

THE POWER OF RAM NAAM

If you want to know what making a film with “Shraddha” and “Bhakti” may look like, go and watch HANUMAN ANSH. The last time a movie stirred my higher emotions was decades back. It was SANKARABHARANAM. But there the theme was the sacred relationship between a guru and a disciple and Classical music as a path of Sadhana. Whereas Hanuman Ansh on the surface, is the biopic of a saint popularly known as Neem Karoli Baba.

I am not here to discuss his extraordinary life but about the movie that tells his story and the way it has been told. If Bhakti doesn't feature anywhere in your life but still you would like to have a taste of some “unearned” Bhakti Rasa, Hanuman Ansh is the easiest way.

Made on a paltry budget of 2 crores, its gross revenue has crossed 300 crores and the marketing has been done purely by word-of-mouth praise of those who watched the movie and sent their friends and family to the movie halls. From Grandparents to grandchildren, everyone is being swept away by this mammoth tide of awe and devotion.

The actors are all unknown. Even the lead actor was chosen providentially when the person who was supposed to do it, fell seriously ill on the first day of the shooting. The Assistant Director was chosen on the spot for the role to step in front of the camera and went on to become a global icon. Miracle? Chosen by Neem Karoli Baba himself?

OTT platforms refused to buy the film. Young people put in their own money to produce the film. The passion that went into writing a

script like this, the total doing away of all commercial frills and starry airs, the depth of the research has to be seen to be believed. Movie making has been redefined.

And the music and songs! When was the last time you heard a song in a film with just an Ektara for accompaniment? There are two such songs: Saasa Haale and Maine Tere Hi Bharose. Two unknown, rustic voices singing the praise of the Lord. Simply haunting. Each and every song of the movie, without exception, is mesmerising. However, my favourites are: Bajrang Baanka, Ram Bhajan Ki Or (sung by a 14-year-old girl) and Siyavar Ramchandra ki Jai.

The powerful voices of the folk singers, the soaring choral voices that give goosebumps and the percussions that beat inside your head is something Bollywood cannot even think of. All this sounds unique and new because of the ethnic flavour and the smell of the earth which is so authentic that you cannot spot even an iota of showmanship anywhere. Only sincerity. A treat for the senses and a balm for the soul.

In my opinion, the movie is a miracle. But then, what is impossible for those who have “SitaRam” in their hearts? Hriday mein jinke SitaRam....SitaRam jai, SitaRam.....You would leave the movie hall with these sacred words ringing in your ears – seeping into your soul and may be flowing out of your eyes.