

Songs of Language Martyrs

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Ekush is the movement for Bengali language. Ekushe is the movement of mass uprising. Ekush is the inspiration for the liberation war. Ekush is the symbol of sovereignty. Ekush is the weapon to wrest the right of Bengali language. The language we speak nurtured in the cradle of the mother is our mother tongue. Our mother tongue is Bengali. Our consciousness consists of the combination of vowels and constants of Bengali language which expresses our hopes and aspirations, grief and happiness, laughter and tears.

We are the children of Mother Bengali. We speak Bengali language. We express all our thoughts and ideas in Bengali. All our dreams and planning are in Bengali. So Bengali is the language of our heart and soul. We love Bengali language. Our mother tongue is the dearer than our life. It is our consciousness. It provides the elixir of our life for sustenance.

Our valiant sons have sacrificed their lives in the language movement of 1952 out of love for Bengali language. They raised the slogan of victory of the language on the eve of their death bullets. The language movement was the precursor of the movement for independence. The blood stained days of '52 were our inspirations. The language martyrs were our forerunners. Can we forget them? Hence the poets composed poems on Ekushe. The poets composed the poems and the musicians gave the melody. Words and music were weaved in unison. With the advent of Ekushey those songs reverberate in our consciousness. The people of Bangladesh sing in one voice-

How can I forget the twenty-first February
Spattered with blood of my brothers
How can I forget the twenty-first February
Washed by the tears of so many bereft mothers?
How can I forget the twenty-first February
Dyed by the blood of my golden land.....

The songs of Ekushey are an expression for winning a sovereign state. The song of Ekushey every year raised afresh the hope and sharpened the awareness for freedom. Ekushe and the glorious songs of Ekushey were blended in harmony. People became more determined to win the glory of independence. So Ekushe is the fountain head of our independence.

The background of Ekushe of '52 had formed for a long time. There was a constant conspiracy centering the state language. The rulers were not prepared to accede to Bengali language as state language. Consequently, began the movement for the state language. The people of East Bengal began to chant "Bengali must be the state language." This slogan was

transformed into songs. Raising the demand for state language people sang-

**We will not, we will not forget Ekushey February
The sticks, shots and military we are not frightened of,
The movement is about Bengali as a state language
The streets of Dhaka is red with blood of Barkat and Salaam
We will not forget it.**

The Bengali language is the song which has informed us of our movement, which has inspired us with hope of freedom and which sent us the message of self determination. It is that song which in 1971 brought us independence. The tradition of that song is very old. The literature and songs of Bangladesh are inseparably linked with its cultural tradition. Charjja is recognized as the oldest form of song of Bangladesh. However, the traditional music of this land was primarily dependent on devotional hymns. Bengali language can be traced back to 1000 AD. Bengali literature has begun since then. The present Bengali language has evolved out of various stages in the past. In the first stage, lyrical poems were composed. The Bengali language began its journey through poetry. The music of Bangladesh has come from time immemorial. The music is linked with people's soul and pulse. So people could lay down their lives for the sake of state language, inspired by the music of liberation war. This is why with the approach of Ekushey, they sing-

**I love Bangla, I belong to Bangla
Bangla is inseparably blended with me
I walk the paths of Bangladesh
Bangla words come out of my mouth
I speak Bengali to my hearts content
I cry in Bengali language and dream
Day and night
My hope for Bangla is for ever
I live in Bangladesh, Bangla is my mother tongue.**

Students and masses played a leading role in the struggle for the state language. The student community confronted the West Pakistan rulers by forming an all party students movement committee. Their demand was for granting the status of state language to Bengali, the language of the majority population. Urdu was the language of minority. On twenty-first February they made that demand at the cost of their lives. Thus as twenty-first February approaches, the voices of people resound with the memory of those heroes-

Twenty-first February has returned again.

**On this day the streets of Ramana were smeared
with blood of students
The student and commoners took the streets
to thwart Urdu as a state language
The students faced the police
and benign sky renting slogan repeatedly
make Bangla a state language
by shedding blood on the streets
The martyrs left a legacy**

The language fighters did not surrender to stern authority of Pakistan rulers. They responded forcefully with message that Bengali must be given status of a state language; alternatively, they would be overthrown from power. But nobody steps down from the power voluntarily. Pakistan government was a rampage of ruthless elimination of student adversaries. The air and sky echoed the sound of gun shots. The streets of Dhaka turned red with blood. In memory of these heroic language fighters songs were composed-

**For language you lost lives
You spilled the streets of Raman with blood
In life and death Bengali language is for the Bengalees
Life is meaningless without the mother tongue.**

The students and masses did not tolerate the suppression of the language which has a permanent appeal, which has won Nobel award for literature. It is incredible that one has to speak a foreign language living in ones own land. People rose in revolt in anger and revolution. They lodged open protest. But the stone hearted enemies could never accept the demand. They began to hatch conspiracy in secret. But the stories of heroism of Banglee nation are written in red letter in history. They did not surrender to any power in the past. Even they failed to take away the independence of Bangalees entirely. That valiant does not know what defeat is. So they took to the streets with their demands defying all conspiracies against the language movement. The enemies were ready with bullets and bayonets. They opened fire on the procession. The streets were painted red with the fresh blood for the youths. Songs were composed in memory of those heroic martyrs-

**Rafiq, Shafiq and Barkat
A few brave sons of mother Bengal
have colored red the soil of motherland
with their own boiling blood
They have not listened to the cry of mothers behind
They cared not for bayonet and bullets
They broke the shackle of tyranny
In hate without fear.**

The students and the masses by sacrificing their lives in the language movement of '52 have proved once again that the motherland is above everything and that they can foil all vile conspiracies to suppress the mother tongue and keep people in bondage. The bengalees proved once again in the liberation war of '71 that they are a brave nation. They snatched away independence. The red and green flag was hoisted in victorious pride. The sacrifice of lives for mother tongue did not go in the vain. So ekush is the day for finding the meaning of life. Ekushe is the day we pay our deep tributes to the brave martyrs who have given us the right to speak in our mother tongue and a dear country about which we can take pride. We sing in praise of the martyrs –

**Salaam, salaam thousand salaam
In memory of the martyrs
I wish to lay bare my heart
Under the feet of their memory
To speak in the language of mother tongue
To talk with bold hopes
Those who laid down their lives with smiles in their face
I sing in their memory, sing in praise of their glorious death
Salaam, salaam thousand salaam
In memory of all martyrs.**