

## 'Jannat' an interesting mix of love, cricket, crime

Film: 'Jannat'; Cast: Emran Hashmi, Sonal Chauhan, Samir Kochar, Javed Shaikh, Vishal Malhotra;  
Director: Kunal Deshmukh; Ratings: \*\*\*

More, more, more...The motto of motorised materialism seems to have overtaken contemporary life. Everyone wants the good things in life in the shortest time possible. The acquisitive spirit has seldom been defined with such economy of storytelling as in 'Jannat'.

Not surprisingly, a lot of Mahesh Bhatt's latest exposition on the excesses of materialism is shot in shopping malls, expensive restaurants and posh stadiums where money flows like unadulterated honey. And when our hero sees the love of his life staring at a diamond ring he walks into the showroom and breaks the display window.

Get what you want by force and forget those homilies that papa preached at the dinner table about the virtues of honesty. 'Honest money means hard work and little reward,' says a wry character in 'Jannat'. He's obviously not read Ayn Rand.

Sanjay Masoom's scathing dialogues scamper across the film's lush skyline to create a language of wannabes who would stop at nothing to get that new villa on the Gold Coast.

Let's then applaud one more moral fable from Bhatt's sensible stable.

'Jannat' tells us to waste not, want 'nought'...By all means covet the zeroes on that pay cheque. But don't forget that if you run after the zeroes your life ends up in the zero zone.

Forty years ago in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's 'Satyakam' Dharmendra had refused to succumb to all the temptations of materialism that were strewn in his path to salvation. Lying dying of cancer, he's asked by his wife: 'Finally what do you have to say about your life of integrity?'

'I've lived,' Dharmendra says at the end of 'Satyakam'.

Can Emran Hashmi (playing the small-time wheeler dealer who turns into a cricket match-fixer, criminal and moral transgressor) turn around before his gruesome death to say he has lived?

Yes, Arjun (Emran) has loved. At heart 'Jannat' is a dark tragic love story. While the girl's innocence and the man's corruptible countenance resembles 'Kalyug', the whole dilemma of the beloved being instrumental in destroying the criminal hero echoes 'Gangster'.

Both 'Kalyug' and 'Gangster' were superior in content and treatment. Debutant director Kunal Deshmukh cannot escape the cliches on existentialism that have come to surround Bhatt's cinema...the morally conflicted Shakespeare-meets-James Hadley Chase hero, the independent-minded strong and value-based heroine, the hero's trusted and loyal friend (Purab Kohli in 'Woh Lamhe', Shaad Randhawa in 'Awaarapan', and now Vishal Malhotra), the ideologue father whose principles are held up to ridicule until the hero discovers the hard way that dad's remedies are the best to deal with ethical ambivalence.

These lingering leitmotifs get a renewed, if not luminous, life in every Bhatt production. But 'Jannat'

lacks the resonance and staying power of some of Bhatt's earlier films about crime and punishment from 'Naam' to 'Gangster'.

Cleverly and cautiously Deshmukh's film brings in the cricket element, which has audiences ignoring the pitfalls of rejuvenating Bhatt's age-old iconoclasm. The stock footage of real-life cricket matches are used well and sparingly in the plot. The stress, as ever in Bhatt's saga of our stressful times, is on the clashing colliding crisscross of human relationships.

Emran's father's sequence in his son's luxurious bathroom where he comments on the basket of soaps is a whammer. But the wheeling dealing in the greenroom and clubs with cricketers of indeterminate nationality behaving like debauched goblins smacks of amateurishness. The murder of the Australian coach turns the Bob Woolmer scandal into a climactic add-on. May his soul rest in peace.

But what stays is the protagonist's passion for money as opposed to his love for Zoya(Sonal Chauhan). The end-game where the engagement ring is juxtaposed against the gun is arresting in more ways than one.

While Emran interprets the over-reaching get-rich-quick schemer's part with a native cunning, one misses that suave and smooth transitions in the character that perhaps a Naseeruddin Shah or even a Shahid Kapoor would bring on the table.

But Emran is charming enough to let the protagonist's journey from a chawl to Cape Town look interesting. He's constantly getting author-backed roles of the angst-ridden social outcast (a garage-sale version of Amitabh Bachchan) which he plays with a fair amount of sensitivity.

Debutant Sonal has much more to do than be the decorative doll she seems equipped to be. She's the weakest link in the powerplay where the politics of the playing field is extended to an engrossing exposition of greed atonement. Some of the supporting cast, especially Jawed Shaikh as the cricketing don and Abhimanyu as his silent henchman, come to grips with their characters better than you would expect in a film that has scant space for anyone except the man who would be king.

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