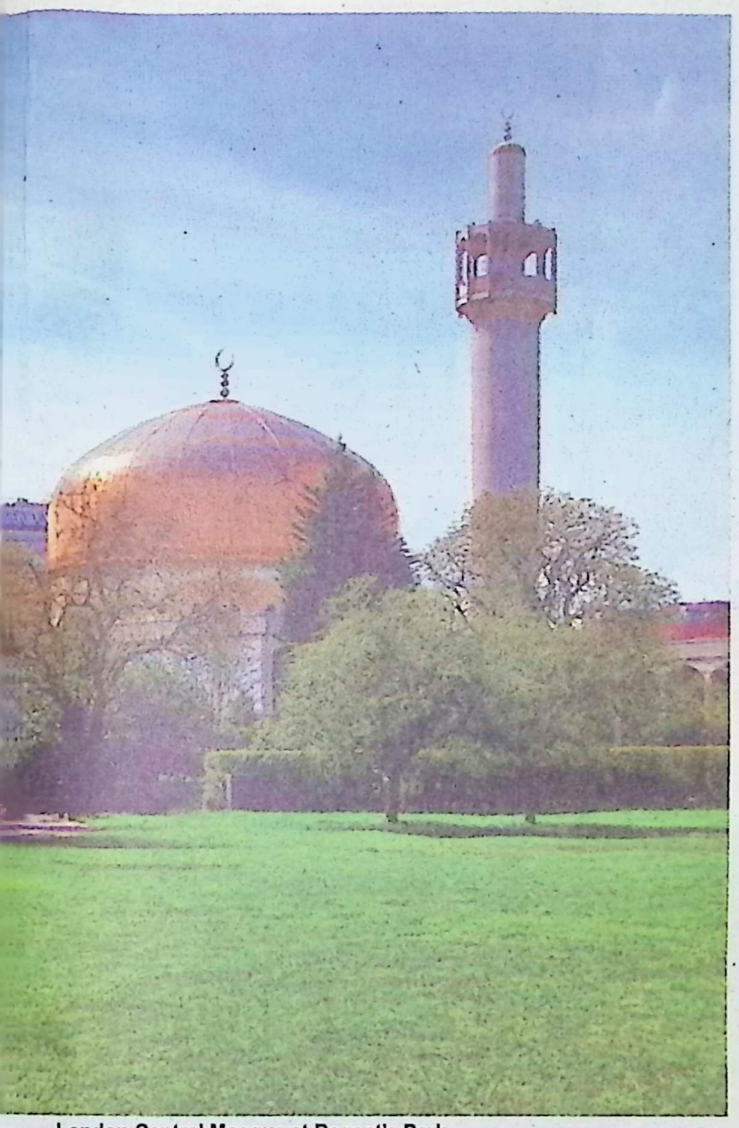


London Central Mosque at Regent's Park.

many 'daaler bora' as I feel like as often as I want. And with three teenagers in my household, we are talking a substantial number of these moreish morsels being devoured in one go!

A trip further afield to the Asian store and nowadays you can get hold of anything you might conceivably need to prepare a *deshi* meal or iftar spread. It not only has the usual rice, pulses, spices, pickles, nuts, etc. but it also stocks bags of 'moori' and tins of 'boot', 'chana' (chickpeas) and even a variety of 'haleem' mixes. If you were feeling particularly lazy and didn't feel like slaving over a hot stove to prepare your own *haleem*, you could just make your way to the restaurant adjacent to the Asian shop and pick up a container especially made for iftar. Admittedly not the best *haleem* in the world but *haleem* nonetheless and I am not about to start complaining.

I think the general public in the UK and especially in London are far more aware of cultural festivals and religious observances these days. Previously in schools, religious studies would comprise of only Christianity but the new curriculum contains, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism arming the children with the basic facts of other religions including the concept of fasting during Ramadan. Today if you tell someone you are fasting, there are very few raised eyebrows and most people you meet either are familiar with Ramadan or want to now know more about the reasoning behind it. To simplify things, I sometimes describe it as a detoxifying of the body and soul.

Even in the workplace people are far more accepting and understanding. These days, it isn't uncommon for my husband to receive emails from colleagues wishing him 'Ramadan Mubarak' or find himself the recipient of Eid greetings. To give you another example of how much people's attitudes have changed, even in the world of football the influx of Muslim players in the premiere league (such as Damba Ba from Chelsea, Ali Al Habsi from Wigan and Samir Nasri from Man City), the various clubs and teams have become far more accommodating and amenable to the players taking time to say their prayers and fast even during peak season.

Eid has also become a proper day of celebration starting with huge numbers of people congregating for Eid prayers held in the mosques dotted around the country. Near to the Regents Park Mosque (and other mosques within London), it is customary to see measures being taken by the councils to make the morning prayers easily accessible and safe especially as the numbers of worshippers appear to be growing every year. It is also a common sight to see Muslims hailing from all over the world out and about in their finest clothes greeting each other on the streets and generally enjoying themselves. A sight that I would not have been witness to as a child. Eid would have been a celebration with a few family friends. Fun but low key. Germany, however, was more like an 'all dressed up and nowhere to go' scenario but Eid is Eid and you just have to make the most of it!

It is a welcome change to be able to celebrate Eid with my own family, relatives and close friends making it the special day that it is. For me the festivities bring with it a house full of colour, laughter, food, merriment and joy. So let me take the opportunity to wish you the same. Eid Mubarak! ■