

WHAT YOUR QURBANI ANIMAL SAYS ABOUT YOU



ZOHEB MASHIUR

The sacrificial animal is at the heart of Eid-ul-Azha. During this time of the year, you're only as memorable as your cow or goat. The style-conscious have long been wise to this and purchase an animal that tells everyone, "Yup, this is me! This is who I am. Well, okay, not literally. I mean, I'm not an animal, it's just a metaphor for - um. Can we restart this conversation?" We've generalised a little and compiled a list of types of people during Qurbani and what sort of animal they buy to best express themselves. Of course, you and your sense of style are unique, but maybe something here will fit your profile.

THE AESTHETE

The Aesthete knows that beauty is not just skin deep. They look first and foremost for one quality in a cow: size. Some will say that a younger animal's meat is more succulent and tender, but the Aesthete will wave away these objections and show you instead just how many flower garlands can be fitted prettily about the neck of their bovine brontosaurus. This cow has presence. It has gravity, and the Aesthete is willing to pay money equivalent to its body weight for it. After such a serious investment, surely they can be forgiven for bringing up the rather stupendous amount several times during your conversations with them this Eid, and indeed three months after?

It's simply bad taste to bring up your own animal when in conversation with the Aesthete. A person of breeding does not encourage such competition.

When it comes to goats the Aesthete must resign themselves to a far lower size ceiling than with cows, yet these little animals do not lack for qualities that a discerning individual can really get worked up about. The opulence of the fur and a certain gazelle-esque slenderness to the leg are there to be spotted by those with the eyes to see them.

When the Aesthete points these traits out to you, pretend to be able to see them too.

THE NEWBIE

A person of wisdom once said, "Life gives the test first, the lesson afterwards" or words to that effect. (Accuracy is just so gauche, don't you agree?) Though it is unlikely that the person of wisdom meant to describe the experiences of the first-time sacrificial animal-buyer, by one of life's delightful coincidences, they have.

If this is your first time buying a cow, a goat, or even a

flower garland for the cow...
hahahahahaha
hahahahahaha
hahahahahaha
ahahahaha.

That is what you will hear when you go home and tell people how much you paid.

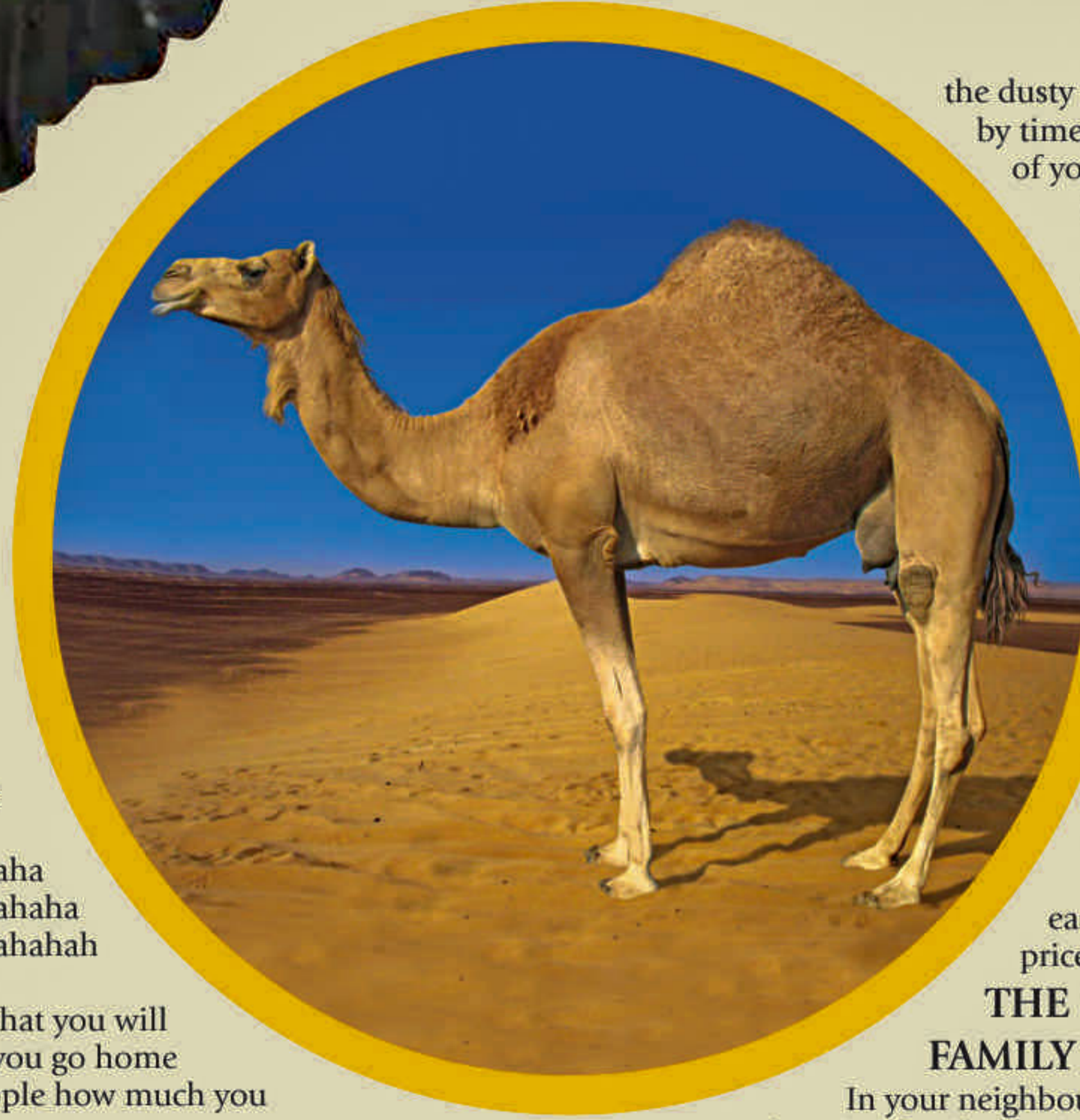
Upon first having the duty thrust upon them, the Newbie will flail about like a blind person desperate to orient themselves. Whatever price the quietly snickering trader will throw out, they will gratefully hang on to it like a life jacket. Later (*much later*), they will learn the truth. And the truth will be hilarious.

The Newbie is easily identified. They will be the one trying very hard to hide behind their quite acceptable, moderately-sized cow - or, alternately, trying to conceal the animal behind themselves. If you shout after them on the street a friendly, "Bhai, koto nise?" you will learn that they are have become tragically deaf.

If you call on the Newbie a week after Eid, you will further find that they have moved to another city. In Spain.

THE NONCONFORMIST

There is much to be said for buying a cow or a goat this Eid. Too much, some may say. The Nonconformist walks the dusty, muddy, earthy aisles of the haat with a look of ennui. The Nonconformist has seen it all before. They want something a little different, a little *subversive* to spice up this year's ceremony. Something that'll stand out on the street and in



the dusty corridors of memory when, ripened by time, they look back fondly at their years of youth and innocent indiscretion. So they buy a honking great camel. Cantankerous and aloof, the camel is not a beast to be taken lightly in its natural habitat. Spirited away from the high desert wind and shoved into a Dhanmondi garage next to the neighbour's bicycle, these regal qualities seem to magnify. Quite aside from its feisty temperament, the camel's foreign nature makes it a challenge to maintain and prepare. The Nonconformist must be prepared to fork out a fair amount of money - not just at the point of purchase, but for everything that comes after. Being different does not come easy; yet, if you can achieve it, it is priceless.

THE OPULENT FAMILY

In your neighbourhood there is a family that is wealthier than you. Please, do not take it the wrong way; we would never be so crude as to comment on your standard of living. It is simply a fact of life that no matter how comfortably-off you may be, there is always, always, a bigger fish. These particular fish school together as a large, extended family, and you will find many generations of them living in their pile for as long as anyone can willingly remember. They are the pillar of the community, and the way they spend on Eid, you quite suspect them of being the pillar of the



national economy as well. The Opulent Family will buy COWs. Not just any old quad-legged, four-tummied, two-horned grass-muncher, but something that is so COW it could well stand as an example to the neighbourhood for the next 30 years of the heights that animal can aspire to should it set its mind to it. The Opulent Family will then buy four more just like it, and somehow repeat this trick every year. Members of the Opulent Family will stand beside these perfect beasts and ask you how much your animal cost. Ordinarily this would be quite unrefined a thing to do, but the thing about having money is that good manners are something you get to define. So smile and tell them and watch them laugh at you, you peasant.

KHAL DROGO
While to the Aesthete size is merely a handy measure of a cow's beauty, there is another style of beast-buyer this Eid who treats enormity as its own prize. This possible Dothraki warlord will be of a tough, rough-and-tumble mindset, and cannot be bothered with such frippery as garlands or basic human safety. This Eid and every Eid, they will buy the same animal: A large slab of rippling male muscle with black fur and horns that get tangled in telephone cabling. This Friday, if you hear the earth seeming to rumble and your cutlery rattling, do not fear. The End Times have not yet come. It is simply the titanic death struggle of this terrifying animal. It is advisable to wear full plate armour in the presence of the black bull. In the presence of its owner, it is advisable to wear an Apache Attack Helicopter.

What unites every one of these people is the emptiness they feel in their hearts around noon when the sacrifice is done and their beloved animal is gone forever. Thankfully Eid comes with lots and lots of food to fill that void, and the comfort of knowing that they truly expressed who they were on that great day.

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