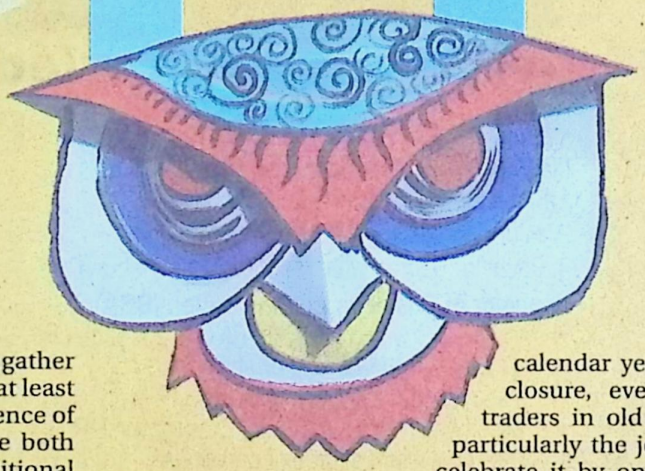
Adda Topic: Celebration of Pahela Baishakh

Adda Location: Some university canteen

Participants: Iffat Jabin Tuni, Nafiza Nasarullah, Afsana Ahmed, Nujhat Jannatun, Prokash Mohammad

Adda Buzz

Tanzina Rahman



THERE'S a customary belief that one should gather at Ramna Botomul, under the banyan tree, at least once in their lifetime to savour the true essence of Pahela Baishakh. Indeed, the experience can be both breathtaking and unifying. To some, it is the traditional dishes and the colourful parades, while to others, it is the effervescent programmes by Chayanot artistes that compose the memorable dawn of the first day of Bengali year.

In this week's adda we asked some students from renowned universities in Dhaka to share their experience on how they like to celebrate Pahela Baishakh.

"Since exam is nearby, unfortunately this time around the university won't be organizing any Pahela Baishakh event," said Tuni. "But few years back, I remember we had a blast in Gulshan Youth Club! We had a concert followed by a magnificent mela."

"But I guess this year Baishakh will be nothing more than a friendly hangout day," Nafiza joked.

Thinking about the best alternatives to hangout and celebrate Pahela Baishakh, Nujhat said-- "I think for students, University of Dhaka, especially the CharuKala gathering is the most spectacular convene where one enjoys the most. Apart from the opulent gatherings that are held in fancy restaurants these are the places that I believe are more significant to Bengalis."

"Personally, I like to take part in the carnival and parades during Baishakh, but then again we have to walk from one part of Dhaka to another, until we get boils under our feet, since getting transport is almost impossible during the day," she added.

Prokash, who is involved with one of the huge events-Kochikachar Mela in old Dhaka, said that the mela is indeed enthralling for both children and adults. "Crowd becomes so massive that one has to squeeze in to get through to the next stall," he added.

"Last year, I took part in a very delightful part of Bengali culture," said Afsana. "Halkhata, which is the Bengali calendar year book closure, every year traders in old Dhaka, particularly the jewelers, celebrate it by opening a new accounts book. Many traders invite their customers and entertain them with traditional sweets and showcase the latest jewelry collection. This tradition has been followed for years, and this year I intend to take part in it as well," she smiled.

"Back in the school days we used to make greeting cards and share with our friends," Nafiza interrupted. "I remember when I was studying in Viqarunnisa, we would dress-up in red and white saris and the last two classes would be dedicated to celebrate the occasion. Sometimes Baul singers would come and we would dance as they sang," she giggled with her friends.

"We don't do greeting cards anymore but we do dress-up in gorgeous red and white saris and call up all our friends for *panta* and *ilish*," she said.

"Some of our friends who live abroad miss the excitement of this day. Poor fellows," Tuni winked. "But nevertheless we upload thousands of photographs to show them what they missed," everybody laughed.

"No, actually I think a lot of Bangladeshi communities around the world are very active when it comes to organizing traditional events," Tuni said.

"In fact, I have this friend whose family is living in Australia. Since the month of April is unbearable because of the heat, they decided to celebrate Pahela Baishakh last month. I found it very interesting," Nujhat added.

Pahela Baishakh is incomplete without the song 'Melay Jaire.. .Melay Jaire…' and this year the students decided to sing it in parades that they will be attending early morning, rejoicing every moment of Pahela Baishakh.

Photo: Mustafizur Rahman