



FILM: **A HERO**

FDG RATING: 3.3 ☺☺☺○○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Asghar Farhadi: *director/writer*
Amir Jadidi: *actor, Rahim*
Sahar Goldoust: *actress, Farkhondeh,*

DATE: June 19, 2022

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **A HERO**

A Hero is a Persian-language drama written and directed by Asghar Farhadi, who is well known for his 2012 Oscar-winning film, A Separation, and his 2017 Oscar winning film, The Salesman. A Hero stars Amir Jadidi, as Rahim who is in debtor's prison because he borrowed money to start his own business and then his partner ran off with the money leaving him unable to repay his friend, Bahram, who had guaranteed the loan for Rahim. Bahram has to use his daughter's dowry to cover the debt which makes him resentful, even vindictive toward Rahim. Without a dowry, his daughter's chances for marriage are grim. During a two-day leave, Rahim tries to convince Bahram to withdraw his complaint against the payment of part of the sum. If that could happen, Rahim has a scheme to get enough money to make a partial payment covering the remainder, however, what unfolds is very different from what he planned.

His girlfriend had found a handbag at the bus stop but rather than try to find the owner, as soon as Rahim is back home, they take the coins to be appraised. Not nearly the amount they had hoped for, Rahim realizes his payoff to Bahram will be much less than what he owes. Probably a combination of the hopelessness of his situation and a guilty conscience, spurs Rahim to find the owner of the handbag and return it.

What happens next puts in motion the complexities of loss of self worth/self respect and the importance of respect from family, friends, and community. Is a person willing to compromise his moral compass and if so, for what reasons? How quickly a small lie can spread ripple effects. And in an instant, social media can build or destroy a person's character.

Farhadi's films tend to carefully expose the hypocrisy of Iranian social systems. He has stated that he is an artist and not an activist, so he approaches social issues indirectly. He further explained that he presents the social and political context of a story as drama rather than issuing a direct statement. Several discussion participants commented on the absurdity of a debtor's prison which prevents the prisoner from working to make enough money to pay their debts.

The opportunistic prison warden jumps on the chance to create a story that will shine a positive light on their system and detract attention from a recent ugly incident. They contact the media peddling a human interest story praising their prisoner for returning a handbag filled with gold coins to its rightful owner. The story snowballed out of Rahim's control as others grabbed on to it, adding their own spin to garner whatever would benefit them. A charity used his story as a publicity angle to attract donations which would pay off his debt but ironically, when it is revealed that initially he had a scheme to keep the gold coins, the charity decides they cannot give him the money and instead, convince him to donate it to a woman to help her murderer husband go free since she would be left without support without him. Perhaps this is his actual heroic act though he really had no other option.

In the final scene, we see Rahim returning to prison resigned to his fate. "It's uncomfortable to watch his demise." admitted one discussion participant. Another disliked the film because there was so much tension. More comments were positive noting Jadidi's outstanding performance and the well-defined character development. The film realistically captured human behavior. Rahim was flawed but he told the truth while others didn't believe him. It was difficult to be honorable with the world against him; difficult to be a person with moral dignity. One resident reviewer appreciated that there was no violence, adding that it was a beautifully crafted drama with intriguing turns and twists. The insight into Iranian life was especially interesting. A memorable scene was when Rahim returns home and sprightly climbs hundreds of stone steps and scaffolding on the side of a huge cliff that is an ancient archeological site and necropolis, to reach his brother-in-law who is working at the site, known for its elaborate carvings in the rocks.

Rahim's heroism is more of an embellishment and just as Rahim's notoriety as a hero teetered, so did our scores for the film. Several high scores were negated by a lonely 1 with other ratings hovering in the middle leaving A Hero with a wobbly 3.3 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!

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