

MINISERIES REVIEW

One Show that Asks a Lot

FATIUL HUQ SUJOY

Olive Kitteridge was a pleasant (and much needed) change from shows about psychotic drug lords, super geniuses with personality disorders, heroics of superhumans and fantasy throne disputes. The show caught my attention after it dominated the Emmys on the year of its airing. It's a four episode long series, and won a ton of awards and as it's from HBO, I had no regrets.

The miniseries, based on Elizabeth Strout's Pulitzer-winning novel of the same name is a four-hour story that portrays four different phases of the protagonist Olive's (Frances McDormand) life. Each phase brilliantly depicts the lives of the seemingly common folk, paints for us the minds of people we don't quite understand and tells the tale of complicated human relations, the interests, miseries and sudden attraction to life of the old and depressed.

The show's greatest asset is its effortless storytelling, to make stories of ordinary people interesting, to make us pay attention to details we are so used to overlooking. The story takes place in a mundane coastal town in Maine. We find our protagonist as a rude wife, a strict teacher, an uncompromising mother, highly judgmental to anybody around her and just too harsh to sympathise with. On the other hand, her husband Henry (Richard Jenkins), who's also an important character, is just the opposite - a sweet, forgiving and an apparently gullible soul. The story revolves around these two but only uses their relationship of ups and downs as a tool to show the greater elements of human nature. As the show progresses we discover Olive as a troubled soul, helping

out the ignored and those she can relate to, who wears the harshness as a shell. But the story also lets us question the effectiveness of such misleading expression of character. As the story leaps past a few decades, Olive's grown up son Christopher (John Gallagher Jr.) suffers from mental stress and blames it on the strictness of his mother. Though Olive claims her intentions were never cruel, the effect nevertheless leads to tragedies in her later life.

And in her later life she encounters affection for the one thing she couldn't wait to let go of - life. Scarred by the untimely suicide of her father, Olive had a firm belief that she too had a case of depression and one day will follow her father's path.

The grimness in the plot is not necessarily what the show comprises of. The subtlest of crude remarks, dumbfound faces after straight out insults and also, a cameo from Bill Murray makes way for effortless comic relief. Also the relatable characters help the viewer to indulge more into the story. And after the end of a four hour journey through the life of Olive Kitteridge, basic questions involuntarily arise, like how acceptable is our behaviour with the people around us, in the blindness of greater motives do we push away our close ones, are we grateful enough to our parents, are our influence to the world around us too meagre to last with time and if we are good people.

Fatiul Huq Sujoy is a tired soul (mostly because of his frail body) who's patiently waiting for Hagrid to appear and tell him, "Ye're a saiyan, lord commander." Suggest him places to travel and food-ventures to take at fb.com/SyedSujoy



INTRODUCING PARENTS TO SUSHI

DYUTY AURONEE

To begin with, my parents are pretty cool. I would try new recipes at home and everyone would appreciate me, only to discover that the vanilla syrup was expired and the cake tasted like rotten watermelon but nobody said a word. My parents are quite enthusiastic about food and try things ranging from gourmet steak to roadside *phuchka* from time to time, but still I wondered if feeding them sushi would be too big a deal or not.

On the day of Pahela Baishakh, I proposed going out for dinner and wanted them to try sushi for the first time. Mom was happy about it; dad, however, threw tantrums. He wouldn't go out in the heat and traffic or eat Japanese food on Bengali New Year. Lastly, he reminded me how I once refused to taste this 'brain masala' dish that he ordered at some place. The men in my life are such 12-year-olds sometimes.

So, I took my mother to a restaurant in Banani where I had first tried sushi. I was thinking of how to ease her into sushi-land. After going through the menu and being confused for a while, I finally decided upon the bento box. That's almost like a crash course on sushi. I remember trying the sushi platter on my first visit but this option was better, really. The combo would have rice, chicken and beef items besides the sushi and maki rolls. So, if mother couldn't eat the latter, she would at least be able to have the familiar dishes and not go entirely hungry.

As we waited for the food to arrive, I briefed her a little on what to expect. I explained what wasabi was and never to gulp down a lot of it at once. I said

the bento box would have both prawn and cuttlefish sushi and she wanted to know if cuttlefish was a fancy name for some common fish. So, I googled her a picture of it and was quite grossed out myself. I thought I'd explain the complicated maki rolls once the food was served.

Finally, the bento box was in front of us. We had also ordered both fruit chillers and water, whatever made gulping down food easier. My mother started with the prawn tempuras. It's almost what we have at home. Next up, sushi. I kept my cutlery down and watched her. Fingers crossed. She took a mouthful. Blank face. I waited. Ah, green signal. She finished it. So, at least I knew it was edible.

Then we moved on to the maki rolls and I explained that the black, crisp wrapping is *nori* or seaweed. The sticky rice supposedly has vinegar and inside are fillings that can range from cucumber to fish eggs. She finished it too. She liked them all. It looked like we won.

If I may add a disclaimer of sorts, sushi served in restaurants here is quite modified to suit the Bengali palette. It's almost like *deshi* Chinese that's nothing like anything from China. So, chances are once anyone musters the courage to put sushi in his/her mouth, they won't be disappointed. However, trying authentic sushi can be an entirely different experience.

If you are looking to make your parents try sushi for the first time, chances are that one of them just won't. One of them may like it or both may dislike it. Whatever it is, buy them ice cream afterwards and pay for the meal. Or, scratch that. Just have a good time. Yes, I did.

