

#MUSING

BATTLE FOR THE CATTLE

Why I don't go to the cattle market anymore

While some people are contemplating which cattle market — “gorur haat” — to visit this Eid-ul-Azha, lazybones like myself are having the times of our lives browsing the pages of social media in search of our desired sacrificial animal. The scenario would have been completely different even five years ago. So, what brought about this change? Allow me to amuse you with the story of why I, like many others, have hung up our cattle market hat for good!

In our urban lives, few spectacles rival the charm and chaos of a *gorur haat*. Row upon row of mooing cows, spirited sellers, cunning brokers, and frustrated buyers — all looking forward to the season's best deal. But makeshift cattle markets in the city are not for the fainthearted, to say the least.

Hygiene is a big issue as one must walk through filth; dodge being “head butt” by the cows; there is also the risk of getting a regal kick from the cow that might end up with you being in the hospital ER!

And Oh! The mind game. Understandably, the buyers would wish for the “big-fat-good-to-look-at” sacrificial animal within their allotted budget. A farmer/trader would naturally want the best price for their precious cattle. But let me tell you, trying to out-haggle a seasoned cattle trader is like trying to outsmart a fox. Not all of us are experienced buyers, so selecting a sacrificial animal and paying the right price for it is quite a challenge.

If you think buying a cattle is difficult, try bringing it home from the market! Cows, bulls, buffalo — whichever you fancy — are oblivious to city life. And them being sentient creatures, the honking horns, the traffic and our sheer lack of skill in handling them unnerve the cattle and all of this adds to the predicament.

True, you can hire *rakhals* from the market, but they too are



mostly unprofessional shepherds looking forward to making a quick buck! We have all parted ways from our rustic lives many decades ago.

Having said that, there is a human element to the cattle market. The colourful characters that you meet — farmers who will narrate tall tales about their struggles of raising cattle, their encounters with clandestine toll collectors while

transporting animals from far away villages to the cities, and of course, middle-men desperately trying to present themselves as hapless farmers! There is never a dull moment when you are rubbing elbows with the people at a cattle market.

So, how does a person who has such joyful notions of a cattle market ditch it completely? Call it pragmatism and a reality check!

The boon of online purchases became mainstream during the days of COVID-19.

