

HINDUSTAN TIMES

The Narrow Path: A Malayalam film on the poignance of father-son ties

- Gautaman Bhaskaran, Chennai
- Updated: Jun 14, 2016 18:00 IST



The Narrow Path is directed by Satish and Santosh Babusenán.

Some of the most fascinating films are now being made in Kerala, and a magical mix of pure arthouse fare and so-called commercial cinema, albeit with artistic sensibilities intact, has been hitting the screens in recent times. One of them is brothers Satish and Santosh Babusenán's *Ottayaal Paatha/The Narrow Path*, a heart-tugging tale of a father and son. The brothers narrate through a series of sparse frames and economy of words how a grown-up son, Akhil (played by Sarath Sabha), is caught between the love for his girlfriend, Nina (Krishnapriya), and his affection for his old father, Vikraman (K Kaladharan). The elderly man is practically bed-ridden with complications arising out of diabetes severely restricting his mobility. When out of bed, he has to hop on to a wheelchair, and he needs constant care.

The family is not well-to-do and lives in a ghetto of sorts, and Akhil has no job, and in any case the city where he lives offers very little opportunity. And when Nina, hailing from an upper class family, suggests that the two go away to Bengaluru, the invitation is tantalisingly tempting. For Akhil, the new city will be like a breath of much-needed oxygen, but the son is wracked by dilemma. Could he possibly leave his infirm father behind to be taken care of by paid employees? Yes, there is Mary Chechi (Prajusha), who stops by to cook for the father and son, and is fond of Akhil in a strange sort of way. But...



The Narrow Path takes us through this trying journey, a very Indian journey of strong emotional bonding between parents and children.

The Narrow Path takes us through this trying journey, a very Indian journey of strong emotional bonding between parents and children that does not let one go from the other, and in a strange twist in the movie we come face to face with the unexpected. And a solution emerges, however, painful it may be.

In a telephone chat from Kerala on Tuesday morning, Satish says that “we had wanted to explore hatred, hatred between a father and son -- something we felt was unusual. But as we went along writing the script, we found the hatred starting to melt, especially after the issues which lay deeply embedded in the psyche of the two men were resolved... In an important way, *The Narrow Path* is a film about discovering oneself, the real within you.”

Akhil had always held his father responsible for his mother’s untimely death from jaundice, and the boy feels that had the old man taken her to a proper hospital instead of treating her with alternate medicines, she could have lived. And it takes the fear of separation for the father and son to talk about it. Finally, the father admits that it might have been his egoistic tendency that stopped him from seeking modern medical help, and the son is relieved at this acceptance.

Satish and Santosh who have made several corporate movies and music videos for many television channels like MTV, Star and Channel V, made their debut feature last year. It was called *The Painted House*, which also talks about in a surrealistic way the pain and pathos of an elderly man as he grapples with the unreal.

The brothers hope that their latest work, *The Narrow Path*, would travel to festivals, before it gets an opportunity to open in Indian cinemas. But the path of meaningful cinema in India is strewn with obstacles, and even a legend like Adoor Gopalakrishnan struggles to get his films into theatres.