Only Bangla will be our state language

ABUL MANSUR AHMAD

I sincerely sympathise with the efforts of Dhaka trying to make Bangla the state language of East Pakistan. Among other

reasons, I would like to make Bangla the state language of East Pakistan for the following reasons:

1. A truly democratic state cannot be established without the language of the people and the state being the same.

2. If Urdu is made the state (1898-1979)language, the educated society of East Pakistan will become 'uneducated' and 'unfit' for government service overnight. By replacing Persian with English as the state language in the mid-nineteenth century, British imperialism made the Muslim educated society 'uneducated' and 'incompetent' in government work overnight.

Abul Mansur

Ahmad

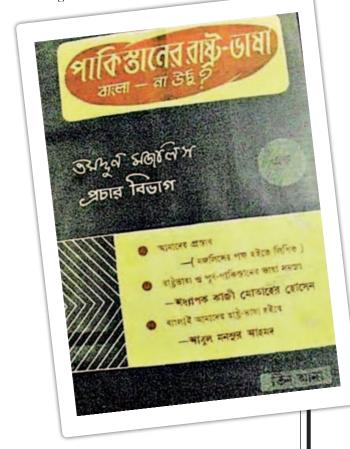
3. The propaganda being spread about how Bangla will be kept as the medium of education even if Urdu is made the state language will turn into political deception. The breadth and depth of knowledge in the state language that one possesses will be the criterion of competence in all fields of life.

4. What is being said about Urdu being easier than Bangla is just a propaganda. In fact, Urdu is much more difficult than Bangla.

5. The well-known and beautiful Lakhnauvi script of Urdu is not suitable for scientific work like printing, typewriting etc. Kolkata and Egyptian fonts are confusing and difficult to learn. In both cases, printing the script is complicated.

6. The allegation that the Bangla language is close to Sanskrit and influenced by Hindus is false. The allegation that the Bangla language is unsuitable for Muslim culture is also incorrect. The Bangla that we want as the state language is not Bangla of Vyakaran Manjusha; it is the Bangla spoken by the people of East Pakistan.

7. We have no dogmatism about the alphabet. If the Bangla alphabet is proved to be unqualified for the pursuit of science even after making some possible changes, then we are willing



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to use the Roman alphabet. If the Urduwalas also agree to use the Roman alphabet instead of the Arabic, then the biggest argument in favour of Urdu is lost. The biggest appeal for Urdu to the Muslim masses is that it is written in Arabic

In addition to the seven arguments I have given above, there are many other arguments that are not worth any less in real life.

If any proposal for discussion on the merits and demerits of Urdu and Bangla is raised in the Constituent Assembly, then it is mainly the students of East Pakistan who should make an effort to ensure the advocacy for Bangla is competent and sufficient. Because their role as the intelligentsia of East Pakistan is immense.

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The article is translated from Bengali by

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State Language and East Pakistan's Language Issue

QAZI MOTAHAR HOSSAIN

The language that the people of a country speak is the natural language for that country. This poses the question then, how could there be a problem when it comes to the language of East Pakistan? This really is peculiar – what's natural is often not easily understood using complex thoughts. Let me try to be

Consider a country where 99 percent of the people speak Bangla, and the remaining 1 percent speak English, Urdu, Hindi and so on. Let's further consider that the latter group has established themselves in that country by moving there through business means or as rulers, and they lord it over those who are less educated and less wealthy. Therefore, they are habitually disrespectful to the people and language of the country. They think it's an unnecessary waste of energy to learn the language of the country in order to deal with the people, and the idea itself is an affront to their self respect. Then again, a conquered and exploited nation has no self respect of its own, neither does it suit them to have any. Especially when it's possible to learn the language of the conqueror and stay in their good graces, earn their satisfaction as well as to create opportunities to make a living. What's even more important is the fact that by preserving this great chasm between the general populace and themselves, it's possible to feel a certain degree of respect. Those lucky few who are blessed by the exploitative conquerors end up with all the benefits, in the name of the public, as their leaders. This is quite natural in our current society, because there's no fear in denying the unfortunate and the voiceless their rights. On the contrary, not doing so might show a lack of intelligence.

This, roughly, is the background to the mentality behind the language issue in Bangladesh, and especially East Pakistan.

The Mughal-Pathan kings nourished the Bangla language

The royal language of the Pathan court was Pashto, and it was Farsi for the Mughals. Even though the Mughal Pathans were foreigners, they adopted this land as their birthplace, and they encouraged the local language to flourish so they'd be able to know the place better. Especially in Bangladesh, with the patronage of Pathan kings, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were first translated into Bangla. Other than that, the Bhagavad and the Puranas were written at this time as well. Before that, the Bangla language was quite malnourished, and the language was looked down upon by the scholars as the tongue of the everyman. Scholars at that time would protect their holiness and superiority in an artificial layer of Sanskrit. The Pathan subedars of Gour would disregard this insubordination by the scholars with kingly kindness. For the benefit of the public (and maybe to quench their thirst for stories at the same time), they'd have these Puranas and Ramayana-Mahabharata written down. Needless to say, there is no substitute to these texts when it comes to preserving the continuity of local culture and keeping the ideals of the ethical and characteristic traits of the countrymen intact. It's largely due to this that even a mere farmer from India is able to amaze Western scholars by presenting themselves as somewhat of a philosopher. In reality, the reason Bengalis were able to assimilate and absorb superior traits from the Islamic civilisation into theirs is because the local language received encouragement from foreign rulers. On the other hand, Muslim rulers and the general public were able to make further breakthroughs in Islam by coming into contact with Hindu hertiage, thereby proving practically the opennes of Islam as a religion as well as its suitability to all.

In the Mughal era, especially the courtiers in the Arakan court spent enormous sums of money to elevate the status of the Bangla language. Muslim poet laureates Daulat Kazi and Sved Alaol achieved immortal feats by writing Bangla poetry. Their language was enriched with words from Sanskrit, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Prakrit and so on, but they didn't force the import of difficult words from any specific language, they wrote poetry in the language that was used by society, or the language that was easy to understand. Even though the Mughal-Pathans were mainly foreigners, they

adopted this country as their own. They didn't want to take over local ideals with the strict sovereignty of Pashto or Farsi, rather the Mughal-Pathan badshahs and subedars gave the local language royal patronage in an effort to create connections with the country. Thus, people were able to learn the court language and maintain national sovereignty at the same time. Moreover, they were able to soak themselves in foriegn ideas and make improvements on them as well. After that came the English rule. Soon, English became the state language. The Hindus welcomed their new lords and their language with open arms, but for many reasons, the Muslims couldn't. Even in Ram Mohan's era, from his own quotes, we can surmise that when comparing gentlemen from the Hindu middle class and the Muslim middle class, the Muslim would have been superior in intelligence and efficiency. But within a short period of time, for reasons mentioned above and the royal doctrine of division, Muslims fell behind in economic, social, as well as state affairs. An alien hatred and jealousy took hold between Hinds and Muslims. Even the Bangla language found itself divided. Highly educated scholars took it under the wing of Sanskrit and made it the bearer of Hindu culture. And the half educated Muslim *munshis* created a type of Islamic literature laden with Arabic and Farsi influences. Both sides took it to the extreme. But Bangla survived through the power of intellect and social institutions, and munshiyana Bangla almost went extinct. It should be said that now, in the era where masses hold priority, scholarly Bangla has But today, English lordship has come to an end

the disaster at Plassey in 1757, the failure of the

Wahhabi movement in 1830-40, the tragic outcome of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 – all of history came to fruition in 1947 when the national flags of victory were flown. And immediately, a tremendously important responsibility has presented itself in front of Hindu and Muslim people as well as leadership. Within the next 10 years, we can hope that through well thought out planning and the struggles of all the citizens of this country regardless of faith, race, and creed, we will be able to eradicate poverty, disease, illiteracy, and internal conflict and establish East Pakistan in a position of pride. To get rid of poverty, it's vital to get rid of social discrimination, to defend ourselves from foreign exploitation, and no matter what resources we have, to make sure we get fair exchange for them. The public and the leadership must be vigilant to make sure that those with evil intentions can't create obstacles for the mental growth of East Pakistan, by meddling in the education system or creating barriers of language.

We are the best example of how barriers of language can cripple a nation, the Hindus and Muslims of India and especially the Muslims of East Bengal. English became the state language as well as the medium of education, which resulted in the expenditure of high levels of mental strength to spend 10 years learning knowledge that should have taken only 5. But because of the foreign language, that knowledge itself remains unclear. Students could only be heard repeating long quotations that are devoid of understanding. Another sector took huge damage, which was the British education policy in India. Textbooks for science related subjects and curriculum were selected in such a way that, instead of effective education, only bookish knowledge could be learned. Thus, this country has no shortage of BSc, BL, or MSCBL, but there are only a few industries. Although, it can't be denied that English education brought with it some benefits as well.



Qazi Motahar Hossain (1897-1981)

Neglect of the mother tongue is the reason behind the downfall of Bengali Muslims

On top of the general crippling of India's Hindus and Muslims, there were two additional reasons behind the numbing of Bengali Muslims. The first is the neglect of their mother tongue, and the second is baseless attraction towards Urdu by mistaking it for a religious language. Thus, Bengalis began to forget the Farsi culture preached by the Muslim badshahs, and they stopped attempting to preserve Islamic heritage using Bangla as well. No matter how much one argues in favour of Urdu – there is no doubt that it is an alien language! Because Urdu doesn't have a connection with the blood of the countrymen, it was no longer possible to preserve Islamic heritage with it. In reality, it is impossible to connect a handful of half learned words and phrases and use that to preserve national and religious heritage. Whatever was being done with *punthi* literature was doing enough to quench the needs of the Bengali Muslim farmer. But due to the neglect of the academics or their disrespect, this too is about to get lost. Which brings us to the reality that, for Bengali Muslims, there remains no such thing as a true civilisation. The language of others and the language taught to them by others is all they have. They are foreigners in their own country, and foreigners seem to be their own people. All of this results in their general disinterest, in their helpless dependence on the West, and their lack of faith in themselves. Clever Westerners are taking full advantage of this. They know that if you come to Bengal with a large turban, you can become a saint, or at least take the seat of a *moulavi* and make some money. It's like how an urban shopkeeper might swindle a rural customer. In reality, Bengali Muslims are a laughing stock and easily exploitable not only to the West, but to all in the East, the West, the North or the South.

Mother tongue is the medium of education The reason behind this misery and inferiority complex is that we have neglected our mother tongue Bangla and grown habituated to speaking empty, unclear words. We don't find strength in these words because they are not engraved into our hearts. Currently, the influence of English is waning, and at the same time, it's possible for Muslims to collectively develop a Bangla language in East Pakistan that is free from extreme Hindu influences while preserving the Hindu-Muslim heritage. It is now our responsibility to fill this gap in Muslim philosophy and nourish our mother tongue and bring pride to our whole nation. Till now, Muslims have been comfortable simply putting the blame upon the shoulders of Hindus, saying that Hindus have filled the Bangla language with Hindu philosophy, but this won't work in East Pakistan. Here, the responsibility of presenting Islamic heritage is left mainly to Muslim literateurs. So now, it's time that Muslim scholars create Bangla literature instead of sticking to punthi literature, and by doing that they

will be able to introduce their countrymen to Muslim civilisation and culture. This is how the mother tongue will be enriched to its fullest, and how Islamic philosophy can properly become one with the hearts of the countrymen, eradicating the misery and inferiority complex they suffer from. We will never prosper by subjecting ourselves to Urdu. Urdu isn't Allah's favourite language, neither is Bangla less favoured. It's also not the case that Urdu is a religious language for Muslims simply because it came from Arabic. In its roots, Urdu is a hodge-podge language created by the multinational soldiers of the Mughal king, but that doesn't make it any less respectable. Urdu is enriched with words from Arabic, Farsi, Prakrit. Over time however, Arabic Urdu and Sanskrit Urdu have come out as two distinct concepts. Other than that, there is considerable difference between the Urdu spoken in Lucknow, Delhi, Lahore, Hyderabad and the likes. The amount of original literature written in Urdu might be low, and it might not be as developed, but Urdu really has flourished when it comes to translated literature. I don't criticise or disrespect Urdu, but I do consider the

Of course, a complete life does not refer to a self-centred one, it refers to a life lived with others. Which is why it's important to learn different languages to maintain working relations with those who speak different languages. But this learning should happen on top of a foundation of education that is complete in the mother tongue, and not instead of the mother tongue.

attraction of Urdu to Bengali Muslims to be dangerous. When I observe that an obscene love song in Urdu is celebrated by the common Bengali gentleman as praise for Allah or when I see that excellent Brahma music written in Bangla is considered haram, that is when I realise that neither ignorant devotion nor ignorant criticism hold any true value. It is nothing more than an illusion of sounds. How much longer will we remain obsessed with this illusion? We have to look at the real world, we have to move in tandem with the flow of life. Therefore we have to function like humans, and not like daydreamers or like mechanical dolls. We have to break free of illusion, open our eyes and examine matters. That is the way of true freedom for us. The only way to get there is through proper practice of our mother tongue, and to learn of everything that is beautiful, alluring or appreciable, in our own mother tongue. And no tongue other than Bangla can be our mother tongue.

Of course, a complete life does not refer to a selfcentred one, it refers to a life lived with others. Which is why it's important to learn different languages to maintain working relations with those who speak different languages. But this learning should happen on top of a foundation of education that is complete in the mother tongue, and not instead of the mother tongue. Needless to say, those who live around us, the ones with whom we share the space next to us, they are the ones we have our closest relationships with – which is why they get priority over others who are further away. Thus, after the foundation of the mother tongue, other languages should be learned as necessary. So, elementary education should only comprise the mother tongue, there can be one or two other languages added to the curriculum for the last three to four years of matriculation. That way, the learning of these second or third languages will be faster and easier to access.

The medium of education must be the mother tongue. To keep up with the world, maybe English would be the most beneficial for us. But putting too much emphasis on it right now is completely unnecessary. An Urdu that is somewhere in between scholarly Urdu and moulavi Urdu would be the most suitable if we want to communicate with people and neighbours of the different provinces of the state. To that end, currently there is much need for reform of Urdu as well. If vain pride and blind fanaticism could be put aside, the difference between Urdu and Hindi could be reduced to create a robust, and thus easy Lingua Franca suitable for the Pakistan and Indian union. If this language was taught in the last or the third and fourth class of matriculation, this would make students masters of a vast expanse of culture; and those who give up education in the elementary or secondary stage would be freed from the unnecessary stress that comes with learning a language, and be able to learn compulsory knowledge and taste one's own culture in their mother tongue.

The Bangla, Urdu, or Roman alphabet could be introduced as necessary

There is no point fussing over script. It really doesn't matter if the Urdu script or the Devangari script, or the Bangla script or even the English alphabet is used. Of course the matter should be given an excess of thought, but keeping ease of typing and reading in mind, and the fact that a script shouldn't take up too much space to write, if an alphabet is found that ticks all the boxes, it could be adopted as an ideal script.

Other than being the medium of education and being a sovereign language, another aspect of the language issue is the question of the state language. Till now, the English were our lords, thus English was the state language, meaning the court language was the state language. Of course, state language refers to the language that will be used to write court rulings, the language whose education will pave the path for high ranking in government, the language that will be used in the state's letters and documents. In short,

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