HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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COINCIDENCE / ITTEFAQ (1969)

Yash Chopra (1932-2012)

Hindi language

film link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f31bBbFSSx0



OVERVIEW

Director Yash Chopra was one of the most iconic and influential Indian film-makers who worked in the Bollywood film industry based in Mumbai. Chopra initially worked with his elder brother, B.R. Chopra, making hits such as *Dhool Ka Phool* (*Flowers of the Dust*, 1959) and *Waqt* (*Time,* 1965). In 1973, he launched his own production company, Yash Raj Films, which went on to become one of Bollywood's most powerful production houses, with over 80 films to date. Chopra is considered a "King-maker" of Bollywood cinema, having introduced and nurtured the two biggest stars of the industry, Amitabh Bacchhan and Shah Rukh Khan. His most impactful films include romances such as *Kabhi Kabhie* (*Sometimes,* 1976), *Silsila* (*The Affair,* 1981), *Chandni* (*Moonlight,* 1989) and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (*The Brave-Hearted Wins the Bride*, 1995) and action-packed thrillers such as *Deewaar* (*Wall*, 1975) and *Darr* (*Fear*, 1993). Chopra's work is also memorable for featuring visually stunning imagery shot in diverse and exotic locales, such as Switzerland and Kashmir. He is the only filmmaker to have won the Indian National Film Award for best popular film five times— four times as director and once as producer. He also received a number of Filmfare Awards (given by *Filmfare* magazine), including 12 nominations and 4 wins for best director and 15 nominations and 4 wins for best film. The government of India honoured him with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for lifetime achievement in cinema in 2001, and in 2005 he received one of India's highest civilian honours, the Padma Bhushan.

Film *Ittefaq* remains one of the tautest and most suspenseful crime thrillers ever made in Hindi cinema, with a brilliant twist at the end. In this, Chopra was aided by Salil Choudhury's background music, which ramped up the tension. Every sound heard during the night plays a part in the narrative. Cinematographer Kaygee's camera work helped quicken the pace of the film that was mostly shot within the confines of a home. Chopra adapted the story from a Gujarati (and then, Hindi and Marathi) play called *Dhummas* (*Fog*), which in turn was inspired by George Englund's 1964 film *Signpost to Murder*, itself a remake of a 1962 play of the same name by Monty Doyle. The film stars Nanda and Rajesh Khanna in the lead with Sujit Kumar, Bindu, Madan Puri and Iftekhar playing supporting roles. The film did not include a single song and was in fact only the fourth Bollywood film (after *Naujawan*, *Munna* and *Kanoon*) that did not have any songs in it. This was also the first Hindi film that did not have an "interval" (Bollywood film runtimes being close to 3 hours, a break of 10-20 mins in the middle of the film called "interval" is standard).The film was successful commercially as well acclaimed critically, with a continuous100-day run at cinemas. It won two Filmfare awards (1970): Best Director (Yash Chopra) and Best Sound (M.A. Shaikh) and three nominations: Best Actor (Rajesh Khanna),

Best Actress (Nanda) and Best Supporting Actress (Bindu)

Background *Ittefaq* was shot in a mere 28 days by lucky chance. At the time, B.R. Chopra (with Yash Chopra as his assistant director) was shooting another film but they had to put that shoot on hold due to heroine Saira Banu's leg injury, which kept her away for a month. To offset the losses caused by an idle unit, the brothers decided to film *Ittefaq*. Rajesh Khanna, who was reeling from five flops, received a lifeline that kept him going until a film released the next year catapulted him to superstardom. *Ittefaq* is also the last film Yash Chopra would direct with his brother before branching out to form his own production house, Yash Raj Films.

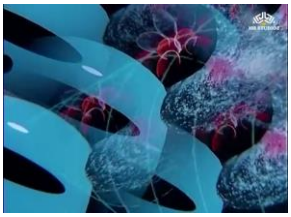
LIST OF CHARACTERS

Dilip Roy	A painter
Sushma	Dilip's (dead) wife
Renu	Dilip's sister-in-law
Rekha	A rich lady
Jagmohan	Rekha's (dead) husband
Dr. Trivedi	A psychologist
Inspector Diwan	A crooked policeman
Public Prosecutor Khanna	A lawyer
Detective Karwe	A detective who helps Dilip
Inspector Khan	A policeman who helps Dilip

SYNOPSIS

Dilip Roy, a famous painter, gets angered by his socialite wife, Sushma, apparently strangles her to death and runs away Upon returning, he finds his wife dead and his sister-in-law, Renu, blaming him for it. He has another psychotic breakdown, is arrested and sentenced him to treatment at a mental hospital under Dr. Trivedi. After some time there, he manages to escape and hides in a palatial bungalow, where Rekha is spending lonely nights without her husband, Jagmohan. Dilip threatens to kill Rekha if she gives him up to the police and they settle into an uneasy camaraderie. At one point, he sees a glimpse of Jagmohan's body in the bathtub, but the body disappears soon after. Detective Karwe and Inspector Khan investigate Dilip's house and find a clue to the murderer's identity. Dr. Trivedi and Inspector Diwan drop by Rekha's house a number of times. After a prolonged cat-and-mouse game, Dilip realizes that Diwan had moved Jagmohan's body outside and gives himself up so that the real criminal doesn't escape justice. Detective Karwe and Inspector Khan also arrive and crack the case, proving that Renu murdered Sushma and Rekha, and that Diwan murdered Jagmohan. Rekha kills herself and Dilip is exonerated.

SCENES







Opening scene A sequence of psychedelic modern art moves to a rousing background score, followed by title credits. Police vans blasting sirens and policemen on motorcycles fly down a long stretch of road at night. Someone stumbles inside a house where many well-dressed people are gathered. He walks through crowded rooms and enters a painter's studio.

A murder We now realise that the previous sequence was seen through Dilip Roy's eyes. A woman lies dead on the bed. Dilip shrieks. The room starts spinning; the camera finally stops at a police inspector (Detective Karwe) who says that Dilip has murdered his wife, Sushma. Dilip denies it but is shut down by the inspector and his sister-in-law, Renu. Renu says that Dilip was a negligent husband and didn't take Sushma out to socialize, preferring to paint at home. Sometime earlier that night, they had a fight.

A fight In a flashback, we see Sushma, dressed in an elegant sari, politely ask Dilip, who is painting, to accompany her to their anniversary party thrown by a friend. Dilip tells her to go alone as he must finish the paining. She gets angry, cursing the fact that she's married to him and snatches away his paint brushes. He tries to explain that the painting was due at a major exhibition the next day. They shout and fight, and she tears the painting. Dilip, furious, grabs her throat and shakes her, yelling that he will kill her. She

collapses on the bed and he leaves, disoriented.



Dilip is arrested Renu continues tearfully that when she got there, Sushma was already dead. Dilip keeps yelling that he didn't kill his wife and grabs at Renu in front of the police. He is promptly arrested and presented in shadows in a courtroom, where he shouts and maniacally laughs that he murdered his wife then cries and says he didn't kill her but will kill all of them. The court orders that Dilip receive treatment in a psychiatric facility. Lightbulbs flash as he walks down a long corridor.



At the psychiatric hospital Prosecutor Khanna visits the hospital and asks Dr. Trivedi if he thinks Dilip is guilty. Inspector Diwan, who is in charge of Dilip, says that Dilip's behaviour is very confusing; sometimes he's ranting and sometimes he's saner than any other person. Dr. Trivedi says that Dilip must have suffered some psychotic breakdown and asks him to be brought to his office. They joke about Dilip reading law books and wanting to represent himself in court.

Dilip's madness Dilip arrives there with his books and takes a proffered cigarette from Dr. Trivedi. They try to make conversation with him, but he ignores them and lies down on the couch, then jumps up and tells them that he knows that Prosecutor Khanna is only there to ensure that he is hung to death. They are all his enemies, keeping him locked up in the hospital. He claims that he is caught between a rock and a hard place. If he's insane, he's doomed to be trapped in a mental asylum for the rest of his life. If he's sane, he'll be hanged for a murder he didn't commit. Dr. Trivedi tries to calm him down but he starts ranting, tries to strangle Dr. Trivedi and is dragged away by attendants. Prosecutor Khanna is convinced he is the murderer. Dr. Trivedi says that when he has a fit he can kill anyone and not remember it.

Dilip escapes Dilip shakes off his captors and runs away, taking advantage of a thunderstorm. The police chase him but to no avail. He keeps running, being chased by the police for a while and finally is able to hide in a mansion. Detective Karwe is called away from dinner and comes to speak to Renu, stationing police protection around the house.



Dilip threatens Rekha A radio announcement describes Dilip as a dangerous madman who escaped, while a woman (Rekha) closes the windows. Suddenly, Dilip jumps out from a corner, puts an arm over her mouth and threatens her with a gun. He takes the keys from her and tells her to keep quiet. He finds her husband's (Jagmohan's) framed photograph and searches for him. He pushes her to show him that there's no one else in the house and bring him a change of clothes. She walks upstairs and tries to get a gun from her husband's wardrobe, but Dilip catches her and takes it away.



Rekha's mysterious behaviour Rekha begs forgiveness and asks him to take some clothes. Dilip likes the clothes he finds and praises Jagmohan's expensive taste. He goes to the kitchen to change and tells her to keep talking to deter her from calling the police. She surreptitiously dials the police while talking, but he catches her again and threatens her. He leaves again to change his shirt and Rekha takes the chance to use a flashlight to send a message to someone outside. Dilip comes out of the kitchen and catches her again, this time strangling her.



Dr. Trivedi visits The doorbell rings. Dilip lets Rekha go and threatens her to not mention him, then hides. It's Dr. Trivedi and Inspector Diwan at the door, asking for Jagmohan. They warn her about Dilip and she tries to say something but notices Dilip and his gun pointed at her. They leave. But Dr. Trivedi returns for his hat and gives her his phone number, which Dilip snatches away from her at the first chance.

A neighbour lady drops in The doorbell rings again. It's a noisy Punjabi neighbour lady, who rushes into the kitchen to borrow some milk and apples while Dilip hides behind the door. She also mentions the escaped madman and some other gossip about a neighbour running away with another man. Rekha makes her leave quickly.

Rekha and Dilip chat Rekha argues with Dilip about murdering his wife and he slaps her. She asks him why she deserves this treatment from him after helping him. Dilip, worked up, tells her that this circumstance isn't of his making and begs her to let him stay overnight. He doesn't want to be a jailer and make her his prisoner; he is completely broken. Rekha says she doesn't know whether to sympathize with him or not. They talk about fear and love and how beautiful it would be if they could reconcile.



Dilip and Rekha have a friendly drink He asks her for cigarettes and plays with his cigarette lighter. She offers him some whiskey and gets him some bedding to sleep on the living room floor and then lays down a sheet on the couch for herself. He takes out the whiskey bottle and glasses, and juice for her, and she brings water. They drink in silence for a while, admiring the chandelier.



Camaraderie Dilip tells her about his childhood and how he used to see wondrous visions in shadows and now wants to paint these visions. Suddenly, there is a thunderclap and Rekha rushes into his arms. Dilip, a little more relaxed now, tells her she's beautiful. There's sexual tension in the air, though neither of them acknowledges it. He says that he wants to paint her picture. She asks about his wife. Her own marriage was lonely as Jagmohan changed after marriage to a cold, uncaring person who spent most of the time away. Dilip tells her that he had never imagined a small fight would lead to such tragedy. But then she lightens the mood and they laugh. He falls asleep soon after.

Dilip discovers a body Some time passes. Rekha, having pretended to sleep for a while, gets up and steals the house key from Dilip's pocket. She tiptoes to the door to unlock it, but the sound startles Dilip who wakes up. She runs and hides. He grabs a flashlight to search for her everywhere. Running into the bathroom, he sees a dead body there for a second. Startled, he screams, which brings the police running to the door.



The body disappears Rekha comes to open the door and he threatens to kill her if she lets on about him. Then he grabs the bedding and whiskey and hides. Rekha tells Inspector Diwan that nothing was amiss. She doesn't let Inspector Diwan go into the bedroom where Dilip is hiding. Dilip sees them go into the kitchen but cannot see anything else as Rekha stands with her back to the keyhole though which he is peeping. After Inspector Diwan leaves, Dilip interrogates her about why the inspector didn't examine the bathroom. She says that Inspector Diwan did. He slaps her again and calls her a "despicable woman" who murdered her husband. They argue and he tells her that he saw the body. But there is no body in the bathroom now.



Dilip has a breakdown Rekha shouts at him that he's gone completely mad and is seeing dead bodies everywhere since he saw his wife's. Dilip also gets very confused and says he may be hallucinating. Rekha consoles him and tells him that his mental state is not well. He cries and apologizes for hitting her.

The police visit Renu Inspector Khan and Detective Karwe discuss evidence and then phone Renu, who is afraid for her safety. Suddenly, she screams. The police rush to her aid. But when they arrive, she says it was just the window banging in the storm. Detective Karwe reassures her and asks her to let him see Dilip's room.

Detective Karwe finds a clue Mysterious music plays in the background while Detective Karwe inspects the room. He comments that Dilip's studio and Renu's bedroom had connecting doors. Renu shouts that his accusation is unfounded and she hated Dilip for neglecting and mistreating Sushma. Her bracelet gets caught in Detective Karwe's suit and he notices some jewelled danglers on it. He asks her why she's not searching for a life partner. She says she is no longer interested in romance after her sister's death. The police leave. Prosecutor Khanna calls Renu and reassures her that he will take care of everything.



Back at Rekha's house Rekha has fallen asleep on the stairs. Dilip paces restlessly. The phone rings and Rekha picks up immediately just as Dilip shouts "Don't". Inspector Diwan and Dr. Trivedi, on the other end of the line, hear his voice and rush out. Then Dilip makes a phone call to the train station to ask about the next train out. He apologizes to Rekha again for his behaviour. He says

he wants to leave all this behind as he's suffocating.



Rekha's confesses to hiding Dilip Inspector Diwan and Dr. Trivedi arrive and Dilip hides again. They ask about the man's voice but Rekha says there is no one. The phone rings again and there is a trunk call from Kolkata for Jagmohan. He is not in Kolkata and hasn't reached home. Dr. Trivedi is puzzled. Inspector Diwan notices cigarette butts and two glasses on the table and also Dilip's prison uniform. They interrogate Rekha and she confesses that Dilip was there.



Dilip's ruse They chase Dilip, but he shoots at them and runs away. They find an open window and suspect that he has left the building. Rekha tells them that he's headed for the train departing at 4:35 am. The police rush out. Rekha, exhausted, staggers up the staircase and almost takes off her sari to change into a bathrobe. But Dilip is hiding in the closet. She rushes downstairs but Dilip catches her. He shouts that she's framing him for her husband's murder. Rekha tries to convince him that he's mad and has killed his wife. He argues with her and decides to find the body.

Detective Karwe and Inspector Khan discuss the case Inspector Khan says that Dilip has no motive— not money or another affair. He isn't insane, just angry at suddenly being accosted, as anybody is likely to be. Detective Karwe shows Inspector Khan the jewelled dangler that he found on Dilip's paint palette in his room but cannot remember where he has seen its like before. They receive a phone call and rush away.

Dilip gives himself up Dr. Trivedi and Inspector Diwan return to Rekha's house. Dilip reveals himself and tells them that he will unveil the truth; afterwards, they can do whatever they like with him, whether hang him or lock him up in a mental asylum forever. He gives Dr. Trivedi his gun out of respect and describes the events after escaping from the hospital.



Dilip's testimony Dilip says that Rekha was friendly with him and didn't try hard to get him captured. Rekha cries and yells that she was never friendly with him. Dilip continues how he saw the body in the bathroom and again Rekha shouts and says that he is insane. But Dr. Trivedi lets him continue. Dilip reasons that once he knew, from the phone call from Kolkata, that Jagmohan had returned, he became certain that Jagmohan had been murdered in that very house that very night. If he escaped, there would be no one else reporting the murder as he was the only eyewitness. He didn't want another innocent to be blamed for the murder or the murderer to go unpunished. Diwan tells him to show the body to prove his words.

Jagmohan's body is found Suddenly, Detective Karwe and Inspector Khan arrive with Jagmohan's body on a stretcher. Detective Karwe calls Rekha to identify the body and she cries on the body, blaming Dilip again for murdering her husband. Inspector Diwan defends Rekha and spins a theory that Dilip must have murdered Jagmohan before coming into the building. Dr. Trivedi says that Dilip was prone to murderous fits and could have killed without remembering any of it. Dilip also says that he doesn't remember what happened after he saw the body in the bathroom and doesn't know how it got outside.

Dilip's realization Suddenly, Dilip has an epiphany. He runs around and shows them how the body would have been moved by while he was hiding and couldn't see out of the keyhole. Karwe then inspects the bathroom and finds an airline ticket from under the bathtub, which he puts away in his pocket. Karwe asks whom Dilip saw and Dilip points to Diwan, who denies being there alone without Trivedi. Rekha also supports Diwan. Diwan opens Jagmohan's fist and shows the number 27 label that was on Dilip's hospital uniform.

Detective Karwe unravels the case Detective Karwe says that the truth will be revealed only if they could determine whether Jagmohan returned to the house alive. Rekha says that she last saw her husband the previous week. Karwe shows her the ticket he found and proves that Jagmohan had indeed returned home. Diwan has a different theory: just like Jagmohan snatched Dilip's uniform label off, Dilip could have grabbed the ticket and brought it inside. Dilip shouts that these were all lies and he's being framed.

Dilip finds the clue that saves him Detective Karwe tells Dilip that he must have strangled Jagmohan in a fit of madness and instructs Inspector Khan to arrest Dilip. Dr. Trivedi says he has never seen such an interesting schizophrenia case in his medical practice. They light up cigarettes and Dilip notices that Inspector Diwan has the same lighter that he was using last evening. He requests Karwe to let him ask Diwan a question: Did he ever came alone to the house or not? They argue. Dilip says, “When all else fails, the helpless one has to depend on God” and grabs his own lighter out of Diwan’s pocket! Dilip tells them that the lighter was gifted to him by Renu.



Renu arrives on the scene Inspector Khan phones Renu and asks her to come there. Detective Karwe says that such an inconspicuous thing was going to be the biggest clue to solving a murder. Renu arrives and again blames Dilip for both murders. Karwe shows her the lighter. She agrees that she gifted it and shows her initial “R” engraved inside. Diwan and Rekha say that it was Rekha’s as she also has the same initial “R”.

Detective Karwe finds Diwan and Rekha guilty Karwe isn’t convinced as there would be no reason for a married woman and a policeman to exchange gifts. He reasons that Diwan and Rekha were having an affair; Jagmohan had suspected it and caught them red-handed. Then they murdered him and hid his body in the bathroom as it was still daylight. Dilip continues that he found his way there at that fateful juncture and gave Diwan the chance to pin a second murder on him. Karwe shows Diwan the ticket and says it must have fallen out in the bathroom when they moved the body. Dr. Trivedi, further examining the label in Jagmohan’s fist, shows Karwe that there were no signs of blood on it, arguing that it was placed there after death.



Diwan is arrested Karwe, now sure, says that Diwan and Rekha murdered Jagmohan. Diwan pulls out his service revolver and threatens everyone. Rekha jumps in front of his gun and admonishes him as being her only sin before Khan takes the opportunity to disarm Diwan and take him away. Karwe praises Dilip for helping them and the law despite being harassed and incriminated by them.

Renu is also guilty Karwe turns the tables and points to Renu as Sushma’s murderer. Renu denies it, but Karwe says that she was too greedy for the inheritance that would come to her on Sushma’s death and Dilip’s incarceration. Otherwise, with adjacent rooms, she should have been able to save Sushma when Dilip was strangling her. Karwe grabs Renu’s arm and shows her the jewelled dangler that dropped from her bracelet at the scene of the murder. He pronounces her guilty.



Rekha kills herself Dr. Trivedi tells Dilip that he had been sane all along and praises his perseverance. Dilip says it was all coincidence; there is a higher power that divides truth from lies and day from night. Suddenly, there is a gunshot. They rush upstairs to find that Rekha has shot herself in the head. Dr. Trivedi says that she has repented for her crime. Dilip, getting emotional, says that he wished our conscience would awake before committing crimes.

Closing scene A voice-over says the closing words: “Thus life stood still. So did these people. But time never stops. This cycle of crime and punishment continues. Perhaps the criminal escapes human justice, but he can never escape divine punishment.”



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Dilip In one of his earliest roles, Rajesh Khanna, the alleged murderer, is vulnerable and dangerous by turns. His defiant anger and uncontrolled outbursts alternate with his desperation to clear his name. And his charming smile, puppy-dog eyes and charismatic personality only heighten his appeal as the wronged/ misunderstood yet vulnerable hero.

Violent Though Dr. Trivedi diagnoses him with schizophrenia (Bollywood's fallback term for any mental illness), his symptoms more closely align with bipolar disorder and anger management issues. Right from the opening scene after Dilip's identity is revealed, he behaves in an unhinged manner. When Sushma tears up his painting by mistake or Detective Karwe and Renu accuse him of having strangled Sushma to death, he loses himself in anger and tries to strangle his opponent. These violent episodes recur throughout the film especially before he meets Rekha, whom he also assaults physically a number of times when she attempts to seek help or escape from him.

Vulnerable But in his saner moments, as Inspectors Diwan and Khan agree (separately), Dilip is just as rational as everyone else, if not more. He isn't shy about expressing his emotions to Sushma and Rekha, especially when it comes to his art, and he isn't afraid to cry and apologize. He even talks to Rekha about his childhood and how he only wanted to paint his visions, thus exposing a more vulnerable side.

Determined Dilip appears to be unsure of his own innocence when he escapes from the hospital. Only after first seeing and then not finding Jagmohan's body does he realize that he was the only witness that could bring that crime to light. It was quite the risk on his part to give himself up to Dr. Trivedi and Inspector Diwan, though initially it doesn't appear that he had connected the dots and deduced that Diwan was the killer. But Dilip remains firm in his stand to find justice for himself and the murdered Jagmohan, all helped along by a series of coincidences.

Rekha Rajesh Kanna gave a memorable performance as Dilip, but it was Nanda who was the screen-stealer. Nanda played against type to bring the duality of the lonely, cheating housewife Rekha to life. Flirtatious and frightened, lonely yet friendly and defiant in turns, resigned and manipulative, virtuous and evil, contained and spontaneous – she was all this and more.

Lonely The most striking aspect about Rekha is her lingering air of loneliness, right from the scene in which she is introduced roaming around alone in the mansion and closing the windows. The house also seems devoid of any touches of home, indicating how little attachment Rekha had to the space as the mistress of the home. Nothing except a single photograph of Jagmohan adorns the living room; no books or embroidery or evidence of any other hobbies with which she occupied her time. Later, she confesses to Dilip that she was indeed lonely as Jagmohan would be away for days at a time and was generally neglectful. She, of course, glosses over her extramarital affair.

Shrewd Even when she's befriending Dilip, Rekha is a like a chess player, always thinking two steps ahead. She reacts with remarkable presence of mind when captured by an armed intruder and appeals to Dilip's gentlemanliness to try and escape or reach out for help, but is thwarted every time. For instance, she takes advantage of Dilip's nap to steal the keys to the main door, but Dilip wakes up before she can make her escape. Again, when Dr. Trivedi asks her if she was all right and all alone, she keeps mum and doesn't mention Dilip. When Diwan visits alone, she makes sure that Dilip, peeking through the bedroom keyhole, doesn't see him moving Jagmohan's body. Later, she convincingly tells Karwe that Jagmohan hadn't returned and cries over his dead body, too.

Manipulative We get the full measure of Rekha's manipulative skills in the scene where she shouts at the already mentally unstable Dilip that he's gone completely mad and is seeing dead bodies everywhere after he saw his wife's. Dilip also gets very confused and says he may be hallucinating. Then she diametrically changes her attitude, consoles him and tells him that his mental state is not well, whereupon he starts brawling and apologizes for hitting her. This alternation of contradictions underscores her grasp of the situation and calculated attempt to get out of it.

Flirtatious All this is helped along by the actor's considerable sex appeal turned on high. For instance, when Dilip slaps and shoves her on the couch, her sari on the upper part of her body falls away, but she makes zero effort to put it back in place, giving Dilip (and the viewer) an eyeful of her comely body. Then there is the classic "damsel in distress" move of falling into the man's arms at a thunderclap! Rekha doesn't hesitate to use her womanly charms to soften Dilip towards her, though it doesn't devolve into full-fledged seduction. It is to an extent understandable, too, as a means of self-

preservation or out of loneliness, up until the time we find out about her affair with Diwan (who seems to be quite rough around the edges and possibly abusive).

Disturbed These contradictory elements make it seem that Rekha is on the edge of an emotional breakdown throughout her presence on screen. The entire gamut of her contradictory behaviour patterns seems to hide something that's only revealed at the end— that she was responsible for her husband's murder and is suffering from the guilt for that as well as for her adultery. This culminates in her confrontation with an armed Diwan, then taking the opportunity of the others' inattentiveness to kill herself. And this puts Dilip's last comment into perspective; had her conscience awoken before committing a crime, she wouldn't have to lose her life so tragically.

THEMES

PSYCHOLOGY

Mental illness Right from the stylized opening sequence followed by an unexpected use of a long, jerky point-of-view camera shot (this point-of-view camera recurs several times in the film), the film hints at something beyond the typical family drama, romance or masala film that the audience is used to from Bollywood. Soon after, Sushma's murder is unveiled and we see a deeply conflicted hero with severe anger management issues and possibly suffering from bipolar disorder. In sequence after sequence, Dilip gets irrationally angry, loses consideration for his surroundings and tries to strangle whoever crosses him, be it Sushma or Renu or Rekha or Dr Trivedi. But his rational behaviour on other occasions, including bouts of impassioned apology or philosophical musings give us pause and keeps us guessing – Did he or didn't he? Is he really mad or pretending to be mad? As Dilip quickly unravels, one is left to question whether or not he's turning insane, even if he wasn't mentally unstable before. Thus the climax comes as a surprise with Dilip's (uncharacteristic) rational behaviour and sleuthing skills shining bright. Bollywood and the mystery genre claim their due.

The film also sheds light on institutional deficits and systemic challenges faced by mentally ill patients which is stunning in its disregard for political correctness but sadly continues to be the reality in many parts of India even today. Even though the court and Dr. Trivedi seem to be well-meaning, insofar as 1970's Bollywood film was concerned, all mental illness fell under the schizophrenia umbrella and Dilip's diagnosis just means that he would be a prisoner in a treatment facility instead of jail. At the hospital, it doesn't seem that he received any actual treatment (medication and/or therapies) but was allowed to do as he wished, like read tomes on law. The doctor, police and public prosecutor, representative of their respective institutions, also don't bother at all with affording Dilip even the basics of human dignity and respect as a mentally ill person (regardless of whether he is guilty of murder or no) and do not hesitate to poke fun at him. Despite these drawbacks, *Ittefaq* is praiseworthy at least in representing a marginalized and often-times silenced population.

Illustrative moment: The unexpected, stylized opening sequence is inspired by Saul Bass's famous title designs for Hitchcock's films. Although a bit random, the sequence emulates chopped up Rubik's cubes shot through a kaleidoscope with spiralling circles and other superimposed "modern art" images. By invoking Hitchcock, Chopra immediately clues the audience in about the kind of film *Ittefaq* will be. This is followed by a long, handheld-camera tracking shot from the POV of Dilip as he enters his house. All very *cinema-verité*-like at this point, but then a zoom-in – accompanied by dramatic music – reveals the strangled corpse of Dilip's wife, whereupon the camera whirls like a dervish and there is a spectacularly over-the-top, melodramatic performance by Dilip.

APPEARANCE

False accusation *Ittefaq* is an excellent example of how a narrative can question, confuse, obfuscate and finally reveal the truth as the polar opposite of false accusation. As Dilip, Rajesh Khanna (quite literally) chews on the scenery to depict the unravelling of a character who's falsely accused of a crime. That said, there is very little, up until the climax of the film, to suggest that Dilip was falsely accused to an audience unfamiliar with Bollywood films and stardom; but to the initiated, just the fact that Rajesh Khanna, superstar and hero, plays Dilip exonerates him even before the film begins. Aside from that, nothing is definitive; the narrative is unreliable because there are many gaps in time that we aren't shown and it's not uncommon (in literature or film) to have the first-person narrator turn out to be the culprit– we have to be on our guard, prepared that anything may be part of a subterfuge. Dilip himself admits that he has no recollection of the times when he's in a manic episode, so he could well have murdered both Sushma and Jagmohan but have no memory of it. Further, not one character in the film defends Dilip's innocence, which further underscores his

loneliness and detachment. In fact, at times Dilip himself is gaslit into thinking that he committed the murders. Time and again, the two actual culprits are vociferous in their ranting on about how Dilip is the murderer; but because they are women and perceived to be the “weaker sex”, no one gives it a second thought as the deaths were by strangulation and hence physically difficult. Even Detective Karwe, who coincidentally comes to Dilip’s aid, seems more interested in due diligence than finding justice for an innocent. Only when Jagmohan’s body disappears do we (and Dilip) begin to suspect that something wasn’t adding up—how could Dilip have moved the body outside with Rekha near him at all times? Of course, the possibility that Dilip is mad and hallucinating, as Rekha falsely accuses him of repeatedly, cannot be dismissed up until the time Dilip decides to put his money where his mouth is and give himself up.

Illustrative moment: When Dr. Trivedi and Inspector Diwan return to Rekha’s house, Dilip reveals himself voluntarily to support his innocence. Dilip accuses Rekha of being over-friendly with him and not trying hard to get him captured, showing that she had something to hide. Rekha, with much histrionics, tires to convince them she was never friendly with him and was terrorizing her as he was a seasoned murderer and insane to boot.

Mystery *Ittefaq* is a tightly-knit, masterful example of maintaining tension and suspense over its hour and a half long runtime. Unlike its relentlessly dark and gritty Western counterpart, the “Hindi-film noir” of the 1950s and 1960s was part of a tradition where many emotions and registers had to be mixed together. So there are tonal variations here, with much juxtaposing of melodrama (in sequences featuring Renu and Rekha), comedic bits (like Rekha’s Punjabi neighbour) and studied restraint. One by one, all the clues are laid out carefully yet without drawing too much attention: Renu misses a bejewelled dangler from her bracelet and Detective Karwe later remembers where he had seen it, Dilip brings his prison uniform out of the kitchen and sets it where Diwan could easily grab the number 27 label, Rekha and Diwan don’t notice the airline ticket that fell out of Jagmohan’s pocket in the bathroom, Diwan picks up and takes Dilip’s lighter by mistake and coincidentally still has it in his pocket when he returns and so on. Then there are the misdirections: an open window, a phone call to the train station, Rekha’s rather large posterior blocking the keyhole, Renu’s sudden scream and so on. Dilip’s sleuthing interspersed with over-the-top acting also keeps us in suspense until the lighter is revealed; as Karwe says, who knew that such an inconspicuous thing was going to be the biggest clue to solving a murder. The last twist is also sudden (and too much of a coincidence perhaps)— in one fell swoop Karwe finds and brings Jagmohan’s body, proves that Renu strangled her own sister for the inheritance and that Rekha and Diwan were having an affair which led them to murder Jagmohan. So all the strings are neatly tied up and Dilip is left alone and repentant.

Illustrative moment: In a suspense thriller like this, even theatrics serve a purpose. There is for instance the initial possibility that the hysterical Dilip and his almost-equally-hysterical sister-in-law Renu–who accuses him of murder – were actually having an affair and putting on an act together. But there are other possibilities: Dilip is guilty and trying too hard to feign innocence; he killed his wife because he was mentally unstable; he is innocent of murder but guilty of loving his art more than partying with his wife; he killed her but then forgot about it because he had to finish a painting.

RELATIONSHIP

Marriage *Ittefaq* shows two unhappy marriages, one extramarital affair and a high-stress, temporary coupling of sorts. In fact, marriage itself is the root cause behind this suspenseful tale of murder and subterfuge. First off, we have the unhappy and abusive marriage between Dilip and Sushma. Sushma wants to socialize while Dilip is an introvert who would rather paint than go partying, plus he has severe anger management issues. They cannot reach a compromise and seem to be ill-suited temperamentally. There also seems to be some truth in Renu’s claim that he has been physically and verbally abusive to Sushma. In all this, the film seems to favour the superstar and suggest that Sushma is in the wrong as a materialistic socialite, whereas Dilip is engaged in an intellectual pursuit. As such, Sushma accidentally tearing the canvas gives him an excuse to assault/ punish her, exposing India's culture of wife-beating even in upper-class circles.

We see this casual violence again in his interactions with Rekha; he slaps her on the face several times, shoves her around and grabs her roughly, even throwing her down on the couch at one point. Once they reach an uneasy equilibrium and sparks start flying, Rekha opens up on her unhappy marriage with Jagmohan. Speaking of her husband, she says plaintively that there was a time when he was her dashing prince on horseback, but that the prince changed after marriage into a cold, uncaring person who spent most of the time away at work. By the film’s end, this moment can be

viewed as a red herring – diverting the viewer's attention from what is really going on (i.e., the affair between Rekha and Diwan and murdering then hiding Jagmohan's body)– but one could take it at face value and trust the genuineness of Rekha's emotions.

Illustrative moment: When Sushma asks Dilip, who is painting, to accompany her to their anniversary party thrown by a friend, Dilip tells her to go alone as he must finish the painting. She gets angry, cursing the fact that she's married to him and snatches away his paint brushes. He tries to explain that the painting was due at a famous exhibition the next day. They shout and fight, and she tears through the painting. Dilip, furious, grabs her throat and shakes her, yelling that he will kill her.

Attraction The most intense and interesting 'coupling' is between Dilip and Rekha. There is a slow building of trust and after a while, Rekha and Dilip are soon chatting away like an old married couple. Making a bed together at night, she playfully tosses a floor mattress at him after she lays down sheets for herself on the nearby couch. We are offered a vision of husbands and wives as jailers and prisoners to each other, shifting roles in turn. Underscored by arguments, casual violence, flirtation etc., the moods keep changing like quicksilver as the two have screaming matches, philosophical discussions, belly laughs, a period of drunkenly staring at the chandelier and Rekha jumping into Dilip's arms at a thunderclap, though a deep sadness underlies these interactions. As the cat-and-mouse game continues, we get pulled into their conflict, becoming privy not only to their scheming and manipulation, but also to every nook and cranny of the house, which emerges as the third, albeit inanimate character.

Two other examples of infidelity are also presented: first, Karwe suggests an affair between Renu and Dilip based on the proximity of their rooms but both deny it vociferously, so it remains unclear why Renu gifted a lighter with her initial "R" to Dilip despite claiming to hate him. It would be a very personalized gift and not a typical present from a sister-in-law, so it is possible that Renu was attempting to seduce Dilip for the inheritance. Second, as Karwe correctly deduces, there is an affair between the lonely Rekha and Inspector Diwan, who likely took advantage of her loneliness. When Jagmohan returned home unexpectedly and caught them in a compromising position, they were compelled to murder him and hide the body in the bathroom, right before Dilip hid in the house entirely by coincidence. Later, after the game is up and Diwan threatens everyone, Rekha literally puts herself in front of the gun and repents melodramatically that he was her greatest sin— leading, soon after, to her suicide from guilt and shame.

Illustrative moment: The chemistry between Dilip and Rekha goes off the charts once they reach an uneasy equilibrium. "Bhaag toh nahin jaogi?" ("You won't escape, right?") he asks her. "Abhi tak bharosa nahin?" ("Don't you trust me yet?") she replies, seductively. They settle into a form of uneasy domesticity, bickering and making up; at one point, sounding like a hurt wife, she moans, "Maine tumhein kya takleef di?" ("What did I ever do to you (to deserve this)?").

Justice Human and divine justice are both invoked repeatedly in *Ittefaq*. What is a crime, how must it be punished and by whom? What exactly, in the end, is Dilip guilty of? Neglecting his wife? Having uncontrollable manic episodes? Loving his art above everything else? Physical and verbal violence, for which he apologizes in his saner moments? Murder, in a metaphorical sense if not in reality? During one of his rational phases, Dilip claims that he is caught between a rock and a hard place. If he's insane, he's doomed to be trapped in a mental asylum for the rest of his life. If he's sane, he'll be hanged for a murder he didn't commit. At the mental hospital, he spends his time reading law books; Dr. Trivedi and Prosecutor Khanna joke that he was studying up to represent himself in court. The metaphor recurs when Dilip tells Rekha that he really had no intention to imprison her, playing jailer to her prisoner and vice versa, but he was helpless. Initially, he was running from the law, but after he realizes that Jagmohan had been murdered, he suddenly grows a conscience and puts his own self-preservation in the back burner, deciding to give himself up. He even tells the sceptical Dr. Trivedi that he will unveil the truth; afterwards, they can do whatever they like with him, whether hang him to death or lock him up in a mental asylum forever. He even gives Dr. Trivedi his gun out of respect. What led to this sudden reversal? The answer is unclear, but then without warning, Dilip begins to invoke divine justice. He raises up his hands to pray and suddenly, like a perfect magician, shoves them inside Diwan's trouser pockets and pulls out his own lighter: "When all else fails, the helpless one has to depend on God". This is played through to the bitter end when Rekha kills herself out of shame and guilt and also possibly the fear of human justice. Would she have killed herself had she never met Dilip and managed to hide the murder from the eyes of the law? The question remains unanswered. But it is certain that she escapes human justice, even though it was executed perfectly when Karwe and Dilip unveil the truth about the two murders. So while fate

can play tricks on us, some justice remains in this world, otherwise life would be far too bleak and hopeless, the film seems to suggest. And thus the titular coincidence which leads Dilip through these adversities also becomes a function of divine justice.

Illustrative moment: After they find Rekha dead, Dr. Trivedi says that she has repented for her crime. Dilip, getting emotional, says that he wished our conscience would awake before committing crimes. A voice-over narrator says the closing words: “Thus life stood still. So did these people. But time never stops. This cycle of crime and punishment continues. Perhaps the criminal escapes human justice, but he can never escape divine punishment”.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) How does the plot of the film reflect its name, *Coincidence*?

2) The actor playing Rekha gave a multifaceted performance in this film. Discuss three contradictions in her behaviour patterns and how these add depth to her character. How do these lead to her death?

3) What is your take on Dilip’s mental illness? Why do you think he behaves so rationally at the end without having a breakdown?

4) Lay out the main points of the mystery and how it is solved. Can you find any loopholes?

5) Discuss any one “social evil” that this film sheds light on and also how you would imagine restitution or healing.