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Meel Patthar Movie Review: A Journey Where Every Milestone Cries in Despair



The new Netflix film Meel Patthar or Milestone, directed by Ivan Ayr, focuses on how entrepreneurs pay little attention to the welfare of their employees, especially the daily wage earners.

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GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN

M eel Patthar(Milestone)

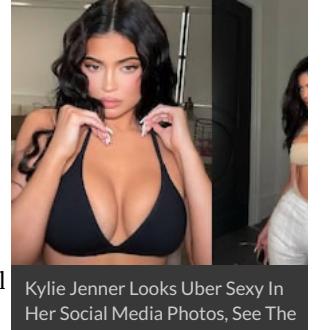
Director: Ivan Ayr

Cast: Lakshvir Saran, Suvinder Vicky

Ivan Ayr's 2018 Soni, which was part of Venice Film Festival's New Horizons, was inspired by the Nirbhaya rape case and several other incidents which revealed how unsafe women were in Delhi and other Indian cities. Soni explored how even police women faced dangerous situations that may begin with eve-teasing but quickly degenerate into murderous violence, and policewoman Soni despite being admonished by her superior officer, would often take on these men singlehandedly and in some of Delhi's most lonely spots.

While Soni had a wider canvas that went into Soni's unhappy marriage and so on, Ayr's latest work, Meel Patthar (Milestone), that was also part of Venice's New Horizons last year, is largely focused on a pressing social issue of how entrepreneurs pay little attention to the welfare of their employees when crises hit them. We saw this all too clearly in the way thousands of India's migrant labourers, who had helped build mammoth buildings and in a variety of other ways, were shown the door during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO GALLERY



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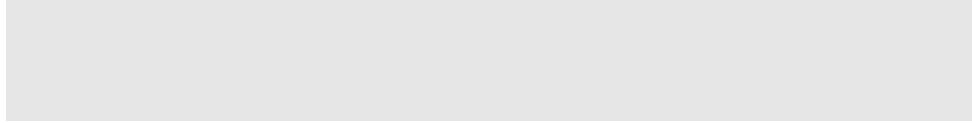


Alanna Panday Shares Sultry Photos On Social Media; See Her Oozing Oomph In These Pics

Meel Patthar, which will begin streaming on Netflix on May 7, takes a slightly different route to say the same story, of how a father-and-son team running a truck company begins to ignore a driver who has been constantly on the road and achieved a whopping figure of 500,000 km. Yet, when Ghalib (Suvinder Vicky), and that is his name, gets tired and suffers from an excruciating back pain, his owners hardly take note of this. They keep

flogging him, who already faces several impediments, both on the personal front and the professional. On the road, grumpy and greedy cops have to be humoured with bribes, and Ghalib's masters would not want to raise this amount, although the policemen's demands keep growing. And with rising costs of maintaining trucks, the company would like to cut corners.

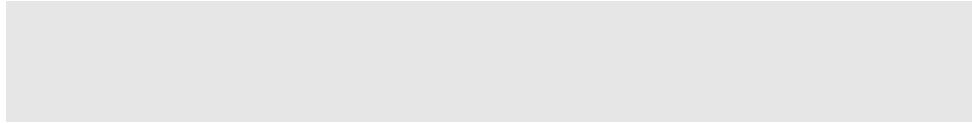
And how do they do this? Well, in Meel Patthar, by hiring a younger driver – Pash (Lakshvir Saran) — whom they hope would ultimately replace the older guy. Obviously, the newcomer would be paid less. A standard ploy that the corporate sector in India has begun to adopt.



Obviously, Ghalib's owners are but a microcosm of the larger evil. There is one heart-rending scene in which Ghalib realising that his days as a driver are numbered — with Pash all too enthusiastic about getting behind the wheel rather than sitting next to the older man — tries bribing the junior with wads of currency notes.

Vicky is subtle and enormously charismatic, his eyes telling the tale of a highly unrewarding career. Although, Ghalib is the star driver, there is little empathy for him from his owners. Back home in his village, his dead wife's family is demanding a monetary compensation. Added to this, his back is giving up on him, and despite his pleas, he is made to carry heavy weight. Cruelty at its height!

Ayr, who is also the writer, presents a beautiful contrast in the way Pash feels about Ghalib and the men who run his company – a very positive note about how not everything is lost.



Much like Soni, which was a more direct commentary on women's safety, Meel Patthar is a subdued and covert take on an equally important social dilemma, of how man has become a mere commodity in the business world. He is useful as long as he can perform, often backbreaking hours, and the moment he begins to falter, he is thrown away like a piece of old machinery. A new one is brought in. Obviously, in a country like India with no social security, this form can only spell doom to the man, who is flogged till he drops dead.

Ghalib's is a classic example of this, and Ayr by naming him after the poet, gives a lyrical touch to his movie. It has a placid look; there is no drama, but quiet discontent, a simmering feeling of misery whose embers are never allowed to rise and burn down a business model where profits are paramount.



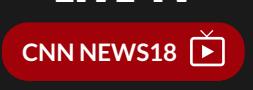
Rating: 3/5

(Gautaman Bhaskaran is movie critic and author of a biography of Adoor Gopalakrishnan)

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