

**MEHMI'S Introduction to
Hindi Film
(10 Favourites)**

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1. Ghayal, 1990 (Wounded)

Ghayal is actually a very tragic story. The wealthy villain entraps the hero's innocent older brother into his nefarious schemes. When the brother goes missing and the hero finds out the truth about the villain, behind his 'mask of virtue', the villain kills the brother and frames the hero for the murder, spreading the rumour that the hero had illegitimate relationships with his sister-in-law. Out of shame, the sister-in-law commits suicide. The hero is imprisoned but he has vowed revenge and, with the help of the other prisoners, he aims for it. He ranges himself against the entire legal system that protects people like the wealthy villain and their control of the ordinary citizen.

Why it is Important

A study of mourning and the anger that it brings, an anger that can define your whole life afterwards. An exposure of the corrupt relationships between wealth,

power and the law. An Indian story about what it takes to achieve your revenge against the law and the system which has victimised you and cast you as a criminal.

Best Scenes

- Behind bars, the villain rails at the corrupt police and the corrupt law that serves power. The anger at the system is real.**
- A corrupt policeman slaps a protesting student across his face, knocking his glasses off. The hero picks them up and gives them back, telling the student to remember this anger in his heart and to clean all of the filth out of the country.**
- When the hero finds out how the evil henchman beat his brother, he walks down some stairs towards him. Before he didn't want to fight. Now he can't refuse. At each step he takes, we see the image of the henchman punching his brother. This is repeated three times. This is anger. Fuelled by the memory of injustice. The memory that someone hurt your brother, your family.**

- The ending, when the hero's girlfriend helps him because he is being beaten by a gang of corrupt cops and she sees how much he is hurting and what he is up against. This is the most beautiful scene in the film and reveals the extent to which she loves him and loves justice.

2. Damini, 1993 (Lightning)

The heroine, a poor and honest woman, marries a rich man. One day, during the festival of colours, her brother-in-law rapes a servant. The family try to hide the incident with their wealth and their power. The heroine fights for the women of her class against her new family. They make her out to be mad and imprison her in an asylum to silence her. She meets a lawyer who is disillusioned with life and the law. She persuades him to come back to the law and help her. Will they be able to fight against the system which serves the rich?

Why it is Important

This film gives the poor hope that they can fight for justice even in the system of privilege and arrogance that marks the modern law, the law of the rich man. It is a film about empowerment.

Best Scenes

- When the hero lawyer meets the rival lawyer who tells him to back off the case. The hero lawyer shows him that he will win.**
- The heroine begins to believe she is mad. She looks out of the window of the asylum. The procession of the Mother Goddess is going out in the streets. Suddenly, power and sanity return. There is a dance of power that the heroine performs in her minds and in her inner vision - the most beautiful dance performance you are ever likely to see. Against a corrupt male law, the figure of the Mother Goddess gives power and mind.**
- The hero lawyer rails at the injustices of the court before a judge. It is one of the finest rhetorical performances in the history of Hindi cinema.**

3. Sholay, 1975 (Embers)

The policeman hero captures a criminal who kills all of the hero's family and cuts off the hero's arms to render him powerless when he escapes from the prison. The criminal villain rules the village by terror. The policeman hero hires two men to capture the villain for him.

Why it is Important

Everyone in India knows every single line of this film off by heart. It is, almost without question, the most famous film of all time. It has been relentlessly copied and inspired so many movies. An exploration of not only revenge, but also arrogance and what it can do to people. For me, the film is about a humble law of the ordinary citizen that is opposed to the violent arrogance of the villain which is modelled on colonial rule. However, the film is also about what it means to be a real friend and it is also about love. The

love stories in it are powerful, funny, charming, and tragic.

Best Scenes

- The scene that haunts me the most is when the hero sees that the villain has killed his whole family. He uncovers the white sheet that covers each body without flinching, counting up the exact revenge that he has to mete out to the villain. No time for grief. He walks to the last body. It is a smaller figure - it is a beloved child. The hero takes the sheet away from the face. And then the look that the hero has on his face is seared into my brain for the rest of my life. The resolution of revenge - the only cure for the mourning, for what someone took away from him.

- The real ending of the movie was cut out. It is the best part of the film. This book contains no spoilers. You can see the real ending on a YouTube clip.

- How does the hero fight without any arms? The solution - when it is revealed -

and when the final fight happens - is one of the best scenes in world cinema.

- One of the hired men for the hero is in love with the hero's widowed daughter-in-law. It is an impossible love. In one scene, he plays the harmonica in the moonlight - it is to her although there is no obvious gesture. She knows it is for her. She knows that he loves her. And she loves him. And they both know that they cannot be together because a widow is not supposed to remarry in India. They both understand this. It is the display of what love is for many Indian people even today. But the hero of the movie goes against the culture and spirit of the times to try and bring the doomed couple together. He understands the music of the harmonica as well.

4. Mughal-e-Azam, 1960 (The Great Mughal)

Akhbar the Great has a beloved son who is to succeed him on the throne. The son is full of rebellion and falls in love with one of Akhbar's dancing girls in an Oedipal twist. What ensues is what happens when doomed and impossible love goes up against absolute power. When the desire for union and revolution goes up against the desire for separation, control, paternal authority, male power.

Why it is Important

Another one of the most famous films in Hindi cinematic history. If you adjust for inflation, it was the most expensive Hindi film ever made. They built a palace as one of the sets. The songs are iconic, including the lead number 'If you have loved, then why are you afraid?' The film explores the revolution inherent in love, its fight against all power, everyone, everything. It is no accident that the

Mughal's son loves a lowly dancing girl. The desire of the revolutionary. The sacrifice: Akhbar's son can give up any throne for the dancing girl, even the throne of India.

Best Scenes

- The iconic scene is the song 'If you have loved, why are you scared?' For me, it is when she sings that she sees her lover everywhere and then we see countless mirrors which multiply his image on the ceiling of the palace. Incredibly beautiful and also true - when you are in love with someone, you really do see them everywhere.

- All of the other songs in the movie are iconic for me too. The one that stands out is when there is an argument sung about whether one should love or one should not, the disadvantages and advantages of love. All the actresses are seated. They convey all of the emotions with hand gestures and gestures of their face. Supremely beautiful.

5. Lagaan, 2001 (Tribute)

The British Raj extort tribute from a small village of farmers suffering through a drought. The hero asks for a respite from this injustice. The white villain - who thinks he is a sportsman - offers the villagers a gamble through the game of cricket, which they cannot play. If the villagers win, no more tribute. The villagers form a team against the imperialists - a team rife with traitors and issues that separate men and resistance. Can the villagers win?

Why it is Important

This is the modern Indian story. They made us play their game, leaving us to our own devices. They gave us unfair conditions. This game is still happening now in the world. The film is about the Indian spirit and how the underdog has to prepare himself for a fight in which the conditions are such that it is almost impossible for him to win.

Best Scenes

- **When the traitor in the team realises who it exactly is that he is serving and what his treachery will really mean. A lesson for those who worship the imperialists against their own.**
- **The villagers let an Untouchable (Dalit) play the game. This is my community. The Dalit plays a prominent role in the events of the game and to the ending. This mirrors our contribution to India - we wrote the Constitution in the form of Dr. Ambedkar who studied at my university. We made the law of the land. We made one of the most important contributions.**
- **There is a white woman that secretly helps the villagers to learn how to play cricket because the conditions are so unfair. She falls in love with the hero and there is a love triangle. The film is not racist - it values love and diversity, the justice of love. Even though she plays a minor role, this white woman is an important character in the film for me. She is the hope of unity.**

6. Hum, 1991 (Us)

Tiger, the hero, works as a petty gangster under the rule of the wealthy villain. His father also works for the villain. However, Tiger's friend wants to lead a revolution against the villain, to stop all the children becoming filthy cockroaches like him. They kill Tiger's friend. Tiger comes for revenge. The corrupt policemen manipulate the situation to get the villain's wealth. Tiger has to flee. His dead friend's sister - who he loves - sacrifices her love so that Tiger will raise his two brothers that have been orphaned because of events without any distractions. Tiger builds a life for his family. But, one day, the wealthy villain - who had been imprisoned - comes back to get Tiger because he incorrectly believes that Tiger killed his beloved child. Tiger has to become Tiger once more to save his family.

Why it is Important

This film is about the unity of the family, the most important thing in Indian culture. The title 'Us' means the family. The film is about how the law - derived from the West and its wealth and individualism - is hostile to our poor Indian families and their organisation. They want to destroy our family. We won't let them. We are going to be us, no matter what.

(This was the last film I watched with my grandmother before she died from lung cancer. She was as big a film fan as me and would stay up well past her early bedtime to watch movies with us.)

Best Scenes

- When Tiger's stepmother dies and gives him the two children to look after, she tells him never to think of himself as 'I', but as 'us'. This is the philosophy of India.**
- When Tiger has to become Tiger once more, after having cooled down and lost**

all of his old fighting habits. He is searching for his sister-in-law and his beloved niece who have been abducted by the villain. He shows the photo to someone. The person makes a dirty remark about his sister-in-law. At first, Tiger tells the man to have some respect. The man doesn't listen. In the scene which I think about over and over again - a scene which actually played out in my real life in a different form - Tiger takes off his glasses and shakes out his hair, like a lion's mane, proving he is the Tiger (Tiger and Lion are the same word in Hindi). Tiger grabs the man by the lapels and beats him - his two brothers are shocked. We are not - Tiger is the Tiger.

- When Tiger's two brothers confront the woman that sacrificed her and Tiger's love for them with their ingratitude and the poisoning of their minds by the Western Law. She sacrificed her love so that Tiger's love never became lessened through sharing. And she teaches them how corrupt they have become. In the movie, the women are goddesses and the voices of virtue and morality.

7. Ghajini, 2008

The Hindi remake of 'Memento'. They (child traffickers) kill the woman he loves and take away his memory. She tried to expose them. Every day, when he finds out she is gone, the searing pain comes back. He lives in perpetual mourning. He lives in perpetual anger. The only thing that will take away the pain is the revenge and justice.

Why it is Important

A story of an undying love. Someone you can't ever forget and fight for, no matter what. If there is one major condition on an Indian man's love it is to protect his woman. To fight the whole world for her. If he can't do that, he is not a man. But what if you can't protect your woman? What if you can't fight the whole world? Or even worse, if something happens to her, what if you can't even take your revenge, your oath, the basis of your commitment to her? The film shows that -

despite every obstacle - you have to be true to the ways. Another exploration of the role of grief and mourning in the mechanisms of revenge and justice in the Indian mentality.

Best Scenes

- The scene where the hero realises what has happened - the absolute rage as the memory returns.**
- The ending of the film, a song, where we realise that even though death has separated the lovers, that he always has her with him.**

8. Mother India, 1957

The story of a poor farmer woman whose husband abandons her and the sons she raises through toil on the land. The story of how she keeps her dignity and becomes Mother India.

(I am named after Mother India's son in the film, Sunil Dutt. He saved the actress that played Mother India from a fire that broke out on set. She fell in love with her saviour when she went to meet him in hospital because of the severe burns he suffered for her.)

Why it is Important

This movie contributed to the way that India is seen as a mother by her citizens. It is a story about the Indian search for dignity despite every obstacle and temptation to succumb to dishonour, despite the Western world holding us in contempt. The title derives from this - An American book called us 'Mother India' to

mock us and our civilisation so we made the film to give what we call, 'a mouth-breaking reply'.

Best Scene

- Mother India says that she can give a son, but she can't give her dignity. You have to understand the line in the context in which it happens to understand that the whole film is about honour in the Indian honour society.**
- The poster image of the film where Mother India shows us the face of suffering as she carries a yoke behind her like the cross of Christ. The tears and suffering of India.**

9. Khuda Gawah, 1992 (God is Witness)

The heroine will only marry the hero Badshaah (King) on one condition - that he brings her the head of her father's killer. She wants justice and revenge. And only then, love. He has to go to India from Afghanistan to bring the trophy. But then, the Indian law which punishes murder comes for him. He is able to show the trophy, but now has to return to India to go into prison. Something happens. We think he is dead. The heroine goes mad with grief. But she is able to bear a child - it is up to the future generation. Or is it? Can Badshaah the king return from the dead to resolve the issues?

Why it is Important

The hero Badshaah is the king because he can give a defenceless and powerless woman in Afghan society her justice and revenge. The film explores the obligation to do this and what it takes to achieve

the feat, despite the obstacles of the Western derived law which is still sovereign in India, the law of the wealthy, rich man.

Best Scenes

- The opening of the film where the hero and the heroine fight and compete aggressively, only for him to fall in love with her. The king only loves a fighter. The king transforms hate into love.**
- The songs of love in the film.**
- The dialogue when the hero Badshaah comes from Afghanistan to India and declares that he has crossed the border because of love.**

10. Agneepath, 1990 (The Path of Fire)

They kill his father. Worse, they drive his mother from her home. He is a child. What can he do? He joins the underworld to protect his mother and sister and to attain justice and revenge. He grows up. He lets people shoot him in an assassination attempt, standing proudly in front of them without protection or cover. He recovers. He comes for each one. And now, it is time for revenge.

Why it is Important

Another story about the duty that an Indian man and an Indian son has to protect the women in his family. It is not just a movie - this is life. This is the expectation. You sacrifice your whole life for them and it is what is expected of you. Otherwise you are not a man.

Best Scenes

- Every scene with Amitabh Bachchan is the best scene. His voice which he changed, that look on his eyes. Someone who has suffered and is in a rage which he has to suppress throughout his whole life. Someone who is on a mission for justice.

- Someone dares to touch the hero's sister. The punishment that the hero metes out to them is what it really means to love someone and to protect them. In that scene, you see why the hero had to choose the life that he had to protect his mother and sister from this world.

- The ending which tells us the truth about the hero and his life.