A Season for Gormandising

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How soon time flies! Believe it or not, Eid is here again, the second of the two that Muslims celebrate annually. Now, Eid is a most wonderful happening, especially when you recall the near hunger with which you waited for your eidee when you were young. Dressed in your best, not ready to sit down on a chair or anywhere else for that matter, lest your shirt and trousers develop unseemly creases, you waited for your parents' guests to arrive. And they did. You watched them furtively as they partook of all that khichuri and pulao and kheer your mother offered them. You waited for the moment when they would dip their hands, once the feasting was over, in their pockets to bring out the one-rupee notes that were your eidee. A positive gleam, indeed a beaming smile, spread over your face. You blessed those guests as you ran out to look for little toys to buy.

That was Eid then, in our childhood, in the 1960s. The new clothes we wore had something of a natural fragrance about them, to a point where we refused to change into anything else at the end of the day. It was a situation where we were determined to wear those Eid clothes all day and night and even into the next day. Or we would wear nothing at all. Ah, those days of innocent folly is what we miss these days as we watch our children (and even our grandchildren, assuming our children have decided that marrying very young gives a spurt to life through ensuring that new life sprouts from their loins and their bellies) celebrate Eid.

And if you speak of Eid-ul-Azha, it is an entirely different proposition altogether. There are too many dimensions involved with the day; and these dimensions begin to take form and substance weeks before the actual day of celebrating the event. Well, first things first. Notice the sheer glee, indeed masochism of a sort, which comes into those who dream of all the feasting they will do on Eid day. It is talk of the cow, with sometimes a few moments given over to discussions of the goat, that dominates every kind of social interaction. Men and women, or husbands and wives, spend days deliberating on whether to go for a sharing of the cow with their neighbours or buy a whole and wholesome cow alone. If the decision leans toward a whole cow for the family, the happiness of the children is palpable. They whoop for joy. Their parents would like to do the same, but are held back by embarrassment or by swift developing gout in their aging bones. Note, though, that they are dying to inform their neighbours of the high price they have paid for that cow tethered to the gate.

But does anyone ever think of asking the bull and cow and goat about how they feel? You can be sure that when you cheerfully part with anywhere between thirty and fifty thousand taka for a cow, place a garland around its neck and walk down the road with it all the way home, the cow has precious little idea it is going to its execution. That is when you remember Farmer Jones of *Animal Farm* fame. You see, those horses and cows and chickens, transported into revolutionary fervour under the leadership of the pigs, certainly understood the exploitative nature of man. And because they did, they drove Jones out of his property one dramatic night and took charge. And then you wonder about present times. Why have all those bulls, roused to Olympian fury by young Spanish matadors year in and year out, never thought of carrying out a coup d'etat in Spain?

A dreamy look comes into your eyes as you wonder how many large slices of salted meat you can derive from that freshly dead cow.

But that is perhaps an irrelevant question, at least for now. What our cows do not understand, every time Eid comes round, is that it is a call for them to prepare to sacrifice themselves for the