Eid in the Cafeteria

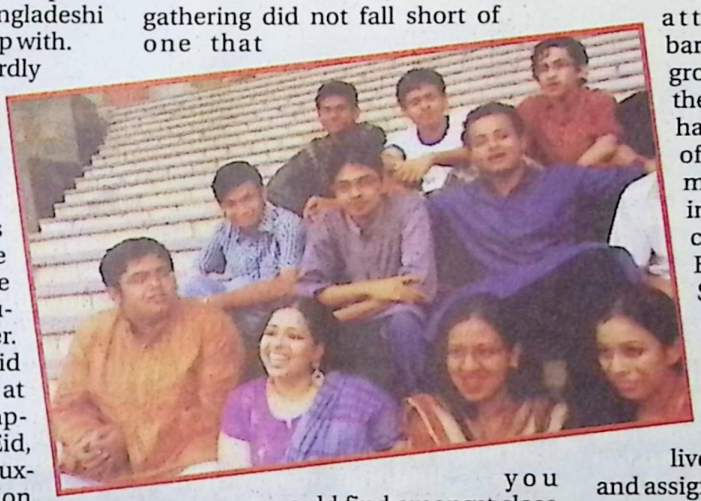
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It has been quite a few years since I last celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr in Bangladesh. School, College, University always got in the way. I am used to the Eid here which was always multi-racial at its best. It is the only time where my home was filled with all the various races and religion, starting from my fathers Christian European co-workers to my Hindu Bangladeshi friends whom I had grown up with.

In Singapore we are hardly ever tied down with the idea of going from one household to the next. We are more accustomed to the idea of mass gathering in Kent Vale, which has become a ritual. This is one of the few times where the entire Bangladeshi community would come together. That is not to say that we did not visit each others homes at all or did not have scrumptious items on the day of Eid, its just we do not have the luxury of a week long celebration. However in this article I would like to concentrate and dedicate more on the friends that I have made who have recently built their homes in Singapore and who have kindly accepted me into their home in NUS.

On night before Eid itself, I received a text message from a friend of mine inviting me to K-gourmet, one of the cafeteria's in NUS for Eid lunch. Next I had a facebook invitation asking whether I would be joining the gathering. Curious to know what was happening I called up one of my close friends, Marzia, who live on campus and asked her why the celebration in the place you spend your entire time in. She, a member of the Bangladeshi society in NUS had put in the effort to SMS all those she knew for this afternoon fiest. I then asked 'Why not come over to my place and celebrate?' The answer was simple. Exams. Yes the monster midterms were around the corner. There was no way the freshies, the sophomores, the seniors and the final years could leave their book aside for half a day travel to a relatives and enjoy the proper ambience of Eid.

Now one would think that would be a horrible way to spend your Eid, eating canteen food. Although, I can not safely say that all the Bangladeshi students had a blast, it does seem gathering did not fall short of one that you would find amongst close friends and family. Sure enough it was his-his-whos-whos; but what does it matter when you are surrounded by those dear to you?



Contrasting views are present no matter what the situation is. When I asked Tamanna Haque a freshman and student under the Business School of NUS what she thought of the gathering, she said 'We were making an effort to be happy because we were missing home way too much. Onek faltu, we were having exams.' Marzia Tabassum on the other hand, a sophomore in Electrical Engineering thought 'It was quite fun because it was one of the biggest gatherings of about 25 to 30 people given the constraints because of exams.' Lastly I went on to ask Shimul the president of the Bangladeshi Student Society, a senior in Electrical Engineering and she gave the same answer as rest of the student 'It was a great idea and it was fun. Of course we hated the fact we had so many exams.' But her answer excited me more then any one else because she went ahead to say 'Oh but of course we are having a post Eid elebration barbeque on the 10th of October, I hope you're coming'

This brings me to my next point, Eid Barbeque. In my freshman year I attended the NUS Eid barbeque and met the various groups of students present there. That was the first time I had met such a large number of Students after the end of my Bangla School days during A' levels. It was my first chance to integrate into the Bangladeshi University Student life. It is almost like a family gathering. It is the final integration of the new into the existing. Everybody shares common sentiments and are at their liveliest. Thoughts of exams and assignments are not allowed. It is one of the traditions of the Bangladeshi Society that students look forward to year after year. It is a tradition that us Bangladeshi Singaporeans have made the best of.

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Photo: Zannatul Lamea