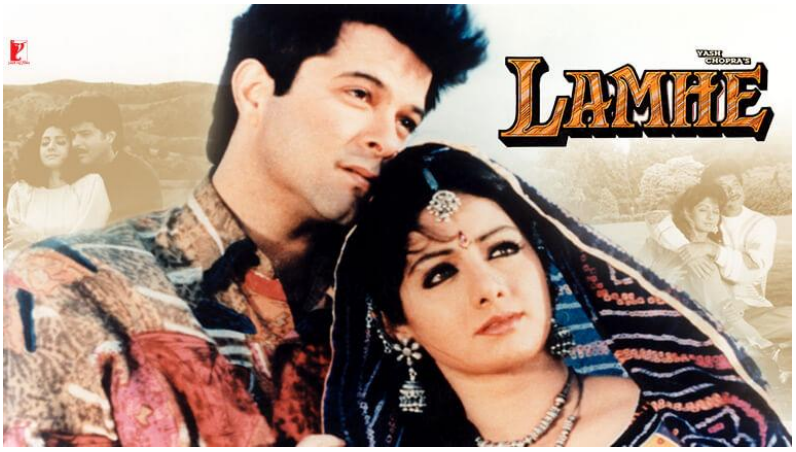
HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Anwesha Maity, PhD.

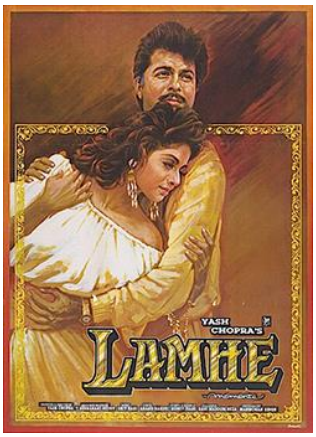
MOMENTS / LAMHE (1991)

Yash Chopra

Hindi language

Film link: https://www.febspot.com/video/787174





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 *Lamhe,* Chopra's last (good) musical romance, was a controversial film largely because of its supposed incest theme and has achieved a near-cult following in the past three decades. *Lamhe* was conceived by Pamela Chopra (Yash Chopra's wife and close advisor) upon being impressed by *Daddy-Long-Legs* by Jean Webster, and derives its major theme of an intergenerational romance from that novel. *Lamhe* was also one of the first of a number of diasporic films that subsequently became popular with the Bollywood filmgoer. The film stars Sridevi (in a double role as both mother and daughter) and Anil Kapoor in lead roles, along with Waheeda Rehman and Anupam Kher in pivotal supporting roles.

Background *Lamhe* was shot in Rajasthan and London. During the London shoot, Sridevi's father unexpectedly passed away and she had to leave for a couple weeks. On her return, she impressed everyone with her performance in a comedy sequence- such was her dedication to her craft. Unfortunately, this would be the second and final time Chopra and Sridevi would work together. Despite its poor performance at the Indian box office and rural areas generally, the film did very well with the overseas audience and in urban Indian metros. Surprisingly, it gathered a whopping total of

13 nominations and won in 5 key categories at the 37th Filmfare Awards: Best Film (Yash Chopra), Best Actress (Sridevi), Best Comedian (Anupam Kher), Best Story (Honey Irani) and Best Dialogue (Rahi Masoom Raza). At the 39th National Film Awards, it also won Best Costume Design.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Pallavi Thakur Bhatnagar/Pooja Bhatnagar-The heroine (Sridevi in a dual role as mother/daughter)
Viren (Virendra Pratap Singh / Kunwarji) The hero (Anil Kapoor)
Durgadevi/Daai Jaa) Viren, and later, Pooja's governess (Waheeda Rehman)
Prem Anand Viren's childhood friend (Anupam Kher)
Siddharth Bhatnagar Pallavi's husband and Pooja's father (Deepak Malhotra)
Anita Malhotra Viren's girlfriend (Dippy Sagoo)
(Kothiwale) Thakur Pallavi's father (Manohar Singh)

SYNOPSIS

Viren (Prince Virendra Singh) comes to Rajasthan for the first time at the age of 18 to sign some papers. His governess, Daai Jaa, begins his introduction to his ancestral culture and its customs, which is continued by Pallavi, his (deceased) father's friend's daughter, through folk music and a visit to the desert. Daai Jaa realises that Viren has fallen hopelessly in love with Pallavi even though she is older than him. Pallavi is oblivious to his feelings, shocking Viren when he finds she is in love with Siddharth Bhatnagar. After her father's untimely death, he helps arrange her marriage to Siddharth and returns to London. Soon after, Siddharth is killed outright in a car crash. Pallavi also dies after giving birth to a daughter, Pooja, who is raised by Daai Jaa. 18 years pass, with Viren never meeting the child. Prem, his childhood friend, supports him. Viren decides to marry his girlfriend Anita, but is thrown into confusion when he meets Pooja for the first time when she is 18, a spitting image of her mother. Daai Jaa and Pooja join Viren and Prem in London. Prem and Pooja become great friends and he soon realises she is in love with Viren. Anita tries to confront Pooja who declares her love for Viren to her and then to him. Viren rejects her so Pooja decides to return to India, but when she is about to leave she finds his drawings of her mother, which she takes to be of herself. She confronts him with these and he tells her of his love for her mother. Rejected and heartbroken again, Pooja and Daai Jaa return to Rajasthan. Pooja agrees to accept an arranged marriage only if Viren gets married first. After receiving his wedding invitation, she decides to break her side of the bargain. Viren and Prem come to Rajasthan to bring Daai Jaa to London and find out about Pooja's defiance. Viren also reveals that hasn't married Anita, after all. They finally declare their love for each other.

SCENES

Opening scene A car drives on a desert road, sand dunes stretching to the horizon. Viren's governess Daai Jaa (Durgadevi) stops the car and tells Viren to touch his head to the ground, which he hesitantly and quickly does and runs back as it's so hot. They chat about the resilience of the local people and the land of his ancestors. He is here to sign some papers related to his ancestral property and wants to return abroad as soon as he can. He receives a grand welcome from the staff and a heartfelt hug from Thakur (his deceased father's friend), who has come to the traditional house after 18 years only to meet Viren. Then he rushes away to hide his tears. Daai Jaa tells Viren that Rajputs don't show their tears to anyone.

Viren peeps at a wondrous woman A group of girls swing on swings and dance in the rain at a neighbouring walled courtyard, led by Sridevi, to the song "*Megha re Megha*" ("O Clouds!"). Viren peeps at them from under an umbrella. He sits absent-minded, when Daai Jaa comes and tells him, among other things, that he is her whole life, after having raised him single-handedly (after his parents' death). +

Viren meets Pallavi Viren walks around the village, follows around the woman he saw and chances upon a traditional song-and-dance, which punctuates the title song "*Lamhe*" ("Moments"). He is a bit morose, but Daai Jaa makes him go to a party at Thakur's house. The woman he was seeking desperately is, surprise! Thakur's daughter, Pallavi. She is a fast talker, saying some funny things about another guest.



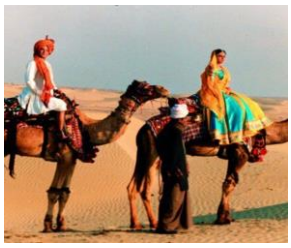



Viren is fascinated by Pallavi The next morning, Viren wakes up to her singing a morning devotional song in the nearby *haveli* temple and terrace. She gives him *prasad* but only in exchange for touching her feet but her father objects. She is funny and uninhibited by social propriety. Viren rushes home and tells Daai Jaa to make his favourite *missi roti* (savoury and spicy flatbread), which they end up eating under an umbrella as it starts pouring. Pallavi praises the food. Viren again tells Daai Jaa how much he cares for her. Pallavi promises to take Viren on a tour.

Viren wants to marry Pallavi Viren tells Daai Jaa that he likes her, but Daai Jaa replies that as Pallavi is older than him, their marriage is not socially acceptable in those parts. The next day, Pallavi sends him a set of local clothes with a letter, saying that Rajasthan wouldn't reveal itself to him if he were dressed as a foreigner. Viren is awkward in his ethnic clothes and Daai Jaa laughs at him.




Viren and Pallavi go on a camel ride Viren falls off the camel while trying to ride it but somehow manages it. Pallavi and Viren ride the camels over the desert landscape. Pallavi tells him that she's bringing him to a place where she visits when she is lonely. They ride all day and rest in the evening at a makeshift camp near a group of *banjara* itinerant singers, where a one of women sings the superhit song, "*Morni baaga mein bole aaji raat maan*" ("The peacock calls to its lover at night"), which Pallavi continues, dancing and singing for a starstruck Viren. Pallavi grows a little pensive.



Pallavi's father dies Thakur gets a phone call from his lawyer that he has lost a court case and is about to lose the *haveli* to his step-brothers. He takes to the bed. Thakur tells Viren to take care of Pallavi, then has a heart attack and passes away. Pallavi breaks down crying. Later, Daai Jaa tells Viren that she hasn't eaten in two days and he should go to her. The funeral rituals are underway when Viren arrives, but Pallavi rushes into the arms of another tall and handsome man in a military uniform and faints! The man brings her inside and Viren returns to his own *haveli*, crying. Daai Jaa tells him to cry it out.

Pallavi and Siddharth are to be married Pallavi tells Siddharth, her fiancé, that her father had left his final wishes with Viren. Daai Jaa tells Viren to return to London right away. Siddharth tells Viren that they are in love but since he was an orphan found on the streets, Pallavi's father did not accept the match. He wants to take Pallavi away for the wedding, but Viren insists that her bridal procession should leave from her home. Daai Jaa also says that she will speak to Pallavi.



Viren confronts Pallavi's creditors The lawyer calls Viren, who asks him to bring the Thakur's step-family to meet him. Viren requests them to not reveal that Pallavi has lost her home to them, but one of her cousins reply that they were peeved to not be able to throw Thakur out as he already passed away. Viren slaps him and tells them to stay away until the wedding. The cousin asks for Rs. 1,00,000 per day and per slap, so Viren slaps him a few more times and tells the lawyer to pay him all of Rs. 10,00,000. Daai Jaa says that she is proud of the man he has grown up to be.

Viren accepts his thwarted love Suddenly, Prem, Viren's childhood friend arrives, singing and happy. Pallavi also arrives and calls Daai Jaa aside. While walking in the beautiful garden, Prem tells that Viren should have been more forthcoming with Pallavi, but Viren says that love should be mutual. Soon, it's time for the wedding. Daai Jaa blesses Pallavi and she says she won't leave without meeting Viren. She asks Viren if he was happy with the wedding. He replies that if she is happy, so is he. They leave, while Viren sits dejected, alone, by a fire on the sand dunes, remembering her.

Pallavi is insulted by her step-family Before leaving, Pallavi gives Daai Jaa the keys. But the step-family has already arrived to gloat that they have won the bungalow. Siddharth yells at them, but Daai Jaa tells her the truth about what Viren did and the money he paid to keep them away. Pallavi says she will never forgive Viren, but Siddharth says it's a debt they can't repay. Prem tells Viren that he'll always have his shoulder to cry on and forcibly takes him back to London.



Siddharth encourages Pallavi's friendship with Viren Pallavi and Siddharth sing a happy, romantic song. They have a happy marriage. One day, when she is writing the latest of many unanswered letters to Viren, Siddharth tells her that Viren is madly in love with her. She is stunned to know the truth and doesn't want to write any more, but Siddharth says that she should give Viren time to get over his first love and tells her to keep writing. In a letter, she lets him know that she will become a mother.

Pallavi and Siddharth die, leaving an infant girl Suddenly, Daai Jaa calls and says that Siddharth had died in an accident. Pallavi, heavily pregnant, was badly hurt. Viren tells the doctor to save the mother, while Pallavi tells the doctor to save the child. But Pallavi's condition worsens. She tells Daai Jaan to raise her child just as she had raised Viren. Viren tells her that he loves her, but she has already passed away. Daai Jaa and Viren complete the funeral rituals just by themselves. Viren scatters her ashes on the desert.

Intermission

Viren avoids Pooja Daai Jaa brings the child home and names her Pooja. A year passes. Viren comes to visit and perform the annual death ritual for Pallavi, but refuses to meet the infant as her birthday and Pallavi's death anniversary was on the same day. We see Pooja grow up quickly, Daai Jaa raising her with love and care. One day, when she is about 12 or 13, Pooja returns from school to see Viren's car outside and wants to meet him. She sulks and sits by his doorstep to meet him. She falls asleep and misses him, but runs behind his car, shouting at him to stop. But he drives away. Pooja tearfully complains to Daai Jaa that Viren never sees her and always leaves quickly, so she will make sure to marry him when she grows up so he can't escape. But his latest gift makes her happy.

Viren has a girlfriend, Anita, whom he intends to marry Prem and Viren ride a helicopter to a huge mansion/ supper club type place, where they meet Viren's girlfriend, Anita. Anita and Prem quip at each other in a friendly way. She tells Viren to move on, but he tells her that he cannot forget Pallavi. Viren tells Prem that he wants to get married and Prem cracks a (rare) homosexual joke, saying that Daai Jaa wouldn't allow a marriage between them. Viren tells Prem that he has decided to marry Anita, then returns to India to perform Pallavi's death anniversary rituals. Prem calls and meets Anita to give her the news, at which she is overjoyed.

Pooja, now grown, is the spitting image of Pallavi Some years pass. Viren has grey hair now, and Daai Jaa has a head full of white hair. Pooja suddenly appears before then. She is a spitting image of Pallavi. Viren is stunned and wants to leave right away, but Pooja requests him to stay for a few days and Daai Jaa also adds on the melodrama by saying he doesn't care about them any more etc.. He leaves, but changes his mind and returns.

Pooja hasn't opened years of presents from Viren At a show, Pooja tells a story about lovers torn apart by family. Later, at the dinner table, she jokes with Viren and shows him a scrapbook with all the cards etc. that he has given her. She hasn't even opened any of the gifts he has given her over the years, waiting for him to hand them to her while saying happy birthday, which he does. Pooja asks if she resembles her mother. Viren, taken aback, leaves her room. Then the next morning, he leaves without meeting her. Daai Jaa tells Pooja that they will be going to London soon.

Prem meets Pooja and warns Viren Viren lies to Prem that nothing happened in India. When they arrive home, Daai Jaa is waiting, as is Pooja. Prem is stunned to see Pooja. She immediately recognizes Prem and they hit it off immediately. Later, Prem tells Viren that god's sense of humour is sick and he should not get involved with Pooja. Then they hear Pooja singing the "The peacock calls to its lover" song as she is watering the garden. Prem goes out to speak to her. They convince Viren to take them on a London trip.



They have a lot of fun around London They walk around, with Prem playing the buffoon and even singing on the streets for money, which Pooja helps him pick up. They play tricks on a guy at a restaurant by pulling out his sweater thread and Prem flirts shamelessly with any women he meets, much to Viren's embarrassment and Pooja and Daai Jaa's amusement. On their return, Viren scolds Daai Jaa for letting Prem and Pooja embarrass him. Prem tells Pooja that Viren is angry because he was finally feeling happy, and that he likes watching old Hindi film songs.





Parody songs Viren is watching the iconic "*Pyaar hua ikrar hua*" ("There was love, there was a confession") song when Pooja and Prem come and assault him in full costume. They keep reenacting several iconic and evergreen film songs in ridiculous props and wigs, chasing Viren around. He sulks but finds no place to escape in his mansion. He gets into the car to leave but they keep at it! He runs out of patience and slaps Prem. They pretend to walk away in a huff, but return with another iconic song that Daai Jaa herself sings and dances to (not coincidentally, one of Waheeda Rehman's own iconic songs, "*Aaj phir jeene ki tamanna hai*" ["Today, I again feel the desire to live"]). Finally, Viren gives in and joins the merriment.



Anita intrudes Suddenly, Anita arrives and Viren leaves with her. Anita tells Viren that he doesn't need to close his eyes to remember Pallavi now that Pooja is here. She doesn't want to share him.

Pooja invites Viren to dinner Just as he's leaving for work, Pallavi hears the car, jumps out of the bathtub, runs to his convertible, hops in and invites him for dinner. It is her birthday. Pooja teases Daai Jaa with a white facial mask, which makes the sides of her hair white. Pooja asks Daai Jaa if she would look nice in grey hair like Viren. Viren, at the office, realizes that he had forgotten Pallavi's death anniversary. He gives Prem Pooja's birthday gift and asks him to convey that he cannot come to dinner. Prem rails at him to "keep the dead happy". Later, Prem gives Pooja the gift.

Pooja dreams of love Later, she goes and finds Viren sitting by a fire by the lake. She takes the unopened gift with her. He opens it and puts on a pretty necklace on her. It segues into another superhit romantic song, "*Kabhi Main Kahoon"* ("Sometimes I say, sometimes you do, that I've given my heart to you"), featuring all the fun activities from the England countryside, like horse riding, sailing and jumping on grapes. This was actually something Pallavi was fantasizing! Viren quickly leaves.



They go on another trip At the breakfast table, Pooja cuts her hand and Viren quickly starts sucking it to stop the blood. Anita calls to have lunch with him. Pooja and Prem are peeved that he is wasting the unusual lovely weather. He leaves, but again changes his mind and takes them on a picnic. They have fun riding swan boats, lazy river rafting, riding a roller-coaster and other rides at an entertainment park etc. They even have a video recording, which Pooja laughs while watching. In another room, Daai Jaa and Prem allude to what's going on. She is worried to see either of them hurt, but Prem assures her that it'll be OK.

Anita grows jealous Pooja has fallen asleep on Viren's shoulder. Anita suddenly comes and sees them like that. She shoos Pooja away and starts screaming at Viren (finally!!) and tells him it's been 18 years that Pallavi has died. She hasn't waited 5 years to take off some other woman's hair off his shirt. Anita points out that Pooja is madly in love with him and so on.



Viren avoids Pooja Pooja goes to greet Viren in the morning but he immediately leaves without eating breakfast when he sees her. Pooja keeps waiting for Viren all without eating. Viren returns and says that he won't eat dinner. Daai Jaa tells Viren that he shouldn't be so mean to Pooja. Prem also reassures her and tells her that Viren probably isn't in love with Anita. He advises her that one should always confess their love to the other person.



Pooja snubs Anita Viren leaves by himself and Prem drops Pooja off to a clothing store, where she was just choosing an ugly sweater in bright blue for Viren when Anita coincidentally meets her. She says that Viren doesn't like bright colours. They chat over coffee where Anita tries to warn her off. She says that Viren has raised Pooja and there is a heaven and hell difference between their love for Viren. Pooja smartly replies that Viren just provided the housing; he didn't raise her, and Anita has no idea what her love is like. She snarkily tells Anita that at least she is a burden on him, but what is she to him? Does he love her? Anita has no words.

Viren rejects Pooja's confession She brings the gift to Viren, who first says it's a bother for her, but takes it back. He doesn't like the sweater and she tells him about meeting Anita at the store, and that if he doesn't want to wear it he should throw it away. Then he puts the sweater on. He has a request. She should get married to someone. He promises to get her to marry the guy she loves, unless she wants an arranged marriage. She confesses her love and Viren is angry with her and keeps yelling at her, then slaps her. The scene segues into an angry dance by Pooja, to rousing instrumental music.

Tension in the air Viren comes and tells Anita that he wants to marry her. Prem chastises him for running away from love, fixating on the past and hurting Pooja. Viren replies that the age difference is too much between him and Pooja. He tells Pooja and Daai Jaa about marrying Anita at the dinner table. Pooja leaves without finishing her meal. Prem calls him stone-hearted. Pooja, crying, tells Daai Jaa that she wants to return to India.

Pooja dresses up for Viren Pooja writes a letter to Viren, writing that she loved him from even before she knew what love was. She wishes him a happy life ahead. She leaves the letter on his bed and sees a sketch of herself wearing *sindoor* (vermillion powder worn by married Hindu women on their hair parting) on his night stand. That makes her ecstatic and we go into another song where she jumps around on her bed and puts on makeup etc. and dresses up in a pretty orange *lehenga choli,* (long, full skirt, blouse and veil) just like her mother.



Confrontation She ambushes Viren when he walks him, all dressed up like her mother. Viren is stunned. She insightfully tells him he is afraid of being rejected by his dead love who never loved him. There is no age in love. He tells her that he doesn't love her. Then she shows the painting. There is only a single difference between the painting and her- a single pinch of *sindoor*, which he should put on her. She holds out a small vial of *sindoor*.

Viren hurts Pooja again Viren, furious, slaps it out of her hand and drags her upstairs to his room to show what the difference between them is. He pulls out some of Pallavi's mementoes, an anklet, pictures and letters, a dried flower. Pooja is stunned to discover that Viren is still in love with her mother and is always reminded of the past when looking at her. She rails at him, saying that she could fight with the world for him, but cannot defeat a shadow of the past. She now understood why he never once met her in all 18 years that she lived in his *haveli*. She tells him that Pallavi only loved her father Siddharth. He has wasted 20 years of his life on someone who never loved him, and she is about do the same.



Pooja and Daai Jaa return to India Pooja returns to her room and cries uncontrollably. It's time for Daai Jaa and Pooja to return to India. Pooja gives Viren an envelope. Daai Jaa tearfully tells Viren that she has become a mother to him. Viren hesitates to ask her to stay for his wedding and lets them go. He finds the necklace in the envelope that Pooja returned. They reach India.

Prem confronts Viren Viren tells Prem that he feels that he's taking advantage of his friendship and he should return to India to his family after 18 years. Viren doesn't deserve his fidelity and Prem should leave him. Prem slaps him hard and calls him a coward who burns everyone. He should realize that he loves Pooja. Pallavi was no one to him, a one-sided love. He shouldn't hide behind excuses and recognize that Pallavi never loved him but all Pooja did was love him. He should

understand the difference between Pooja and Pallavi.

Pooja asks that Viren marry before her Back in India, Daai Jaa is morose. Pooja tells her to visit Viren for a few days to bring her smiles back. Daai Jaa tells her that she has raised both of them with equal love and that's why they hurt her. Daai Jaa asks Pooja to get married as Viren would never forgive himself otherwise. Pooja replies that she would do anything for Viren's happiness, but Viren should marry first, as he's the "older son".

Viren lets go of Pallavi's memories Daai Jaa calls Viren to tell him that Pooja has agreed to get married only if he marries Anita first. Viren remembers Pooja in all her moods and burns the letters from Pallavi. He tells Anita that he is now hers. Anita asks him to close his eyes and he sees Pooja in his mind's eye. He is shocked! Viren's wedding card arrives and Pooja comments that Anita would be very happy. He calls and says that he has gotten married but Pooja now breaks her promise that she will marry someone else. She has her whole life to figure out what she wants now.

A surprise visit Viren and Prem decide to give Daai Jaa a surprise visit without Anita. Daai Jaa says she cannot leave Pooja. Viren is shocked to learn that she has refused to get married. Pooja performs a story at a show again, that was basically the story of her unrequited love.

All's well that ends well Just as she's leaving, Viren comes to meet her. Pooja is surprised and tearful. Viren asks about her husband and wants to meet him. She lies and Viren yells at her for lying to him. She angrily and tearfully tells him that he of all people has no right to speak to her that way. He turned her away as he couldn't bear her truth, so he shouldn't get so worked up over her lies. Viren finally confesses that he hadn't gotten married to Anita. He was also lying and that was the answer to her question. He never loved Anita; she was a good friend and would remain so. But had fallen in love with her, not someone else (i.e., not Pallavi). He tells her, "I love you, Pooja" and she comes rushing into his embrace.

Prem arrives, singing the "*Kabhi Kabhie*" title song from *Silsila.* Daai Jaa also appears. Pooja and Viren fly away on a private jet. "Moments of love begin…"

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Pallavi/Pooja

Insofar as Pooja is Pallavi's functional double, in addition to being played by the same actress, Sridevi, some core elements are repeated in the characters, with only a few differences. The mother-daughter characters are inverse reflections of one another, and are played in such distinct fashion that one never feels one character intruding into the other, a perennial fear of actors playing multiple roles in one film. One prominent reviewer probably said it best in her review of her award-winning performance: "Sridevi...becomes an incarnation of two women whose lives (and deaths) are bound by the nature of Love. Sridevi has pushed the limits of acting with *Lamhe*, and like the film, she has decided that there are no limits." The discussion below is however, not exhaustive.

Feisty Both mother and daughter are uninhibited by social convention to a great degree are always have smart/ witty comments in every situation. For instance, Pallavi casually tells Viren to touch her feet as he's younger than her (also indicating that she doesn't see him as a potential lover), while her father vehemently objects given his status as a prince. Similarly, Pooja always brings a fresh, feisty air and is even more uninhibited than her mother; on her 19th birthday, she doesn't hesitate to jump out of the bathtub, barely throw on some clothes and jump into Viren's luxury convertible quite wet, all to invite him for dinner.

Persistent Both Pallavi and Pooja are persistent in pursuing their hearts. Pallavi, though she keeps her true love hidden from the people around her, seems to bloom only after her marriage to Siddharth (both literally and figuratively). In the one scene where she's writing a letter to Viren, she looks content in a way we haven't seen her before when she was at home: softer, more radiant, and shorn of the deep pensiveness that marked her earlier time with Viren. Pooja, taking her "daddy issues" to a new level, ups the ante with her incessant pursuing to Viren when she directly snubs off her romantic rival, Anita, about being nothing to Viren and that she'll make him wear that ugly sweater of her choosing. Viren was not only the father figure in her orphaned life, he was the man who could have been her father if her other had reciprocated his ardour. But for Pooja, bred on Viren's intermittent visits to his ancestral property in Rajasthan, there was no distinction between Prince Charming and this long-distance godfather. Hers was the love that knew no barriers. Neither spatial,

nor temporal, nor of age. Even the knowledge of her beloved's repressed passion for her deceased mother did not act as a deterrent. For not yet being 20 years old, Pooja is remarkably insightful and mature.

Fashionable Both Pooja and Pallavi are quite fashionable (going by their contexts) and care greatly about their appearance. Pallavi is a devout Hindu Rajputani, always dressed in the local, elaborate ethnic attire with her head covered. Pooja, just to visually contrast with her mother, sports a short bob and usually wears skirts, fitted blouses, shorts and leggings (nothing too revealing but right in the 90's style) at home and *salwar-kameez* (long shirt-like top and trousers) when she's performing her shows.

Traditional Whatever the differences in their appearance and mannerisms (Pooja for one is a Pandora's box of mischief) hold the "true" traditions of their culture close to their hearts. Pooja performs a Hindu worship ceremony and attends a party in the same attire with equal ease. When Pooja thinks of impressing Viren, she dresses up in a *lehenga choli* with all its elaborate accessories. And finally, music of the soil, the "*Morni baaga mein bole, aaji raat maan*" ("The peacock calls to its lover at night"), ties these two women who had never met across the generations.

Prem

Anupam Kher, one of Bollywood's top comedic actors, shines in this supporting role especially with Sridevi, whose comic timing is excellent as well. The scenes featuring Pooja and Prem crackle with a cheerful energy that's missing in the other characters, notably Viren. Prem is an unwavering friend to Viren and doesn't hesitate to point out his bullheadedness as needed.

Loyal Prem is the epitome of "in sickness and health" to Viren. He has been Viren's steady companion, providing succour after Pallavi's death. We have no idea where he was before then, though, as he doesn't have the ingrained characteristics of an NRI as Viren does. From his opening song, "*Tum ne bulaya aur hum chalein aayen*" ("You called, and lo, here I am/ with my heart in my hands" from *Rajkumar,* 1964) to the (gay) joke, that if Daai Jaa had allowed it, he would gladly have married Viren- Prem is the only constant in Viren's life for the past 18 years.

Underappreciated Viren only occasionally acknowledges and appreciates Prem's unwavering, unconditional friendship, usually treating him as a nuisance who embarrasses him with his flamboyant moves especially out in public. This comes to a head when Viren, having made up his mind to push Pooja away, tells Prem also to return to his home in India- he had already sacrificed 18 years of his life. Prem, furious, slaps him hard and calls him a coward who burns everyone.

Voice of reason The clown is often the wisest, as literary and cinematic tradition goes, and Prem is no different. When he's not busy playing the buffoon, he has some level-headed wisdom to offer to the befuddled and obsessed Viren. From the beginning, he advised Viren not to get too enmeshed with his feelings for Pallavi, but his warning fell on deaf ears. Later, after Pooja's appearance, Prem repeatedly chides, scolds and argues with Viren to let go of the past and recognize that Pooja loves him, and that there is nothing immoral in reciprocating her love despite their age gap. He also advises Pooja to confess her feelings, which moves the plot forward.

Humorous This whole story of a man being obsessed with his dead, unrequited love for 18 years and a young woman with monumental "daddy issues" who would give an arm and a leg to have him would have been very oppressive, had it not been for the light-hearted moments that Prem inspires. From their visits out to London and the countryside, to the parody song sequence, to his indiscriminate and over-the-top flirting with all the likely and unlikely women he sees, Prem keeps the audience chuckling and guffawing.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Classes*:*

Caste The real path-breaking story here perhaps belongs to Pallavi, who married someone she loved, someone who was picked up from the streets and raised in an orphanage (Chopra again includes an orphaned character), whose caste and religion is unknown and who has worked hard to become a ranking member of the Indian military. It must be noted here that Rajasthan ranks in the top 5 states in India for "honour killings" (and not coincidentally, female foeticide): it is a place where

parents don't hesitate to kill their children if they marry out of caste. So despite her father's nauseous caste pride and being born in an upper-class, upper-caste family, Pallavi and Siddharth's interfaith/intercaste relationship is much bolder, contextually, than Viren and Pooja's age-gap romance. That said, Chopra makes it palatable to the average Indian audience by giving Siddharth an upper caste surname (Bhatnagar), having plot armour fail Pallavi's father (i.e. killing him off) before he can object to their union, and having Pallavi's father hand off her responsibility to Viren with the barely veiled suggestion to marry her, even though she was older than him; a caste match was more acceptable than the other option for him. This is perhaps also the real structural reason why Viren never attempts to recover Pallavi's ancestral property from the evil step-family and leaves Pooja without an inheritance. In fact, not once do Daai Jaa, Pooja or any other character mention that she, too, is from a noble family.

Illustrative moment: Viren, recently crushed by the knowledge that Pallavi loves someone else, finds himself in the awkward situation of having to meet Siddharth who calls on him. Siddharth tells him of his background as an orphan, how he met Pallavi and they fell in love, and how they were waiting for the right time to get married against Pallavi's father's wishes. Though Viren handles it with as much grace as he can muster (he's only 18 or so at this point), it's abundantly clear to Siddharth that he is madly in love with Pallavi, though she herself never recognizes it.

Class*: the uber wealthy* Viren is literally a prince, "*kunwarjee*", likely a descendent of a small colonial princely state's rulers or a *zamindar* family that had managed to hold on to its (ill-begotten) riches after Independence (most *zamindari* land was seized by the government and redistributed after Independence). His background isn't explored at any depth; all we know is that his parents passed away when he was very young and he was raised by Daai Jaa in London. He is obscenely wealthy. Nothing perhaps underscores that fact as well as that, at the tender age of 18, he takes on the financial burden of raising Pallavi and Siddharth's daughter, Pooja, without so much as a second thought and even lets her use the Rajasthan house exclusively. He certainly seems rich enough to buy her mother's property back from the step-family, but doesn't go that route, instead keeping Pooja financially dependent on him.

Viren owns (at least) two lavish estates in Rajasthan and the English countryside, along with undisclosed business ventures. The setting in Rajasthan, with its luxurious *haveli*s and elevated architecture, along with the remnants of some of these pre-Independence, obscenely rich families, helps establish Viren's background here more plausibly than in Chopra's preferred Punjab- (erstwhile) Uttar Pradesh region. Beyond this background, however, the interiors of both his Rajasthan and English countryside houses are far from being lavish or opulent. The Rajasthan *haveli* is starkly minimalistic, with a wide and nearly empty foyer/living area; the few pieces of furnishings therein are unremarkable. His own room and Pooja's room are small and cozy, with much clutter and outdated or oppressive furniture. They have no visitors, relatives coming over, or house parties. Likewise, his English mansion is an upper-class country house, a true class marker, yet Viren does not use this space in the way that the English aristocracy or upper middle class would: there are no country activities, antique furniture or country clothes in evidence, but instead televisions, fully-equipped kitchens, luxury cars, city clothes and plastic garden furniture.

Illustrative moment: "The slap"- No better testament to Viren's wealth (and naivety-driven ego) can be found in this film. When Viren requests Thakur's step-family to not reveal that Pallavi has lost her home to them, one of her cousins reply that they were peeved to not be able to throw Thakur out as he already passed away. Viren, enraged, slaps him hard and tells them to stay away until the wedding. The cousin asks for Rs. 1,00,000 per day and per slap, so Viren slaps him a few more times and orders the lawyer to pay him all of Rs. 10,00,000. But the villainous cousin reneges on the deal, arrives after 6 days per their original demand and confronts Pallavi. Pallavi, too, raised in riches herself and kept ignorant of the decline of her family's finances, doesn't comment about the massive sum that Viren had spent without batting an eyelid, just to keep them away.

Lifestyles: Viren has received a "proper" upbringing in the U.K. by Daai Jaa, his governess, who does seem to be quite distinguished herself but hails from a small Rajasthani village. How she ended up in that unlikely position is not explored- only that she has forgotten all about her own family/ past in all the years of taking care of Viren. Viren does not live like an Englishman, but like a rich Indian in the U.K. and as such may serve as an aspirational model of the successful NRI (Non-Resident Indian) businessman in terms of his lifestyle, in particular in the international "five-star" appearance of his vast English estate. He himself upholds old-fashioned ideals of how to be a successful member of the British Indian community, its own class in many ways (more on that below),

and is solidly mocked for it. However, his ragtag “family” couldn’t care less about appearances; for them, extreme wealth means a seamless transition of their preferred “five-star” lifestyles anywhere they go. The physical surroundings may change as they all move easily and luxuriously around the world, but they see no need to change anything about themselves, food preferences, clothing and so on. Prem and Daai Jaa are completely untouched by the U.K., which seems somewhat surprising as they have spent the majority of the past 18 years there. And as the Indian audience experiences London and the English countryside mainly through Pooja’s fresh and “native Indian” eyes, we get a mishmash of (classless?) public spaces, such as Whiteley's shopping mall, London Airport, Trafalgar Square and Regent's Park, although her imagined romantic song sequence is set in the Lake District. The English countryside is meaningless for these characters, who eschew common activities like long country walks but indulge in such alien pastimes as grape-pressing and lighting log fires in the open, all for the sake of exoticizing U.K. for the (internationally aspiring) middle-class audience in India. For Pooja especially, and the audience by proxy, the west is a place where one can indulge in infinite consumption, shopping, theme parks etc. without having to care about the oppressive “what will people think” and the numerous problems that are part and parcel of a “third-world” home in India. Interestingly, “the family” is remarkably isolated back in Rajasthan; they have no friends, don’t attend any events or visit anyone or travel locally. Any connection to their “roots” is only mentioned in passing, as when Pooja mentions that the folk song is etched into the soul of every Rajasthani girl, despite being very westernized herself (in dress at least, to contrast with her mother).

Illustrative moment: The London outing serves as a good example for this kind of fun, effortless, “touristy” vibe that only way too much money can buy. Prem plays the buffoon and sings on the streets for money, which Pooja helps him pick up; not because they actually need it, but it was a fun thing to do, of course. At a restaurant, Prem casually starts unravelling a loose thread from an unsuspecting (white) man’s sweater, who for some reason isn’t the least bit offended. Prem also flirts shamelessly with all the women he meets, much to Viren’s embarrassment and Pooja and Daai Jaa’s amusement.

Gender*: The “ideal” modern Indian woman* In *Lamhe*, women represent the NRI’s links with India, in particular Viren’s (and Chopra’s) nostalgia for beautiful women. We see not one, not two, but four strong women shaping the plot and the hero. Part of Viren’s complicated relationship with India stems from the fact that it belongs to the women Viren has lost: his mother, about whom we know nothing, and his first love, Pallavi. These figures find substitutes in the film in his foster-mother, Daai Jaa, and Pallavi's daughter and double, Pooja. Daai Jaa, (lit. Daai= midwife/ nursemaid, Jaa= shortened from *jaan*, life/ love) his governess, is the archetypal maternal figure of Hindi movies: kind, gentle, selfless, nourishing. She is a nostalgic figure to the diasporic audience, almost a representative of India itself. Her real name, Durga Devi, has long been forgotten along with everything else about her. Played by Waheeda Rehman, a screen idol of the 1950’s-60’s, she provides further nostalgic connotations for the older diaspora, who remember her from their youth. Next, the lively Pallavi represents a certain ethnic mode of the “Indian woman”, which her even more uninhibited daughter Pooja has inherited, despite her western gloss, through her knowledge of folksongs and folktales. This, along with the use of the doppelganger, reassures the audience that however much a woman may change on the surface, she remains a guardian of traditions, culture and family values. At the end of the film, Viren ultimately must return to Rajasthan, to Pooja, the ideal “modern yet traditional Indian woman”. And he can do this only by leaving Anita behind, perhaps because she wasn’t traditional or passionate enough. Anita, of diasporic Indian origin (evident from her accented Hindi), who had loved him for 5 years and whom he jilted, could have been depicted as a full-on vamp. But instead she’s a bit cold and logical, but also fully empathetic, recognizing, before Viren does, that he is in love with Pooja and not her.

Illustrative moment: A good example of romanticizing the “modern yet traditional Indian woman” is when Pooja, discovering a sketch of Pallavi in Viren’s room, mistakenly thinks Viren is in love with her. She promptly changes from her usual western attire of t-shirt and leggings to a pretty orange *lehenga-choli*, one very similar to the outfit her mother had worn (likely an heirloom) and sings the song, “*Meri bindiya”* (“My bindi” [coloured dot on the forehead, worn by Indian women]). Viren, when confronted with this ethnic version of Pooja looking exactly like Pallavi, but (to him) an inferior copy of the “real thing”, finally loses his self-restraint and drags her to his room to show her the truth: that he hasn’t stopped loving her mother for the last 18 years. Only when he faces the possibility that Pooja too, like Pallavi, would marry someone else, does he come to his senses.

Diaspora: *The “foreign-retuned” Indian man vs. the second-generation expatriate* The

“foreign-returned” Indian man has been a stock character in films and literature from the earliest days, such as *Bilat Pherat* (*The England Returned,* N.C. Laharry, 1921). The character has usually returned from a visit or a substantial stint abroad; the remarkable change in his mannerisms etc. is seen as more of a comedic device than a social marker. There have, however, been far fewer films set genuinely in the diaspora, with second or third generation Indians as protagonists, as Viren is here. Chopra is again a trendsetter here with *Lamhe.* The 1990’s and 2000’s saw an explosion of films in which at least one major character has been raised abroad and returns to India in search of their roots; for example, *Dilwale Dulhanya Le Jayenge* (*The Brave-hearted wins the bride,* Aditya Chopra, produced by Yash Chopra, 1995) and *Pardes* (*Abroad*, or lit. *Another Country,* Subhash Ghai, 1997). The Indian experience presented from the eyes of the diaspora is highly romanticised; it’s conservatism, taboos and problems whitewashed in favour of a supposedly gentler, more community-oriented existence.

In the 18 years after Pallavi’s death, Viren has internalized many old-fashioned concepts of English ethnicity which are still recognised in India, such as introversion, self-restraint, formality and a dislike of gaudy/ bright-coloured clothes. This gentle mocking of the westernised Indian is one which some British Indians like to project about themselves, where there are no negative images of westernisation, although opportunities for this abound in the text. This may be a utopian rendering of a non-racist Britain, but also reflects the view of the elite Indian diaspora (in U.K. and elsewhere) who argue that their wealth, social status and independent business enterprises have largely protected them from at least overt racism.

That said, the plausibility of Viren being a member of the second-generation British Indian diaspora continues to give us pause: it’s unclear why Daai Jaa, his sole guardian, would choose to raise him in a foreign land, U.K., all by herself, instead of returning to India (better family support and resources). Maybe she was merely following his deceased parents’ wishes; the film does not explain and Viren visiting India for the first time only on reaching adulthood is more likely a plot device to justify his age-gap romance with Pooja more than anything else. Another loose thread is Prem’s background; Prem calls himself Viren’s “underwear buddy” (*langotiya yaar*, i.e., childhood best friend), but his entire family is in Delhi and he has spent 18 years providing Viren a “shoulder to cry on” after Pallavi’s death. Where was he for the first 18 years? And why does he, too, not display any common features of the British Indian diaspora? Further, it’s unclear, at the end of the film, whether Viren and Pooja would settle in India or abroad after the marriage. The film gives us no answers.

Illustrative moment: Viren is a typical NRI hero (as imagined by an Indian film-maker who is not a member of the diaspora, of course) whose values remain Indian in spite of his foreign upbringing and gloss, and who is uncorrupted by the temptations of the west. Although Viren's lifestyle and mannerisms are not recognisable as English to the English, to us (his audience) his over-Anglicised mannerisms are comic and his stoicism, hollow. This is best seen in his temper tantrum at the end of the London tour, when he yells at Pooja, Prem and Daai Jaa for thoroughly embarrassing him in public and now he “can’t show my face anywhere”. Of course, since he doesn’t socialize at all, this perceived public embarrassment is totally imaginary and it’s actually his family who, in behaving as if they don’t care at all about what others think, have actually grasped the truth of the situation.

The Bollywood film abroad: When shooting overseas became popular after Raj Kapoor’s *Sangam* (*Union*, 1964), it was often justified in the plot through the device of a holiday or a medical visit (for instance, in *Chandni*), although not necessarily crucial to the plot. Foreign locations are often an excuse to show spectacular scenery in tourist destinations or rich and exotic consumer lifestyles, which the “mango people” (*aam janta*), or public, can only, mostly, fantasize about. Chopra has been a key figure in this trend: once the exotic-value of popular Indian tourist destinations like Kashmir, Nainital and Shimla were wearing off (better and more affordable travel and accommodations since the 1990’s), he went to the tulip fields of Holland (for *Silsila*; followed by Switzerland (for *Faasle* and *Chandni*) and Germany (for *Dil To Pagal Hai*), while making his indoor sets ever more international or even transnational. Film-makers argue they also include foreign locations for commercial reasons, namely that the audiences enjoy seeing exotic locations, they get more value for money from their stars who are less inclined to cancel shoots and who regard the travel, on which they usually bring an entourage, as something of a perk. Yet overseas locations also perform a wide range of functions and meanings within the text, including the visual pleasure of spectacular, exotic locations or ideas of places suitable for romance, mainly parks and gardens. They also suggest that the moment of love is not bound by the chronotopes of the mundane, the place of everyday life, the moment of leisure, but can move effortlessly in time and place, just as most “item numbers” do- hit a pause on the progress

of the plot. The songs also often involve numerous costume changes, thus reinforcing the an excessively consumerist lifestyle already invoked by travel for leisure, an emblem of the cosmopolitan Indian. (From Rachel Dwyer, *Yash Chopra: Fifty Years in Indian Cinema*)

Illustrative moment: Pooja's imagined superhit romantic song, "*Kabhi Main Kahoon"* ("Sometimes I say, sometimes you do, that I've given my heart to you"), ticks all these boxes and more. Featuring many exotic and fun activities from the England countryside, like horse riding, sailing and so on (whether factually accurate or not), along with prancing around in beautiful gardens wearing a different set of designer clothes in every sequence, is basically every upwardly mobile, middle-class Indian girl's dream. Keeping in mind also the increased desirability of "foreign- settled" grooms in the Indian matrimonial marketplace from the 1990's onwards, it is interesting to note that not once does Pooja try and imagine Viren in an Indian setting, in contrast to her mother, Pallavi, who makes him wear local ethnic clothes and takes him on a camel ride.

PSYCHOLOGY

Love*:*

Unrequited love Chopra, master of the love triangle, tries a new formula here, different from *Silsila*, which showed how passionate love can ultimately be shallow and fade, but the love based on a shared life can deepen into a much stronger bond; and different also from *Chandni*, where he does the reverse and shows how sensible, mutual-respect-based love is ultimately much weaker than a passionate first love. In *Lamhe*, he mixes and matches the couples between passionate first love and reasoned older love.

For Viren, it is love at first sight with Pallavi, when he peeks from under the umbrella and sees her singing and dancing to a song of missing her beloved on the very first day he lands in India. Her beauty and charm, coupled with his undoubtedly highly romanticised vision of the "traditional Indian woman" whom he has never met, quickly cements his obsession with/ adoration of Pallavi. She is compassionate and kind toward Viren, but in the manner of a young married woman being kind to a boy, not like a single woman flirting with a potential lover, and he completely misses the point. He thinks that her quiet sorrow and longing under the exuberant surface are for him, not recognizing, naively, that she was already in love with Siddharth.

This would have been more believable had Anil Kapoor been the same age or younger than Sridevi; even with his face shaved and hair cut shorter, he does look about the same age or older than her, which necessities the dialogues having to reassert that she is older than him. In any case, Bollywood and the local culture has always considered cougar relationships (older woman- younger man) as somewhat of a taboo. In the history of Bollywood, no cougar relationship has been shown to have a satisfactory ending, leave alone a happy one. They are always marked with societal shame and disapproval, leading to situations where such relationships serve merely one purpose: to escalate the conflicts for the man to find his true calling and destiny (and love). *Lamhe* avoids this by making Viren's love unrequited. But the reverse (much older man- younger woman), though controversial, is much more readily accepted and was actually Pamela Chopra's inspiration for the film.

Pallavi's real love story likely began as a passionate kind of love that would lead her to go against her father's wishes, but by this point it has become just a quiet understanding in the background of her life. This is perhaps why she keeps writing letters to Viren after her marriage and Siddharth supports her: that it is better to stay in touch and let their relationship change naturally as the puppy love wears off. Unfortunately, her sudden and untimely death freezes Viren in that moment of obsession, not letting him move on for a good 18 years, while also festering a deep resentment for Pooja, as the doctor saved the baby instead of the mother.

Pooja, too, gets caught in this cycle without realizing it herself, because she grows more and more obsessed for Viren simply because he always avoided her. Pooja has the same kind of passionate, puppy love for Viren, only in her case it deepens after more contact during their London visit. But then the fascinating thing is, Viren isn't capable of that sort of crazy young love any more. So while Pooja is completely in love with him very quickly, he has a much slower journey falling in love with her. Pooja ends up maturing from her puppy love through heartbreak into a deep, mature commitment, where she would rather remain single than marry someone else. They are finally able meet in the middle in the last scene of the film, though that conclusion seems both rushed and inevitable, given the norms of Bollywood romantic dramas.

Illustrative moment: After her song-and-dance routine (unknowingly) dressed up like her mother, Pooja offers up a little box of *sindoor* so that Viren can "mark" her as his wife. Viren, furious, slaps it out of her hand and drags her upstairs to his room to show what the difference between them is. He pulls out some of Pallavi's mementoes: an anklet, pictures and letters, a dried flower. Pooja is stunned to discover that Viren is still in love with her mother and is always reminded of the past when looking at her. She rails at him, saying that she could fight with the world for him, but cannot defeat a shadow of the past. She now understood why he never once met her in all 18 years that she lived in his *haveli*. She tells him that Pallavi only loved her father, Siddharth. He has wasted 20 years of his life on someone who never loved him, and she is about do the same.

Controversy: Incest *Lamhe* was a film much ahead of it's time and even more than 30 years after its release, has been criticized for depicting incest, "grooming" and paedophilia by conservative reviewers. A man, who once loved the mother, finding himself falling for the daughter certainly generates some unease. The root of this (small-minded) confusion is simply, as Chopra says, "The very fact that Waheeda (Daai Jaa) is bringing up the daughter in his house, she's his daughter. I don't agree." Chopra goes to great lengths to counter this accusation. Viren's love for Pallavi is never reciprocated, for one. Then he separates Viren and Pooja right from her birth. Every year, Viren returns to his *haveli* for a single day to perform the death anniversary rituals for Pallavi and leave some gifts for Pooja. But he makes it very clear to Daai Jaa that he has no intention whatsoever of meeting his charge and barely bothers to hide his resentment. This underscores the impossibility of any "grooming" on his part. Viren first sees Pooja on her 18th birthday and her likeness to Pallavi comes a shock to him. Here too, Pooja being a legal adult is important to negate any possibilities of paedophilia; plus, she turns another year older before any romantic confessions are thrown around. In fact, had Viren not had Daai Jaa's support and immense wealth, he would have likely gone the more practical/ logical route of raising Pooja as his own daughter and being involved in her life. That would likely have prevented any possibility of "actual" incest, though, again, there is no blood relationship between them. (Instances of father- daughter incest are not uncommon in conservative parts of India where women are actively discouraged to speak up about sexual abuse). Viren and Pooja's "scandalous" love is further excused by the gloss of Viren being an NRI (perhaps the real reason why he has to be raised abroad): his actions are viewed differently, as an influence of the west and not "Indian" enough to be justified. He isn't an emancipation for anyone, but perhaps needs one from his own confusion!

Illustrative moment: Yash Chopra says, "And then the controversy, because Sridevi (Pooja) was the daughter of Anil Kapoor (Viren). I think in my own way I tried to tell the film in one or two very obvious scenes between Anupam Kher (Prem) and Anil Kapoor: She's not your daughter, you didn't have the guts even to say the name of your beloved, who's long dead. She's the daughter of Pallavi and Siddharth. She's in love with you. There is no age for love, so the 18 years don't matter…. People will (say) I am wrong but I definitely feel that I thought of my subject I wanted to make. It doesn't dishearten me (to) make more controversial films."

Nostalgia*: homeland* One of the main "hooks" for the diasporic community towards this kind of romantic film lie in their identification with a typical diasporic man like Viren, who also holds a nostalgic view of his relationship with "home" that is absent in British culture. Viren's relationship with India is largely one of cultural nostalgia, typified in his only form of relaxation, that of watching old Hindi movies. This creates a position of empathy, as this is a practice common among the South Asian diaspora who regard watching Hindi movies as an important part of their culture (cinema-going and the arrival of Indian satellite and cable television channels). They encourage their children to watch Indian movies to learn about India and Indian culture, and now the younger generations of British Indians have become Hindi movie fans. Watching movies is also the main way toward passive language acquisition (Hindi, Urdu or regional languages) for the second or third generation diaspora. Even if this generation is more comfortable in English, they often enjoy the local language of the movies, as this language of emotion and intimacy evokes a certain nostalgia. They are fond of film songs, and those in *Lamhe* are particularly evocative of such emotions, such as the lullaby, the *bhajan* (Hindu devotional song), and the love songs, which mention the rainy season as the ideal time for romance and so on. This use of language, in particular the language of love, is an important component of British Indian identity. It seems that this audience for the Hindi movies already exists and, although the bulk of its movie-viewing may be Hollywood, the cultural, linguistic and emotional referents of the Hindi movie guarantee their popularity. While the major audience for the Hindi movie outside of India is the Indian diaspora, it is also consumed by the Pakistani and Bangladeshi diaspora and by many other audiences throughout the world (notably by audiences in African countries like

Nigeria and Kenya and also Russia). Thus in many ways, Hindi cinema becomes a transnational or even post-national product, providing the diasporic community with a common group sentiment and supporting Arjun Appadurai's argument that globalisation is often a vernacular or local process which does not necessarily imply Americanisation. (From Rachel Dwyer, *Yash Chopra: Fifty Years in Indian Cinema*)

Illustrative moment: The sequence where Prem and Pooja mercilessly bully Viren by parodying his favourite Hindi film songs stands out as one of the most memorable comedic moments from the film. Armed with a garden variety of absurd props from toilet paper and brooms to wigs and umbrellas, Prem and Pooja act out the first few lines of a series of iconic film songs while Viren tries his best to escape from their annoying performances. After he has been chased around for a while, he finally loses his "British" uptightness and slaps Prem (the amount of casual violence in this film is astounding! But Prem will get to slap Viren later in an emotional moment). They pretend to walk away in a huff, but return immediately with another song that Daai Jaa herself sings and dances to, which is not coincidentally, Waheeda Rehman's most iconic song from her younger years, "*Aaj phir jeene ki tamanna hai*" ("Today, I again feel the desire to live"). Finally, Viren gives in and joins the merriment. Incidentally, the "snake dance" sequence from Rehman's *Guide* inspired Sridevi's famous "rage dance" sequence in *Lamhe,* performed to instrumental music after she was rejected by Viren.

Exotic India: Touristy Rajasthan The choice of Rajasthan as the home of this "family" is surprising. Chopra's films usually feature elite, upper-caste characters from North India (Delhi and Punjab, particularity) and having Viren belong to one of these communities would have been contextually appropriate, too, as much of the U.K.'s Indian population hails from Punjab. The majority of Rajasthani-origin British Indian diaspora are the Marwari business community, who are surprisingly not referred to in this film at all. One reason for Chopra's choice could be that a home base in Rajasthan would make it contextually more plausible for Viren to be obscenely wealthy. But a more commercial reason clearly is to promote tourism and cultural nostalgia. Chopra focuses specifically on touristy images of Rajasthan, its traditional houses and temples, the sand-dunes stretching to the horizon, the camel ride, the folksongs and the exuberant (for no good reason) Banjara tribesmen and women, all of which have been used to market Rajasthan as a happy mix of a luxurious hotel experience coexisting with a vibrant folk/ indigenous local culture. This would have probably appealed most to the Euro-American audience, not to mention the Indian diasporic audience, who would enjoy seeing the "heritage" depiction of India as a change from the hackneyed images shown in the west, with their twin themes of poverty and exotica/excess. Interestingly, *Indian Summer* (the English dubbed version of *Lamhe*) cut out most of the songs and settings in Rajasthan (a likely attempt to trim down the 3hrs+ runtime), but that version, too, fared poorly in the box office.

Illustrative moment: Viren has a complicated relationship with Rajasthan and India. He does not initially want to visit Rajasthan; when Daai Jaa asks him to worship the ground in the opening scene, he is more concerned about the heat scorching his forehead as he scrambles out of and back into of his air-conditioned Rolls-Royce. Viren's relationship to the earth is clearly contrasted to that of the women, such as in the sequences where he and Pallavi are out on the desert and when she joins in with the *banjaras* singing the superhit peacock song. In fact, Pallavi's intimate relationship with the earth is finally accepted by Viren only after her death, signified by him scattering her ashes on the sand.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) *Lamhe* has been touted as a "film ahead of its time" by critics. Do you think the film would have been better accepted today?

2) How are Pooja and Pallavi similar? How are they different? How do they uphold/ undermine their cultural heritage?

3) What significance does Viren being a member of the British Indian diaspora add to the film and why?

4) Discuss Daai Jaa's contribution in keeping all the main characters together through adversity.

5) Do you think this film was about incest? Discuss.