

SPOTLIGHT

ACUTABOVE

# The Mirkadim breed of COWS



Your first impression of the Mirkadim region in Munshiganj would be no different than that of many other modern villages, or small towns in Bangladesh. Ponds scattered here and there, thatched huts being replaced by larger concrete buildings, the traditional haat bazaar continuing to be the melting pot of commerce and social life, and a culture awkwardly caught up in the middle of the notion of simpler times versus rapid changes and globalisation.

But dig deeper, and you will realise Mirkadim is like no other. It is the home of Mirkadim cows, a distinct class in our livestock industry — the highly celebrated and premium, ‘Mirkadim er goru’. The cattle have set this area apart from the rest, with its name forever twinned with that of the cows it farms.

What really makes Mirkadim’s cows so exclusive?

Anwar Hossain, a cattle farmer who has been raising such cows for more than 15 years, says that first and foremost, the appearance itself is a key reason for the fame.

“There is a demand for white cows. People find them pleasing to look at,” Hossain opined.

But not all white cows are created equal.

“The Mirkadim cows usually have subtle pinkish hues in some parts of the body, giving them a rather distinctive look,” he added.

Moreover, the meat of these cows is superior in taste. It is of premium quality — our answer to Kobe beef!

What owes to the superior taste, though?

“The feeds of Mirkadim cows are more diverse and richer,” informed Hossain, who, this year, has four of these cattle to sell in the market.

He bought them about eight months ago in exchange of Tk 3,20,000. Add to that the hefty cash outflow he bears to

buy expensive fodder. However, he is confident that it’s all worth it — Mirkadim cows sell at relatively higher prices too, and Hossain hopes for a decent mark-up.

The same confidence is shared by Anis as well, another cattle farmer who lives nearby.

“I usually do not need to go to the cattle market at all. Customers send their people to have a look and they directly buy from my cowshed,” he says.

His secret to success is also shared with Hossain and other such farmers. “Go to any ordinary farm and see the quantity, richness, and the types of fodder. Compare that with ours and the difference will become apparent.”

The fodder makes a lot of difference, and so does the level of care taken.

“If a drop of rain touches my cow, I take out my own gamcha and wipe it out,” Hossain explains how meticulous they are with their cattle.

A peek at the cowshed of Idris Haque, another Mirkadim farmer, would suffice to get an idea of the dedication. You will be surprised how neat and clean the cowshed is. You will be impressed that there are fans attached for the comfort of the animals. And you will understand that some thought went into building the cowshed itself: modest, but relatively spacious and a more robust structure in comparison to those of typical farmers.

“It is not uncommon that Mirkadim cows can sell rather quickly once taken to the ‘haat’. You do not need to wait for days and days,” Haque says. “That’s the fruits of our labour.”

And laborious and expensive the farming is!

With the hard work and costs that come with this business, many like Haque are concerned about the future.

“When I was a child, there were more families involved in farming Mirkadim cows than there are now. Many have shifted to cross-breed cattle,” he said.

This thought gets reinforced when he goes to Rahmatganj Haat every year, a cattle market which has long been branded as the ultimate marketplace of Mirkadim cows. “With changing times, the haat nowadays bring up more variety; the exclusivity is waning away.”

The Mirkadim cow is like no other. From the special care taken to the rich feeds they are fed, the cows are premium, their meat distinctively tastier, even a heritage — a cut above.

This begs the question — after one visits the cowsheds in the area and on his way back to Dhaka — can Mirkadim, amidst the whirlwind of changes and the hard realities of trade and life at large, retain the glory of its special cattle that have made it so famous?

By M H Haider  
Photo: Star

## Fancythat!

Jazzing up your beloved animal with garland, ‘mala’, is nothing new, but the enthusiasm with which this is done nowadays by a growing number of people, definitely is!

Previously, choices were limited. And that’s all good and this trade is still apparent in cattle markets. But if you want to run the extra mile — add more pomp and razzmatazz surrounding your animal — now you have that option too.

Your destination?

Facebook! There is now a number of F-commerce ventures which deliver ornaments for your cow.

One of them which has been in this niche for quite some time now is ‘Bulls n Masks.’

“Designs and options were scanty. People were not very familiar with the concept,” Md Saleh Ahmed, CEO, Bulls n Masks, looks back at the time when he started his endeavour in 2016. “I did my research - and even a lot of explaining-and-convincing with the tailors!”

The sets or malas are elaborate and



intricate, featuring various designs, metals, mirrors and a wide plethora of other materials. Ahmed strives to offer new designs every year. He adds that ‘Bulls n Masks’ is cautious about not offering anything that will provide discomfort to the animals.

A general price range for ‘Bulls n Masks’ products would be Tk 1200 to Tk 1800.

“Many young people are enthusiastic about cattle and simply love to make them even more beautiful,” he said about the demand.

Other than direct customers, Bulls n Masks also sells to large farms. “They purchase from us and accessorise the cow as a gift to their customers,” he informs.

A longstanding subsector of the Eid-ul-Azha trade comprises of mala. And Facebook ventures like Bulls n Masks have taken it to a whole new level. Fancy that!

By M H Haider  
Photo: Bulls n Masks

