Straight from the heart

NOBEL CHOR IS A WINNER, WRITES MAINAK BHALIHK

On the outside, Nobel Chor is a fictional account of the fate of Rabindranath Tagore’s Nobel prize that was stolen from Santiniketan in 2004. But as one discovers, it is in essence a journey into the heartland of Bengal and the hearts of Bengalis, investigating and discovering the significance that Tagore and his legacy still hold in the lives of everyday people today.

In a nutshell, the stolen Nobel medal ends up, by chance, in the hands of a humble farmer, Bhanu (Mithun Chakraborty). He seeks the advice of the village schoolteacher (Soumitra Chatterjee), who informs him about the prize and its value. For a poor man like Bhanu, who can barely make ends meet, to come across such a thing, is a stroke of luck.

The sale of such a commodity would not only turn this simple man’s whole life around, but as the film shows, it could also give hope to the entire impoverished village. The film takes this opportunity to touch upon contemporary issues regarding the state of our villages and the great divide that exists between the rural and urban worlds.

Bhanu sets out for Calcutta with the medal, which is a premise for tons of humour and jokes as we see the absurd and humorous side of city life through the puzzled eyes of a simpleton, who can’t, for the life of him, make sense of city people and their strange ways.

However, as Bhanu’s journey of discovery progresses, he realises the real intrinsic value of the Nobel prize and what it’s essence truly stands for.

Mithun Chakraborty, one of the finest actors in the country, gives yet another memorable performance with his portrayal of Bhanu, delivering each nuance of the innocent farmer’s persona right from the wide trusting eyes, to the rice-eating potbelly, to the country-bumpkin walk, creating a solid place of empathy for the character in the hearts and minds of audiences.

Soma Chakraborty is convincing as Bhanu’s wife who just wants what’s best for her small family. Veteran Soumitra Chatterjee as Mastermoshai works his magical touch, giving the character and setting that familiar old-world nostalgic charm that we all know and love.

Roopa Ganguly stands out as a wealthy businessman’s wife who stands up to her husband for what’s right. Arindam Sil towers as SP Sumedh Sen with a layered performance of an officer of the law who is stern and upright while still revealing a softer human side to his character. And Saswata Chatterjee with his impeccable comic timing as Hari, Bhanu’s friend who gives him a footing in the big city, gives a solid performance.

Sudipta Chakraborty’s portrayal of Monu, Hari’s wife, exudes an honesty and simplicity showing concern for Bhanu and his well-being in the big unsafe city.

My personal favourite part of the film is the documentary-style opening, where director Suman Ghosh really shows his chops as we are taken through a whirlwind montage of TV news reports, newspaper clippings and live interviews of celebrities and dignitaries, building the premise to a climax from where the rest of the film takes off. I only wish that a flavour of this edgy style and its energy had found a place in the fabric of the rest of the film as well.

Indranil Ghosh’s art direction tastefully encapsulates the vast framework and scope of the film and its rural and urban settings while Anandi Ghose’s costumes bring the flavour of each character alive. The soundtrack, comprising a blend of folk music with modern Bengali compositions by Bickram Ghosh, brings a musical dimension to the film and its various moods.

It’s always great when a filmmaker sets out to do something
and sticks by it. This is a good example of one of those moments. A simple story told honestly from the heart, brings out a winner in Nobel Chor.

DID YOU LIKE NOBEL CHOR? TELL T2@ABP.IN

Copyright © 2012 The Telegraph. All rights reserved. Disclaimer | Privacy Policy | Contact Us