

Eid — then and now

labbayka -llāhumma
labbayk, labbayka lā
šarīka laka labbayk,
inna -l- amda wa-n-ni
mata laka wa-l-mulka lā
šarīka lak

“Here I am [at your service] O God, here I am. Here I am [at your service]. You have no partners (other gods). To You alone is all praise and all excellence, and to You is all sovereignty. There is no partner to You.”

This is the Muslims' call during the pilgrimage or Hajj, I remember my parents used to watch Hajj on TV and this call echoed throughout our home. And till date, I do the same, I tune in to the Hajj on TV and recite this, it is some sort of ritual you can say for me. It brings back loads of nostalgic memories and always gives me a sense of purity. The spirituality and holiness you feel while reciting the “talbiyah” along with the congregation is a powerful feeling. The sacredness and religiousness gives you a sensation of purity, it connects you to the almighty and you surrender yourself totally.

Every year after Hajj, the Eid-ul-Azha or Qurbani Eid festivity begins, but I remember in our family it started a few days before Hajj. The family used to meet and decide on what should be the Qurbani budget that year, the kind of sacrificial animal to choose from, etc. Then there was the joyous moment of going to the *haat* or sacrificial animal bazaar to buy the cattle of choice. This going to *haat* was in itself a big moment in my family; my father used to invite all my aunts and uncles to meet for a brunch of khichuri and omelettes and then they would all start for the biggest *haat* in town.

Once the cattle were bought, they were



stationed at my grandmother's backyard and all the tiny tots of my big joint maternal family hovered over them and got busy to feed them leaves and grass or whatever they fancied, I remember some child offering the cattle his candies. After the sacrifice was done, the teens of the family had the responsibility for distributing the meat to friends and extended family and to the poor. Beef was cooked that day in large pots. Tender and soft, it was devoured with polao or khichuri. It was all a celebration in the true sense of the word and I still remember every bit of the fun in detail.

However, as years went by and we grew up, these festivities were no longer fun, rather, they became chores to comply with societal pressure. I wonder whether my father felt the same pressure or was it indeed all pleasurable during his time?

Anyway, Qurbani Eid has now become so simple with the advent of butcher shops that all I do now is pay my share of the money and wait for the meat to be delivered on Eid day. You choose your cattle online; you practically have no worries except maybe distribution. And with COVID-19 and all, I decided this year to give the majority portion of my sacrificial meat to my service folks who deserves it more than anyone.

This week, Star Lifestyle is bringing out a special recipe supplement to make it easy for you to choose from and prepare your Eid day menu. We have some exclusive recipes from our celebrated recipe columnist Salina Parvin; Bihari dum gosht, beef boti masala, baked mutton leg, Mughlai beef fillet curry, just to name a few. So flip through our pages, read our recipes and have a great Eid-ul-Azha.

But please avoid *haats* this year and play it safe. May Allah have mercy on us and His beautiful green planet this Hajj.

— RBR

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Food and Styling: RBR

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