

#PERSPECTIVE

Celebrating EKUSHEY

It has been 70 years since that fateful February morning. The events of Ekushey ignited the very soul of a nation, united the people under one common term — a shared medium of expression for a population of millions. The demand was simple: to be able to use the language one is most accustomed to, the mother tongue, in all aspects of life. The struggle was to defy all forms of cultural oppression, and bask in the warmth of a flourishing tradition a thousand years old, and to continue to live a legacy.



Language helps us express ourselves. It is a tool to communicate our feelings and emotions. It also constructs our collective thinking. How we perceive the beauty of nature, or how we react to the struggles of life can vary depending on the tool we use to communicate — that is to say, the language we use to express our emotions.

The Language Movement has had an everlasting effect on the psyche of the Bengali nation. It has been the single most important socio-political movement that influenced all future socio-political thought of this land. Between 1952 and 1971, and every single movement in between, Ekushey has been the guiding light. That was when Ekushey belonged to us only.

To be able to speak in Bengali gives us a unique insight into human existence. The pathos of human lives finds new expression for us, through Bengali. And that is true for any language, to its native speakers. The ability to articulate ourselves also moulds how we think, how we observe our surrounding

universe, and ultimately, how we express ourselves.

The feelings evoked in us by a good piece of literature, in any language, has a lot to do with the way we express ourselves in Bengali. How we react to lines of poetry, or moved by a play on stage...are after all human feelings and quite understandably unique in nature. However, on a collective level, at the community level, we react in a similar manner to these literary creations.

There are more than six thousand spoken languages in the world, and Bengali is special to us for more reasons than one.

Seventy years ago, the struggle was to create a world where all are treated equal without a superiority of any race over the other, or any language over the other. The struggle continues...as the spirit of Ekushey guides all humanity.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Model: Mofassal Al Alif