



PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

# CELEBRATING EID the Chatgaiya way

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ARUN BIKASH DEY

From the infectious enthusiasm in the air to the meticulously prepared delicacies and vibrant gatherings, the Chatgaiya way of celebrating Eid-ul-Azha showcases a fusion of prosperity, religious devotion, and cultural heritage.

With its historical reputation as a prosperous city and a hub of religious passion, Chattogram stands apart from other regions during this joyous occasion.

Prof Dr Monzur-Ul-Amin Chowdhury, senate member of Chittagong University, says



while many traditional practices continue to thrive, some have gradually faded away with the passage of time. However, the spirit of the Chatgaiya community remains intact, as they proudly embrace their unique identity and



rejoice in their distinctive way of observing Eid-ul-Azha.

## STARTS WITH THE SACRIFICIAL RITUALS

The people of Chattogram prefer to offer their sacrifice on the very first day of Eid-ul-Azha, however, in a few cases that may be an exception. Traditionally, they prefer a single animal's sacrifice, be it – a cow, buffalo, or camel under the name of seven people. In the case of goats, sheep, and ewes, there is a religious provision for sacrificing under a single name.

Sending sacrificial animals to the daughter's in-law's house is also an age-old custom in Chattogram. This practice still goes on in the region per the person's affordability.

## THEN COMES THE FOOD

If there's one word synonymous with extravagance, it would

undoubtedly be Chattogram's cuisine during festivals. Households prepare special dishes using the meat of sacrificial animals, elevating the culinary experience to new heights.

Hosting guests with freshly cooked meat and hand-made bread is a must-have of Chatgaiya culture. It is also a traditional custom in Chattogram to distribute these hand-made flatbreads and cooked mezbani meat or kala bhuna to the homes of relatives.

Meanwhile, the tradition of city dwellers returning to their village homes to celebrate Eid with extended families is gradually fading as the concept of joint families transforms into smaller nuclear units. Nevertheless, many families in the port city continue to uphold this practice, taking advantage of the closure of educational institutions during

the festive period and travelling to their village homes four to five days prior to Eid.

In villages, the afternoon on Eid day is marked by the serving of different types of pitha (traditional rice cakes) among family members and visiting guests, a custom absent in city areas. The meat from the sacrificial animals is divided into three parts in villages, with one part distributed to the poor, one sent to relatives, and one retained for personal consumption. This distribution process commences in the afternoon and continues into the evening.

Evening meals in villages consist of meat dishes paired with traditional ruti (flatbread), while in cities, meat dishes are served with parata or bakarkhani (types of flaky bread).

In villages, the male members of the family gather in the yard, engaging in lively conversations and adda (informal discussions) from evening till night, while women focus on preparing delectable meat-based dishes in the kitchen. Meanwhile, children enjoy the evening with their cousins and friends.

In contrast, city dwellers typically remain in their houses or apartments during the evening.

Thus, the conclusion of Eid day unfolds in its own distinctive manner, with varying traditions and activities, encapsulating the diverse celebrations of village and city life.

# QHWAB a preserved delicacy

SIFAYET ULLAH

From the eighties till the 2000s, Rabeya Begum, a home-maker from Chattogram's Hathazari upazila had no refrigerators at their house. So whenever Eid-ul-Azha came around, she had to opt for a unique technique to preserve the meat – by making Qhwab.

"Qhwab is our traditional technique of preserving meat. We use this method to eat meat throughout the year," she said.

Every year during Eid-ul-Azha, people of each region preserve the meat of the sacrificial animals differently. However, for many in Chattogram Qhwab is a very popular method of preservation.

Many residents also make Qhwab to send it to relatives and friends living abroad.

Khaleda Begum, a mother of two expatriates, said, "My two sons stay in other countries so we make Qhwab and send it to them every year."

## MAKING QHWAB

Aysha Siddika, a home-maker from Chattogram, shared her way of making Qhwab.

She said, "At first, we separate the fat from the meat. Then we cover the meat in a spice paste and season it adequately with salt. After marinating, the pieces of meat are cooked several times without water."

She added, "The meat should be boiled until dried but not burned. After this process is over, the dry meat pieces are kept under the sun. After a few days of sun-drying, the meat is kept in large containers."



# Going cashless at cattle markets

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Abul Hossain, a resident of the port city's Hamzarbagh area, bought a cow from the Sagarika cattle market for Tk 1.30 lakh. The trader Abdul Hannan received the full amount from the digital transaction booth of city corporation sitting in the market.

While visiting the cattle market, many like Abul are doing digital transactions at the cashless of "Smart Bangladesh Smart Haat" organised for the first time in Chattogram to avoid hassle.

Traders are also taking this as a positive initiative by the Bangladesh Bank and the city corporation.

More than 12 banks and mobile banking services are facilitating facilitate the service at two cattle markets in Sagorika and Nurnagar Housing areas.

Abul Hossain told The Daily Star, "I came to the market without cash when I learned about the digital initiative a few days ago."

Abdul Hannan, the seller, said, "Three of us from Dinajpur came to Chattogram with 27 cows. So far 14 cows have been sold. Among them I sold two of them digitally. I have been selling cattle at this market for the last 12 years. I used to keep the cash with me, which was quite risky."

Sagarika Cattle Market supervisor Anisur Rahman said the response they got this time is quite positive. It will become more popular in the years to come.

Mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said, "This initiative has been taken to stop the fake money business centring Eid and make transactions between buyers and sellers safe and hassle free."



## MEAT DISTRIBUTION

# Traditions a must for Eid

SIFAYET ULLAH

In terms of festivities, Eid-ul-Azha has always had a special place in homemaker Shamsun Nahar's heart, a resident of South Pahartali under Chattogram's Hathazari upazila.

Every year she eagerly awaits the day, thinking of when her father will visit her in-laws' house with freshly cooked meat and hand-made rice flour bread.

"My parents' house is my prime identity. So, every year I wait for their arrival with the sacrificial gifts," she said.

Sending freshly cooked meat and hand-made rice flour bread to daughter-in-laws' houses is a long-standing practice within Chattogram's tradition.

Following this, every married Chatgaiya woman waits the same way

every year.

Sirajul Islam, a 60-year-old father of two daughters and a resident of Anwara upazila, said, "After cutting meat, I go to my two daughters' house every year on Eid day with raw and cooked meat as it's our tradition."

Rokeya Begum, a mother from the port city's Oxygen area, said, "We share our joy with loved ones through the exchange of such sacrificial gifts."

In addition to distributing meat, sending whole sacrificial animals to the daughter's in-laws is also a tradition in Chattogram.

However, sometimes this tradition creates pressure on the lower strata of the society when it becomes mandatory. Still, many people of this region feel that these traditions help them share happiness among each other.



# Butcher for a day!

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Abdullah, a rickshaw-puller, was waiting in front of a blacksmith's shop at Halishahar on Sunday.

Every Eid-ul-Azha, the 35-year-old transforms into a seasonal butcher.

"I have to sharpen my butchering tools as Eid is just around the corner," he said.

Like him, many low income people become butchers to earn some extra money.

Such "professionals" from different upazilas gather around cattle markets in Chattogram city's Devanhat, EPZ, AK Khan intersection, Muradpur, Bakalia, and Sadarghat areas.

Day labourers, rickshaw pullers, transport workers, and many others usually crowd the spot two days before Eid to take up butchering contracts in exchange for money and meat.

"The demand for professional



butchers is high, so many hire us instead as we demand lower wages. I even assisted a professional a few times," said Rubel Mia, a vendor in the Bandar area.

It costs around Tk 8,000-20,000 to hire a group of 3-4

professional butchers. The expenses for similar sized groups of seasonal butchers are as low as Tk 2,000, said Fazlul Karim Manik, a trader in New Market's Tamakundi Lane.

"While many workers sell the

meat they receive as donations in roadside markets because they live alone, others take the meat home to enjoy a good home-cooked meal with their families on this special day," shared Azizul Islam, a street vendor in the same market.