ASHES TO ASHES (Raakh Redux)
Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles 2010

This was the one film I was very anxious to see at the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles. The North American film premiere of Amir Khan’s feature film debut which original debuted in 1989 was also one of the first “parallel cinema” or “art house cinema”, though I do not enjoy either of those terms to describe cinema outside of mainstream cinema in India. What this means simply put is cinema without song and dance, and more to the point, a realistic form of cinema that didn’t speak of fantasy or escapism as most mainstream cinema. Rather, it is a form or type of cinema which speaks directly to the audience for the purpose of telling the realistic story and perspective that is prevalent in society but never usually talked about.

In director Aditya Bhattacharyya’s debut film, he tackles the controversial subject matter of rape, mafia underworld and violence and brings it into the forefront when Aamir Hussein (Amir Khan) a young man from a well to do family, gets into the trouble with the mafia and endures the audacity of watching his girlfriend get raped in from him, and is left scarred and wounded. Of course this occurred just in the first 20 minutes of the film!

What ensues is the protagonist’s quick and sudden fall into the dark seedy underworld into and through a life of crime, and more dangerously an abandonment of morality in search for justice. As the story unfolds, we learn that Aamir and a police inspector played by Pankaj Kapur have a relationship that would seem to be sympathetic which turns into apathy and of course later turns into partnership.
The Spiritual Quotient

If you are looking for spiritual quotient and salvation, you can find it in this film, but you would have to pay attention to the opposite of what one would normally search for. Case in point, Aamir’s character seems to unwittingly fall into downward spiral from a happy disposition and into utter chaos and confusion, due to the fact that the choices he made from a mental position of rage ultimately leads him into a self destructive cycle that becomes his reality.

From the beginning of the film, to the end, it is in fact a sad, destructive downward spiral, which wouldn’t seem spiritual in a conventional sense. However, it is, spirituality either increasing one’s awareness of it, or slowly losing are two different sides of the same coin. We are taught to believe that ascertaining spirituality means gaining it. However, one can easily lose it and it is also a form of spirituality, only losing one’s own touch with it.

In such a case Aamir loses contact with the spiritual essence of himself, transforms into someone he cannot conceive of being, which is no better than the mafia overlord who ended up raping his girlfriend from the beginning of the film.

True growth or true loss is the essence of spiritual development and spiritual loss.

*** 1/2 out of ****

The Spirited Critic

Related Posts:

- November 13, 2014 -- Mamta Kulkarni detained for alleged drug trafficking
- October 15, 2014 -- Azad loves to light Diwali lamps
- October 2, 2014 -- 'I am a coward'
- June 10, 2014 -- Aamir Khan: no regrets
- April 3, 2014 -- Hrithik gets Dippy
- March 28, 2014 -- Sonam feeling unsafe
- January 3, 2014 -- Aamir goes for a bigger record
- December 31, 2013 -- Recap of the Hits & Misses of 2013
- December 26, 2013 -- Mumbai is unsafe: Kareena
- December 13, 2013 -- Celebrities voice disappointment about criminalizing homosexuality