

# REPRESENTATION OF HARYANVI CULTURE IN BOLLYWOOD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VISHAL BHARDWAJ'S MOVIE- MATRU KI BIJLI KA MANDOLA

Dr.Seema Rana.

Department of English, G.M.N.College, Ambala Cantt, Haryana.

**ABSTRACT-** In the context of Haryana, the number of films produced remained very small till 1984. But when Chandrawal was released in March 1984, it created a stir in the film industry. Chandrawal broke all records on the box-office in Haryana, Western U.P., Delhi and parts of Rajasthan . But still, there was a long way to cover to bring the Haryanvi culture on the broad screen. The Bollywood movie *Matru Ki Bijli Ka Mandola* provides this much needed platform. An uneven beard, stud in the ears, careless dressing, rowdy walk and a bidi tucked behind the ear- the desi Haryanvi look sported by actor Imran Khan in the movie has got everyone talking about the Bollywood's newfound love for a rather raucous Haryanvi culture. *Matru Ki Bijlee Ka Mandola* is a political satire produced by Vishal Bhardwaj.He has also directed, co-scripted and scored the music for the film. The movie deals with almost every problem being faced by rural India at the moment. Though the movie did not get much success at the box office, nevertheless it is definitely a bold step by the director Vishal Bhardwaj to bring the culture of Haryana to the big screen. Thus it can be concluded that it has proved to be a creative piece of work in promoting regional voice which has not been heard so far at such a level.

## FULL PAPER

Haryana is proud of having a rich cultural heritage that goes way back to the Vedic times. The state is rich in folklore. The age old customs of meditation, Yoga and chanting of Vedic Mantras are still observed by the masses. The seasonal and religious festivals glorify the culture of this region. Haryana has always been a state of diverse races, cultures and faiths. The people of Haryana have preserved their old religious and social traditions. Their culture and popular arts are Saangs, dramas, ballads and songs in which they take great delight.

The most striking feature of Haryana is its language itself; or rather, the manner in which it is spoken. Popularly known as Haryanvi, it is perhaps a bit crude, but full of earthy humor and straightforwardness. With rapid urbanization, and due to Haryana's close proximity to Delhi, the cultural aspects are now taking a more modern hue.

In modern times, films have become one of the most powerful mediums of entertainment in India. Besides Hindi films, which are mostly produced in Bombay, a remarkable progress has been made in regional films.

In the context of Haryana, the number of films produced remained very small till 1984. But when Chandrawal was released in March 1984, it created a stir in the film industry. Chandrawal broke all records on the box-office in Haryana, Western U.P., Delhi and parts of Rajasthan . But still, there was a long way to cover to bring the Haryanvi culture on the broad screen.

The Bollywood movie *Matru Ki Bijli Ka Mandola* provides this much needed platform. An uneven beard, stud in the ears, careless dressing, rowdy walk and a bidi tucked behind the ear- the desi Haryanvi look sported by actor Imran Khan in the movie has got everyone talking about the Bollywood's newfound love for a rather raucous Haryanvi culture. After the movies like *Love Khichdi*, *Khap*, *Jalpari*, *Kismat Love Paisa Dilli*, *Tere Naal Love Ho Gaya* and *Rockstar* many more Hindi films with Haryanvi backdrop are in the pipeline. Haryanvi has a distinct flavour that seems to be working out for Bollywood. For long Punjabi culture has dominated the Hindi films and the Haryanvi backdrop in the films is proving to be a much needed change for the fans. It seems the Haryanvi culture is gaining popularity not just among audience but also among actors. Shah Rukh Khan was recently quoted as saying, "I think I have played a variety of roles but one character that I really want to play is a Haryanvi." Randeep Hooda, who donned the Haryanvi jat avatar for a film *Love Khichdi* says that it was one of the most interesting characters that he had ever played. Haryanvi culture has some unique aspects to it, and these aspects make the films revolving around the Haryanvi community not just interesting but informative. For example, Haryanvi people are very much in your face. They have a distinct dressing style, unique names and body language that add to the character on screen. If not the lead character, at least one Haryanvi character in the film makes it lively. What makes this click is the Haryanvi humour, which is very engaging. It is witty and has an intelligent quotient to it too. Probably that's why it is becoming very popular among audience.

*Matru Ki Bijlee Ka Mandola* is a political satire produced by Vishal Bhardwaj.He has also directed, co-scripted and scored the music for the film. The movie deals with almost every problem being faced by rural India at the moment. Set in the rustic surroundings of a village in Haryana, the film is about Harry Mandola (Pankaj Kapur), a wealthy industrialist who loves his drink, his daughter Bijlee (Anushka Sharma) and the unusual bond they both share with Harry's man Friday, Matru(ImranKhan). Shabana Azmi and Arya Babbar play supporting roles.Much to her father's delight, Bijlee is all set to marry Baadal (Arya Babbar), the son of a powerful politician Chaudhari Devi (Shabana Azmi). This alliance which is far from just being a simple union of two young people becomes the seed for a story that brings twists and turns in the lives of Matru, Bijlee and Mandola.

The film tells the story of three individuals, Harphool Singh Mandola a.k.a. Harry,his daughter, Bijlee Mandola and Hukum Singh Matru known in short as 'Matru'. Harry is a wealthy, cynical businessman who dreams of turning the Mandola village into a

shining example of his success and a microcosm of a fledgeling economy in itself. But this dream can only be realized if the villagers agree to sell their land to the government at unfairly low rates in order for the land to be converted into a Special Economic Zone.

While being the shrewd, sophisticated and composed individual that Harry normally is, he is also quite fond of drinking. Whenever drunk, he turns into the advocate of equality and betterment of the villagers, but regrets these thoughts and deeds when sober. When he chooses not to drink he hallucinates, as a withdrawal symptom, about a pink buffalo 'Gulabo', the mascot of the brand of alcohol that he enjoys. The knowledge of these hallucinations is later used by Matru as a maneuver to get Harry drunk in order to succeed in his own plans to save villager's land.

Baadal and Bijlee's union is strategically apt as it serves Harry's and Chaudhari Devi's personal goals. While Chaudhari Devi conspires to control Harry's wealth by marrying her son to his daughter, Harry seeks Chaudhari Devi's help in realising his dream in exchange for their children's marriage. Seeing Chaudhari Devi and Baadal's ambitions now with more clarity and while helping Matru and the villagers, Bijlee falls in love with Matru.

Matru is a revolutionary, fighting for the villagers' cause of not letting their land being taken away. He is educated in Law from J.N.U., holds a job as Harry's driver and is responsible for regulating Harry's drinking. The film starts with a negotiation at a liquor shop set in crop laden fields, between the liquor shop owner and a heavily drunk Harry. The shop owner's rude refusal to sell alcohol to Harry due to the day being a dry day provokes Harry to run his Limousine into the shop. Once drunk, Harry is shown to be an entirely different individual, who wants the land of the villagers to be returned to them, Matru to marry Bijlee while himself to retire as a religious man.

The villagers, in their fight are supported and advised by Mao who regularly sends messages to the villagers, written on cloth. Later in the film it is revealed that Mao is none other than Matru who is advising the villagers without revealing himself in order to retain the key position as Harry's aide.

Although they have the help of Matru, his college friends and Bijlee, the villagers lose their entire harvest to an unexpected rain storm. This harvest, which would have fetched enough money to settle their debts to the government bank and still some more for their own survival, is now completely destroyed. One immediately relates this to the plight of farmers in Haryana, Thus the villagers are forced to surrender their land, against their will, to the government in order to settle their debts. Later, discovering Bijlee's alliance with the villagers, Chaudhari Devi, now cautious, decides to finalise the decree to convert the now acquired land into an SEZ only once Bijlee and Baadal are married.

All this builds up the tension leading up to the wedding at the climax wherein Matru and the villagers have a plan to get Harry drunk who will then call off the wedding. This plan apparently works and Harry is shown to be drunk, succumbing to Matru and the villagers' plan. Now while drunk, he enters the wedding venue, calls off the wedding, chases away Chaudhari Devi, Baadal and their supporters and decides to get Bijlee and Matru married. Consequently, upon refusal by Matru on the pretext that Harry will not feel the same way about him and Bijlee when sober, Harry, to everyone's surprise, reveals that he had sworn on Bijlee to not consume even a drop of alcohol and has stood by his word, in turn revealing that while he did all that he did appearing to be drunk, he wasn't drunk at all in the first place.

The barebones plot seems to be "inspired" from the Bertolt Brecht play - Mr. Puntilla and his Man Matti. Mandola is two personalities- The disgruntled man when he is sober and the cartoonish nice man when he is drunk. Matru is his chauffeur who is in love with his daughter, Bijlee. Continuing his love for Shakespeare, Vishal packs in a strong political statement in this well crafted satire. *Matru Ki Bijlee ka Mandola* mirrors a biting social reality while also reflecting the booming pace of consumerism in the country.

Crowding the grainy lands of Haryana with an exciting, interesting bunch of weirder-than-thou characters, the movie is soaked with Shakespearean references, joyously witty one-liners, and a number of satirical puns at popular culture, including billionaires and politicians. Through its rocky terrain, the film is a relevant reflection of the vintage (yet prevailing) socio-political scenario but doesn't go all propagandist with it; instead choosing a boldly irreverent path - almost as crazy as attainable within the mainstream hemisphere.

The pink buffalo is a remarkably well-thought motif that is perhaps the most metaphorical character of the lot - a reflection of Mandola's collective fears, while also being something that eventually empowers him. Based in Haryana, this rustic tale plays on some quirky characters.

Matru - the unrefined Haryanvi chap and also, an active participator in the politics of his village gels with Mandola for its progress. While Mandola, being a dipsomaniac is a two-faced man; one before emptying the bottles and the other, after it. And, here lies the paradox. Bhardwaj has very wittingly placed the idea of rural politics with respect to this particular character that has a wavering tendency. Here, the idea of drunkenness has been reversed. Therefore, the so-called miff between the Capitalist biggies and Communist villagers is in existence only when the leader of the former is in his senses. It is shown that the monetary idea of profit which drives a man crazy to betray his own people develops in a state of normalcy.

The lyrics of the movie are very well connected with the Haryanvi culture. The folk songs are the soul of Haryanvi culture ever since. They are the real picture of the Haryanvi people and the society. The emotions and the opinions of the people find a place in these songs. The song with the lyrics "badal uthiya ri sakhi, mere sasre ki aur...." is very beautifully connected with the culture of Haryana. An imagery of the cloud and the rain is presented in this song. Generally, it is picturing the inner state of a girl who is worried about the dark clouds which are rising in the direction of her in law's home. The pathetic condition of the farmers has been portrayed when they face heavy water pour over their ripped crops.

The song with the lyrics, "tatta pani ae samundra ka...." presents yet another form of the Haryanvi culture. It is generally sung on the occasion of a wedding when a bridegroom or bride goes for a ritual bath. It provides a real picture of the traditional marriages performed in the Haryanvi culture.

The song with heart-touching lyrics, “Desha me yo desh mera se harya bhrya hariyana, sedhe sadhe log aade ke dudh dahi ka khana...” creates an atmosphere of the rich Haryanvi culture in which very simple and docile people live together. It also reflects the real brotherhood and innocence of the Haryanvi people. Yet another song with the lyrics, “Char dina ki chamak chandni...” compares the youth and the old in an ironic manner. The song is philosophical in tone and further describes the short span of young age and warns human beings to perform all creative and useful works in this period before it is too late.

The people of Haryana are well presented in this movie by their dressing style, their names and dialogues. The scene of Chaupal depicts the typical Haryanvi culture that can be seen in every village of Haryana and it also shows their vital nature. Their primary aim is to be happy even in worse and miserable conditions. In the movie, it is shown that they have to fight to protect their land which is the only means of their livelihood. It is only because of their culture that they take a united stand against the capitalists.

The character named Matru who is educated from J.N.U. is being portrayed in the movie with his dual identity. He reminds us of one of the typical Shakespearean characters- a man in disguised form. At one level, he lives among the villagers of ‘Mandola’ as a character named Matru. But on the other level, he assumes the identity of ‘Mao’- a revolutionary character who takes a stand for the sake of the poor people against the greedy business tycoons. Symbolic of Haryanvi youth, Matru is ready witted and moulds himself according to the situation. Though a law graduate, he still chooses to stay in his native village; in spite of the fact that he could easily get white-collared job. With revolutionary ideas in mind, he proves himself as an altruist by helping his fellow villagers though he does not own any landholding.

The lively nature of the Haryanvi people has been portrayed through Mandola’s eccentric persona. The alcoholic tycoon becomes a caring soul when drunk, leading a revolution against himself in that state. When he is sober, he is no better than a beast. The Macbeth metaphor is cleverly woven in thanks to Mandola’s visions. He sees Gulabo the buffalo at odd hours.

Vishal uses Matru to make his political point. Without reserving much surprise, he reveals soon enough that the mysterious Mao, who guides the farmers in their agitation, is really Matru, otherwise Mandola’s servant and drinking partner. The villagers of Mandola find in ‘Mao’ a kind of Nietzschean ‘Superman’ who will solve their problems and bring the redemption for them. Mao is, for them, a kind of ‘Messiah.’ But when it is revealed that Mao is no one else but a man among them called Matru, they realized the power of a common man. It serves as a message for them that every one of them can be a ‘Superman’ if they have the ‘will to power’ to bring the change.

Unlike most youth-centric Bollywood films that project the current generation as carefree and unsure of their purpose in life, Vishal Bhardwaj has portrayed his characters- Matru and Bijlee in a different light altogether. Today, the youth are aware of the happenings around them and do not leave any stone unturned to bring about a social transformation. Matru dresses like the other villagers, speaks in Haryanvi and becomes one of them. He dares to take a stand against the oppressors rather than accepting it as a way of life. Matru also has a special feeling for his village and stands for today’s youth- educated and aware, but concerned about his own people and sensitive to his culture. Bijlee is confused whether she should listen to her heart or head- the perennial crossroad at which the young find themselves. Matru and Bijlee represent the changing face of young India who is willing to take charge of their lives in a positive, responsible way.

The surname Mandola comes after the name of village ‘Mandola’ in the same fashion as the people of Haryana use the names of their villages as their surnames which reflects their deep cultural roots.

Chaudhary Devi, the minister, symbolizes the ambitious nature of the corrupt politicians who have nothing to do with the common lots. They have their own selfish motives. She is inspired from Shakespearean character ‘Lady Macbeth’ in the play ‘Macbeth.’ Like Lady Macbeth, she recognizes the seeds of ambition in Harry Mandola and incites him to design an evil plot in order to seize the lands of his villagers in the name of SEZ.

There has been a long struggle between the capitalist class and the proletariat class since ages. The dominant class has always tried to exploit the working class in some form or the other. The same issue has been raised in this movie. In the movie, Harry Mandola and the clever minister referred to as Deviji, who helps him in converting the agriculture land into barren land, atleast on paper, represent the dominant class. The poor farmers of the village represent the exploitative proletariat classes who have only their lands to survive on. The class is, therefore, a matter of hierarchy within society, power and economic privilege. Being a member of the upper classes confers certain privileges upon a person. Every class develops particular forms of culture and forms of behavior- which is often described as ‘working-class culture,’ ‘mass culture,’ or ‘middle-class culture.’ Culture, therefore, is not about truth, beauty, taste or aesthetics. Rather, culture is a system where particular ideas about truth, beauty and aesthetics are developed in relations to particular classes. Thus, it is believed that cultural forms reflect social conditions, and the novel or film often reveals the truth about classes, class conflict and power relations within a society. The ‘language’ or ‘form’ of a work of art (which would include films and novels) captures, therefore, a social experience. Raymond Williams is quite right when he says; ‘Culture’ is ordinary, in every society and in every mind.’ Culture is ordinary, an experience common and accessible to each person and his/her society. It is active and changing. It comprises not only the public, common experience but also the new, creative, individual aspects.

For Williams, the word ‘culture’ meant both ‘a whole way of life’ and the forms of signification (novels, films but also television and advertising) that circulate within a society. It is the common men who form a culture. And this culture is linked with society. In the movie, the villagers of Mandola form their own culture. They have their own way of life. Mandola finds his true identity and real culture only when he mingles himself with the ordinary culture of his villagers when he is drunk. And at last, he has to become a part of that very culture. Thus culture forms a very essential part in forming a particular society and its people.

Though the movie did not get much success at the box office, nevertheless it is definitely a bold step by the director Vishal Bhardwaj to bring the culture of Haryana to the big screen. Thus it can be concluded that it has proved to be a creative piece of work in promoting regional voice which has not been heard so far at such a level.

**REFERENCES**

- *Matru ki Bijlee ka Mandola*. Dir.Ashok Bhardwaj.VB Pictures, 2013.Film.
- Nayer, Parmod K. *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*. India: Dorling Kidersley, 2010. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. India: Penguin, 2007. Print.
- Williams, Raymond. *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*. London: 1989. Print.
- <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/matru-ki-bijlee-ka-mandola-adapted-from-th-play-mr-puntila-and-his-man-matti/315601-8-66.html>.
- <https://www.google.co.in/#q=Bollywood+goes+haryanvi+in+matru+ki+bijli+ka+mandola>
- <http://www.musicperk.com/matru-ki-bijlee-ka-mandola/>
- <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/macbeth/>

