

'UP among friendliest states for film shooting & a boon for industry'

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Lauding the Yogi Adityanath govt for extending support to film industry, actor Vikrant Massey said that Uttar Pradesh is one of the friendliest states for shooting of films.

Back from the recent Shanghai film festival, Massey, who spoke about his life at the TOI Dialogues in Varanasi, said he was happily surprised to see the love for Hindi cinema in Shanghai. "The support for Hindi cinema was wonderful. We had five screenings of my movie '*12th Fail*' in four days and all were housefull. Soon there will be an official release in China."

Speaking about the facilities provided by the state govt to filmmakers, he said: "The govt gives subsidies and all assistance required for shooting films. I have done almost seven films here. I believe nearly 70 films are shot in UP every year."

Expressing his love for Kashi, Massey said, "It's almost my third home. Annually, I spend almost a month here. Be it cleaning of the city or ghats, and improving the tourist's spots, the transformation is phenomenal. UP has seen massive changes

in the last few years. This is the reason why Varanasi is getting more tourists than Goa."

Following the unexpected success of his film '*12th Fail*', Massey admitted that it was indeed a life-changing movie and he felt more grateful than ever. "During shootings, we had moments of doubts and self-realisation that accompanied the movie, with the director facing scepticism," he said.

"Director Vidhu Vinod Chopra's wife, Anupama Chopra, who is a prominent film critic, once remarked that I (Massey) was an OTT actor and doubted that not many would come to see such a film. This doubt was compounded by the fact that '*Shikara*', Chopra's previous film, had not been widely seen," he said.

Massey said that he believed in the power of honest storytelling and added, "If you make something with honesty, it will be successful. I feel it's the authenticity and the refusal to manipulate the audience that resulted in a huge success."

"We did not go for big campaigns and relied on word-of-mouth and organic recommendations. The film resonated with the audiences, particularly in India, where it inspired many, including govt bodies that recommended it for viewing," the actor said.

Crediting his teachers, besides the family, for helping him pursue a profession in creative and performing arts, Massey said, "I was in Class 7 or 8 when I realized that I have no interest in academics. My teachers convinced my parents and since they were in a situation where there could be nothing worse (as their salary got exhausted in 15 days), they allowed me to do whatever I wanted to."

Speaking about the real-life character of the film (Manoj Sharma), he said: "He was very welcoming. I wanted to go beyond the book and script to do this movie and wanted to know his worldview for which I spent every Sunday with him."

"Not every film can be a success. It's a life rule that something stays the same forever. My judgment in deciding a film will stay the same forever. I am privileged to have much more than I ever wanted. I will continue to represent the common man," he said.

