

A Hero Movie Review: Asghar Farhadi Gives an Incisive Comment on Iranian Society's Morality



Asghar Farhadi's A Hero, in the running for the Oscars in the international category, examines the dilemma its protagonist finds himself in when he is unable to return a loan.

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GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN

A still from Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi's latest, A Hero.

A

Hero
Director: Asghar Farhadi

Cast: Amir Jadidi, Sahar Goldust, Mohsen Tanabandeh. Fereshteh Sadr Orafaie, Sarina Farhadi

Iranian auteur Asghar Farhadi is renowned for movies on marital discord, which to me have always appeared as a microcosm of the society. A Separation, The Past and The Salesman are moving portraits of the family, and the lives of the individuals unfolding against the backdrop of a deeply conservative community – which is blatantly patriarchal. We see, for instance, how in The Salesman, the husband is deeply suspicious of his wife after she is attacked by an intruder. In A Separation, it becomes apparent that the man has an upper hand, and is helped by the male judge in an issue in which the woman is not entirely unjustified. Farhadi's latest, A Hero, which won the Grand Prix at Cannes last year and which is now in the running for the Oscars in the international category, moves away from marriage to examine the dilemma its protagonist finds himself in when he is unable to return a loan.



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The Salesman Review: A Compelling, Strong Piece of Work

Fitting to a T into a culture which promotes heroism, the film is an aching story of Rahim Soltani (played with a touch of brilliance by Amir Jadidi), who is serving time in prison for an unpaid debt. His clinched fist conveys an inherent fear of sinking. He had borrowed 150,000 Tomans from a loan shark. To help Rahim, his relative, Braham (Mohsen Tanabandeh), pays off the loan. But when the money does not come back, Rahim is sent to jail by Braham, who is also desperate, because he had taken the money from the savings for his daughter's dowry.

On a two-day parole, Rahim meets his secret girlfriend, Farkhondeh (Sahar Goldust), and finds that she had come across a lost handbag with 17 gold coins. Unfortunately, these would not be enough to return Braham's money. So, Rahim hits upon a plan to get himself out of the fix by advertising about the handbag, hoping its owner would come to claim it. She does, and Rahim is then interviewed by a television channel that propels him to the skies as one who despite his pressing financial need, was noble enough to return the coins.

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A Hero weaves hereafter into a thrilling experience with a Government official suspecting something fishy about the whole handbag business, and his doubts begin to multiply when he discovers that the woman who had claimed the coins had disappeared. In a chain of do-or-die moves, Rahim tries to salvage the situation, even asking his girlfriend to pretend to be that woman. The whole thing blows up in his face.

A Hero, which is set in the city of Shiraz, is a powerful demonstration of how Iranian society feeds on stories of heroism and valour. People go out of their way to prove how good they are, and Rahim – who is a single father with a son who stutters – presents himself as a man tormented by circumstance. In fact, he had invested the loan in a business, but his partner ran away.

A Hero, while being an incisive commentary on morality versus economic deprivation, suffers from a repetitive narrative that makes Rahim's saga somewhat vague and even detached. A bit of the punch is lost, and the work seems a trifle too long even with its comparatively short runtime of two hours.

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GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN *Gautaman Bhaskaran is a movie critic, commentator and an author, who penned the first ever biography of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, and has been covering ma...[Read More](#)*

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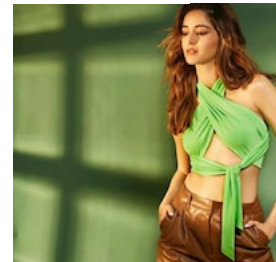


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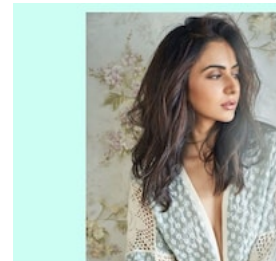
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