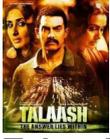


Talaash

Written by Sharad Vatss

Thursday, 06 December 2012 09:07



Talaash sees Aamir Khan back on screen after three years, and he doesn't disappoint.

To start with, I'll share a scene of the film. Aamir gets a call from a journalist to clarify on the evidence found in a case. Banging the phone down, he summons his staff and shouts, "Until and unless we solve this mystery, no clue should go outside". I feel like doing the same, by telling you nothing about everything I intend to share through this review of the much awaited Talaash.

Story: Inspector Shekhawat (Aamir) is working on an accidental death case of a renowned film star. In the process he finds there is much to the case then it appears.

Meanwhile, a parallel story unfolds, that of Shekhawat and his wife Roshni (Rani Mukerji). While the couple hardly communicates, it is revealed that they lost their child in an accident. The incident resulted in an almost broken marriage. Their death of their son haunts them. While Roshni undergoes therapy to get over the shock, Shekhawat spends sleepless nights and drowns himself in work when he is not thinking of the ill-fated moment.

Shekhawat's investigation of the case leads him to a brothel. He enlists the help of Rosie (Kareena Kapoor), a prostitute who seems to know many of the people involved in the case. She approaches him as a prospective client but ends up as his crucial informer. He insists her to come out off the trade but she wants him to first help find her old friend who went missing.

The story has a motley cast of characters, including Roshni's neighbour who talks to the dead (Shernaz Patel) and a crippled pimp (Nawazuddin Siddiqui) who wants to make a quick buck.

As Shekhawat solves the mystery, he also confronts many things in his own life. And then there is the Sea Worli road which witnesses many unresolved accidents and murders, playing a central role in the movie. The answers to all of those lies within!

Performances: Kareena Kapoor comes across too posh for the role of a street hooker. She oozes sexuality in every gesture, but it's just that gestures are of Kareena and not Rosie. It's mostly a repeat of Chameli. Her preaching and 'divine' facial expressions annoys you beyond a

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point. Rosie's role as a supporting angel to the distressed hero is a reenactment of every golden-hearted whore that you've ever seen, from Devdas to Muqaddar ka Sikandar.

Rani Mukherjee does rather well with a small role. As the housewife with an ironic name of Roshni, the actress brings intensity to her sadness in a dark house. Rani always had the capacity to be heartbreaking and unexpectedly fiery at the same time. She does both with aplomb here.

Nawazuddin Siddiqui is another strong actor, Bollywood is discovering. His every move and facial expressions gets him into the skin of the desired character.

If, like me, you have fond memories of the man with a steely core in Raakh, and have been looking for a similar character, you need look no further. Your talaash has ended! Aamir shoulders the film with flair. He essays the role of a tough cop, who is vulnerable inside, beautifully. Towards the end, a cathartic scene in which he comes face-to-face with his grief leaves the greatest impact.

Direction and writing: Reema Kagti (of Honeymoon Travels fame) was holding this script for years. They approached even Saif for the role of Shekhawat but he turned it down.

The Movie opens up with Mumbai's glamorous yet sardonic night. Reema weaves the plot expertly, adding in both suspense and emotional element. But, she fumbles towards the end. Kagti also takes a risk by mixing genres (emotional drama and suspense), which is likely to estrange the mainstream audience.

As the case unfolds, you get your answers from the characters. But clearly, Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar, the scriptwriter duo, give you much more than that. They take you through a self-exploratory journey and bring you back replete with answers. Farhan Akhtar's dialogues are witty and unleash several underlying messages. Though the script is tightly woven, it goes a bit slow in an already slow paced narrative, especially in the second half. Over all, it gives you a feel of Kahani in narration, and the way city of Mumbai and the night are used as characters themselves, add mystery to the story.

It seems quite clear, right from the title sequence, where smoky streets filled with destitute chillum-smokers and frail hookers that we are not here to see a realist police chase drama.

Camera and action: Mysteries have the desired impact only with a relaxing camerawork. The cinematography by K R Mohanan is as specific as needed and as detailed as the character. This is his third mainstream film and he has used his experience well. The cinematography, though simple, captures the essence of Mumbai. The locales of the city are wonderfully depicted, making them a character in the film, rather than a mere backdrop.

Action scenes are limited to the accidental cars and underwater activities. Amir Khan went

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through a three month training to hone on his swimming skills for couple of specific scenes in the movie. The underwater sequences are shot in London and adds thrill to the narrative.

Music: Ram Sampath gives an apt background score, in keeping with the flavor of the film. Though not so special, but the songs brings in the much needed respite in an otherwise tensed screenplay. The plot and performances leave no room for trivialities.

Talaash overall achieves is a rare balance of grit and gloss. It's a good thriller but not as big as Aamir's last few offerings.

I like the film for two reasons, the performances by Khan, Nawazuddin and Rani, and the shocking though predictable end. One more thing, unlike most of the suspense thriller, which solve the mystery in the climax, you can actually sense it if you go through the dialogues and frames of the movie carefully.

Well, I did and got very close to the truth. Inspired by one of my favourite Hollywood flicks!

(Rating: *1/2)**

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