

This year, like other years, we came across a vibrant *deshi* crowd playing *dhak, dhol,* tambourine and pandeiros. Their rhythmic movements adorned by colourful masks could be seen from a far. A spark of nationalism spurred up instantly. It was hard to hide our smiles or ignore the sudden rush of even looking at them from a distance. As I saw passers-by staring at this extraordinary crowd I felt proud, taking in the colour and tempo of the celebrations. We tried to join the horde but a quick peek of a piece of *shorshe Ilish* (Hilsa in mustard) dragged us to Ananda- a popular but slightly over-priced Bangladeshi restaurant. Yet it seemed worth it to celebrate the special day with pomp. Only one piece of Hilsha with plain white rice was 10 Dollars which converts to Tk 800 almost and each *bharta* would be 2 dollars each, that is Tk160! Our lunch was accompanied by *sutki bharta, begun* and *alu bharta* amid many other Bangladeshi food.



Posters to celebrate a cultural identity.

Many cultural programmes were also organised in various Bangladeshi communities including *Chayanot*-Toronto in different locations. The songs and dances particularly by American-born Bangladeshis were perhaps sometimes not perfect by *deshi* standards but the spirit was all there. There were big *boishakhi melas* as well with stalls filled with saris, *fotuas*, *pithas*, and many other ethnic items.

What makes me happier is the fact that this celebration goes beyond religion or politics and is a day when Bangladeshis and Bengalis all over the globe can take part in this simple ritual of music and colour at least for one day. At least for one day we could be free of thought of being a part of a nation that is in so much turmoil. Certainly, there is no identity crisis at the Baishkahi celebrations. If a fete like this can bring us all together around the globe, surely there is hope that our nation can be united with a little bit of tolerance and team work. ■