

Varying notions of the need for hysterectomy are shaped by differing experiences of the utility of the uterus (making babies, defining womanhood), a related factor being ideas regarding its longevity (is a uterus needed after reproduction has taken place?). There is also a difference in terms of the biomedical constructions of risk to the uterus versus social notions of the risks of the uterus, which relate to the need for menstrual hygiene and more generally speaking, invisibilisation of women's health. It could be said that on the one hand, the hegemonic public health habitus objectifies and atomises the female body in terms of just a uterus, while on the other, it casts women within a vulnerability paradigm (4) in which, as victims, they actually lose the agency of choice and self-determination with respect to their own bodies (again, justice concerns). In addition to these basic questions are those that emerge at intersection with other contingencies in which paternalism may be exercised. These include questions related to differently abled girls, orphaned girls, and females of a low socioeconomic status.

On the basis of the reflections above, it can be said that the issue of hysterectomy is, at bottom, a much larger and complex issue that is inflected by relationships between patients and providers, women and their families, women and the society, and even the somatic (woman—her own body) and the systemic (woman—the health system). These factors must be understood in a necessarily broader set of contexts as currently there is the lack of systematic research and understanding of the subject.

Anitha Thippaiah, Associate Professor, Public Health Foundation of India, **Gulrez Shah Azhar**, Assistant Professor, Public Health Foundation of India, 4 Institutional Area Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, 110 070 INDIA e-mail: gsazhar@iiphg.org

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How Hindi films tarnish the image of psychiatrists

Ek Thi Daayan, a horror film with supernatural content, was released in April 2013. The protagonist in this motion picture believes that his stepmother is a *daayan* (witch), who is eventually shown to kill his sister. His father dies of a cardiac arrest on seeing that his wife has turned into a witch and killed his daughter. The psychiatrist (strangely named Dr Palit) he consults looks upon his experiences as hallucinations, the origins of which can be traced to a book on witchcraft that he believes in and has been reading ardently. All through the film, the psychiatrist counters the protagonist's belief in the

existence of ghosts and witches, and is successful in his efforts. However, towards the end of the film, he realises that evil spirits do exist. He now feels that the content of the book on witchcraft is valid and is convinced that the protagonist's life is in danger. Alas, he succumbs to death.

Of late, a character in the mould of a 'psychiatrist' has been commonly appearing in a number of Hindi films dealing with the supernatural or paranormal. In most such films, the psychiatrist's medical and scientific explanation of the sufferer's symptoms is jeopardised and proven wrong, while the exorcist's magico-religious elucidation of the causation of the symptoms and the treatment he administers are shown to be correct and in keeping with the obvious truth. This theme has appeared in a host of films during the past decade. Such films include *Banaras* (2006), *Bhoot* (2003), *Darling* (2007), *Hawa* (2003), *Hum Tum Aur Ghost* (2010), *I See You* (2006), *Naina* (2005), *Phoonk* (2008) and *Talaash* (2012).

A recent study concluded that the portrayal of psychiatrists in Hindi films of late has been rather unflattering and leaves a lot to be desired (1). The phenomenon is apparently global as the depiction of the psychiatrist in commercial American films is equally disheartening (2). As long as the cinematic representation of psychiatrists is healthy, the inclusion of a 'psychiatrist' character in films with supernatural content is justified. Sadly, however, the fact of the matter is that most such films denigrate the dignity of the psychiatrist's profession. Sorcery, witchcraft and mysticism conveniently supersede the psychiatrist's rational and scientific reasoning and/or interventions. These celluloid psychiatrists end up convinced that ghosts do exist, making real psychiatrists wish to call all such Hindi films *daayans* (pun intended) that knowingly or unknowingly distort their image. Notwithstanding the argument that films are meant to entertain and not educate audiences, a demeaning portrayal of psychiatric professionals is downright preposterous. As it is, psychiatry as a branch of medicine and psychiatrists as professionals have a somewhat dubious image in the eyes of health professionals, the general public, decision-makers in the health sector and students in various areas of healthcare (3). The prejudiced portrayals in films may only add to their existing woes. These portrayals are likely to have an impact on the attitudes and beliefs of those who have not known a psychiatrist first-hand for a long enough time to form their own opinion, an opinion that is independent of the image depicted in films (2).

Considering their widespread popularity and easy accessibility, films could instead be used judiciously to reduce the stigma attached to the profession by depicting psychiatrists in a more tasteful and accurate fashion. In this respect, films such as *15 Park Avenue* (2005), *Lage Raho Munnabhai* (2006) and *Love Aaj Kal* (2009) have done well to present the profession in a positive light, without compromising on their entertainment value. Likewise, *Bhool-Bhulaiyaa* (2007) explores a constructive possibility by depicting a healthy liaison between a psychiatrist and a faith healer. There is a need to extend censorship in cinema to ensure that films do not distort medical facts and make a mockery of the conduct of doctors and their profession.

Girish Banwari, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Sheth V.S. General Hospital, Ellis Bridge, Ahmedabad, Gujarat INDIA
e-mail: drgirishbanwari@yahoo.com

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Scientific sanctions: a catastrophe for the civilised world

Nowadays, Iranians are being subjected to the strictest sanctions ever imposed against a country. The political deadlock between six international powers and Iranian officials has resulted in a proliferation of sanctions touching all aspects of Iranian activities. Economic sanctions have caused intolerable suffering to the people and now, another type of sanctions has been foisted on us – scientific sanctions.

I am not a politician, but as a young physician, committed to research and engaged in scientific publishing, am deeply afraid for humanity and civilisation. Science has now been reined in. During the past year, I have sensed the increasing pressure on the scientists in my country to report the results of their surveys. I cannot understand why the scientific community tolerates the pressure mounted by politicians to compromise the independence, purity and honesty of science, which is now being undermined.

During the past year, I have experienced many difficulties in publishing articles. Surveys which could have been published in the best international journals and helped all scientists

around the world to continue to improve the quality of human life and our knowledge were rejected. My articles have been rejected, even after frequent revisions, without any reasonable excuse. In one instance, a Canadian journal rejected my article after one year and three sessions of revisions, claiming that the article possibly had some limitations which had not been reported. An interesting question is why was such a decision not taken after the first revision itself? And why were doubts cast on our honesty when we were reporting on a registered clinical trial? The question arises as to whether journals can be assured of the honesty of the researchers involved in all American or European surveys.

Another problem faced by us was that of banking sanctions. These sanctions made the payment of publication fees and offprint requests impossible and thus, the number of journals we could submit our articles to shrank. Elsevier as well as Taylor and Francis have officially announced that they will impose these sanctions (1,2).

My country has suffered such problems frequently in recent decades. We have a rich history and our civilisation and culture go back thousands of years. As Isaac Newton said, we stand on the shoulders of giants, giants such as Avicenna and Razi, the Iranian pioneers in science. We do not want to restrict our capabilities, but it seems that the international community wants us to. This is a catastrophe for civilisation and science, and will stand out as a blemish in the history of science.

Behnam Baghianimoghadam, Research Consultant and Resident in Orthopaedic Surgery, Shahid Beheshti Hospital, Babol University of Medical Sciences, Keshvari Square, Babol, IRAN

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