

21st February: Few Thoughts

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Every year 21st February comes and goes routinely with book fair and music and songs. It appears that the 21st February is observed more as a ritual and for one month, every one becomes conscious and excited how to observe the day. Once the month of February elapses, the enthusiasm and exuberance for Bangla language disappears.

Do those routine events go deeper regarding the real significance of the day? Why did Barkat, Jabbar, Rafiq, and Salam pay supreme sacrifice in 1952? Surely they did for the honour and preservation of Bangla language.

This implies that every one in Bangladesh has a right to read and write Bangla. This goal remains unfulfilled even after 36 years of independence of Bangladesh. Can we blame others for such negligence?

If the authorities in Bangladesh wanted to make literacy campaign vigorously, every one in the country should have been able by now to read newspapers and write. Alas, even today many cannot read and write. The question is: Why?

One educationist suggested that students from high school to university are to be engaged to take one village in their charge to make all the villagers literate—read and write- and such a movement by students and literate village youth can easily turn into a literacy campaign under the government or NGOs. Within a few years all in Bangladesh will be literate.

Literacy is a pre-condition to democracy. The meaning of democracy is totally lost to hungry, poor and illiterate people as they are under the influence of local influential class who provide lands to them for *barga* cultivation or provide employment to their sons and daughters.

Bangla language is the creation of living speakers of Bangladesh. The question is whether rural people understand the Bangla language used in TV, radio and in newspapers. There is a distinct impression that the language used in the media is too sophisticated and difficult to comprehend the meaning what the media wants to convey to ordinary people.

There are two Bangla: one for the educated and the other for the country people. Words used by educated class are different from those spoken by village people. Why does this chasm continue to persist? Does it mean the class--rich and poor divide- should continue perpetually through language?

For the sake of Bangla language for all, the Bangla Academy may consider on this day the following:

First, the grammar of Bangla language needs to be simplified. *Second*, some alphabets of Bangla need to be revisited as to whether all alphabets are necessary or not. *Third*, the spelling of Bangla is to be made easy and practical for writing.

Language is a living thing and must be relevant for all people. Bangla Academy and educationists may convene a conference to discuss, debate and arrive at a decision of simplification and easy to make Bangla language access to all people in the country.

Another fact we must not forget that learning of Bangla does not mean that we do not learn other languages. Multi-lingual skill is an asset for every one.

It is to be acknowledged that English has become a language of commerce, education and computer. During the days of economic globalization, integration of economy with other countries is a must for the progress and prosperity of Bangladesh. Our emotion should not play over reason and reality in not learning English language.

Finally, our salute to language martyrs and let we make serious endeavours to make Bangla language easy and accessible to all, rich and poor.