



International Journal of Research in Academic World

Received: 13/April/2026

IJRAW: 2026; 5(6):142-144

Accepted: 18/May/2026

Mental Health in Celluloid: A Study of Select Hindi Films

^{*1}Dr. Naveena V and ²Smt. Savitha GP

^{*1}Associate Professor, Department of English, Government First Grade Women's College, Shivamogga, Karnataka, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government First Grade College, Siddhartha Layout, Mysuru, Karnataka, India.

Abstract

Sound mental health is very essential for all of us to lead a healthy and happy life. At times, a few unfortunate people suffer from a few mental problems. Reasons vary from person to person. But, if given proper psychological and moral support, several of these problems can be resolved. Popular Hindi films entertain the masses with varied unrealistic themes. However, at times, they do play the role of an educative medium by highlighting social and psychological issues. In the present paper, two movies have been analysed to see how responsibly these movies have taken up sensitive issues to educate the audience on such as dyslexia or emotional problems. What these movies have done is indeed a commendable job. If people get to know these sensitive issues and treat the victims sympathetically, we can build a better society.

Keywords: Mental Health in Cinema, Psychoanalytic Film Analysis, Hindi Cinema, Childhood Trauma, Dyslexia in Media.

Introduction

"Indian cinemas need to be understood in their historical unfolding as well as their complex relationships to social, economic, cultural, political, ideological and institutional discourses" (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 2).

Cinema in India is very special. It is so because its genesis coincided with that of the genesis of the nation. In its nascent stage, cinema played the pivotal role of uniting citizens against the colonizers for the common cause of achieving independence. It succeeded in its zealous mission to some extent too. A silent film such as *Bhakta Vidur* (1921) attracted the ire of British as its chief character resembled Gandhiji and the character Dritarashtra appeared like King George. It was banned in several places. The magistrate of Karachi observed that "the movie is likely to excite disaffection against the Government and incite people to non-cooperation" (Bose 82). *Janmabhumi* (1936), *Bandhan* (1940), *Sikander* (1941), *Kismet* (1943) etc. are a few other movies that dealt with the theme of patriotism in the pre-independent India.

In the post independent India, cinema's interest in the theme of patriotism stayed for a few more years. But then, Indian cinema, began to concentrate on variety of themes so that it could provide entertainment to its audience. In its long journey, Indian cinema itself forged mainly into two categories namely Commercial or Popular cinema and Parallel or Art cinema. Commercial cinema provided mere entertainment to the spectators with unrealistic themes and the Art cinema tried to bring to audience themes that are close to real life. In other words, one was entertaining whereas the other was educative medium. However, of late, film makers

are experimenting with themes that fall into both the categories. It is difficult to decide which is which.

At times, popular cinema has played the pivotal role of not only as an entertaining medium but also as an educative medium. In India, among the films of different languages, Hindi films occupy prime position in terms of viewership as they are watched and enjoyed by audience across India as well as around the globe. They stand away from other language films within India as they experiment with multiple genres.

However, when it comes to different genres experimented by the Hindi cinema, they have a long way to go when compared to dominant films in other languages and industries, especially Hollywood film industry. Not many genres are paid much attention to even after many decades of Indian cinema's inception.

Psychological movies are one such genre of films that seek attention in India. If films bring out this aspect in a positive way, they can benefit the general mass about multiple issues related to human psychology. Human behaviour is guided by one's psychology too and understanding others' mental health can lead to happy relationships within and outside homes. A healthy society can be built with healthy relationships and psychological study of human behaviour can assist in it.

The present paper attempts to study two Hindi films to assess how they have taken up the subject of human psychology in them and have dealt with the issues related to mental health. *Dear Zindagi* and *Taare Zameen Par* have been analysed with the assistance of popular Psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud, John Bowlby and others. Common themes

found about psychological disorders in the mentioned movies are as follow:

Childhood Trauma

Childhood plays a vital role in shaping one's personality. A happy and secured childhood is necessary for grooming one's future. Researches have shown that children with such childhood succeed in becoming responsible citizens of a nation whereas children who are not fortunate enough to have such childhood develop to become problematic adults. A happy and secured childhood is the right of every child. Hence, it is the duty of every parent to offer such a protected childhood to their wards. Love, care, happiness, a feeling of security should be given to children on a priority basis. First and foremost, it is a love of children that protects children from injury, soothes and heals their wounds (Kutin, xiii).

Separation from the loved ones is part and parcel of one's life. Depending on a person's age, each separation is accompanied by a lesser or greater degree of fear. Over time, a person learns to distinguish between temporary and permanent separations and thus to control, suppress or cover up the mental anguish (Thill 86). John Bowlby in his book *Attachment and Loss: Separation, Anxiety and Anger (Vol II)* explains the problems children face when they are detached from their beloved mother or other loved ones with whom a child has developed attachment (15). With several case studies Bowlby tries to assert that children find happiness and solace only in the company of their mothers or beloved caretakers. He asserts that emotional disturbances will definitely have influences on the child in his or her adult life (15).

Separation of a child from his or her parents poses a life-threatening crisis, which affects in a special way the child's self-image and the way he or she sees the world (Hrdina, 59). The mental condition of the child alters to a greater extent and the child goes through lot of stress and trauma. At times, the child can behave abnormally or even violently. It can become too stubborn to handle. Sympathy is what it requires then. When a child is separated from his or her parents, the child must be respected as the victim of the current situation. His or her emotional state is to be taken seriously and shown consideration in all circumstances (Hrdina 60). When such sympathy is not offered to a child, the child can retaliate in unexpected ways.

Both the movies *Dear Zindagi* and *Taare Zameen Par* deal with the theme of childhood trauma. Kaira is separated from her parents at a very young age as the parents move to a different country in search greener pastures and Ishaan is separated from parents for the purpose of his education. When separated from her parents Kaira develops liking towards her grandparents. However, when the parents return from abroad, they take her away from the grandparents. This upsets Kaira and she begins to dislike her own parents. The soured relationship heals only at a later stage of her life when she is made to realize her mistake by a therapist.

Similar things happen in the movie *Taare Zameen Par*. Ishaan has the problem of dyslexia, where he is unable to read or write properly. The problem is neither understood by parents nor by teachers. Hence, he is considered to be a dullard both at home and school. Tired of rejection, Ishaan develops resistance and at times, he acts insolently towards his teachers, peer group and parents. The father, who is very ambitious, decides then to admit him in a boarding school. In spite of his repeated entreaties, Ishaan is sent to a boarding school where he experiences similar rejection by all. Unable

to bear the separation from his loved ones, Ishaan retreats to complete silence. This fatal silence is understood only by the newly-appointed art teacher who had similar experiences in his childhood.

Citing Wong J Toof and Devlin J M, the article *Childhood Trauma and Attachment Theories* asserts that childhood trauma is a life threatening and violent event in a child's life as it significantly impacts a person's behavioural and emotional functioning because it affects how a person develops trust and attachments in later life (Childhood). Kaira's separation from her grandparents, her feeling of insecurity and loveless life comes to fore and haunt her in her adult life. Even though she is very successful and creative in her career, she is unable to have a healthy love life. She dates with guys who she feels are good enough for her. But, for simple and small reasons, she comes out of those relationships. She appears very possessive or even promiscuous in these relationships but it is only her feeling of insecurity in such relationships that makes her behave so. She is afraid that she may be snatched away by her loved ones. Hence, she plays a safe game. Before they desert her, she comes out of those relationships. However, she cannot live comfortably after doing so. She is troubled by her own fear and anxiety. She suffers from insomnia. She behaves cynically with her family and friends. Her problems come to an end only after she gets proper counselling.

Loneliness

Human beings are by nature social beings; which means they live in the company of other people sharing different kinds of relationships throughout their life. If healthy relations can make one's life, problematic relations have the potential to mar one's life. As the article *Psychological Effects of Loneliness Among Children* points out, loneliness has different emotional impacts (Suri). Children who undergo chronic loneliness experience sadness, anxiety and depression. It also hinders social skills among children. When children do not learn these mandatory skills, it affects their relationship with their peer group.

In addition, academic performance will also get affected by loneliness. Children lose interest in studies or they fail to meet the expectations of their parents and teachers. In order to escape criticism or punishment, children may resort to dubious ways to excel academically.

Ishaan in *Taare Zameen Par* is teased, bullied and mocked for not performing well in the scholastic activities. He is criticized by all; parents, teachers and even friends. No one understands that he is affected by dyslexia. At times, he is made fun of because of his inability to read or write even simple sentences. Assuming that he has no interest in academics, his parents too decide to send him to a boarding school. He becomes even more alone after going there. His problems are reduced only when he is treated empathetically by his arts teacher. He suffers silently for long till then.

Importance of Psychological Support

It is very essential to provide psychological and moral support when one suffers from mental trauma. If unattended, things can become more complicated for the person who is experiencing such trauma. At times, the consequences of mental trauma can be fatal as well. Speaking about human mind, Lanyado opines that:

There is something deeply mysterious about what happens in the dark side of human soul. At the same

time as harbouring despair, misery, pain and hardship, it also holds a strange potential for change. It is after all only when people find themselves caught in this place for too long a time, with no sense of any light at the end of the tunnel that they seek out psychotherapeutic help. (12)

Hence, identifying the problem and to provide emotional support at right juncture is very vital. Empathy, patience, compassion, care and love from a therapist or loved ones can alter the very way how a traumatised person looks at the world. These things can revive the springs of hope in a dejected and hopeless person.

In *Dear Zindagi*, as an adult, Kaira goes to the therapist willingly. The therapist, most importantly, listens to the problems of Kaira. He suggests her vital changes in her thought process and her behaviour. He helps her mend her relationships for a better life. He succeeds in bringing smile not only on her face but also among people around her.

Similarly, Nikumbh, the arts teacher, in the movie *Taare Zameen Par*, counsels not only the unfortunate boy Ishaan but also his parents. The boy has a unique cognitive problem and no one identifies it, neither his parents nor teachers. Everyone looks down upon him for his academic and behavioural failure. It is only Nikumbh who identifies the problem and assists him to improve and excel. Without his timely help, Ishaan would have withered like a flower. Hence, psychological and moral support is very much required for those suffering from issues related to mind.

Conclusion

Sound mental health is very essential for all of us to lead a healthy and happy life. At times, a few unfortunate people suffer from a few mental problems. Reasons vary from person to person. But, if given proper psychological and moral support, several of these problems can be resolved.

Popular Hindi films entertain the masses with varied unrealistic themes. However, at times, they do play the role of an educative medium by highlighting social and psychological issues. In the present paper, two movies have been analysed to see how responsibly these movies have taken up sensitive issues to educate the audience on such as dyslexia or emotional problems. What these movies have done is indeed a commendable job. If people get to know these sensitive issues and treat the victims sympathetically, we can build a better society.

References

1. Khan A, director. *Taare Zameen Par*. Aamir Khan Productions; 2007.
2. Shinde G, director. *Dear Zindagi*. Red Chillies Entertainment; 2016.
3. Bose M. *Bollywood: A History*. Lotus Roli; 2006.
4. Bowlby J. *Attachment and Loss: Separation, Anxiety and Anger* (Vol II). Basic Books; 1973.
5. Childhood Trauma and Attachment Theories. Psychology Writing; 2024 Feb 7. Available from: psychologywriting.com/childhood-trauma-and-attachment-theories/
6. Gokulsing KM, Dissanayake W, editors. *Routledge Handbook of Indian Cinemas*. Routledge; 2013.
7. Hrdina K. If I could become anyone else in the world...: Traumatization through Separation and Loss. In: Ullmann E, Hilweg, editors. *Childhood and Trauma: Separation, Abuse, War*. Ashgate; 1997. p. 57-73.
8. Kutin H. Forward. In: Ullmann E, Hilweg, editors.

Childhood and Trauma: Separation, Abuse, War. Ashgate; 1997. p. xiii.

9. Lanyado M. *The Presence of the Therapist: Treating childhood trauma*. Brunner-Routledge; 2004.
10. Suri RK. Psychosocial Effects of Loneliness Among Children. Available from: <https://www.talktoangel.com/blog/psychosocial-effects-of-loneliness-among-children>
11. Thill R. Separation as Trauma, Relationship as Therapy. In: Ullmann E, Hilweg, editors. *Childhood and Trauma: Separation, Abuse, War*. Ashgate; 1997. p. 86-97.