

Fine acting, focussed direction make 'The Edge of Heaven' engaging

Film: 'The Edge of Heaven'; Cast: Nurgul Yesilcay, Baki Davrak, Tuncel Kurtiz, Hanna Schygulla, Patrycia Ziolkowska, Nursel Kose; Director: Fatih Akin; Rating: ****

Hollywood movies "Crash" and "Babel" got preachy and heavy handed in dealing with the plot of seemingly unrelated characters who get connected in dramatic and sometimes violent ways. Now comes the brilliant "The Edge of Heaven" by German-Turkish writer-director Fatih Akin, which though similar in style to "Crash" and "Babel", differs in depth and subtlety.

In 'The Edge of Heaven', the six principal characters never meet and yet we see them just brush by. We know more than the characters and yet we watch with bated breath.

The movie is solid on all fronts. The director had already impressed with "Head On" and follows the similar vein thematically with his latest.

The focus is clearly on characters, the dangers of impulsive love and an all important ever burdensome need to atone and reconcile. All the characters are clearly seeking to atone or reconcile and it is a treat to watch the director unfold these themes maturely.

The film criss-crosses Germany and Turkey. It begins in Germany where an aging Turkish widower visits a prostitute. He offers to have her stay in his house and pay her the same amount she would make if she continued working. She initially rejects the offer but has to take it up after some fundamentalist Muslims threaten her.

This new arrangement complicates matters with the man's son Nejat. The prostitute tells Nejat of a daughter she has back in Turkey who she supports financially. After a tragic turn, the son Nejat (Baki Davrak) leaves Germany for Turkey to look for the daughter. But the daughter Ayten (Nurgul Yesilcy), unbeknownst to Nejat, is involved with some radical militant group and befriends the German girl Lotte (Patrycia Ziolkowska) who she falls in love with much to the consternation of the German girl's mother Susanne (Hanna Schygulla).

The acting is clearly one of the strong points of the movie. The young Yesilcy radiates such an intensity that, though we may not agree with her politics, we can at least sympathise with her passion.

The veteran German actress Schygulla gives arguably the finest performance portraying a wise but loving mother. She maintains an air of dignified rigidity except for one incredible scene with the camera positioned atop a hotel room. The other supporting actors fill in commendably. Since the movie is character driven, it needed good acting to underpin the drama.

Akin masterly uses the contemporary political situation like the effect of immigration on [Europe](#) changing the cultural landscape and the schizophrenia Turkey displays as it chooses between being Asian or European to serve as background. He never strays to make any overtly personal comments or sermonises. He trusts his story, his actors and the drama inherent in the script.

This is a movie for film lovers. Those looking for good, solid, serious drama to take a break from the more inane Hollywood offerings of the past few months will gladly welcome "The Edge Of Heaven".

Sevanand Gaddala (© IANS / India eNews)