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# SPECIAL POILA BOISHAK EDITION

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## HIGHLIGHTS

**Public Health:** Passive Smoking

**News Pick:** Butterfly Conservatory

**Festival Recipe:** Chingri Burger

**Special Feature:** Transgender

**Theme Stories**



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# THE HINDU TAZIA MAKER FROM ISLAMPUR

*Dipankar Dey*

We have seen Muslims involve in Hindu Pujas, We have seen Muslims making Hindu goddesses idols we have seen Muslims decorating in Hindu puja festival.



NEWS PICK

However, very less is written down about Hindus are also involved in same for the Muslims. One of the examples is that of a Hindu family from Islampur's Matikunda area for the last 15 years is involved building Muharram Tazia for the Holy Muslim Festival of Muharram. The decorating artist is Mr. Abinash Bagchi, a Brahmin by Hindu caste. His father started making Tazia's for 12

years and later his son i.e. Mr. Abinash Bagchi or popularly known as Sadhu Da is continuing the Tazia making the tradition for the last 5 years. Not only he himself but his wife Latika is also helping in his endeavor. Matikunda area is areas with Hindu families reside next to the Bagchi's. However, according to Mr. Bagchi, no one protested his endeavor. The people who buy the Tazia's made by the Bagchi's feel enthralled in the deal because Mr. Bagchi never leaves any stone unturned towards making the Tazia's in a holy manner. Muslim organizers of Muharram festival in Islampur feel that there is a strong divine force to make the two community live in Islampur with uniformity for millenniums. Mr. Bagchi, on the other hand, is adamant to continue the profession if also there are no visible profits. According to him, his father has ingrained the unity in diversity mantra in his mindset and he will never turn back. On the other hand, local Muharram Organizer Mr. Bablu Mohammad says that this is very much a matter of pride that a Hindu man is making Tazias for them. Everyone in Islampur will try to stop the divisive forces to divide the unity of Hindu and Muslims in Islampur in the future.

NEWS PICK

# DARKNESS OF THE LIGHTMAKERS FROM DHUPGURI

*Supriyo Basak*

There is a deep darkness under the lamp. Or else it can be said that under the darkness there is the celebration of Lights i.e. Dipabali. Yes, it's the people who work day and night for the festival of lights stays behind the lights in Dipabali.



NEWS PICK

There is a deep darkness under the lamp. Or else it can be said that under the darkness there is the celebration of Lights i.e. Dipabali. Yes, it's the people who work day and night for the festival of lights stays behind the lights in Dipabali. This is the picture is seen everywhere and

Dhupguri is also no exception. The place is known as Thakurpat area under Dhupguri. It can be seen that people from all age groups i.e. old, middle aged and even the minor girls are working hard to make the earthen lamps for the dipabali utsav. If you ask Hiralal Pal, Siddhi Charan Pal, Renubala Pal and others they will say that they are working for the last 5-6 months for this Dipabali but this work is no more serving their families livelihood. No grants are provided from the Government and any other Social & Welfare Organization. However, they are still attached to their ancestral culture of lamp making. Now the situation is that even the 'Dadon' or Local Loans from the Mahajans are also not available, No pre-orders are coming, the average earthen lamp prices have not risen and lastly the raw material cost has increased manifold. The income has decreased like anything. Among the potters, Siddhi Charan Pal says if they make 1000 lamps they get a meager amount of Rs. 200/- only, in addition, there are breakage losses due to transportation. One of the interesting things it is learned that most of the potters in this place are being included in APL category and thus they are deprived of any of Government allowances. According to Hiralal Pal, another potter from the place expressed displeasure of joining any other profession like laborers or something fearing loss of dignity. Renubala Pal also expressed dissatisfaction with the role of the media because many articles are published and their situation is getting worsened day in and day out. One thing is clear that though their economic conditions are worsening yet they are still attached to the Indian culture and the almighty knows till how many years!!!!

# THE BUTTERFLY CONSERVATORY AT RAMSHAI

*Nileshwar Sanyal*

"Butterfly butterfly, your wings are so bright, in the nice sunlight". If you are a nature lover and also want to know the origins of the butterfly, if you are keen in butterfly photography, then you have to step into Ramshai, located at the Gorumara National Park near Mainaguri.



Here you will be getting the opportunity to view various types of butterflies and also get to fly the butterflies in the air. This can be your Christmas and New Year Destination this year. This is Ramshai Butterfly Conservatory. The Department of Forest invites you to this conservatory. The conservatory was established in the year 2013 with an area of 2 Bighas at Gorumara Forest by

NEWS PICK

the Department of Forest. A butterfly laboratory was also made. You will get the birth details of at least 75 different species of Butterflies found in Gorumara Forest. The entry to the butterfly conservatory is free however you need to pay for photographic purposes. However, you won't mind for that. After all, you are going to frame such a beautiful experience forever.

NEWS PICK

# THE POILA BOISHAK SPECIAL: CHINGRI BURGER

*Dola Ray*



## Ingredients

### *Chingri Patties:*

Some peeled and little boiled medium chingri (According to requirement)

- 1/3 cup Breadcrumbs
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 Teaspoon salt
- 1/4 Teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 Teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 Onion leaves (piaz koli), white and green parts, thinly sliced
- 1 Large egg, lightly beaten
- 1/4 cup Mustard oil

### For Masala - Mayo:

1/2 cup Mayonnaise

1 Teaspoon to 1 tablespoon fish curry Masala

Half Buns and lightly toasted

Boiled potato slices, Lettuce leaves and Tomato slices for topping

**Process:** Just plainly chop half of the chingri taken for the item on a plain surface. The rest of the chingri should be grated and beaten in an electronic food processor. If food processor is not present then you can also beat it by putting it over a hard plain surface with the help of grater or heavy kitchen objects. Beat those until it becomes smooth.

Now mix both the chingri i.e. the grated chingri and the earlier chopped chingri in a large bowl along with bread crumbs, salt, garlic powder, lemon juice, pepper, Combine both chingri in a large bowl with the breadcrumbs, lemon juice, salt, garlic powder, pepper, scallion (Onion leaves or piaz koli), and eggs. Then mix the whole thing. Put the entire mixture in a refrigerator and freeze it for 10 minutes. Take out the freezed mixture and then form into thick patties. Again put the patties into the refrigerator and freeze it for another 10 minutes. Bring out the patties from the kadhai and keep aside for little warming into room temperature.

On another side on the oven put mustard oil in a kadhai and medium heat it for some time. Put the patties in the heated oil and cook till light brown red.

**Masala – Mayo preparation:** Mix the mayonnaise and fish curry masala to taste in a small bowl.

To serve, put half of the buns then spread it with the Masala – Mayo over the sliced bun. Then put the cooked chingri patties each over the spread masala mayo over the buns. Put the chopped off onion leaves, boiled potato slices, lettuce leaves over the chingri patties. Then put the other half of the buns over the toppings and fix it with a toothpick. Serve it with tomato sauce and kasundi.

# THE POILA BOISHAK: RECREATED

*Mrinal Mukherjee*

The Poila Baisakh celebrations date back to the Mughal period during the rule of the great Mughal ruler Akbar. After undergoing a lot of changes and going through various reforms, what we celebrate now is the modern form of Poila Baisakh.



Poila Baisakh, as the name itself clarifies, is the traditional New Year day of the Bengali people. The day is also known as “NABA-BARSHA”. The day itself is preceded by many small events, be it buying a copy of the PANJKA from the nearest book stall, or be it the heavy discounts which are offered in almost all shops on clothes and other accessories, on the name of “CHAITRA SALE”, or be it the Bengali year end fairs, like “GAJAN” and “CHARAK”. All these signifies that the very first celebration of the Bengalis, who are known for celebrating

THEME STORY

“BARO MASHE TERO PARBON” is close at hand, which is none other than “POILA BAISAKH”

The “POILA BAISAKH” day it is related to a lot of nostalgia. People wear new clothes, exchange sweets and pleasantries among friends and acquaintances. The Bengali tradition of wearing “DHUTI-PANJABI” for men and “GOROD” sarees with red border for women seems deeply nostalgic. For Bengali traders and shop-owners, Poila Baisakh is “HAAL-KHATA” time, an auspicious day to open the ledger, after duly worshipping of Lord Ganesha and Maa Lakshmi. Regular customers are formally invited to attend the evening party. And it goes without mentioning that these invitations is not something to look forward to, for HAAL-KHATA also means settling of all outstanding debts of the previous year!!!

And oh!!!

The Bengali new year cuisine!!!

The Bengali penchant for enjoying good food throughout the year comes through best on Poila Baisakh. Household kitchens exude the aroma of freshly prepared Bengali delicacies, especially sweet dishes, because it is thought to be a good omen to start the year with “MISHTANNA”, and traditional sweets such as ROSOGOLLAS, KALAKAND, ROS-MALAI etc. The lunch and dinner items include rice and the best preparations of fishes, mutton, mishti doi etc.

The rich tradition of Bengali culture is reflected by the celebration of Poila Baisakh. However, due to the blind imitation of the foreign culture, it does not get as much recognition as the beginning of the English New Year gets.

Many of the so called elite section of the Bengali class, who would say the name of the running English New year in an instant, are the same people who would fumble to say the name of the approaching Bengali New Year!

What a pity!!!

But in spite of these separate incidents, Poila Baisakh unites every Bengali with the famous Tagore song,

“ESHO HE BAISAKH, ESHO ESHO”

Hope we Bengalis stay united always, and remembers our culture and tradition always!!!

And for all those who are trying to find the exact approaching Bengali New year, it's  
CHOUDOSHO CHOBBIISH, i.e. 1424, equivalent to the running English New year 2017-18!!!

Subho Nababarsha to everyone!!!

THEME STORY

# Discrimination to the Transgender Persons in India and Rights Movements: A Perspective

*Dr. Tapas Chatterjee\**

## Introduction

The pressure of tradition and consequent conservatism in Indian society have often been sidelined and catapulted with onslaught of our remarkable achievements in social and physical sciences as well as technological applications enriching life with creativity, as can be reasonably expected. Despite such outstanding progress, in the domain of social norms and mores, moral constructs in society could not dent any other area of personal human choice to the extent it has affected matters pertaining to sex and gender identities. The society has delineated standard patterns of sex and gender in terms of expected ubiquitous patterns of behavior, speech, communication and styles in utter contempt of the inalienable rights of individuals to follow own styles of sexual preferences and gender life. Any deviation from the standard, and consequently ethical pattern, and moral value is considered as audacious and harmful and are dealt with ruthlessly with severity. The ideological regulation is dominant and its might is utilized to destroy assertion of personal choices in gender and sex-life. For example, there are mindsets about how a female will walk, speak, communicate and role-play even in private spheres, how her public roles are to be regulated to be able to be treated as a virgin, how attributes such as courage, physical strength and participation in social production will be associated obviously to male masculinity as opposed to females and so on with an outcome of extreme constraints of gender discrimination being laid down for the women only.

Most families do not accept if their male child starts behaving in ways that are considered feminine or inappropriate to the expected gender role. Consequently, family members may threaten, scold or even assault their son/sibling from behaving or dressing-up like a girl or woman. Some parents may outright disown and evict their own child for crossing the prescribed gender norms of the society and for not fulfilling the roles expected from a male child. Parents

may provide several reasons for doing so like bringing disgrace and shame to the family, diminished chances of their child getting married to a woman in the future and thus end of their generation (if they have only one male child) and perceived inability on the part of their child to take care of the family.

The society thinks that it is the law of nature to have two kinds of sex, male and female and sexual relationships can only take place between opposite sexes. Any deviation from this “law of nature” is considered a disease and a sin. As a result, the transgenders and bisexual persons are subjected to untold misery and atrocity in as much as they are considered as outcasts in a civilized social pattern. A conservative and prejudiced society does not rely upon gender identity being essential to a person's internal and personal sense of existence of being a man or a woman (or someone outside of that gender binary).

### Transgenders

Gender identity refers to a person’s internal sense of being male, female or something else. Gender expression refers to the way a person communicates the gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics. Transgender people are individuals of any age or sex whose appearance, personal characteristics, or behaviors differ from stereotypes about how men and women are ‘supposed’ to be. “Trans” is sometimes used as shorthand for “Transgender.” While transgender is generally a good term to use, not everyone whose appearance or behavior is gender-nonconforming will identify as a transgender person. Transgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex which the doctor marked on their birth certificate. Transgender people have existed in every culture, race, and class since the story of human life has been recorded. The contemporary term ‘transgender’ arose in the mid-1990s from the grassroots community of gender-different people. In contemporary usage, transgender has become an ‘umbrella’ term that is used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, including trans-sexual people, male and female cross-dressers (sometimes referred to as ‘transvestites,’ ‘drag queens’ or ‘drag kings’) and inter-sexed individuals. Transgenders also include such men and women who, regardless of their sexual orientation and appearance or characteristics are perceived to be gender atypical. In its broadest sense, transgender encompasses any person whose identity or behavior falls outside of

stereotypical gender norms. That includes people who do not self-identify as transgender, but who are perceived as such by others and thus are subject to the same social oppressions and physical violence as those who actually identify with any of these categories. Other current synonyms for transgender include ‘gender variant,’ ‘gender different,’ and ‘gender non-conforming.’

In India there are a host of socio – cultural groups of transgender people like hijras/ kinnars, and other transgender identities like Shiv-shaktis, Jogtas, Jogappas, Aradhis, Sakhi, etc. However, these socio-cultural groups are not the only transgender people, but there may be those who do not belong to any of the groups but are transgender persons individually.

### LGBT Community

The LGBT community or GLBT community is comprised of people with distinct choice of sex with same – sex partners. It is usually referred to as the gay community and is a loosely defined grouping of lesbian, gay, bisexual and other people, organizations, and sub-cultures with related behavioral manifestations, united by a common culture and social movement. These communities also value and celebrate their pride, diversity, individuality, and sexuality. LGBT activists and sociologists see LGBT community-building as a counterbalance to heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, sexualism, and conformist pressures that exist in the larger society. The term gay pride is used to express the LGBT community's identity and collective strength. The LGBT community is diverse in political affiliation. Not all LGBT individuals consider themselves part of an LGBT community. Groups that may be considered part of the LGBT community include gay villages, LGBT rights organizations, LGBT employee groups at companies, LGBT student groups in schools and universities, and LGBT-affirming religious groups. LGBT communities may organize themselves into, or support, movements for civil rights promoting LGBT rights in various places around the world.

Sexual and Gender Identity

### The Biological Basis

The concepts of gender identity and transgender identity differ from that of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic, emotional or spiritual

attraction to another person, while gender identity is one's personal sense of being a man or a woman. Transgender people have more or less the same variety of sexual orientations as cis-gender people. Cis - gender refers to someone who identifies with the gender that they are assigned by birth. In the past, the terms homosexual and heterosexual were incorrectly used to label transgender individual's sexual orientation based on their birth sex. Professional literature now uses terms such as attracted to men (androphilic), attracted to women (nephiligyc), attracted to both (bisexual) or attracted to neither (asexual) to describe a person's sexual orientation without reference to their gender identity. Therapists are coming to understand the necessity of using terms with respect to their clients' gender identities and preferences. For example, a person who is assigned male at birth, transitions to female, and is attracted to men would be identified as heterosexual.

Chromosomes define Gender. Once we decide to tear apart ignorance and superstition and examine the issues in the light of research in the biological sciences, we must understand that the most fundamental characteristic of gender is described in terms of the chromosomes, e.g., males have XY chromosomes and females have XX chromosomes. Whenever there are digressions from the correct mix of chromosomes, sex and gender identities assume a different form. We also find that there are medical theories about why some people are transgender or LGBT. Some studies have established that fluctuations or imbalances in hormones or the use of certain medications during pregnancy may cause intersex or transgender conditions. Other research indicates that there are links between transgender identity and brain structure. Each of the types mentioned above arises due to specific biological and physiological disorders in respective human organs, namely, lack of desired levels of Endrogen, Chromosomes ( XXY in place of XY), abnormally low levels of X and/or Y Chromosomes and abnormal quantity of Hormones. Brain structure differences have also been noted between gay and heterosexual men, and lesbian and heterosexual women as part of extensive research on biology and sexual orientation.

With regard to genetic factors, a study by Hare reported that Trans women have a longer androgen receptor gene than cis – men, which is less effective at binding testosterone, potentially preventing complete masculinization of the brain. Prenatal androgen exposure or sensitivity, or lack thereof, is an often cited mechanism to explain observed brain-structure differences. Psychological factors have also been proposed.

We have heard recently about something unusual that happens in a small village in the Dominican Republic (Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism. 85 (5): 2034–41 / Journal of Neuroscience. 22 (3): 1027–33. / Hormones and Behavior. 50 (4): 589–601 / Gynecological Endocrinology. 19 (6): 301). One in 90 children there that are born girls are not destined to stay girls. Once these children start puberty, they grow penises and testicles. They are known locally as guevedoces, literally “penises at age twelve”. Scientists call them pseudohermaphrodites and Dr. Julianne Imperato, one of the first to study the guevedoces, discovered that the startling transformation was due to an enzyme deficiency. All humans start out as female in the womb. At the risk of over-simplifying, boys then get a shot of testosterone that changes the clitoris into a penis and changes the vagina into testicles. Guevedoces don’t have as much of an enzyme called 5-alpha-reductase. It is this enzyme that converts the testosterone into the male genital building hormone dihydro-testosterone. At puberty, the “girls” undergo another surge of testosterone that belatedly causes the outward change into boys and ultimately men. The phenomenon is not confined to the Dominican Republic and further cases have been reported in Papua New Guinea. The condition that results in the guevedoces’ late transformation is one of a variety of conditions that come under the umbrella term Intersex. Simply put, an Intersex condition occurs where a person’s sexual anatomy doesn’t fit the typical definition of male or female. It can mean that a person’s genitals look different to the norm for their sex, or that the genitals look like the norm on the outside but the internal anatomy may more closely resemble the opposite gender. So children are not necessarily defined by the genitals they are born with. .

People with Intersex conditions differ from people who are Transgender. Transgender people generally have hormones, genitals and chromosomes that seem consistent to one sex but they believe themselves to be of the opposite sex. Intersex conditions manifest as some sort of physical mismatch between the genders that shows up in chromosomes, internal sexual anatomy or genitals that may differ from the norm. There is crossover between the groups but they are also distinct.

So, a transgender person may look male, have XY chromosomes, have the same male sex hormones levels and undergo male changes during puberty. Yet all the while the person feels like a girl trapped inside a boy’s body. Similarly, a female may identify as male. Why? Is it all in the

head? Possibly, but that doesn't mean that it's not real and the head is a great place to start searching for answers.

Surprisingly, there are not a lot of studies on transgender issues. But those that have been carried point towards actual differences between transgender people and their cis - gender peers. Transgender, or transsexual, can refer to someone who may feel like they're a member of one sex trapped in the body of another or that their birth gender is just wrong somehow or may refer to someone who has an intense desire to be a member of the opposite sex.

### Problems faced by Transgender Community

The main problems that are being faced by the transgender community are of discrimination, unemployment, lack of educational facilities, homelessness, lack of medical facilities: like HIV care and hygiene, depression, hormone pill abuse, tobacco and alcohol abuse, penectomy, and problems related to marriage and adoption. In 1994, transgender persons got the voting right but the task of issuing them voter identity cards got caught up in the male or female question. Several of them were denied cards with sexual category of their choice. The other fields where this community feels neglected are inheritance of property or adoption of a child. They are often pushed to the periphery as a social outcaste and many may end up begging and dancing. This is by all means human trafficking. Sometimes running out of all options to feed themselves, they even engage themselves as sex workers for survival.

Transgenders have very limited employment opportunities. Transgenders have no access to bathrooms/toilets and public spaces. The lack of access to bathrooms and public spaces access is illustrative of discrimination faced by transgenders in availing each facilities and amenities. They face similar problems in prisons, hospitals and schools. Thus, later transgender women may find it difficult even to claim their share of the property or inherit what would be lawfully theirs. Sometimes, the child or teenager may decide to run away from the family not able to tolerate the discrimination or not wanting to bring shame to one's family. Some of them may eventually find their way to Hijra communities. This means many Hijras are not educated or uneducated and consequently find it difficult to get jobs. Moreover, it is hard to find people who employ Hijras/TG people. Some members of the society ridicule gender-variant people for being 'different' and they may even be hostile. Even from police, they face physical and verbal abuse,

forced sex, extortion of money and materials; and arrests on false allegations. Absence of protection from police means ruffians find Hijras/TG people as easy targets for extorting money and as sexual objects. A 2007 study documented that in the past one year, the percentage of those MSM and Hijras who reported forced sex is 46%; physical abuse is 44%; verbal abuse is 56%; blackmail for money is 31%; and threat to life is 24%.

Hijras face discrimination even in the healthcare settings. Types of discrimination reported by Hijras/TG communities in the healthcare settings include: deliberate use of male pronouns in addressing Hijras; registering them as 'males' and admitting them in male wards; humiliation faced in having to stand in the male queue; verbal harassment by the hospital staff and copatients; and lack of healthcare providers who are sensitive to and trained on providing treatment/care to transgender people and even denial of medical services. Discrimination could be due to transgender status, sex work status or HIV status or a combination of these.

Social welfare departments provide a variety of social welfare schemes for socially and economically disadvantaged groups. However, so far, no specific schemes are available for Hijras except some rare cases of providing land for Aravanis in Tamil Nadu. Recently, the state government of Andhra Pradesh has ordered the Minority Welfare Department to consider 'Hijras' as a minority and develop welfare schemes for them. Stringent and cumbersome procedures and requirement of address proof, identity proof, and income certificate hinders even the deserving people from making use of available schemes. In addition, most Hijras/TG communities do not know much about social welfare schemes available for them. Only the Department of Social Welfare in the state of Tamil Nadu has recently established 'Aravanigal/Transgender Women Welfare Board' to address the social welfare issues of Aravanis/Hijras. No other state has replicated this initiative so far.

### The Supreme Court judgment on Transgender Rights

The judgment was pronounced in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India & Ors. [Writ Petition (Civil) No. 400 of 2012 ('NALSA')] by a division bench of Justices K.S. Radhakrishnan and A.K. Sikri.

This judgment covers persons who want to identify with the third gender as well as persons who want to transition from one identity to another, i.e. to male to female or vice versa. The Court has directed Centre and State Governments to grant legal recognition of gender identity whether it be male, female or third gender. The ruling has guaranteed legal recognition for Third Gender and ruled that fundamental rights are available to the third gender in the same manner as they are to males and females. Further, non-recognition of third gender in both criminal and civil statutes such as those relating to marriage, adoption, divorce, etc is discriminatory to the third gender. The Court has also ruled legal recognition for people transitioning within male/female binary although the procedure has been left quite vague. It has directed to provide public health and sanitation, proper measures to provide medical care to Transgender people in the hospitals and also provide them separate public toilets and other facilities. Further, they have been directed to operate separate HIV/ Sero-surveillance measures for Transgender. The Court has further ensured Socio-Economic Rights like access to social welfare schemes and to treat the community as socially and economically backward classes. They have also been asked to extend reservation in educational institutions and for public appointments. The Centre and State Governments are asked to take steps to create public awareness so that Transgender people will feel that they are also part and parcel of the social life and not be treated as untouchables; take measures to regain their respect and place in society; and seriously address the problems such as fear, shame, gender dysphoria, social pressure, depression, suicidal tendencies, and social stigma. Parliament has passed the Act on Transgender Rights in pursuance of the Supreme Court orders.

However, while Transgender have been provided constitutional protection including benefits of reservation and legal remedies by the apex court, the LGBT community has been denied similar protection. The Delhi High Court ruling of 2009 has been stayed by the Supreme Court on 11 Dec., 2013. Homosexual intercourse remains a "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" and is a criminal offence under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. On January 28, 2014, the Supreme Court dismissed the review Petition filed by Central Government, NGO Naz Foundation and several others, against its December 11 verdict on Section 377 of IPC.

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# POHELA BOISHAKH – THE BENGALI NEW YEAR DAY

*Ridam Chowdhury*

The Pohela Boishakh is the second largest celebration of the Bengali after the Durga Puja. It is the traditional age old culture of the Bengalis. The day of Pohela Boishakh mostly falls on the 15th of April and sometimes on the 14th of April according to the Gregorian Calendar. Boishakh is the first month of the Bengali calendar and hence Pohela Boishakh means the first day of the month of Boishakh and so is known as the Bengali New Year. The festival is celebrated in the Indian states of West Bengal, Tripura and Assam and elsewhere by the people of Bengali heritage irrespective of their religious faith. The day of Pohela Boishakh has an alternative name too called as the Nobo Borsho where Nobo means New and Borsho means Year and so it connectively means New Year.

The Pohela Boishakh day in West Bengal is celebrated with processions, Boishakhi Mela and family good times. The Boishakhi Mela is the fair which is most awaited by the Bengali people to enjoy the rides of the fair, to buy new things and as known by everyone that the Bengalis are very much fond of foods, this fair or the Boishakhi Mela offers all kinds of Bengali foods mostly Chingri Macher Malaikari and Sorshe Ilish and of course the mouth watering and heart melting sweets – Rosogolla and Misti Doi. The traditional greeting for this day is Subha Nobo Borsho which literally means Happy New Year.

Like the new year day in the rest of India, the Bengali families clean and decorate their houses with Alpana (Rangoli) and places a Ghot (Earthen Pot) at the middle of the Alpana and fill it with Gangajal capped with Amro Pollov (5 Mango Leaves) and mark the pot with the auspicious Hindu red and white Swastika sign which means the Direction towards the Right Path. In this day Lord Ganesha and Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped by the Bengali families to start the New Year with love, faith and happiness among each other. Even people do visits the nearby rivers to offer their prayers to Surya Devta (Sun God) and take a ritual bath.

THEME STORY

The day of Pohela Boishakh in West Bengal includes the early morning cultural procession which is known as the Prabhat Pheri. The processions consist of dance troops and children singing songs of Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore. Opening of new account books in the grocery shops is one of the major events for the Bengali people in this very day and this is known as the Hal Khata. The shopkeepers distribute sweets and calendars to its customers as a token of love. Gifting of new clothes to each other and Mukhe Misti (offering of sweets) can be called as the signature mark of the day.

There is a saying in Bengali – BANGALIR BARO MASHE TERO PARBON which means that the Bengalis have more than thirteen festivals in the whole of twelve months and hence Pohela Boishakh is the beginning one.

**SOKOL KE JANAI SUBHO NOBOBORSHER ANTORIK PRITI O VALOBASHA**

**THEME STORY**

# SAY NO TO PASSIVE SMOKING

*Imisara Mukhia*

We often become a passive smoker once or twice a day sometimes on the street or some restaurant, bus stops, public toilet and even work places. Still not many of us are unaware of the fact that passive smoking is dangerous to our health more than the smoke inhaled by the smoker.

## What is passive smoking?

One of the biggest problem here is many people still do not understand what passive smoking is, so for those of you who are unfamiliar with the term then passive smoking is when someone or non smoker inhale the smoke exhaled by the smoker or the smoke coming out from the tip of the burning cigarette , bedi or cigar .

## How does it affect us?

when we come in contact or inhale this harmful toxic smoke it will hinder the supply of oxygen to our brain , narrow blood vessels , make our heart work at faster rate and increase the risk of having heart attack , and expose us to poisons , carcinogens ( cancer forming substance ) increasing the risk of having lung cancer .

While walking on the street or in a market place we come across a lot of unhealthy smoke exhaled by the people, which causes a lots of problems like headache, breathing problem, vomiting etc, but we never complain against those people who leaves their unwanted smoke right in front of our face without caring much about other's lives and that is simply because most of us are either unaware of the fact that passive smoking also known as second hand smoke or environment tobacco smoke can lead us and our loved ones to lung cancer or because we don't want to indulge ourselves into some unnecessary chaos with some unknown person . But for

how long are we going to stay like this or when is it (smoking in public places) going to be strictly banned from our state while many other states and some major cities have already shown their initiative against it. These are some really important questions that we should consider. It is not like government has not taken any initiative. under section-4 of COTPA (cigarettes and other tobacco products) states that “no person shall smoke in any public places: provided that in a hotel having thirty rooms or a restaurant having seating capacity of thirty persons or more and in the airport, a separate provision for smoking area or space may be made “which means that if we find anybody guilty of violating the law can lodge a complaint against that person but it is we who don’t say anything or are unaware of it.



According to the Australian Government Department of heart and aging says that people who live with the smoker have 30% greater risk of developing lung cancer than those who live with non-smoker , because it exposes the non-smoker to the same toxic gases , chemicals and five particles as inhaled by the smoker himself , and if the pregnant women are exposed to this toxic gases it can cause a lot of problem to their babies because it increases the risk of miscarriage , low birth weight and SIDS ( sudden infant death syndrome ) and also develop asthma problem later in their lives ( source : Australian Government department of heart and aging )

### What are we suppose to do?

If you are a smoker then you should be aware of the fact that by doing so you are not only putting yourself in danger but also to those who are in an around you they may be your friends, family or loved ones and for those who don't smoke but faces a problem on the street or in any public place it is like being punished for the crime you have not committed. so don't keep quiet but speak up against it for yourself and for the one you care , so that everybody become aware of it because if you speak up today then others will follow.

# FESTIVAL OF LIFE

*Arpita Baruah*

On this day, friendships are made, strengthened and kept.

Ushering spring with the festival of colours at Shantiniketan,

It's something worth your time...

When you see those smiling faces, find yourself in the middle of thousands of people,

Singing Rabindra Sangeet on a bright sunny day,

An unequivocal thought lingers in your mind...all day long.

That slight bitter-clay taste of abeer in your mouth,

That heady, dusty and earthy smell which intoxicates along with the Bhaang,

The fingerprints you leave on everything you touch;

You are afraid to go clean yourself because that will only get you further painted,

Because no one is who they are- Yep! BOSHONTO ESHE GECHE...

The great poet P.B. Shelly once penned down "O, wind, if winter comes, can spring be far behind?" the rhetoric is evident. Spring arrives in India and how! Fun, frolic and fiesta are evident. The whole nation drowns in the madness of the spring festival commonly known as Holi. As diverse as she is, celebration is also seen in the laps of Shantiniketan. Located in Bolpur region of the Birbhum district in Kolkata, Shantiniketan is an epitome of culture and heritage. Formerly known by the name Bhubadanga, this became the foundation ground for Nirakar Brahma, founded by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore. Later Rabindranath Tagore followed his footsteps and started the tradition of playing colours in spring time. tourists flock from all around the world to catch a glimpse of the vibrant Bosonto Utsav of this small town. This celebration is also seen in some parts of North Bengal like Siliguri.

On the occasion of Basant Utsav in Shantiniketan, the students of university clad themselves in yellow coloured clothes. The sight of all these youngsters adorned in such bright dresses is indeed beautiful. They entertain with some spectacular performances. The function is very enjoyable and provides a great opportunity to reveal the talents. They sing and dance and have a great time.

# FAMOUS TEA: DARJEELING TEA

*Sanchita Aich*

**D**arjeeling is a district in West Bengal, India which is famous for 2 things. One, it a tourist place, a hill area and second one is The ‘TEA’ of Darjeeling. It is available in black, green, white and oolong. Oolong is when it properly brewed, it yields a thin-bodied aroma. The flavour can include a tinge of astringent tannic characteristics and a musky spiciness sometimes described as “muscatel”.



Unlike most Indian teas, Darjeeling tea is normally made from the small-leaved Chinese variety of “Camellia Sinensis” var. Traditionally, Darjeeling tea is made

as black tea; however, oolong and green teas are becoming more commonly produced and easier to find. White teas are become also famous. The taste of these teas is so delicious and refreshing that make it popular all over the world. Darjeeling tea became the first Indian product to receive a GI tag, in 2004-2005 through the Indian Patent Office. Tea planting in Darjeeling began in 1841 by Arthur Campbell, a civil surgeon of the Indian Medical Service. He brought seeds of the tea plant from Kumaun and began to experiment with tea planting in Darjeeling. The British government also established tea nurseries during that period. Commercial development began during the 1850s. In 1856 the Alubari Tea Garden was opened by the Darjeeling Tea Company.



According to Tea Board of India- Darjeeling tea can only refer to tea that has been cultivated, grown, produced, manufactured and processed in tea gardens in the hilly areas of Kalimpong Subdivision consisting of Samabeong Tea estate, Kumai tea estate, Kurseong Subdivision excluding the areas in jurisdiction list 20, 21, 23, 24, 29, 31, and 33 comprising Siliguri subdivision of New Chumta Tea Estate, Simulbari and Marionabari tea estate of Kurseong subdivision of the district of

Darjeeling. Growing tea in these areas gives aroma, taste, with light tea liquor; the infused leaf also has a distinctive fragrance. As per 2004, the amount of tea sold as Darjeeling worldwide every year exceeds 40,000 tonnes, while the annual tea production of Darjeeling itself is estimated at only 10,000 tonnes, including local consumption. According to The Board, Darjeeling Tea cannot be grown or manufactured anywhere else in the world. There are 87 tea estates in the Darjeeling hills. These teas cover over 17,500 hectares of land, producing over 9 million kg of tea per year and engaging about 50% the people of Darjeeling district. In each tea estate there are many workers who work very hard to make the tea world famous. The white variant of Darjeeling tea has a delicate aroma and brews to a pale golden colour with a mellow taste and a hint of sweetness. Darjeeling white tea leaves are very fluffy and light which helps it to prepare easily. This is the tea that we all want to have. May this taste and freshness of this tea still remain forever...

# THE TEA STORY

# THE MOUTH WATERING... SWEETS OF BENGAL

*Piyasha Sarkar*

## THE FOOD STORY

This one is a true experience of a Bengali friend living in Punjab colony of Shimla. One day when out shopping in the bazaar, he ran into his Punjabi neighbor an elderly lady. As he greeted her, she responded with a smile, “I know I had forgotten to buy something for the family .Meeting you has reminded me what it was, “Rasgulla”. Extraordinary small, big in size yet but the yummy part the spongy white Rasgulla is believed to have been introduced in present day west Bengal. In 1868 by a Kolkata based confectioner named Nobin Chandra Das. Kolkata and the temples of Puri to the power corridor of Rashtrapati Bhawan, Rasgulla remains one of the best loved inventions. The Oriyas believe in their inventions there are several name like Rasgulla, Roshogollah or Rasbari. This 700 years old sweet dish was a part of a ritual also known as “Khira Mohana” due to its almost white appearance back in 11th century. The term Rasgulla came from Odisha is famous for the one from Salepur. Bigger, softer, creamier, with a velvety cream like appearance, this variation of Khira Mohana was developed by a local confectioner. The technique of steaming of cheese balls and then allowing them to slowly rise in the sugar syrup was technique that was mastered by him. The odiyas believe this how the modern day Rasgula originated. Meanwhile now a day’s Bengalis let’s just call it “Roshogolla” Bengalis claim that it was developed by Calcutta gentleman Nobin Chandra Das in 1868 and its get highly popular. Nobin Das was the first person to mass market it as a product. The famous sweet shop in Kolkata K.C Das who was Nobin Das son began to can the Rasgulla which resulted in the widespread availability of the sweet. In these way the famous sweet shop get highly renowned and today in Bengal Rasgulla has become very remarkable in number.

Bengal sweets are known for its rich in culture. Bengali term “mishit” is an amazing word where people of all ages like to have. When it comes to Bengali sweets whether the person is a sweet tooth or hardly matters that person will surely want to taste every bite of sweet. In Bengal there are many types of sweets but there are several one which has some special taste while having it. Bengal people love to eat “mishti” Mishti like Malaichom Chom, Nolen Ghurer Payesh, Pantuwa, Raj Bhog.

Channar Jilapi, Kalo jam, Kheerer Sandesh, Sitabhog, Mihidana and more. This list would not be completed without mentioning “Mishit Doi” this light and sweet blend of milk, yogurt and course brown sugar, marks all celebrations and auspicious occasions. In Bengal there are many sweets but as we all know Rossogollaa Bengali traditional sweets one of the most widely consumed sweets. Rosogolla has also had different tastes and is types. Similarly in other states have their own tastes like the Bengalis are famous for Roshogolla and Marwaris specilities are “laddu” which they need in every festive. Laddus can also be of various type like Motichur Ka Laddu, Bashan ka Laddu, Aval Laddu, Boondi Laddu, Coconut Laddu, Badam Laddu. These wonderful “Misthis” are definitely Bengalis sweetest gift to the world.



**YOUR NEWS | YOUR PORTAL**

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