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Paradise Movie Review: Sri Lankan Director Prasanna Captures The Island's Angst Through A Young Couple

Written By: Gautaman Bhaskaran Edited By: Shrishti Negi News18.com Last Updated: OCTOBER 06, 2023, 11:32 IST Mumbai, India

A scene from Prasanna Vithanage's directorial Paradise

Paradise (U/A)

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7 October 2023 | English, Malayalam, Sinhala

1 hrs 33 mins | Drama

Starring: Darshana Rajendran, Roshan Mathew, Mahendra Perera, Shyam Fernando

Director: Prasanna Vithanage

Paradise has been very well crafted with smart editing by Sreekar Prasad and captivating photograph ajeev Ravi.

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Paradise Movie Review: One of the most gripping dramas I have seen in recent times, Sri Lankan auteur Prasanna Vithanage's Paradise is an incisive study of the island nation's complex social and linguistic divides. Probably, the director's most engaging work in his basket that has an array of socio-political cinematic analyses. Paradise – to be screened at the ongoing Busan International Film Festival — is a sad reflection on how the three-decade long civil strife hit societal dynamics in Sri Lanka. Though the ethnic war ended over a decade ago, the embers from the flame are still visibly hot.

An extremely sensitive helmer, Vithanage's movies are subtle and soft much like the man himself. Yet, beneath this lies a power-packed mind that misses nothing and never hesitates to call a spade a spade. In what appears like an irony of sorts, Vithanage – who has written the story and co-scripted it with Anushka Senanayake – titles his work Paradise. But if one were to scratch the surface, it would be clear that here was a divinely beautifully island where Paradise may have been well lost.

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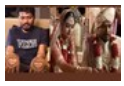
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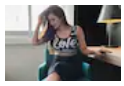
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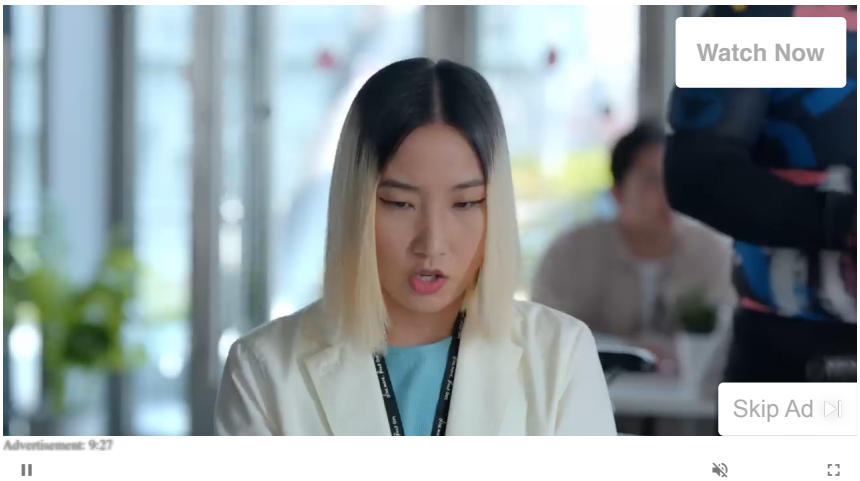

And this works at many levels: a couple who arrive in the country to celebrate five years of togetherness; a police force that is dominated by the majority Sinhala and; a downtrodden minority Tamil race whose battle for rights was fought by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

In a tightly knit plot, we see Amritha (Darshana Rajendran) and her husband, Kesav (Roshan Mathew) arriving in Sri Lanka just a couple of months after the administration had declared bankruptcy in June 2022. There were protests, fuel shortages, electricity outages and a deep sense of sorrow and helplessness. In the beginning, Amritha and Kesav appear untouched by all these; they are tourists from India, and visitors from other countries have been revered on the island, because they brought in some money to keep the country's economy moving, however ploddingly that may have been.

Their ecstasy crashes when thieves break into their hotel room and escape with their laptop computers and mobile phones, and without these the two find themselves utterly incapable of carrying out their work. In fact, Kesav had just landed a huge contract and their celebration with Champagne (maybe caviar too) turns bitter. Guided by their driver, Andrew (Shyam Fernando), the two go the police where a sour-looking sergeant, Bandara, (Mahendra Perera) offers to help nab the culprits after initial reluctance. He lines up a few men, and Kesav identifies one as the man who broke into their room. Amritha is not sure, and is even more uncertain that her husband is right. " Are you sure" she asks him. "Yes", his confidence seems not just unreal, but unethical. How could he have recognised the thief when his face was masked and the room was dark.

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Bandara is happy, because the man in question is a Tamil, and Vithanage very subtly introduces the sense of deep deep distrust, even hatred, the two communities have for each other.

Paradise has been very well crafted with smart editing by Sreekar Prasad and captivating photography by Rajeev Ravi. What is more, the climax driven by an unexpected twist adds a kind of drama that no viewer is going to forget for a long time.

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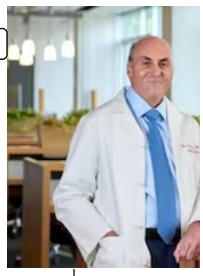

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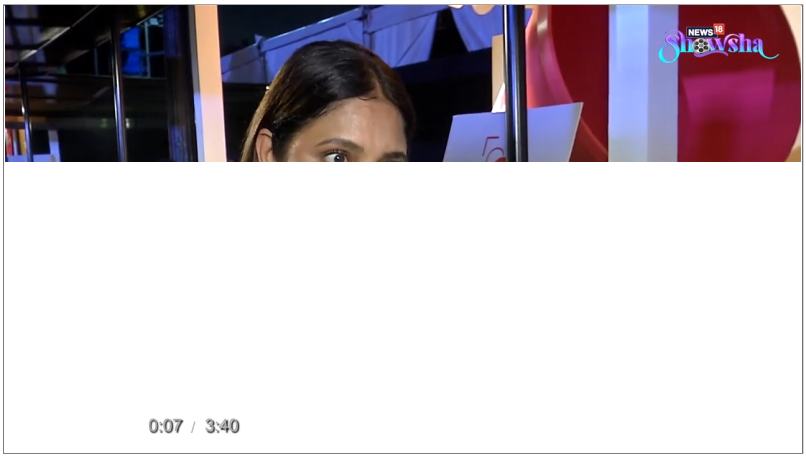

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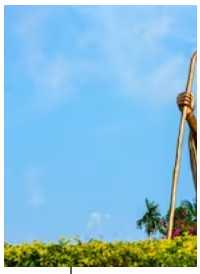

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Performances are uniformly good, though Darshana is superb revealing her pain and frustration watching her husband's heartless cruelty. She looks horrified when she watches him shoot at protestors outside their hotel, and even stops him from shooting a deer for food. Shyam Fernando and Mahendra Perera are impressive as well, playing their parts with a sense authenticity.

A theatrical screening of Paradise is being planned in India, and should not be missed.

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About the Author

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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