Language Movement 1948-1952 and Education Movement of 1962

Introduction

1. In 1947 Pakistan became one State with two countries and one nation with two peoples. Actually, the creation of Pakistan had been a geographical absurdity, with its two parts separated by twelve hundred miles of Indian territory. The difference in the social structure, economy and culture had even been greater than the physical distance. Adherence to a common religion, Islam, was never enough to make these two dissimilar parts a single nation.

2. The first point of contention between two parts of Pakistan was the State Language. At the time of partition, the people speaking different languages were:

Language	Pakistan %	East Pakistan %	West Pakistan %
Bengali	56.40	98.42	0.02
Punjabi	28.55	0.02	67.08
Sindhi	5.47	0.01	12.85
Pushto	3.48	-	8.16
Urdu	3.27	0.64	7.05
Baluchi	1.29	-	3.04
English	0.02	0.01	0.03

Table 1: Linguistic Demography of Bangladesh

3. Point to note here that the mother tongue of 56.40% people of Pakistan had been Bengali. Mother tongue of only 3.27% was Urdu. However, the ruling elite group of West Pakistan was adamant to establish Urdu as the only state language of Pakistan neglecting Bengali the language spoken by the majority of the population of Pakistan.

Background to the Language Movement

4. The election manifesto of Bengal Provincial Muslim League, for the election of 1946, proposed Bengali as the state language of Bengal. Daily/weekly newspapers in July 1947 published a good number of articles on the issue of making Bengali the state language.

5. Dr Ziauddin Ahmed, the then VC of Aligarh Muslim University advocated in July 1947 that Urdu should be the state language of the future state of Pakistan. His proposal was

immediately refuted by Dr Muhammad Shahidullah, a respected Bengali linguist and scholar from Dhaka University stating his support for Bengali.

6. **Pakistan Education Conference**. In November 1947, a resolution at the national education summit in Karachi advocated Urdu and English as the state languages of Pakistan. The conference also decided removal of Bengali from all government stationeries, including money order forms, envelopes and postcards. Students in East Bengal got agitated with the information. A meeting was held in Dhaka University campus on 6 December 1947, demanding Bangla as a state language. The meeting was followed by processions.

7. **The Pakistan Public Service Commission**. The Pakistan Public Service Commission dropped Bengali from the list of approved subjects. There were nine courses on languages namely Urdu, Hindi, English, German, French, Latin and Sanskrit less Bangla.

Important Political Personalities of Pakistan during and after Partition

8. **Mohammad Ali Jinnah**: Governor General of Pakistan Aug 1947 – Sep 1948 (died)

9. **Liakat Ali Khan**: Prime Minister of Pakistan Aug 1947 – Oct 1951 (assassinated).

10. **Khwaja Nazimuddin (Bengali)**: Chief Minister of East Bengal (Aug 1947- Sep 1948), Governor General of Pakistan (Sep 1948-Oct 1951), Prime Minister of Pakistan (Oct 1951-Apr 1953).

11. **Iskandar Ali Mirza (Bengali)**: Governor of East Bengal (May 1954- Oct 1954), Governor General of Pakistan (Aug 1955 – Mar 1956) – President of Pakistan (Mar 1956 – Oct 1958).

12. **Nurul Amin (Bengali)**: Chief Minister of East Bengal (September 1948- April 1954).

13. **Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy**: Prime Minister of Bengal (Apr 1946-Aug 1947), Prime Minister of Pakistan (Sep 1956- Oct 1957).

14. **A K Fazlul Huq**: Prime Minister of Bengal (Apr 1937- Mar 1943), Chief Minister of East Bengal (Apr 1954-May 1954), Governor of East Pakistan (Mar 1956-Apr 1958).

15. **Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani**: Established East Pakistan Awami Muslim League in 1949. Member of Parliament up to 1975.

The Language Movement

16. Although the Language movement continued till the acceptance of Bengali as one of the State Languages of Pakistan, there had been two major waves of the movement.

17. **First Wave**

a. The first public demand for making Bengali a state language of Pakistan was made in a literary conference on 12 November 1947 arranged by Tamaddun Majlish, a literary and cultural entity led by Professor Abul Quashem of Dhaka University.

b. The first 'Rastrabhasa Sangram Parishad' (Language Action Committee) was formed towards the end of December 1947 with Professor Nurul Huq Bhuiyan of Tamaddun Majlish as the convener.

c. The East Pakistan Muslim Students' League was founded on the first week of January 1948 by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (later Father of the Bengali Nation) and a few others. A Committee of Action of the students of Dhaka University with Shamsul Huq as convenor was set up for achieving Bangla as the State Language.

d. Direndra Nath Dutta, a Bengali opposition member, moves a resolution in the first session of Pakistan's Constituent Assembly on 23 February 1948 for recognizing Bengali as state language along with Urdu and English. The resolution was opposed by Liakat Ali, the Prime Minister of Pakistan and other non-Bengali members.

e. On 11 March 1948, during a general strike on the issue of state language, students were baton-charged and a large number of students were arrested in Dhaka.

f. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Governor General of Pakistan was due to visit Dhaka from 19 March. The provincial government became nervous and Nazimuddin under pressure of widespread agitation entered into an agreement with the committee of action which amongst eight points mentioned that the Provincial Assembly shall adopt a resolution for making Bengali the official language of East Bengal.

g. On 21 March 1948 Muhammad Ali Jinnah during his visit to Dhaka declared at Race Course Maidan (currently Suhrawardy Uddyan) that "Urdu and only Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan". Jinnah repeated same declaration while addressing the Convocation in Curzon Hall on 24 March. Students present at both

the spots protested vehemently. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then a university student, was among those who raised the protest slogan and was placed under detention.

18. **Second Wave**. The Language Movement took a serious turn at the beginning of 1952. Both Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan were dead by then. Khwaja Nazimuddin had succeeded Liaquat Ali Khan as prime minister of Pakistan. The people of East Pakistan started losing faith in the Muslim League. A new party, the Awami Muslim League was formed in 1949 with Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani as Chairman, Shamsul Hoque as general secretary. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became Joint Secretary remaining in jail.

a. In January 1952, the Basic Principles Committee of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan announces its recommendation for Urdu to be the state language. To add fuel, Prime Minister Nazimuddin at Paltan Maidan, Dhaka on 27 January repeats Quaid-i-Azam's view that "Urdu will be the only state language of Pakistan."

b. Students responded to this speech with the slogan, 'Rashtrabhasha Bangla Chai'. A strike was observed at Dhaka University on 30 January.

c. On January 30, 1952, in a secret meeting attended by representatives of different parties, it is decided that the leadership of the movement should be assumed by the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League under Bhashani.

d. January 31, 1952, Bhashani presides over an all-party convention in Dhaka. A broad-based All-Party Committee of Action (APCA) is constituted with Maulana Bhashani as Chairman and Kazi Golam Mahboob as its convener.

e. In a meeting on 03 February 1952, the Committee of Action decides to hold a general strike on 21 February, as East Bengal Assembly meets in its budget session.

f. February 20, 1952, at 6 pm government promulgated Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code prohibiting processions and meetings in Dhaka City. This order generated tension and resentment among the students.

g. February 21, 1952, a meeting is held in the campus of Dhaka University. Students decide to defy the official ban imposed by Nurul Amin's administration and processions are taken out to stage a demonstration in front of the Provincial Assembly. Police starts lobbing tear gas shells to the students. Students retaliate by batting bricks. The riot spreads to the nearby campuses of the Medical and

Engineering colleges. At 4 pm, The police open fire in front of the Medical College hostel. Five persons: Mohammad Salauddin, Abdul Jabbar, Abul Barkat, Rafiquddin Ahmed and Abdus Salam were killed. The news of the killing spread like wildfire throughout the city and people rushed in thousands towards the Medical College.

h. February 22, 1952, thousands of men and women throng the university, Medical College and Engineering College areas to offer prayers for the victims. After prayers when they go for a procession, the police open fire. Four more persons are killed. As the situation deteriorates, the government calls in the military to bring things under control. Bowing to the pressure, the Chief Minister Nurul Amin moves a motion recommending to the Constituent Assembly that Bengali should be one of the state languages of Pakistan.

j. By February 24, 1952 police arrested almost all the student and political leaders associated with the language movement.

Bangla Becomes one of the State Languages of Pakistan

19. With the election scheduled to be held in March 1954 a coalition of the Awami Muslim League, the Krishak Praja Party, the Ganatantri Dal and Nizam-e-Islam was formed on 13 November 1953 with the name Jukto Front. The Jukto Front declared their 21-point program as the party's manifesto for the elections which included adoption of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan.

20. After the resounding victory of the Jukto Front in 1954, Bangla was recognized as one of the state languages of Pakistan at a session of the National Assembly on 9 May 1954.

21. On 26 February 1956, the Constituent Assembly passed the first Constitution of Pakistan recognizing Bangla as a State Language.

Contribution of Bangabandhu in Language Movement

22. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had enormous contribution to the Language Movement. A few of his contributions are stated below:

a. Bangabandhu participated in the signature collection campaign and various meetings and processions with the Rashtro Bhasha Shongram Porishod.

b. In December 1947, some language heroes formulated a 21-point manifesto propagating the Language Movement. Bangabandhu was one of the key signatories.

c. The East Pakistan Muslim Students League was formed on 4 January 1948 under the aegis of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The 10-point demands of Students League included the demand to make Bangla a state language of Pakistan.

d. The first successful strike, in the history of language movement, was observed on 11 March 1948. Sheikh Mujib was arrested while leading this strike but was released on 15 March.

e. On 15 March 1948, the Chief Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin signed an 8-points agreement with the Committee of Action. Before the agreement was signed, it was shown to Sheikh Mujib along with other detainees for their approval.

f. Sheikh Mujib was in jail in 1952 during the peak time of the language movement. He kept in touch with the agitators on regular basis and passed necessary instructions remaining in the jail.

g. National leader Shaheed Suhrawardy took a stance against the Language Movement of 1952. He issued a statement supporting Urdu as the state language. But Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was able to change his mind in this regard and was able to solicit his support for the cause of promulgating Bangla as the state language.

Contribution of Language Movement in Subsequent Struggles

23. Seventy years ago, in 1952, the Language Movement established the national identity and self-dignity of the Bengalis. The 21st February has been immortalized by global recognition as the International Mother Language Day.

24. The language movement of 1952 established relation and confidence between ordinary and political people. This mutual confidence accelerated the liberation struggle of the nation.

25. The language movement was the beginning of the realization of all our rights. The education movement of 1962, the six-point movement of that year, the mass uprising of 1969, the election of 1970 and the independence struggle of 1971 all followed the spirit of the language movement.

Education Movement of 1962

General

1. Since the establishment Pakistan, anarchy in education sector became a common feature. Number of educational institutions started to decrease and the dropout rate increased within a short time. In 1947-48 the number of primary schools in East Pakistan was 29,633, which came down to 26,000 within a span of 5 years in 1954-55.

2. Just two months after taking over as President and Martial Law Administrator, Ayub Khan announced formation of a National Education Commission headed by Secretary, Education of West Pakistan and Ayub's former teacher at Aligarh University, S. M. Sharif. Out of eleven members of the commission only four educationists were from the then East Pakistan. The commission submitted its interim report on 26th August,1959. However, the report of Shariff Commission was finally published in 1962.

Important Features of the Sharif Commission Report

3. Following were the main features of the report:

   a. The concept of free primary compulsory education is a utopia.

   b. To introduce a Lingua Franca for Pakistan, Roman Script should be introduced and for that Arabic should be given priority.

   c. Urdu should be made the language of the people of Pakistan.

   d. Education should not be available at minimum cost and at a 'cheap price'.

   e. There is reason to see it at par with investment both in industry and education.

   f. The 2 years' degree course should be upgraded to 3 years for improvement of quality at the higher education level.

Students Movement

4. The Sharif Commission Report was rejected outright by the students in East Pakistan for following reasons:

   a. The whole tone and tenor of the report was reactionary and against the interests of the people of East Pakistan. Students clearly pointed out that the door of education has been closed to the poor and low-income people.

b. Restriction on available opportunities for higher education by imposing strict conditions of enrolment and promotion. The very connotation of “Investment” in education triggered sharp reaction from the students.

c. Raising the standard of public examinations.

d. Increasing the tenure of the degree course to three years.

e. Heavy load of English language course in higher secondary level

f. Proposal for enhancement of tuition fees at schools and colleges

5. Action committees and sub-committees were formed in many institutions to protest against the report. The agitation program was started by Dhaka College students. Students of medical school and National Medical institutions also resorted to the movement, which included hunger strike also.

6. A students’ meeting of Dhaka College on 10 August announced a general strike of students throughout the province on 15th August. Students responded favourably to the program.

7. Series of meetings were held in between 15th August and 10th September at the historic Amtola in the Dhaka University Campus. On 10th September, in a meeting of student leaders of most of the educational institutions of Dhaka, a hartal or total strike was announced on 17th September.

8. Students started picketing from early morning on the day. Car of a provincial minister and some other cars were set fire. Dhaka University Campus was packed up with students from the school and colleges of Dhaka City. Hearing the news of police firing at Nawabpur road a huge procession was brought out. Police fired at the procession at Abdul Gani road killing a high school student and injuring many others. The firing at Abdul Gani Road infuriated the processionist which not only included students but also workers and employees of different mills and factories, rickshaw pullers and boatmen from across the Buriganga river.

9. The movement subsided eventually when the government postponed the implementation of the report.