

'Maharathi' - a tale of trust, lies and deception

After successfully staging 700 shows of the play 'Maharathi' in Gujarati since 1987, veteran actor Paresh Rawal is all set to win audiences again through the big screen adaptation of the classy comic thriller that is releasing Friday.

Paresh plays an unsuccessful actor-cum-conman in the film - the same character he had essayed in the play that he had directed. But he avoided directing the movie because he could not remove theatre from his sensibility.

'I've often been asked why I didn't direct the film. The truth is the play is still fresh in my mind. But I didn't want the grammar of the stage to be applied to the film version. Then what is the point doing a film? My mind is filled with the play. I couldn't have detached myself from the stage. I needed a fresh cinematic vision to improve on the play. After doing plays for 21 years, I can't remove theatre from my sensibility,' Paresh said.

Finding a producer for the film was an uphill task for the actor.

'History repeated itself for the film when I had to hardsell my script for almost three years. Finally, I found a producer in Shree Ashtavinayak Cine Vision Ltd,' he said.

Originally, Vikram Bhatt was to direct it, but he was replaced by Shivam Nair of 'Ahista Ahista' fame. The film stars a host of theatrical veterans like Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri and Boman Irani apart from Neha Dhupia and Tara Sharma.

'Maharathi' revolves around a middle-aged man, Subhash (Paresh), who has spent 10 years of his life trying to get a break in films but does not succeed. He makes ends meet by committing petty crimes and conning unsuspecting victims.

One night, he saves a man's life at the risk of his own and accompanies him back home.

Eventually winning his trust, Subhash is hired by the man, Adenwalla (Naseeruddin Shah), as his driver. However, Adenwalla's wife Mallika (Neha Dhupia) resents his proximity to her husband.

Subhash, once he is firmly ensconced in Adenwalla's house, discovers that Mallika has evil designs. Seeing this as a lucrative opportunity to rid himself of a lifetime of middle-class mediocrity and poverty, Subhash collaborates with Mallika to acquire Adenwalla's money and property.

However, their best laid plans go awry and Subhash ends up getting trapped in his own lies and manoeuvres.

In the race of films being adapted from books and real life stories, one has to wait and watch if 'Maharathi', a screen adaptation of a successful play, is liked by critics and audiences.

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