

Malayalam film Aattam opens the Indian Panorama Feature Film Section at IFFI 54

Feel phenomenally honoured to be the director of the opening film *Aattam* at IFFI: Director Anand Ekarshi

Aattam is very personal, it's a family project, close to my heart: Actor Vinay Forrt

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The Indian Panorama section at IFFI 54 that offers an excellent cinematic experience for the film-lovers, opened yesterday with the Malayalam film *Aattam*. The directorial venture of Anand Ekarshi, *Attam* explores the dynamics between an individual and a group when pitted in certain uncomfortable situations.

Director Anand Ekarshi of the film *Aattam* while interacting with the media at 54th International Film Festival of India, in Goa, said that the "overarching theme of the film is not specific to any gender or patriarchy as such. It has been conceived in layers of dynamics between the individual and the group, where the group is of men and the individual is a lady." He adds that the storyline partakes a gender study but the picture in itself is not region or gender specific.



Ekarshi takes the directorial helm of this 140 minutes long cinematic masterpiece, guiding a cast led by the dynamic duo, Vinay Forrt and Zarin Shihab. Talking of the plot of the movie, he adds that it presents an evolving dynamic between an individual and the group. "It is not inspired by *12 Angry Men*, rather it was a natural progression but it's an honour to be compared to the movie", he added while responding to a query. The idea of the film was conceived during the COVID pandemic period during normal conversation on a trip with friends, he explained on the question of how the movie was conceived.

Vinay Forrt, the lead actor, talking on the conceptualization of this film mentioned that, he was on a trip along with his theatre friends of 20 years where "we decided to represent our friendship, togetherness and art in some way and it was decided to do a film." The responsibility of it fell upon Anand, who is the most "creative and well-read" in the group, added Forrt. This idea finally took the form of the film *Aattam*. He expressed, "Attam is very personal, and it's a family project, close to my heart."

Forrt commended Anand for his directorial finesse as he "understood the strength and limitation of every individual actor and handled that very well and as a viewer, it translated into great performances." On the question of what motivates him as an actor, Forrt remarked, "Exciting script, challenging character, and such other factors are important".

Talking of the movie, Zarin Shihab said that, "the response to the film has been fantastic." She commends the director and adds, "it is great to see theatre artists coming together for the film and Anand has very smartly used theatrical devices and elements to elevate the storytelling for the screen."

On this note, the director Ekarshi remarked that this was the debut film for nine of the actors and that "transitioning from theatre to cinema is a task and acting for a shot is a challenge for stage actors. 35 days of scene rehearsals were done before the shoot to get used to the camera and the set, so the rehearsals were the most important thing".

The sound designer of the movie, Renganath Ravi talked of the challenges of shooting with 13 actors in the same location but how the sound design made it interesting, adding a nuanced layer to the film.

Aattam: This drama film revolves around a woman and twelve men play by a theatre group called *Arangu*. They get a chance to be recognized internationally when they are given an offer by Chris and Emily, friends of Hari, an actor who was replaced from the lead role previously played by Vinay. Anjaly, the only female artist of the play, is in love with Vinay and informs him that she was mistreated by Hari at a party which was hosted by Chris and Emily. Vinay tries to bring out Hari's true colors by sharing this information with Madan, who agrees to discuss this with the rest of the team and eventually expels Hari. Friendships are at stake but monetary benefits and success is used as a tool to reward and bribe people's moral fiber. As the events proceed, reality seems weirder when truths unravel.



Cast & Crew

Director: Anand Ekarshi

Producer: Joy Movie Productions LLP

Writer: Anand Ekarshi

DoP: Anurudh Aneesh

Editor: Mahesh Bhuvanend

Cast: Vinay Forrt, Zarin Shihab

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