

The price of freedom

Anisul Hoque's book launched in Indian capital



Anisul Hoque (3-R) with Karan Singh (3-L) at the book launch. **Pallab Bhattacharya, New Delhi**

Bollywood could take the distinction of making India's first feature film on the theme of the Bangladesh's Liberation War if efforts in this regard by a book publisher and Bollywood producers fructify.

Discussions are on with three or four Bollywood producers to reproduce the story -- a novel, based on true accounts of a woman who sacrifices her only son Azad for the cause of the freedom of a country from Pakistani occupation, by well-known Bangladeshi journalist-writer Anisul Hoque -- on the celluloid.

The publicists of Palimpsest Publishers are in touch with the producers for making a movie out of the book "Freedom's Mother", the English translation of Hoque's Bangla novel "Ma", which was published in Bangladesh in 2003.

The English translation by Falguni Ray was launched at a function here on February 4, at a time when Bangladesh is celebrating 40 years of independence.

"The book has enormous cinematic possibilities encompassing the entire subcontinent," Bhaskar Roy, CEO of Palimpsest Publishers, told The Daily Star, adding, "Our publicists are in discussions with Bollywood producers but nothing has been finalised as yet."

The story of Azad, believes Roy, would have an appeal across the subcontinent as he was born in Kanpur, had his education in Karachi University and disappeared forever during the Liberation War in Bangladesh.

While taking part in the Liberation War along with his friends, Azad is captured by Pakistani troops who tell his mother that he could get a reprieve if he turns a witness against his friends.

However, Azad's mother, during a meeting with her son in the prison, resolutely tells him not to disclose anything about his friends, knowing fully well that this could endanger her son's life.

Azad tells his mother to bring home-cooked rice but the next day when the mother returns, she does not find Azad.

The mother stopped eating rice, the staple food of every Bengali, since that day and for the next 14 years till she died in 1985.

Hoque, who was here to attend the launch of his novel's English translation, told The Daily Star that he undertook a great deal of efforts to track down Azad's friends to get details about him and his life before writing the novel.

While India has made an invaluable contribution to the liberation of Bangladesh, no feature film has so far been made in this country based on the subject.

Launching "Freedom's Mother", eminent Indian scholar Dr. Karan Singh said, "It's a very moving story. It shows the price one has to pay for freedom. Many people say we got our freedom nonviolently. Well, we did in a way, but look at the violence that took place during Partition. That was also part of the freedom. Lakhs (hundreds of thousands) of people lost their lives, millions were uprooted, so, there is always a price that has to be paid and Bangladeshis paid that price in full measure."

Bangladesh High Commissioner Tariq A Karim said, "This is a story which needed to be told. We are celebrating our 40th anniversary of independence. This is a time when we need to remember what we went through to achieve what we got."