important Christian holiday, when many people leave town, our programme has been pushed back to the last week of April.

We are not unhappy for this delay, since there is little time to choreograph the dances and hold rigorous practices. In my house we are organizing some of the group dances: the rain dance to describe the heat of Summer with which the Bengali year starts, and then after the rainy season has been depicted by a lyrical dance by two Bengali girls, we will collapse the autumn months of Shorot and Hemonto into the season of harvesting and planting and show that with a harvest dance to a catchy version of an old Bengali song 'Ayerey Kati dhan' which I found on the you-tube.

The music for this dance has captured my Italian student's attention. At the end of every session they are humming and singing the song. To take advantage of this high level of receptivity, generated by the energy and universality of melody and rhythm, I have slipped in as much information as possible into the dance sessions. The students have received a copy of the songs in Roman English, so they can pronounce and follow the words of the song, and a list of the key words and verbs with their meanings in Italian. I have also included the full text of the songs in the original Bangla to help them read. But this is all conscious background information, part of my habitual pedagogic function. The rest happens by the alchemy of the human instinct for rhythm and melody. Since the songs are repetitive and simple, I notice that my students' Italian tongue seems to have no trouble parroting at least the repetitive chorus stanzas. This is the same class that in a normal classroom lesson would trip over every second new Bengali word I introduced, only because they were strange and static. But when in the process of dancing, the words become a measure of rhythm or code for a beat and the words enter the consciousness of the learners through the pace and rhythm of the body and are released from the mouth with the exhaled breath. I find it fascinating to note how instinctively the Italian vocal organs process foreign sounds when disguised as music. I am amazed and amused to hear my students humming to themselves entire phrases with emphatic beats: 'SHOnali DHAnero ISHara TEY....aayerey shobey kastey haatey/aayerey kati dhan.KATI dhan, KATI dhan aayerey.'

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To help the students understand the action we have choreographed, I shout 'Remember, kaastey is *falce* (scythe), haatey is *mano* (hand)' and promptly I have a row of Italian farmers gracefully chopping down sheafs of '*pianto di riso*' from my living room floor. Then for another number I watch six pairs of arms waving half-heartedly, like dying birds in the air and I holler, 'Asmaan is *cielo* (sky); megh is *nuvola* (cloud); paani is *aqua* (water) chaya is *ombra* (shade) and the land is baking like a hot pizza', and immediately my Roman rainmakers leap up convincingly to pull down water from the heavens.

In fact, I think I will ask them to stop practicing now because the *cielo* outside is covered in dark *nuvole* and it is threatening to come down in an outpouring of *pioggia*. Sigh! Sorry everyone, I am exhausted; and while my Italian students might be improving their Bangla, my language skills are going haywire. In fact, by the time I write again and we are ready to stage our Boishakh programme, I may have gone totally speechless.

But for now, I wish all of you Auguri per Pohela Boishakh. Buon Anno tutti! Or as my dancing Italian students would say: '*Nobo borsher shubechcha!*' ■