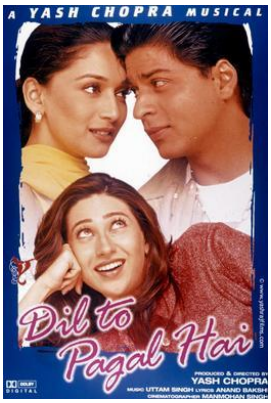
HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Anwesha Maity, PhD.

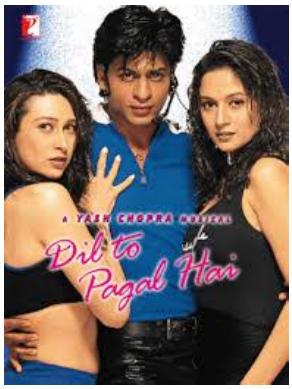
THE HEART IS CRAZY / *DIL TO PAGAL HAI* (1997)

Yash Chopra

Hindi language







Film link: https://www.febspot.com/video/345811

OVERVIEW

Director Yash Chopra (1932-2012) 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 *Veer Zaara* (2004) 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 Chopra's second-to-last film, *Dil To Pagal Hai* is a light-hearted musical romance, starring Shah Rukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit, Karisma Kapoor and Akshay Kumar. It follows the love lives of the members of a musical troupe, in which two dancers (Madhuri and Karisma) get entangled in a love triangle with their director-choreographer (Shah Rukh). The soundtrack was composed by Uttam Singh, with lyrics written by Anand Bakshi. Made on a large budget, it became the highest-grossing Hindi film of the year and received widespread critical acclaim, with high praise for its direction, story, screenplay, soundtrack, cinematography and performances of Khan, Dixit, Kapoor and Kumar. At the 45th National Film Awards, the film won 3 awards, including Best Popular Film. Kapoor's performance as Nisha won her the National Film Award for Best Supporting Actress. Additionally, it received 11 nominations at the 43rd Filmfare Awards, including Best Director (Yash Chopra) and Best Supporting Actor (Akshay Kumar), and won a leading 8 awards, including Best Film, Best Actor (Shah Rukh Khan), Best Actress (Madhuri Dixit), and Best Supporting Actress (Karisma Kapoor).

Background Chopra again had considerable difficulty casting the female leads as Sridevi refused to play Pooja and half-a-dozen actresses refused to play Nisha. Moreover, the script went through about five or six versions, the only consistency being that "someone, somewhere is made for you". Chopra says, "The unit liked it, they thought it was young, of today and happening but there wasn't a story. I thought it just needed outstanding music. Adi (Aditya Chopra) said that he would never make this film but I wanted to do it. My stories were *Daag*, *Kabhi Kabhie*, *Silsila*, *Lamhe*, but Adi feels words

and dialogues, he knows how people speak." Shah Rukh jokingly complained that Chopra made him a lover from this film onwards, whereas he only wanted to reprise a role in *Deewar* and "fight, kill women, throw them off buildings" etc.. Of course there were negative reviews: while Shahrukh was not criticised, it was not his film; as Yash Chopra's alter ego, he is in charge, but mostly from a distance; Karisma's performance was acclaimed, but her costumes were thought too skimpy and appropriate only when we looked at her from afar; Madhuri wasn't as slim as usual and looked like a woman, not a girl, though her acting and dancing was excellent and so on. That said, the film's music broke all records and was sold out in the first week; every single song has so far stood the test of time and is still fondly remembered, especially by the millennial generation, a feat matched by only a handful of Bollywood films.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Rahul	Director of a musical theatre troupe (Shahrukh Khan)
Nisha	Rahul's best friend and lead dancer (Karisma Kapoor)
Pooja	Rahul's imagined "Maya" and the girl he falls in love with (Madhuri Dixit)
Ajay	The son of Pooja's foster family and her best friend (Akshay Kumar)
Ajay's mother	Aunty (Farida Jalal)
Ajay's father	Uncle (Deven Verma)
Tai	Pooja's dance teacher (Aruna Irani)

SYNOPSIS

Rahul, a successful director of a musical theatre troupe in Mumbai, announces plans for his next musical to a cheering crowd: the story of Maya, an idealistic woman who believes in love above all else. Rahul's troupe and his best friend/ lead dancer, Nisha, are flabbergasted as Rahul is unable to clearly communicate his vision to them. In the meanwhile, we see snippets of Pooja's life as a dedicated dancer and dutiful foster daughter to a loving family. Pooja passes in and out of Rahul's orbit, their fateful missed encounters marked by Rahul's whistled tune of one of the superhit songs from the film. Nisha gets injured while practising one day, and the troupe is down by their lead dancer. As luck would have it, Rahul and Pooja unexpectedly end up practising together and Rahul realizes that he has found Maya in her. Rahul chases her and pushes her to give her best to the role, and they grow romantically attached, though neither of them confess their feelings directly. In a plot twist, Ajay, the son of the family that fostered Pooja, returns from London and decides that he must finally marry her as he has loved her for years. Pooja, placed in a bind, is unable to refuse him or say anything to Rahul, while it becomes increasingly clear to Nisha that Rahul, whom she had fallen in love with long ago, was now in love with Pooja. Pooja lets Rahul bring her to visit her old dance teacher, who discerns what's going on at a glance and encourages both of them to confess their feelings, gifting them Ganesh statuettes to "show the way". Ajay returns again with plans for a quick wedding, announcing his intentions to the troupe and shocking Rahul and Nisha. The climax of the film coincides with the climax of the musical, where Rahul has changed the script to a break-up between the lead couple played by himself and Pooja. But in yet another twist, Ajay appears and plays a recording that Pooja had made praising Rahul and gives his stamp of approval. Thus all's well that ends well!

SCENES

Opening scene "What is love"? An ethereal Madhuri Dixit (Pooja) and mischievous Shah Rukh Khan (Rahul) argue about love. Pooja is convinced that God has made a soulmate for everyone; He will give a sign when she meets him. Rahul doesn't believe it. Title credits roll, with many of the cast and crew with their spouses sitting together on a bench. A stunning Karisma Kapoor (Nisha) dances to the superhit song with a dance troupe onstage to "*Mujh ko hui na khabar*" ("I didn't know when love stealthily stole my heart") and Rahul joins in at the end to a raving audience.



A dream of Maya After the show, Nisha scolds Rahul for his late and unexpected stage entrance and they argue; Rahul jokingly says that he can make the make-up artist dance better than her. During the final bow, he promises the audience he'll be back with a new play, Maya, in three months. Later, his troupe members question him about what he's doing or if he has a girl in mind. Rahul says she is in his heart and imagination. He describes her while we see a women in white running in a beautiful green valley. We see Pooja, dreamily looking into the distance, and Rahul calling her.

Pooja's days Pooja lives with her aunt and uncle, a singer who loves parodies and performs for the household staff. Her aunt is very angry that he doesn't let the staff work and disperses them. Pooja serves him some tea, then runs away when her aunt hands her a letter with a cassette tape from Ajay, their son. Her aunt tells her uncle that after Pooja was orphaned and came to live with them when she was 11, she has lighted up their lives and the friendship between Ajay and Pooja is so wholesome.

Friendship Pooja plays the cassette where Ajay jokes with her in his usual manner (they have grown up together and are great friends) and they have a mock back-and-forth conversation that shows how well they anticipate each other's reactions. Ajay will be visiting from London soon. Rahul and Nisha also argue playfully and he arm wrestles her on the bed.



A conversation about marriage At a gym/ studio, Pooja and Anjali practise some dance steps. Anjali says her wedding has been arranged. Pooja wants her to wait for her true love, but Anjali replies that in their culture others choose whom the girl marries and she might fall in love with him. Pooja looks puzzled and says that she will choose her husband herself.

Maya again Nisha tosses away Rahul's folder of ideas and tells him that there cannot be a girl like Maya who actually exists. Rahul again teases Nisha that she's not a girl. The other troupe members agree with Nisha, but Rahul tells them that he won't make any changes to the character. Rahul plays, sings and dances to another superhit song "*Bholi si soorat*" ("You can see her innocent face and charming gaze though my eyes"). Pooja runs and dances dreamily in a green valley while Nisha goes about her usual routine, only joining at the end.



An embarrassing mistake Nisha takes Rahul shopping, making him try on many shirts. At the dressing room, he takes off his pants, realizes he only has shirts to try on and puts on a new one, while whistling his signature tune. Pooja is coincidentally in the next stall and she hears the tune. Rahul is ready to leave, but Nisha laughs at him for wearing no pants. Pooja and Rahul pass by each other in the changing area, where he's shy and awkward and she laughs at him.



Crossed connection Pooja picks up the wrong order of sandwiches for her birthday party. Of course, Rahul has picked up Pooja's cake. Nisha scolds Rahul and convinces him to return the cake. When Rahul arrives, Uncle says that they have already eaten the sandwiches but Pooja would like to thank him. But they don't meet each other; instead, she hears him whistle the tune and is puzzled.

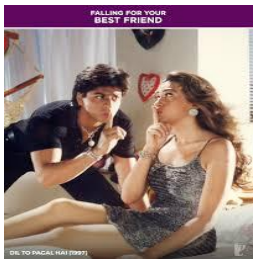
Nisha realizes that she loves Rahul Pooja shops for herself on Valentine's day and Anjali pokes fun at her. Pooja just knows that she will meet her soulmate before midnight. Rahul and Nisha are at a Valentine's party but Rahul wants to leave. They argue about love and lovers spending time with each other. While arguing, he asks Nisha if she can spend her whole life with him, stunning her. After he walks away, she says that yes, she can.



Fantasizing about love At the party, Rahul performs yet another superhit song, "*Chand ne kuch kahan*" ("The moon tells us to love"). Elsewhere, Pooja sings and dances to parts of the song on her terrace and room by herself. Pooja is waiting for her prince charming to literally sweep her off her feet. Nisha fantasizes about being with Rahul alone in a room full of balloons, singing about her love and that Rahul has no idea about it (this song is sung by three characters and singers; this is not uncommon). Nisha leaves.

Pooja's dream comes true Rahul makes a phone call from a booth, yelling about why Nisha left early. Serendipitously of course, it was a cross connection and Pooja is on the other end of the line. He apologizes to her and they chat about the new music that she has playing in her room. He wishes her happy Valentine's and comments that she has a pretty voice. She is about to sleep, when she hears the tune whistled from afar and sees someone walk away. It chimes midnight. Her dream of meeting her soulmate has come true!

Reunion A bespectacled Ajay (Akshay Kumar) returns from London. Pooja finds a large gift box, wrapped in red, on her table. It's a jack in the box! Pooja chases and tries to punch Ajay while he runs away, laughing. They even have their own complicated high five greeting sequence!



Nisha celebrates her birthday Rahul has forgotten Nisha's birthday; he yells at everyone for not reminding him earlier and Nisha tells him that some things shouldn't need reminders. But he hasn't actually forgotten and he got her a little gift! They all head to dinner together. Nisha drinks tequila shots against Rahul's advice.

Pooja and Ajay go for dinner Pooja and Ajay are also having dinner in the same restaurant. Ajay says that he has found his forever love, but Pooja is not convinced given his philandering ways. Ajay doesn't say the name of the girl, but keeps staring at her after distracting her with a ruse. Rahul and Pooja again pass by each other but don't meet.

Nisha's drunken confession Nisha is a boisterous drunk. Later, Rahul carries her home and puts her to bed. She drunkenly confesses to him and asks him not to leave her. He is shocked, but she passes out.

Some fun moments Ajay comes to wake up Pooja in the morning. He almost kisses her, but then screams in her ear, making her jump up. She yells and throws pillows at him. He wants to take her on a trip to another city nearby where he has some work as he will return to London the next day. She tricks him and gets him with the closet door in return for the rude scream!

Ajay proposes to Pooja Ajay and Pooja visit Europa-Park (in Rust, Baden-Württemberg) and see entertainers in Mickey Mouse plush costumes and dancing girls etc.. They sing the duet title song, "*Dil to pagal hai*" ("The heart is crazy") which was another superhit. Afterwards, when its time for him to return to London, he confesses her love for her and proposes to her. She is shocked and doesn't look too happy. But he reassures her that no matter what her decision is, they will remain the best of friends. She remembers Anjali's words about slowly falling in love with her husband and hints that she agrees to his proposal.





Pooja discusses her situation with Anjali Later, Pooja and Anjali discuss what happened and Pooja says that it made her happy to see Ajay being overjoyed with her acceptance. She repeats Anjali's words back to her, but thinks that has only temporarily stepped away from her idea of a dream soulmate- maybe Ajay is that person after all.

Nisha is hurt While practising a dance routine, Nisha hurts her ankle. The doctor says that the ankle is fractured and she cannot dance for three months or more. At the hospital, Rahul teases her and she apologizes for getting hurt. He reassures her that he will take care of her. The troupe members are worried about how they will perform the show now that they've taken money from sponsors.



Finding Maya Elsewhere, Pooja practices her classical dance steps and Rahul also coincidentally is there, playing drums. They have an instrumental duet. Rahul is impressed by her passion and performance. But Pooja leaves without them speaking. Rahul realizes that he has found his "Maya".

Intermission

Rahul chases Pooja Rahul goes and speaks to Uncle about working with Pooja. At the market, Rahul catches up with Pooja and offers her the lead spot to dance in his show. Pooja flatly refuses, but he keeps chasing her, offering explanations and begging her on his knees in the marketplace, embarrassing her to show up for a rehearsal.



Rahul's vision resonates with Pooja She arrives late and the rehearsal initially doesn't dance well, with Rahul pressuring her and yelling at her to be like "Maya". She starts crying and he apologizes. He calms her down and explains his vision of Maya as dreamer waiting for her prince charming, which resonates with her. She gets up and starts dancing in a daze; giving a great

performance this time.



Dancing in the rain At the hospital, Rahul tells Nisha all about how beautiful Pooja is and how well she dances. Nisha gets jealous, though he lies that she is better. Pooja passionately rehearses her parts and gets along well with the group, sharing jokes and meals. One night, after rehearsals, they get wet in the rain, singing another superhit song, "*Koi ladki hai*" ("There's a girl/ When she smiles/ It rains pitter-patter") with a group of kids. They go and see Nisha at the hospital and she also dances with her fractured foot!

God will give a sign Nisha comes home with her aunt and rushes off to the engagement party between two of the group members. Rahul and Pooja are also there. Rahul complains about the institution of marriage but the rituals and fun are enticing to Pooja. She tells him that she is getting married, but details haven't been fixed. He is stunned, but doesn't let it show. Pooja tells him about her soulmate theory and that she has already met him (meaning Ajay), but Rahul is unconvinced. Nisha arrives there, but Rahul has already left to drop Pooja off home. Rahul asks her how he will know if he meets his soulmate. Pooja again says that God will give a sign. Rahul remembers all the moments when they passed by each other unknowingly. He whistles his signature tune while leaving, and Pooja recognizes that.



A dance battle Nisha comes to the dance studio and sees Pooja practising. She joins in with some vigorous moves and Pooja follows suit. Rahul and the rest watch, enthralled. Nisha's injured foot starts bleeding and she collapses on Rahul.

Nisha leaves Later, when Rahul goes to meet Nisha, she is packing to leave and go to London to meet her parents. She tells him straight up that she loves him but he doesn't. They have become very good friends and some distance is needed between them. But they end with a light mood and Nisha goes to say goodbye to the troupe. Nisha apologizes to Pooja for barging in on her performance, saying that she got jealous.

An impromptu performance Rahul is woken up by Pooja impersonating him while she thinks she's alone in the studio. He fanaticizes about kissing her, but only whistles the end of the tune when she can't. This segues into the song of the signature tune, which Pooja and Rahul perform/ practice with the troupe, "*Arrre re arre kuch ho gaya*" ("Oh look, something happened!") with scenes of them getting closer to each other and fantasizing about romance.



Visiting Pooja's mentor The next day, Pooja wants to visit her old dance teacher Tai in another nearby city and Rahul purposely shows up to drive her there. Pooja runs to meet Tai and dismisses her dance class. Tai's dogs assault Rahul, who ends up in the doggy pool with a flower basket on his head! Tai is puzzled to see him and asks Pooja more while she's cooking. Pooja says that Rahul is just a good friend, nothing more.



A day well spent and gifts received Rahul gets along well with dance school kids. Tai tells Pooja that she loves Rahul and she should acknowledge it. Pooja fantasizes dancing with Rahul to "*Arrre re arre kuch ho gaya*" ("Oh look, something happened!") with the kids and Tai. They spend an enjoyable day together. Tai asks Pooja about Ajay's return and gifts her a small Ganesh statuette, telling to be more selfish about what she wants and her love for Rahul. She should keep the statuette with her, as Ganesh will show her the path. On the way out, Tai gives Rahul another Ganesh statuette and tells him to be brave and confess his feelings.

Rahul believes in love now Rahul and Pooja attend a troupe member, Jimmy's wedding. Rahul gives a funny speech about how opposites attract, how he has started believing in love and how God has made soulmates for everyone. Pooja is touched but also sad. After everyone has left, they stay behind in the now-dark ceremony hall searching for Pooja's lost bangle. Rahul has found it of course and he calls her to come closer and closer, and they hug and almost kiss (SRK has a "no-kissing" policy that he broke for the first time for Chopra's last film, *Jab Tak Hai Jaan*, 2012).We have the next superhit dream song, "*Dholna*" ("Darling"). At the end, Pooja runs away.

Nisha sees Pooja and Rahul are in love Pooja and Rahul are both lovesick, unable to concentrate on their regular rehearsals. They act out a scene that reflects their current state. Nisha arrives there and watches them, realizing that they love each other. Everyone applauds their performance. Nisha remembers her words that she'd challenged Rahul about marrying her earlier and leaves without speaking to him.



Nisha's grief Later, Rahul finds Nisha by a lake, throwing stones into the water. She tells him that she's a bad person because she's hurt and angry that the person she loves is in love with someone else. She should be happy for her best friend, but she is not. Rahul also starts crying and says that she isn't bad; God is to blame for these messed up match-ups. Nisha starts crying and throwing stones at the sky and Rahul apologizes to her, both of them crying now.

Pooja records a message for Ajay She tells him that she has found her soulmate. Her childhood dreams were nurtured and grew with her. Ajay is her best friend and that's why she waited for him at the airport. She thought Ajay was the one, but then she met Rahul. She describes Rahul's behaviour and mannerisms in great detail and asks if Ajay will be fine with it.



Aunty is overjoyed that Ajay plans to marry Pooja Ajay calls his mother/Aunty to say that he's returning the next day to marry Pooja. Aunty comes to Pooja to bless her, saying that she had always wanted to have Pooja as her daughter-in-law but she had never pressured her because she wanted Pooja to be happy on her own terms. But Pooja's decision to marry Ajay has filled her heart with joy.

Ajay announces his marriage plans to the troupe Rahul is busy supervising a rehearsal when Pooja comes and wants to talk to him, but he's too busy. She tries a few times, but he gets called away. Ajay arrives and hugs Pooja, telling her that he has come to marry her. Rahul and Nisha are also there. Ajay announces heir wedding plans in three days and invites the whole troupe. Rahul swallows his tears and congratulates them with a fake, hyped up cheerfulness. Ajay takes Pooja off for lunch and Rahul starts giving directions angrily, but Pooja comes back to get her bag. Nisha starts crying.

Rehearsing a sad ending Pooja and Rahul rehearse a scene that again reflects their own situation. He has decided to change the ending to a sad one, with the hero and heroine breaking up. Nisha tells him that she doesn't like the ending and it should be a happy one. Rahul says that people should face reality as it isn't so dreamy. Pooja hears them and runs away crying to the dressing room. Both of them hold their little Ganesh statuettes and cry.



Nisha tells Pooja to be true to herself It's finally the day of the show, which features all the songs, one after the other, to great audience applause. Nisha consoles Rahul in the wings. Before the last scene, Nisha speaks to Pooja and tells her that it's fateful for two people to mutually love each other. Nisha has lived with love in the guise of friendship all her life; now Pooja would be living with friendship in the guise of love if she married Ajay. She would be betraying both friendship and love.





A happy ending They start performing the last scene, where Maya says that she is getting married. Rahul changes the dialogue and asks her if she loved him even for a moment. He keeps repeating his question and she hesitantly and angrily says that she never loved him. Rahul starts walking off stage, but suddenly, Pooja's recording starts playing. Ajay is at the wings, signing at her to go and be with Rahul. Pooja continues her loving words as she walks towards Rahul and tells him that she loves him forever. They hug. Nisha and Ajay and happy-crying. The audience applauds. Ajay cozies up to Nisha and asks if she's married, annoying her. Pooja and Rahul perform the title song "*Dil to Pagal Hai*" ("The heart is crazy")... "Someone, somewhere is made for you".

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Rahul

Rahul, the hero of our film, is a slightly hyperactive director of a musical theatre troupe. Usually full of good-natured bluster, he is successful in finding his “dream girl” Maya/Pooja and holding on to her at the end.

Creative Rahul's theatrical productions are engaging and entertaining to its audience, with sold-out shows as we see in the opening scene. That he has already a fully sponsored show 3 months ahead of time in the cutthroat city of Mumbai, as we learn when the troupe members complain about replacing the injured Nisha, certainly says something about both his creativity and business acumen. Throughout the film we see several sequences of him directing the other performers with the sort of expected hyperactive/genius mode that is stereotypical of theatre directors.

Fun-loving Rahul’s charm stems from his blustering, good-natured character. We see his cheerful and fun-loving character from the way he interacts with his friends to the ways in which he shows his love for Pooja. This is well encapsulated in his catchphrase, “*Marr gaya Rahul*” (“Rahul’s a goner”) which he utters in a gamut of situations- uncomfortable, shy, embarrassing etc.. For instance, when Nisha wants to get drunk at her birthday party, he knows trouble is brewing and says these words!

Romantic The founding premise of Dil to Pagal hai is, indeed, monogamous (heteronormative) romance quite unlike Chopra’s previous films. Though Rahul has the overtly romantic image of Maya in his mind, he is initially cynical about love, lovers, relationships and marriage, but this is something he (and we) realizes is a superficial and constructed contradiction. For when he actually finds his one-and-only “soulmate” Pooja, he is head-over-heels in love, doing the exact same things he previously despised.

Cosmopolitan Rahul has a truly cosmopolitan lifestyle and mindset that could be easily transplanted to any megalopolis worldwide. He is equally comfortable on the stage, in an upscale restaurant, at a mega shopping mall and at a countryside dance school, showing how flexible he is as well.

Pooja

Pooja, the main heroine of *Dil to Pagal hai*, is a somewhat naive, quite romantic and very responsible daughter to her foster family. An average upper-middle class girl-next-door, she is waiting for her Prince Charming to show up and luckily for her, she is able to overcome obstacles to finally be with him.

Accomplished Pooja is an accomplished dancer comfortable performing both Classical Indian and Western dance styles; Madhuri Dixit, the actress who plays Pooja, is professionally trained in Kathak (a North Indian classical dance form with roots in the Mughal court) and is often considered the best dancer amongst Bollywood heroines, so the part was well cast. Pooja initially charms Rahul with her classical interpretation of his impromptu rendition on drums, showing her versatility and practically forcing Rahul’s hand to include more traditional and fusion dance elements in his musical theatre, which it was previously lacking.

Romantic Pooja is the very image of a diehard romantic girl, an idealized vision that perhaps every young Indian woman nurtures but is unable to express/ act upon. While she is demure in her behaviour especially when contrasted with the much more lively Nisha, the world of her dreams is completely unfettered by reality. Of course, despite her training in dance and the potential for an accomplished career there, all she dreams about is finding her soulmate, the ONE that God had placed somewhere upon Earth just for her.

Dutiful Throughout the second half of the film, Pooja is torn apart by her love for Rahul and her duty towards her foster family. She wants to follow her Prince Charming to the ends of the world (or at least the stage), but cannot reject Ajay, who is like a brother to her, because she is afraid of hurting him and her dear Aunty (Ajay’ mother) whose fervent desire was to someday have Pooja as her daughter-in-law. Even though Ajay reassures her that they will always be best friends, she cannot easily shed that commitment until Ajay practically gives her permission to do so.

Nisha Chopra's casting of Karisma Kapoor (from Raj Kapoor's accomplished film lineage) as Nisha was a lucky stroke; the role was previously rejected by a half dozen actresses for not being meaty enough but Karisma brings it to life, so much so that it's difficult to imagine any other actress in that role. Nisha, like Pooja, is in many ways what the average 1990's young Indian woman dreamed to be: extremely rich, unencumbered by family obligations, independent-minded with a booming career in a lucrative profession, and as the cherry on top, possessing an excellent figure and fashion sense, too. Nisha has none of the negative behavioural patterns that are often stereotyped in young women from this demographic (petty-minded, gossiping, bullying etc.) but is straightforward and selfless, no matter how challenging the situation is.

Accomplished Karisma, though not a trained dancer, brings an energy and finesse to her western dance sequences that is simply mesmerizing; in fact, she easily outshines Pooja in a dance-off even with an injured, bleeding foot!

Innocent Karisma has what's usually called a "baby face" in Bollywood and in her early career, she mostly played naive and innocent heroines (with an occasional sexy side) keeping with that image. Being about a decade younger than both Shah Rukh and Madhuri gives her Nisha an age-advantage, too, when it comes to portraying the natural innocence of a young woman not yet tarnished by the "big bads" of the Mumbai entertainment industry; her innocence also places Rahul in the position of a natural "protector" towards her.

Straightforward Nisha is very straightforward about what she wants; from scolding Rahul about his late stage entrance to laughing at him when he forgot his pants while shopping to confessing her feelings for him directly, she wears her heart on her sleeve.

Selfless Nisha deferred to Rahul's wishes from the beginning and this seems almost natural in their director-actor relationship even though they are best friends. But once Nisha realizes that Rahul loves Pooja she is able to overcome her jealousy and sadness to support their relationship, even going out of her way to try and talk some sense into Pooja.

THEMES

Fate Chopra' s films have long focused on the force of destiny or fate, in particular in love, where the couple are made for one another. This itself becomes the organizing theme in *Dil to Pagal Hai*, where the hero and heroine are linked by a series of coincidences even before they have met. From the very beginning, Pooja firmly believes in the (cloying) theory of romantic soulmates and that God will give her a sign when she meets him. Rahul, on the other hand, doesn't believe in love or marriage or even long-term relationships. Apart from Pooja being the literal embodiment of Rahul's imagined Maya, Nisha's injury also becomes a fateful crux which necessitates Rahul to seek a fresh face. Plus Pooja and Rahul share a common passion for and have similar tastes in music, dance and theatre.

Interestingly, this is the first and only Chopra film where God features so prominently as the maker of romantic destiny; needless to say, this God is unquestionably Hindu, showing just how much his son Aditya Chopra's "natural" Hindu religiosity, a centrepiece in his own films, influences the plot. From the little Ganesh statuette gifted by Tai to the emotional scene where Rahul and Nisha blame God for destroying the best-laid plans, we see fate at the heart of this film. Interestingly, also, Chopra does away with the "great Indian Hindu wedding" theme in favour of a Christian ceremony/ service for Jimmy's wedding, providing Rahul an opportunity to speak as the best man on his transformed opinions about love and marriage. This is religious syncretism at the most superficial (in the Indian context) as many urban Indian Hindus accept Christianity and celebrate Christmas wholeheartedly with all the accoutrements, including going to Church for mass and putting up trees; there is an easy back-and-forth that's missing from Hindu-Muslim relations at least (for instance, most Indian Hindus would shudder at the thought of properly celebrating Eid).

Illustrative example: This idea of "God will give a sign when I meet my soulmate" is best encapsulated in the signature tune that Rahul whistles (the tune of "Oh look! Something happened!") but the vibe here is a cheery, intriguing one instead of the creepy, chilling whistling from *Darr* (same actor, same character name). Pooja first encounters this whistled tune in the shopping mall dressing room and by the time it's Valentine's Day, she is convinced that her soulmate is whistling that tune, even though she has not seen him. Rahul and Pooja narrowly miss meeting over half a dozen serendipitous coincidences, like the one on Valentine's Day when Rahul gets her over the phone instead of Nisha.

Love triangle/ quadrangle Once again, Chopra brings us an unusual combination of romantic partners. Rahul and Nisha are long-time friends (though we aren't told anything about their history) with a closeness only deepened in the way working together in theatre does- letting them experience emotions and situations beyond their own real-life intersections. Nisha falls in love with Rahul's wackiness but doesn't bring out his romantic side, as Rahul doesn't really see her as a girl; to him she is "one of the guys", primarily because she dresses and behaves in a highly westernized manner. Rahul's repressed desire for a dreamy romance is embodied in his ideal woman, Maya, even though he professes to be cynical about love itself. In contrast, Ajay and Pooja are childhood friends since she was orphaned at 11 and came to live with Ajay's family. They have a very sibling-like relationship, as is to be expected- Ajay mercilessly teases her and plays pranks and she doesn't hesitate to engage in some rough-and-tumble playfulness with him, even though she is dignified and graceful in her public life. And as for Pooja and Rahul, apart from their meeting entirely based on a series of lucky coincidences, the (only remotely) interesting thing for the unlikely couple is that they draw out hidden positive aspects of each other. Rahul encourages Pooja to be more outgoing and polishes her as a performer, for what use is natural talent and training if not to entertain the spectator? For her turn, Pooja helps Rahul shed his cynical attitude towards love and be more open to that life-altering experience. Interestingly, not once does Rahul chide Pooja for not being selfish enough and choosing her true love, ie. him.

Illustrative moment: The scene on the lakeshore where Nisha angrily/sadly throws rocks into the river is one of the most memorable, emotionally intense and well-executed scenes from this film and 1990's Bollywood in general. Granted, Nisha is endearingly naive and blames herself for feeling jealous and unhappy in a situation where those were the most natural reactions, but Rahul absolves her of blame by shifting it to God, who is the final arbiter of fate and the heart, over which nothing else can hold sway.

Sacrifice One of the most enchanting aspects of *Dil to Pagal hai* is how long-time friends (Nisha and Ajay), while initially heartbroken to find that their respective "best friend cum beloved" (Rahul and Pooja, respectively) is in love with someone else, ultimately support their friends' happiness instead of being selfish. Ajay has loved Pooja for a long time but we don't really see a watershed point with him, like we see with Nisha when she realizes that she has been in love with Rahul all along. After having a string of girlfriends for years, Ajay quite suddenly returns from London and even more suddenly decides that he must marry Pooja, even going so far as to propose to her and tell his mother, to her great joy. Ajay could easily have pressured Pooja into marrying him as everything was in place and she is self-sacrificing to a fault. But he chooses to ham his way through a heartfelt reunion between Rahul and Pooja instead of pressing his claim, that too in the most public manner possible, by playing Pooja's recording to a crowded, cheering audience. Nisha, for her part, comes to terms with Rahul's love for Pooja and her own heartbreak quite gracefully. After the emotional scene on the lakeshore, she fully empathizes with Rahul when Ajay suddenly appears as Pooja's fiance and even sheds tears for his sake when it seems that Rahul and Pooja won't end up together after all.

Illustrative example: We see Nisha's clarity and sacrifice best in the emotionally heightened scene where she confronts Pooja to be honest with herself. Before the last scene of the play, Nisha speaks to Pooja and tells her that it's a matter of great luck for two people to mutually love each other. Nisha has lived with love towards Rahul in the guise of friendship all her life; now Pooja would be living with friendship in the guise of love if she married Ajay. Pooja would be betraying both friendship and love if she were to abandon Rahul now. But unfortunately, her words fall on deaf ears.

Friendship In *Dil to Pagal hai* the central idea was Pamela Chopra's: a story of predestined love and wrongly-paired couples. The family (Yash and Pamela, along with their sons, Aditya and Uday) elaborated on the story, notably by introducing the hero's group of friends, in a manner immediately reminiscent of the American comedy, *Friends* (1994-2004). Family naturally takes a backseat in this configuration that is uber-cosmopolitan and glossy to the extreme (more on this later): Rahul apparently has no family but is successful and rich enough to afford to live at/ own a studio; Nisha's parents live in London and let their daughter gallivant by herself in Mumbai; and Ajay/Pooja's family is both super rich and super liberal. With not a single pesky, tradition-loving, "what will people say"-spewing parent or relative in sight, the youngsters have a field day.

In fact, *Dil to Pagal hai* deserves kudos for portraying deep and wholesome friendships between members of the opposite sex without any overt sexualization of the relationship, though one of the friends is secretly in love with the other. In Indian culture, such friendships are practically unheard of

and even if they occur, are hurriedly corralled into a marriage arrangement lest anything untoward happen, regardless of whether both parties are romantically inclined towards each other.

Rahul's theatre troupe lives in a Manhattan-style loft apartment, complete with a Pepsi vending machine, a fireman's pole and a cityscape of skyscrapers visible through the windows. Gender rules are relaxed: young women like Nisha have their own apartments away from their parents' homes where men can visit freely; Nisha and Rahul go clothes shopping together or to bars and drink tequila slammers; and girls get drunk with no condemnation of their behaviour. The young crowd has birthday celebrations and goes to Valentine's parties and so on. But in true "*phir bhi dil hai hindusthani*" fashion ("All said, the heart is still Indian"), Rahul chooses Pooja over Nisha.

Illustrative moment: It is Nisha's birthday and Rahul insists on going to celebrate at a posh bar-cum-restaurant (even in the 1990's, many restaurants didn't have liquor licenses to make them more family-friendly). The boys want to drink tequila shots and Nisha of course wants one, too, because they just left her by herself and went to the bar. They all line up and do the shot in perfect comedic sync. Then they do it again, and again, until Nisha becomes quite boisterous and Rahul has to carry her over his shoulder and bring her back to her apartment.

Gender: *An ideal Indian woman* The story that the Indian guy may live like a westerner, love his buddies, both male and female, but will fall in love with a traditional Indian girl and the traditional Indian girl must reconcile her family duties with her own desires, is one that would become increasingly formulaic in Bollywood as the decade wore on. One of the pleasures of Chopra's films of course is the presentation of the idealised woman as an object of visual desire. This pleasure is not only for the heterosexual male viewer but also for anyone who enjoys looking at this sort of stylised depiction and relates to her in a variety of complex ways (as discussed below re: fashion and travel). In *Dil to Pagal hai*, we see the two heroines presented as two models of femininity, one the friend and one the beloved, plus the "standard model" Anjali. Anjali, an ideologically conventional Indian woman whom we see only in a couple scenes as Pooja's close friend, seems to be independent and health-conscious, but has no reservations at all getting into a marriage arranged by her family. For her, that is the "realistic", mature way of adulthood, as marriages are not only between two individuals but two extended families. Interestingly, Chopra, who's fond of showing weddings, does not show Anjali's grand Hindu wedding but instead chooses to include the much simpler Christian reception instead.

Next, the friend, Nisha, thinks herself to be on equal terms with the men on all fronts (thankfully, the film doesn't rudely decimate her gender privilege), and despite her revealing clothes, Rahul thinks of her in this way too. When she declares her love for him, he is nonplussed as he has only ever considered her a friend. And finally, Pooja, the beloved, appears in his dreams before he meets her, running through green fields, trailing a chiffon saree. They keep passing each other, but the first time they meet, he sees her dancing without her knowing he is watching her. Her passion and idealism is enough to make him fall in love with her. Unlike Anjali, though, Pooja has always wanted to follow her heart and find her soulmate; Pooja and Rahul having many things in common only helps the heart grow fonder. And then finally Tai, Pooja's dance teacher and clearly a mother figure, encourages her to follow her heart, giving the stamp of societal approval as well.

Illustrative moment: This image of the ideal Indian woman is highlighted in all of Pooja's song and dance sequences, especially those that she performs spontaneously in private spaces or when she doesn't know anyone is watching (cue Chopra's trademark voyeurism here). For instance, in "There's a girl/ When she smiles/ It rains pitter-patter", Pooja gets seductively wet dancing in the rain with Rahul and a group of kids; again, in "The moon tells us to love", she dances and sings by herself, solitary but oh so desirable, in her bedroom and terrace, waiting for her valentine; and of course the dance that makes Rahul fall in love with her, where she gets seductively sweat-drenched in a white, semi-transparent *salwar-kameez* (traditional north Indian women's attire).

Consumerism Undoubtedly, the consumerist and associated pleasures offered by the glamorous realism of Yash Chopra's films is a huge crowd-puller, especially as the lifestyle of the super rich depicted in these films becomes increasingly cosmopolitan from the late 1980's onwards. Chopra first depicted modern, lavish interiors in *Waqt* and set the model which others have followed, with Sadhana playing tennis and swimming in ultra-fashionable garb. From the 1990's, along with relaxed gender roles for urban women, fashion choices, too shifted: previously, western clothes for women were associated with western values and often suggested a certain moral laxity, to say the least. But now, western clothing is worn as fashion: Nisha wears miniskirts, hotpants and cropped tops without any embarrassment while Pooja and the dancers are often clad in body-hugging lycra and American

and British designer sportswear. Certain stars, such as Karisma Kapoor (Nisha), are known to wear the most fashionable clothes and many women would watch her films just to see her latest outfits of peak 1990's fashion. In contrast, Madhuri Dixit (Pooja) is known to dress gracefully in ethnic wear like *lehengas* (full skirt and blouse), *salwar-kameez* and sarees and looks much better in those silhouettes than in western attire, in which she looks simply uncomfortable, particularly in the dance practice sequences. Copying stars' clothes is a universal phenomenon and feeds into the consumerist pleasures of the film, spawning fashion trends and shopping expeditions to emulate the film's glamour in real life.

Apart from fashion, *Dil to Pagal hai* also underscores a bevy of newfangled consumerist cultural practices that began taking root with the "opening of the global market" since the mid-1990's, which may now seem dated. A notable one of these is Valentine's Day, a purely consumerist import targeted towards youngsters, who fill the coffers of companies selling greeting cards, balloons, candy and other largely westernised paraphernalia. Now of course in a majority-Hindu conservative nation; Hindu radical groups in various parts of India like Sri Ram Sena, Shiv Sena and Samajwadi Party have been protesting the celebration and harassing young lovers in public, though most urban centres have not been widely affected.

Illustrative moment: The Valentine's day sequence here is an illustrative example for both consumerism and relaxed fashion and gender codes. Pooja shops for herself on Valentine's day, as she doesn't have a Valentine and Anjali pokes fun at her. Rahul and Nisha are at a Valentine's party but Rahul wants to leave. Nisha fantasizes about being with Rahul alone in a room full of balloons, singing about her love and that Rahul has no idea about it. Later, Rahul gets Pooja on a cross connection and wishes her happy Valentine's. She is about to sleep, when she hears the tune whistled from afar and sees someone walk away. It chimes midnight. Her dream of meeting her soulmate has come true!

Cosmopolitanism In *Dil to Pagal hai*, India is portrayed as a sanitized, glossy high-rise cityscape or as a country resort for a dance school. The characters speak Hindi and shop in Indian markets and at well-known Mumbai stores (The Mumbai Store, Shoppers' Stop and Rhythm House). Shots at the Leelavati Hospital where Nisha is taken for her surgery indicate we are in Mumbai. The only Indian "outdoor" location, Tai's dance school, is named as Khandala, where the use of several specifically Maharashtrian elements confirms that this metropolitan city is indeed Mumbai. However, the characters are all Punjabi, as indicated by their names (e.g. Pooja Malhotra) or other cultural features (e.g. Nisha's aunt speaks Punjabi). But as these details are easily overlooked, the film could almost be set in any metropolitan city in the world. Additionally, overseas space is not only a holiday destination, but also an economic space, somewhere one travels for work, in Germany or Japan, as Ajay does. Thus, *Dil to Pagal hai* reiterates Chopra's vision and conviction that the Indian can wander anywhere in the world and feel at home wherever she or he desires. He or she can pick up and put down the West, because what really matters is a sense of home, somewhere to belong, a *watan* or *desh* (homeland), sanitised and acceptable, with no trace of it being in any way inferior to or "backward" than the West.

Illustrative moment: Ajay takes Pooja on a "day trip" to Europa Park in Germany; this is unrealistic simply given the (10+ hours) flight time from Mumbai and also of course two unwedded young people of opposite genders cannot spend the night together by themselves! The space of the park itself would have been unremarkable and not identifiable as "abroad" except for the presence of many "*firangi*s" (white people) and some park entertainers wearing character costumes and so on, which we don't really see in India in the 1990's. Pooja and Ajay also don't bother to "tone down" their usual boisterousness but she is dressed relatively modestly throughout (the choice of a dull brown for her clothes further suppresses her look).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) *Dil to Pagal hai* is probably the lightest, most charming of Chopra's films. Do you agree? Why or why not?

2) What do you think of the ideas about romance and its cultural accoutrements that *Dil to Pagal hai* portrays?

3) Discuss the trope of friendship in the film with examples.

4) What makes Pooja a better romantic partner than Nisha? Would you have made the same choice

as Rahul in this? Why or why not?

5) Chopra's films have long assumed an easy cosmopolitanism. How is this present in *Dil to Pagal hai*? And is it really that easy?