

Dhaka Day by Day

Now What about Benglish?

by Farah Ghuznavi

In the last few years, much has been made of the version of English that is spoken in India. Certainly, whether you like it or loathe it, there is little denying that it has a unique character of its own. From the habit of shortening words to unrecognisable monosyllables, to the charms of the accent in which the words are uttered, it opens up a whole new world for most of us. For example, when my Indian friend described her fiancé as "a nice guy, but just too senny man," she wasn't just shortening the word "sentimental" to describe his personality, what she actually meant by that was that he was somewhat hypersensitive about emotional matters!

It takes a while to figure out, but once you get the basic idea, you shouldn't have any problems understanding the mysteries of communication in Indian English. The basic rule in "anything goes"! This was evidenced by the question posed by another friend, a college student, who asked me, when I went to visit her, "Shall we get some g-jams and hot sams?" As I stared at her in total puzzlement, she translated the mysterious query to me as being, "Shall we get some *gulab jamuns* and hot *samosas*?"

On this side of the border, we have developed our own unique version of English as well. We have not as yet received the international recognition that Indian English has, but perhaps the time has come for that to change, and for "Benglish" (otherwise known as Bengali-English) to take its own place on the international stage. The genius of Benglish comes not from merely shortening words, but from totally changing the English words from their original meaning, and thereby foxing anyone who has the temerity to think that they actually understand English quite well!

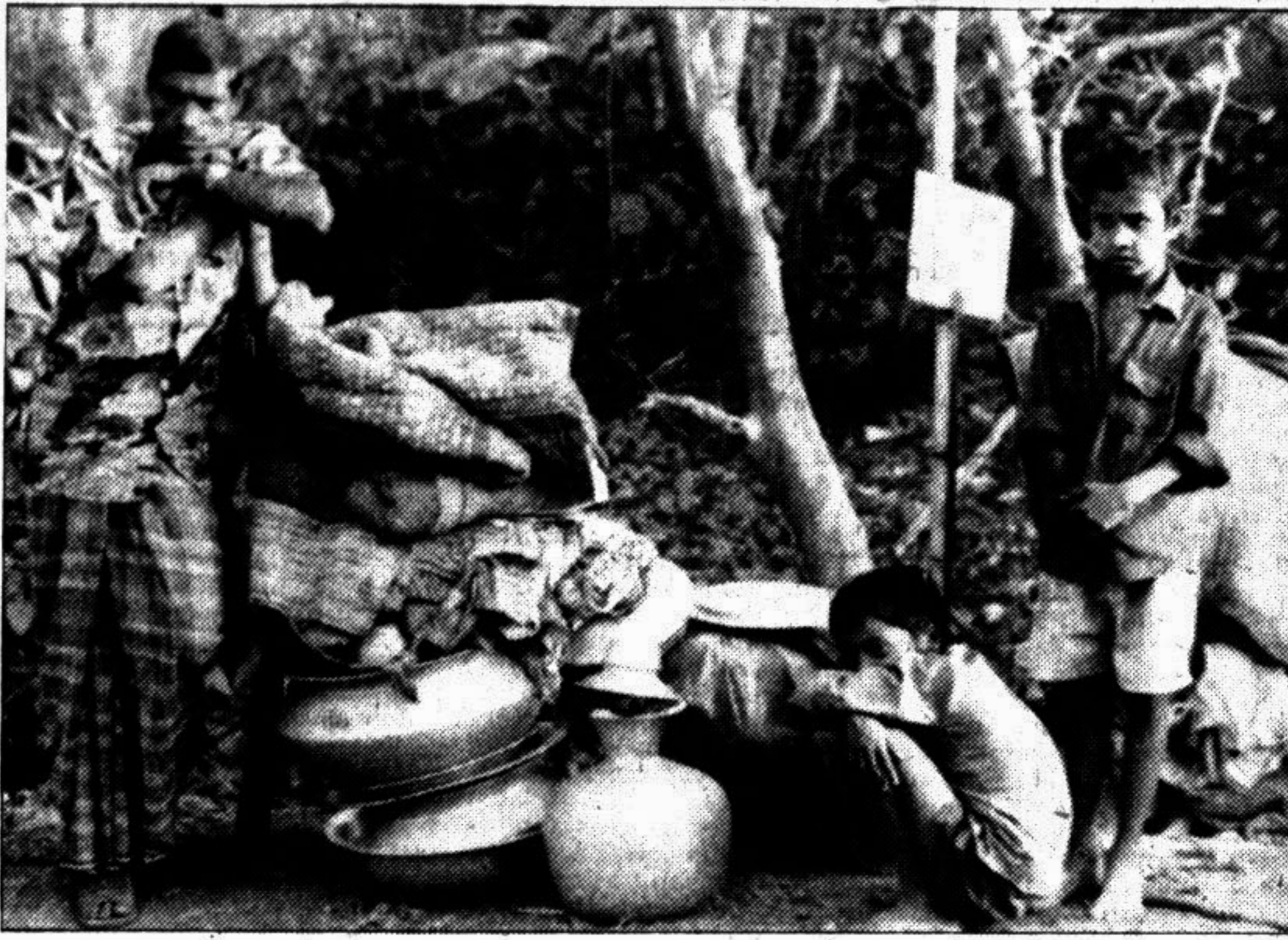
A conversation overheard over one of Dhaka's endless crossed lines had a friend of mine completely puzzled. A man and a woman were following the time-honoured Dhaka tradition of conducting a deep and meaningful romance with a total stranger over the phone, when the woman became indignant and said accusingly to the man, "I just want to make friendship with you, but I can see that you are trying to roommate!" When she asked me in bemusement what "roomdating" involved, I had to confess my total ignorance. However, when I asked another friend, a strong proponent and experienced hand at Benglish what was going on in this conversation, she was able to enlighten me. The woman was clearly looking for a meaningful long-term romance

(here codenamed "making friendship"): the man however was a cad and a bounder, who was seeking an opportunity for an illicit consummation of their relationship i.e. a roommate (when they are actually having a date and they are both physically present in the same room for unnamed nefarious purposes)!

Another factor which can occasionally give rise to hilarity is when a situation occurs when someone speaking in English is conversing with someone speaking in Benglish. Thus, a friend's father was recently quite shocked when a subordinate of his stormed out of the office almost weeping with rage at something he had said. What he had actually said, upon being handed a piece of *standard work* from this employee was, "What is this nonsense?" What followed was an outraged tirade from this gentleman, who shrieked, "You are calling me a nonsense?! Who do you think you are? So what if you are my boss? I will not put up with anyone calling me a nonsense! I am not going to work were anymore!"

Another opportunity for such a linguistic misunderstanding to arise in a relationship was also illustrated to me by the comments of a male friend who was desperately (and rather unsuccessfully) suffering the pangs of puppy love for one of Dhaka's most sought after young women. Upon being braicingly told that even this would pass he moaned "You don't understand how hard it is. I feel her so much. I must tell her that I feel her". Since I was pretty sure that no such opportunity for intimacy had arisen between the two, I found myself being forced to point out to him that by going around making such claims, he was putting himself in the likely position of having his ears boxed by the lady in question!

But my favourite example of Benglish (and its total disregard for English grammar) remains the much loved and oft used phrase "mydear manush" (please note that "mydear" is one word here, and that "manush" means person). The highest compliment that people seem to give someone goes along the lines of saying, "He is really a 'mydear' fellow to me!" Just remember that the worst thing you can do when someone says this is to smirk to yourself... the person might take offence at your lack of respect for his "mydear manush," and given what can happen when you use the word "nonsense" unwarily, who knows what this might lead to!



This family has taken shelter on the road-side after their house was gutted in a fire at the slum behind the Dapa post-office at Fotullah on the out-skirts of the capital yesterday. — Star photo

Birth centenary of Netaji Subhash Bose observed

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose is a pride of Bengal and a great son of the sub-continent who became a legend by establishing 'Azad Hind Fouz' to spearhead the struggle for independence from the British, reports BSS.

It was observed by the speakers at a discussion marking his birth centenary at *Bakultala Zainul Manch* of the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University yesterday. The discussion is the first of the year-long programmes by Netaji Subhash Bose Janma Shatabarshiki Udyapan Parishad which was formed in the city recently with intellectuals, literatures, journalists and cultural activists of the country.

The parishad convenor and historian Dr Sirajul Islam was in the chair while its secretary Harun Habib read out a paper on the life and activities of the great leader. Among others, poet Belal Choudhury, Shamsuzzaman Khan, Mofidul Huq, Lt Col (ret'd) AIM Nurunnabi Bir Bikram and Zakaria Dweep took part in the discussion.

Harun Habib, a journalist, described Netaji as a unique personality with rare human qualities who wanted total freedom of all, irrespective of caste and creed, of the sub-continent from the clutches of imperialism.

Habib expressed the hope that today's generation would take lessons from the life, politics and spirit of the great leader like Netaji who was completely free from communalism. Other speakers said his brand of politics had helped narrow the gap between Hindus and Muslims ultimately abolishing communalism.

They said Netaji's Azad Hind Fouz had inspired all irrespective of religions and specially the women in those days when the struggle for independence was at its peak.

Belal Choudhury said the youth force may draw inspiration from Netaji. Dr Islam said holding of such programmes for the first time in Bangladesh was significant from the historical perspective.

DUJ condemns termination of Inqilab newsmen

The adjourned meeting of the executive committee of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) was held yesterday at the Jatiya Press Club with the DUJ president Zahurul Haq in the chair, reports BSS.

The DUJ in a resolution condemned the termination of the BFUJ assistant secretary general Masud Nizami from the Daily Inqilab. The meeting demanded immediate reinstatement of Nizami to his position and said otherwise, the journalists union would be compelled to initiate programmes for greater movement.

The meeting relieved the unit chief of Daily Inqilab Mohammad Salauddin of his responsibilities and directed the deputy unit chief of the newspaper to reorganise the unit in consultation with the DUJ organising secretary within ten days. The meeting was adjourned till 12 noon January 28.

Int'l workshop on jute Jan 28

A three-day international workshop on 'Jute and the Environment' will be held at hotel Abakash in Mohakhali on January 28, reports UNB. President Abdur Rahman Biswas will be the chief guest in the inaugural session.

Under the auspices of the International Jute Organisation, the workshop will be participated by scientists and delegates from Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Nepal, Thailand, the Netherlands, Japan, Pakistan and Sweden.

CU viva-voce

CHITTAGONG, Jan 23: The viva-voce examination of MA final year in the Department of Philosophy of the Chittagong University for the year 1992 will commence from February 10, reports BSS.

It further said that the oral test of the thesis group of MSc. final year in the Department of Chemistry, 1991 (inorganic group) will be held on January 31.

Appointment

Major General Abu Kaisar Fazlul Kabir, ndc, psc, has recently been appointed as Director General of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), a premier think tank in the country. Major General Kabir has replaced Major General Ghulam Quader, who has returned to Bangladesh Army as Engineer-in-Chief, says a press release.

Biswas, Khaleda greet Arafat

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in separate messages felicitated Yasser Arafat on his being elected the President of the state of Palestine, reports BSS.

In a message to Arafat, Biswas said: "on the occasion of your brilliant victory in the elections for the President of the state of Palestine, I would like to extend to your excellency my heartiest felicitations on your own behalf as well as on behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh."

"We sincerely pray to the Almighty Allah for your excellency's long life, good health, happiness and success in leading the people of Palestine to lasting peace, progress and prosperity."

Begum Zia said: "the government and the people of Bangladesh join me in extending to your excellency our sincerest congratulations on your splendid victory in the recent elections for the President of the state of Palestine."

"On this happy occasion, I would like to reaffirm that Bangladesh has consistently extended unwavering support and will continue to do so to help our Palestinian brethren in their just struggle to realise lasting peace, progress and prosperity."

Happy Marriage Day

To



Farooque and Yesmin (Rozy)
May Allah bless you both with health, happiness and hope!
With love from:
Rekha, Baby, Bhaia & Amma

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CONTACT: FARUQ ALAM, "PSYCHE"
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PM takes iftar with orphans

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had her iftar yesterday with the orphans and alevs at 30 Hare Road, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister talked to them and enquired about their welfare. The iftar was attended by State Minister for religious Affairs MA Mannan and State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman.

ভোরের কাগজ - রেডকাউট

বিশ্বকাপ ক্রিকেট কুইজ প্রতিযোগিতা
প্রথম পর্ব চলছে

খেলা দেখার টানটান উত্তেজনা, মাথাটা খাটানোর মজা আর অনেকগুলো আকর্ষণীয় পুরস্কার -

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- তৃতীয় পুরস্কার : সিডি প্রেয়ার অথবা ১৫ হাজার টাকার প্রাইজবন্ড
- চতুর্থ পুরস্কার : ১০টি, ১ হাজার টাকার প্রাইজবন্ড
- পঞ্চম পুরস্কার : ২০টি, ৫০০ টাকার প্রাইজবন্ড

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