



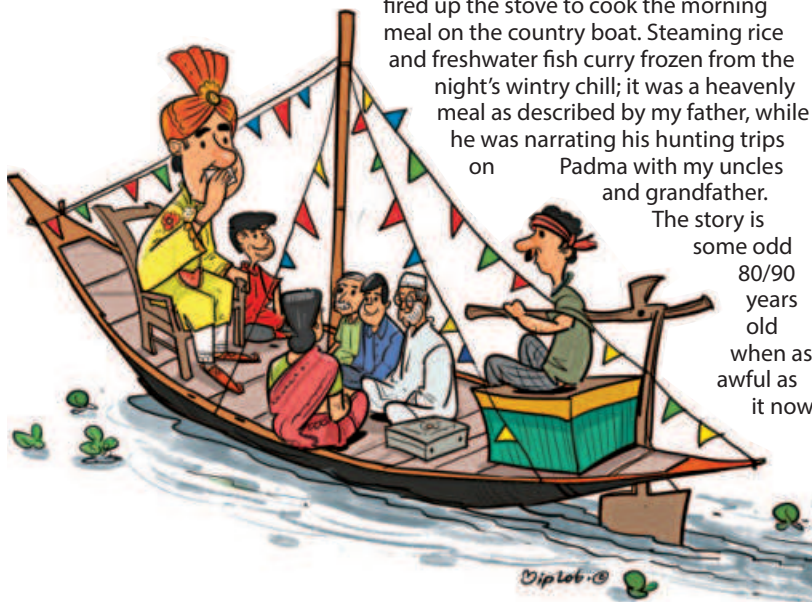
#PERSPECTIVE

# ... ABOUT A BOAT

A foggy winter morning with no indication of the sun coming out any soon, you see three large country boats slowly making its way through the creeks of the mighty Padma. The silhouette of an elderly man with a gun standing at the fore aiming at the cranes, the snipes and the grebes (*chokha*) is an unusual image. His sons

sitting still on the deck while the boatmen fired up the stove to cook the morning meal on the country boat. Steaming rice and freshwater fish curry frozen from the night's wintry chill; it was a heavenly meal as described by my father, while he was narrating his hunting trips on Padma with my uncles and grandfather.

The story is some odd 80/90 years old when as awful as it now



seems, hunting was a popular sport. My love for boats and boat journeys began from that point in time when my father re-counted his memory.

I love the country boats of Bangladesh—*bojra, goyna, mallar, panshi, dinghi*; such romantic names, and to think there are over 150 different types of boats in our country!

My most recent memory, a part of a day-long boat trip with almost five-star hospitality, was witnessing a loud and merry wedding procession on boats in the Sundarbans.

From the high deck of my launch I saw a string of boats decorated with purple, magenta, yellow paper flags, a mike booming latest Hindi wedding numbers— though this movie-like situation demanded the Bangla *leelabali* song; happy people dressed in bright dresses and saris were dancing to the beat. A groom in his white sherwani, paper flower garland, the sequin studded pagri sat on a high chair, which was sort of his dais, was smiling coyly at us, holding a white handkerchief over his mouth.

I joined the noise cheerfully, wishing good luck to his procession. I being the cynic, the dark clouds gathering at the afternoon horizon reminded me of Rabindranath's *Noukadubi* where two newlywed couples met with an accident while returning in a boat from their respective weddings; the prelude to an excitingly starry-eyed read.

I didn't want to spoil the romance of the

moment instead, and realised that the wedding parties, be those on boats, which is a rare sight for us now, or the more common motorcades, have the same wedding gaiety and merry-making regardless. Boisterous, giddy the groom going to his wedding and the coy bride-to-be waits for an eternal bliss of lifetime happiness be it in a thatched hut or a multi-storied apartment.

Coming back to my love for these water vessels, I have a legendary anecdote to share— would you think that I once carried a boat home? It was during a visit to a backwaters area— I was invited by our caretaker to his house. I waded through the duckweed and water-hyacinth filled waters in a *donga*, which is a dugout made out of Palmyra palm hull, to reach our destination. The elongated boat made from a tree trunk filled my mind with wonderful notions and I picked one up for Tk 3000, loaded it onto a pick-up van, and carried it all the way to my rooftop garden in Dhaka. It served as a flower bed for many years until the husk mixed with the mud and remained no more!

This first day of Boishakh, free yourself from all your urban bindings, ride a boat, have a hawai mithai, wear a rickshaw art tee and celebrate being Bangladeshi. Shuvo Noboborsho!

By RBR

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ঐতিহ্যের আর এক তাম্র আধুনিকতা  
ঠিক যেমন রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য মানেই

**স্যান্ডালিনা**  
সোপ



রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য...

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