



# REHNUMA

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Throughout life, especially during times of need and sorrow, we always pray to our religious spirits to invoke the angelic figure in our lives to bring about sanguine changes. In the movie 'Kal Ho Na Ho', the character Aman Mathur is the angelic figure in the lives of Naina Catherine Kapur and her family. He brings about a series of positive and amicable events in the lives of the Kapur family and gives them a new outlook on life. At times, Aman also fills in the void of the fatherly figure for the Kapur family, but at the end what is interesting to me that the movie shows the human side of this angelic figure as well. The director, Nikhil Advani shows that Aman is only human, due to his imperfections. The director shows how Aman solves the puzzle of the Kapur family's heart like an angelic figure, yet remains human through different scenes and songs throughout the movie.

From the very first official meeting with the Kapur family in front of their house, Aman establishes himself as a positive influence for the family. Firstly, he does so by humoring the two Kapur kids Gia and Shiv about their rather annoying singing grandmother. He also does so by uniting the diverse community present in the Queens neighborhood where the Mathur and Kapur family reside, as seen in the song 'Pretty Woman'. As Hu stated, in the dance number there are dancers of different races and ethnicities ranging from white to black to Hispanic, and even East Asian. (Hu, Pg 5) Throughout the song, there are sprinkles of both American and Indian representations throughout the song such as the Dhol Player, and when Aman is standing in front of the American flag, and later even rapping. Throughout the song, the dancers of different backgrounds who seem to be enjoying and dancing with Aman, which is different and unique to the audience as Hu states '*an NRI would not be accepted leading non-Indians in American dance*'. Hu also says '*Instead of isolating themselves in their own corners of Queens, South*

*Asians shared spaces with members of other ethnicities'* (Hu, Pg 5), shows how the neighborhood is made to seem like a safe space for the Kapur family by the fact that Aman, an Indian is leading the entire dance number. These moments show how Aman seems to be embracing his identity as a Non-Resident Indian (NRI), and shows the Kapurs that it is okay to be Indian and American at the same time. He is encouraging the Kapur Family to embrace their cultural freedom in the American diaspora and show that is okay to be an NRI. This notion is positively adopted by the family, as seen in the song when Kammo and Vimmo (the grandmother's disciples) dance with the crowd and even when Jenny, the mother of Naina after the songs, that this is the first time she has seen so many colors in her neighborhood. Aman seems to show the family that their neighborhood is a safe space for expression and positivity, with respect to the different cultures, present there. He is also showing the importance of unity within the family in order to sustain in the diaspora, which is best seen in the song 'Baar Baar Hum' when he encourages Jenny to reinvent her quintessential American coffee shop to an Indian restaurant in the streets of New York. Through these instances, Aman is trying to show the family to embrace their NRI identity in US and that the country is safe space for the family, despite '*racial tensions of "brownness" in post 9/11 New York*' (Hu, Pg 6) as long as they are all united, which bore fruit at the end with the success of the new restaurant.

He also unites communities within India in the diaspora, specifically in 'Maahi Ve', where the environment is '*de-Americanized*'. (Hu, Pg 8) Even though as Hu states, the environment might as well be India (Hu, Pg 8), Aman is still facilitating both the Gujarati and Punjabi community to mingle and dance together happily with the entire dance sequence and the garba sequence at the end, adopting traditions from both ethnic groups which isn't a commonality in real life.

Aman also helps Naina being able to express herself sexually as seen in the song 'It's the Time to Disco'. In the article, Hu states that the dance number '*exposes the way South Asians are excluded from the production of their own sexual desires as well as their own mastery of American popular culture*' showing how uncommon it is for Indians, especially Indian women to be okay with expressing their sexuality publicly as that is a huge matter of fact for them as seen in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge. Aman encourages Naina that it is okay to embrace her sexuality when she is removing her jacket at the beginning of the songs by saying 'Come on, Naina' and essentially cheering her on while she dances in the club, and then later on even dancing with her. Aman shows Naina that it is okay to culturally and sexually express herself in the diaspora, and embrace life with positivity or as he put in the movie 'Jiyo, Khush Raho, Muskarao, Kya Pata Kal Ho Na Ho', which loosely translated means to live, laugh, smile, who knows if tomorrow will come or not.

Along with being a friend to the Kapurs, Aman sometimes even fills the void of the missing father figure in the Kapur family. An instance of this is when he unites the family to revamp the coffee shop to an Indian restaurant, supporting Jenny as a father figure or when he dances as Jenny's partner in the song 'Maahi Ve', as Rohit and Naina dance together as partners, also when he is leading the Kapur ladies singing in 'Maahi Ve' or when he is carrying the hypothetical marriage 'doli' of Naina. One of the main instances where he represents the father figure is in the sad version of the title track of the movie and when he takes Naina to the marriage altar and gives her hand to her fiancé, as her father traditionally would.

The movie represents Aman as an 'angel' in several portions of the movie, but the most prominent being in the title track. In the title track, Aman is wearing white and looking over Naina and Rohit. They don't sense his presence but he is there looking over them as a helping

soul. Aman supports the family as an angelic figure in overcoming financial and emotional hurdles, but the movie also shows that though Aman is an angelic figure for the Kapurs, he is only human and has his own weaknesses.

One of the main plot elements present in the movie is associated with Aman's terminal heart disease, which forms most of the plot of the movie. He, even though is responsible for bringing so much happiness for Naina, is at the same time responsible for his own heartbreak. He lies to Naina about his marital status, so as to spare her from future heartbreak at the expense of his own heartbreak. Though with good intention, Aman is still making uses of lies and rather manipulates Naina into loving Rohit almost. Aman is only human with human imperfections and he dies due to a terminal disease at the end of the movie like many people. It is rather ironic how this morally good-hearted man as shown in the movie, died due to an ailment of the heart.

Kal Ho Na Ho talks about a man who tried to make everyone happy, sometimes even in expense of his own happiness. Aman died a content man knowing that he left behind so many loved ones who had learned to love and live because of him and they will continue to spread love as life goes on. I believe that angels are the people in your life who encourage you to be the best version of yourself, be it your family, your friends, your teachers. All these angels have their own imperfections and ailments, and that's when we have to be the angelic figure for them as they are for us. By being each other's angels, we will be able to foster a positive and loving environment for all.

### **Works Cited**

Hu, Brian. "Bollywood Dreaming: Kal Ho Naa Ho and the Diasporic Spectator." *Post Script; Summer 2006*, Vol. 25 Issue 3, p93, May 2006, pp. 41–49.