

BARBECUE FROM "KANGRI"

The glitter of crystal chandeliers, the sophistication of the extravagant décor, the gathering of the elite of the metropolis in their Sunday best and the near perfect ambience of the huge spacious hall; contributed to the lavish atmosphere of the barbecue festival at Hotel President, Mumbai. There was a lot of gaiety but less of contentment and happiness, there was glitter but not much of light. As the aroma of barbecue chicken, sea food and meats floated in the air there was something missing. It was this strange feeling and the aroma of the place which sent me on a sentimental journey to the days of past, when I was a child. The days I used to spend with my maternal grandparents at Banamohalla situated in one of the bylanes of old Srinagar town. My grandparents used to live adjacent the lane named Razdan Kocha. My grandmother was a very religious lady. So she would go to a temple on the bank of river Jhelum early morning everyday. On her return she would buy few pieces of liver and kidney from the butcher. She would bring the same home wrapped up in an old newspaper, roast these pieces on the burning charcoal embers in a 'Kangri' (kashmiri fire pot). The old lady was a perfectionist, so she would roll over these pieces a number of times, with tongs, to make sure that the pieces were perfectly barbecued. While she would be doing this, I used to sit by her side and gaze at the liver pieces in the 'Kangri'. The aroma of the roasted meat would make my mouth water and I would grow impatient to taste it. Finally she would place the 'Kangri Berbecue' pieces in a saucer, sprinkle little salt and pepper on it and I would devour the mouth watering delicacy with relish. By the end of it I would even lick my fingers too. All this while my grandmother used

to gaze at me with a longing, lingering look of loving care. Perhaps she was deriving contentment and satisfaction from the manner in which I was consuming the meat pieces. Even today I cherish the memories of those wonderful moments overflowing with love and care.

While surrounded by the artificial compulsive extravagance of this concrete jungle, I cannot help thinking of the natural simplicity of the people of those good old days, particularly of my grandmother whose so called dining room, 'WUT" in Kashmiri language was lit by a solitary lamp and only a part of the floor was covered by an old red-mat. All this simple atmosphere but overflowing with lot of love has left an indelible mark on my thoughts, this impression cannot be erased by even an iota neither by the brightest glitter of any number of chandeliers nor by the absolute perfect sophistication of a luxury five star hotel.

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