



REVIEWS

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Aayudham (Weapon)

Directed by *Sreedhar Rao* | Review by *Moumita Deb*

Aayudham is a promise to a simple, heartfelt film but one in which you run the entire gamut of emotions — joy, tears, regret, anguish, self-denial excitement and ebullience.

Nothing is new here. Whether it is empathizing for the kid's misfortune or freeing a battered housewife from the shackles of a loveless marriage, the material at hand has been touched upon earlier. But what makes the film stand out is its adventurous narrative and evolving suspense that keeps you rooted and guessing.

You can almost feel the helplessness of the kid and his suffering mother and the household in which not just people, even emotions are trapped. Her inability to pay the school fees owing to her paltry income, their impoverished mode of living due to abject poverty, starkly rings through with vigorous intensity and dominant play of emotions.



Almost like every other accidental death that begins with the same essential circumstances: guardian's lapse in attention, an unsecured and loaded gun, heightening tension, intoxicated husband frustrated with life resorting to violence and abusive language followed by wild altercations. Culminating eventually in the harrowing tragedy, an unintentional death of the mother who succumbs to the inadvertently fired gunshots while trying to rescue her son from the clutches of her tyrannical husband. The void created in the life of the child on being estranged from the woman from whom he received plenty of emotional support and positive reinforcement is projected with a dynamic accuracy of expressions and ends with the same questions: Who is to blame, and should the child be penalized?

Youth gun violence remains a significant concern and surfaces again and again throughout the movie. The director though makes a concerted effort to restore the noble side of human nature, which he does through the mother's character in the film – a paragon of sacrifice.

The film takes a comprehensive look at this subtle issue and contemplates on what fosters in the youth an urge to own weapons. It reflects the costs and consequences that firearm homicides, suicides, and unintentional shootings impose on young people.

The child feels empowered after possession of the loaded weapon which instigates him to take the drastic step. He gives vent to his long trapped vengeance against his wretchedly irresponsible father who doesn't fit into the definition of a father as coined in the child's tender susceptible mind. The film seeks the opportunity to make a veiled yet virulent stand on the aftermath of severe domestic violence, its victimization of children and the impact it creates in their fragile mind.

Therefore, keeping children and youth safe from gun violence and restricting young people's unsupervised access to guns should be the key priority of educators, and parents alike.

Countless other children and youth, though not injured or killed themselves, are survivors of gun violence, scarred by the effects of such violence in their homes, schools, or communities. Although gun violence often victimizes children and youth, they also can become perpetrators, using guns to kill or maim others.

Aayudham echoes the reckless gun culture of the west and its negative impact on rural Indian society, symbolically converting a cop's gun to a metaphor for a nuclear weapon and tells us how one incident



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changes the lives of many people in the town. It narrates the story of a cop who had never used a gun all his life.

The cop's repentance at losing the fatal weapon while trying to rescue a woman from being brutally molested by local assailants kicks off the element of suspense. It heightens and reaches its peak once the child gets its possession through strange circumstances and allows curiosity to get the best of him.

The movie further explores the issues of juvenile crime from varied perspectives and the alarming increase in violence. Loaded weapons when kept within children's reach draws a clearer picture of children and youth being at risk of perpetrating or being victimized by gun violence. Also dwells on what role society can play to reduce the number of youth gun injuries and deaths.



Moumita is a Kolkata based independent filmmaker and film critic. She holds a post-graduation degree in English literature from Jadavpur University. Reading novels of a wide range of authors of all genres from classic to contemporary has always been Moumita's passion and calling. She also takes a strong liking in playing the Spanish guitar & has participated in quite a few concerts. Moumita has done her certification course in Cinematography, Video Editing and Filmmaking.

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