

Newsletter co-leads: Tuhina Chakravorty & Arka Ghose

About BNG



Bonga NextGen's mission is to celebrate, preserve, and promote Bengali heritage within the American diaspora. We strive to build a vibrant community that bridges generations, fosters connections, and inspires a deep appreciation for the richness of Bengali culture. Through social gatherings, educational programs, and cultural showcases, we aim to empower individuals to embrace their roots, share their stories, and contribute to a flourishing legacy for future generations.

As a BNG Leader, what does this community mean to you and what made you want to be a part of it?
Growing up, I often found myself split between two cultures without a clear place where both sides could coexist naturally. I wanted to be part of building the kind of space I always wished I had somewhere young Bengalis can celebrate our culture in ways that feel natural to our lives here, while also creating new memories and connections together, and the BNG community has made all of that possible.

What is your relationship between your American and Bengali identities?
For me, the relationship is constantly evolving but ultimately I see my American and Bengali identities as complementary rather than competing. Growing up with both has given me the ability to move comfortably between cultures, bringing the best of each into my life. My American side encourages individuality and exploration, while my Bengali side keeps me connected to family, tradition, and community. Together, they give me a unique perspective that I carry into everything I do with BNG.

What do you like best about your Bengali identity/background/heritage?
I love the emphasis on art, language, and storytelling. From Rabindrasangeet to theatre to the warmth of adda, there's such a deep cultural value placed on creativity and conversation. It feels empowering to belong to a heritage where intellectual curiosity and artistic expression are so ubiquitous.

What are your interests outside BNG?
Outside of BNG, I'm a data scientist with a focus on social impact projects. In my free time, I love watercolor, call art, reading, traveling, and staying connected to the performing arts.

Anything else you'd like to share?
I'm very excited for this new chapter of BNG with the launch of our newsletter! My hope is that it becomes a platform to share the voices, talents, and stories of our whole community. This is just the beginning of what we can build together.

Shankhadip Chakravorty - VP

Tell us about yourself and your role in BNG.
I am the current VP of BNG and was the Treasurer/Co-Founder in the previous term (2023-25). I first joined through NABC NextGen, which was the youth wing of the 2023 North American Bengali Conference, as the cultural program lead. I met most people I know from the org today though that experience I work at Bank of America as a data analyst and outside of work, I sing/learn Hindustani Classical vocal music as well as other forms of light music occasionally. My singing career was a huge part of me getting involved in the Bengali community and its cultural aspects throughout my life, and BNG was the best outlet for me to be able to continue to contribute with like-minded NextGen Bengali Americans and lead in the way we want to. I also love watching sports (American football/cricket) and doing analysis on sports whenever I'm free.

What is your favorite Bengali food?
Mutton Biriyani

As a BNG Leader, what does this community mean to you and what made you want to be a part of it?
Being a NextGen Bengali, we've had to follow in our parents' footsteps in cultural decision-making for many years. When me and a small group of individuals decided we wanted to do something on our own and get involved in our culture while being a hub for young Bengali Americans on our own terms back in 2023, it was after years of seeing the amazing culture I grew up in and the desire to give back to that culture through a leadership capacity, while also meeting new people who share my Bengali background/heritage from this area. Getting to reconnect with people through BNG that I hadn't seen in years was very special, and meeting new people who have become my close friends since 2023 is something I'll be forever grateful for to this endeavor. After a few zoom calls and fun conversations in 2023, we founded BNG, filled out the necessary documents, recruited our first leadership team, and the rest is history!

What is your relationship between your American and Bengali identities?
I was deeply immersed in Bengali culture growing up, probably more so than American culture, besides TV shows and some sports. I learned Bengali before English, a conscious decision made by my dad who taught me Bengali, knowing I'd have the rest of my life to learn English at school. I watched Bengali movies, listened to Bengali music from lullabies and film songs to popular contemporary music, and visited Kolkata almost yearly for over a decade. I went to lots of Pujas and volunteered at my local temple that was predominantly Bengali, so naturally, most of my friends were Bengali growing up. Post high school, I became more in tune with my American identity and made more friends outside my Bengali circles, but at that point I was more immersed in my Bengali identity, and that carried through all the way to today. I now find myself more deeply reconnecting with it as a leader in BNG over the past two years. Even though sometimes they may seem like two different worlds, they are blended together in my day-to-day life growing up in the US while being surrounded by my growing community of Bengali-American friends.

What do you like best about your Bengali identity/background/heritage?
Bengali culture/heritage is incredibly rich and filled with many different genres of music (Rabindra Sangeet, Nazrul Geeti, Baul songs, Bengali Folk and contemporary Rock) that have inspired and been taken to all different corners of the world. Many Bengalis are important historical figures particularly in the Indian Freedom Movement (Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Khudiram Bose), in forms of music (Rabi Thakur, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Kishore Kumar, Monna Dey), science (Satyendra Nath Bose, Jagadish Chandra Bose), and others. These are trailblazing figures not just for Bengal or India, but leaders in a global context and respected worldwide, making it even more special that I get to share my heritage with these great figures and attempt to be a steward of the culture that's known worldwide in my own way.

Tanaya Badsa - Secretary

Tell us about yourself and your role in BNG.
I grew up right here in Edison, NJ, and currently work as an Occupational Therapist at JFK Hospital. This year, I'm serving as Secretary for Bonga Next Gen, helping keep things organized behind the scenes while supporting the amazing work our team is doing. Last year, I was part of the Social Events Core, so I'm excited to now take on a bigger role in shaping how our community grows and connects.

What is your favorite Bengali food?
Rui Moacher Jhal

As a BNG Leader, what does this community mean to you and what made you want to be a part of it?
For me, BNG feels like a bridge—it connects our shared Bengali heritage with the experiences of growing up here in the US. It's a space where we can celebrate traditions, but also build friendships and opportunities that reflect who we are today. I wanted to be part of BNG because I believe our generation deserves a platform that's both fun and meaningful, where we can honor our roots while also creating something new for ourselves and future generations.

What is your relationship between your American and Bengali identities?
My American and Bengali identities have always been intertwined. Growing up in Edison, my family's deep involvement in the Bengali community shaped how I see the world—I learned in cultural programs, trained in Indian classical music, and faithfully wore my nighty Bengali dhoti (even if I didn't always love it). At the same time, living in the US gave me experiences that are uniquely my own. I've learned to carry both identities with pride, letting them guide how I connect with others, contribute to my community, and shape who I am today.

What do you like best about your Bengali identity/background/heritage?
What I love most about my Bengali heritage is the perspective it gives me—a lens to understand the world, my family, and my place in the community. I don't have extended family here in the US, so staying connected to my family in Kolkata and being able to communicate with them is incredibly important to me. At the same time, the Bengali community here in New Jersey has become like family, giving me a sense of belonging and continuity. My heritage connects me to both my roots and the community I choose, shaping how I navigate life and relationships today.

What are your interests outside BNG?
Outside of BNG, I'm into anything that lets me pretend I'm slightly more talented than I actually am—playing piano, experimenting in the kitchen, or trying to pull off a fashion moment without tripping over my own feet. Basically, if it involves creativity, curiosity, or me eating. Mostly me eating. A lot.

Anything else you'd like to share?
TEAM MAACHI WOOOOO

Riju Sanyal - Treasurer

Tell us about yourself and your role in BNG.
I am the newly appointed treasurer in charge of managing the budget and costs for our events. I am also coordinator of the book club. I am an internal medicine hospitalist by profession.

What is your favorite Bengali food?
Daal bhaath

As a BNG Leader, what does this community mean to you and what made you want to be a part of it?
It is very important to me to maintain my Bengali heritage and keep our culture alive for the next generation. My parents are very involved in the pujo cultural organizations in central NJ and NABC so I naturally learned to embrace my Bengali heritage by supporting their initiatives.

What is your relationship between your American and Bengali identities?
It is very important to embrace both sides of my Bengali American identity and learn about the history of Bengalis in America.

What do you like best about your Bengali identity/background/heritage?
I enjoy the extended Bengali family experience of the "aunties" and "uncles" who we grew up with and helped foster our Bengali community.

What are your interests outside BNG?
Hobbies include sports, trying new restaurants, reading, and practicing Spanish and Bengali.

Anything else you'd like to share?
Amra shobai raja.

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Anything else you'd like to share?
Amra shobai raja.

BNG Events

Ki Holo - Past Events

- May 17th 2025: Bonga Utsov
- May 31st 2025: Art & Adda at the Asia Society and Museum
- June 5th 2025: Brooklyn Bondhus dinner at Bricolage
- June 13th 2025: Unbound at the South Asian Theatre Festival
- June 15th 2025: Quarterly Book Club featuring Sunshine and Spice by Aurora Palit
- July 26th 2025: Bonga Next Gen Members Beach Day
- August 13th 2025: NYC Restaurant Week Dinner at Le Jardinier
- September 6th 2025: New Brunswick Tea Crawl

Ki Hobe - Future Events

- September 21st 2025 at 1 PM: Quarterly Book Club featuring The Lowland by Jhumpa Lahiri
- November 14th 2025: Adda & Aux in Brooklyn, buy tickets [here!](#)

Catch us at these Durga Pujas:

- ECCA Durga Puja 9/27
- GSCA Durga Puja 10/4 and 10/5
- Maitree Durga Puja 10/12



Take a Peak at Some of Our Past Events



Book Club

Last Book: Sunshine and Spice by Aurora Palit

"When struggling brand consultant Naomi lands a career-saving job she's culturally unequipped to handle, she makes a deal. With Dex, the grumpy, anti-manager son of her traditional Bengali client, she'll help him thwart his mother's matchmaking efforts if he helps her meet the mad scientist's exacting standards. But the line between reality and rumour blurs as Naomi is pulled deeper into lies that could end her career and break her heart." [Author's website](#)

About Aurora Palit

"A first generation Bengali-Canadian, Aurora Palit grew up in rural Alberta, where she was always the only South Asian student in her class. Her love of reading began at age four, but it wasn't until high school—when she wandered into the romance section of a bookstore—that she realized happily-ever-afters were her jam. Flash forward (an undisclosed number of years) and Aurora is now writing those stories with her own unique brand of humor, perspective, and belief that people of colour deserve love stories too. During her time pursuing a master's degree in English literature, Aurora was drawn to discourses on diaspora and identity, racism, and multi-generational immigrant experiences; topics she now explores in her writing. [Author's website](#)

Thoughts of Participants:

"A delightfully lighthearted read, effectively blending together light hearted romance with deep dives into the Bengali diaspora identity. This book shows us that love can transcend all boundaries, even the sturdiest of all—cunties"

Current book: The Lowland by Jhumpa Lahiri

Current book: Prize-winning, bestselling author of The Namesake comes an extraordinary novel, set in India and America, that tells the story of two brothers bound by tragedy, a fiercely brilliant woman haunted by her past, a country torn by revolution, and a love that lasts long past death. Masterly suspenseful, sweeping, piercingly intimate, The Lowland is a work of great beauty and complex emotion, an engrossing family saga and a story steeped in history that spans generations and geographies with seamless authority. It is Jhumpa Lahiri at the height of her considerable powers." [About the Book](#)

About Jhumpa Lahiri

"Jhumpa Lahiri is an acclaimed American author known for her poignant explorations of identity, displacement, and family within the Indian-American experience. Her debut short story collection, Interpreter of Maladies, won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000. Lahiri's subsequent works, including the novel The Namesake and the short story collection Unaccustomed Earth, have further established her literary reputation. In 2013, she published The Lowland, a finalist for both the Man Booker Prize and the National Book Award, which examines the lasting impact of political violence on two brothers and their family. Lahiri continues to contribute meaningfully to contemporary fiction in both English and Italian."

Come join our discussion on September 21st at 1 PM. The link to the discussion can be found in the Bonga Next Gen WhatsApp group. We hope to see you there!

