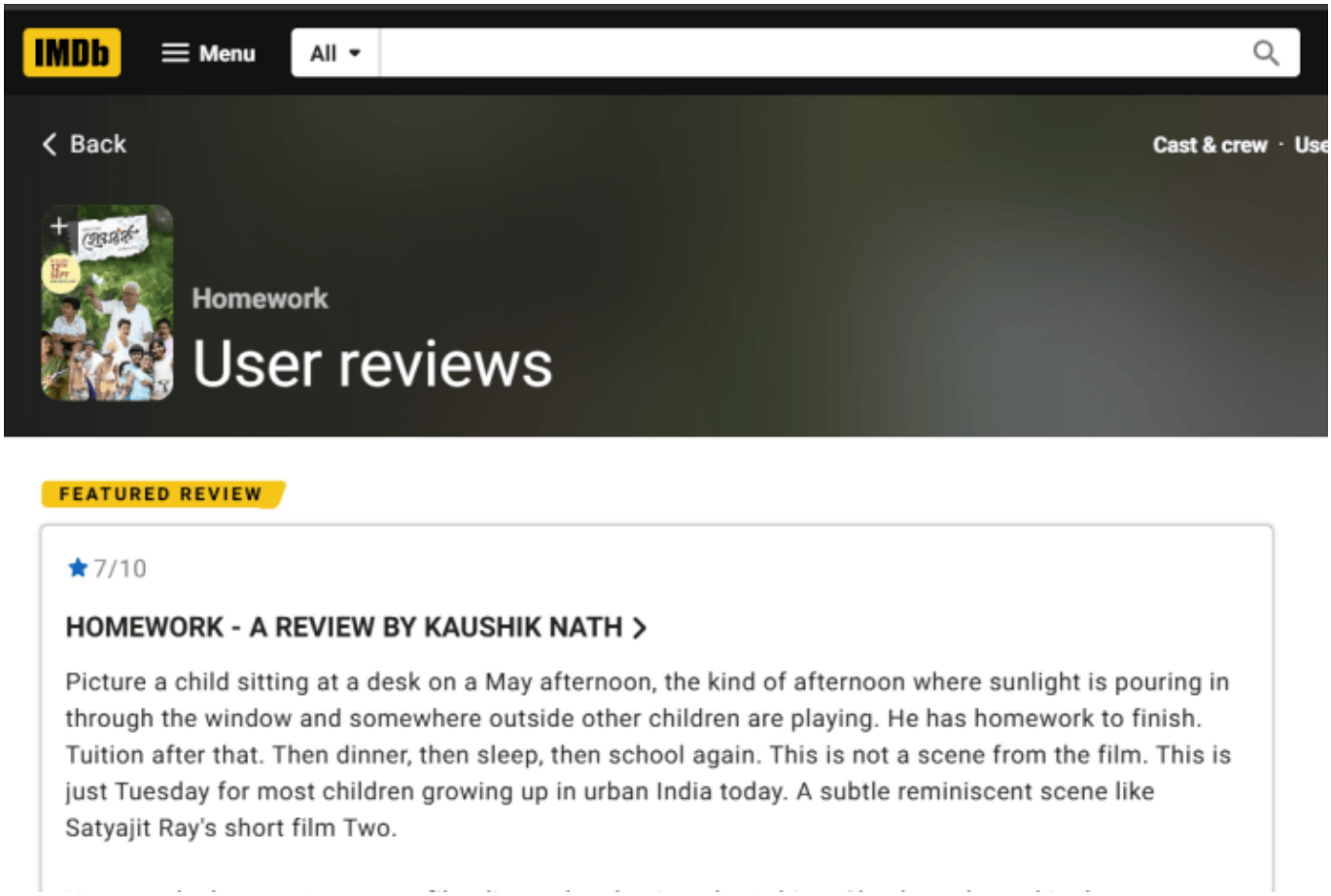
BY KAUSHIK NATH

Picture a child sitting at a desk on a May afternoon, the kind of afternoon where sunlight is pouring in through the window and somewhere outside other children are playing. He has homework to finish. Tuition after that. Then dinner, then sleep, then school again. This is not a scene from the film. This is just Tuesday for most children growing up in urban India today. A subtle reminiscent scene like Satyajit Ray’s short film Two.

Homework, the new Assamese film directed and written by Achinta Shankar released in theatres recently and comes from a director who has been quietly building one of the more interesting bodies of work in contemporary Assamese cinema. His earlier films : Pratighaat, Dur, Priyar Priyo, Kanchanjangha showed a filmmaker comfortable with emotion and restraint in equal measure. Homework feels like the natural next step. It is his most focused film, and in many ways his most personal.



The story follows Apu, a young boy who has been longing to spend his summer at his grandfather's village. City life has given him comfort but not much freedom, and the village represents everything his daily routine does not, open fields, cousins to run around with, afternoons with no fixed agenda. When his grandfather comes to take him there, Apu finally gets his wish. What unfolds is less a plot and more an experience. The film lets you breathe alongside Apu as he discovers what childhood can feel like when nobody is measuring it.

But Homework is not naive about the world. The grandfather, in a moment that quietly anchors the entire film, reminds Apu's parents not to trade their son's present for the sake of some imagined future. It is said without drama, almost as an aside, and that is precisely why it lands so hard.

The casting is where the film finds much of its strength. Surjyang Jiu Margheria plays Apu, and he is extraordinary in the way that only children who are not really acting can be. There is no performance to speak of. He simply inhabits the character completely curious when Apu is curious, frustrated when Apu is frustrated, joyful in a way that is completely uncontrived. It is the kind of work that makes you forget you are watching a film at all.

Playing his mother is Gayatri Mahanta, returning to Assamese cinema after a long time away. Her comeback alone would have been news, but the film adds a layer to it that no casting director could have engineered. Surjyang is Gayatri's real son. The mother and son you see on screen are the mother and son in real life, and every scene they share carries that truth in it. There is a particular moment of quiet comfort between the two that would not have worked half as well with any other pair of actors, however talented.

The supporting characters are drawn with similar care. The parents who pile pressure on Apu are not bad people. They are people doing what countless Indian parents do every day pushing their children hard because they genuinely believe that is what love looks like. The film does not judge them. It simply asks them, gently, to look at what they might be costing their child in the process. That generosity toward all its characters is one of Homework's greatest strengths.

The themes the film explores childhood, learning, the weight of school and tuition and competition, the cost of stealing free time from children are almost entirely absent from Assamese cinema. Films in the language have covered love, tragedy, rural life, and social issues, but the specific anxiety of modern childhood has rarely been examined this honestly.

The music is by Zubeen Garg, one of the most significant voices in the history of Assamese music and culture. This is among his final works, and there is something quietly moving

about hearing his music in this particular story about preserving what is precious before it slips away. Arupjyoti Baruah also contributes to the soundtrack. The song Jantra is the highlight, a piece that captures with real precision the clockwork, mechanical existence that children are pushed into, and the longing to escape it.

Before its theatrical release, Homework had already travelled to and been recognised at the Rameshwaram International Film Festival, the Goa International Film Competition, the Tamizgam International Film Festival, and the Uruvati International Film Festival, winning awards for Best Child Actor, Best Film, and more. Festival recognition does not always predict how a film will land with a general audience, but in this case it says something meaningful.

Homework is rooted, specific, and deeply human. It is also a film that parents genuinely need to see, not to feel guilty, but to remember something important about what their children are actually going through. Achinta Shankar has made a film that respects both its subject and its audience. That is not as common as it should be.