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As I watched Kahaani, I thought of Vidya Balan's ability to play two opposite characters at the same time, both with such honesty and intensity. In The Dirty Picture she's a sexy siren and in Kahaani, a lone pregnant woman in a strange city.

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The story is about Vidhya Bagchi (quite emphatic on not being called Bidhya), a woman from London, looking for her husband who came to Kolkata two months ago and went missing. Vidya, seven months pregnant begins a relentless search in a festive city. She smells something fishy as everybody denies seeing or hearing about her husband there. Nobody to rely upon in a city soaked with lies, she turns to her own memories.

Her only hope comes in the form of a police officer named Satyuki (Saarthi of Arjun – another name of Lord Krishna). True to the name he joins Vidhya in the hunt. Vidya soon realizes it's all a big puzzle, which keeps getting complicated with her every move.

A woman on the threshold of motherhood suddenly finds that her spouse has vanished. How do you come to terms with this? People you approach for help deny his existence. You are certain that this individual exists and that you are carrying the proof in your womb - his child. The concept is novel and truly striking!

Vidhya, as expected, steals the show. The talented actress delivers a performance that's at par with her former accomplishments. You just cannot miss her screen presence. She carries the film on her shoulders, something she did earlier in The Dirty Picture. It is good to see an actress coming this far in Indian cinema. No wonder she stands another chance to sweep more awards.

Nawazuddin Siddiqui plays the role of a grey shaded police officer. We saw him in Pan Singh Tomar as Gopi. Here he gets more screen space and utilises it brilliantly. Parambrata Chattopadhyay as Satyuki, a newly appointed soft spoken police officer, is very convincing.

Kahaani

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The casting director has done a commendable job. All the actors come from Bangla background and thus mix easily with the culture shown in the movie. Also, the lesser known actors shine in their respective roles given they have no industry image to give you any idea of their characters in the movie. This adds to the suspense.

The director, Sujoy Ghosh, has used the panorama of Kolkata beautifully to create an element of mystery. The dark lanes and slow life of the city brings thrill to the story. It seems as if the city is not moving at all while the story unravels at fast pace. Ghosh has made the best of the festival time with all the famous icons of the city - trams, metro, rickshaw - playing their part in the mystery. Kolkata comes across as dark, dreary and mysterious in the movie.

The suspense is so gripping that even the interval looks long for a change.

Vishal Shekhar's music is good but is not used much in the movie. In a way it helps maintain the pace of the movie.

The climax is super, the backdrop of Durga Puja making it more meaningful.

Watch it, if you want to see a good clean thriller.

(Rating: 4 stars out of 5 for me.)

---Sharad Vatss is a movie buff who works for Pepsi.