

Shekhar Home tries to capture Holmes but exploits



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It is, more often than not, well, nigh impossible to recreate a masterpiece. Even more so, a masterly character. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's much-celebrated and lionised sleuth, Sherlock Holmes, living in a gas-lamp-lit London's 221B Baker Street, has evoked unrealistic ambition. Writers and moviemakers have tried to recreate the detective and his illustrious sidekick, Dr Watson, who once served in the British Army. Dare say, these efforts have been in vain, for to get the feel of Holmes and his times, one would need another Doyle. I firmly believe this.

There have been umpteen books copying Mr Holmes' exploits. I remember reading Donald Thomas' *New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. I have also seen movies like *Feluda* and *Byomkesh Bakshi*, which have tried to get into the shoes of the moody British detective. But they have not been able to match the original. No way.

There is something magically unique about our man with a pipe who strums a violin while sitting in a room filled with tobacco smoke. The aura that Doyle created around his hero cannot be duplicated. At least nobody has been able to, up until now.

So, *Jio Cinema*'s latest six-episode series, *Shekhar Home*, falls flat trying to create yet another Holmes, yet another Watson, Inspector Lestrade, or Mrs Hudson. However, their names have been changed to suit the desi flavour. Sherlock becomes Shekhar (played by Kay Kay Menon), and Watson is Jayavrat (Ranvir Shorey). Sherlock's brother, Mycroft, is called Mrinmay (essayed by Kaushik Sen), Mrs Hudson is Mrs Henry (Shernaz Patel) and the bumbling cop,

Lestrade, is Laha (Rudranil Ghosh). Irene Adler, the only woman to get Holmes's 'Adrenalin' flowing, is Irabaty (Rasika Dugal). We also have Professor Moriarty or M (Kirti Kulhari), of course. Can Holmes exist and thrive without his arch enemy?

Created by Aniruddha Guha and Srijit Mukherji and produced by *BBC Studios India*, the Hindi-language drama has an essentially Bengali flavour; it is set in Bihar and Bengal (Kolkata). The town, Lonpur, is an imaginary one, and the bloody murders are committed there between 1991 and 1993. (I wonder why the original language could not have been Bengali.)

The episodes, helmed by Mukherji (the first four) and Rohan Sippy (the last two), deal with different stories. But unfortunately, they did not grip me, although the performances were superb. The writing was rather insipid. The direction is not tight enough.

The series explores murders, robberies and spirits, and one, *Bhaskar Villa*, talks about family secrets—a la *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The ghost story is silly. Against Doyle's serious approach, Guha and Mukherji adopt an irreverent tone. So, I found it difficult to admire or appreciate Shekhar Home's adventures.

If at all there is a plus point in the series, it is the incredibly wonderful acting by Menon. He carries *Shekhar Home* towards some kind of watchability. Shorey is not bad either, and both are bold enough to sport looks that are far from flattering. But Menon could have been even better had it not been for a poorly penned part.

The writer is a senior film critic and author





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