

# Sam Bahadur (film)

***Sam Bahadur*** (stylised as **SAMबहादुर** ; lit. *transl.* Sam the Brave) is a 2023 Indian Hindi-language biographical war drama film based on the life of India's first field marshal, Sam Manekshaw.<sup>[6]</sup> It is directed by Meghna Gulzar who co wrote with Bhavani Iyer and Shantanu Srivastava. Produced by Ronnie Screwvala, under the banner of RSVP Movies.<sup>[7]</sup> It stars Vicky Kaushal in the title role, alongside Fatima Sana Shaikh, Sanya Malhotra, Neeraj Kabi, Edward Sonnenblick and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub.<sup>[8]</sup>

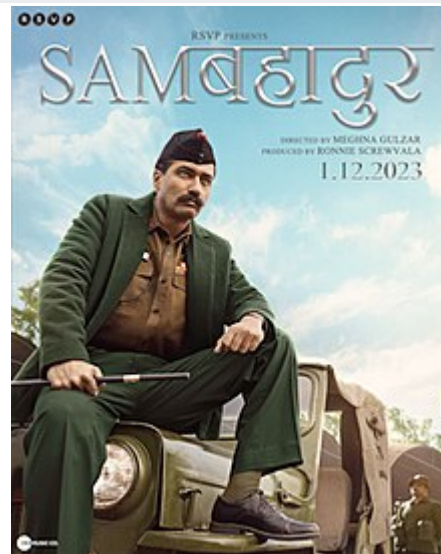
The film was released on 1 December 2023 and it earned ₹128.17 crore (US\$16 million) worldwide. At the 69th Filmfare Awards, the film received eight nominations, including Best Film (Critics), Best Actor and Best Actor (Critics) (both for Kaushal).

## Plot

In 1934, Cadet Sam Manekshaw is amongst the first batch of gentleman cadets to be trained at the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun; amongst his batchmates is his junior-rival, Tikka Khan. Graduating from the academy that year, he is posted as a second lieutenant to the 12th Frontier Force Regiment, Ferozpur. Soon after his appointment, he meets Siloo Bode, whom he later marries. In 1942, during the Second World War, Manekshaw, promoted to the acting rank of major, is sent with the regiment to participate in the Burma campaign. During the Battle of Sittang Bridge, he is wounded in action but survives and is awarded the Military Cross for gallantry.

In 1947, amidst the partition of the British Indian Army, Major Manekshaw is approached to join the Pakistan Army by his colleague, Yahya Khan; he chooses the Indian Army instead. Upon independence, discord emanates between the two countries over the sovereignty of Kashmir. In October 1947, Pakistan launches its military campaign to capture the region. In response, Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and home minister Vallabhbhai Patel dispatch Manekshaw and V. P. Menon to Kashmir; they succeed in securing the accession of Kashmir to India. India counter-attacks, but the war concludes in a stalemate.

### Sam Bahadur



Theatrical release poster

<b>Original title</b>	<span><i>Sam Bahadur</i></span>
<b>Directed by</b>	<span><span>Meghna Gulzar</span></span>
<b>Written by</b>	<span><span>Shantanu Shrivastava</span></span> <div></div> <span><span>Meghna Gulzar</span></span>
<b>Produced by</b>	<span><span>Ronnie Screwvala</span></span>
<b>Starring</b>	<span><span>Vicky Kaushal</span></span> <div></div> <span><span>Fatima Sana Shaikh</span></span> <div></div> <span><span>Sanya Malhotra</span></span>
<b>Cinematography</b>	<span><span>Jay I. Patel</span></span>
<b>Edited by</b>	<span><span>Nitin Baid</span></span>
<b>Music by</b>	<b>Score:</b> <div></div> <span><span>Ketan Sodha</span></span> <div></div> <b>Songs:</b> <div></div> <span><span>Shankar–Ehsaan–Loy</span></span>
<b>Production company</b>	<span><span>RSVP Movies</span></span>
<b>Release date</b>	1 December 2023 <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Running time</b>	148 minutes <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	<span><span>India</span></span>

In 1959, Manekshaw, now a major general and Commandant of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, is approached by defence minister V. K. Krishna Menon and Chief of General Staff Lt. Gen. Brij Mohan Kaul of his opinion on the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen. K. S.

<b>Language</b>	Hindi
<b>Budget</b>	₹55 crore <sup>[3][4]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	est. ₹128.17 crore <sup>[5]</sup>

Thimayya. Manekshaw, interpreting their actions as political interference, rebuffs them. However, Kaul conspires to stop Manekshaw's upcoming promotion by orchestrating a court-martial on the basis of impropriety; nevertheless, but Manekshaw is exonerated by his superiors.

In 1962, the Sino-Indian War erupts, leading to the army being trounced by the Chinese; Kaul resigns while Nehru dismisses Menon. On the advice of Indira Gandhi, Nehru has Manekshaw promoted to lieutenant-general and assigns him as commanding officer of the IV Corps, Tezpur. He proposes an advance, but Nehru, forlorn from defeat, refuses; Indira intercedes in Manekshaw's favour. By 1963, Manekshaw manages to re-rally his troops in the North-East Frontier Agency. In 1964, Nehru dies, and Manekshaw is promoted as general commanding officer of the Eastern Command; two years later, Indira is appointed prime minister. Between 1965 and 1967, Manekshaw involves himself in the anti-insurgency operations against the Mizo National Front, for which he earns the Padma Bhushan.

In 1969, with discord amongst the Bengalis in East Pakistan rising, Yahya, now a general, is made Pakistan's president; elsewhere, Manekshaw is appointed as the Indian Army's next COAS and promoted to general as well. In 1970, the East Pakistan-based Awami League sweep Pakistan's general elections, however Yahya refuses to cede power to them, resulting in anti-government protests across Pakistan. In response, Yahya authorises Tikka, now a lieutenant-general, to initiate Operation Searchlight – a massive anti-Bengali pogrom, which he executes with ruthless efficiency. Considering the situation, Indira favours war, but Manekshaw opposes it, highlighting the army's hindrances; she agrees to wait. The U.S. warns Indira against war, but she rebuffs them. The army is mobilised and begins training the Mukti Bahini.

On 3 December 1971, Pakistan strikes first, launching pre-emptive attacks on Indian territory. India immediately responds with counter-attacks in Pakistan's western and eastern sectors. The opposing armies witness profound clashes, with Pakistan bearing numerous casualties on land, sea and air in both sectors. By 16 December, the Pakistani troops in the east, overwhelmed, surrender to the Eastern Command – ending the war. The conclusion cedes a political triumph to Indira while Yahya resigns from the humiliation of defeat. With Manekshaw's retirement approaching, Indira has him to be promoted to the rank of field-marshal in recognition of his wartime leadership; he proudly retires in January 1973.

## Cast

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### Indian Army

- Vicky Kaushal as Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, the 7th Chief of the Army Staff, Indian Army.
  - Jiyana Kapadia as Baby Sam
- Bobby Arora as Major O. S. Kalkat, Indian Army.
- Monuj Borkotoky as Major, Assam Rifles.
- Krishnakant Singh Bundela as Subedar Gurbaksh Singh.
- Dhanveer Singh as Lieutenant Dilsher Singh
- Rajveer Ankur Singh as Lieutenant General Depinder Singh

- Ujjwal Chopra as Lieutenant General Brij Mohan Kaul
- Sudhir Singh as General. Paramasiva Prabhakar Kumaramangalam
- Pushpadeep Singh as Brigediar Kulwant Singh
- Jaskaran Singh Gandhi as Sepoy Mehar Singh.

## Manekshaw's family

- Sanya Malhotra as Silloo Manekshaw, Manekshaw's wife.
- Rajiv Kachroo as Hormusji Manekshaw, Manekshaw's father.
- Prajesh Kashyap as Haji Iftikhar, Manekshaw's friend at the Indian Military Academy.

## Government of India

- Neeraj Kabi as Jawaharlal Nehru, the 1st Prime Minister of India.
- Govind Namdev as Vallabhbhai Patel, the 1st Deputy Prime Minister of India.
- Fatima Sana Shaikh as Indira Gandhi, the 3rd Prime Minister of India.
- Aanjjan Srivastav as Yashwantrao Chavan, the 8th Minister of Defence.
- Atul Kale as K. B. Lall, Defence Secretary.
- Elango Kumaravel as V. K. Krishna Menon, the 7th Minister of Defence.
- Vivek Bahl as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the 2nd President of India
- Sanjay Roy as Zakir Husain, the 3rd President of India
- Varun Narang as Sheikh Abdullah

## Pakistan Army

- Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub as Gen. Yahya Khan, the 3rd President of Pakistan and the 5th Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army.
- Manish Bomba as Gen. Abdul Hamid Khan, Chief of Staff, Pakistan Army.
- Upen Chauhan as Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan, Governor of East Pakistan.
- Rohan Verma as Capt. (later Lt. Gen.) Attiqur Rahman, Manekshaw's friend and later Governor of West Pakistan.

## British Raj

- Edward Sonnenblick as Lord Louis Mountbatten, Governor-General of India.
- Paul O'Neill as Maj. Gen. David Cowan, Commander 17th Infantry Division. British Indian Army.
- Richard Maddison as Lt. Col. Donnie Edward, British Indian Army.
- Sammy Jonas Heaney as Capt. McLaren, British Indian Army.
- Ed Robinson as Lt. D.A.D. Eykyn, British Indian Army.

## United States Department of State

- Jeffrey Goldberg as Henry Kissinger, United States Secretary of State.
- Richard Bhakti Klein as Kenneth Keating, United States Ambassador to India

## Imperial Japanese Army

- Keiichi Ando as IJA officer
- Keita Arai as IJA officer
- Naiyo Ishida as IJA officer

## Cameo Appearance

- Kalki Koechlin in a Special appearance in the song "Dum Hai Toh Aaja"

## Production

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### Development

In 2017 Meghna Gulzar narrated the story of the biopic on Sam Manekshaw on the sets of *Raazi* which she planned to make her next film. Kaushal impressed by the idea decided that he would play the character.<sup>[9]</sup> She then went for years of extensive research and writing collaborating with Bhavani Iyer and Shantanu Srivastava, also meeting with family members of Sam Manekshaw.<sup>[10][11]</sup> The film marks the second collaboration between Gulzar and Kaushal. In 2021, the film was announced by RSVP Movies on the 107th birth anniversary of late Sam Manekshaw.<sup>[12][13]</sup>

The film was filmed with real Indian army personnel.<sup>[14][15]</sup>

### Casting

In December 2021, Shaikh and Malhotra joined the cast, marking their second collaboration after their debut film, *Dangal*.<sup>[16][17]</sup> Kabi joined the cast in September 2022 to portray the role of Jawaharlal Nehru marking his second collaboration with Gulzar after *Talvar*.<sup>[18]</sup> Kaushal has gone through extensive training in the army under the guidance of the Indian Army's 6 Sikh Regiment in preparing for his role.<sup>[19]</sup> Kaushal in an interview with *Film Companion* revealed that the character would be his toughest onscreen role to date.<sup>[20]</sup> The film will not have junior artists and instead real-life army personnel and people from the Defence Force have been cast.<sup>[21]</sup>

### Filming

The Principal photography commenced on 8 August 2022.<sup>[22][23]</sup> The film was shot over two years in 13 locations in India covering four decades of the life of Sam Manekshaw.<sup>[24]</sup> Filming took place in Mumbai, Pune, Jodhpur, Pataudi, Chandigarh, Ooty, Dehradun, Kolkata,<sup>[25]</sup> Patiala,<sup>[26]</sup> Srinagar, Pahalgam,<sup>[27]</sup> and Delhi.<sup>[28]</sup> The team wrapped on 14 March 2023.<sup>[29][30]</sup>

## Music

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The music of the film is composed by Shankar–Ehsaan–Loy while the lyrics are written by Gulzar. Background score is composed by Ketan Sodha.<sup>[32]</sup> The first single titled "Badhte Chalo" was released on 13 November 2023.<sup>[33]</sup> The second single titled "Banda" released on 22 November 2023.<sup>[34][35]</sup>

***Sam Bahadur***

**Soundtrack album by Shankar–Ehsaan–Loy**

Track listing

No.	Title	Singer(s)	Length
1.	"Badhte Chalo"	<div>Shankar</div> <div>Mahadevan,</div> <div>Vishal Dadlani,</div> <div>Divya Kumar</div>	4:03
2.	"Banda"	<div>Shankar</div> <div>Mahadevan</div>	3:59
3.	"Itni Si Baat"	<div>Shreya Ghoshal,</div> <div>Sonu Nigam</div>	4:15
4.	"Dum Hai Toh Aaja"	<div>Sunidhi Chauhan</div>	2:51
Total length:			15:08

Release

Theatrical

The first teaser was unveiled on 1 December 2022.<sup>[36]</sup> On 13 October 2023 the official teaser was released by the RSVP production.<sup>[37]</sup>

The film was theatrically released on 1 December 2023, clashing with Ranbir Kapoor's *Animal*.<sup>[38]</sup>

Home media

The film premiered on OTT platform ZEE5 on 26 January 2024.<sup>[39][40]</sup>

Reception

Critical reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 38% of 16 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.9/10.<sup>[41]</sup> *Sam Bahadur* received mixed reviews from critics.

Catherine Bray of *The Guardian* rated the film 3 stars and stated "The incidents and set-pieces are neat, but the structure is episodic. It's a perennial problem for biopics; how to give events the momentum of fiction when the underlying narrative is fact."<sup>[42]</sup>

Subhash K. Jha of *Times Now* rated 3.5 stars out of 5, praised Kaushal's acting and stated "I am afraid Vicky Kaushal, a reasonably talented actor, is not equal to the task. He tries hard to echo the original's three Bs —bravery, benevolence and bravado. But mimicking the original doesn't quite amount to a comprehensive character creation."<sup>[43]</sup> Anuj Kumar of *The Hindu* wrote, "When the screenplay flattens, Vicky does the heavy lifting to keep the mission on course and after a point, the screenplay does become a series of snapshots of his long list of accomplishments set to a rousing background score, but *Sam Bahadur* has enough firepower to keep us invested."<sup>[44]</sup> Shubhra Gupta of *The Indian Express* gave a rating 2.5/5 and wrote "It's hard to play a character so closely without becoming a caricature, but Kaushal becomes *Sam Bahadur*."<sup>[45]</sup> A critic from Bollywood Hungama awarded the film 2.5/5 stars and wrote "*Sam Bahadur* is

<b>Released</b>	27 November 2023 <sup>[31]</sup>
<b>Recorded</b>	2022
<b>Studio</b>	Purple Haze Studios YRF Studios
<b>Genre</b>	<div>Feature film</div> <div>soundtrack</div>
<b>Length</b>	15:08
<b>Language</b>	Hindi
<b>Label</b>	<div>Zee Music</div> <div>Company</div>
<b>Shankar–Ehsaan–Loy chronology</b>	
<div><i>Dono</i> (2023)</div>	<div><i><b>Sam Bahadur</b></i> (2023)</div> <div><i>TBA</i></div>
<b>Official audio</b>	
Sam Bahadur - Full Album ( <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCamg5AuDlo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCamg5AuDlo</a> ) on <u>YouTube</u>	

a well-intentioned biopic and showcases Vicky Kaushal like never before. But it suffers due to the docudrama treatment."<sup>[46]</sup> Saibal Chatterjee of *NDTV* gave a rating of 3.5/5 and wrote "It would be easy to describe *Sam Bahadur* as a Vicky Kaushal show because it is who dominates every major scene in the film, but Meghna Gulzar balances between ambition and restraint, neither the spirited central performance nor its emotional payoff would have been quite as remarkable."<sup>[47]</sup> Sukanya Verma of *Rediff.com* gave a rating of 2.5/5 and wrote, "Nothing that the movie tells isn't already available in the public domain."<sup>[48]</sup> Tushar Joshi of *India Today* gave the movie 2.5 stars out of 5 and stated "Production and set design, costumes and make-up department score big too. One wishes the direction and writing was on the same page as its technical counterpart."<sup>[49]</sup> Anusha Sundar of *The New Indian Express* opined "Sam Bahadur would have definitely sounded good on paper. Honestly, it does feel the makers were going for a simplistic approach to tell the story of a man whose uniform is adorned with the highest honours. But somewhere, the film loses its charm and settles for mediocre storytelling for a glorious tale."<sup>[50]</sup> *Business Today* critic Anwesha Madhukalya stated "The no-nonsense army chief, speaks out when and as he pleases, but is never cruel or ruthless to his juniors. That's where the magic of Gulzar and co's writing lies."<sup>[51]</sup>

Writing a review *Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain* (also for *Rediff.com*) praised *Meghna Gulzar's* effort and stated "You have to grant it to Meghna's research team and those sourcing military hardware for the film."<sup>[52]</sup>

Nandini Ramnath of *Scroll.in* wrote "Gulzar's screenplay, written with Bhavani Iyer and Shantanu Srivastava, has a little bit of everything and nothing about any one thing in particular."<sup>[53]</sup> Shomini Sen of *WION* wrote in her review "Unfortunately, *Sam Bahadur* falters ever so often. This, despite the fact that Kaushal looms large on screen with his exceptional performance."<sup>[54]</sup>

## Box office

The film was released alongside *Animal* on 1 December 2023. On its first day, the film collected ₹6.25 crore, the second day ₹9 crore and the third day ₹10.30 crore. The film has earned ₹110.69 crore (US\$14 million) in India and ₹17.48 crore (US\$2.2 million) in overseas for a worldwide gross collection of ₹128.17 crore (US\$16 million).<sup>[5][55][56]</sup>

## Accolades

Award	Ceremony date	Category	Recipients	Result	Ref.
Filmfare Awards	28 January 2024	<u>Best Film (Critics)</u>	<u>Meghna Gulzar</u>	Nominated	[57][58]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>Vicky Kaushal</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Actor (Critics)</u>		Nominated	
		<u>Best Lyricist</u>	<u>Gulzar</u> for "Itni Si Baat"	Nominated	
		<u>Best Production Design</u>	Subrata Chakraborty and Amit Ray	Won	
		<u>Best Sound Design</u>	Kunal Sharma	Won	
		<u>Best Background Score</u>	Ketan Sodha	Nominated	
		<u>Best Costume Design</u>	Sachin Lovelekar, Divvyaa Gambhir and Nidhi Gambhir	Won	
		<u>Best Action</u>	Parvez Shaikh	Nominated	

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