

The detachment I feel from cultural events

NABIHA NUSAIBA

A red and white saree, a wrist full of bangles and a bucketload of excitement. I had it all. I was not yet four when my dad had been assigned to duty on Pahela Baishakh at Ramna Park. The entire house was in a state of hullabaloo as its residents donned themselves in new clothes to celebrate the auspicious day with him. I spent all of that day inspecting the world from a king's viewpoint, sitting atop my father's shoulders. And oh! The things I saw. In my book, nothing will ever trump the new year celebrations of 2005. Over the next few years, dad was posted all over the country while mom travelled the world. Orchestras in Ramna were taken over by *nagardolas* in the neighbourhood park before finally being replaced by processions on the television. The television remains turned off now, cultural festivals have blended into my regular days, leaving me feeling monochrome while the world showers in vibrant colours.

Pahela Baishakh isn't the only victim of my indifference. You could throw heaps of marigold at my head during *Pahela Falgun* or drown me in a pool of flour during *No-banno*, I doubt I will do anything but cough a little. The perpetrators?



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

A LACK OF TIME

My parents tried their best to introduce us to our culture. But there's only so much you can do when you're physically unavailable and paranoid about the wrongs of the world. After 12 years of complaining, God pulled an UNO reverse card on me. Suddenly, I was the family member to be

swamped with work from all those yearly board exams.

A REPETITION OF TIME

You wake up, put on some makeup, do your hair, get into a nice outfit and set out for an amazing day. When I was four, I was excited to go to my first ever festival. For me, the great unknown lay ahead. After a while,

it became more of a hassle. You do the same things every year just to experience the same things you did last year. Granted, these only happen once a year, but they're still the same things.

A SHIFT IN TIME

One of the things my mother has in common with my friends is their mutual hatred for crowds. Most of my friends prefer trendy restaurants to Ramna Park. Me? I love crowds. Where there's a crowd, there's life. Younger me thought I would thrive on *Mangal Shobhajatra*s but I never thought I would have to do it by myself. Have you ever been to a procession alone? If so, my contact details are below, let's figure out what's wrong with you.

CAPTURING TIME

Lately, *melas* are more of a marathon. The first person to get a profile picture worthy photo taken of themselves wins. Listen, I get it. You got all dressed up, it'd be stupid not to. But it's annoying when that is all you do. Why can't we also sit and experience the music while munching on some sugar candies? Why not do both?

Nusaiba secretly wonders if she's pronouncing her name wrong. Set her straight at n.nusaibaah@gmail.com

Board games you can play online

FAIZA ADIL

Social distancing is uncharted territory, bottled up in our homes, texts and calls just don't seem to really imitate the solidity of interacting and hanging out with your friends and loved ones. A frustrating yet fulfilling game of just about any board game is another luxury that we can't afford right now, but there are a few places that just about cut it. Stuck at home with an abundance of time and the constant company of the internet, here are board games you can play with your friends online!

SKRIBBL.IO

Trying to figure out what your friend is trying to draw or act out makes some of the most memorable memories, it's hilariously frustrating. Skribbl.io is like an online Pictionary, but it's fairly easy to set up and play, with quirky sound effects, an interesting point system and funny avatars. Each round, one player draws out their word with an array of colours and everyone else simply types out their guesses in the chat box. Skribbl has slightly better drawing tools compared to the array of other I/O games out there, so that's a point in its favour.

PRETEND YOU'RE XYZZY

Cards Against Humanity is the most entertaining of games out there, and a big boost to your ego at every round you win. After



all, it's all about your sense of humor. Pretendyoure.xyz lets you join games or create rooms where you can decide what the cards are about. This spin off lets you pick your own packs and rules and is just like the original version.

WEBOPOLY

While it may look confusing, Webopoly is an interesting version of classic Monopoly but with other websites as property and a few unique tweaks. The game goes like every monopoly goes, you know what to expect. Give its appearance a little bit of patience, once you're used to it, it's just as frustrating as traditional Monopoly!

PLAY.UNOFREAK

Say what you will, a quick game of Uno is always fun. Play.unofreak lets you create games, or play with complete strangers, it's fast and simply - Uno. The best part however, is the fact that you get to decide on the most arguable moves Uno has; stacking and doubling cards, this is a site where you play it how you like it.

PLAYINGCARDS.IO

Basic games are under often underappreciated, a simple game of go fish, cards, checkers or crazy eights goes a long way. Also with their own Cards Against Humanity spinoff, Playingcards.io lets

you play all of these games and create your own! A simple site that just does the job and hits quite a few birds with one stone.

There's dozens more sites like these that you'll find if you go digging on the internet which you could most definitely do with all of this time at home. But these are some that'll get you started, get your friends and get on these websites to beat your boredom!

Faiza enjoys the lazy company of her overweight cat and a million deadlines, reach her at faiza2421@gmail.com



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Baishakh Like Never Before

FAISAL BIN IQBAL

The nation-wide celebrations of Pahela Baishakh — the most significant festival of the Bengali calendar — will not take place this year. As sad as it sounds, we have to come to terms with it. Covid-19 has stalled the entire world, and with growing concerns over community transmission and how social gatherings can accelerate the spread of the virus, cancelling the celebrations was the only viable option.

There is, however, ways you can actually celebrate the event. If online classes and work from home can be a thing, why not "*bashay boshe Baishakh?*" As odd and unsatisfying it may sound, this is perhaps the only way we will be able to keep our minds off the panic, and celebrate the festivities from within the safety of our home. Here's how.

Well, you start the day like you would normally on the morning of the Bengali new year.

Get up early and take a quick shower. Then, put on the colours of the day — red and white, preferably. Stay away from the dark tones. Given that you will be spending the entire day at home and away from all the heat and chaos, you can wear that saree or panjabi without a worry. If you could not care any less about traditional attire, just put on anything you are comfortable with. Thankfully, aunts cannot judge you for your wardrobe while you are indoors.

For breakfast, you might have to skip on the *panta-ilish* supreme mega combo offer, assuming that you could not get the *ilish* because of the shutdown. Hence, you will need an alternative. You could try *muri* with a mix of your choice, most likely *chanachur* and *morich*. Boom! The *phalmuri*. Or, you could do a typical quarantine experiment and make an abomination out of it; puffed rice with Nutella.

After a hearty breakfast, it is time to meet up with friends. Sadly, you do not have the option to "*Melay laire*" this year. You will need to come up with yet another alternative to hanging out with your friends. Luckily for you, applications like Zoom, Messenger and Discord can connect you without you or them having to come out of social isolation. One group video call, and you will get to be with all your friends on the same platform.

As you engage in the casual Baishakh conversations, you will suddenly realise that this might be the first Pahela Baishakh where you cannot take pictures with your friends. Of course, that is not entirely true as you can just take screenshots of your video conference. You can use all the beautiful filters just like you would in a normal selfie. Some of those filters will even put flower crowns on your head, just as fake as the ones they sell at the fairs, but free.

At the fairs, you usually get to witness a wide range of live performances arranged

for your entertainment — concerts, puppet shows, and the occasional argument between a food-stall owner and a customer over the price of a plate of *fuchka*. These are nothing you cannot recreate at your home. With a little effort, you too can entertain yourselves just like they do at the fairs.

Speaking of food stalls, it is possible that delivery services will be running full operations that day. So, if you feel like it, you and your friends could simultaneously order the same food from the same place. You can even play a mini game to see who gets the fastest delivery. Fun, right?

The *mangal shobhajatra* is the biggest Pahela Baishakh attraction every year. However, this year the procession will not be carried out due to the ongoing crisis. Should that stop you from doing a "mini" shobhajatra at your house? Absolutely not. Make some giant paper masks, and parade around the house with them. Your family members will either be elated at this cultural display, or probably grow more concern about your mental health, something you do not see that often.

By evening, you and your friends are supposed to be at a coffee shop somewhere in Banani or Dhanmondi. Since that is impossible right now, you guys should go back to talking over social media. Make some Dalgona coffee to give yourself that coffee shop feels. In case you want a more realistic experience, just

take all the chairs at your home and bring them inside your room. Occupy those chairs with anything you can find around you, like stuffed toys or dirty laundry. Afterwards, wait in the corner with your coffee, and as it gets cold, see if any of those inanimate objects gets up from their respective chairs and leave. Chances are they won't, nor will they get anything to eat or drink, and that's as real as it gets. With that cold cup of authentic Dalgona, your Baishakh celebrations will have officially come to an end.

At the end of the day, what we need to remember is that this pandemic has the entire human civilisation with its back against the wall. For now, our best and perhaps only chance at keeping ourselves and our loved ones safe from this disease is through social distancing. We will have to keep maintaining this precaution until we find a cure. We know, this Baishakh will be different for all of us. For once we will be entering a new year where we cannot just forget the past and move on.

For your safety, as well as the safety of your loved ones, stay home, follow the rules, and help flatten the curve. *Shubho Noboborsho*.

Faisal wants to be the very best, like no one ever was. To survive university is his real test, to graduate is his cause. Send him memes and motivation at abir.afc@gmail.com