

Hindi War Films Which Also Give a Message of Peace

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Asia-Pacific Research, April 07, 2021
[Countercurrents](#) 6 April 2021

Region: [South Asia](#)
Theme: [History](#)

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War films can easily degenerate into war propaganda and narrow nationalism. However there are other war films which vividly bring out the inherent pain and destructiveness of war in sensitive ways and hence, whatever their story content, also convey a message of peace. It is true that war films made in any country are often aimed at bringing out mainly the courage of its soldiers in battlefield, but even such themes handled with sensitivity can convey a message of peace.

Haqeeqat, a war film made with a lot of sensitivity and commitment by Chetan Anand, is perhaps the most durable war film made in Hindi cinema. When we see this film, the great sense of dedication with which this film has been made by various members of the film unit comes across very clearly, whether in acting or in the great songs which are still widely used for their inspirational as well as sad content—songs like kar chale ham fida and ho ke majboor mujhe.

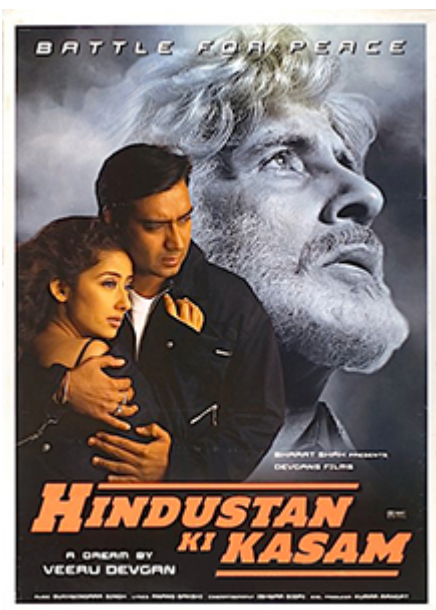


Let us recall the background to this film. The defeat in China War of 1962 was seen as a great debacle in India. There was a lot of criticism, and an overwhelming sadness. The

country had to come out of this. Chetan Anand starts with this aim. This is a war film which sets out not to glorify any victory but to make defeat acceptable without losing honor. The way forward Anand finds is to focus on just one point of very courageous resistance by Indian soldiers. Of course despite the defeat and the debacle there were some cases of Indian soldiers fighting very bravely in very difficult conditions. Instead of going into the wider debacle or its causes Chetan Anand just focuses on one case of very courageous resistance. So he can still remain close to truth in the part selected by him, without going into the wider controversial details.

His point of courageous resistance is then inter-woven with love-stories and close human ties being threatened to make a poignant and sensitive story which brings out the tragedy of war. Hence the film supports myths at some levels but in ways which are not harmful and provide solace to people. On the other hand the sensitive handling of the various situations, the relationships, the songs also leave a lasting anti-war message, a message of the futility of war, in ways where this does not appear to be an imposed message at all.

In another film Hindustan Ki Kasam Chetan Anand takes up the Indo-Pak war of 1965. This time the context is of Air force rather than of army. While this film celebrates the courage and skills of Indian fighter pilots, the impact in terms of the devastation caused in a single family of exceptionally courageous and committed members is brought out very vividly. Hence this film also conveys an overwhelming message of peace, a message of futility of war.



In contrast to these predominantly war films, Usne Kaha Tha, a film of Bimal Roy Productions, is not primarily a war film but instead a love story. This is based on the famous short story of the same title written by Chandradhar Sharma Guleri. However in film the anti-war message is more emphasized than in the story. The song which is filmed against the background of departing soldiers Jaane Wale Sipahi se Poocho Wo Kahaan Jaa Raha Hai (Ask the departing soldier where he is headed for) can perhaps be called the most defining anti-war song of Hindi cinema.

These are only a few examples which reveal how war themes can also be treated in ways which ultimately leave a message of peace. Another remarkable film made by V.Shantaram titled Dr. Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani focuses on the courageous and dedicated services of a great doctor from India (a real-life story) to Chinese soldiers and people during the Second

World War. This film still reminds people of the need and importance of friendship between India and China even though times have changed to feelings of hostility and suspicion. This film also has a story of tender love running alongside the main story of great sacrifices and commitment. This again reminds us of how often love stories have been interwoven with war themes to bring out the tragic impacts of wars on humanity and human relationships.

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