

Progga Laboni

> The mother tongue is the language in which a person thinks, in which their creativity develops, and not having a good grasp of it can be a major drawback throughout a person's life.

today, all that matters is one's looks and people become stars after doing just one or two programmes," she says. "With a few exceptions, most do not give their work the time and seriousness required and they hardly know what they are really doing, let alone in what manner they are speaking. In our time, we used to have to write and learn the script; today, it is simply read out from a teleprompter."

Many people in the media today have no training, says Laboni. Neither is there any accountability. "They make mistakes and then they establish them as being correct." As for the informal Bangla used in television dramas, she says "I am vehemently opposed to it. It is not a language spoken by anyone and only those who do not know the language properly themselves can encourage such use."

Actor Asaduzzaman Noor believes this sort of language is used in the media because performers these days do not know how to speak in proper Bangla and it is quicker and easier to get them to say a dialogue in an informal style.

"This is not a reflection of reality," he says, "because this is not a language that anyone actually speaks. This language has no character and a culture cannot grow based on it. Art is a rich form and its language must be rich as well."

But, believes Noor, this is only a passing phase. "It is like the advent of satellite television, which brought on the influence of foreign media and changed everything for some time. But people always come back to their own cultural roots," says Noor. "Eventually, people got tired of it and when local channels went on the air, they turned to them. Similarly, people will go back to the original, proper and rich form of Bangla. Language will change and evolve, but at it's own pace. It cannot be forced. People won't accept it if it is. This trend is a product of commercialism and it won't last forever."

Film director Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, the instigator of much of the purity debate for having used colloquial Bangla in popular films like *Bachelor* and television serials like "Ekannoborti" and "69", claims that he only portrays reality.

"I use 'metropolitan colloquial' language in my films and videos based on people living in Dhaka for the same reason that a *kooli* cannot be depicted dressed in an expensive suit -- simply because film as an art requires truthful portrayal of details. The costume, the performer, the actions, the locations and the language have to look and sound real. By this I don't mean that everyone in every situation speaks in metropolitan colloquial or that no one ever speaks in standard Bangla. We mix it up a lot and this is reflected in my works. If there is nothing wrong with using Kushtia dialect for a story based in Kushtia, why should it be wrong to use metropolitan colloquial in a story set in Dhaka?"

This colloquial is not the reality of an upper middle class as is claimed by many, argues Farooki. "Those who think it is should go out to places like Nakhalpara, Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Rayerbazar, Azimpur, Gopibag, Sayedabad, the Dhaka University halls, Dhaka College, City College, Tejgaon College and talk to the people there."

Every young generation has their own jargon, he claims, and this is simply reflected in his productions. "And just for the sake of argument," says the filmmaker, "even if one person speaks in that language, why should the media not show it? Don't minorities have the right to be represented in the media? Or is it all about the majority?"

Farooki does not view film as an educational force and points out that the function and characteristics of news and talk shows should not be confused with that of film as an art. "The former deal with formal language and the latter with both formal and informal language."

With regard to how much responsibility a filmmaker has to keep the masses free of the influence of so-called "bad language", Farooki says, "Not an iota! It is not the filmmaker's responsibility to put 'good language' on the lips of someone who actually doesn't speak it. Just as it is not his or her responsibility to infuse good attributes to the characters of Golam Azam or Hitler. If that were so, we would have had to