

## **Language Issues in the Initial Years of Pakistan, 1947-1956**

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At independence from the British colonial rule in 1947, Pakistan consisted of two wings—East Bengal and West Pakistan (now Pakistan). Population-wise East Bengal formed the majority and the people spoke Bengali. Naturally they expected Bengali to be one of the state languages of Pakistan. But they felt frustrated and ignored when the central leadership in cooperation with a few leaders of East Bengal declared that ‘Urdu alone would be the state language of Pakistan’. This declaration led to widespread protest and agitation leading to bloodshed and killing by police firing on 21 February 1952. Bengali was in the end recognized as one of the state languages of Pakistan in the Constitution of Pakistan adopted in 1956. This ended the controversy over the language issue. It may be mentioned that in recognition to the sacrifice of the people of Bangladesh for their mother tongue 21 February has been declared by the United Nations as the International Mother Language Day. The main purpose of the paper is to examine how the controversy arose and what were the reactions of East and West Pakistan respectively and how the problems were solved.

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