

Role of Indian films in awareness generation of HIV/AIDS.

Harshal Tukaram Pandve*

Department of Community Medicine, Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial Hospital, Pimpri, Pune, India

HIV continues to be a major global public health issue, having claimed 40.1 million [33.6–48.6 million] lives so far. In 2021, 650 000 [510 000–860 000] people died from HIV-related causes and 1.5 million [1.1–2.0 million] people acquired HIV. There were an estimated 38.4 million [33.9–43.8 million] people living with HIV at the end of 2021, two thirds of whom (25.6 million) are in the WHO African Region. There is no cure for HIV infection. However, with increasing access to effective HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care, including for opportunistic infections, HIV infection has become a manageable chronic health condition, enabling people living with HIV to lead long and healthy lives [1]. Individuals can reduce the risk of HIV infection by limiting exposure to risk factors. Awareness regarding preventive measures is the key for HIV prevention. Those infected with HIV have to not only deal with the disease but also the various myths around it. To create awareness is all about using a medium, which is not only the most popular, but also available to everyone. The question is how one uses the medium. Any medium can be used for a good purpose or a bad one.

Film medium is one of the very strong medium in many parts of the world. Hollywood and other film industries, including the Italian and French, have produced at least dozen films about HIV/AIDS. The 1993 film, Philadelphia, which features Tom Hanks as a lawyer who faces workplace discrimination. Stories centering on the epidemic began to be filmed in the mid-1980s: An Early Frost, Parting Glances, and Longtime Companion, How to survive plague, Dallas Buyers Club are some of the prominent films to mention [2, 3].

The Indian film industry is the largest in the world in terms of number of films produced with between 1,500 to 2,000 films produced every year in more than 20 languages [4]. It includes films in Hindi language as well as in all regional languages of many states of India. The Hindi language film Industry is popularly known as “Bollywood” is huge industry. Based in Mumbai, it produces some 1000 films a year and on any given day 15 million Indians watch such movies. Traditional themes of love, marriage and family, song and dance against a verdant valley, good pitted against evil, fantastical villains, spectacle and turmoil. No more, no less, this is Bollywood has been known for decades. In recent years the scenario is changing as Bollywood also dealing with some different theme and some social issues.

Illness has often formed an important plot element for many mainstream films. The films like Alaap and Aah dealt with the

issues related with tuberculosis. Cancer is favourite subject for Bollywood; number of films are made on cancer patients like Anand, Mili to recent Kal Ho Na Ho. The films based on the psychiatric disorders are also made like Khilona, Maine Gandhi Ko Nahi Mara and Woh Lamhe. So far in Bollywood, films dealing with the sensitive issue like HIV/AIDS are very few as traditional mainstream producers believed that we were committing commercial suicide, depicting a man with AIDS as the central character of a film.

Recently few film makers shown the courage by dealing with the burning issue of HIV/AIDS. The Hindi films like Phir Milenge, Nidaan, My Brother Nikhil and Aisa Kyun Hota Hai are based on life of AIDS patient.

Phir Milenge, the maiden directorial venture of south Indian actress Revathy, is a poignant story of HIV-infected persons. The story revolves around three themes-a human interest narrative, presentation of medical facts on HIV/AIDS, and an analysis of the social and legal impact of HIV infection. The central issue of discrimination in the workplace could have been analysed in depth [5].

My Brother Nikhil, directed by debutant Onir loosely based on the life one of the first victims of AIDS in the Indian state of Goa in the 1980s, it recalls the severe social stigma that surrounds the disease. Nikhil is a state champion swimmer who is cast out by his parents, arrested and put into solitary confinement in a dirty sanitarium under the law of the country at the time. It is only with the help of his sister and gay partner that he fights the law, creating awareness and public sympathy for his cause in the process.

Film Nidaan, directed by Mahesh Manjrekar is an emotional film related to the HIV/AIDS. It's a story of young Marathi girl of middle class family. The family's happiness is shattered when the girl falls ill and the doctors diagnose AIDS, which she had contracted during a blood transfusion in her childhood days. Aisa Kyun Hota Hai directed by former UNICEF officer Ajay Kanchan, the film carries a message on two crucial issues facing the country: HIV/AIDS and communalism.

Popat is Marathi language noteworthy film based in rural background of Maharashtra state. Importance of the film is that it depicts all the important aspects which are important for HIV/AIDS awareness which included how HIV infection is transmitted? What are the early and late symptoms of HIV and how it can be prevented? Film throws light on many aspects which are important for AIDS education.

*Correspondence to: Harshal Tukaram Pandve, Department of Community Medicine, Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial Hospital, Pimpri, Pune, India. E-mail: dr_harshalpandve@yahoo.co.in

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In conclusion, the making such film is a brave attempt to highlight some issues facing people with HIV/AIDS. To film such a story without an eye on the box office is a tribute to the social commitment of the makers of this film. Other film makers also need to contribute for this sensitive issue of HIV/AIDS and explore various aspects of the disease as well as the social issues related with it.

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