

'Badla' Is A Nifty, Delicately Drawn Whodunit...

Film: "Badla"; Director: Sujoy Ghosh; Cast: Amitabh Bachchan, Tapsee Pannu, Amrita Singh; Rating: ****(4 stars)

The phonetic distance between badla, the Hindi word for revenge that serves as the deliciously filmy title of this delicately drawn whodunit, and Badal, the name that the lawyer-protagonist is known by is easily bridgible. The craftily-plotted whodunit shows us why vendetta is best served cold. It unfolds in snowcapped England, you see.



Or, do you?

Amitabh Bachchan plays Badal Gupta, a hotshot lawyer on the verge of retirement who has never lost a case.

Badal goes for the kill when he is invited to look into a case of a murder accused, a nonchalant imperturbable married woman named Naina Sethi whose morals are so reprehensible they make Indrani Mukerjea seem excusably misguided in comparison.

Kudos to Tapsee Pannu for playing a woman who won't stop at anything to get what she

wants. It shows the expanding moral spectrum of celluloid heroism to see a female protagonist so low in the conscience department, and it is a pleasure to see Pannu so good in being bad.

But why must she smoke to prove her disregard for moral values? I thought smoking for vamping went out of vogue with Shashikala.

But I am straying. A crime this film about unforgivable crimes, never commits. To the point and

on the ball, Badla is a concise gripping cat-and-mouse concoction where lawyer Bachchan and the accused Pannu play off against one another with feline stealth, one never willing to acquiesce to the other's persuasive arguments, so that in no time a swirl of accusations come hurling at us without the plot giving away anything. The dialogues tell us everything the characters want us to hear without giving away the truth.

Sujoy Ghosh, it seems, has adapted a Spanish film

"The Invisible Guest". I suspect the suspect-motive-crime-denouement graph in the original must have been very different. Badla contextualises the murder to fit into the ambit of adultery.

Pannu's entrepreneur-heroine has a loving family of devoted husband and adorable little daughter.

Why would she break the domestic idyll to have an affair with an anglo-Indian Arjun (Tony Luke) who must wear cross around his neck even while bearing it (the cross, I mean) and who speaks with a thick Bandra-Catholic accent that tends to take away from the gravity of the crisis on hand.

Arjun's peculiar diction is the least of the problems in the narrative. Ghosh fills up the frames with an implosive tension.

Most of the time there are just Bachchan and his accused (far from a victim) talking, exchanging barbed words and slanted glances that give nothing away. Both the actors are adept at using

words to express more than just what they want to say. There is a third crucial character, played by the powerful Amrita Singh who makes even an offer for a cup of tea seem like a stern rebuke. It's a pity that there isn't much of Singh with Bachchan together. What I wouldn't give to see that Mard-slinging!

Cinematographer Avik Mukhopadhyay captures the scenic splendour of the English countryside without allowing the characters to look subservient to their environment.

Handsome shot and as sharply cut as a Saville Row suit, Badla is a unique blend of suspense and chamber-piece. The verbal exchanges between Bachchan and Pannu play a curious mind-game with the perception of guilt and retribution.

At the end Sujoy Ghosh captures two vital faces staring out of a window.

They remind us of how important characterisation is to a tightly-wound plot, and how easily a suspense drama can come undone in the wrong hands.

Women Don't Need Men's Permission To Travel: Dia

MUMBAI: Actress-producer Dia Mirza, who started travelling alone at the age of 18, has observed a change in the patriarchal mindset regarding solo women travellers, and she considers it empowering. Dia took her first flight and went to Thailand along with one of her female friends after winning the Femina Miss India beauty pageant in 2000.

What changes has she seen in the society's attitude towards solo women travellers?

Dia told IANS: "A girl does not have to seek permission from a man, or from the society to go

out there to explore the world, she just needs her own permission. I think that is empowering.

"That a girl cannot be on her own, comes from a patriarchal mindset. It comes from the mindset that a woman must be protected, they are weak when a girl travels solo, and I mean travelling anywhere -- going on a vacation, going to work or to study abroad or anything that they do."

"But there's a shift in social conditioning that allows women to follow their choice to travel alone, travel free," explained the actress.

LONDON: Superstar Shah Rukh Khan's daughter Suhana Khan often gets into the limelight -- sometimes for her fashion sense and sometimes her magazine shoot. This time, she has caught everyone's attention by her dancing skills.

In a video -- which has surfaced on the Internet, Suhana, who is currently studying here, is seen having fun at a dance rehearsal with her friends.

Suhana is matching steps with others on Kenny Loggins' "Footloose" in the video, which has gone viral on social media.

Suhana Khan Creates Online Buzz With Dancing Skills



She was an assistant on Shah Rukh Khan's latest release "Zero", which featured him as a dwarf. He was seen with Anush-

ka Sharma and Katrina Kaif in the film, which, however, turned out to be a dud at the box office. much to disappointment of fans.

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Taapsee, Anurag Kashyap To Team Up For A Supernatural Thriller

MUMBA: Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap and actress Taapsee Pannu are coming together again for a supernatural thriller.

The yet-untitled film will be produced by Sunir Khetarpal for Azure Entertainment and will be shot in November and December this year. It is slated to release in 2020.

"I always knew I will work again with Anurag considering the experience I had during 'Manmarziyaan' but didn't know it will happen so soon," Taapsee said in a statement.

"Sunir and I have also been discussing on working on more subjects together

since quite some time and this was an immediate ayes' for all of us on board. I am looking forward to this film as I have not explored supernatural genre in Hindi films as yet," she added.

At the moment, Kashyap is busy exploring locations for setting of the film as the place where the movie is set is integral to the supernatural theme.

"Taapsee keeps me on my toes and she is on a mission to push me to take on challenges. She threw this one at me and I am taking it on. I have never done anything like this before so I am looking forward to it," Kashyap said.

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