



SPOTLIGHT

The night of Sakrain

People of Old Dhaka are a fun-loving lot - there's no argument in that. From their lavish meals to the never-ending wedding ceremonies, their many elaborate and extravagant affairs make this notion an undisputed fact. And they know how to party!

The night of Sakrain is one such example. Poush Shankranti - the occasion that marks the end of the Bengali month, Poush - is celebrated through the Sakrain festival. Dates of the event vary, according to different localities. This year, the occasion will be celebrated in Dhaka on 14 and 15 January.

Sakrain is about kite-flying. Flaunting awe-inspiring kites of myriad colours and shapes and sizes, and taking part in the thrill of kite-fighting, has been a Sakrain tradition for ages.

But the festival doesn't stop as the sun (and the surviving kites!) come down.

"You've got to come at night!" my friends from the old part of town had always insisted. And this recommendation had always come with another invitation: "You've got to get on our rooftop!"

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Because, they said, that's when and where the party is.

So, even though I'm not a party animal, due to their insistence, I went, last year.

The neighbourhood was buzzing with people. Every corner of its narrow alleys were occupied with friends having a good time or people passionately discussing their episodes of kite flying or

opponents raging against one another over foul play.

I, however, was dragged by my friends to one of the houses.

I passed the courtyard and climbed through a steep, narrow and deviously twisting stairway.

I was on the rooftop. A very crowded rooftop. The night had begun.

Loud speakers sprang into life with Bollywood numbers. And out came the disco lights. Securing a safe enough place on the rooftop amidst the countless people, my eyes started screening the neighbourhood - which now jumped up and down with the beats of Yo Yo Honey Singh.

The entire 'moholla' seemed to transform itself into an open-air nightclub. Beams of light, in red, yellow, blue and every other colour there is, moved about amongst the houses. Beautiful fireworks very often illuminated fragments of the night sky.

Festivals and fire go hand in hand, it seems. So, in addition to the strobe lights, there was also the warm and ravishing glow of fire. From the rooftop, I could see a silhouette of a man whirling

a couple of fiery strings. Meanwhile, ravishing flames were brought out from the mouths of the daredevils.

My friend was one of them. After showing off a couple of stunts, he offered me to try it out, handing me the kerosene. I bluntly refused, stating that I was unwilling to walk about with the odour of an energy fuel for the next few days. He of course thought that I did not have the guts for it.

The night ended after having a lot of fun and eating an uncountable amount of sweets.

I went home, with a brain hyperactive from the overdose of sugar; numb ears, from the loud music; a hoarse voice, from shouting amidst the loud music and the equally loud crowd; but also, with a happy heart, because of the beautiful vibe of Sakrain.

Sakrain this year is just around the corner. My friends didn't invite me this time. They probably figured that parties are not for me and that I would rather be home.

This Sakrain, I will surprise them.

By M H Haider

Photo: Taufiqur Rahman, Hasan Tareque

