

# Eid never changed, I may have

AZRA HUMAYRA

Eid always was the best time of the year; I counted down the days like my life depended on it. The moon sighting felt like a sacred thrill. Once it appeared, I commandeered my mother's button phone, texting "Eid Mubarak" with far too many exclamation marks to every number I could find. Eid still feels like it did when I was a child – a jampacked day consisting of new clothes, *shemai*, and a happiness so overwhelming I can barely contain it. Now, I am older, taller, and more measured, but the giddy anticipation remains, as if time forgot to age that part of me. My father still wakes up early, still nudges me to get ready, and my mother still makes *shemai* in more variations than I once knew to appreciate – now I do. Now, I may get restless to return to Dhaka with so many things tied to my name, which little me would be so annoyed with.

# It's about keeping our loved ones closer

ADRIAN SARWAR

When I was a kid, Eid was all about new outfits, new shoes, *mehendi*, and a fresh hairstyle. Eid day meant hanging out with my cousins all day, enjoying *chotpoti*, and spending a chunk of the day in one of the corners of my granny's home with my favourite cousin. For a long time, that was Eid for me.

But as I grew up, I realised Eid wasn't just about the clothes, *salami*, or sneaking a peek at the new

pair of shoes in the middle of the night. In fact, Eid changed when that cousin of mine left for her education. It changed when we all stopped gathering at granny's. It changed as we fondly thought of those who were with us last Eid but not this one.

With time, I've realised, Eid is about being surrounded by loved ones – and missing the ones who once held us close. It's about finding ways to keep them close to our hearts, even if they're no longer by our side.



# Leaf that held my sky

OHONA ANJUM

The sky roared as the sun peeked through the clouds, Eid morning drenched in rain. The veranda, slick with water and the kitchen thick with the scent of *shemai* simmering on the stove. Our hearts were fixed outside, beyond the curtain of rain, Billu waited. Curled up on the tin shed. We clutched our bowls of *shemai*, how could we reach him in such a downpour? But waiting wasn't enough. We plucked the biggest leaf we could find, giggling, we darted out into the rain, holding the leaf above our heads, feet splashing against the soaked earth. Billu blinked in surprise as we placed the bowl beside him. A deep purr, he lapped up the sweet treat.

Mission accomplished. We raced back, hearts pounding. Our mothers couldn't know. We remained pressed against the wall, biting back laughter, pretending our dresses weren't damp, that our adventure had never happened. But the smiles. Those, we couldn't hide.

Years later, on clear Eid mornings, I still search the sky for rain, still hear the rustle of a leaf, the splash of our tiny feet and those laughter dissolving into the wind, like childhood, that became clouds beyond reach.



# Attar and perfume

RAFID KHANDAKER

For as long as I can remember, Eid has started with me waking up to the aroma of *ma's* handmade *shemai*. Baba always made a point to wake us up three hours ahead of the Eid prayers, just so there was not even an inkling of a possibility of missing it. It didn't matter much, though, as I spent those three hours dozing off anyway. So instead of crinkling my pajamas, I crinkled my Eid clothes. My brother somehow managed to stay awake the whole time, despite both of us spending the entire night fighting over who would get to play *World of Warcraft* on the computer.

As prayer time approached, all the men in our family would gather under our building, and we would set off for the Baitul Mukarram Mosque. The smell of *attar* and perfume adorning everyone's colorful *panjabis* was certain to jolt me out of my drowsiness.

And with that, Eid had begun. The rest of the day would be filled with *dawats*; hopping from one house to another and filling up on enough *jorda* for the rest of the year. And it would all end with an uncharacteristically early bedtime.



# The woes and charms and remaining crumbs

PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR

The familiar scents of cardamom, glossy bundles and store-bought *attar*. The first light of the sun slants through the sheer curtains, pooling in the folds of an untouched prayer mat and beaded *tasbeeh*. The old microphone hanging from the four-storied minaret balcony of the local *masjid* summons at early six, crackling with a listlessness that does not quite reach the bones. *Muazzin shaheb*, holding the receiver a little too close as always, delivers the muffled sound of a repeated message most people do not clearly understand.

We sleep through consecutive alarm slots before we rush to miss the early congregation. 'Eid Mubarak, *dadijaan!*' greetings exchanged at breakfast, while

stretching an arm halfway across the dining table to scoop out another spoonful of *mistipayesh* and *lachcha shemai*.

From counting the smell of freshly minted bills, now counting heads and how many 100 taka notes your bare, tattered wallet could afford to spare, because

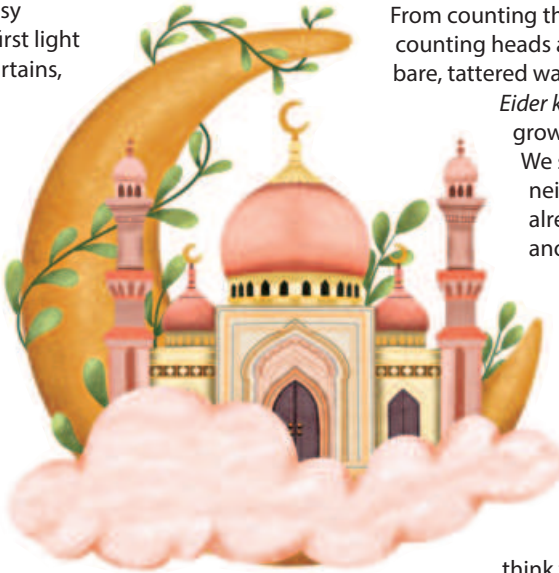
*Eider khushi* evolves in ways that makes growing up feel just a little more dreadful.

We still do visit friends and next-door neighbours, squashing spaces in our already-full stomachs to stuff room for another bowl of dessert. And our *mehedi*

dries, new dresses lose their crisp lingered in sweat and bellies wobble with content. Somewhere, we still chase the night sky to catch fleeting glimpses of the barely hung *Eider-Chand*, disappearing through

shifting clouds before we rush to bid the first *salam*. Somewhere else, the smog-filled haze swallows the crescent moon before we even

think to look.



# Shemai and other love languages

TINATH ZAEBA

Eid always arrived like the perfect guest – on time and bringing a flurry of sweet chaos. It began with *henna*-stained hands, milk thick enough to hold dreams, and cardamom whispering promises of something delicious. The kitchen was home to bubbling pots of *shemai* – made in abundance – not just for ourselves, but for the many hands that would reach for it, for the family that filled my home like the warmth of a sunlit morning. As a child, I stood beside my mother, stirring carefully, watching as the golden strands softened into something familiar, something shared.

Now, just one pot simmers on the stove. Fewer bowls are set on the table, even fewer hands reach out, but the love remains the same. In the swirls of thickened milk and softened vermicelli, I still hear them – the murmured conversations, the greetings, the gentle clinking of spoons against porcelain. Time moves forward, carrying some away and leaving others behind, but in these small rituals of sweet nostalgia, they return, even if the people don't.

Eid has changed, but perhaps its magic never truly leaves us. After all, every Eid, I spend so much time making *shemai*, a dessert I don't even like to eat.

