and hopes to study political science. "Let's see how my study goes." He will not continue the Ghosh tradition as his mainstay like his elder brother does – on the other hand, it hardly seems likely he could live a life that is entirely ghee-free. Swoosh-swoosh-swoosh – it's teamwork. It's the family. It's the sound of Ghosh. Of a morning before class Narayan pulls the bovine udders; to the sound of squelching spurts he aims fresh Australian-cow and half-Australian-cow milk into a bucket. "Australian cows give twenty plus litres of milk per day," he says, "An ordinary cow gives ten. Our family has been making ghee forever."

Each brother produces a minimum of 2 kilograms per day but they make more when the prices rise, at the time of Eid and in winter. Each kilogram will sell for about 1,000 taka while the by-product, 35 kilograms of liquid doi, or curd, will fetch another 1,000 taka.

"We have around two hundred cows in total," Narayan says, "Some brothers have more, others less. Those with fewer cows buy milk from outside. It takes forty kilograms of milk to make one kilogram of ghee." Ah, but if the milk is bought from elsewhere an average day's profits are reduced to 500 taka, so for a Ghosh those Australian and half-Australian cows surely come in handy.



PHOTOS: ANDREW EAGLE

For the visitors the ghee cooling is demostrated with bucket of water. At other times, the pond has the task.



Kalpana Chandra Ghosh, Paresh's wife, knows the family secret of a second boil that's 'just right' for quality ghee making.

Swoosh-swoosh-swoosh. Swoosh-swoosh-swoosh. Kalpana and Topon Chandra Ghosh, mother and son, are the ones pulling the ropes, churning butter in the yard. They are of course the wife and son of Paresh. And it seems to be enough exercise – a half an hour upper-body workout per bucket. The trade must keep the whole family fit and healthy. And over and above the "together" in it, the teamwork quality, it looks meditative – that sort of repetition that's all together good for the mind. Ghee has many advantages. A Ghosh life is a well-paced together-life.

First the milk is boiled before being dipped into the pond for half an hour to cool, Topon says. It's then that the churning starts. When the transformation to soft butter is complete, the solids are collected and water drained. Then it's boiled and sent to the pond again.

"Madarganj ghee is tasty," says Topon. "Its quality is high because of the fresh milk and our process. While others use machines we churn by hand." And they know how to boil it – a secret, that final phase – medium heat, not too hot or too slow. About thirty minutes of flame from butter to ghee, so it goes.

And finally he's arrived – he's late but he's here. Of course I'm talking about Paresh. "Many people come here and buy the butter instead," he says, "It makes no difference to us because the profit is the same. But they make their own ghee from that, to sell, with added impurities. Our ghee you can only buy here."

As he helps his wife strain the newly boiled ghee in the kitchen house, he's unmistakably cheerful. One could be forgiven for thinking he's always so – that kind of life pleasure cannot easily hide like kittens beyond a tin wall. "Ghee can last for six months out of the fridge." He's proud of his product.

"Even if there was one taka profit in it," says Paresh with a grin, "I would still make ghee." Swoosh-swoosh-swoosh. The sound of a large, contented family. The sound of a thousand years. The sound of ghee-makers making ghee.

Oh, and, there's one other little thing worth mentioning – those Australian cows and the half-Australian cows... There's no such thing as an Australian cow, not really. Perhaps they came to Bangladesh from Australia, where there are of course many cows. But the black and white ones – in Australia they're commonly called Holstein Friesians, from the north of Holland and Friesland in Germany, originally. That would make them a little more German-Dutch, technically. But of course it's hardly something for Renu Bala Chandra Ghosh to worry about.