

Embracing Swedish Midsummer: A Bangladeshi's tale of joy and belonging

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The day began with a traditional Swedish lunch at my friend Hasse's summer house. Nestled in the woods, the place was beautiful and peaceful. The picturesque setting immediately seized my heart, and I felt as if a part of me remained there even after we left.

The house, with its rustic charm, overlooked a stunning lake that mirrored the sky, creating a tranquil and almost magical atmosphere. The air was filled with the scents of nature, mixed with the aroma of our upcoming feast. It felt like a place where time stood still, a perfect sanctuary away from the hustle and bustle of daily life. I felt that that is the place, I should be living away from the crowd.

Our table was a feast for the eyes as much as for the stomach. We indulged in herrings in various marinades. The different marinades included mayonnaise with ginger and chilli, onion and chilli in vinegar and mustard, and a special one called "old man's mash," made with eggs, fish, and mayonnaise.

Each flavour was a new and fascinating experience for me, showcasing the rich culinary heritage of Sweden.

We also enjoyed boiled potatoes with



fresh dill, eggs, a lovely cheese pie, and sausages. To accompany the meal, we had shots of snaps, both store-bought and home-brewed, adding a festive spirit to our lunch. The snaps, with their sharp and warming taste, were a new experience for me, heightening the celebration's traditional feel. The interesting tradition



was to sing a special song before taking the shots.

After our hearty meal, we moved to the backyard where we enjoyed drinks and played games. The laughter and companionship were infectious, filling me with a deep sense of belonging. Some of my friends, feeling adventurous, decided

to take a swim in the lake. Watching them from the shore, I felt admiration and apprehension.

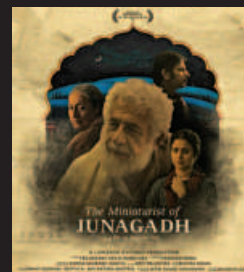
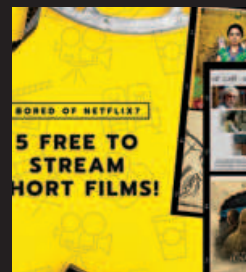
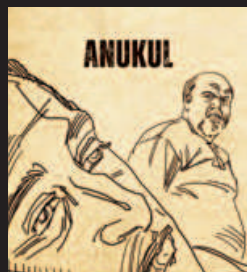
While I longed to join in, my inability to swim kept me on dry land. Nonetheless, the sight of my friends laughing and splashing in the water added a lively and joyous dimension to the afternoon. Their excitement was contagious, making even those of us who stayed on shore feel part of the fun.

As the day progressed, we set off for Evedal, a scenic area by the lake known for its traditional Midsummer festivities. The slow walk there was filled with anticipation. The air was filled with the sound of music and laughter as people danced around the Maypole, a tall wooden pole decorated with flowers and greenery.

It was my first time participating in such a dance, and although I stumbled through some steps, my friends' encouragement made it an enjoyable and heart-warming experience. The folk music played on fiddles and accordions, seemed to carry the spirit of Midsummer itself — joyous, vibrant, and full of life. Each dance move and each melody felt like a celebration of life and togetherness.

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#ENTERTAINMENT



Bored of Netflix? Here are 5 short films for you to binge!

Imagine you and your spouse are sitting on your living room couch, staring at the screen, scrolling endlessly to find something fresh and new on platforms. Nine out of ten times, you keep scrolling until you pass out or both of you settle on re-watching the over-watched FRIENDS episodes (seriously, you've got to stop!). If all this rings true to your ears, here are 5 Indian short films you can watch for free on YouTube! Yes, you heard that right!

Gadhedo

Starring Vikrant Massey, "Gadhedo" offers a whimsical interpretation of a Rajasthani folktale, portraying how easily fools can be exploited by the clever. The plot centres on Goru Dhobi, Massey, who naively pays to turn his donkey into a man under the tutelage of the ill-equipped teacher Maatsa, Chandan Roy Sanyal.

Set in a Rajasthani village, the film delivers a profound message through its exaggerated, comically portrayed characters and straightforward storyline. With distinctive performances and striking cinematography, "Gadhedo" is a must-watch, providing rich entertainment in just 16 minutes.

Anukul

"Anukul" — adapted from Satyajit Ray's short story, stars Saurabh Shukla as Nikunj, a Kolkata resident who employs a robot housekeeper, Anukul, played by Parambrata Chatterjee.

The film portrays a polite and well-meaning Anukul who develops a friendly relationship with Nikunj, which is disrupted by Nikunj's irritable cousin, Ratan played by Kharaj Mukherjee. Faithfully capturing Ray's narrative, including Anukul's light-blue checked shirt and black half pants, Sujoy Ghosh introduces a humans-vs-machines conflict, typical of sci-fi. Running 21 minutes, "Anukul" showcases the potential of Ray's stories in film, hinting at greater possibilities if more creative filmmakers like Ghosh could access Ray's works.

Interior Cafe Night

In the 13-minute short set in a quaint Kolkata coffee shop, as it nears closing time with Bengali music filling the air, the café owner, Naseeruddin Shah encounters his long-lost love portrayed by Shernaz Patel, who left him three decades ago. Their tender

reunion unfolds alongside a flashback of a younger couple, played by Shweta Basu Prasad and Naveen Kasturia, enduring a painful farewell—a stark contrast to the older couple's serene and loving reconnection.

While the theme of lovers reuniting is familiar, this film distinguishes itself with its unique narrative approach and stellar performances.

Chutney

With a runtime of almost 17 minutes, the short film begins in a subdued tone, set against a backdrop of gossip, scandal, and infidelity in a small Delhi community. It creates a sense of calm, making its jarring climax more disconcerting. The plot unfolds unpredictably, surprising even the most astute viewers.

Centred on Tisca Chopra's dream-like performance, with strong support from Rasika Dugal, the narrative primarily revolves around a conversation between two housewives over a plate of pakodas.

While the surface story tackles a husband's infidelity with a younger woman, the film's darker essence is cleverly woven into a

recipe shared by the older and wiser of the two women, revealing the depth of her experience and discontent.

The Miniaturist of Junagadh

A personal favourite that will leave you hauntingly enchanted by the story throughout its length of 30 minutes.

Set during the tumultuous period of the 1947 partition in the princely state of Junagadh, "The Miniaturist of Junagadh" stars Naseeruddin Shah as Husyn Naqqash, an elderly miniaturist artist forced to sell his ancestral home and relocate to Pakistan.

Adapted from Stefan Zweig's "The Invisible Collection," the film explores the profound impacts of partition on ordinary lives, portraying Husyn's struggle with the loss of his homeland and the erasure of his cultural identity. Through its narrative, the film delves into India's painful past and addresses broader themes of cultural loss and reconciliation relevant to contemporary global conflicts.

By **K Tanzeel Zaman**
Photo: **Collected**