

Cinem

A Moving Portrayal of the Absurdities of Life

Premiere of "Choturtha Matra" takes place at Natmandal

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"NATMANDAL" recently witnessed the premiere of Jolchobhi Pandalipi Karkhana's "Choturtha Matra", written by Shahidul Zahir, with its allegories, surrealism and symbolisms. The main actors in the film included Joyanta Chattopadhyaya, Tamalika Karmakar, Soniya Jaffer, MM Morshed and others, who performed with skill and sensitive interpretations.

Adapted from a short story, "Choturtha Matra" had the plot of a strange individual, Abdul Karim(Jayanta Chattopadhyaya), who lives in the section of old town in Dhaka, and who breaks glasses in his home every day. These he places outside his door, from where the neighbouring children steal the pieces and buy sweets("katkati"). When dividing the sweets between the four of them, quarrels ensue with swear words and scuffles. These fights are over the fact that the divisions are not equal. The neighbouring men, including "mastans", turn up at the hero's house and terrorize him for breaking the glasses that lead to bloodshed. As a consequence, he goes on putting more glasses as requested by the people around him, but this results in further fights among the neighbouring youths. These incidents supply some action, though they get blasé with repetitions, which is the intrinsic purpose of Shahidul Zahir.

These weird and absurd incidents are repeated at least four

times. One wonders as to why the hero breaks the glasses, although he himself gently and soft-spokenly comes up with the explanation that this happens in every home.

Another repeated incident in the film is the coming of the old newspaper vendor, who buys papers from people, while the hero sells his collection, making a mild joke of this process of their buying and selling and offering water to drink to the tired and thirsty constantly smiling travelling merchant of old newspapers. The bargaining over the small bundle of old newspapers provides some aspects of comedy. Everyday the price changes and at the end the hero's collection of papers are reduced to nothing. The two then decide that Abdul Karim will buy old papers from the vendor and sell them back, having read them. This is a parody of society and signifies that our lives have entered a circle, which repeats itself. The message is that we cannot come out of this limitation of repetitive mundane matters in our lives, no matter how hard we try.

Abdul Karim repeats various day to day events many times, with some variations, and so plods through life. In the same vein, the house-maid comes to work everyday, cleaning and cooking, and with whom the protagonist has some sexual relationship, which is only hinted and not directly portrayed. This maid, played by Tamalika Karmakar, is feisty and full of life, apart from being attractive and dressed in a low-class but colourful manner. As Abdul Karim calls out to her gently and repeatedly "bua,



Tomalika Karmakar looking smug with the situation

bua" and as she shuts the main door with a smug smile, the viewer's imagination flows free. The physical attraction and the consequences that follow are suggested and not actually portrayed in any graphic detail.

Another female character, a passer-by, dressed in the latest fashion and simpering constantly (Sonia Zafar), comes to the "mohalla" asking Abdul Karim for directions to someone's house. He fancies her too and fantasizes about her too in his restless sleep as well as his waking hours, as he relaxes on his deck chair.

Among the recurring dreams of the hero is the man who gives rides to people on his horses and these scenes, done at night, are almost

ethereal with the blue sweep of the fog and the emerald green leaves in the foreground. This particular dream sequence begins with the clip clop noise of the horses. There is also the repeated visions of a man who will not allow Abdul Karim to even gaze at the grass that has grown on the dried river. This aggressive farmer, in his strange cap and muffler, along with his walrus moustaches and his bulging bull-fish eyes, too appears funny enough in this tale of our absurd life. The farmer repeatedly tells Abdul Karim that he has to get permission to see the view in front of him and they end up in confrontations, with the farmer threatening belligerently and the hero claiming his rights in a soft, pathetic tone. The man says in threatening tones, "Do you have the

permission to watch my river or my grass field. How dare you stand here and stare?" The hero goes on with his hapless standing and staring, adding to the strangeness of the plot. However, as you study the theme, as the film progresses, you comprehend why these apparently confused occurrences take place. The dreams entwine with one another as well as with the reality of the everyday mundane existence.

The "mastans", the unruly neighbouring children and the horse-man recur in the film adding variety to the portrayal of the hero's life which comprises of little else but reading questionable Bangla news papers with their near pornographic ads., and writing. Abdul Karim stays within his room most of the time and falls asleep at all odd hours, sometimes on his chair and at times on his bed. While doing this and reading, he gets lost in his dreams. Meanwhile, it is not clear whether he has a job or not. It is also vague as to what he writes, although he pursues this activity frequently. He listens to the neighbours' TV and radio and gazes for hours as to what takes place on the lane in front of his house. And so his life limps on.

The structure of the film is not a direct adaptation from the original short story. There are improvisations and changes necessary for the film language. During the editing, the incidents changed their sequences. At times it may appear like some stream of consciousness technique to some. There is nothing in the normal order of story with a beginning, middle and end. Yet it is clear as to what is going on. The point that the what Shahidul Zafar, the writer, and Nurul Alam Atique, the director, have tried to present is that people have to go through life repeating their near insipid existence. Boredom is shown as an unavoidable side effect of people's existence. According to the film, people are imprisoned in their routine existence where nothing much of consequence takes place. No matter how much we try, according to the original text and the director, the average man is doomed to a lackadaisical life.

Nurul Alam Atique is not trying to preach but present how the human mind works. This is his first film, and earlier he has worked as a screenwriter with "Krittikonkhola" to his credit. This contains the story of a "jatra" group that goes to a fair to



Sonia Zafar simpering and smiling

present a play. There they run short of money and the lead actress is forced to lose her honour. The finale is with the suicide of the heroine. Atique has been involved with alternative films for 12 years, made by various other people like Morshedul Islam and Sarwar Jehan Khan. Atique calls his film "A game of structure". He says, "I have used this story because this is the kind of audio visual work I want to do. To be frank, we have used only one camera. My next film 'Flower child' is nearly complete and I hope people will find something to think about in this too."

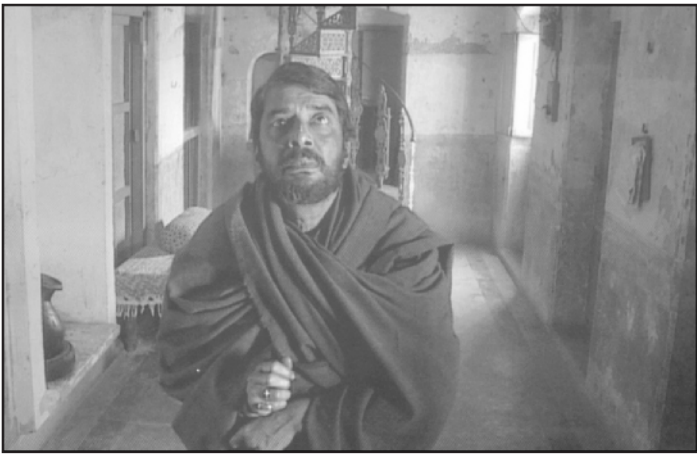
The music that accompanies and intersperses the scenes of

"Choturtha Matra" is "formidable", while the clarity and aesthetic impact of the camera shots are "magnifique".

Meanwhile, "Jolchobi" that has created the film, has other ongoing projects like "Flower child", "Gayatrisondhya", "Seagull", "Throne of the Inner World" and "Wings of Bicycle". Among these the film "Flower child" is remarkable for its touching story of a boy who grows flowers over his parent's grave to finally fall in love with the widow who comes to the neighbourhood to only lose her to neighbouring ruffians. "Jolchobi" cameramen are trained in India, Germany and USA.



The paper man having his vital sip of water



Jayanta Chattopadhyaya flummoxed with life

TV GUIDE

BTV 3:00 Opening Announcement 3:20 Open University 3:45 Shashatalayha 4:00 Khabar 4:05 Cartoon: Casper 4:20 Shukhi Poribar 4:40 Apun Bhumi 5:20 Proyash 5:45 Pushtitayha 6:00 Khabar 6:10 Shopan 6:35 Programme from Chittagong station 7:00 News Headlines 7:05 Geet Bitan 7:30 Chande Anande 8:00 News in Bengali 8:30 Drama Serial: Shorol Shinagshu 9:00 News Headlines 9:05 Film Show: Young Hercules 9:30 Drama Serial: Aloukik 10:00 TV Serial: Charlie Chaplin 10:30 News in English 10:55 Magazine Show: Chetonyang Bangladesh 11:30 Khabar / The News 11:45 Closing	BTV 9:35 Ekhtaarer Soinic Magazine prog: Agamir Tarka 10:10 Vidroh 10:45 Bengali Film: Kalo Golap HBO 7:00 A Match Made in Heaven 9:00 The People Under the Stairs 11:00 Greedy 1:15 Fallen 3:45 So I Married an Axe Murderer 5:45 Against All Odds 8:15 Live in a Day 10:00 Billy Madison 11:45 Biloxi Blues 2:00 Fallen 4:30 Macarthur STAR GOLD 10:30 Woodland Bollywood News 11:00 Geet Bahar 11:30 Sujata (Nutan, Sunil Dutt) 3:00 Woodland Bollywood News 3:30 Rahi Badal Gaye (Rishi Kapoor, Shabana Azmi) 7:00 Geet Bahar 7:30 Rang Birangi/Amne Samne (Mithun Chakraborty, Bindya Goswami) 11:30 Woodland Bollywood News 12:00 Raja Aur Runk (Sanjeev Kumar, Nirupa Roy, Kumkum) 12:30 Raja Aur Runk (Contd...) 3:00 Geet Bahar 3:30 Baba Tarakanth (Bishwajit, Sandhya Roy) 6:30 Pushpanjali (Sanjay Khan, Naina Sahu) BBC WORLD 6:00 BBC News 6:30 World Business Report 7:00 BBC News 7:30 Asia Today Inc Asia Business Report 8:00 BBC News 8:30 Asia Today/World Business Report 9:00 BBC News 9:30 Asia Today/Asia Business Report 10:00 BBC News 10:30 Talking Movies 11:00 BBC News 11:30 Earth Report 12:00 BBC News 12:30 Hardtalk 1:00 BBC News 1:30 Holiday 2:00 BBC News 2:30 Reporters 3:00 BBC News 3:30 Hardtalk 4:00 BBC News 4:30 PHYS WRLD 5:00 BBC News 5:30 Reporters 6:00 BBC News	BTV 6:30 Wheels 7:00 BBC News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 Click Online 8:00 BBC News 8:30 Reporters 9:00 BBC News 9:30 Asia Today 10:00 BBC News/World Business Reports 10:30 Face to Face 11:00 BBC News 11:30 World Business Report/World Sport 12:00 BBC News 12:30 Hardtalk 1:00 BBC News 1:30 Top Gear 2:00 BBC News 2:30 World Business Report 3:00 BBC News 3:30 PAN 4:00 BBC News 4:30 Asia Business Report/Asia Today 5:00 BBC News 5:30 Asia Business Report/Asia Today
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PICK OF THE DAY  Billy Madison HBO at 10 tonight. Billy Madison (Adam Sandler), next heir to the billion-dollar Madison hotels, is the laziest and extremely idiotic fool in entire Madison family. But his 'youthful' days are over when his retired father (Darren McGavin) asks him to repeat the grades 1 through 12 in just 24 weeks!	HALLMARK TV 1:00 Sea Change 2:00 Danger Bay 3:00 Neil Simon's The Sunshine Boys 5:00 Sesame Street 6:00 Child's Cry 8:00 The Ranaway 10:00 Sea Change 11:00 Gift of Love: The Daniel Huffman Story 1:00 Danger Bay 2:00 Sesame Street 3:00 Clifford 3:30 The Cat in the hat Builds a Door-A-Matic 4:00 Road To Avonlea 5:00 Frankie and Hazel 7:00 Blind Sport 9:00 Arabian Nights 11:00 Pals AXN 6:30 Grandeur Musashi/Starship Troopers 7:30 El Hazard : The Alternative World/Curious Play 8:30 Big Sky II/ Blind Sport 9:30 Exploring the Unknown 10:30 Grandeur Musashi/Starship Troopers 11:30 El Hazard : The Alternative World/Curious Play 12:30 Amazon/The fierce Ones 1:30 Exploring the Unknown 2:30 Pensacola III/Casualties of War 3:30 Movie: Elatliners 5:30 Who Dares Wins 6:30 Grandeur Musashi/Starship Troopers/ El Hazard: The Alternative World 7:30 Curious Play /Who Dares Wins 8:30 Ripley Believe It or Not	TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS EKUSHEY: 8:00 p.m. Bandhan. (Episode 5): Akram's wife Jolly tries to create many problems but innocent Shirin does not understand that. The family needs money so they look for a bank loan for their new business. ATN BANGLA: 9:00 p.m. Ekturer Shoinik. A programme in remembrance of the Liberation War of '71. Guest: Amir Hossain Amu, Minister for Food. BTV: 9:15 p.m. Young Hercules. Evil Strif and Discorde plans to destroy Carliuth again. On the other hand Hercules and Iolas goes to visit Jason. There they face many interesting objects and creatures. STAR WORLD: 11:00 p.m. Ally McBeal. Boy Next Door: Billy's brain tumor triggers a series of hallucinations; a man claims that his wife's extensive cosmetic surgery is grounds for an annulment; Cage gets stuck in an elevator.
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Streets 7:00 Friends 9:00 Fresh Prince of Bel Air 9:30 Late Show With David Letterman 10:00 ER 11:30 Friends 12:00 Fresh Prince of Bel Air 12:30 Full House 1:00 Late Show With David Letterman 2:00 All My Children 3:00 Music Zone 4:00 Benny Hill Show 4:30 Heartbreak High 5:30 Music Zone ZEE CINEMA 9:00 Kuch Lamhe Kuch Nagme 9:15 Ikke Pe Ikka 9:45 Movie Fare 10:00 Gunah Aur Kanoon 1:00 Chatpati Chat 1:15 Madhyantar 1:30 Bhabhi 5:00 Darpan 5:15 Tara Rum 5:45 Film Time 5:45 Shatranj Ke Khiladi 9:45 Cine News 10:00 Superhit Hamesha 10:30 Suraksha 2:15 Kuch Lamhe Kuch Nagme 3:00 Gori 5:30 Chehren 5:45 Film Time 6:00 Jaggu ZEE MUSIC 6:00 Zee Music Plus 7:00 Aalap 7:30 Tararun 8:30 Hit Pe Hit 10:30 Hit Mix 11:00 Blue 11:30 Zee Music Box 12:00 Zee Music Plus 1:00 Hit Pe Hit 2:00 Jharokha 2:35 Dil Se 3:05 Tararun 4:00 Hit Pe Hit 5:00 Zee Music Box 5:30 Hit Mix 6:00 Cool-Age 6:30 Zee Music Plus 7:30 Hit Pe Hit 8:30 Best Of Best 9:00 Compact Disc 9:30 Zee Music Box 10:00 Sizzlers 10:30 Jharokha 11:05 Just Jammin 11:35 Phoren Maal 12:35 Phoren Maal 1:05 Zee Music Box 1:35 Jharokha 2:00 Hit Pe Hit 3:00 Compact Disc 3:30 Tararun 4:30 Phoren Maal 5:30 Sizzlers ALPHA BANGLA 6:30 Chooker Khali	Jeebon Rekha 7:00 News Bulletin 8:00 Alaap 9:00 News Bulletin 9:05 Bharat Bhraman 9:30 Purobi 10:00 Aanyaa 10:30 Omanisha 11:00 Swapnoneel 11:30 Gritasaja 12:00 Bahari Ahaa 12:30 Ebar Jomba Mawja 1:00 Ingeet 1:30 Ek Akasher Niche 2:00 Nayantara 2:30 Ke Tumi Feature Film 5:00 Shesh Prashna 5:30 Half Chocolate/Disney 6:00 Alpha Khabor 6:30 Foot Ball 7:00 Swapnoneel 7:25 Jhankar 7:30 Surer Ei Jhama Dhara 7:55 Jhankar 8:00 Nayantara 8:30 Ek Akasher Niche 9:00 Chena Mukh Achena Manush 9:30 Bhristi Megher Akash 10:00 News Bulletin 10:05 Ek Palake 10:20 Ingeet 10:40 Ek Palake 10:45 Foot Ball 11:20 Alpha Khabor 11:45 Ek Palake 11:50 Bideshini Bodhu 12:15 Surer Ei Jhama Dhara 12:30 Purobi 1:00 Bharat Bhromon 1:30 Bengali Feature Film 4:00 Ek Akasher Niche 4:30 Nayantara 5:00 Ingit 5:30 Foot Ball 6:00 Ananya ZEE TV 6:15 Yaadon Ke Pal 6:45 Old Is Gold 7:00 Bhakti Geet 7:30 Jagran 8:00 Morning Zee 8:30 Nickelodeon 9:00 Nickelodeon 9:30 Gulidasta 10:30 Filmi Chakkor 11:00 Highlight Zee 11:15 Chatpatti Chaat 11:30 Ek Nazar 12:00 Koshish Ek Aashaa 12:30 Sangini 1:00 Dastaan 1:25 Jhalak 1:30 Hasratein 2:00 Chandan Ka Palna Resham Ki Dori 2:30 Amanat 3:00 Gharana 3:30 Yeh Dil Kya kare 4:00 Kaise Kahoon? 4:30 Samander 5:00 Nickelodeon	Nickelodeon 6:00 Ek Nazar 6:30 Banegi Apni Baat 7:00 Hip Hip Hurray 7:30 Ek Nazar 8:00 Yeh Hai Mumbai Meri Jaan 8:30 Babul Ki Duayein Leti Ja... 9:00 Mehendi Tere Naam Ki 9:30 Chandan Ka Palna Resham Ki dori 10:00 Ankahee 10:30 Yeh Dil Kya Kare 11:00 Kaise Kahoon 11:30 Manzilein Apani Apani 12:00 Gharana 12:30 Gardish 1:00 Jai Ganesha 2:00 Dastaan 2:30 Ek Nazar 3:00 Mai Baap 5:45 News In Hindi STAR SPORTS 7:30 Sportsline Today 8:30 Spanish Football League 2000/01 Spanish Football League 9:30 Pga Tour Golf Verizon Byron Nelson Classic Irving, TX USA Third Round 12:30 Sportsline Today 1:00 World Wide Rugby Super 12 Rugby 2001 Dunedin, New Zealand Canterbury Crusaders Otago Highlanders Round 12 3:00 Asia Sport Show 3:30 Tennis Jip Morgan Chase Challenge Delray Beach, FL USA 4:30 Sports Unlimited 5:30 Golf Programming Golfglobe 2001 6:00 This Is The Pga Tour 7:00 Watersports World 8:00 Sportsline Tonight 8:30 Olympic Magazine 9:00 Sbk World Superbikes Championship Sbk World Superbikes Championship 2001/Monza, Italy 10:30 Sportsline Tonight 11:00 West Indies Cricket The Cable & wireless One Day Series Grenada, West Indies South Africa West Indies 5 th Odi, Highlights 12:00 Sportsline Tonight 12:30 Race Day Spielberg, Austria Austria Grand Prix 1:15 Formula One 2001 Formula One World Championships Spielberg, Austria Austrian Grand Prix 4:00 International Motorsports News International Motorsport News 2001 5:00 Sportsline Tonight 5:30 World Wide Rugby Super 12 Rugby 2001 Dunedin, New Zealand Canterbury Crusaders Otago High-
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