

Ghar More Pardesiya

Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge is not only an ode to the concept of soulmates, but it also addresses the ongoing battle between the male protagonist, Raj, and Baldev, the father of the female protagonist about what an ideal Indian is. Both characters have their own perspective as to what values are possessed by an ideal India.

Baldev's perspective seems to root in the prospects of Indian traditions. As Mankekar states as well, he believes that it is '*the responsibility of children to carry on the traditions of the family, the community, and the nation*' (Mankekar, Pg 736). Baldev aims to keep his Indian culture alive because he is so far away from home and he wants his daughters to do the same, to an extent that is controlling, and sometimes even manipulative. There is a scene in the film when he returns home after his first encounter with Raj in London, his daughters and wife are dancing to western music and as soon as they get the hint that he is home, they immediately change the music to Indian bhajans/hymns. This shows that even in his daily household he is trying to impose the Indian culture and make his family fearful of being 'un-Indian.' Mankekar gives an example of another instance: '*His drastic decision and the family's precipitous departure..*' (Mankekar, Pg 737), Baldev seems to place the 'honor' of the family in the hands of his daughter, Simran, which can only be saved by her marriage in India. He does not even know anything about the man his daughter has fallen for, and he makes the decision for her about who she is to spend the rest of her life with as if her sexuality and she herself is an asset to him which he can exchange for 'honor.' Raj, on the other hand, while he does believe that honor seems to have to do with a woman's sexuality, believes in being individualistic and encouraging as opposed to Baldev, who believed in controlling the women in his life.

During the scene where Raj tries to prank Simran that they seemingly slept together, the scene ends by him saying that he understands that a woman's honor is extremely important and he would

never do anything to tarnish that, even though she may think that he is an inauthentic Indian. Simran's initial view of Raj is to dismiss him because his values do not align with that of a 'real' Indian as taught to her by Baldev. This scene seems to show her that he does possess those values, but he is also rooted in his individualism and nuances which gained from western culture. Mankekar mentions that the purity of NRI women is supposed to be protected by the men (Mankekar, Pg 738) in the West, but it can also be argued that not only was Raj maintaining the said honor of Simran, but he was also clarifying to her that she can make her own choices for her body and no one else can. There is another scene where Raj seems to take the serving plate from the mother to serve the guests, and the mother is rather surprised that a man is taking up that role showing how she was constantly put down by the men in her lives, which is also proven by her story of her education being stopped which she tells Simran. Raj seems to show that an ideal Indian is not only one rooted in the traditions, but also in one expressing their individuality and making their own decisions.

The entire movie is a constant battle between maintaining tradition and being able to maintain individuality. Raj could have easily eloped with Simran but he chose to win over her father first, emphasizing how important he thinks family is and Baldev's efforts to keep his family rooted to their Indian traditions shows how valuable he believes the family household is to him, and by letting go of Simran at the end he is trying to keep his family together as he sees his wife's and other daughter's support for Simran and Raj. In both cases, morality seems to be a front seat over what the individual wants. All in all, I believe the movie shows the Indian identity is represented by the importance of the social construct of family, no matter where you are.

Works Cited

Mankekar, Purnima. "Brides Who Travel: Gender, Transnationalism, and Nationalism in Hindi Film." Vol. 7, no. 3, Jan. 1999, pp. 731–762., doi:10.1215/10679847-7-3-731.