



Pohela Boishakh

Find out about the Bengali calendar and the beautiful festivals and traditions that come throughout the year.



Pohela Boishakh
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"Do you know what day it is tomorrow, Asha?" Apu asked. "I think it's Tuesday" replied Asha. "Yes, it's Tuesday, but it's also April 14 th, the Bengali New Year!" "How come it's tomorrow and not in December?" "Because tomorrow is the start of Boishakh , the first season of the Bengali calendar. Did you know that Bangladesh is the only country in the world that has six seasons?"



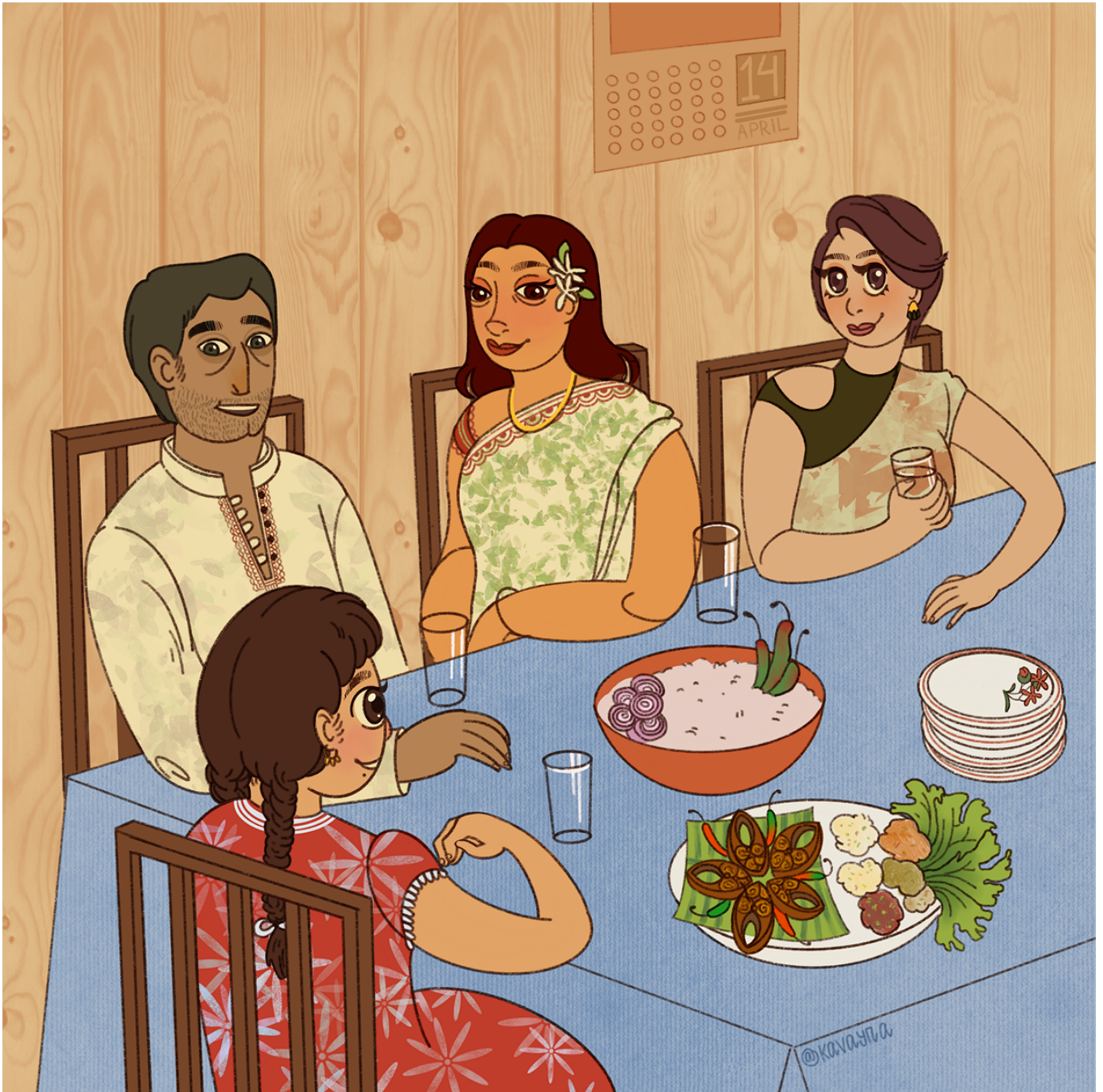
That evening, Apu and I went to the Art College where the students were busy making HUGE figures of animals. There was a giant tiger made of bamboo and paper, a gigantic fish and an elephant the size of a house! Many students were preparing owl masks and painting clay pots. "We are getting ready for tomorrow's Mangal Shobhajatra," one of Apu's friends explained. "This year, the parade is about unity and we are making different animals to show them living together in peace. Tomorrow we will drive them down the roads of the university!"



In the morning, Apu and I woke up very early and walked to Ramna Park. As the sun began to rise, the choir under the banyan tree began to sing..."Esho Hey Boishakh, Esho, Esho..." "Come O Boishakh, Come, Come..." Apu explained that this is a song written by the poet Rabindranth Tagore to welcome the first sunbeams of the new year.



Next, we went to watch the parade. I saw the giant fish and the enormous elephant floating happily above the crowds. Everyone was dressed in bright new clothes and there were flowers everywhere. I made sure not to get lost in the crowd as we slowly followed the huge tiger.



When we came home, Ammu and Baba were waiting for us. They were hungry!"Hurry, hurry, the ilish fish is ready and the panta bhat awaits you!" "What is panta bhat, Ammu?" I asked. "Panta bhat is rice that we bring from the old year into the new. Yesterday I left the cooked rice to soak in water overnight and today it has a special taste. Together with the fried ilish, it is the perfect meal to start the Bengali New Year!" said Ammu. I sat down with Ammu, Baba, and Apu and thought to myself, this is going to be a very good year. Esho Hey Boishakh, Esho, Esho.



Note The Bengali calendar is split into 6 seasons. The first month, Grisho , starts on April 14 which is known as Pohela Boishakh, or Bengali New Year, in Bangladesh. On this day, there is a grand parade in Dhaka and Chattogram prepared by the art college students. This celebration is listed by UNESCO as a Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It is a celebration of harvest, love, friendship, and family.



Wonderful Words Boishakh - The first season of the Bengali calendar. Mangal Shobhajatra - Also known as The Procession of Well-Being, is an annual parade held on the morning of the Bengali New Year. Ilish - Another name for the Hilsha fish, related to herring. Panta bhat - A name for rice that is brought from the old year into the Bengali new year.

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