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Rubana Huq

In Transit: In quest of an 'O' in place of an 'A'

April 13, 2011



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Boishakh is all about being spelt with an uninvited A and an absent H and becoming Baisakh instead.

Boishakh is all about being greeted with unpalatable Vs being used in ShuVo greetings.

Apparently a friend of ours has warned users against using ShuVA NAVAVARShA to which my daughter drafted but had not sent out the following response: "Hello SASA (chacha)!" As for myself, I have been wanting to faithfully in Bangla yet have been shying away from Bijoy for a long time, and have just come across AVRO keyboard in Bangla which is also not stress free...

As a race, we beat everyone hollow when it comes to celebrations. We seize every opportunity to celebrate and therefore, with any long weekend, many of us fly off to neighbouring lands for a quiet/racing/karmic holidays. Be it Ekushey February, Pohela Boishakh, or Eid-ul-fitr. It's impossible to get seats on outbound flights and it's equally impossible to persuade any friend or family member to stay back for the sake of tradition. Our tradition, after all, has been hijacked by the electronic media. One sings to be watched; one performs to be a part of a contest; one loves just because one has been chosen to be a reality show superstar. In a world like this, why would Bangladeshis go to Ramna Batamul and risk their precious necks? Doesn't make sense! It's far important to follow the national media taking pride in live telecasting the show along with the private channels and watching it in our private spaces in our own comfort zones.

As for our past lives, we have long forgotten the taste of Boishakh. Thanks to the mullahs threatening to turn Ramna into another Sindh valley. Thanks to the ferocious clerics with nails jutting out of their sticks, cracking the opponents' skulls with a clear conscience, all in the name of Allah. I wonder, how does our Lord not blow this specie with a simple vanishing wind? For how long does Bangladesh have to tolerate the lethal idiocy of extremism? For how long will Bauls live in fear because of their long hair and for how long Fatwa continue to decide our lives, tradition and faith?

When will we ever peak?

True, this country is in transit. This country is crossing one plain and is inching towards the sky. A nation comes with a baggage of mistakes, misinterpretations, mal-observations

and murky doubts. The negative load is always a payable account that needs to be reconciled before any acquisition of a higher culture. Therefore, with progress, there's a stint of disgrace, corruption that mars our national spirit. There are mornings that shame us with news of share scams and stunning loss of wickets. For this we need not look away from our festive souls and lay in despair. 1418 will be brilliant just because of a few unusual Bangalis who are willing carriers of our old torches, singing their own version of Esho hey Boishakh, racing to the Batamul in full speed, wearing their best clothes and best moods.



Little Baishakhi with her clay model.

I met one such angel, Baishakhi. Baishakhi, a 12-year-old attends grade IV and was at a celebration point in a tiny little school that has a tiny wooden bridge which disallows any visitor any easy access to the school. There is a drain blocking direct access and the soil by the side of the school is muddy and needs filling. There are neighbours who scream every time the children queue up for singing the National Anthem.

It's an ordinary neighbourhood with extraordinary children. Baishakhi is just one of them who were standing right there with a full layout of a house made with clay that has a modern set up: a living room with a rocking chair, two human figures on a bedroom, a dining et al. It's a complete urban scene. She is wearing a full set of artificial jewellery complete with dangling earrings and complemented by her red and white block printed sari. She is dark and beautiful. She is Bangladesh for me.

There is a young nine-year-old Shagor Baul, being treated for Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma at Square Hospital. I am sure Shagor would have enthralled Ramna on Pahela Boishakh this year. 1418 will miss out on Shagor. Hopefully 1419 won't. I have seen Shagor in Phalgun. It's tragic that we are missing out on him in Boishakh. For me, Shagor is my Bangladesh.

While we all plan our own little versions of Boishakh and run away from festivities, cursing the sun and the stampede possibilities, Boishakh will always belong to our little Boishakhis and Sagars, who'll build their own clay models and will hum their own tune, irrespective of an acknowledgement from either the public or the private.

1418 will surely flow through these tiny palms, flood them with hope, dodge our elite hunger and satiate only who sense beauty and wrath in the one big bowl of Boishakh.

Atharo-tey desh okkhoto thakbey, ei kamonaye...

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1. Somnath GuhaRoy on April 14, 2011 at 1:09 am

Living far away from Bangla and India, I was missing Pahela Baishakh and getting increasingly unhappy and frustrated. Hitting bdnews24.com, I found myself.

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