

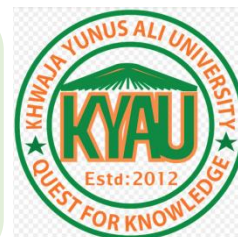
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## Research Article

### Language movement and self-identity of Bengali: A General Overview

Dr. Md. Rajaul Karim <sup>1\*</sup>, Md. Rubel Hossain<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bangladesh Studies, Khwaja Yunus Ali University, Enayetpur, Sirajganj, Bangladesh

<sup>2</sup>Department of Library and Information Science, Khwaja Yunus Ali University, Enayetpur, Sirajganj, Bangladesh.

\*Corresponding author: Email: [mdrezaulkarim801@gmail.com](mailto:mdrezaulkarim801@gmail.com) (Dr. Md. Rajaul Karim, Bangladesh Studies, Khwaja Yunus Ali University, Enayetpur, Sirajganj, Bangladesh)

#### ABSTRACT

*During the British rule, the Muslims of Bengal demanded a separate independent Muslim state to establish their lost rights. In response to the demand, the British government provided an independent state called Pakistan for the Muslims. But after the establishment of Pakistan, it announced the establishment of Urdu as the state language, excluding Bengali, the mother tongue of the majority of the people of Pakistan. In this, the Bengalis started a movement to protect their mother tongue, Bengali. It was through this movement that nationalism was born among the Bengalis. Therefore, this study has tried to show how the identity of the Bengalis was established through the language movement.*

**Keywords:** Language, Movement, Nationalist, Political Party, Independent, Government.

#### Introduction

The language movement was a cultural movement of the Bengalis. Later, this movement gave rise to economic and political movements. This movement was the first step in the development of Bengali nationalist consciousness. Since the establishment of Pakistan, the West Pakistani ruling class was engaged in trying to deprive the rights of the Bengalis. Although 56.47% of the total population of Pakistan spoke Bengali, they wanted to impose Urdu, the language of only 3.27% of the population, as the state language. The ruling class ignored the opinions of the majority of the people and declared Urdu as the state language. The Bengali intellectual community protested this. They started a movement to protest against the unjust and discriminatory decision. This protest movement took its final form in 1952. This movement initiated the Bengali nation into the mantra of independence, under the inspiration of which Bangladesh was born after a long struggle.

#### Research Approach

Research approach is the prime concern of any research work. For the present research, a mixed-method approach has been used. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been used to address the set objectives, and both of the results have been incorporated through cross-sectional description. The

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researcher thinks that to conduct this research work efficiently, there is no alternative to the mixed method. Therefore, this research approach has been selected to conduct this research work.

**The purpose of the study**

Although various books have been written on the language movement of Bangladesh as a whole, no book has been written so far on the development of Bengali nationalism through the language movement. Moreover, all the books written on the language movement have not found a place for research and analysis of the language movement. That is, the books and articles published on the language movement of Bangladesh have discussed some issues from a general perspective. None of them have discussed the issue of Bengali nationalism. Therefore, I tried to conduct the research to explore the identity of Bengalis through the language movement.

**Research methods and data collection**

I have mainly collected information from primary sources. Newspapers and periodicals are important components of this research. We have also collected information from the Bangladesh National Archives, Central Libraries of various universities, Bangladesh National Library, Bangladesh Public Library, various private libraries, and official documents related to the language movement and discussion programs of various political parties on the language movement. In addition, we have interviewed some language soldiers who participated in the language movement.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study has many limitations. After the establishment of the Muslim League, the dispute over Bengali and Urdu languages began. After the establishment of Pakistan, the Urdu-speaking ruling class abolished Bengali and imposed Urdu on the Bengalis. As a result, the Bengalis started a movement to protect their mother tongue. This movement took its final form in 1952. It takes a lot of time to research this long history. But it was not possible due to time and financial constraints. Moreover, almost everyone involved in the language movement has passed away, so it was not possible to get accurate information through interviews. The people we interviewed could not answer all the questions due to their age, and we did not get accurate information. However, we think that the current study will help in future large-scale research on this topic.

**Politics of Pakistan: Political Trends in East Bengal (1947-1952)**

The movement to establish a separate self-identity for the Muslims of Bengal began in the thirties of the last century and reached its peak with the establishment of independent-sovereign Bangladesh. This movement was not limited to the creation of a separate state out of British colonial rule and the dominance of the majority Hindu community. They also agitated for an independent country entered solely on the Bengali language, separate from the other language-speaking communities of the subcontinent. As a result, they came out of the dominance of West Pakistani Muslims in 1971 (Ahmed, 2009).

On December 16, it became an independent nation on the world map. Before the partition of India in 1947, the last elections in undivided Bengal were held in 1946. In this election the Muslim League won 110 out of 119 Muslim seats in the Bengal Provincial Assembly. Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy took over as the Chief Minister of Bengal in April 1946 (Sayeed, 1968). Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim were the architects of the astonishing victory of the Muslim League in Bengal. Through their untiring efforts, the Muslim League gained an absolute majority in the province of Bengal. But Suhrawardy failed to win the confidence of the central leadership of the Muslim League. Despite being the chief minister of the large state of Bengal, he was not included in the executive committee of the All-India Muslim League. Maulana Akram Khan, Khwaja Nazim Uddin, and Ispahani

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represented Bengal in the supreme policy-making committee of the Muslim League during the transitional period of 1945-47. They had no role in the politics of Bengal at that time (Pirzada, 1979).

In April 1946, the Muslim League convened a convention of members of the newly elected Legislative Assembly in Delhi. Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim, along with others, represented Bengal. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani joined from Assam (Ahmed, 1967).

A draft proposal to define the North-East and North-West Zones was presented for discussion in the Subject Committee of this Convention. In this draft, it is said that an independent and sovereign Pakistan state will be formed with these two zones. Abul Hashim opposed the draft as opposed to the Lahore Resolution of 1940. But despite this opposition, the Pakistan Resolution was unanimously passed on April 9 (Zaheer, 2001).

The last session of the All-India Muslim League of undivided India was held in Delhi on 9–10 June 1947. A resolution was passed in this session supporting the plan of partition of India proposed by Lord Mountbatten. In this session, it was decided that Pakistan would be formed out of the North West Frontier Province, Sindh, Baluchistan, the western part of Punjab, and East Bengal as per the Mountbatten plan. Abul Hashim opposed the proposal of partition of Bengal. He pointed out that this is a direct betrayal of the Lahore proposal (Hannan, 1998).

In 1947, when the partition of India was taking shape, there was no consensus among the Muslim leaders of Bengal about the partition of Bengal. Among the leaders, Maulana Akram Khan, Hamidul Haque Chowdhury, and Nurul Amin were in favor of the partition of Bengal, while many, led by Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim, were in favor of a united Bengal. Nazim Uddin could not make up his mind this time. He sometimes supports this side and sometimes the other side. The All-India Muslim League or Congress never supported the idea of a single Bengal. As a result, the movement in undivided Bengal soon ended in failure. The conservative section of the Muslim League never forgave Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim for their involvement in the Akhand Bengal movement (Rahman, 2012).

In June 1947, the members of the Bengal Provincial Council decided to partition Bengal. The members of the Provincial Council of Bengal came together to elect a new leader for the Provincial Legislature of East Bengal on the orders of the Muslim League. In this election, Khwaja Nazim Uddin was elected as the new leader by 75-39 votes. On August 14, 1947, the state of Pakistan was born after the partition of India. India got independence on 15 August. Lord Mountbatten took over as Governor General of India and Mohammad Ali Jinnah as Governor General of Pakistan (Sayeed, 1967).

Governor General Muhammad Ali Jinnah appointed Sir Frederick Bourne as the Governor of East Bengal. Khawaja Nazim as the first Chief Minister of East Bengal. The first cabinet was formed under the leadership of Uddin. This cabinet included the leaders Maulana Akram Khan and Khwaja Nazim Uddin. No member of the erstwhile Suhrawardy cabinet was inducted into this cabinet. Soon after the establishment of Pakistan, the politics of East Bengal witnessed disunity, compromise, and lack of cooperation among the political leaders instead of unity (Roy, 2003).

Soon after the birth of Pakistan, the Muslims of Bengal began to realize that their interests differed from those of the West Pakistanis. They realize that they have nothing in common with West Pakistanis except in the bonds of religion. They did not take West Pakistani dominance lightly in all areas. They realized that they faced a new set of masters in the Pakistan they had established to escape the dominance of Bengali Hindus. These new masters are West Pakistani non-Bengali Muslim leaders. The clash of interests with the West Pakistanis in various spheres of state life led to the development of a distinct nationalist spirit among the people of East Bengal. The conflict of interests of Bengali

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Muslims with non-Bengali Muslims dates back to before the creation of Pakistan. As a result of this conflict, AK Fazlul Haque resigned from the National Defence Council and the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League in 1941 on the orders of Jinnah (Afzal, 1986).

Since the beginning of Pakistan as a new country, the people of East Bengal have been subjected to the domination, exploitation, and neglect of the West Pakistanis. West Pakistanis considered themselves to be superior in status and descent as true Muslims, while most of them considered the people of East Bengal to be genetically inferior and converted to Islam from low caste Hindus. They considered them as low-class Muslims. Muslims who migrated from other provinces of India thought that the real Pakistan was West Pakistan. They showed a kind of indifference towards the social system, language, culture, and traditions of East Bengal (Ahmed, 2002).

This trend continued later. We see that the former president of Pakistan, Ayub Khan, also had the same idea. He thought that the Muslims of Bengal were inferior as a race; they had never enjoyed freedom. Always used to being ruled by others, they need help to keep pace with Muslims in other parts of Pakistan. The real truth is that the Muslims of Bengal are a humble and peaceful nation. History testifies that they never accepted the rule of foreign masters. They rebelled against foreign rule at the first opportunity whenever they got the chance (Ahmed, 1997).

Early in the beginning of Pakistani rule, Bengalis realized that they were a completely separate community from the people of West Pakistan. The history of the Bengali community—tradition, culture, ethnography, lifestyle, education, etc.—from West Pakistanis was so different that they were unable to understand the mentality of the people of East Bengal. The political awareness of Bengalis was much more advanced than that of West Pakistanis. The people of West Pakistan lived under the feudal system under the strict control of feudal lords. On the other hand, the western-educated Bengalis were used to democratic norms for their position at the center of British rule. West Pakistani military and civilian leaders began to fear this political consciousness of the Bengalis, and the level of rule and exploitation increased day by day (Alam, 1991).

Suhrawardy was the Chief Minister of Bengal before the establishment of Pakistan. Everyone knew that he would be the first Chief Minister of East Bengal. But Liaquat Ali Khan was not ready to tolerate Suhrawardy's courage and independent spirit. He disliked Suhrawardy. He preferred his loyal Khwaja Nazim Uddin as the Chief Minister of East Bengal instead of Suhrawardy. Therefore, the leader of the Bengal Parliamentary Committee made such moves in the election that eventually defeated Suhrawardy, and Khwaja Nazim Uddin was elected as the leader. Khawaja Nazim Uddin took charge as the newly elected Chief Minister of East Bengal." The event surprised even Lord Mountbatten. He expected Suhrawardy to be the Chief Minister of East Bengal (Haque, 2000).

Muhammad Ali Jinnah showed a completely autocratic attitude and removed the two main leaders of Bengal, AK Fazlul Haque and Suhrawardy, from the leadership of Bengal. It was unfortunate for the people of Pakistan, especially the people of East Bengal. The people of Pakistan have to pay for the mistake Jinnah made by not giving these two proverbial leaders the opportunity to serve the country when the newly formed state of Pakistan was in dire need of competent leadership (Rahman, 1982).

The new state of Pakistan faced various problems from the beginning. New Erecting the administrative structure of the state, establishing a new capital, and reorganizing the army and police force; issues like the refugee problem, the financial problem, the exacting of a fair share from India, etc., keep the Pakistani ruling leaders busy. They fail to focus on important tasks like nation-building and strengthening national unity (Helal, 1984). It was at this time that Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the undisputed leader of Pakistan, took a decision as head of state that further complicated the problem of nation building. In 1948, on his first visit to East Bengal as the Governor General of Pakistan, he announced in a public meeting in Dhaka that Urdu would be the sole state language of Pakistan. This

declaration of Jinnah created a strong reaction among the people of East Bengal, especially among the educated-intellectual class. The people of East Bengal refused to accept a foreign language as the state language instead of its own mother tongue. As a result of Jinnah's announcement, the people of East Bengal stood in a row and formed the national language movement (Kamal, 1969).

At the moment of this disaster in Pakistan, the Governor General of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, died. The central leadership of Pakistan was disoriented by the death of a leader with a personality like his. Central Muslim League leaders eventually appointed East Bengal Chief Minister Khwaja Nazim Uddin as the Governor General of Pakistan. 13 The appointment of a weak-minded Khwaja Nazim Uddin in place of a personable and strong-willed leader like Jinnah had an adverse effect on the politics of Pakistan. Khwaja Nazim Uddin became a puppet of West Pakistani leaders within a short time. As a result, the hope that spread among the people of East Bengal soon turned into disappointment (Parveen, 2007).

When the post of Chief Minister of East Bengal became vacant, it was the responsibility of the members of the Provincial Council to appoint a leader, that is, the Chief Minister. Everyone expected that the leader would be elected democratically by following democratic norms. But on the advice of the central leaders, Khwaja Nazim Uddin instructed the Governor to appoint his loyalist Nurul Amin as the Chief Minister. The Governor appointed Nurul Amin as the Chief Minister of Bengal on the recommendation of Khwaja Nazim Uddin. The members of the Provincial Legislative Assembly were forced to accept this appointment. However, many members expressed anger and disappointment over this appointment and lost confidence in the central Muslim League leaders (Chowdhury, 1992).

After the partition, there was a major change in the politics of East Bengal. The need for nation-building and unification of public opinion was felt. In this work, political parties played an important role in a democratic state. At this time, apart from the main political party, the Muslim League, which was in power, several political parties continued their activities in East Bengal. Some of these parties were born in British India, while for various reasons, some new parties were formed after the partition. These parties started their activities with new enthusiasm (Feldman, 1972).

### **Political party of East Bengal**

Many political parties were formed in British India at different times for different reasons. These parties played a role in the anti-British movement according to their party's ideology, constitution, and manifesto. Notable among these parties are the Indian National Congress, the All-India Muslim League, and the Communist Party, etc. (Begum, 1989).

The activities of these groups were active in East Bengal. Apart from this, the regional party, AK Fazlul Haque's Krishak-Praja Party, was functioning nominally. After partition, these parties continued to function, while many new political parties were formed for various reasons. Bengal was ruled by the Bengal Provincial Muslim League before the partition. In the 1946 elections, out of 119 Muslim seats in the Provincial Council, the Muslim League won 114 seats, and Fazlul Haque's Krishak-Praja Party got 5 seats. After the election, the government of Bengal was formed under the leadership of Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy. On one side were Provincial Muslim League Secretary Abul Hashim and Chief Minister Suhrawardy; on the other were party president Maulana Akram Khan and Khawaja Nazim Uddin (Mohan, 1971).

Khwaja Nazim Uddin withdrew from provincial politics when the cabinet was formed under the leadership of Suhrawardy. A new polarization in the politics of the Muslim League was centered around the movement that started in the politics of Bengal in 1947 on the question of the formation of Akhand Bengal. Abul Hashim and Suhrawardy favored the formation of a single Bengal, while the Central High Command of the Muslim League favored the division of Bengal and the annexation of East Bengal to Pakistan. Nazim Uddin agreed with the central leaders on the question of Bengal

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division. The Nazim Uddin group became powerful with the support of the central leaders. With their support, Bengal was bifurcated, and East Bengal was decided to join Pakistan. Abul Hashim and Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy's attempt to form a united Bengal failed (Ziring, 1971).

On August 5, 1947, a vote was taken in the Bengali Muslim League Parliamentary Party on the question of who would hold the responsibility of government in the newly formed East Bengal Province. According to the decision of the party, Khwaja Nazim Uddin was appointed the first Chief Minister of East Bengal. Internal strife in the Muslim League led to the birth of a faction opposed to Khwaja Nazim Uddin. This opposition group broke away from the Muslim League by forming several new parties before and after the partition of the country (Makinley, 1979).

**National language movement of 1952**

When Pakistan was established as a separate state, one of the main responsibilities of its leaders was to help create national unity and a sense of nationalism among the different linguistic communities of the new state. To stand tall as a nation, it is necessary to strengthen such bonds among the people. But soon after the creation of Pakistan, this initiative ran into controversy over the Bengali language. In November 1947, the then Education Minister of Pakistan convened the Pakistan Educational Conference in Karachi for the purpose of reforming education in the light of Islamic ideals. When the decision to accept Urdu as the only national language was taken in this conference, the representatives of East Bengal opposed it. Thus, the language debate comes to the fore (Banerjee, 1969).

Immediately after independence, there was an attempt to impose Urdu as the official language of Pakistan. Only English and Urdu languages are used in Pakistan currency, postage stamps, money orders, railway tickets, etc. Bengal was excluded from the list of subjects of the Public Service Commission and from the recruitment examination of naval and other departments. Even the Pakistan Constituent Assembly has designated English and Urdu as official languages. When the session of the Constituent Assembly began on 23 February 1948, Congress member Dhirendranath Dutta proposed an amendment to make Bangla the official language of the Constituent Assembly along with English and Urdu. A discussion on his proposal was held on 25 February. He argued that he did not propose this in the spirit of provincialism. Since Bengali is the mother tongue of the majority of the people of Pakistan, therefore the language of the majority should be the state language of Pakistan (Ahmed, 1972).

As the proposal came from a Hindu member, the Muslim League leaders found Dhirendranath Dutta's proposal to smell of conspiracy. They termed the proposal as an attempt to destroy the unity and integrity of the country. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan opposed the proposal, commenting that the Bengali language was being proposed to thwart efforts to unite the Muslims of Pakistan through a common language. He said that the state of Pakistan was established on the basis of the demands of crores of Muslims of the subcontinent. Pakistan is a Muslim country. Therefore, the language of Pakistan should be the language of Muslims. Since Urdu is the common language of Muslims in Pakistan, Urdu will be the only official language of Pakistan and no other language (Ahmed, 1972).

The motion brought by Dhirendranath Dutt was voted down. Bengali Muslim members of the Muslim League voted against the proposal. When the demand to make Bengali one of the official languages of the Constituent Assembly was ignored, the East Bengali Language Movement started. To demand the establishment of the status of the Bengali language, students, teachers, employees, and journalists of East Bengal, regardless of all intellectual classes, formed a systematic movement. Hindu members of the provincial council, along with some ministers of the provincial government of East Bengal, supported this movement (Maniruzzaman, 1975).

The movement against the declaration of Urdu as the sole state language gradually became stronger and wider. Students of Dhaka held a strike in support of 26 February. During the strike, students from

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various institutions of Dhaka marched in the Ramna area to raise slogans in support of the Bengali language. A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Professor Abul Kashem, editor of Tamuddun Majlis, at the Dhaka University campus. It was demanded in the meeting, Bengali as well as Urdu the status of one of the national languages should be given. A strong demand was made to print Bengali language along with Urdu on Pakistani coins, tickets, various forms (Malik,1992).

National Language Struggle Parishad was formed on March 2, 1948 in Fazlul Haque Hall of Dhaka University to advance the movement to give Bengali the status of national language. Members of all ideologies and organizations are included in this council. Shamsul Alam was the convener of the council. On March 11, the newly formed National Language Struggle Council called a strike on the language issue in East Bengal. Students gathered in groups in front of the secretariat. Suddenly, without provocation, the police resorted to heavy lath charges on the assembled students, resulting in serious injuries to more than 50 students. The students protested and condemned the lath charge. They strongly criticized Nazim Uddin and his cabinet. They called for the resignation of the Bengali members of the Constituent Assembly (Mehrish, 1972).

The government called the protest a conspiracy of Pakistan's enemies. A press release on March 12 termed the language movement as an anti-state conspiracy. But the students continued to protest. Day by day the movement became stronger and common people participated with the movement. When the intensity of the movement increases, Khwaja Nazim Uddin seeks the help of Mohammad Ali of Bogra to organize a discussion with the Sangram Parishad. On March 15, after the negotiations, the 8-point agreement was signed. Among other terms of the agreement the main conditions were- (1) In the session of the Provincial Council, a proposal would be presented for the recognition of Bengali as the official language and the adoption of Bengali as the medium of instruction at all levels of education. (2) The Provincial Council shall in another resolution recommend to the Central Government the adoption of Bengali as one of the State languages. According to the terms of the treaty, the first condition, namely the adoption of Bengali as the official language and medium of education of East Bengal, was raised and accepted by the Provincial Council. But the ruling party avoided submitting the second condition of the agreement in the form of a recommendation to the central government. As a result, the students started a new movement. On March 17, when the students marched towards the Provincial Council meeting hall, the police lathi-charged and fired blanks, which dispersed the procession (Karim, 1977).

When the people of East Bengal were united on the language issue and continued their agitation, on March 19, 1948 the Governor General of Pakistan Mohammad Ali Jinnah visited East Bengal for the first and last time. The people of this country expected statesmanship and practical action from Jinnah. Everyone expected him to provide a well-thought-out and practical solution to the problem. But Jinnah disappointed the Bengali-speaking people of East Bengal by showing a dictatorial attitude in favor of Urdu and took a strong stand. He announced in a public meeting on 21 March at Racecourse that Bengali may be the official language of East Bengal but only Urdu and no other language will be the state language of Pakistan. He also said that if anyone takes a stand against it, he will be considered an enemy of Pakistan. Suddenly there was a soft sound from different parts of the meeting. At the convocation ceremony of Dhaka University on March 24, Jinnah again declared in a strong voice that the Bengalis could choose any language as their provincial language, but the official language of Pakistan must be Urdu. As Jinnah spoke, the graduates who were present raised their voices. This reckless, undemocratic, and autocratic attitude of a wise, liberal head of state like Jinnah created frustration and anger in the minds of the people of East Bengal (Muhith, 1978).

On March 24, representatives of Rashtra Bhasha Sangram Parishad met Jinnah and handed him a memorandum outlining the arguments for making Bengali one of the national languages. Jinnah tried to convince them of the need to make Urdu the only state language. But delegates with Jinnah's

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arguments did not agree. After Jinnah's visit, the language movement subsided. Due to Jinnah's personality, disinformation of the then government, and Jinnah's death, many people lost the enthusiasm of the movement. However, anger started accumulating in the minds of the students around the language. In the meantime, Pakistan's Union Education Minister Fazlur Rahman, though a Bengali, planned to introduce the Arabic alphabet instead of the Bengali alphabet. A 16-member East Bengali Language Committee was formed with Maulana Akram Khan as its president. The teachers-students-students of the Bangla Department of Dhaka University immediately condemned this initiative and protested to the appropriate authorities. Conscious people and intellectuals protested it. This plan of the education minister failed when the East Bengal Language Committee submitted a report opposing the use of the Arabic alphabet instead of the Bengali alphabet (Rahman, 1993).

The language debate came to the fore again in September 1950, when the Principles Committee constituted to frame the Constitution of Pakistan submitted its report. The report proposed to make Urdu the state language of Pakistan. A Language Struggle Committee was formed in Dhaka to protest this decision of the Policy Committee. The Struggle Committee convened the National Conference on November 4 and 5, 1950, at Dhaka. In the report of the Principles Committee, the proposal regarding the national language demanded the adoption of Bengali as the national language of Pakistan along with Urdu. On November 12, protests were held across the province. In the end, when the Prime Minister withdrew the report, the language question was buried. However, Rashtrabhasa Sangram Parishad was formed with the enthusiastic students of Dhaka University to take the movement forward. Abdul Mateen was elected its convener (Paul,1972).

In 1952 the language movement started again. The language movement was revived by a declaration by the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazim Uddin. On his visit to East Bengal, on January 27, 1952, in a public meeting, Khwaja Nazim Uddin made a similar announcement to Jinnah that only Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan. This announcement caused adverse reactions among students-teachers-intellectuals. The students of Dhaka University in a protest meeting denounced the Prime Minister, Chief Minister, and provincial ministers as brokers and puppets of West Pakistan. They accused the prime minister of violating the 1948 agreement. In protest, the Rashtra Bhasha Sangam Parishad announced a student strike, procession and public meeting at the end of the procession on January 30, 1952 in Dhaka city (Ali,1970).

At this time the political leaders against the Muslim League became vocal on the language issue. They declared solidarity with the students' movement. An all-party meeting was held under the chairmanship of East Bengal Awami Muslim League President Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani at the Bar Library in Dhaka on January 31 to speed up the language movement. A 40-member All-Party National Language Struggle Parishad was formed in this meeting with members of various anti-government parties. On the advice of Abul Hashim, the council announced a program of hartals, protest marches, and public meetings throughout East Bengal on 21st February. A session of the Provincial Council was convened in East Bengal on 21st February. The purpose of the 21st February program was to gain the support of the members of the Parishad in the Upper Session and put pressure on the central government by passing the proposal of Bengali as one of the state languages (Helal, 1984).

The provincial government showed a strict attitude towards the All-Party Rashtra Bhasha Sangam Parishad. Daily Pakistan Observer, a pro-movement English newspaper, was banned. As a result, people became angrier. Intelligence agencies alert the government. But the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the provincial government of Nurul Amin failed to realize the importance of the incident. It considers the matter as a law-and-order problem and takes measures to deal with it through the use of force. On the orders of the provincial government, the district administration banned all processions and meetings in Dhaka city from the night of February 20 and issued Section 144 for a month. A large



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gathering of law-and-order forces in the vicinity of Dhaka University and throughout the city (Parveen, 2007).

Due to the promulgation of Section 144 as per the previously announced decision on 21st February, students divided into small groups and started gathering at the Dhaka University campus. By noon, the number of students reached several thousand. Leaders called on loudspeakers to defy government orders and march. As a result at one stage, breaking the section 144, the students divided into small batches and started leaving the campus. When the processions came out into the streets, the waiting police force arrested them and took them away in trucks. In this way, the police took the arrested students out of the city in groups and released them. But the police became helpless as the students continued to come out like a stream. In the meantime, when a group of female students came out with a procession, the police stopped them. At this time, the students came out together from inside the university and joined the female students. Breaking the police cordon, they marched towards the Provincial Assembly Bhavan (now Jagannath Hall). The meeting of the provincial council was going on there. The aim of the students was to submit a memorandum to the provincial council members demanding to make Bengali the national language. The police fired teargas to stop them and resorted to lathicharge. Even if the students did not desist, the police opened fire without warning. Abdul Jabbar and Rafiquddin were martyred on the spot. Many were seriously injured. Among them, Abul Barkat was martyred at 8 pm (Haque,2000).

When news of police firing and some martyrdom spread, the whole situation took an unimaginable turn. The students turned violent. Strong protests and condemnation of the police killings were voiced through the microphone of the medical college hostel. People are called to take to the streets in protest. At the same time, the members of the provincial council were demanded to boycott the session. When the news of the shooting spread, employees from the office-court came down the road and expressed solidarity with the students. Dhaka city practically came to a standstill. Section 144 becomes inoperative. The entire country erupted in protests and went up in flames (Feldman 1972).

Shortly after the police firing, the budget session of the provincial council started at 3:30 minutes as per the pre-scheduled time. The session held in a tense atmosphere left the ruling Muslim League members stunned by the horror of the incident, as were the members of the opposition. Many of them joined the opposition party members in criticizing the government. On February 22, the Chief Minister moved a motion to recommend to the Constituent Assembly to make Bengali one of the state languages to pacify the members. The motion was passed unanimously. For the first time, some members of the Muslim League supported the amendments brought by the opposition members. The split among the Muslim League members came to light when some members petitioned the Speaker to allot them separate blocks. Awami Muslim League achieved the status of opposition party in the provincial council (Rahman, 2012).

The people of East Bengal stood in a queue to protest the 21st February killings. The Muslim League government came to be known as the murderous government, and the situation of the Muslim League in East Bengal became worse. The party could not win the trust of the people of East Bengal any day. At that time, the budget session of the East Bengal Provincial Council was going on. Governor Feroze Khan Noon announced the adjournment of this session due to the fear of disturbance. Muslim League members and ministers could not go outside Dhaka. Pro-government newspapers stopped selling in districts outside Dhaka due to student opposition. Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, editor of Dainik Azad, resigned from the provincial council in protest against the incident. Many of the members strongly criticized the role of the government. A strike was observed on February 22-24 in protest against this murder. On February 22, the police marched again during the protest march, opened fire, and at least 2 people died. The students of the medical college immediately took the initiative to construct a Shaheed Minar in memory of the martyrs at the site of the firing (Hannan,1998). They are helped by

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all the students irrespective of the party affiliation. Shaheed Safiur Rahman's father inaugurated the minaret on February 24. But on February 26, the police demolished the said minaret. 30 Dhaka University teachers to defame the university by the police Strongly condemned and demanded the introduction of the Bengali language as a medium of education. Politicians like AK Fazlul Haque, Maulana Bhasani, and Aaur Rahman Khan were not active in the language movement for so long due to various reasons. But they strongly criticized the government's role in the February 21 killings and declared solidarity with the movement by forming the Civil Liberties Committee on February 23. A meeting of the All-Party National Language Struggle Council was held on February 24 at Dhaka Medical College. The meeting in a resolution decided to call off the strike from 26 February and set a deadline of March 5, 1952 for recognizing Bengali as the state language. Otherwise, it warned the government that a new movement would be launched (Ali,1970).

Pakistani leaders and the ruling party failed to understand the significance of the incident. Governor of East Bengal Malik Feroze Khan Noon, in a report sent to the Prime Minister five days after the incident, stated that the incident was a product of conspiracy. According to him, its purpose was to install AK Fazlul Haque, the favorite of Calcutta Hindus, in power in the province. In later reports, the governor continued to evaluate the language movement in the light of conspiracy theories. But on February 28, the governor finally spoke to understand the importance of movement. He told the Prime Minister that unless Bengali is recognized as one of the national languages, this problem cannot be solved. However, he commented, if Bengali is recognized as the national language, the Arabic alphabet should be used instead of the Bengali alphabet (Ahmed, 2002).

The government tried to suppress the movement by force. The police started a massive manhunt. Provincial council members Abdur Rashid Tarkbagish, Khairat Hossain, Manoranjan Dhar, and Govindlal Banerjee were arrested under the Public Safety Act. Dhaka University teacher Proctor Mozaffar Ahmed Chowdhury, Professor Munir Chowdhury, Dr. B.C. Chakraborty, and Ajitkumar Guha were arrested. Many others involved in the movement were arrested, many went into hiding to avoid arrest. Chief Minister Nurul Amin gave a radio address on March 3, 1952, to prove himself completely innocent. He pointed out that the national language question is not real, behind it lies a nefarious conspiracy of foreign brokers and others to thwart the government (Parveen,2022).

Despite the recommendation of the East Bengal Provincial Council, the Constituent Assembly was prevented from approving Bengali as the state language. East Bengal Muslim League member Noor Mohammad raised the recommendation of the Provincial Council regarding language in the Constituent Assembly, but the East Bengal Muslim League members did not support it. Congress party member Babu Dhirendranath Dutta and Professor Rajkumar Chakraborty spoke in support of the proposal. However, West Pakistan Constituent Assembly members Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, Sardar Asadullah Jan Khan, and Seth Shukdev argued for making Bengali one of the state languages. The proposal brought by Noor Mohammad was rejected. On December 22, 1952, Prime Minister Nazim Uddin presented the final report of the Principles Committee to the Constituent Assembly. But the report avoids the question of giving Bengali the status of a national language. As a result, frustration, anger, and dissatisfaction increased among the people of East Bengal. They lost confidence in the Muslim League (Helel,1984).

While the language question remained unresolved, the program for the East Bengal Provincial Council elections was announced. Through this election, the people of East Bengal get an opportunity to express their views on language, autonomy, democratic process, economic discrimination, discrimination in government jobs, etc. The Muslim League's stubborn and autocratic attitude on various issues since partition, especially on the question of making Bengali the state language, caused the party to lose massive popular support in East Bengal. Various political parties of the province have come together to give a befitting reply to the Muslim League in this election. Awami Muslim League,

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Krishak-Shramik Party, Nezam Islam, etc. The United Front, an electoral alliance against the Muslim League, was formed. The United Front publishes a 21-point election manifesto. Among these were making Bengali one of the national languages, declaring February 21 as Martyrs' Day and providing proper compensation to the martyrs' families (Rahman,2012).

The ruling Muslim League was defeated in the provincial assembly elections held in March 1954. The United Front won a majority of seats. Out of 237 Muslim seats, the United Front got 215 seats. The Muslim League won only 9 seats. Most of the leaders of the Muslim League, including the Chief Minister, were defeated in the elections. Muslim League leaders understand the importance of the language movement these days. The Parliamentary Board meeting of the Muslim League recommended making Bengali one of the state languages along with Urdu. In the light of this recommendation, on May 9, 1954, the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan decided that the official languages of Pakistan would be Urdu and Bengali and any other language recommended by any provincial assembly. Members of Parliament can speak in Urdu and Bengali languages apart from English. According to this decision of the Constituent Assembly, Bengali was recognized as one of the state languages in the first constitution of Pakistan introduced in 1956 (Sayeed, 1968).

**Conclusion**

The language movement is a unique event in the history of Bangladesh. It was the first protest and rebellion of the Bengali nation against the discriminatory behavior of the Pakistani state, the first inspiration for Bengali nationalism. Since the creation of Pakistan, the Bengali nation was being crushed by the West Pakistani government's neglect, deprivation, and exploitation. The insult to the mother tongue shook the minds of the Bengalis. They realized that their language, education, culture, economics, and politics were not safe in the hands of the Pakistanis. In this way, the seeds of Bengali nationalism were sown among the Bengalis. As a result, the nationalist political movement for independence in the sixties was possible. With this, the demand for autonomy was changed to the demand for independence, and as a result, the brave Bengalis won an independent Bangladesh through the Liberation War.

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Both Karim MR and Hossain MR prepared questionnaires for survey data collection and analyzed them to find the expected results.

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