

Film Review: A slanted silver screen offering on the Uri attack in Kashmir



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- “Uri: The Surgical Strike,” a film that focuses on the Indian strike that followed the attack

CHENNAI: In 2016, militants stormed an Indian army base in Kashmir killing 17 soldiers. Delhi blamed Pakistan for the attack and many Bollywood producers declared that they would no longer work with Pakistani actors which had the knock-on effect of forcing director Aditya Dhar to shelve his directorial debut which was set to star Pakistani actor Fawad Khan.

Fast forward to 2019 and Dhar has released “Uri: The Surgical Strike,” a film that focuses on the Indian strike that followed the attack — albeit in fictionalized form, where a personal revenge drama plays out within the more elaborate political arena.

The movie follows Indian Army Major Vihaan Shergill (Vicky Kaushal) as he is asked to lead a team of commandos deep into Pakistani territory. Elaborate planning goes into the strike, which is finally carried out after dark. Shergill, who had sought a desk job in order to take care of his ailing mother in Delhi, agrees to get into battle gear again after his brother-in-law is killed in the attack that triggered the strike. For Shergill, it is not just the honor of his country that is at stake, but also his own seething anger at having lost a close member of his family. This can be seen in all its naked starkness toward the end of the film, which attempts to weave together macro-level politics with one man's deep-seated emotions.

Unfortunately, Dhar's work appears a little lopsided. Pakistani officials were made to seem incompetent in the film — one character keeps burping and swallowing antacid, while another is loose lipped with vital information after he becomes intoxicated in what seem to be caricatures rather than characters.

What is most disconcerting, however, is that the film seems like a war cry — something most international filmmakers with a sense of moral responsibility try to avoid when telling war stories. To top it all off, Kaushal is not impressive and a compelling actress such as Yami Gautam (whose performance in “Vicky Donor” was superb) is wasted in an insignificant role. Of course, some of the action sequences shot in Serbia are breathtaking — a major plus point in the film.
