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Family vs Individuality: Exploring DDLJ and Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani

Bollywood cinema has been changing in major ways over time. One of the most notable changes would be how the problems in major commercial cinema have evolved over time. From the beginning of Indian cinema, most problems in films always dealt with society. The society was the major obstacle standing in the way of main characters in the film. Slowly, societal problems were less frequently discussed in films because the focus started to become on family-based problems. Interestingly, the trends started to change again, and the vast majority of commercial cinema problems started dealing with individual problems. There are no definite years that these changes started happening, but it has been a slow, ongoing, and gradual process. Exploring the differences between cinema from the mid-1980s to early 2000s and contrasting it with more recent films will show how the problems in films went from family-based to individual-based.

One of the most prominent love stories in commercial Hindi cinema, is *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995). This film revolves around the idea of the arranged love marriage. The families of couple need to agree to the relationship, or else the relationship will never work out. Raj, the male lead played by Shahrukh Khan, goes to extensive lengths to win over Simran's family. Simran, the female lead essayed by Kajol, is a strong-willed and free-spirited girl, yet she has a strong set of values and love for her family. She is willing to leave everything for Raj because she believes that her father will never understand their love. But Raj is constantly reminding her of their Indian values, and how important it is for the family to agree to the marriage. While she is falling for the passion of love, Raj is maintaining their familial obligations, because he believes it will contribute to their long-term happiness. Raj spends half

of the film proving to Simran's family that he is a very good Indian man, which would make him the best match for their daughter. The overall film spends time solving problems and overcoming obstacles all related to the family.

An interesting film to compare Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ) to is Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani (2013). Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani is a recent commercial romantic comedy film that has been extremely successful at the box office. Many elements of the film are similar to DDLJ, and the setting and plot have an uncanny resemblance to DDLJ, such as similar trip scenes and wedding scenes. However, the overall issue in this film is the contrasting life goals of the characters. They do not have family getting in the way of their love. The challenges that get in the way of their love have to do with how the male lead, Bunny aka Kabir, played by Ranbir Kapoor, differs from Naina, played by Deepika Padukone. Bunny dreams of traveling and exploring the world, while Naina is a simple, studious girl who wants stability in life, including a marriage and children. Naina teaches Bunny how the small things in life can bring happiness to the heart. And, Bunny teaches Naina how to have fun, conquer fears, and to accept herself. They complement each other in many ways; however, their fundamental dreams in life cause them to separate.

DDLJ and Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani are examples of how cinema is changing. While the love is similar in both films, the circumstances around that love have changed. According to "India's Changing Consumer Economy" the rise of consumerism has changed the role of the females in India. The growing consumerism has given modern females more freedom to make their own decisions. Joint family systems are shifting to nuclear family systems, which is allowing for females to be more independent and there is less male domination within the family system (Ventakesh). DDLJ is still dealing with a strictly male dominated family system, so it

makes more sense as to why Simran obeys by her family, especially in the beginning of the film. One specific situation example would be the reason for the female protagonists going on the trip. DDLJ's Simran is about to get an arranged marriage in India, to a man she has never met. She wants to live her life in a vacation of a lifetime. She sweetly asks for permission from her father to go on the Europe trip. She is aware of her responsibilities to her family, but she just wants a vacation before she commits a lifetime to a mystery man her father has chosen for her. Conversely, Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani's Naina is a medical student, who is overworked and tired of being so studious. She realizes she has no social life, and has become fed up with her boring routines. She impulsively decides to go on a hiking trip in Manali, where she knows some old classmates will be. She does not ask for permission, instead she just leaves a note for her parents to find after she has left. Both Simran and Naina take a trip for themselves, but have different ways of making that decision. Simran stays attached to her family duty, while Naina takes an independent decision to leave.

The changing in the types of cinema that is being made is deeply affected by the global and economic conditions of India. India's economy today is worse than what it was in 1991; there is more inflation and a larger deficit (Venu). One major change from 1991 and 2013, as Venu describes, is that there are larger "global financial flows" between India and the West. This may not be beneficial for India's economy for now; however, this increased interaction of India and the West has contributed to more cultural mixing. The West has always been more individual based in terms of their approach to both communications and business. India has been influenced in some regards, by the West, and this may be a partial contribution as to why commercial Bollywood cinema now primarily makes films that deal with individuals, and their problems, rather than worrying about what the family thinks.

In both DDLJ and Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani, the second halves of the films take place in a wedding atmosphere. In DDLJ, it is Simran's wedding, and Raj is anonymously there trying to stop it. During the wedding sequences, Raj figures out ways to impress all of the family, and attempts to discredit the goodness of Simran's fiancé. Raj loves Simran, but he wants the blessings that an arranged marriage receives, so he refuses to run away. Arranged marriages were tradition, and especially for Simran's family. Raj strives to bond with Simran's father, and slowly succeeds at it by waking up in the mornings and feeding the birds with the father, Balraj. Raj is persistent, and his "Indianness" is what wins him his bride in the end of the film. The arranged love marriage succeeds, after a lot of hard work on Raj's part.

Today, love marriages are more acceptable, and arranged love marriages are considered perfect. Indian culture now allows more room for individuals to fall in love and have a love marriage ("India Culture Today Is a Mix of Traditional Values and Newer Cultural Ideas"). In Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani, the wedding sequence takes place eight years after the trip. Bunny, who now goes by Kabir, comes from Europe to attend his best friend, Aditi's, wedding. Naina is also there, and once again, these star crossed lovers have a chance to express their feelings for each other. What is surprising is that throughout the wedding sequences, no parents are specifically shown. The most important scenes are just how all the friends are bonding once again after eight years. Kabir and Naina are trying to figure out what their love means, and that has only to do with themselves, not with their family. The problem for them would never be convincing their parents to allow them to marry, their problem is convincing themselves that they could have a future together.

These two films have so many similar elements in plot, but it is very surprising to see how a change in time has changed the major circumstances involving love. Cinema reflects what

is happening in the culture. DDLJ and Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani show that Bollywood commercial cinema is ever-changing, and that is vital to study further. The overall trend of films changing from family-based films to independent, individual based films is a process that directly relates to how the culture and traditions of India are changing.

Works Cited

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