

HOTEL SALVATION (Mukti Bhawan)

India (2016) 102 minutes

Director: Shubhashish Bhutiani

Cast: Lalit Behl (Daya), Adil Hussain (Rajiv), Geetanjali Kulkarni (Lata), Palomi Ghosh (Sunita), Navindra Behl (Vimla)



Screening 3 October 2018 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

77-year old Daya Kumar dreams that he will soon die. He tells his son, Rajiv, of his wish to end his days in the holy city of Varanasi and to attain salvation. With little choice, Rajiv dutifully accompanies his stubborn father to the Mukti Bhawan (Hotel Salvation), a guesthouse devoted to people who are intending to die in Varanasi. As their stay lengthens, Rajiv struggles with his responsibilities back at home while his father is rejuvenated at the hotel.

Reviews



... "Here's a story where faith and family become intertwined, as a slightly frayed 77-year-old suddenly senses his time is up and prevails on his hard-working son to drive him to Varanasi so he can peacefully pass on.

It might sound somewhat mournful, yet writer-director Shubhashish Bhutiani's first feature ... uses gentle humour and the quirky habits of the elderly to soften the tone as the father's hopes don't exactly pan out as planned.

Lalit Behl is equal parts lovable and exasperating as the old boy, but as the story proceeds, Adil Hussain's work-hassled son takes centre stage – getting to know his dad as a person rather than a burden makes him rethink his own priorities regarding work and family. A leisurely, wise and ultimately affecting meditation on the benefits of letting go."

Trevor Johnston, Time Out

"There's a rare combination of the sacred and the secular in Shubhashish Bhutiani's debut feature *Hotel Salvation* (Mukti Bhawan). The young Indian director developed the film through a Venice festival production support programme awarded on the strength of his short film *Kush*, a prize-winner in 2013, and the combination of different worlds and talents that development process must have involved has worked very well indeed. There's a rich and moving sense of atmosphere to Bhutiani's tale of life and death – or, more exactly, the moment when life comes to an end, and a different dimension opens – as well as a father-son relationship that offers an incisive perspective on the values of contemporary India. ...

Resist any easy parallels to *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*: Bhutiani directs with great subtlety, drawing out nuances that barely need to be verbalised (if a screen association is necessary, there are resonances with Alexander Payne's *Nebraska*). The budget of *Hotel Salvation* can't have been large, but the director and his cinematographers Michael McSweeney and David Huwiler relish the different contrasts of light on stone and water, as well as the bright colours of place and attire. *Hotel Salvation* is a film of great tenderness, one that relishes the details of physical reality, even while acknowledging that leaving all behind is the most natural, even essential thing of all."

Tom Birchenough, TheArtsDesk.com

Film Facts

- The film premiered at the Venice Film Festival 2016, where it received a 10-minute standing ovation and won the Biennale College Cinema Award.
- Writer/director Shubhashish Bhutiani is only 26 years old.
- Lalit Behl (Daya) and Navindra Behl (Vimla) are husband and wife. Both have distinguished careers as writers, directors and actors on stage and screen.