# Bollywood and Mental Illness
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Objective: To study the portrayal of mental illness (especially psychosis) in Hindi films since 1950 and to study the influence of prevalent social, political and economic factors on each portrayal.

Method: Using two encyclopaedias and one source book, films that had mental illness affecting one of the protagonists were identified. The social, economic and political factors were identified using history texts.

Results: In the 1960s after India became a Republic, the political climate was one of idealism and as a result the portrayal of mental illness was gentle, more international in its outlook, and used psychoanalytic techniques. In the 1970s and 1980s, as a result of increased political and bureaucratic corruption and an unstable political climate, the portrayals became harder and psychopaths were portrayed more often. In the 1980s, the trend continued with female psychopaths, and avenging women emerged as a major force because the political and judicial systems were seen as impotent in delivering justice. In the 1990s, following economic liberalization, the women were seen and used as possessions in society and the cinema, and portrayals of stalking and morbid jealousy increased.

Conclusion: Hindi films since the 1950s appear to have been influenced by changing cultural norms which in turn affected the way mental illness is portrayed.

Introduction

Cinema is one of the key structures in understanding of any culture, and the portrayal of mental illness within such a context should be of major interest to the clinician in understanding its influences on society. The way mental illness is used in the narrative of the film is determined by the state of the society (at what level of political maturity the society has reached) and the reflection of political and economic factors which are prevalent at a specific time in the history of the culture and society(1).

Films from different cultures have used mental illness and mentally ill individuals for entertainment, very often at a very crude level. To make the discourse on mental illness within the context of the film easier, the author and the producer/director simplify the concepts of mental illness, often confusing symptoms and lumping various psychiatric conditions together. The condition depicted is very exotic and esoteric such as possession states, trance, split personality or multiple personalities especially from the countries where these are common. Mental illness can be used for a number of purposes from providing comic relief to using an 'illness' and behaviour in the affected individuals as turning points in the narrative. Films have been used to learn about cultural competence as well as to gather information regarding a specific culture (2). However, it is worth bearing in mind that commercial films are made for entertainment and are a business enterprise and are not necessarily for education (3). The commercially available film can be used for discussing portrayals of mental state, diagnosis of mental illness, and diagnosis of personality disorders (3). Cape (4) puts forwards the interesting hypothesis that films are 'cultural reservoirs' which influence what is taken for granted in a given society. Social cognitions affect world construction and world maintenance. Myths and stereotypes are transformations of fundamental conflicts. Hyler et al. (5) suggest that mental illness portrayed in films is stereotypical and some of the common stereotypes are rebellious-free spirit, homicidal maniac, female as seductress, enlightened member of society, narcissistic parasite

and zoo specimen. Applying DSM III diagnoses to a range of films portraying a vast array of clinical conditions, Hyler (6) points out that it is important for the psychiatrist to be aware of how their profession is depicted in films as this is how patients and their families form their images of psychiatry and psychiatrists. An awareness of these images is essential in understanding the resistance of patients and their carers to therapies.

The Hindi film industry is the world?s largest producer of films ? nearly twice that of those produced in Hollywood per annum. Affectionately called 'Bollywood' because it was Bombay (now called Mumbai)-based, the film industry dates back to the early 20th century. Although the filmmaking and the style was heavily inspired by Hollywood, the genres developed within the Hindi film industry were typical of the culture and the country. The emphasis on 'social' and the 'mythological' films was crucial in the initial growth of the Hindi film industry. A typical Bollywood film will include a variable number of songs which are used to say the un-sayable and often are seen as short stories within themselves ? well-known directors often had typical styles in filming songs. The conventional Hindi cinema relies on Indian conventions, which restate the values and attitudes already known in a more internal form. These conventions include the role of the woman, pleasures of poverty, ability to change things in spite of obstacles, the hand of fate, etc (7). The differences in Hollywood styles, stories, and portrayal and Bollywood films have been attributed to the differences in psyche of two audiences, e.g. the Western mind is said to seek things clear and compartmentalized (8). The portrayal of mental illness and the mentally ill has varied over the last 50 years. In this paper, I describe the influence of different political and economic factors on such portrayals.

Aims of the study:The aim of the study was to examine the portrayal of mental illness and whether it was affected by the social, political and economic factors prevalent in the society at the time films were made.

Material and methods: From the author?s own experience and after discussions with informants who were interested in the field of Hindi films and discussions with staff at the National Film Archives of India, Pune, over 50 films were identified. In each of these films, the depiction of mental illness was a key factor in the turning point of the story and one of the protagonists suffers from mental illness. These were also identified by using two encyclopaedias (9,10) and a source book (11). All films were viewed by the author and the portrayal and storyline followed along with the use of songs and comic creations. The author attempted to find an association between the quality and the type of mental illness and the prevalent sociopolitical and economic factors at the time the film was released. The history of the country, especially prevalent social, political and economic factors, was studied using a key recent text (12) with secondary sources whenever indicated. The period chosen for the study was a 50-year period from the time of India becoming a Republic in 1950. The period under study was divided into three broad periods related to the tenure of the Prime Ministers in the central government. These three periods were: 1950?1967 (which included the term of the first Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru and his successor Lal BahadurShastri), 1967?1984 (with Indira Gandhi at the helm for most of this period) and from 1984 onwards (after Gandhi?s assassination). The periods coincide respectively with what can be called adolescence of the republic, the youthful rebellion, and maturity of age. These periods can also be called romanticism, villainy and 'new' romanticism. The descriptions of these are discussed further below in this paper.

Results: The age of romanticism  - The first two decades after India became a republic were the era of optimism. In spite of the trauma of partition of the country where a million people had been killed in the religious riots and several millions displaced, and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi (father of the nation), the vision of the leaders remained secular and socialist. Independent India?s policy of non-alignment and non-aggression embedded in the five principles of the Panch Sheel agreement led by the then Prime Minister Nehru being recognized internationally, generating a sense of pride in the young nation state. The period between 1950 (when the country became a republic) and 1964 have been called the years of hope and achievement (12). In spite of the multitude of problems and difficulties, there was a air of hope, faith in the future and a sense of resilience. Basic objectives of democracy, civil rights and liberties,

secularism, scientific and international outlook, and economic development within the context of socialist principles remained of prime importance to the leaders and the people (13).

The films produced in the 1950s and 1960s reflected this hope and exploited the sense of stability. The portrayal of the joint family in several films indicated that, with the arrival of newly educated members, modern ideas were introduced but an emphasis on old traditional values was retained. Although there was a degree of discontent among the intelligentsia on the slow nature of the progress towards the socialist ideal, the portrayal of mental illness in several films was not affected by this and was gentle and understanding. Even though there were some films with psychiatrists portrayed as buffoons and the protagonists as comic characters, there was a sense of accomplishment. The asylums were named the 'International Lunatic Asylum' and even the patients reflected the international nature by having African, Chinese and English individuals.

Three films, 'Funtoosh' (1956), 'Karorpati' ('The Millionaire') (1961) and 'Half-Ticket' (1962), dealt with mental illness in comic and turning point in the story. During this period, two key films dealt with psychoanalysis. 'Khamoshi' ('The Silence') (1969) showed the story of a nurse who cures a patient through psychoanalysis and falls in love with him as part of the counter-transference which is never resolved. After he is discharged, she initially refuses to take on another similar patient. Under changed circumstances, she does so and in this case he falls in love with her within the transference and she goes psychotic in turn. The international nature of therapy in this particular film is illustrated by the fact that the nurse is sent abroad for training and returns to serve the people.The model of treatment being followed is Freudian and the Chief of the clinic explains this and principles of psychoanalysis to a nurse. The impact of the hangover of the colonial experience is inherent in the story. The trauma of failure in love is shown as the cause of the psychosis in two of the protagonists. As a nurse, the heroine deals with patients as difficult children and it is clear that she has no support system of her own as her close confidant is only her diary.

The second film dealing with psychoanalysis in this period was 'Raat aur Din' ('Night and Day'), which won the Presidents' Medal for its heroine. Heavily influenced by the Hollywood film 'Three Faces of Eve,' the story of a traditional married Indian woman who, under the influence of alcohol, becomes a Westernized woman who dances and flirts with strange men. She is admitted to a Psycho Home (sic) and the psychiatrist embarks on a voyage of discovery with her, finally recognizing that the root of the problem lay in her childhood with her traditional mother who did not believe in educating her daughter. Seeing freedom given to an Anglo-Indian neighbour, she hankers after it but represses her wishes, which, in her youth, emerge as multiple personality. Also, the Western treatment is contrasted with that of a shaman. This portrayal can be seen at a number of levels in the context of the changes the nation was going through. The role of psychoanalysis (imported), the traditional oppressive mother-in-law, educated husband, impact of demon alcohol, the role of developmental changes and traumatic events in childhood influencing the personal growth are cleverly dealt with. 'Ittefaq' ('Coincidence') (1969) used mental illness as a device to indicate that the protagonist could not be trusted, but the portrayal was sympathetic. A box office hit, 'Khilona' ('The Toy') (1970) showed that the treatment of mental illness was marriage.

The age of villainy  - The political landscape changed dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s. The inflation was rampant, the corruption among the politicians and bureaucrats reached an unprecedented high and the foreign monetary reserves were low. Following an appeal by one of the defeated candidates, Indira Gandhi?s election to the Parliament was countermanded and in 1974 she declared Emergency, imprisoning leaders of the opposition and the governing style became draconian. Eventually, the news of compulsory sterilizations and the removal of the poor people from inner city areas, coupled with an atmosphere of restricted free speech, led to the defeat of Indira Gandhi and initiated the era of coalition governments. Increasing lawlessness and corruption made the common man feel that justice was denied through usual routes. This led to the arrival of the angry young man in Hindi films, personified by the super star Amitabh Bachchan. Two films, 'Zanjeer' ('The Chain') (1973) and 'Deewar' ('The Wall') (1975) were extremely popular. In both, the lone hero (with romantic interest entirely peripheral) fights for justice against villains and smugglers. In this period, the politicians started to be seen as villains too. The villains in the films of this era were psychopaths who had no sense of guilt or redemption. One of the biggest hits of all

times, 'Sholay' ('The Embers') (1975), introduced a villain who kills insects, shoots his gang members indiscriminately, and amputates the arms of the police officer who had dared to arrest him. Thus, even a police officer (albeit retired) is shown to have no faith in the political or legal system and has to avenge himself by employing petty criminals.

Themes of lawlessness, violence, vandalism, oppression and exploitation were articulated in numerous films and the 'villain' became the hub of nastiness. This nastiness, however, was remarkably different from the previous villainy where, by the end of the film, the villain had been redeemed after apologizing publicly and getting his comeuppance. The new villain worked outside the social constraints, rules and norms. An increase in separatist and terrorist activities across several states (in some cases encouraged by politicians themselves) and the increasing economic problems of the country meant that people started to feel more oppressed. Indecisive inaction on part of the central government led to the common man feeling a sense of vulnerability and a sense of injustice in that the guilty were getting away. This allowed the heroes to be outside the system to achieve what they wanted to. The public attitudes started to harden towards politicians and media (5) thereby legitimizing authoritarian solutions to social problems.

The age of new romanticism - In the 1990s, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi (Nehru?s grandson who had been Prime Minister following his mother?s assassination) and the economic reforms that he had initiated meant that impact of consumerism, urbanization and globalization became much more traumatic. The villains, as well as the heroes, in Hindi films started to become not only psychopathic but also psychotic. Several of the big hits during this period had the hero as a villain who wanted revenge for wrongs done to his family but the hero was bordering on psychosis and did not see any reason not to be vengeful. A trilogy of films starring the current number one hero in Hindi cinema, Shah Rukh Khan, ? 'Darr' ('Fear') (1995), 'Baazigar' ('The Illusionist') (1993) and 'Anjaam' ('The Consequence') (1994) ? showed stalking of the heroine to varying degrees. In all three films, the hero makes a virtue of his obsessional love for the heroine. In 'Darr' and 'Anjaam', the hero showed total inability to understand why the heroine was not able to reciprocate his love. In 'Darr', the risk taking and conversations with dead other indicate a clear link with psychosis. In 'Baazigar', (loosely based on 'A Kiss before Dying', a Hollywood film starring Matt Dillon), the hero is in love with two sisters at the same time, murders one and to hide his tracks murders the other as well, then dies in the end in his mother?s lap. 'Anjaam' had an avenging woman who feels that the judicial system has let her down. In a dramatic move, the heroine nurses the paralysed hero to get better so that she can then avenge the wrongdoing. Another big hit during this period is 'Khalnayak'  ('The Villain') (1993), which has the hero as the villain who, coming from a family of freedom fighters, finds that the system has let him down and in joining a corrupt politician starts his reign of terror.

The films of the 1980s legitimized and exploited the stereotype of avenging protagonists in a shameless way. The post-emergency period led to a sharp decline in the legitimacy and authority of key institutions, which led to an authoritative assumption of disruptive powers considered essential for providing order and security ? which further contributed to crumbling efficacy and legitimacy of the traditional institutions of the state of polity (14). Interestingly, avenging women were portrayed as an incarnation of the goddess Kali (the goddess of destruction) giving religious imagery and legitimacy to their actions which can be understood by the viewer as a logical consequence of bad acts. This 'avenging heroine' led to portrayal of female protagonists who were a combination of modernity and traditionalism: aggressive, demanding and sexually assertive.

The role of women in mythology influences their role and existence in the society (15). Due to the impotence of judicial system the collective impotence ? in contrast with individual potent power embedded in the rapist ? the woman has to take on the culture to avenge herself. It is clear that such violence embodied by avenging women, vigilante groups, and gangsters represent the volatile struggle between the private and public fantasies (16). Two other films, 'Kaun' ('Who') (1999) and 'Gupt' ('Secret') (1997), used heroines who were clearly psychotic. In the former, the heroine is alone in an urban household with no rootedness, and kills two men. In 'Gupt,' the heroine is in love with the hero and on discovering that he is in love with someone else, she tries to eliminate the obstacles in her path. Eventually, it becomes clear that she had spent time in a psychiatric asylum. The representation embedded in love appeared to highlight,

exactly like their male counterparts, that obsessive love is alive and kicking (literally and figuratively) and it is the underlying possessiveness which makes it frightening as well as secretive (17). The motif of obsessive and possessive morbid jealousy remains prominent in this next decade. 'Aaina' ('The Mirror') (1993) and 'Pyar Tune Kya Kiya' ('What Kind of Love') (1999) showed obsessive borderline female protagonists.

In the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century, once the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), a predominantly Hindu nationalist/fundamentalistled coalition, came into power, the economic liberalization juggernaut continued to roll on and the opening of the country to the global market forces pleased the lower-middle and middle classes. In Hindi films produced during this period, the traditional portrayal of culture continued apace. The focus reverted to joint families where everyone knew his/her place and was happy in it. However, women again became the property of the man. At least half a dozen indigenized remakes of 'Sleeping with the Enemy' show the stalking of the heroine where the protagonist questions her every move. As had been demonstrated in some studies earlier (18), the levels of jealousy are higher in capitalist societies, it is not surprising that with the abandonment of socialism such portrayals increase. In a classic example, in 'Agnisakshi' ('Witnessed by the Fire', implying marriage) (1996), the villain questions his wife as to where she had been and goes with her to the supermarket to time the whole sequence and questions the veracity of her story.

The rise of the BJP in the 1990s led to a transformation of the social order where the middle classes (especially the merchant classes)  had the visibility of power, but the lower castes had become more subjugated and marginalized with the institutionalized behaviour and expectations (19). In two key films during this period, 'Dilwale' ('Those with Hearts') (1994) and 'Tere Naam' ('In Your Name') (2003), the heroes suffer. In the former, the hero has gone psychotic and his psychosis is effectively influenced by the lunar cycle. A full moon makes him violent when all hell breaks loose in the psychiatric hospital. In a rather tedious and long-winded story, it becomes clear that love has something to do with it. In 'Tere Naam,' following a beating by the villains, the hero develops a head injury and the 'neuropsychiatrist ' encourages the family to take him to an Ayurvedic ashram where the inmates are controlled by the barbed wire and the treatments include head massage, blessings and other Ayurvedic techniques indicating a hark back to traditional living.

The Hogarthian view of the asylum is frightening to the viewer but within which the hero receives calming treatment which helps him to recover fully. The portrayal confirms the psychosis in both these cases and the role of rosy love and physical trauma leading to mental illness has been repeatedly illustrated. The interconnection between the Hindu households and strains experienced indicates a threat to normal functioning of the structures which have been recently fortified and are seen to be under threat by external forces. Other more recent examples such as 'Dewangee' ('Madness') (2002) and 'Aitbaar' ('Reliance') (2003), 'Madhoshi' ('Intoxication') (2004) show protagonists to be psychopaths with pseudo hallucinations.

Discussion

The portrayal of mental illness in Hindi films since the 1950s was, and continues to be, influenced by multiple factors, both national and international. The influence of international films, especially from Hollywood, is beyond the scope of this paper but should not be ignored. The findings of the present study suggest that the political, social, economic and religious landscape in India since its independence has influenced and continues to influence the way mental illness is presented in Hindi films.

The idealism of the 1950s and 1960s with political stability meant that the portrayal was outward looking ? at an international level and using Western therapeutic strategies such as psychoanalysis. Although the

use of ECT has been shown, it was often of a frightening nature. The role of the family in causation as well as management of mental illness was often tackled very sensitively. In some portrayals, the characters or the psychiatrists were comic, providing relief to the viewer ? an observation not dissimilar to that in Hollywood (20). The country seemed to grow up in the 1970s and 1980s and, if these years are seen as teenage years, it is useful to see it as teen rebellion which meant that the parental authority figures embedded in the politicians had to be stood up to. The attitudes started to change with a sense of abandonment by the institutions which led to the arrival of the angry young man who felt he had to stand up as an individual against the forces of corruption and fight for his rights. The demarcation between good and bad appeared to have become less distinct. From the 1970s with the villain becoming hero, the nature of anti-social behaviour became acceptable with an inordinate increase in amounts of violence.

The switch between gentle romantic films of the 1960s, to the psychopathy of the 1970s and 1980s and narcissism of the 1990s, was a result of sociopolitical climates (17) and the suggestive violence since 1960s became gradually more obviously physical and outrageous. The heroes of 1980s were rootless and their success was a reward for being smart (21). Ithough Hindi films responded by portraying women as chattel and possessions, the soap operas on television harked back to joint families with some friction between the new bride and the mother-in-law and other relations. The young generation was being represented by heroes who had nothing to give except destructive hate, venom and bile (17). Raychaudhuri (22) asserts that the role of the Sangha Parivar (the predecessor of BJP) in bringing religion into mainstream politics played into the expectations of lower?middle class businessmen who had so far felt excluded from the polity, administrative power and social privilege. This largely Hindi-speaking group is also the most likely audience for Hindi films so it is not entirely surprising that the stories and nature of films changed to attract this audience. The emphasis on joint family, religious rituals and Ayurvedic explanations and interventions, along with changing notions of nationhood wrapped around the notions of ethnicity and religion, meant that the portrayal of mental illness also changed accordingly.

The changes in the economic system led to a sense of new freedom but that also meant that for the lower?middle class businesses money and capital became more important, perhaps at the cost of kinship and family and contributed to creating a sense of power in the minds of certain groups who felt that they could control the dispossessed such as mentally ill and women in particular. Portrayals of mental illness are mostly harmless and cumulative effect influences help seeking as well as expectations of treatment.

To conclude, only a small select number of films have been chosen to illustrate the hypotheses. Notions of narcissism, self-aggrandizement and revenge-spearheaded by the angry young man in the 1970s were replaced by psychotic and psychopathic villains in the following decades where the villains themselves became heroes. In the 1950s, the portrayal of mental illness was understandable and gentle and hopeful in meeting with the prevalent views of hope and idealism. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the portrayal became much more aggressive.

The liberalization made consumerism respectable and also allowed women to be treated as personal property and a commodity to be traded. Within such framework of the entertaining spectacle, the films portray reality as perceived by the author of the film. The films, like literature, reflect the realities of social beings around them and do not function in a vacuum. There is no doubt that the ensemble of characters in Hindi films could be seen as complex shifting icons of people of the nation, their leaders and enemies, and of the masses and elites.

# Acknowledgements

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