



## A Tribute To Charlie Chaplin

by Kazi Golam Towsif

"CHARLIE Chaplin, the little tramp with cane and comic walk almost single handedly elevated the entertainment medium of motion pictures into art, died peacefully yesterday at his home in Switzerland. He was 88 years old. This was the obituary news in The New York Times on 26 December 1976, announcing the death of Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin.

Life for Charlie Chaplin was never easy. But he had to live

"it was owing to her vocal condition that at the age of 5, I made my first appearance on the stage", Chaplin wrote. No other motion picture actor captured and enthralled the world as Charlie Chaplin did. He became an immortal artist as he successfully portrayed a unique character. In more than 80 movies from 1914 to 1967, he (by the way, he was a writer, director as well as an actor) took the role of the little fellow capriciously knocked about fac-

**Rebounding from Adversity**  
A sombre theme in "The Gold Rush", for example, is about man's inhumanity to man. The comedy arises from the hero's adversity, illustrated by his eating of his shoe. The element of contrast exemplified by that scene was at the root of Chaplin's comedy. This sense of comedy tickled the fancy of millions of viewers for half a century.

The little tramp, the comedy character that lifted its creator to perpetual fame, was neatly dressed in baggy trousers, huge shoes, and a sporty bamboo cane. A jet-black mustache completed the costume. What made it all fit together was that it complemented Chaplin's slight gesture — he was 5 feet 4 inches tall, he weighed about 130 lbs in his prime years.

He was told to wear something funny, and he put on a grab-bag basis from other members of the company, pants belonging to Fatty Arbuckle, size 14 shoes each placed on the wrong foot, a tight coat, a colleague's derby, a prop cane, and a false mustache that he cut down to fit his face. With a few exceptions, Chaplin used this getup for about 25 years, and it was his symbol for a lifetime. The artistry with which it was employed, of course, should that the Little Tramp of "Modern Times" was a far more complex character than that in "Kid Auto Races at Venice".

The explanation for this was the meticulousness with which Chaplin studied the structure of comedy, with the intention of making audiences laugh.

### Desperately Serious

"All my pictures are built around the idea of getting me into trouble and so giving me a chance to be desperately serious in my attempt to appear as a normal little gentleman", he wrote early in his Hollywood career, adding, "That is why no matter how desperate the predicament is, I am always very much earnest about clutching my cane, straightening my derby hat and fixing my tie, even though I have just landed my head."

One of Chaplin's basic routines had to do with dignity. And

"Even funnier than the man who has been ridiculed is the man who, having had something funny happen to him, refuses to admit that anything out of the way has happened, and attempts to maintain his dignity", he wrote in 1918.

### A Train of Possibilities

Some of Chaplin's best comic situations resulting from his keen-eyed observation of

lines. I stored these points away in my mind and some time later, when I made "The Fireman", I used everyone of them".

Added to Chaplin's talent for perceiving comic potential in everyday occurrences was his skill at using contrast. "Contrast spells interest", he once remarked. "If I am being chased by a policeman, I always make the policeman seem heavy and

ers, this form of body language permitted the actor to be readily understood by people everywhere. Indeed after only two years on the screen, he was unquestionably the top figure in motion picture industry. Demand for his pictures was phenomenal. For example, one New York theatre played his films continuously from 1914 to 1923, stopping only because the building burned down.

Some notion of adulation of the actor may be inferred from the response to his bond tours during World War I. crowds of 30,000 in New York, 65,000 in Washington, 40,000 in New Orleans. Going to Europe in 1921

— "The Tramp", "Shoulder Arms" and other of his classics had of course preceded him. Chaplin was mobbed in London and Paris. The latter city announced a public holiday for the premiere of "The Kid". Few men in this century in any field attained his stature with the public.

At the same time, Chaplin widened his out look of social world, meeting and becoming friendly with Max Eastman, the radical writer; James M Barrie, the British playwright; H G Wells. Throughout his life, he enjoyed the shuttlecock of wits with bright and learned men and women.

This tendency of him is exemplified in founding his own film company too. Chaplin's later films were made for "United Artists", a company he founded with three friends who by that time became legends in Hollywood-D W Griffith, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks. Chaplin's initial film for this concern was "A Woman of Paris", a comedy of manners that he produced and directed without starring in it.

"The Gold Rush", the picture with which he wanted to be remembered by, came out in 1925 and it once again confirmed his support of the public. Less successful with the critics was "The Circus" which opened in 1928. It seemed to lack the feeling of "The Gold Rush", and its comedy twists were short of flair. Starting work on "City Lights" in 1928, the actor faced a crisis in the advent of talkies. He was afraid that spoken dialogue would impair the character of "The Tramp", cause difficulties in his reliance on pantomime and cut into foreign sales. Moreover, many of Chaplin's effects had been achieved by undercranking the camera, a feat impossible at the speed of a motor driven sound camera.

**Reputation as Radical**  
The picture's appeal was one factor in Chaplin's conquering tour to Europe and the Orient —

and a whirl of meeting with statesmen, writers, artists and celebrities. Returning to Hollywood, he embarked upon "Modern Times", a satire on mass production, which at the time gave the actor a reputation as a "Radical". "It (the picture) started from an abstract idea, an impulse to say something about the way life is being standardised men turned into machines and the way I felt about it", he said of his witty social parable. The Little Tramp disappeared with "Modern Times".

many conservatives, Chaplin's life is detrimental to the moral fabric of America". John Rankin a right wing legislator from Mississippi noted. Finally, in 1952, the actor, a British subject, was exiled by the United States. While he was sailing to Britain, the Attorney General of US announced that he could not re-enter the country unless he could prove his "moral worth". Piqued Chaplin spent rest of his life in Europe, setting on a 38 acre estate at Vevey, Switzerland.



Chaplin in 'A dog's life' (1918)

### A Special Academy Award

In 1972, however retribution of a sort was made to Chaplin. He visited the United States to receive a Special Oscar from the American Motion Picture Academy and accolades in New York. By this time the once-bubbling actor aged into senility.

He could little more than bow and smile in response to expressions of affection for him and his art. In his declining years Chaplin looked back with happiness on his early days in the movies. "I was able try to anything in those days", he said, "I was free."



Chaplin as 'The Great Dictator' (1940)

ing reality, but not so utterly battered that he sank in the ocean of despair. Rather, there would be hope in him that would drive him forward.

His role in "Everyman" and the Little Tramp was that of a clown, a social outcast, and even a philosopher. Chaplin's Everyman he always managed to maintain his dignity and self-respect. There was pathos to the Little Tramp, yet he never wanted to be pitied.

The essence of Chaplin's humour was satire, sometimes very subtle as in "The Kid" and "The Gold Rush", and sometimes acerbic as in "The Great

life around him. "I watch people inside a theatre to see when they laugh. I watch them everywhere to get material which they can laugh at", he explained. "I was passing a firehouse one day", he went on, "and heard a fire alarm ring. I watched the man sliding down a pole, climbing onto the engine and rushing off to the fire.

"At once a train of comic possibilities occurred to me. I saw myself sleeping in bed, oblivious to the clanging of the fire bell. This point would have had universal appeal, because everyone like to sleep. I saw myself sliding down the pole, playing tricks with the fire horses, rescuing my heroine, falling of the fire engine as it turned a corner, and many other points along the same

clumsy while, by crawling through his legs, I appear light and acrobatic. If I am being treated harshly, it is always a big man who is doing it; so that, by contrasting between the big and the little, I get sympathy of the audience, and always I try to contrast my seriousness of manner with ridiculousness of the incident", Chaplin noted.

### Attraction and Adulation

"I am known in the parts of the world by people who have never heard of Jesus Christ", Chaplin said matter-of-factly early in his career. Entering motion pictures in what was the medium's infancy Chaplin was obliged to rely on situational comedy and pantomime, the use of mute gestures and facial expressions to convey emotion. Transcending linguistic barriers,

"The Gold Rush", the picture with which he wanted to be remembered by, came out in 1925 and it once again confirmed his support of the public. Less successful with the critics was "The Circus" which opened in 1928. It seemed to lack the feeling of "The Gold Rush", and its comedy twists were short of flair. Starting work on "City Lights" in 1928, the actor faced a crisis in the advent of talkies. He was afraid that spoken dialogue would impair the character of "The Tramp", cause difficulties in his reliance on pantomime and cut into foreign sales. Moreover, many of Chaplin's effects had been achieved by undercranking the camera, a feat impossible at the speed of a motor driven sound camera.

Despite "The Great Dictator", the 1940s were difficult years for Chaplin. His wartime speeches calling for a Western front in assistance for Stalin to crush Hitler irked

and with "The Great Dictator" Chaplin joined the sound picture ranks. A feral ridicule of Hitler and Mussolini, the film has grown in stature over the years as its political implications have been, according to critics, "I want to see the return of decency and kindness". Chaplin said at the time, "I am just a human being who wants to see this country a real democracy...."

Despite "The Great Dictator", the 1940s were difficult years for Chaplin. His wartime speeches calling for a Western front in assistance for Stalin to crush Hitler irked

boys how idiotic they later left) for a good product at last, or so they thought. The plot was plain. A young widowed gentleman (Afzal) leaving with his beloved, only kid daughter and an undying love for his late wife. His love for his only daughter knows no bounds and comes a glamorous young lady into his office — in a lace saree and sleeveless blouse, and begs for a job. He offers her a job as a governess in his house, and although his love for his daughter is emphasised in the drama, he asks for no references or experience or qualifications from this glamorous looking young thing with 2 inch thick pancake makeup on her face. (hint enough?)

So she steps into his house, empty handed — so the viewers saw and starts her job. No one bats an eyelid as to the impropriety of such a young woman coming to live in the house of a single gentleman, but then this is the world of BTV

make-believe. So she comes into his (Afzal's) life and takes charge, in a variety of trendy clothes (all the latest mods) and matching accessories — (Remember, she had no luggage when she arrived?) to be more precise, a new outfit for every scene. One starts to wonder why such a girl who can also play the piano, and appears to be so well stocked in her wardrobe, needs to be a governess in the first place? Apparently the director doesn't do so. We are now rushed through the main story line. This young governess with the respected "Nursing" strategy, and cures him, (how well, that was only too well known).

Now, society wakes up, tongues wag (we only saw the servants, for apparently no one else knew about it, other human beings were non-existent during the entire period) and the elder sister of the father (Laila Hasan) comes running to rescue her beloved brother. She absolutely vetoes a marriage with a Governess (who was asking for it anyway?).

Now the director realises he is out of time, so in comes the surprise element. Mou flutters her heavily mascaraed eyelashes and runs away quietly (the sacrifice element) and falls right in front of a moving car. This she regains her memory.

Apparently she had lost her memory in an accident and unable to remember anybody — including her husband — had run away from the hospital (I suppose with 2 suitcases loaded with clothes, makeup and accessories). The latter part the viewers had already been tortured with. So the drama, ended to the relief of the viewers, who never had been with the story anyway. Every BTV drama has a lesson in it, this one possibly declared "Mou is a model" as a leading slogan in every scene of it.

Well it's better than dramas where innocent and adorable village belles run with "bothis" to defend many causes, or heroines boldly tell their suitors not to disturb them in university corridors but to meet them in the sanctity of their own houses (which is then shown to be their bedrooms!!).

God knows where the BTV dramatists and directors get their common sense of ethics and logic from. But the point is, if this is the kind of entertainment that they feed the public with so many times a week, the younger members of it will soon freak out.

In the Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons among brains of different species, brain function during sleeping and dreaming, usage of the right and left hemispheres and

the evolution of the brain. And many fascinating details about the function of the brain. On reading The Dragons of Eden, Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer, remarked that Dr Sagan possessed the Midas touch, he created writings that were too intriguing to refuse.

In The Dragons of Eden Dr Sagan explained the structure, composition and capabilities of the brain to store data. Besides, there were comparisons