

**English translation:**

The first day of the Bengali New Year is the first of the month of *Boishakh*, known as *Pohela Boishakh* by Bengalis. When this day finally comes, we leave behind the whole year's sadness, pain, fatigue, and hopelessness and embrace the New Year with joy and festivities. In the villages, fairs are arranged on this day. Lots of fun-filled activities are exhibited in these fairs such as *latthi khela*,<sup>1</sup> bull fights and *boli khela*.<sup>2</sup> There is an air of celebration everywhere, in the towns and cities and on the streets. Around the world, people from different countries and cultures celebrate their new years in different ways, but, however they observe it, this special day is a happy time for everyone. New things are welcomed to replace old bitter memories that are washed away. Our *Kobi Guru*<sup>3</sup> Rabindranath Tagore had written a song about the Bengali new year, as had lots of other poets. They wrote songs, poems, etc. about this. The Bengali New Year was established in the Mughal era, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Akbar the Great. Back then, Bangladesh was a state that paid taxes to the Mughal rulers. So, for the convenience of collecting taxes, the first day of this dry season was chosen as the New Year; that is, they chose the first of *Boishakh* and that is how the Bengali calendar started out. Now the feudal system is gone, and, anyway, rulers do not collect taxes like that anymore, but even now the existing small and big businesses end all their book-keeping and start their new accounts in a financial book known as the "*haal khata*." They always invite many people for this occasion and there is a lot of merrymaking; there are food and sweets to celebrate with.

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<sup>1</sup>sparring with bamboo sticks

<sup>2</sup> a traditional form of wrestling

<sup>3</sup> *Kobi Guru* is a title given to poet Rabindranath Tagore which literally means "guru of poets"