

FILM REVIEW

Dispelling misconceptions about Alzheimer's Disease

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***Maine Gandhi ko nahi mara (Hindi)* Anupam Kher, Urmila Matondkar, Parvin Dabbas, Addy and Prem Chopra. Director: Jahnu Barua.**

The film *Maine Gandhi ko Nahin Mara* deals with the subject of Alzheimer's disease. It is the story of Uttam Chaudhary (Anupam Kher), a retired professor who is a Hindi scholar. He is a man of principles and values, great integrity and honesty and is considered a genius. He stays with his daughter Trisha (Urmila Matondkar) and son Addy (Addy). Chaudhari's eldest son stays in America, but he gives financial help to the family in Mumbai. Trisha works with an NGO while Addy is a happy-go-lucky college student. The professor shares a special bond with his children.

The normalcy of this happy family is soon shattered. Chaudhari begins to suffer from frequent bouts of forgetfulness. Besides occasional lapses of memory, he starts becoming absent-minded and delusional. He no longer remembers when his wife passed away. He also forgets that he has retired and goes to give a lecture in the college. Later, when Trisha's boyfriend's family comes to see her with a marriage proposal, Chaudhari acts in a demented manner. The family goes back disappointed and Trisha's boyfriend marries another woman of his parent's choice, fearing that the dementia runs in the family. The professor's condition completely deteriorates and he starts blaming himself for being the man accidentally responsible for Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Obviously there cannot be any truth in his claims. He starts getting paranoid and begins to see everything with suspicion and fear. Normal life becomes impossible for him. Only his daughter Trisha stands by him in this terrible state of his.

Trisha consults various doctors. Doctors give various possible explanations including dementia, Alzheimer's disease,

schizophrenia etc for the professor's illness. But the problem lies deeper. Finally, she meets a new doctor (Parvin Dabbas) and his senior colleague, Dr Verma (Prem Chopra). The doctor, having tried the usual means of treatment, now resolves to try a rather radical experiment to rid the professor of his paranoia. For this, Trisha and the doctors decide to orchestrate a courtroom drama. This drama becomes successful in treating professor's condition.

As ever, Anupam Kher is marvelous as he convincingly brings out the paranoia and the inner conflicts of his character. Urmila Matondkar plays her part credibly, as indeed do all the others in the movie. Jahnu Barua, the director, is the winner of several national awards. In this, his first Hindi film, his direction of the sensitive subject of dementia, is competent particularly in the handling of certain emotional moments.

Maine Gandhi ko Nahin Mara talks about Alzheimer's disease, an issue that hasn't been tackled on Hindi screen before. It throws light on the life of patients with such illnesses and illustrates how the patient and his family suffer due to the disease as well as society's unacceptability and hypocritical attitude towards members of such families. People still think that mental illness runs in families and many girls face problems during their marriage proposal. The movie also depicts the parent-child relationship, the feeling of being 'unwanted' that a senior citizen experiences at times and the caregivers' burden.

In India, films on mental health problems are rare. The general public still has many misconceptions related to mental disorders and these still need to be addressed. As film media is one of most popular media in our country, more films based on such issues should be made. *Maine Gandhi ko Nahin Mara* is a sincere effort on the sensitive issue of mental disorders; other film makers should take inspiration from the film.

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