

Jalebi, Saree, Samosa

When did we become too good for Bangla?

FABIHA AFIFA

"It just doesn't sit well in your mouth, ma."

My mom said, referring to a very simple Bangla word I used in our conversation as I was explaining the Jeffrey Epstein case to her: faash, the Bangla word for "expose".

She almost looked proud as she said it, proud that she feels her daughter has a bit of an American accent. Proud that a foreign, secondary language seemingly sounds more natural from my mouth than my own native language.

I don't blame her though. Asian societies in general tend to mimic Eurocentric cultures, albeit very selectively.

If we only consider a large part of our society's preference of English over Bangla, it is hard to pinpoint the exact moment this started. During the British Raj, going to study abroad or being fluent in English was a luxury only the wealthiest could afford and thus, these became symbols of class and status.

After 1971, Bengalis had an entire country to mould to fit their identity. Unfortunately, pre-existing societal notions led to people undermining their own culture and by the 1990s, English medium schools were being established all over the country and became affordable to many.

English is undoubtedly important. It is the universal language but because of our over-emphasis on the language, Bangla is often neglected in English medium school curricula at best and openly denounced at worst. As a student of that system myself, the number of times I have heard of schools berating students for speaking in

Bangla within school premises is alarming.

This discouragement and neglect of Bangla only fosters the same sense of cultural inferiority in students' minds and ultimately leads to many dismissing Bangla as being too hard or simply "uncool". I have even heard excuses like, "Well, I won't need Bangla in my professional life."

What hurts more than this detachment of the youth from our culture and language is perhaps the youth's attempt in distorting it to fit with Eurocentric standards. Common Bangla words are now replaced by their Hindi counterparts because those words are better known to the Western audience.

Culture and language are ever evolving, yes. Bangla does have words of various languages from all over the world, yes. However, those words came in organically to make the language more adaptable and widen its vocabulary and not whitewash it or mutate it to appease people's need to conform to standards of other cultures.

There is still hope, though. Hope is perhaps what has kept this nation standing after centuries of foreign rule and as we finally hold our future in our own hands, it is important for us to break free from the shackles put on our minds, our pride.

Bangla is not inferior to English, Hindi, or Urdu. We are good enough and it is about time we restore our heritage and language instead of "diversifying" it to a point it is not even itself anymore.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Fabiha Afifa is secretly a Lannister noblewoman and a Slytherin alum. Pledge your allegiance/soul to her at afifafabiha01@gmail.com

Our concerns about the Metaverse

ZAHEEN TASFIA ZUHAIR

Dystopian sci-fi is coming to life.

Here's the sci-fi part: Mark Zuckerberg is working on the Metaverse, a fully immersive augmented reality experience. If his vision comes true, you will be able to use your VR headset and travel Meta's virtual world as an avatar. You will be interacting with other people's avatars, buying virtual clothes. You will even be able to get married online.

Here's the dystopian part of this ordeal. Most of Facebook's critics think the Metaverse is just another scheme to get our time and money. Given Meta's record of knowing the damage its platforms causes and not doing anything about it, most people are siding with critics.

Firstly, safety has to be built into the Metaverse, a point Zuckerberg has emphasised. Unfortunately, Andrew Bosworth, Meta's Chief Technology Officer, says moderation of content in the Metaverse is practically impossible. Even if they tried to regulate, Meta would have to monitor every interaction in their virtual universe. Privacy is a huge concern here, especially if EMG, or electromyographic technology, is integrated.

EMG could detect and intercept nerve impulses and translate it into the corresponding signals in the virtual space. So the thought of moving your fingers in



enough to send texts. The catch is, your brain activity will need to be monitored by Meta.

How much do you want to trust them?

Even scarier, have you seen the deepfake of Zelenskyy asking Ukrainians to surrender? Thankfully, people noticed glitches and realised the video was fake. But Meta is developing highly realistic avatars. Someone could impersonate you by customising their avatar to look just

like you. If they carry out cybercrimes, you could be blamed. Getting hacked will be more terrifying than ever.

Additionally, cyber-bullying may only get worse. And not just because spending all of one's time on social media without interacting with real people makes one insensitive and narcissistic.

Augmented reality will make you feel like you are in the real world. WION reported that a woman's avatar was groped

by another Metaverse user's avatar. When the woman asked the stranger to stop, he said it was the Metaverse and he could do whatever he wanted.

Then there's the concern about misinformation, fake news and propaganda. If people spend most of their life in the Metaverse, Zuckerberg essentially controls what they see. One who controls the flow of information controls the world. If someone controls the Metaverse... they can control our lives.

The people we meet, our relationships, will be decided by algorithms. The rise of dating apps correlates to the fall of long term-relationships. If one can look like however they want – be whoever they want – in the Metaverse, real life quickly loses appeal.

References

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2. Moon on Youtube: (Dec 25, 2021) *Metaverse: The Most Evil Business in the World*
3. Meta: The Metaverse and How We'll Build It Together – Connect 2021
4. Gravitas Plus. (Jan 8, 2022) *The Metaverse Explained*

Zaheen thinks watching productivity videos makes you automatically productive. Send help at [instagram.com/tasfiazuhair](https://www.instagram.com/tasfiazuhair)