

Will 'Singh is Kinng' bring home NRIs?

Will some NRIs head back to India after watching the latest box office hit, 'Singh is Kinng?' After watching the conscience pricking scenes during which the hero Akshay Kumar urges his friend to return from Australia to care for his old and ailing parents back home in Punjab, many NRIs will have to answer their consciences as to why they should not return.

Yet, this is a happy film as Happy Singh is the hero's nickname. The opening sequences in the Punjabi village are hilarious and every punch line in the dialogue evokes laughter, if not giggles. For Punjabis, the punch lines push the envelope further for Bollywood. Everyone in the film seems to have unlimited energy, the stunning locales in Egypt and Australia, the dances with their outlandish costumes and knee-tapping music make for rip roaring entertainment. Producer Vipul Shah drives home the message of 'Namaste London' yet again that it's high time the NRIs return home.

But the film founders in the second half when its long-drawn climax becomes bizarre and the real message of the emotional re-union with parents and the loved ones in the village is merely flashed with the titles as the audience goes home. This homecoming needs to be played out fully for NRIs when they introduce their foreign girlfriends, face the realities of living in India and help to develop their village to prosperity. If included, this would be a great promotion for the emerging opportunities in India for young NRI professionals and middle-aged investors.

With tongue in cheek, most of the NRIs are shown as gangsters in Melbourne. True, they could be some there, but the film has a lot of NRI gangs for just one city blasting away in high risers and malls. That makes Melbourne a very dangerous city! Of course, a large number of Punjabi youngsters have gone Down Under ostensibly to study but end up working illegally, especially driving taxis. All this came to a boil recently when one was killed, followed by high-pitched demonstrations. Now the Australian government has allowed Indian students to work part-time legally. The grant of a student visa (with reduced fees) since last April automatically permits them to work for 20 hours a day. So there are fewer chances for them to turn to crime for survival.

Back to the film, which made history as a refrain by the Indian news media July 22. Just after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government won the trust vote on the India-US nuclear agreement, the theme song of the film took over all TV channels like a refrain. Within minutes after Manmohan Singh scored a thumping victory, many Punjabis sent SMSs to their NRI relatives: 'Congratulations India... Singh is King!' The next morning, one of the newspapers had a new twist on this refrain with its headline 'Sting is King!'

In the past few days, 'Singh is Kinng' has become the theme of some parties. The invited couples, Sikhs and non-Sikhs, are supposed to turn up in traditional Punjabi gear for Punjabi food and any male invitee who does not wear his turban is helped to wear one by the hosts. This 'Bhangra' party crowns the best dancer with the title - you guessed it! - Singh is Kinng.

An e-mail with the heading 'Singh is King' has also begun circulating. Giving a brief CV of Manmohan Singh, it ends by claiming he is the most educated head of government in the world. A TV channel also ran a contest 'Main Bhi Kinng' to honour outstanding acts of bravery and courage. Akshay Kumar crowned the winners.

Then came the news that some Sikh organisations were not happy about how the film portrayed the

community. But its hero and its Gujarati producer Vipul Shah apologized and explained its honourable intentions to a Delhi Sikh religious body, pleading against any ban. They said it highlights the greatness of the community and Akshay promised to act in another film sporting the full beard to satisfy community leaders. However, a radical group of young Sikhs pelted with stones an Amritsar theatre running its opening show, alleging that the film depicts the community in a distorted manner. Yet the midnight paid premieres in [New Delhi](#) attracted no protests as the audiences enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

How did the film get its captivating title? Akshay Kumar solved the mystery during an interview. After a film shoot in Jaipur, he was driving behind a truck that carried the slogan 'Singh is King'. Right at that moment, he telephoned the producer saying that he had a name for his next film. The story and everything else came much later to become a fun ride for the family. That's how a box office scored the bull's eye.

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