

Pride in one's mother tongue needs to be instilled at an early age.

For a nation in which people gave their lives for the right to speak in our mother tongue and for it to be established as the State language, today we seem rather confused. Is the Bangla language under threat? Is it being abused, undermined or just neglected?

It is generally accepted that the mother tongue is a language learnt naturally. True, but, like any other language, the mother tongue is also picked up from hearing it being spoken around a person. It is human nature to learn from example, from role models we consider appealing, be it a parent, sibling, teacher or media celebrity. From a very young age, we unconsciously begin to imitate gestures, mannerisms, etc. of people we like. The same applies to language. We learn to speak the way people around us speak. But with so many different influences on us -- family, friends, teachers, colleagues, radio, television -- how do we know which to follow? Unless one form is made to seem more positive, more popular and more powerful than all the others.

The saying goes that a lie told repeatedly eventually becomes the truth. Discourse theory states that power produces the dominant discourses in a society, which in turn establish truth and knowledge in that society. Thus, the "mangled" Bangla that we speak today, if we are allowed to continue, may just become the everyday Bangla of tomorrow.

According to eminent educationist Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury, the trend of undermining Bangla may or may not be deliberate, but there is an arrogance regarding the proper learning of the language, with many people believing that they do not need to know the language or to practice it in its correct form.

"A capitalist class which has no concern for culture has set this standard and makes it seem right and that there is no need to learn otherwise. The media then imitate it," says Professor Chowdhury. "The media should not encourage this degraded, insulting and vulgar use of language. They must create awareness by setting a proper standard. Language is not only a reflection of culture; it must follow a standard."

"Literature is not about physical realism," says Chowdhury, in response to the claim that the media -- which has come under attack for the use of informal,