



## # Entertainment

## Black Warrant shows the horrors of Tihar Jail, but subtly

The latest Hindi prison drama, Black Warrant, in the form of a Netflix series, created by Vikramaditya Motwane and Satyanshu Singh, may have a smattering of all that we have seen in Bandini.

Gautaman Bhaskaran | January 18, 2025 11:35 pm



There has been no dearth of films set inside prisons. Both in Hollywood and India. However, the one which still haunts my memory is the 1963 Bandini with Nutan essaying a murder convict and Ashok Kumar her lover. With Dharmendra as the jail doctor falling in love with the beautiful prisoner, the stage is set for a high emotional drama. Under the sensitive hands of director Bimal Roy, Bandini traverses many harsh realities with consummate ease, without going overboard and without being noisy.

The latest Hindi prison drama, Black Warrant, in the form of a Netflix series, created by Vikramaditya Motwane and Satyanshu Singh, may have a smattering of all that we have seen in Bandini. The core plot in Black Warrant revolves around a jailor in India's biggest and most notorious Tihar Jail in Delhi — a meek and puny Zahan Kapoor, the grandson of Shashi Kapoor.

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Zahan may have been schooled in theatre, but happily he does not exhibit any of the exaggerated stage mannerisms. He is subtle, subdued and gritty in a quiet sort of way. Playing Sunil Kumar Gupta, a greenhorn jail warden, he is taught the ropes of a life within the four walls by his boss DSP Rajesh Tomar (Rahul Bhatt). He cautions Sunil that the jail is a viper's pit, where some bite and others get bitten. And Sunil swings

nervously between these two. Working along with two other jailers – Vipin Dahiya (Anurag Thakur) and Shivraj Singh Mangat (Paramvir Singh Cheema) — Sunil swims through the harsh waters of jail life. Yes sometimes he sinks but quickly comes up to the surface.

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In a place where rules are set by the inmates, life is not easy for our man, but there is some help coming his way – one in the form of Charles Sobhraj (Sidhant Gupta). Admittedly, the seven-part series is too kind to this ruthless killer who terrorised the beaches of Thailand murdering sunbathing women earning the black title of “bikini killer”.

Based on jailor Sunil Kumar Gupta’s memoirs, *Black Warrant: Confessions of a Tihar Jailer*, which he wrote along with Sunetra Choudhury, the television work is a roller-coaster ride through murky terrain where drugs and drinks flow with shocking ease, where bribes can get you anything and where human rights are trampled in a horrible way. Men can go mad or turn into animals. But Sunil manages to steer through these keeping his sanity intact.

On the flip side, *Black Warrant* needed more twists and turns to keep our eyeballs wavering away from the box. It is too placid for a prison story, and a bit repetitive. A fledgling romance between Sunil and girl from outside seems too forced and sticks out rather inconveniently. And pray what was the need for a journalist (Rajshri Deshpande) to butt in, and she is one among the several of the women who appear more like vases on the mantelpiece. Come on, there is even a subplot about a sex-craving housewife.

Tihar suffocates everybody and *Black Warrant* hisses. As the walls close in, the characters gasp for air, as might some viewers too!

*(The writer is a senior movie critic)*

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*Black Warrant Netflix Tihar Jail*



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