



The challenges facing Porabari chamcham's authenticity today

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

However, Ghosh has highlighted a pressing issue affecting the taste of the sweet, a challenge equally faced by many traditional sweet makers: "I have heard people complaining that sweets don't taste the same as before and their quality is degrading. I believe that the root cause of this issue lies in the milk. Cows used to graze on organic Bermuda grass — also known as Dhruva grass but today, they are fed artificial diets, and with wetlands and greenery disappearing, the quality of milk is not what it once was. This, in turn, negatively affects the richness of our sweets."

The chamcham of Porabari, despite its rich history and widespread fame, now faces numerous challenges, and it is primarily due to the rise

of mass-produced sweets, which has led to a decline in the number of skilled artisans making chamcham using traditional methods. Now and then, we see sweets labelled as "chamcham" in markets; however, in reality, they do not follow the authentic recipe of Porabari, leading to a dilution of its unique qualities.

Although the fame of chamcham has spread far beyond Tangail, with Bengali communities overseas longing for its authentic taste, exporting this sweet remains a significant challenge.

Ghosh highlights, "There is a considerable demand for chamcham in Europe and America. However, for us, exporting still remains a logistical challenge. All over Bangladesh, we distribute our sweets, but when it comes to sending them abroad, there are several restrictions. For a time, we even exported our sweets to Japan. However, we stopped exporting at one point."

According to Ghosh, due to the need for fresh ingredients and careful preservation, large-scale exports have not been feasible for sweet makers. A handful of customers often carry the sweets with them when they travel, but a streamlined export process remains a



notable hurdle.

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) RECOGNITION AND ITS IMPACT

The chamcham of Porabari received the Geographical Indication (GI) recognition, which officially distinguished it as a unique product

tied to its place of origin. However, has it benefitted the makers of chamcham?

Questioning the recognition's practical benefits Ghosh answers, "GI recognition has not changed much for us. The situation remains the same."

This recognition was provided to

protect traditional practices and prevent counterfeit production. However, no noteworthy steps were taken to preserve the authenticity of chamcham. We need stronger enforcement of validity, greater promotion, and financial incentives for local sweet makers for the GI tag to be truly impactful. Otherwise, the tag will just be another recognition that will go to waste.

To reinforce the status of Porabari chamcham as a premium Bengali sweet, nationwide and international campaign can be incredibly beneficial, as it will not only increase sales but will make young confectioners aware of the traditional methods and the significance of chamcham.

With its rich history, unique taste, and most importantly, GI recognition, the Porabari chamcham continues to hold a special place in the hearts of sweet lovers across Bangladesh and beyond. Therefore, it is our responsibility to ensure that this beloved sweet can reach even greater heights and remain a treasured delicacy for generations to come.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Shadab Shahrokh Hai
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