

Dawn of a new Baishakh

Pahela Baishakh is back, so is the promise of a new year that it never fails to bring. After a two-year gap forced by the pandemic precautions, we are once again set to celebrate this very Bengali festival with all the fervour and gaiety it demands.

The quintessential celebrations will once more begin at day break under the shade of the grand ashwatha tree (sacred fig, reminiscent of the Banyan) at the Ramna Park. Songs of Tagore, Nazrul and other poets will play too, chorused in united voices, making some of us nostalgic, and creating fresh memories for the young ones, to cherish later in their lives. The young and dynamic students of Charukala have been busy painting colourful murals on walls and paper, as well as laboriously creating giant sculptures and masks, reflecting Bengali heritage. Today, those were paraded around during the joyous Mangal Shobhajatra, on the streets around Dhaka University, once more. The unnamed baul will be singing at the roadside now, with admirers gathered around, listening to the tunes of rustic and rural Bengal!

Baishakh has always been

about human resilience. The Baishakhi sun seems unbearable yet we never fail to find an array of positivity in it. As Tagore puts it, "muchhey jak glani, ghuchey jak jora; ogni-snaney shuchi hok dhora (let the weary be erased, infirmity cease; hallowed be the Earth to bathe in your fire). After two tough years fighting a pandemic, our emotions could not have been more aligned with Tagore than this!

For what at times seemed a never-ending ordeal, the entire duration of the COVID-19 pandemic not only curbed our celebrations and stifled our spirits, it also stomped on the business created by festivals— all peak times for local businesses to flourish. It also pushed us into our own metaphorical boxes, isolating us from each other. With the pandemic easing up across the globe, we can finally start to relive our lives freely.

With the new day and the new year, let us again hope that joy and stability return to our lives, the new and old normal arrive at a balance, and life gets back on track.

Subho Nababarsha!

MAHFUZ ANAM



