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1419

April 14, 2012



“meney lendering is khryyme; arey bhai bozsen na keno ki voltey sassi!!”

These were the lines that I woke up to middle of the night, watching two participants in a midnight talk show. The stresses on “crime” and the speakers’ desire to emphatically argue that one party was worse than the other, made the debate worse with even worse form of ingregi and bangla. I laughed my heart out! This is what I love most about ourselves; we are a happy race. In spite of one *ilish* costing Taka 1200.00, in spite of consuming one “*anda*” at Tk 12.00 a piece, we still look forward to *panta doi, koi, shorshey bhorta* and rounds of *kobita abbritti* on Pahela Baishakh.

OMG (oh my God), I almost sound like an Indian forcing English to be my vernacular, claiming distortions as per my convenience, inserting Bangla wherever and whenever I require. But then again, isn’t that the case? Are we not supposed to be free in our desh, saying whatever and whenever we want to, tugging corrupt mountains on our backs and still sounding like Sisyphus, hoping to peak again with equal audacity of acquiring bags of wealth, over and over again?

While there are rail bogeys running about leaving money trail behind, while there are bridges being pillared with bubble financing, while six banks will be sitting with their main branches on the pockets of a few politicians, while special licenses and privileges are signed, sealed and delivered to a few sons of a few of the seniors of the soil, while the walls are pasted with deceptive mug shots of the corrupt exiled sons announcing their comebacks, 1419 has just arrived with a fresh promise of fresh rains washing away our regrets, pain and hurt...

While we mark the *Chaitro Shongkranti* with ektaras, dugdugis, bandanas marked with red and green, and bauls adoring our stages, let us also remember that these colours are naturally available for the people who live in places like Korail, where one bulldozer can level the green with red, by either spilling the chilli powders from their unstable shelves or by rolling it over a body of a child, marking the lives of parents with a permanent red marker, stained in blood...

There was a mild suggestion from my family quarters of strolling around the streets of Dhaka with two journalists, Simon Dring and Mark Tully who are currently in Bangladesh, and who are being honoured at a private level for the next three days. I realised that this would be a great opportunity to impress upon these visitors what Baishakh is all about. But I didn’t have the heart to do this, on this Pahela. With the site of RAB taking positions all over the city, with security being tightened in all corners, Dhaka feels like being a City of Fear...

I don’t want guns to be seen on my streets when I share my Baishakh with the foreign friends of ’71. I don’t want to be a tour guide, hastily masking a leaking drainpipe; I don’t want to make rash detours when I sense a neighbourhood pulsating with anxiety. If I could, then I would only take them around, on streets as alive and genuine as the Charukala parade, enjoy doi panta at the crack of dawn and then flaunt Pahela with pride.

Since Dhaka today, treads with trepidation of uncertainties, I would rather safely tuck my dreams under my pillows and wake up to perhaps an evolved 1419, dramatically different from my silly, idealistic wish list, which I tick off everyday...

In one of the dailies, a picture of a group of young tribal children spaying their rivers with petals caught my eyes. They are seen celebrating their Bishu festival that coincides with Pahela Baishakh. They are celebrating the ending of the old year for three days, with a hope of the Karnaphuli forgiving their sins while they decorate its waves in their best possible behaviour. True, their rituals defy reality; their faith overrides our daily political realities; their practices put ours to shame, reminding us that in spite of the repression and bias that they suffer, in spite of their tongues being tied to chains, they celebrate the flow of their lives with a silent mountain pride. But fortunately or unfortunately, we, in the plains, do not believe in complicit obedience.

For the last eleven years, Ramna has continued to haunt us with memories of a bomb blast that has scarred the nation forever. The families of the ten, who died, even if we have forgotten them all, don't celebrate Pahela the way we do. Point is, how can a state continue to willingly suspend recollection of tragedies? Or is the state devising a new magic realism that will continue to overlap the canvas of disaster with newer lies and newer soothsayers? Or perhaps, newer robots...?

OMG, haven't you read about it yet...about how digital we have become? The Dhaka Metropolitan Police will be using 'improvised exclusive device' a.k.a 'robots' to track and detonate bombs in the city of Dhaka on or Pahela!

If not anything else, maybe, just maybe, 1419 will be digital after all! 😊

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Tags: [Bangladesh](#), [Pahela Baishakh](#)



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