

## BOOK LAUNCH

# The Ballad of Ayesha

Friday, 20 July 2018 was the evening of an epic coming to light again.

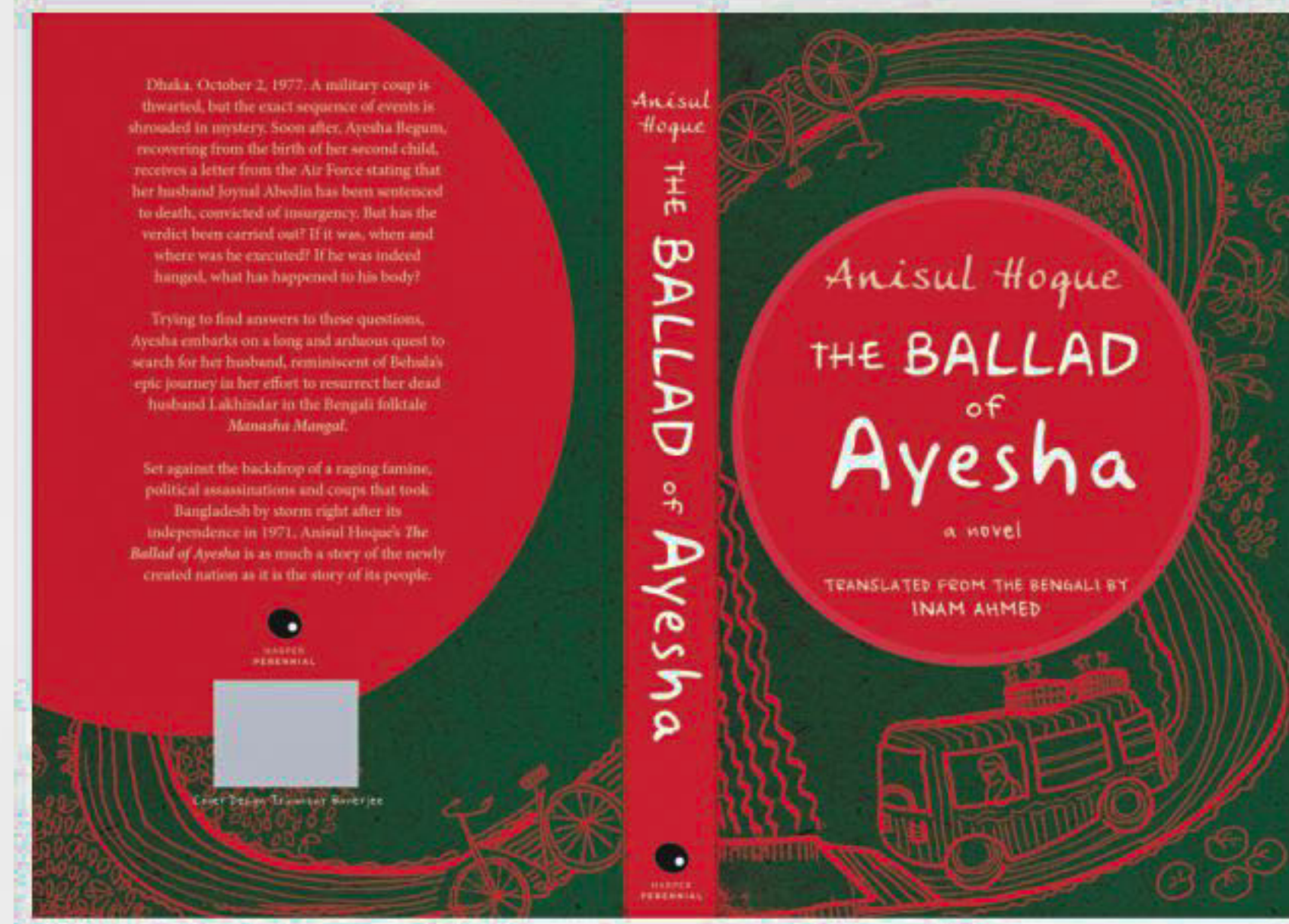
The English translation of 'Ayesha Mongol' by Anisul Hoque, a best-seller of the late '90s, was launched at a special ceremony at Batighar, situated in the capital's BishwoShahittoKendrobuiding at Bangla Motor.

The novel depicts the life of one Ayesha Mongol, a woman seeking answers to questions ever since her husband — an air force officer — failed to return home one day in 1977. It gives the readers a window into Ayesha's struggle to hold onto someone who is already gone, never to return.

Based on real events and with a spin on the socio-political situation of post-war Bangladesh, the book tries to resolve the rhetorical question of what actually happened to her husband and others like him.

The English translation done by eminent journalist Inam Ahmed is as riveting as the Bengali novel published almost two decades ago. Ahmed succeeds in capturing the exact raw emotions penned by Hoque in his modern classic.

Speaking on the occasion, Asaduzzaman Noor, Cultural Affairs Minister, said —



"Inam's translation is extraordinary. I remember finishing about 30 pages of the book in one go. Translating is never an easy task but with The Ballad of Ayesha, it was beautifully done."

The richness of Bengali literature, classic or modern, should reach a global audience and an English edition of the popular novel by renowned publisher like Harper Collins may just be the right baby steps towards that goal.

The book launch was well attended and included renowned personalities from the field of arts and culture. The event was followed by a musical soiree.

'The Ballad of Ayesha' is already out and available at Batighar, other bookshops and web portals like rokomari.com.

A short film based on the book is scheduled to air soon on television.

By Ramisa Haque

Photo courtesy: Anisul Hoque

## RESTAURANT REVIEW

## Taste the Real Thai

"Have you eaten yet?" One of the first things Thais ask upon meeting someone, that singular question perfectly describes the passion locals hold for the legendary cuisine. Translating that passion onto vibrant plates of food that scream Thailand is exactly what Real Thai aims to do. Celebrating a royal culinary cuisine, Real Thai is an upscale fine-dining restaurant located atop the 13th and 14th floors of one of Uttara's sky-high towers.

Although the food is a touching nod to Thailand's signature robust flavours, the walk around the restaurant is far from a stroll through the busy Bangkok streets. Sitting down comfortably, you'll find yourself silently admiring the stark white and steel gray minimalistic décor as waiters cater to your every need. That is, until you are drawn in by the canvas of Uttara's blue skies as you look out the glass-paned walls for window. Waiting for your meal as your orders are hastily taken away, your eyes might follow the waiters to notice glass walls upon granite shelves, giving you a clear view of the kitchen. Of course, watching it being prepared like a live cooking show as experienced chefs toss, grill and steam orders you placed seconds ago offers its own thrill.

With the 13th floor for sitting and dining, it is the 14th floor that is ideal for hosting small events like corporate seminars, parties and even Thai buffets. Spacious enough for 80-100 people, this floor is called a 'glass-house' as three sheets of glass act as walls with a portion of the ceiling also made from it. With the outdoor seating area also on the 14th, it is here where the spell of hovering clouds, shimmery skyline and occasional aeroplane whizzing through the sky will have you lost in thoughts in the company of rising steam from your coffee.

But let's go back to the food. 'Experienced' is the word when describing the

culinary artists reigning Real Thai's kitchen. With two Thai chefs leading the charge, authentic Thai food is what's on the menu.

"I come from a family of chefs; cooking is in my blood. Over my 30-year experience working as a chef, one thing is for sure: you cannot make good food without love," opens up Sompom Jarujit, Head chef over at Real Thai. With sleeves full of culinary tricks and

quality of food is consistent all throughout. With classic ingredients used universally in Thai cuisine such as 'bai makrut' or kaffir lime leaves, 'kha' or galangal, 'takhrail' or lemon grass, 'horapha' or Thai basil and countless more stocked in the pantry, cooking to create exotic flavours is no longer a tall order. In fact, it is a chef's dream.

Speaking of menus, what's for lunch you



secret recipes passed down from generations, Chef Jarujit's uncompromising nature when it comes to ingredients is what ensures that only the best makes its way onto your plates.

"The ingredients have the most importance when preparing a meal. With the ingredients properly sourced, Thai food's signature aromas and balance of flavours are a sure thing," he undoubtedly noted.

And so, the ingredients are brought in from mainly Thailand to ensure top-notch

wonder?

Whether it's a scrumptious lunch, assorted dinner courses or even some lightly-tossed, street-food-style snacks to munch on during evenings, the extensive menu here will always have something for you. From grilled skewers to creamy soups, from seafood salad medleys to whole steamed snappers, from roasted duck to sizzling chicken — Real Thai has a little bit of everything. But a few house favourites are sure to steal your hearts.

A bold blend of aromas with a kick of red chilli, fragrant lemon grass and refreshing hits of lime leaves, the 'tom yum kung' or simply, clear prawn soup, priced at Tk 595, is what defines Thai cuisine. Chunky prawns and mushrooms give the soup body while the fiery flavours of the broth take your palate on a safari ride. A milder and glorious dish that packs quite the punch is the creamy and hearty 'kang khiew waan kai' or chicken green curry, priced at Tk 555. Since the sweet flavour is the bed of curry atop which chunks of chicken, coriander, galangal and basil sit, it is best eaten with steamed rice as to sop up every spoonful of the Thai staple.

And let's not forget dessert. Winning hearts and souls of every diner, the 'khai neeo ma muang' or sticky rice with mango, priced at Tk. 395, sings a symphony of flavours when glutinous rice is paired with sweet, ripened mango and drizzled with rich coconut cream syrup. One bite of the indulgence and you will find yourself curiously going back to explore the combination of flavours again and again.

Bringing Thailand to your plates, Real Thai is a glorious celebration of one of the best culinary cuisines in the world. This Thai gem, tucked away in bustling Uttara is all about authenticity in food and hospitality. And that is exactly what you'll feel once you step inside Real Thai.

By Ramisa Haque

Photo: Real Thai

Opening Hours: 12PM-3:30PM & 6PM-11:30PM

Hotline: 01906333666

Address: Khan Tower (Level 13), Plot 14 & 16, Sonargaon Janapath, Sector 11, Uttara, Dhaka-1230

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/realthaifinedining/>