

Hisaab Barabar: Two plus two does not add up to four in this bank scam story

GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN

The latest Zee5 original film, *Hisaab Barabar*, by Ashwani Dhir took me back to another similar work, *Mrinal Sen* helmed 1969 *Bhuvan Shome*. Here, Utpal Dutt plays a strict and disciplined Indian Railways ticket inspector whose transformation forms an integral part of the narrative.

Dhir's protagonist, R. Madhavan, essays a similar role, based as he is in Delhi's railway station. He is a stickler in matters of money: he feels banks by cheating their customers/depositors of tiny amounts are making huge sums which run into thousands of crores. Yes, apart from *Bhuvan Shome*, Dhir's movie has an uncanny similarity to the notorious Harshad Mehta banking scam.

While Madhavan has a meaty role, Kirti Kulhari's is not. Donning the Khaki, she tries to help Sharma in a part that is half-heartedly written and seems disjointed. Often, she fails, and watches helplessly as, for instance, when Sharma's house is demolished by Mehta's goons. In a way, I liked this, for *Hisaab Barabar* does not make a hero out of its humble and down to earth railwayman or the cop.

We all know how the plot would wind its way to the finishing line. No surprises here. But lack of dramatic curves, which keep a movie racing, is certainly an impediment. Writers Dhir and Ritesh Shastri do not appear to have put their hearts into the story, often leaving it hanging so unsatisfactorily.

Madhavan has taken far too many similar roles that he looks jaded. Time he took something more challenging,



Neil Nitin Mehta's Micky Mehta is a Harshad look-alike portraying an arrogant business tycoon out to swindle depositors' wealth from his Do Bank. But like so many whistle blowers we have seen, Madhavan's Radhe Mohan Sharma gets into Mehta's way, and all because the railwayman found some Rs 27-odd missing from his Do Bank account. With his wife having deserted him and a small son to take care of, Sharma, though, is fearless taking on a corrupt system.

like, for instance, the character in *Shaitaan*, in which he was brilliant. Kulhari has very little to contribute, except turning up -- mysteriously -- every time our hero is in a fix. She seems to have some kind of extra-sensory perception as the film struggles to resolve conflicts in a believable manner. Serious problems need hard resolutions. Glossing over them, as *Hisaab Barabar* does, weakens the narrative so much that it begins to totter.

The writer is a senior movie critic and author