



The movie is an opportunity lost in creating a good horror story.

Good to see Bollywood coming up with new ideas for a horror plot. Gone are the days when we were served Ramsay's or Bhakri's films, featuring unknown actors, and a single plot of a haunted house, palace, mandir, basement, graveyard, etc. The new age Bhattas, RGVs and Bhardwajs, explore new idea every time. Though the chances of repetition still exist, the horror genre is respected more now.

Ek Thi Daayan promises a lot, as it starts, but fails to consolidate. A very different set up, but almost the same subject as Vishal Bhardwaj's directorial debut, Makdi. The film addresses the world of witches, and co-incidentally, again a directional debut (by Kannan Iyer).

Story. Magician Bobo (Emraan Hashmi) is happy with his successful career, a beautiful and dedicated love interest, Tamara, and to be adopted son, Zubeen. The only problem is his childhood memories, which have started hallucinating him. He is unable to focus on his career and visits his old psychiatrist. During the hypnotising session, he reveals those dark memories.

Child Bobo (Vishesh tiwary) and his sister Meesha are taken care of by their father (Pawan Malhotra), as their mother is no more. Bobo is attracted towards magic tricks and witchcraft books, and creates his own creepy world. Enters Diana (Konkona Sen Sharma) in his father's life. Bobo believes her to be a witch. His life changes in a horrific incident. Time passes by, but, those memories started haunting him. Would he be able to get rid of the 'daayan' in his life? The film provides the answer.

The story seems an urban version of Vishal's rural daayan - Makdi. The first part is really good. It starts smoothly, and the magic tricks of Bobo provide the essential dose of thrill, also setting up a creepy platform for the story to unfold. Young Bobo's belief and investigation of Diana being a witch provide the film with some scary scenes. The best scene of the movie comes during his last encounter with Diana. Konkona gives her best in that scene.

It's the second half which lets the film down. Storytelling loosens up and starts to follow the likes of Vastu Shastra, Bhoot and Raaz. Lisa (Kalki Koechlin) enters the story and carries the witchcraft symptoms of Konkona. The end seems to be a copy of Paranormal Activity. Typical Bollywood mindset has influenced the ending.

Huma Qureshi's character is just of a smiling partner, not believing in what Bobo says. The

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Written by Sharad Vatss
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routine stuff in Bollywood horrors.

Performances. Konkona leads the acting honours. Vishesh playing the young Bobo gives a masterful performance. Emran and Kalki did their part well. Huma seems to be just smiling around, reminding of Madhuri dixit, dancing with her bulky figure, reminding of Sonakhsi and trying to act, reminding of Katrina Kaif.

Pawan Malhotra is too good in his small role as Bobo's father. Bhavesh Balchandani, as the psychiatric, impresses.

Direction & Story. Director, Kannan Iyer, has taken a risky subject. Till date we have not heard of a horror flick setting box office records. He has done a good job in the first half and provided fresh creepy imaginations on screen. Though he seem to be in awe of Vishal Bhardwaj, as many scenes (unnecessarily) stressed too much on on the detail. Second half is where Kanna fails. The characterisations and tricks to control the daayan look funny, and do not match the standard set up by the start of the movie.

This film is based on a small, 30 years old story, written by Konkona's father, Mukul Sharma. Dialogues by Vishal are good, and comes across as normal life conversations. The screenplay is co-written by Vishal Bhardwaj and Mukul Sharma. They have beautifully transformed the rural daayan story for an urban audience.

Camera & Music. Visuals of the movie are a treat. The sets are good and so is the camerawork by Saurabh Goswami, except the last scene, where characters look funny instead of scary. Music by Vishal lives up to his standard. The songs, penned by Gulzar, feel good to the ears during the first part, but interrupts the story in the second. 'Lautungi Main' and 'Kaali Kaali' are my favorite from the lot.

The movie starts on a good note but fails in the second half. The plot doesn't stay true even to its own logic. It's cheesy and simply too silly to scare. Kannan Iyer has the potential as evident from the overall mood of the film, but over dramatisation has obstructed the flow towards the end.

To me it's an opportunity lost. You can still watch the film for few scary moments, some good acting and a unique premise.

(Rating: **1/2)

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