

# How to be Bengali for a day

**AATEEYA SAABEEN**

Are you afraid that you're not celebrating Pahela Baishakh in the most authentic Bangali way? Do you think you're not traditional enough? For those of us who set aside this one particular day out of 365 to be 100 percent Bengali, here's a checklist to make your life easier.

## Updating your Facebook status at dawn

Much to your dismay, the Bangla New Year starts as the sun goes up. So make sure you don't post "Happy Bangla New Year to all my friends" at/after 12am.

## Having Pantalish

Are you a *real* Bengali if you do not have pantalish even when there's a ban on hilsa fishing? What a disgrace to our culture and society!

## Attending the cultural programme at Ramna

Festivities usually begin at the crack of dawn with the artists from Chhayanaut ushering in the first day of the Bangla year with songs of Tagore and Nazrul. This is the one event that you don't want to miss, even if the thought of waking up before dawn and looking your best seems like a Herculean task.

## Joining the Shobhajatra

Mangal Shobhajatra is a rally arranged by the students of Charukala, which is surely one of the major attractions. The theme for the procession changes every year and usually revolves around our heritage and culture. This is a whole lot of fun, even if

you are physically unfit and have the stamina of a sad panda.

## Riding Nagordola

The localised version of a Ferris Wheel is something that will always be the highlight of my Pahela Baishakh revelry. Even though this manually operated ride looks like it's going to fall apart any second, the feeling you get when you go up while the air hits your face is priceless!

## Buying random stuff off the street

After Pahela Baishakh every year, I'll somehow end up with things that I'll never need which I had no recollection of buying either. This Baishakh, buy anything and everything you find while walking on the street. Who knows, you might need 17 clay dolls and 5 dugdugi some day!

Definitely buy and blow those mini vuvuzelas, and make people go permanently deaf, securing your place in hell.

## Getting fleeced by the Bedeni

Even though this is something I particularly don't like nor enjoy, this has been an inseparable part of every Pahela Baishakh. The *bedeni* (female snake charmers) will come up to you with a cute little box and threaten to let loose whatever is inside that box, which is usually a not-so-cute little snake. While you scream your heart out and try to get away, the *bedeni* demands you pay some money in exchange of leaving you alone.

Don't be a fool. Pahela Baishakh happens only once every year and it's an

occasion that brings together everyone. Embrace your Bengali-ness, put on a lot of sunscreen, and do not put on a lot of makeup because it's most certainly going to melt. Here's to hoping for a happy and peaceful year!

*Aateeya Saabeen, who scarily resembles a koala in looks and in sleeping patterns, is a dedicated Beatlemaniac. She believes her Hogwarts letter got lost in the mail because they misspelled her name. Leave her a message at Saabeen226@yahoo.com*



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