

'I have made a double crossover film'

Vijay Singh's second offering *One Dollar Curry* is a comedy

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After the runaway critical success of *Jaya Ganga*, a film about an Indian writer who boats down the Ganga in search of a mystical love, writer and filmmaker Vijay Singh is ready with his second offering.

This time, it's a comedy titled *One Dollar Curry*, for which Singh was in New York recently to promote and sell to distributors.

"It's very different from *Jaya Ganga*, it's a fun movie about a Sikh immigrant who goes to Paris and becomes a cook even though he barely knows how [to cook]," Singh says.

The movie has a slight autobiographical touch — Singh himself moved to Paris without knowing French — for two simple reasons: "I used to have a French girlfriend in India and later, I fell in love with French surrealism which was the single most important reason for me to go to Paris, in search of my literary roots."

The new film stars Manhattan hotelier Vikram Chatwal in the lead role of Nishant, an illegal immigrant who sets up a mobile food stand in an auto-rickshaw. "I actually

bought an Indian auto-rickshaw and converted it for the film," Singh said.

Singh describes *One Dollar Curry* as a double crossover film, in that he thinks it would appeal to Indians, Western audiences as well as Indians living abroad. "Unlike Bollywood, which makes films for Indians in India and abroad and then calls it crossover — that's not what crossover is," he argues. "My film could be a twice

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crossover, like *Monsoon Wedding* or *Bend It Like Beckham*."

This will be Chatwal's first full-length film; he had earlier done a cameo in *Zoolander*, the Ben Stiller-directed 2001 comedy that had Stiller in the lead role.

In *Curry*, Chatwal plays an Indian brought to France by human trafficker 'Fixer'. He cooks up a fake identity for himself, purporting to belong to an ancient line of royal chefs, and gradually works his way up, through what Singh calls 'integration' with Parisian life.

When Chatwal's father Sant Singh Chatwal visited the sets, Singh says, he remarked: "This is my story."

The film, which is in English — or rather, "about 85 percent English, 10 percent Hindi and 5 percent French" — also stars Smriti Mishra and Gabriella Wright.

Singh says he is not concerned as much about the characters as about the emotions they evoke in the viewer. "I ask the same question that your girlfriend would ask as you leave the theater: 'Acchi lagi [Did you like it]?' he says.

"No more films in Paris though, it was very difficult to shoot," he says. "I felt pushed all the time, with permits, times, and a third of the budget goes towards social security, it was very tough."

As for the name, Singh reveals the idea came from his brother, Shakat. "It's a very catchy name and every time I mention the name it brings a smile to their lips."

While the film is still a couple of weeks away from being completed — "It's still in post-production" — Singh says distribution is the most difficult part.

"For one, it's a small budget film with no



PARISH GANDHI

■ Vijay Singh

studio backing, so it's a huge risk for the distributor," he admits. "But I also hope to be able to take the film to Cannes this year."