

Shab-e-Baraat, Ramadan and Eid

English translation:

Shab-e-baraat is an important festival in Bangladesh. This happens fifteen days before Ramadan starts. People start cooking in the morning on this day. *Firni*¹ and *halwa*² are common food items made on *shab-e-baraat*. On this day, all the religious Muslims offer prayers all night, and some people also go to the mosques to pray. People give clothes and food to poor people. Since Ramadan starts fifteen days after this festival, the traffic starts getting worse from then on; the malls are lit up and crowded with people shopping for Ramadan. A committee is formed to sight the Ramadan moon. If they sight the new moon anywhere in the country, they announce that Ramadan will be observed the next day. In the event that they don't sight the moon, then Ramadan is observed the day after that. Ramadan is a very important month for Muslims. On this month, all Muslims abstain from eating or drinking, from sunrise till sunset. Then... the whole day... they pray five times a day and also recite from the Qur'an. Every day, about a half hour before sunrise, they wake up to eat some light snacks which are known as *sehri*. After a whole day of fasting, they break the fast at sunset with a meal known as *iftar*. The *iftars* are usually lavish affairs with lots of different types of food. First they have dates, sherbet, water, etc., then fruits, chickpeas, *halim*,³ *doi bora*,⁴ *jilapi*,⁵ and many other types of sweets. *Iftar* food is also sold in the streets. Deep fried snacks such as *piyajji*, *beguni*, etc. -- these are popular *iftar* items.

After that everyone prays and then goes to bed, and this routine is followed for the whole month. The city experiences a lot of traffic jams throughout the whole month of Ramadan, as people are out to do *Eid* shopping for themselves and for their friends and relatives. Clothes are also given to the poor. Then after thirty days... the timings [schedules] for schools and offices are shortened, so that people can reach home in good time for *iftar*. Some schools are even closed for the whole month. After thirty days, people eagerly wait to see the new moon that brings *Eid*. If the moon is sighted then *Eid* is observed the next day; otherwise, it is observed the day after that. The morning of *Eid*, everyone wakes up early and the men of the house go to the mosque to offer their *Eid* prayers, and lots of food is prepared, such as *firni*, *shemai*,⁶ beef, pilaf, etc. Everyone in the family eats breakfast together after the men come back from the mosque, and then they all go to visit other relatives. *Fitra* (charity) is given to the poor on that day. This is money given to the poor which has to cover the cost of at least one decent meal for a person. This amount is fixed by the market every year. Then everyone goes to visit their different family members that day; they wear their new clothes and enjoy the day thoroughly. The day of *Eid* and the next day are government holidays, and some people

¹ Sweet rice pudding.

² A sweet confection made from mainly semolina, sugar and nuts.

³ A dish made from wheat, lentils, spices and red meat.

⁴ Deep fried lentil doughnuts in sweet and spicy yoghurt sauce.

⁵ Fried pretzel in sugar syrup.

⁶ A sweet vermicelli dessert.

make use of this to go on vacations to Cox's Bazar or Sylhet, because Cox's Bazar has sea beaches and there are many tea estates in Sylhet. Then on this *Eid* there are lots of special programs on the different channels on television. On *Eid*, people touch the feet of their elders for blessings, and they are given a monetary gift known as *ividi*. Everyone enjoys this *Eid* a lot.

About CultureTalk: CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use everyday. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

© 2003-2009 Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and Five Colleges, Incorporated