



SPOTLIGHT

The tenth of Zil Hijja

THE last month of the Islamic calendar is a momentous one. Zil Hijja, or Dhua al Hijja, is the name of the month that literally means "the one of pilgrimage". Millions of Muslims visit the holy lands of Mecca and Medina in this month. And the tenth of this month is again significant because it marks the day of Eid ul Adha.

Termed as the Greater Eid or 'boro Eid', this festival commemorates a touching story of Prophet Abraham (AS). Commanded by Allah in the prophet's dream to sacrifice his son, Abraham passed the test by showing his loyalty towards Him, when, at the last moment, the Almighty stopped him and told him to sacrifice a lamb instead.

And hence, we sacrifice cows, goats, buffalos, camels or sheep every year on Eid ul Adha -- a reminder of the great prophet's willingness to sacrifice and to seek Allah's infinite blessings.

The festivity and happiness associated with the day is unparalleled. Probably, the first chap-

ter of joy and glee comes when you go to the 'gorur haat'. The hustle and bustle of the bazaar, choosing a cow, bargaining with the seller and finally the 'victorious' journey home with the cow are delights we all are familiar with.

The phase in your life when you enjoy Eid the most, one may argue, is childhood. With no burden of responsibility and the holiday spirit, children seem to be the most excited about Eid.

In case of Qurbani Eid, a child playing with the cow or goat is a common scene.

Somewhat afraid but very excited and with just enough daring, groups of children feed the animal while maintaining a distance, while the more adventurous ones try to climb and sit on the cow's back. The centre of attention for a couple of days, the cows and goats become the object of marvel!

I remember my childhood Eid celebrations, when all my cousins -- the whole gang -- went to our village home in Bikrampur for 2-3 days. By the time Eid came, we were pretty tired from



the amusements we had with the cow.

We woke up very early in the morning -- a very busy day. The elders would already start getting ready. We hurriedly put on new clothes and our 'dadi' meticulously applied a hint of attar on our panjabis.

We made our way to the mosque -- in one long line -- through a winding narrow muddy path with paddy fields on both sides. From the mosque, the 'imam' invited people not to waste time and rush to the mosque. He said the

'takbeer' and advised us to say it while we were on our way: Allah is the greatest, He is the greatest. There is no god except Allah. He is the greatest. All praises and thanks are for Him.

In the mosque, before the prayer, the imam asked the designated maulavi shahib from the mosque to go through the village to perform the slaughtering, covering all the houses there were. "I will begin from 'Member Bari' and move towards the north till the end of the village. Hafiz Shaheb will start from the mosque, move eastwards and end at 'Madbor Bari'..." he would say.

But of course, you could perform the slaughter yourself if you wanted to. For many people, it is a way of participating more deeply in the ritual, and is done very dutifully.

And then, many among us would become butchers for a day and sit on the ground to process the raw meat, along with several helping hands. Many became busy distributing the meat among the poor and the relatives. The lazy ones would delegate authority and take a nap!

In the afternoon, the first batch of the meat arrives at the table. Most often, it is the liver. And that is just the start of the 3-day long or a week long feast!

We meet the rich 'nehari' on the breakfast table. Lunch with cousins is even more fun with yummy beef and mutton curries. Evenings are spent in an enchanting barbeque party on the rooftop. Dinner is reserved for the ultimate treat: steak or kachchi biriyani.

While it's great to enjoy good food, let's not



make food the centre of attention. Instead, let's cherish the spirituality of Eid. Allah had spoken in His book about it.

"It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches God: it is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify God for His Guidance to you and proclaim the good news to all who do right."

By M H Haider

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