

KHO GAYE HUM KAHAN – THE TRUE GEN Z FILM



For those who have watched this movie might look at the title and think – obviously, the film is about social media, therefore, of course it's a Gen Z film – and then click on Letterboxd to rant vigorously about Ananya Panday. And yes, they would be right

In a world where the perception of the younger generation are constantly online is as strong as the perception of millennials being broke, this film is that stereotype crammed into a 2 hour film, critiquing social medias influence on people's lives, in a heartwarming tale about 3 best friends living in the urban, tech-savvy Mumbai.

However, the brains of this film, Arjun Varian Singh, in his directorial debut nonetheless, shows a tale which represents Gen Z more so than the surface-level social media aspect. A tale showing confidence and empowerment in youth, their independence from traditional expectations, and how this film will be a model for how Bollywood and Indian urban society will progress into the future.

The film's first impression shows nothing truly spectacular. It is a another coming-of-age film, the story revolving around three beautiful, well-off young people who struggle with their various love lives, careers and mental health over a period of time, where it all works out in the end. It is an over-saturated film genre replayed over the years, particularly in the 2010's, with beloved hits like Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani or Dear Zindagi, which prioritises the romance and drama KGHK seems to avert from.

However, AVS portrays his story as part of his, and many's, experiences in their youth, stating KGHK "...represents my life at 25, focusing on the idea of being lost and realising the importance of the right friendships and authenticity in the digital age". This thought makes his movie stand out from the crowd in more ways than just keeping up with the times.

A refreshing point is the lack of love triangle within the main trio, where the film focuses on the strength of their friendship rather than matching them up. Ahana, portrayed by Ananya Panday, slots in perfectly as one of the gang with two guys, sacrificing the major romantic hetero-love plot potential Indian movies frequently exploit with close friends, of which YJHD is a notable culprit.

The film works in the end because, whilst love is one storyline for all three characters, like most young people, close friendships are what keeps people afloat, and that is tested and explored in KGHK under a microscope. This is a sign of changing times, where people are slowly becoming more open-minded to mixed friendships, and not prioritising the traditional expectations of families prevalent in Indian society.

Independence from society is another key point. The trio are unrestrained in their world, whether it be from their parents, love interests, social values, job prospects or wealth. They have their own ambitions, to start their own gym, and ultimately succeed in achieving them. The only thing which endangered their goals was when their friendship started to crumble. It is nice to see that kind of empowerment where people are driven and undisturbed from fulfilling their dreams, unlike in some of their film contemporaries, where characters would normally end up sacrificing either their friendships, careers and ambitions for the sake of romantic or familial duty.

Now is the moment everyone has been expecting. Social media is the main theme of this story, focusing on the misuse and addiction, and the overall negative affects it can have on a person's mental health and social life. From Lala being cyberbullied and people stalking their respective partners, to comparing themselves to others and their anxieties which comes from basic communication, everyone, especially Gen Z who grew up and are accustomed with this lifestyle can relate to some thing in the film. But it might not be as simple as social media = bad.

Sure, social media affected the integrity of the trio's friendships and their love lives, and the ending scene when they just started using social media less drove home that message. But there are saving graces, such as the character of Simran, played by Kalki Koechlin. She is a photographer who also uses social media to promote her photos. But she has a fascination with people and the meanings behind the screen, exhibited when she interviews Imaad (Siddhant Chaturvedi) whilst doing her job. She is a person in the movie who shows how social media can be positive in promoting someone's work.

This film is the perfect representation of the world from the eyes today's youth. With the backdrop of a trendy, urban, connected India, with characters who are motivated, individualistic and outspoken, completely different from previous generations, and an open-minded approach to showing various issues which people face today, Arjan Varian Singh could've made a film which could be the benchmark for future coming-of-age stories to come.