

IMAGES THROUGH A THEODOLITE**MANNAN MASHHUR ZARIF**
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I Googled “Sharing food,” and the results were as bizarre as the search itself. But it proved a point.

Mr Google responded:

“People also ask:

Is it OK to share food with friends?

Is sharing food a sign of intimacy?

What shared food means?

Why do we share food?”

Surely, Google and I were not in the same page.

Our exercise this week is not about how much we depend on the Internet; it’s on ‘sharing food,’ which seemed like a pretty simple concept. Or so I thought.

We celebrated Eid only a few weeks ago; Durga Puja is right around the corner, and Christmas will be here soon. Come New Year’s Eve, you will realise another year has passed by and in retrospect, you have accomplished nothing.

Of course, that is not what your Facebook friends will know. Simply because, you will fly to Vietnam and as you return, not only will you find the month’s pay already spent, but also in debt as you endorsed the dollars, but old-fashioned budgeting took a back seat. You were born in the ‘90s, and the concept of ‘Traveller’s Check’ never did sink in.

I will not say social media does not have its fair share of good use. People bond, remains connected, share thoughts and ideas. As someone who has a special bond with the IT section, and one that gets stronger with every passing day, I marvel at the idea of people collecting meat from city

“Eat, pray, love” — not necessarily in that order

dwellers, only to distribute them to places which are beyond their reach.

And I was amazed to see the response. I truly felt that maybe this is the very spirit of Eid after all! And what makes me prouder is that these are indeed youngsters, most of them two decades younger than I.

For years, every time we cook a decent meal, a portion invariably goes to the family living in the opposite flat. At times, they share ‘mejbani mangsho’ and my wife reciprocates with her special ‘beef shatkora.’ We also share a love for seafood, and every time I see large pomfrets on the dinner table, I know where they are from.

I can recall a time when, come Eid day, the less fortunate would form queues in front of houses and collect the meat, only to sell it to the butcher. Many held them guilty of sacrilege without even thinking twice that maybe for a single day, they have more meat than they can consume.

As far as meat from qurbani is concerned, the spirit of sharing teaches us to split into three equal shares. Most people usually see that this duty is performed within sunset, yet some others treat matters in a different fashion.

I cannot say if this is a permissible way of doing things, but the reason for sharing the idiosyncrasy of this family is simply the novelty of it.

The three-member family does not share most people’s enthusiasm for red meat. So, beef is on the table as long as the Eid day dish lasts. Most of the meat gets stock

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piled in the refrigerator, only to be used for preparing meat dishes throughout the year— from the humble samosa for the unannounced guest, to lavish winter barbeques — this is the what they use!

The family lives in an area that sees destitute men, women, and children sleep with just a blanket as a cover; at times without a sheet to protect from the Aedes and the Anopheles mosquitoes. A nearby city corporation signboard proudly claims — “Beggar Free Area!” — a mockery of the lives

that are less fortunate.

I realise homeless and beggars are not synonyms, but the sorry state of our governance and prevailing social order is not too difficult to fathom. This particular group and some others in the neighbourhood, are well aware of which household to visit whenever they are in need for meat, perhaps for a festive occasion of their own; perhaps, just to give the taste buds a different feel. This supply runs for 12 months, and the cycle continues.

There have always been people who share food in such curious manners. One of my acquaintances makes it a point to feed people on the birthday of her deceased father. She gives away food parcels filled with sweets and savouries her father once used to enjoy. Another interesting soul takes a rickshaw ride to any random bazaar; asks if the rickshaw-puller will wait while he does his grocery.

Sometimes, they do, at times, they do not.

On his way back, he gives away the entire bag of grocery fit enough to provide a square meal for a family. The rickshaw pullers are often taken aback; at times, accepting only after persuasion.

The concept of distributing/sharing food is as simple as treating a friend at his favourite burger joint, or cooking your wife’s favourite — lasagne — on your anniversary. Charity is promoted, charity is needed. What is more needed is showing people that the fellow being cares. Make sure that deep in your heart, the list goes —love, pray, eat. And in that exact order!

PERSPECTIVE

The nightshift and its keepers

What keeps the night owls —norm defying nocturnal sapiens, and daredevils trading blows with insomnia— going as they burn the midnight oil to the ashes of wicks left of their candle like spirits at dawn?

Shift workers are generally prone to suffering from risks of type 2 diabetes, increased anxiety, and other health hazards. The reasons for why it’s so difficult for us to alternate between night and daytime sleep seem to be embedded in our genetic codes, hypothesised to be from our Palaeolithic past — a throwback to when our ancestors only doodled on caves for fun. But despite all of this, in the context of Dhaka, many seem to actually prefer night shifts.

Shefayat Hossain, inspector of security from Shield Security, who has been working at North South University for the past 17 years, said that he prefers the night shifts due to the calm environment and the lower workload.

He adds that there are checks from management, and sleeping on the job leads to punishments and pay cuts. However, there is not much to keep them awake as it is against the rules to even drink tea or coffee from passing by tea sellers or street vendors!

The Senior Security Inspector from Independent University Bangladesh, who wished to remain anonymous, informed that the night shift lasts from 10PM to 6AM and all personnel are rotated every eight hours.

His work includes overseeing that everyone on duty is adequately alert. He mentioned that coffee and biscuits are enough to keep himself awake, and he finds that almost everyone on his team has developed a level of familiarity with the work and does not have much trouble staying awake.

Other members of security commented on a lack of snacks being available at the hours they have to stand vigil at. Cell phones and walks around the campus help clear out any drowsiness they usually feel, commented another member of security at the gate.

RJ Sarah Alam, from Radio Foorti, has to work from 11PM to 2AM when she hosts the show What the Foorti, and she finds the large number of responses at those hours from attentive listeners intriguing.

“At times, it’s fun working alone, you get to focus on the work,” said Sarah. She goes on to say if she had to pick between day shifts and working at night, “I usually set my

preferences depending on the show. What I love about ‘What the Foorti’ is that it’s a comedy show.”

When asked if there’s anything which helps her stay awake, she laughed and replied with, “When the job is fun, you don’t really feel tired.” On the downsides of working late, Sarah talked about how she does not like how her sleep cycle gets thrown out of whack. It leads to her sleeping well into the day and missing out on a lot of things.

Rashed Zaman, a former night crawler, is currently studying Mechanical Engineering at Monash University Malaysia. During his time as Assistant Marketing Manager at Techcloud Ltd., he had to make calls to potential clients between 9PM and 6PM.

He says that he had loved working at night primarily due to how it led to higher efficiency with minimal distraction all around.

“Another thing I loved was finishing up all work before sunrise and waking up to a day which is free to be conquered,” said Rashed.

He would wake up at noon and start his day off with brunch, during those days. In order to keep his circadian rhythm in tempo, he had gotten double layered curtains for

his room and instructed family members to keep noise away from him at the very least till 12:30PM.

Some of the things he found troublesome were the lack of recreational breaks and the thought of being stuck at the office with gates to the building being closed till the next morning, even during a potential emergency.

There was also a lack of support from the top of the chain during the night whereby certain problems had to await resolution till the light of day graced all.

By many accounts, the night itself transmutes established thought patterns into previously uncharted ways of thinking. With headlights chasing highway roads and solitary moon gazers adrift on night sailing winds, speakers playing Sinatra’s “In the Wee Small Hours” or Tagore’s “Amar Nishitho Raater Badol Dhara” in distant corners of Dhaka, there are those who have claimed the nights for themselves.

Trading sunshine for starlight, eerie quiet exchanged for blaring horns, stillness for motion, they forge dreams into reality at the darkest of hours.

By K Naim Uddin