

# FRIDAY WRAP

#2.49.0

'A Glimpse of Humour'

2 December 2011



LANDSCAPE IN THE RAIN: It was raining heavily when I took the photo, but the sun illuminated the landscape parochially. Bergueda, Catalonia, Spain. (Mihaly Attila Kazsuba)

## Wrap

- ~ Rap -- to talk., *conversation*.
- ~ a piece of thin, flat bread *that can contain anything* eaten as a sandwich.
- ~ Signaling *the end (ie of a week)*
- ~ *Under wraps – secret.*

## I don't do that

This is both a funny subject and a window to our local community here in Cape Town. Whereas I find it funny (and classless) for many it's a normal state of affairs.

There are many idiosyncrasies in our society here in Cape Town.

We do things here that are quite unique in the world.

Join me on a spiritual journey as I list some of it.

## Barakat

This word is an Arabic word meaning blessing. There is a similar word (berkat) in both Malay and Indonesian with exactly the same meaning. But like a lot of other things, we, here in Cape Town have mangled the word to mean something totally different.

And here in Cape Town everybody uses this word. They even use it in the newspapers. Here in Cape Town it means 'to take foodstuff home' to give it its easiest meaning.

I have touched on this subject before where the taking foodstuff home is so inbred in our community that it will never disappear. Here are some examples.

Only some.



FISHING ON THE CLOUD: Anglers fishing in the mist rising from the reservoir by dawn look like fishing on cloud. Gosam reservoir, Anseong, Gyeonggi-do, Korea. (Sungjin Kim)

### Story One

A long, long time ago, a colleague told us the story about their annual football function. This was in one of the less affluent area in Cape Town.

Nevertheless.

There were speeches, awards and everything but the piece de resistance was the full buffet table laid out for all the players. He says within minutes the table was empty but the guys did not eat much, as they all had stacks of food discreetly rolled up in serviettes behind their backs. For them it was not about eating and socializing but to come to the function to take food home.

I use to take a lot of wedding photos and two incidents at weddings I remember distinctly.

### Story Two

The first was when the father of the bridegroom had the biggest Barakat in front of him. There were a few empty tables and the father could not resist packing up everything at the table for himself. Maybe it did not cross his mind that all of the food, and there were huge pots of it, and the cakes and snacks will be going to *his* house after the wedding. He couldn't resist the Spirit of Barakat.

### Story Three

The second one was at this fancy hall in Phillippi where each table of eight people received the usual Akni/Breyani and a whole sliced leg of lamb still on the bone. It was more than enough food for everyone around the table and more. (*Remember Nadia R?*)

Then, as waiters were still busy dishing up the food, it was time for evening prayer. There was a Dessert Table laid out with thirty different kinds of dessert for later.

We went to pray in the prayer area across the way from the hall and we were away for not more ten minutes. When the men returned it looked like a war broke out in the hall. The food was up (some people took the whole leg of lamb in their bag) but the cherry on the cake, pardon the pun, was the Dessert Table. It was empty.

There was nobody left at the Dessert Table and there was almost nothing left on the table. In less than ten minutes the whole table was cleared!

### Story Four

Then there is the story of a lady who asked the people in the kitchen for a plastic bag because she wanted to take the *sugar in the sugar bowl on the table*, home.

I kid you not.

And another story was when the whole table was packed up for Barakat before the bride came to the hall; before the function even started.

Everything on the table that can be carried away is carried away. Or even in the hall for that matter.



FLAT OCEAN: Just before a huge monsoon downpour, the ocean became flat as I have never seen before. It was drizzling a bit, people were on their way to their house, when I walked up this pier. The light rain made the pier mirror-like, and the ocean was so calm. On the horizon are the islands just in front of Makassar, part of that special islands of Sulawesi. Makassar, Indonesia. (Erik Kievit)

And the 'Spirit of Barakat' is not only prevalent in the Muslim or Slumse community but amongst all Capetonians. This happened at a so-called white wedding...

At the hall they had rows of thick thigh high candles all along the carpet leading into the hall.

After the wedding two of those candles disappeared and the bridegroom had to pay for the 'lost' candles.

Over-zealous Barakat makers?

Or thieves?

Is there a difference?

I kid you not.

Let's start at the beginning...

### **A Quick History**

Barakat in the old days was a brown paper packet filled with various cakes, an apple, orange and a banana that was distributed among the men after a Thikr (prayer meeting). Remember?

Then Barakat morphed. Now after a Thikr, after everybody had their fill, the leftovers could be taken home so that nothing goes to waste.

Then it started happening at weddings and other functions where everything that was left can be taken home.

In all the major religions it is good to be generous and to give, give, give but certain people are taking advantage of it.

Because then the people got greedy.

### **Function**

As the food at any function arrived at the table the 'guests' already lined up what was going to go in their Barakat, if it is not on your side of the table, hard luck, ask the waiter to bring more, it's on their side of the table and they are taking it home. Being social se moer.

Or the first two people who sit at a ten seater table take all the cake and snacks before the other people even arrive.

Then people starting taking the flowers and decorations and these days at



WINTER LOLLIPOPS: Winter is extremely beautiful in Lithuania. It was an early morning and minus 25 degrees Celsius outside. This landscape feels out of this world, but in fact it's in the outskirts of my home city, Kaunas—just a mile away from my house. Oftentimes beauty lies just a step away from our door. Kaunas, Lithuania (Matas Juras)

wedding they have to announce that people must not remove the vases.

Is it the spirit of Barakat gone wild?

What is it with taking food home? Are their hordes to feed at home? Is their famine, starvation and hunger at home? Is there no food at home? But most of the time it is just a matter of it's free and will take as much home as possible.

### **Restaurants**

Another aspect of Barakat happens in restaurants.

It is one thing ordering a meal and asking for a doggy bag when you can't finish it. It is a whole different kettle of doggy, no pun intended, when you order a big meal *with the intention of* taking most of it home. You're missing the point of eating out completely. Other people don't find it amazing when you walk with a Styrofoam container from Spur containing a half a burger or a one from Ocean Basket containing 10 chips, a piece of hake and five prawns. And your daughter-in-law at home is not going to appreciate this 'gift'.

## **From Friday Wrap 2.24.1 ~ Food for Thought (Part I)**

### **The spirit of 'Barakat'**

But that is so inbred in our community and society that, I think, will never disappear.

Maybe if we can get past the idea that if you invite ten people you must cater for twenty five and the balance can be taken home by the ten you invited.

But even if you cater for ten they still want to take a 'barakat' home, sometimes almost at the expense of others. Sometimes the 'barakat' is ready before the function starts.

Sometimes the people don't want to eat because they would rather take it home.

A friend related a story of a regular function they give for the old people then the guests bring their own carrier bags for their 'barakat'.

And didn't you see people in restaurant ordering a big meal then, after barely touching their food, they ask for their 'barakat' box to take the food home.

The whole reason for eating out and '*breaking bread with family and friends*' is lost. Day old food in Styrofoam containers does not look the same as when it was presented to you the first time.

The spirit of 'barakat' will probably live on forever in our society. And we are all guilty of it, there is just a time and place for everything...

### **Socially Conscious**

And it is not to say that the 'Barakat mentality' is prevalent amongst the socially in-ept, no, there are some who just never learn or become more socially conscious even if they attend socials every week. And the 'Barakat mentality' is not only confined to taking things home but also in the belief that they are not going to get from everything.

At the buffet they want to be first and only first. They will fight to be first. And



PLATFORM 2: Early morning commuter walks the tracks. New Delhi Railway Station, India. (Danny Griffin)

when it is their turn to dish they try to heap enough food on their plate to cause them to do a balancing act and to feed at least three adult people. Fish, chicken meat , vegetables, rice all heaped and mixed on the plate and still balancing two rolls at the top. Then they will be first at the dessert table too. And dish a portion of each dessert, if they eat it or not.

One of my small pet hates is the functions where the people are into the dessert *before* all the people has even dished or eaten their main course.

Why can't people wait till everyone has finished eating before going into dessert?

Have you been to those functions where all the people have not eaten yet but some have already finished eating, main and dessert and are on their way home with their Barakat?

Socially in-ept?

Classless?

Anyway.

## **Socially Unconscious**

I heard some recent tales that made me cringe in my own skin.

I heard a story of the person who took a samoosa or pie or whatever and scratched out some of the filling. And the reason you may ask? They did not like a lot of filling. And then to crown it all, they took a small pie, cut it in half and only ate the half leaving the other half to waste.

I kid you not.

Why did they take the samoosa or pie or whatever in the first place?

Is it an unwritten rule that you have to leave something on your plate when you are done?

And the people with children who dish them adult portions and the children are unable to finish all their food.

Same thing isn't it?

In Islam and all Abrahamic religions wasting food is seriously frowned upon.



*THE UNTOLD STORY: A young Afghan refugee girl living, with her family, in a village named Bhaun near district Chakwal in Punjab, Pakistan. Village Bhaun, Punjab, Pakistan. (Mohsin Khawar)*

*'The Prophet did not approve of leaving any food in a plate since as he said 'You don't know which portion is blessed'.*

And not only in Islam, to quote a priest, ...Wastefulness, in my opinion, a sin and a dereliction of our God-given duty...'

So where do we come from to waste food?

Is it to show we are posh?

Because we see it done in movies?

In movies they never eat. They talk over the food and rarely eat. Or leave all the food in their plates. It's a movie people. Make believe stories with make believe people with make believe food; do not imitate make believe. You have more than enough examples in the Koran or Bible than make believe.

Oh yes, another story.

A person gets invited to a lunch or supper then refuses to eat because the food is too oily or something and ask for a slice of bread rather.

*Abu Huraira (RA) reported that 'the Prophet never expressed his dislike of a food. If he liked it he will eat it. If he disliked it, he will set aside.'*

Rest assured that if that happens to me, that person won't be invited back to my table.

### **Children should be seen not eaten**

These days children get to choose what they want to eat. And now the so-called experts say children must not be forced to eat their vegetables. When we were children we did not have a choice. You eat what's on your plate or else. And the 'or else' is never pleasant. People are just too lazy to teach their children healthy eating and healthy living. It is easier just to say 'put it on the side of your plate'. And then they still get defensive before the time and say, 'my darling child does not eat bread/potatoes/rice/whatever'. 'my darling child's' mother need a big fat *klap!!*



LONE TREE YELLOWSTONE: A solitary tree surviving another harsh winter in Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. (Anita Erdmann)

### **You can lead a horse...**

Another pet hate of mine is people who stand and eat. And by eating I mean a plate of food. And when you point it out to the person they get offended and saying there's nothing wrong and they like it that way.

Our parents and grandparents taught us always to sit and eat as 'only animals stand and eat'. Wise people they were.

*The Prophet told (Muslims) "not to drink while standing up". When Anas (RA) was asked about eating while standing up He replied by saying: "that is much worse".*

We have so many beautiful examples but we fail miserably when it comes to executing those examples.

These days this rule is just not taught anymore and children, big and small, are allowed to walk around and eat. We were not even allowed to get up from the table without being excused. My wife still admonishes me if I get up from the table for any reason before I have finished my food.



UNTITLED: Children filled with happiness playing in the water. Brazil. (Seth Solo)



FLESH AND BONES: In a world where no one understands the importance of nature, all that is left of our nature is just these flesh & bones. Toronto, Canada. (Amirhassan Farokhpour) #

## Up front

You have probably met someone like this in your life before. Its buffet and you have to queue for your food. Not that I mind, not a bit. But there is always that special person that needs to get to the front of the line. He will squeeze through and con his way to the front of the line as if there is just one meal left.

But you have this happening in the train station, busses, damn, even planes. Maybe it's an African thing that standing in line is so un-African. You have two people wanting to get into the double doors of the train and will try to get ahead of each other and try and push each other away.

I saw people fighting to board a plane to an African destination with *booked* seats too. Booked seat means they will have a seat on the plane; they will not have to stand. But then again I saw it happening with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis too. So maybe it's not an African thing. Maybe it's just the fear of not being first.

Damn, I said this all before. I must be running out of stories.

## At the Table

Don't get me started on eating together at the same table for a meal. Today you get TV meals for the TV society. Right? When last did you and your family sit down and eat at the same table?

*'One study, looking at teen behavior, found a strong link between regular family meals and a number of positive outcomes: academic success, psychological adjustment, lower rate of drug and alcohol use, and risk of suicide.*

*Another study, of children ages 3-12, found that time spent eating at home was a better predictor of academic success and emotional adjustment than any of the following activities: school, homework, athletics, arts and religious participation.'*  
*Internet*

Wow, am I venting.

That is my story for this week. I hope I was entertaining enough.

And next time you at a function and there is any kind of food left, raise your hand and say to the host, 'Thank you, but I don't do Barakat.'