

# Litmosphere

## An ecosystem for bibliophiles

Those of us who were avid readers as children tend to have similar story arcs with our reading habits. Although we would spend hours buried in books during our younger years, life eventually got in the way. Old books started collecting dust, while the spines of new ones would mostly go uncracked. This arc was what led Rubaiya Chowdhury to start up Litmosphere, a literary organisation.

Rubaiya's fascination with fictional worlds began to take a back seat when she started attending university. With time, it disappeared altogether. When she returned home for summer break in 2016, she noticed that her sister Ramisa Chowdhury was in the depths of her obsession with books. Armed with an extensive list of suggestions, she succeeded at getting Rubaiya to rediscover her love of books again. This inspired Rubaiya to open a Facebook group with Ramisa, dedicated to former bookworms and current ones alike.

"I think we did accomplish what we set out to do. We helped readers find an online forum where they could discuss books written in both English and Bangla, exchange suggestions, and connect with each other through comments threads which often lead to holistic, offline friendships. Things like this, along with the events we organise can help liven up the reading experience for current readers and help former readers get back to reading again," Rubaiya remarked.

The organisation provides an experience which many book-based websites fail to execute. Litmosphere helps broaden members' horizons when it comes to their preferences for authors and genres in an organic manner. As Litmosphere has

a community feel to it, former strangers become familiar people whose tastes a reader can trust, based on their previous recommendations or personhood.

Litmosphere also organises monthly events to discuss the assigned book of the month. The book usually revolves on a specific theme each month, such as mental health or blindness awareness. The books along with the thematic issues are then discussed extensively during these monthly meet ups.

Litmosphere has something in store for sellers too. It allows all kinds of sellers to make promotional posts, be it an established brick and mortar bookstore or a member trying to sell pop-culture merchandise. The organisation has its own membership card, which allows members to avail special privileges at stores which collaborate with Litmosphere.

The pandemic ushered in a new era for Litmosphere, giving way to robust changes. Although meet ups such as monthly book circles and themed yearly events significantly decreased in frequency, the Facebook group became swamped with new members, review posts and memes. Changes in the daily pace of life influenced many to pick up old habits, including reading. The lack of in-person meet ups were replaced by virtual events such as book-based movie nights.

When asked about the future, Rubaiya mentioned that Litmosphere really wants to help its members introduce the world of fiction to the children in their lives. "We do not want literature to fully transcend into becoming a dying art," stated Rubaiya.

By Tasfia Ahmed

# Indian Food Festival at InterContinental

To journey through platters of exotic spices, Elements of InterContinental Dhaka hosted an Indian Food Festival that ran every night, from March 29 to April 3, 2021.

The festival was a true nod to the modern Indian culinary climate and sought to provide diners an authentic trip down the lanes of Kerala to Kashmir with a delectable assortment of flavours, zests and zings authentically native to these regions.

The High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh, Vikram K Doraiswami inaugurated the food festival. Also accompanying him in this grand endeavour was Kevin Wallace, general manager of InterContinental.

However, to show off his repertoire of culinary experiences, Chef Hardev Singh Saini was tagged from a sister concern of Intercontinental Hotels Group, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida in New Delhi, and especially flown to handle the kitchen during this scrumptious Dhaka affair.

"India is just one borderline away from here and so my target is simply to

bring the best of India to the palates in Dhaka. Even though the cooking techniques and recipes hail from the cultures of India, all the produce, especially the vegetables, have all been authentically sourced from Dhaka," shares Saini.

And, so, the mélange of Indian culinary secrets and Bangladeshi greens and meats created an aromatic and mouth-watering buffet that could've won over even the toughest of critics. From chaats hailing from Delhi to live dosa stations, from shredded mirchi beef to Andhra and Ajwaini fish curries and, finally, from prawn malai curry to chicken tikka butter masala — every dish had a symphony of its own. But the highlight of this spectacular buffet has to be the Hyderabad biryani, an absolute crowd favourite.

Fragrant in the spices used in its creation and tender in the chunks of meat generously running through the grains of basmati rice, you can't help but take a second spoonful of serving. To cap off this perfect meal, taking centre stage at Elements, was the everything-sweet corner — the dessert station, offering cakes, mousses and regional sweets to anyone with a sweet tooth!

InterContinental's trek through Indian food was a triumph. At the end of this journey, all you'll want to do is lean back and bask in the true satisfaction of gorging down a great meal.

By Ramisa Haque

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ঠিক যেমন রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য মানেই

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