

# ‘Gold’ whips up India’s patriotism through hockey



CHENNAI: Sports films seem to be the fashion in India. In recent times, there has been “Soorma,” “Chak De! India,” “Mary Kom,” “Sala Khadoos” and “Lagaan.” And now it is Reema Kagti’s “Gold,” a fictional story loosely based on India’s first gold medal as an independent country at the 1948 London Olympics.

Bollywood bigwig Akshay Kumar, who has in recent years taken on the role of a patriotic Samaritan with movies like “Padman,” “Toilet,” “Airlift” and so on, portrays Tapan Das, a Bengali coach and manager of India’s field hockey team.

Dhoti-clad Das is passionate about the country’s national game, which has now been eclipsed by the glamorous and money-spinning cricket. A bit of a clown and an alcoholic, he somehow manages to convince the hockey federation that he can assemble a winning team and clinch the gold at the London Olympics, just a year after India became a free country. Putting together a team of players (Kunal Kapoor, Amit Sadh, Vineet Kumar Singh and Sunny Kaushal among others), Das raises a battle cry: Let us avenge 200 years of British slavery by winning the hockey gold on their home turf!

The script and the way it has been narrated capture the essence of a newly independent India, struggling to cope with the blood and gore of the Partition, and it is a heart-rending human tragedy. What is more, “Gold” is a brutal reminder of how

the division of the Indian subcontinent into two nations not only split the people, but also its sports and players. There is a poignant moment when we see Pakistani players cheering Indians on the field in what was to be one of the last examples of such unity.

Admittedly, Akshay carries the film with his antics, bordering on buffoonery, and an almost obsessive earnestness. But he appears to be playing this nation-building patriotic card a little too often, pushing us into a bit of boredom. “Gold” is not in the same league as “Chak De! India” or “Lagaan.” A certain novelty we saw in these two movies seems to have been lost.

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