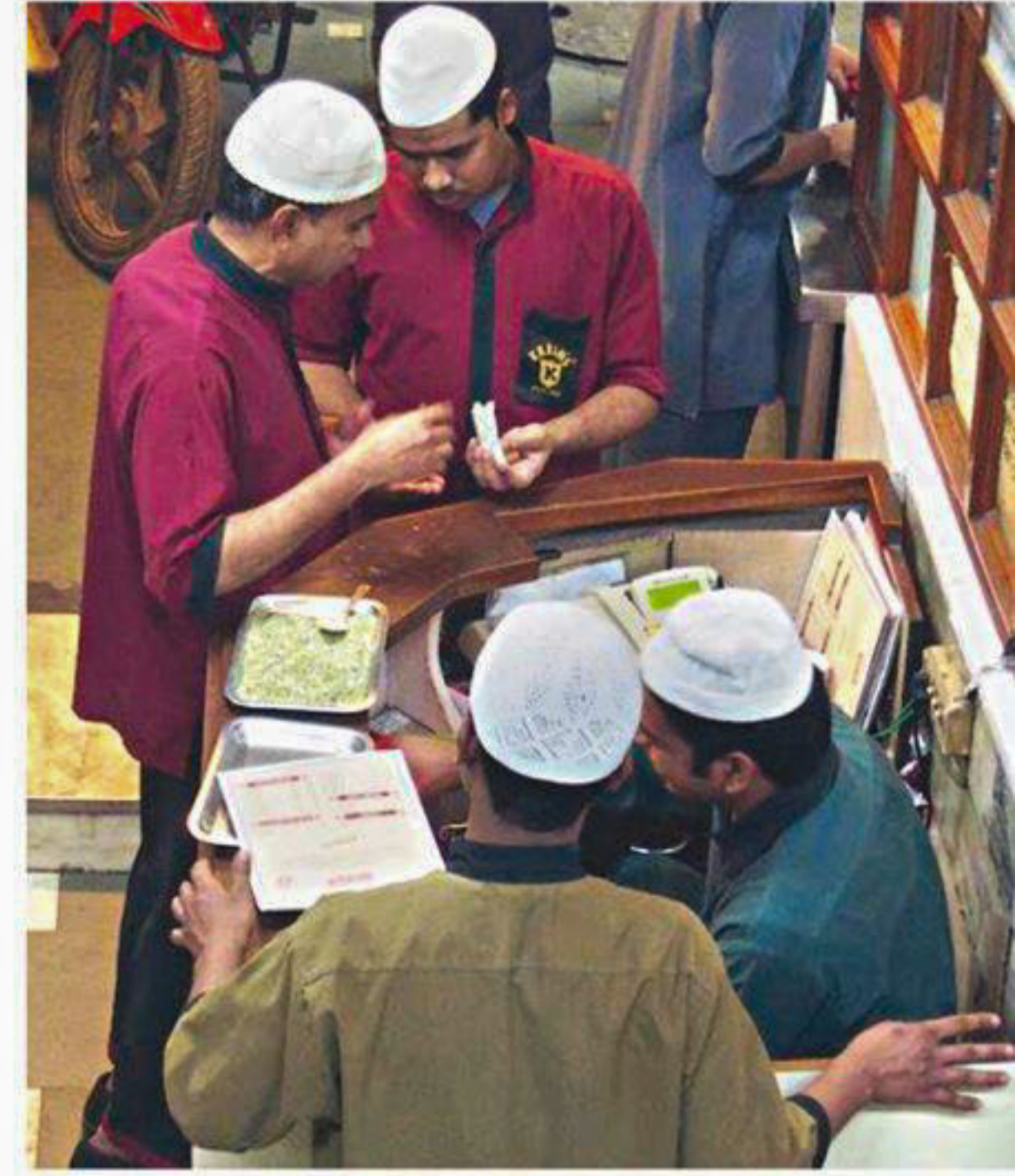


FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD

BY KANISKA
CHAKRABORTY

Karim's - such a let down

We were in Delhi in December. Lovely chill. Great time to eat. After trying out some cafes in and around Khan Market, Kamala Nagar, we decided to pop over to Old Delhi for the street food.



My favourite place to go is around Jama Masjid, in the lane where there is the original Karim. But I seldom go to Karim's, which is known to be a veritable institution.

The streets there are full of wonders. Open grills emit the heavenly aroma of spices and kebabs. Large containers are full of rabri, reduced milk with nuts and sugar added to it.

Magnificent fruits. Interesting bakeries

selling biscuits and breads. A lane where butter chicken literally means chicken cooked in butter.

Gnarled faces tell the stories of time. Rickshaws and carts jostle for space. Stray bulls amble across. Everyone seems to be heading somewhere with incredible alacrity. Except us.

We had all the time in the world to look around. And soak in we did. Except for the fact that my mother could not eat anything for the fear of falling sick. Hence, we walked in to Karim's.

Her go to place when she was a student in Delhi. Her mind went back to the naan, the tandoori chicken, the dal, the firni. And that's what we ordered. I added an order of sheekh kebab to that.

The food came. Her face lit up. I took a bite. Penny dropped. That was some of the most tasteless food I have ever tasted. Pasty, burnt meat of the sheekh, the lack of salt in the chicken, the chewy naan.

The dal was the saving grace. Thick, wholesome, warm, comforting. I had high hope for the firni. A good firni is one of the simple pleasures of life.

A spoon and I stood corrected. This firni



was devoid of any sweetness. No texture of rice. A classic example of mass cooking with no love. I guess her memory served her well as she was not as disappointed as I was.

And to top it all, I did get an upset stomach that night. Always better off with hot delicious street food.

Photo courtesy: Kaniska Chakraborty



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