

MEDIA COVERAGE

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The voice of Ram

WHEN Mumbai-based Maya Entertainment Limited (MEL) contacted Manoj Bajpai to play the role of Ram in its forthcoming movie 'Ramayana- The Epic' three months ago, the actor said he reacted with disbelief.

He asked the caller, music director Sarang Dev, if he was sure his image as a Bollywood baddie would go down well with the image of the revered mythological character.

"I had a hearty laugh when he said he had called me, in fact, to lend my voice to the character of Ram in MEL's animation movie, 'Ramayana, The Epic.' Of course, I immediately responded with affirmative, if only to shed some of my sins by lending my voice to a divine character, who was virtue personified," Bajpai recalled at the promo launch of the movie here today.

Juhi Chawla, Ashutosh Rana and Mukesh Rishi, whose voices have also been used in the movie, also attended the launch function. Speaking on the occasion, Juhi said when she had taken her kid to see two Indian-made animation movies recently, she was a bit disappointed by their poor animation and technological quality.

"So, when MEL wanted me to lend my voice to the character of Sita in its animation movie, I put the precondition that it should be of international standard. They immediately sent me the clippings of the portion shot and I was convinced that they had indeed done a great job. But I still have no clue as to why they chose me to lend my voice to the mythological character, Sita," Juhi said.

For Ashutosh Rana, who has lent his voice to the character Demon King Ravana, the project was like a dream come true.

"I was born and spent my childhood in a village in Madhya Pradesh, where the only form of mass entertainment available were the seasonal Ram Leelas. As a child, it was my dream to play a part in them. When they needed children to play Hanuman's monkey brigade, I vied to play one of monkeys," Rana recalled. He said for years he nursed a secret ambition to play the role of Ravana in one of the Ram Leelas.

"I have always liked Ravana's self-assurance, devotion and bravery. Besides, the actor playing the role of Ravana in the Ram Leelas in my village was immensely popular across 16 surrounding villages. But my ambition remained unfulfilled," he said in mock seriousness.

Bollywood villain, Mukesh Rishi, who lends his voice to the character of Hanuman, said that 'Ramayana, The Epic' helped him shed his Punjabi twang in speaking some of the Hindi words, thanks to the script-writer Rituraj Tripathi who insisted on chaste diction for every word.

Chetan Desai is directing the 100-minute movie, which is now fifty percent complete. He said it was being made essentially to introduce the young generation to Indian mythology.

—IANS

