



TIFF 2014 Film Review: Mary Kom

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Indian boxer Mary Kom's real life story has the potential to inspire a nation and the world but it remains to be seen if the film in her name can do the same.



Receiving mixed reviews following its world premiere on September 4 at TIFF 2014 and theatrical release the next day, the high buzz film has been getting kudos mainly for Priyanka Chopra's performance. In his directorial debut **Omung Kumar** uses flashback to narrate the story. In doing so he doesn't give a complete insight into how Mary Kom's passion in boxing developed. Instead he focuses on how a woman gets torn between being a mother and having a career.

The film portrays **Mary Kom (Priyanka Chopra)** determined to get into the training academy. It's her persistence that gets the attention of the coach (**Sunil Thappa**) who explains early on that her world is now going to be a square (referring to the shape of the boxing ring). It's through some very simple dialogues like "attack", "focus", "have no mercy" that the coach imparts the tactical skills of the sport and before you know it Mary Kom has already become a champion. It's not until much later that you see her really training for the sport and those are perhaps the more empowering sequences of the film.

Mary then meets **Onler (Darshan Kumar)** who later goes on to become her supportive husband. This is the turning point in the film, as Mary has to give up boxing when she becomes pregnant with her twins. It is through Onler's encouragement that Mary is able to take up the sport again. Kumar plays the compassionate character really well and is in no way over-shadowed by Chopra's towering presence.

Chopra who had to train as a boxer and also take real hits has worked really hard to get the look right. Like in *Barfi* she easily lets go of her glamour quotient sporting freckles, pigmentation on her face and even appearing bald in one of the true sequences. The Manipuri accent seems misplaced and the script lacks the motivational pull the story requires as it becomes all too predictable.

Omung Kumar resorts to the usual Bollywood fare using melodrama to hammer the point. The music and songs are jarring at times and could have been used more effectively to propel the story. However the lullaby sung by Chopra is worth mention given the real Mary Kom also loves to sing.

The film merely touches upon Manipur's strife and upheaval but then moves on. The culture could have been woven a bit more into the fabric of the story. The film also gets a little bit into the politics of sports and how federation officials mistreat and discriminate athletes.

All in all *Mary Kom* is worth watching given Indians themselves know very little about this sport icon, Olympic medallist and five time world boxing champion.