

## My exploration of Bengali literature — better late than never

If someone asks me what I have achieved in this long stay-at-home situation, I will say that I have relished the rich and exciting works of Bengali wordsmiths! During this time at home, I have explored and read works of Bengali writers, many of whose works I had not read earlier. Thanks to the Internet, which brings Bengali books to the palm of my hand 8,000 miles away from my homeland.

As someone who is a product of the English-medium education system of Bangladesh, my exposure to Bengali literature was rather limited, I admit. As a teen, I devoured works of Humayun Ahmed, Muhammed Zafar Iqbal, and Satyajit Ray. I enjoyed Sunil Gangopadhyay's Kakababu series, Rakib Hasan's Tin Goyenda, and Sukumar Ray's unique gibberish. However, my exploration of Bengali literature stopped short for reasons I cannot recall now. I did read Bengali novels, however, every now and then, but it was English paperbacks which kept me engrossed for two decades.

I am the kind of reader who enjoys papers books more than electronic ones, which means that here in the US, I cannot purchase Bengali books at local bookstores. Last June, however, I began to explore works of Bengali writers on the Internet. Almost anything and everything written by Bengali literary minds was available. I began to re-read Humayun Ahmed and Satyajit Ray. I also embarked on



a journey to read works of authors whose works I had not read before.

In a very short time, I became a fan of Tarapada Roy's satirical sense of humour; Ashapura Devi's strong female protagonists; Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's fictional detective Byomkesh a.k.a. the truth seeker; Syed Mujtaba Ali's "Ramya Rachana" and his incredible life and experience as a writer, journalist, and travel enthusiast.

Over the last seven months, I believe I have greatly enriched and enhanced my mind and soul by reading works of literary maestros like Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Ahmed Sofa, Buddhadeb Bosu, Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. The more I read, the more I appreciate the richness, the vastness, and the depth of Bengali literature. It would have been a great loss to me if I had died before reading any works of these great creative minds.

Every time I read a writer's work, I do a quick search on the Google to learn more about him or her. I have learned that Sunil Gangopadhyay, Tarapada Roy, Buddhadeb Bosu, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay were born in Faridpur, Tangail, Cumilla and Mymensingh respectively. I am gaining insight into the political history of our region as I am reading works of Bengali authors.

Before we discover and explore other countries, languages, and cultures, it is imperative that we explore our own first.



If we are unaware of our own heritage, we can never find the shoes that fit us right. You will always try to fit in, but never can. As a first-generation immigrant in the US, I understand the importance of searching and finding "that" right pair of shoes.

In order to appreciate other cultures and languages, we ought to know our own first, for if you do not know yours, then you would

never know how you became who you are. These are the clues to our past!

We would never know how our societies evolved if we do not read, re-read, explore, and re-explore our history and literature in its native language. I made attempts to read translated works of Bengali literature, but translated works rarely do justice to great creative endeavours, I think. It is like the book-is-almost-always-better-than-the-film situation. Therefore, if you can read Bengali, enjoy Bengali literature in its original form.

On my Dhaka trips, I buy Bengali books to bring them back to the US. I already know what books I want to acquire on my next visit! As someone who enjoys paper books more than e-books, I think I would love to re-read some of the Bengali novels and short stories that I have read in this pandemic.

I wish I had started exploring Bengali literature much earlier, but I am finding solace in what wise men say: better late than never!

I see my journey into reading works of Bengali wordsmiths as a way to enrich myself and as a way to connect and reconnect with my roots. The journey that I have just embarked on will take more than a lifetime to end, simply because there is a plethora of rich Bengali literary works out there, and there is no way I can finish reading them all.

**Wara Karim**  
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

### #PRESS RELEASE

## Battle of the beef at Pizza Hut!

Stepping onto their 18th year of successful operations, Pizza Hut started the new decade in the best manner possible by introducing two brand new flavours for Bangladesh on 28 January, 2021. Pizza lovers — be prepared to tantalise your taste buds because these flavours are nothing like your ordinary pizza options!

Being the forerunner when it comes to playing with exciting flavours to concoct innovative and lip-smacking creations in their kitchen, Pizza Hut has rolled out a couple of beefy additions to their menu in the non-veg line, Mejbani Beef and Beef Kala Bhuna. Pretty explanatory from the names, this is the international chain's take on our local flavours to provide customers with the best of fusion food.

In regards to this, Amit Dev Thapa, CEO of Transcom Foods Ltd. and sole franchisee of Pizza Hut Bangladesh, said, "We constantly update our menu with new flavours and items but this is the first time we chose to provide something to our customers that perfectly caters to their nativetaste palette by satiating their local cravings whilst maintaining our international standards."

Inspired by authentic Chittagonian flavours, Mejbani Beef and Beef Kala Bhuna are available across all outlets of Pizza Hut countrywide. More so, these new additions have been highly appreciated by the citizens of Chattogram as well, giving them not only something to savour but also something they take pride in.

The two flavours are available only in their signature pan-crust style pizza in three different sizes, personal, medium, and family.

Each of these are available in four delectable avatars as well. The hot version has a tinge of spiciness exuding from red paprika and capsicum sitting atop while the chilli rendition has that fiery kick emanating from spicy jalapenos and green chillies dispersed throughout.

On the other hand, the spicy version will embrace your taste buds with a burst of freshness and pungency due to the addition of tomatoes that complement the chunks of beef perfectly. The same can be said for the deluxe version, with its triad of toppings—capsicum, mushroom, and tomatoes—scattered evenly.

The price starts at only Tk 299, which means they are easy on the wallet. Furthermore, Mejbani Beef and Beef Kala Bhuna are available for both dine-in and takeaway with the option of free home delivery as well.

"It was easier for a global franchise like ours to quickly get accustomed to the drastic changes brought about by the pandemic because we had already been maintaining such hygiene measures since several years," noted Thapa.

So, whether you need something delicious to munch on while binge watching your favourite series curled up in your blanket at home or are finally giving into the strict safety protocols that we dutifully adhered to for the most part of last year — you know where to head! The only question is, which team will you be in — Mejbani Beef squad or Beef Kala Bhuna squad?

By Fariha Amber

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