East Pakistan. Subsequently, the issue of state language became a popular subject of discussion among students and eventually turned into a national demand."

Language activist and politician Kazi Golam Mahboob wrote, "The State Language of Pakistan: Bangla or Urdu,' better known as the proclamation of the Language Movement, was the first booklet relating to the language movement which was published by Abul Kashem, the founder of Tamaddun Majlish."

National Professor Dr Anisuzzaman noted, "In mid-September, a booklet titled 'The State Language of Pakistan: Bangla or Urdu' was published by the Tamaddun Majlish. It was the first publication that espoused the cause for Bangla to be made the state language."

To the ordinary citizens of East Pakistan and those who would later wage the language movement, the booklet triggered a new sense of nationalism.

Many activists were inspired to take part in the movement after reading the booklet.

While explaining why the booklet was so important, language activist Advocate Gaziul Haque wrote in the *Daily Bhorer Kagaj* in 1998, "In the large canvas of the Language Movement, the emergence of Principal Professor Abul Kashem was that of a hero. He emerged with a big question: What will be the state language of Pakistan? The days back then were not similar to those we are going through. The political consciousness of the people was not as robust as it is now. Pakistan was

nation for Muslims was a result of their activism."

"In such an adverse time, a young professor asked the question, challenging the establishment. And, he himself answered the question, saying both Urdu and Bangla would be the state language. This is not just an unparalleled courageous act but displays the psyche of a hero."

Language activists have effusively discussed about the booklet. Yet, regrettably, in our national history, it has continued to be neglected and denied the importance it deserves.

*The Daily Janakantha* in 2003 carried an

rate the day. "It was the first booklet relating to the question of language in East Pakistan. It described the rationale as to why Bangla should be made a state language and outlined the strategy of a possible language movement."

Expressing sorrow as the day isn't commemorated with dignity, they said, "It's regrettable that such an important chapter of our national independence struggle is being gradually forgotten." Those who signed the statement were National Professor M Innas Ali, poet Shamsur Rahman, Dr Anisuzzaman, language movement veterans Gaziul Haque, Abdul Matin and Abdul Gafur.

Four years later, in 2007, on the 60th anniversary of the publication of language movement proclamation, the nation's nine eminent intellectuals and Language Movement veterans released a statement. "After the proclamation was published, the language movement began in 1947 based on the demands outlined in it. The proclamation paved the way for our struggle for self-determination and independence. We, therefore, feel that, given the historic significance of the day, it should be commemorated under the state auspicious."

The signatories were former Chief Justice Kamaluddin Hossain, National Professor and political scientist Talukder Maniruzzaman, former Director General of Bangla Academy Dr Ashraf Siddiqui, language movement veterans Gaziul Haque, Muhammad Takiullah, Dr Mirza Mazharul Islam and Professor Abdul Gafur, poet Nirmalendu Goon and Professor Abul Kashem Fazlul Huq, who was also the chairman of the department of Bangla at Dhaka University.

In 2018, *The Daily Prothom Alo* carried a news article covering a discussion held in the Language Movement Museum. The seminar was jointly organised by Language Movement Research Centre and Museum and BD Morning, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the publication of the language movement proclamation. Speaking at the event, former secretary and columnist Manzoor-e-Maula said, "It is beyond any doubt that the proclamation in particular and the booklet that contained the proclamation in general was of immense importance. Through the proclamation, the intellectual and theoretical premise of the language movement was built. It clearly described in detail why Bangla should be made one of the state languages of Pakistan and how to attain the goal."

"The proclamation demanded that Bangla should be made the medium of education and used in the courts. Yet, even now, Bangla is not the medium of education at every school. Even now, Bangla is not the language used in courts. Do we have to resurrect the Language Movement?" he asked.

The booklet was donated by language movement veteran Muhammad Takiullah to, and currently stored in, the Language Movement Research Centre and Museum.

The article is an excerpt from *Ekusher Nepathya Katha* written by MR Mahub. The piece was translated by Nazmul Ahasan, an editorial assistant at *The Daily Star*.

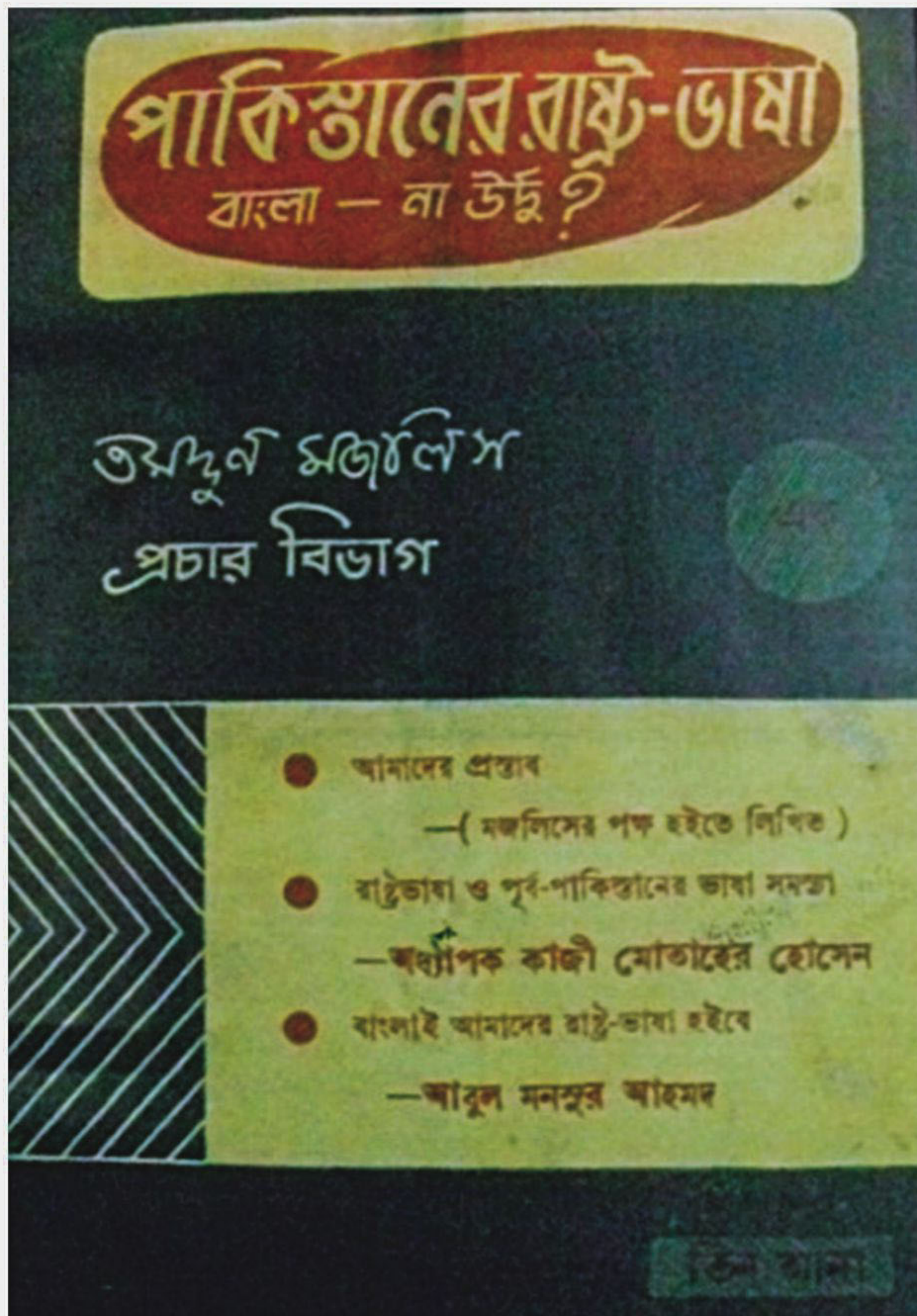


PHOTO COURTESY: BHASHA ANDOLON GABESHANA KENDRA O JADUGHAR

created based on the two-nation theory, causing a division between Muslims and Hindus."

"From 15 August, the day Pakistan was created, to 15 September, the day the booklet was published, it was a difference of just one month. The people of this country hadn't yet learned how to question their leaders. In the political stage of Pakistan, there was an absolute dominance of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Quaid-e-Millat Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan and Ghazanfar Ali Khan. The very creation of Pakistan being a

article and called on the country to recognise September 15 as the proclamation day of the Language Movement. "On this day in 1947, just one month after the creation of Pakistan, a movement demanding Bangla to be made a state language was declared," the article stated. In the same year, *The Daily Prothom Alo* ran an article which also called September 15 as the proclamation day of the Language Movement.

On 15 September 2003, six eminent citizens of the country released a statement calling on the nation to commemo-