



ILLUSTRATION: ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

# Love, remembrance, and Eid

## Keeping the memories of loved ones alive through Eid rituals

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Through the waves of grief, many appeals of life tend to dim and lose their radiance. This phenomenon finds its way during celebrations like Eid, especially since much of its brightness comes from the simple fact of spending it with loved ones. The scintillation of every familiar Eid tradition slightly wanes, as the void left by a missing presence overshadows any light around it.

The emptiness never truly fills itself, but slowly, nearly imperceptibly, we learn to live beside this vacancy. Through a slightly strange, yet sentimental Eid ritual, I found a way to ground the hollow ache of grief after losing my grandmother. As I grew up, most of my memories of her slipped through the gaps between my fingers, leaving me grieving in a borderless void with the pain of forgetting who once filled that space. The only tether to the woman who cradled my childhood was a simple Eid breakfast: *daal bhuna* and *shada bhaat*. It was nearly a sacred delicacy, given how much she loved it and how lovingly she upheld the tradition of starting every Eid day with a warm plate of it. It was also the only thing that kept me connected to her.

And just like that, Eid became a way of grief and celebration coexisting to produce something much more beautiful yet melancholic: a fragile harmony of remembrance amid the festivity. Across different homes and relationships, this bittersweet harmony takes on deeply personal forms, revealing itself through traditions just as intimate.

One such story comes from Shyan Chowdhury, a first-year university student for whom Eid became a journey of loss and restoring sparks. After his father passed away during the Covid-19 pandemic, the house felt emptier, and the celebratory joy of Eid became hard to embrace for both him and his mother.

"In the past, we used to watch fireworks from home, but never light them ourselves," Shyan explains. "After he

passed, most holidays became empty and something we neglected. Two years ago, during Eid, we finally lit our own fireworks. I think it was the first time my mother and I truly smiled in a long while; for a moment, it felt like he was there with us, smiling at the sparkles just like he used to when it was the three of us gazing at the sky from his balcony."

Sometimes Eid mornings are inseparable from the scent and warmth of a grandmother's kitchen. Nameera Alisha, currently an O level student, finds herself resonating with this. Every year, she and her siblings would wake up early to help her grandmother make a special *shemai* that had been passed down for generations. Even after her passing, the ritual continued, becoming a way to connect with her once again.

"There was something magical about the way she made the *shemai*," Nameera recalls. "She's no longer with us, but we still make it every Eid. It will never taste exactly like hers, but as we cook together, she's there with us in every knead and every pinch of sweetness. I wait for this every year because in these imperfect, warm moments I feel her love again."

Dayanandan, a class nine student, shares that Eid carries memories of more than one loss. At the age of 13, Dayanandan began learning more about Eid customs from his best friend, who eagerly shared the celebrations with him. After his friend passed away in an accident a year later, Nanda continued visiting his house every Eid, sharing a meal with his parents in quiet remembrance.

"I go to his house every Eid and have food with his parents, using what he taught me to show them that their son isn't gone," he says.

Eid would also make space for someone else after Nanda lost his sister to a terminal illness. Remembering her favourite Eid meal, he began preparing beef rolls every year in her memory. A simple dish became a thread between the past and the present.

"It wasn't extravagant," he recalls, "just a simple beef roll,

but after she passed away, I learned to make them myself and cook them every Eid, imagining that maybe if she were here, she'd enjoy my cooking."

For Tasnuva Shyaara, currently in her second year of university, Eid carries the warm presence of relatives who are no longer with her yet are remembered during the quiet moments of family gatherings.

"It's never planned, but every Eid my family reminisces about the days my grandparents were with us," she says. "Whether it's talking about a recipe that was my dadi's or how much nanu loved spending Eid with us, somehow it always finds us and settles yearningly over our hearts. Eid reminds me that no matter how far they are, through sharing their stories, I can keep them alive and close to me."

Tasnuva explains that through these spontaneous conversations, the absence of her loved one is softened, and their presence is gently woven into the cadence of Eid.

Eid for Sahrish Nazmul, an O level student, is as much about ritual and sensory memory as it is about keeping her late grandmother's Eid spirit alive.

"Although she passed away in 2023, we still visit her house to do the same," Sahrish says. "This time, the laughter doesn't quite reach the corners where she was. Yet we honour her by continuing our *mehedi* nights, cooking her *tehari*, and watching the TV shows she thought were masterpieces. Even in her absence, she feels close to our hearts and present in the warmth we share."

Across homes and generations, a pattern emerges: grief and joy often paradoxically share the same space and shape Eid into something profoundly intimate. The ache of loss is never fully overcome, yet with love and resilience, small deliberate acts transform sorrow into remembrance and connection.

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