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Expansion of State Language Movement in East Bengal at the end of 1947

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ABSTRACT

The activities that started Prof. Abul Kasem to awaken general public of East Bengal about Bengali language on September, 1947, became more stronger at the end of 1947. At that time meeting, procession and slogans have been begun in the different parts of East Bengal especially, Dhaka. Protest meeting and conference was held by the effort of Tamaddun Majlish in Dhaka in protesting against Pakistan government's negligence about Bengali language and many women have taken part for the first time in these meetings. This article discusses the impetus of Professor Dr. Abul Kasem, poet, intellectuals and students to attract the people of East Bengal to Bengali language at the end of 1947.

KEYWORDS: East Bengal; Bengali Language; Meetings; Pakistan; Dhaka.

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INTRODUCTION

Pakistan central government began to neglect majority people of Pakistan's mother tongue Bengali language in printing Post Card, Money Order Form and Postal Tickets and in Pakistan Civil Service Examination. By watching this Tamaddun Majlish enforced their activities and opposed strongly against anti-East Bengal works. Many meeting and movements have been held in different parts of East Bengal mainly in Dhaka to make the Bengali community's conscious about mother tongue where many women participated to make the East Bengal leaders strong.

After some days of freedom a demand raised from intellectuals, writers, poets, artists and even from general public, published on 24th September, 1947 in an editorial column of 'Dhaka Prakash' patrika.¹ Some important parts of that editorial column is given below:

“STATE LANGUAGE OF EAST PAKISTAN

We will make our country a real one in front of world-people in the way of peace and progress by the Hindu-Muslim unity though Pakistan is divided into two parts for the freedom of India, this is our principal duty only. First of all cordial attempts of country's people is necessary to establish organization, progress and peace. State-leaders must be alert for the support of each and every country-people in all walks of life. It is useful to take care of in acting rules and regulations and full public support should be required for arrangement of simple living and exchange of mental state among all classes of people in all phases of life. State-language will be the main assistant to succeed all attempts. Bengali is the State language of all classes of East Pakistani and life time savings of them. It may not be possible to exchange views and state of mind if Bengali language is not in use. We heard that Urdu will be the State language. Actually in the major parts of West Pakistan Urdu is living language but two Muslims and one Hindu does not know the Urdu little out of 1000 persons in East Pakistan. It requires some years to learn this language newly. Majority of the Bangladeshi people is illiterate and some half-illiterate, higher-educated people is very rare. In this circumstance, if the State language is totally new, every people of that century will be considered illiterate. After all, it will be impossible for competent person to proceed in service and in business due to language-problem. There will be no other means to maintain the consistency in

state affair and business works except a non-Bengali incompetent in Bengali language. For this reason, various disadvantages will be created and work discipline may be hampered soon. Before taking decision about the State language the honourable President of the country is requested to consider all the matters carefully and pray to him to accept only Bengali as a State language of Pakistan.”²

Prof. Abul Kasem, Secretary, Tamaddun Majlish and Professor of Dhaka University (Department of Physics) organized a conference in A.K. Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall, University Street, Dhaka University, Dhaka to discuss and consider the mother tongue Bengali language as a State language of Pakistan.³ Many famous persons attended the meeting. Among them were :

1. KaziMotaharHossain
2. Syed Mohammad Afzal(Provincial Minister)
3. Poet Jasimuddin.⁴

An argument was proposed to accept Bengali language as one of the State language of Pakistan. Speeches were delivered for discussion and consideration about the use of Bengali language and proposed to start movement if necessary.⁵ In the mean time, a strong opinion was exposed in favour of Bengali language to accept it as State language in September to October number in 1947 of ‘Saugat’ under the caption of “Pakistan : Rastra Vasa O Shahitya”.⁶ Many undistinguished and distinguished writers wrote about the East Bengal language problem in Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly news papers. Majority of them wrote in favour of Bengali. Some of them wrote to accept Bengali language as State language, many other wrote to select Bengali language as State language with Urdu,⁷ but their number was very few. It is known from an article headed by “Vasa Samasya” written by Ayesha Begum in Mahila Mahafil Supplement of Daily Azad, 5th October, 1947 that many discussion and arguments about language problem and State language in many University Halls is done.⁸ Majority of speaker supported Bengali language. Ayesha lamented that some leaders of East Bengal supported Urdu language as State languages.⁹

Within three months of Pakistan’s freedom first movement started on a demand of Bengali language as a State language.¹⁰ New Post Card, Envelope, Money Order Form, Postal Ticket etc. have been printed in Urdu together with English.¹¹ The majority community of whole Pakistan’s mother-

tongue Bengali language was displaced. Naturally, East Pakistan's educated people were regretted. Some students (especially Dhaka University's students) and government employees protested against this and started movement. In those movements slogan was raised 'Rastra Vasa Bangla Chai'. Not going in confrontation with the Pakistan central government. This slogan was raised 'Urdur Sangge Birodh Nai.' But to make the demand strong on the part of mother-tongue Bengali language, demand as raised 'Sabkichhute Bangla Chai'.¹² Firstly, it was clear that majority people of East Bengal did not want Bengali language as a State language, they wanted Bengali language as one of the State language with Urdu. Middle-aged, old-aged, intellectuals, writers, artists, ministers and professors observed that it would not be possible by such a small number of people to bound the Pakistan central government to select Bengali language as a State language. Strong movement should be organized to compel the Pakistan administrators to realize their dream fruitful. Lively life is required, students are the first and can dedicate their lives. A meeting was held on 12th November, 1947 in Dhaka University's A.K. Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall under the Presidentship of Habibulla Bahar to awake the student about Bengali language.¹³ Some parts of the substance published in Daily Azad, 13th November was given below :

“...Writers-students meeting was held in Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall today at 4 p.m. at the effort of Tamaddun Majlish. Janab Habibulla Bahar presided over the meeting. Demand has been raised to select Bengali language as a State language of East Pakistan. Lectures were delivered by East Pakistan's Agricultural Secretary, Janab Syed Mohammed Afzal, Poet Jasimuddin, Dr. Anamul Haque, Janab Abul Hasnat, and President etc. about the importance of acceptance of Bengali language as State language of East Pakistan. Abul Hasnat Saheb explained his planning about the modification of Bengali language.¹⁴

COLLISION BETWEEN PROFESSOR ABUL KASEM AND NURUL AMIN

It is noted that a temporary collision has been started between Prof. Abul Kasem and Nurul Amin for the highest post and power of Tamaddun Majlish. So Prof. AbulKasem took leave from Tamaddun Majlish temporarily. By this opportunity, Nurul Amin called a meeting on 12th November and demanded to select Bengali language as a State language.¹⁵ So, no reference was found of 12th November meeting in Prof. Abul Kasem's subsequent writings. At that time central office of Daily Azad situated in Kolkata, 12th November's news was sent to Kolkata from Dhaka Office through

telephone.¹⁶ But the collision between the two was not sent to Kolkata from Dhaka Office by telephone though they knew that.

A report was published by Daily Azad on 13th November to have the brief news through telephone. Daily Azad published its detailed report on 15th November.¹⁷ Some parts of the reports were given below :

“...If the State administration is not lead by the arbitration of mass-mother tongue, the relation between the inhabitants and the State will be cut-off soon. It will not be justifiable to burden the other language on East Pakistani inhabitants except Bengali language as a State language of East Pakistan. I strongly believe that there is no bar to declare Bengali language as a State language of East Pakistan. Janab Nurul Amin Secretary, Civil Supplies of East Pakistan, said this in a meeting held in A.K. Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall at Yesterday afternoon. Habibulla Bahar, Secretary, Health Department, East Pakistan presided over the meeting. Nurul Saheb further added, Alems raised a demand that Urdu has a good relation with Islam Dharma is not justifiable. He further said “truly speaking, there is no much relation of Islam Dharma with Urdu. There is so much relations of other Indian language with Islam as that with Urdu.”

Janab Nurul Amin requested the authors of Bengal to make Bangla grammar and spelling easy.

President Habibulla Bahar said that the only demand of self-control right is Pakistan’s firm resolve. If the Bengali language is not accepted as a State language of East Pakistan, betray will be committed to the inhabitants of this province. Both Bengali and Urdu language may be introduced as Central Pakistan’s State language. Syed Mohammad Afzal, Abul Hasnat, Dr. Anamul Haque, Poet Jasimuddin etc. delivered speech on behalf of Bengali language. None of them said against Bengali language except poet Golam Mostafa.¹⁸

East Bengal people recognized the Bengali language as a State language of whole Pakistan till now. But Pakistan State administrator paid no heed to their demand. So they came back to some extent and began to demand to accept Bengali language as a State language of East Pakistan. In this respect

they gave the memorandum to Mr. Khaza Nazimuddin, Chief Minister, East Bengal on 17th November, 1947.¹⁹

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Many women signed in this memorandum. They were :

1. Fem. Prof. Mrs. Shamsunnahar Mahammud, M.A.
2. Mrs. Lila Roy, M.A. (Fem. Secretary Joysree)
3. Mrs. Anowara Chowdhury, B.A., B.T.(Secretary, Nikhil Banga Muslim Mahila Samity)²⁰

This is the first time proceeding of women of East Bengal for Bengali language as State language. Some important parts of the Memorandum was given below :

“Bengali language is the richest language of India and occupied an important place among the principal language of the world and 8 crore people of India use this and both Hindu and Muslim developed it in helping manifestation blooming and progress.”

“If both the governments of West Bengal and East Pakistan accept it as State language, its future will be brighter.”

“As Hindus will learn Sanskrit, Hindi and other language, in the same way East Pakistani will learn Arabic, Persian and Urdu to maintain the political and cultural relations with West Pakistan and other Muslim countries. So, East Pakistan government is humbly requested to select Bangla as East Pakistan’s State language and medium of instructions as soon as possible.”²¹

CONCLUSION

Agitators, literate persons, general public even women of East Bengal protested and hated against anti-cultural, anti-development and anti-mother tongue works in participating the meeting, slogan and movement. Tamaddun Majlish took major part against Pakistan central government and Urdu language in holding meetings and movements. Pakistan central government subdue wanted to suppress the East Pakistani and Bengali language as well. But it was not possible on the part of Pakistan the

suppress the Bengali community and at last was compelled to accept Bengali language as one of the State language of Pakistan with Urdu.

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