



# Understanding Portrayal Of Mental Illness In Popular Cinemas: A Comparative Analysis Of Rain Man And My Name Is Khan

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**Abstract:** This study aims to Understand the Portrayal of Mental Illness in Popular Cinemas, specifically Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), in popular cinema through a psychological lens, employing Labovian and Character Analysis techniques. Focusing on the films "Rain Man" and "My Name Is Khan," the research aims to scrutinise prevalent depictions of mental health in cinema and discern any shifts in these portrayals over recent years. While "Rain Man" explores the complexities of an unconventional brotherly relationship, with Raymond as an autistic savant, "My Name Is Khan" intertwines a love story with social and political commentary on post-9/11 discrimination, featuring Rizwan Khan navigating the world with Asperger's syndrome. The analysis of "My Name Is Khan" reveals a mixed portrayal of Asperger's syndrome, with moments of accurate depiction and instances where the condition seems oversimplified. Despite potential misconceptions, the film effectively uses its narrative to shed light on societal prejudices, discrimination, and the quest for acceptance. The study emphasizes that while cinematic portrayals may not always align with clinical accuracy, they contribute to creating awareness and challenging societal perceptions about mental illnesses. The emotional intensity and impactful events in the film serve as a means to engage and educate the audience about the human experience and societal prejudices associated with mental health conditions. The study underscores the role of media in shaping public perceptions and influencing discussions surrounding mental health.

**Index Terms-** Autism Spectrum Disorder, Mental Illness, Labovian Analysis, Character Analysis, Cinema, Mental Health.

## I. INTRODUCTION

To this day, there is no consensus on the definition of abnormality or mental disorder/illness. This isn't to imply that definitions don't exist; they do. However, a truly satisfactory definition will probably always remain elusive (Lilienfeld et al., 2013; Stein et al., 2010). Understanding the nature, causes, and treatment for mental diseases is the focus of abnormal psychology. Mental disorders and illnesses are complex and multifaceted conditions that affect millions of people worldwide, transcending age, gender, and cultural boundaries. These conditions have a profound impact on individuals' thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and overall quality of life, as well as on the societies in which they live. Understanding mental disorders and illnesses is essential for promoting mental health, reducing stigma, and providing effective support and treatment to those who need it.

Mental illness or mental disorders are terms that refer to morbid states that are characterised by the incapacity to function in the personal and social roles usual for others of the same age and sex in the same culture. These disorders reflect a disorder of brain function and often of the function of other physiological functions, for example the immune and digestive systems. In this positive sense mental health is a foundation for wellbeing and effective functioning for an individual, and for a community, and is created and compromised in everyday life, in families and schools on streets and in workplaces (Lahtinen, Lehtinen, Rikonen and Ahonen. 1999).

## 1.2 Cinematic Representation of Mental Illness

Movies significantly influence people's understanding and perceptions, particularly on topics they have little real-world experience with. Several studies have shown that what people see on T.V. and in movies influences their perception of reality and plays a role in shaping their knowledge of the world including public opinions and societal perceptions (Kimmerle and Cress, 2013; Smith et al, 2019). As film grew as a vehicle for exploring complex subjects and entertaining, mental illness became a recurring theme. Mental illness is commonly portrayed in both children's and adult films, with the majority of these depictions being negative. Many characters with mental illnesses are depicted as violent, referenced negatively, or portrayed humorously, which trivializes their conditions. These inaccurate representations can reinforce or worsen negative stereotypes and attitudes in the general public, leading to the isolation of individuals with mental illnesses and discouraging them from seeking treatment. Moreover, these false portrayals can create unrealistic treatment expectations for those with psychiatric disorders and their families. However, there are also some positive depictions that have the ability to educate the public and be used in clinical practice.

According to decades of research, many people hold inaccurate and negative attitudes about mental health conditions. Jorm (2000) discovered, for example, that community attitudes towards people with mental illnesses are mostly negative and based on erroneous beliefs. According to Das et al. (2017), these negative and incorrect perceptions exist in part because people's real battles with mental illness are often concealed from viewpoint, allowing inaccurate and stereotypical portrayals from the media to dominate. Hyler et al. (1991) classified stereotypical portrayals of individuals with mental illness in film into six categories: the aggressive and dangerous homicidal maniac, the eccentric and rebellious free spirit, the enlightened members of society capable of creating a utopia, the nymphomaniac and powerfully seductive female, the overprivileged narcissist, and the dehumanized crazy person. One of the most common misconceptions about mentally ill individuals, exacerbated by cinema, is that they are violent. Such misconceptions aggravate discrimination against such people, in areas of housing, employment, interpersonal relationships, and health care. Another common stereotype of a mentally ill person is that they are portrayed as intellectually disabled, developmentally delayed, and dependent on others. These characters are frequently portrayed inaccurately in order to add humour to the film. Another myth perpetuated by the film industry is that certain illnesses, such as dissociative identity disorder, anterograde amnesia, and schizophrenia, are more common than they actually are because they are popular illnesses used to create melodramatic plot lines (Pirkis et al, 2006). This is true even for Indian cinema, especially Bollywood. Research indicates that portrayal of psychiatric illnesses in Bollywood has relied more towards dramatization and magicoreligious folklore rather than evidence-based scientific facts, fostering a misinformed, negative and often stigmatizing public attitude towards psychiatric illnesses and people suffering from them (Banwari, 2011; Bhugra, 2005; Pathak&Biswal, 2020).

Mental health care professionals and experts are often depicted as antagonistic or deceitful, with sympathetic portrayals being uncommon. Gabbard (2001) examined over 400 films and discovered only three with supportive mental health experts. According to the researchers, "only those treatments that serve a filmic purpose are depicted." Psychotherapy is frequently portrayed because it allows the viewer to see what is going on in the patient's mind. However, many of these sessions are unrealistic, showing rapid recovery and a disregard for medical ethics. Electroconvulsive therapy is often portrayed for dramatic effect, typically administered without consent or anesthesia. This frequently leads to the patient appearing zombie-like, with very few films depicting positive outcomes. Medication therapy is rarely depicted in films since it is not cinematically engaging.

Despite the prevalence of negative stereotypes in movies, research shows that portrayals have improved over time, from the 1900s to the early 2000s. Additionally, even films containing stereotypes can have a positive overall impact on viewers. When people see characters in films with mental health issues, they may become more accepting of their own conditions. For example, a 17-year-old girl interviewed by Butler and Hyler mentioned that Angelina Jolie's portrayal in *Girl, Interrupted* was powerful and helped her feel more comfortable with her own bipolar and antisocial issues. With time, there has been a gradual shift in Hindi cinema specifically, from entertainment to infotainment. Popular films captured the attention of not just viewers but also caretakers of those suffering from mental illnesses. These films have shown a wide range of mental illnesses, including dyslexia, Asperger's syndrome, depression, and Tourette syndrome. *Dear Zindagi*, for example, tells the story of an urban middle-class female who suffers from depression. The protagonist becomes unhappy as a result of lifestyle obstacles and flashbacks to her childhood loneliness. The film then progresses by questioning common misconceptions about people with mental problems and therapists. The film is the first to depict a mental health professional's therapeutic relationship with a patient. As a facilitator of the therapeutic process, a therapist comforts the client in a nondirective manner rather than giving advice or recommendations. Today's Hindi film producers are emphasising on the struggles of patients

and their caregivers. They have now joined the niche segment of patients and caregivers as a result of this transformation. A few films have done well at the box office by depicting the patients' and carers' experiences such as misery, pain, and suffering.

Certain films may also be educative and aim to break down stereotypes. "By authentically depicting the nuanced and complex ways that mental health conditions intersect individuals' lives, [film] can introduce audiences to new ways of thinking, ways of asking for help, and ultimately create necessary shifts in our cultural beliefs about mental health" (Smith et al, 2019). Pirkis et al. (2006) examined the use of cinema as an instructional tool for mental health professionals. They may aid in explaining the symptoms, treatment, and stigma associated with various illnesses. However, it is critical to note that this is merely a supplement to actual clinical experience.

This study investigates the portrayal of mental illness in popular cinema, focusing on the films *My Name is Khan* and *Rain Man*. By analyzing narrative structures, linguistic elements, and psychological dimensions, this research aims to reveal the storytelling and character development related to mental health themes in these films. We approach this study with a balanced perspective, recognizing the impact of movies on reducing stigma and raising awareness about mental health. We emphasize the responsibility of filmmakers to portray mental illness accurately and respectfully, avoiding harmful stereotypes. Our goal is to promote compassionate and informed dialogue on mental health, contributing valuable insights to psychology and media studies.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on the non-numerical analysis of narrative structures and character psychology in popular cinema. Qualitative research is particularly suited for exploring in-depth understandings of human experiences and social phenomena, making it ideal for examining the portrayal of mental illness in films. The two types of analysis used in this study are Narrative and Character Analysis. Narrative analysis, based on Labov's six-part model (1972), is used to systematically examine the stories within the films *My Name is Khan* and *Rain Man*. This method allows for a detailed exploration of the narrative structures, uncovering how these stories are constructed and how they convey experiences related to mental illness. The six parts of Labov's model, which have been discussed in greater detail in the paper, are- Abstract (brief summary or overview), Orientation (contextual information setting the scene, answering who, what, when, where, and why), Complicating Action (the central conflict or problem), Resolution/Result (the outcome of the complication), Evaluation (moral lessons or broader implications) and finally, Coda (conclusion).

On the other hand, character analysis involves a psychological examination of the characters with mental disorders in the films. This analysis focuses on their thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and motivations, providing insights into the complexities of their psychological dimensions. By analyzing these characters, the study aims to understand the accuracy and depth of their portrayal in relation to real clinical experiences of mental disorders.

## III. DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study is to examine how mental illness, specifically Autism Spectrum Disorder, is portrayed in films. We aim to analyze the common depictions of mental illnesses in cinema and assess any changes or shifts in these portrayals over recent years, through Labovian's and Character Analysis while keeping in mind these two movies- "Rain Man" and "My Name is Khan", two such films that stand out for their unique narratives and the emotional impact they leave on the audience.

In "Rain Man," the originality lies in its portrayal of an unconventional brotherly relationship. The story dives into the complexities of family dynamics and the challenges of understanding and accepting those who are different, here as is the case of Raymond, an autistic savant with remarkable skills. Whereas, "My Name is Khan" blends a love story with a social and political commentary on post-9/11 discrimination. What sets it apart is the central character, Rizwan Khan, who navigates the world with Asperger's syndrome, highlighting the importance of empathy and understanding in a society quick to judge based on appearances.

### 3.1 Labovian's Analysis

#### *Abstract*

*Rain Man* unfolds as a powerful drama that delves into the life of Charlie Babbitt, a charismatic and ambitious car dealer whose world is turned upside down when he learns about the death of his estranged father. Expecting a substantial inheritance, Charlie is shocked to discover that the majority of his father's wealth has been bequeathed to his older brother Raymond an autistic savant residing in a mental institution. Determined to gain control of the fortune, Charlie kidnaps Raymond and sets out on a cross-country journey, initially driven by selfish motives. However, as the trip progresses, Charlie begins to understand the depth

of Raymond's unique abilities and the challenges that come with his condition. Charlie's initial frustration transforms into a deep sense of responsibility and care for his brother.

While talking about Bollywood, *My Name is Khan* tells the story of Rizwan Khan, an autistic Muslim man from Mumbai, who is brought to the United States by his younger brother Zakir after the death of their mother. He marries Mandira, a Hindu single mother, whom he met while working there, but following the 9/11 attacks in America, all Muslims were viewed with suspicion by the US government. That incident ruins the lives of Rizwan and Mandira. An Asperger's syndrome guy named Rizwan sets out on a life-changing quest to meet the President and clean his record. As he navigates a society grappling with prejudice and intolerance, the film delves into themes of love, resilience, and the profound impact of an individual with unique abilities.

### **Orientation**

The narrative begins by presenting Charlie Babbitt, a slick and ambitious car dealer who has a car company 'Babbitt Collectibles' based in Los Angeles, California. He has a girlfriend Susanna, of probable Spanish descent, who also works in the company. Charlie acts all distant and cold with her girlfriend and reacts to her very insensitively. Charlie had a strained relationship with his father since his childhood and upon hearing of his death, he doesn't respond with any remorse, rather is only interested in inheriting his money. He travels all the way to Cincinnati for the funeral, only to learn that all his father left him was an old classic 1949 Buick Roadmaster convertible, that Charlie always wanted to ride as a kid but his father never let him. All the money and property was left in the name of a beneficiary in a mental institution 'Wallbrook'. The rest of the story unfolds as Charlie finds out who this beneficiary is, what relationship they share, and how from then on their relationship develops.

The movie *My Name is Khan* is primarily set in the United States, spanning various states and cities. Scenes take place in San Francisco, where Rizwan works and meets Mandira. The narrative also unfolds in other locations as Rizwan embarks on a cross-country journey. It is deeply influenced by the post-9/11 socio-political climate in the United States, adding an extra layer of complexity to the characters' experiences. Rizwan is initially shown working as a cosmetics salesman in San Francisco, where amidst the process, meets Mandira, played by Kajol, a Hindu hairdresser, when Rizwan goes to Zakir's salon for a haircut. In order to relay a message and make it clear that he goes by Khan and is not a terrorist, Rizwan makes the trip to Wilhemina, Georgia, to meet with the US President. Then he came across Texas where he encountered various individuals and experiences, reflecting the diversity and challenges present in American society. Each location of Rizwan's travel became a canvas for exploring the complexities of human relationships, societal challenges, and the resilience of the human spirit.

### **Complicating Action**

Charlie feels disappointed when he finds out that his estranged father did not leave him anything on his inheritance as he was anticipating a significant inheritance that would solve his financial troubles and allow him to maintain his luxurious lifestyle. When he travels to Wallbrook to discover the beneficiary, he is shocked to learn that his father chose to leave the majority of his possessions in Charlie's older brother Raymond's name. Raymond has been institutionalized for years due to his autism. Charlie pays Raymond a visit at his house and discovers that Raymond is a middle-aged man with a flat voice, methodical manner, and a "definitely" knowledge of things like the fact that tapioca pudding is "definitely" on the menu and that his favorite TV show is "definitely" going to air. This revelation serves as a turning point in the story, as Charlie had never known that he had a brother. It disrupts Charlie's expectations regarding his inheritance and sets the stage for the central conflict. In the first instinct, he feels a sense of jealousy that Raymond received all the love and money from their father, that Charlie was always deprived of. He feels especially jealous when he find out that their father let Raymon drive the Buick, which he held so dearly when he was alive.

Charlie kidnaps Raymond from the mental institution and swears to bring him to live in California because he is upset that he has not received his fair portion of the fortune. The brothers along with Susanna spend the night at a motel, which is a challenge for Raymond, because his bed is not just in front of the window just how he likes it, his books are not around him and the dinner menu doesn't include pizza on a Monday night. When Susanna finds out that Charlie got Raymond out of the institution for his selfish motives, and he didn't care a dime for his brother, she leaves him. The next morning Charlie plans to take a flight off to California where he can resume his business and pay off all his previous debt. However, finding out that Raymond is terrified of flying, Charlie, frustrated as he decides to take a road trip across the country with his brother. The narrative further complicates throughout the journey, as the characters face challenges in their relationship.

Initially, Charlie questions everything about Ray's condition and his lifestyle. He scolds him aggressively for not being able to understand things. He shouts at him when Ray walks over to Charlie and Susanna having sex. He behaves quite insensitively towards him, ignoring the fact that the concept of privacy and sex are alien to him. He is not able to understand his needs, so he forced him to get on a plane to LA. But when Ray refused multiple times, and Charlie didn't listen to him, he had an extreme outburst right there at the airport. Charlie often got irritated at Ray for following strict routines like lights out at 11, having tapioca for dessert, and having maple syrup kept on the table before pancakes arrive. In the initial half of their road trip, Charlie is shown as a selfish self-centered man who only cares about his share of his father's inheritance and saving his company from drowning in debt. He doesn't care for the well-being of his brother, and even tells him that his condition is a lie and that he is only pretending.

Whereas, The plot of *My Name is Khan* is original and distinct. It chronicles Rizwan Khan's life from the perspective of a young child growing up in India in the 1970s. Why Rizwan is different is a mystery. Following the passing of their mother, Zakir, Rizwan's younger brother, transfers him to the US, where he has resided ever since he departed India at the age of 18. After observing Rizwan's behavior patterns, Hasina, Zakir's wife and a psychologist, swiftly determines that Rizwan has Asperger's syndrome. After that, she collaborates with him to create plans that will facilitate his assimilation into American culture. While marketing cosmetics for his brother's business, Rizwan meets Mandira, a Hindu hairdresser who is divorced, and her son Sam. To Zakir's dismay, who rejects Mandira since she is not a Muslim, the two have an awkward but endearing courtship before being married. Up until the Twin Towers are demolished, Rizwan, Mandira, and Sam lead a middle-class suburban life. They start to experience racism's impacts in both their personal and professional lives during the course of the following five to six years.

One day, a fight at the playground turns into a racist attack, which murders Sam. Heartbroken, Mandira tells Rizwan she is leaving him and holds the surname Khan responsible for her child's murder, saying he reminds her of Sam's death and she cannot bear to see him. When Rizwan tells her that he is about to leave and asks when he should return, she becomes enraged and cynically urges him to come back after he can convince the president that, despite his Muslim name, he is not a terrorist: "Mr. President, my name is Khan, and I'm not a terrorist." Because of his Asperger's syndrome, Khan interprets this directive literally and sets out to deliver his message to the president.

Along the way, he meets people from several ethnic backgrounds, is mistaken for a terrorist at a demonstration, and gets wrongfully detained. After being freed, he finds out that his friends' little Georgian town of Wilhelmina was hit by a hurricane. In order to go to the storm-tossed town and assist with rescue and reconstruction efforts, Rizwan decides to put off his quest. The whole country is aware of Rizwan's narrative by the time he eventually meets with the president to convey his plea. When Mandira finds him again, he has defeated an Islamic terrorist organization, assisted in the reconstruction of a community that was destroyed, and survived being stabbed by an Islamic fanatic. However, the conclusion goes beyond Rizwan's personal journey. The film addresses the consequences of his arrest at a political rally, where he was mistaken for a terrorist. The media attention surrounding the incident leads to a broader societal reflection on prejudice and racial profiling. Rizwan's story becomes a catalyst for change, fostering a greater understanding and acceptance among people.

### ***Evaluation***

The one thing that remains constant throughout this movie is Raymond's character. Raymond, an autistic savant, shows no change in his condition, which is an accurate depiction of chronic disorders. The thing that changes is the way in which his brother Charlie sees him and with time grows affectionate towards him, and starts accepting him for who he is, Although Ray's inability to show his emotions or understand others' and challenges with physical intimacy often made it difficult for Charlie to keep a patient attitude towards him. For example, Towards the end of the film, Charlie shouts out in a scene that perfectly captures all of his frustrations with Raymond, "I know there has to be somebody inside there!" In another instance, there is a moment between the brothers, when they are dancing, when Charlie, really longing to hug his brother, goes in for one Ray just retaliates and starts screaming. In that moment, Charlie feels hurt but he doesn't let it show on his face. In that sense this movie really reaches an individual to be patient and understanding towards people who have special needs. It throws light onto the challenges faced by people with autism. Raymond's character humanizes the experiences of those on the Autism Spectrum, fostering greater awareness and empathy.

I think one event that distinctly helped Charlie forget all their differences and see Charlie as his brother was when he found out that his childhood imaginary friend Rain Man, was actually his older brother. He was unable to pronounce Raymond, so instead he used to say Rain Man, who used to sing to him. Raymond even showed a picture of him with their father, when he was little. It was at that moment that

Charlie felt a real connection with his brother. The movie shows Charlie's significant growth. Initially motivated only by his financial gains, he gradually shifts his focus to understanding and caring for Raymond, demonstrating a transformative change in his values and priorities.

A character left shadowed in this film is Susanna's. Susanna always had a caring and understanding attitude towards Raymond. She used to try to make Charlie understand about Ray's condition and that he should not scold him for making mistakes or for not being able to understand things that others would normally easily do. When Ray's date doesn't show up, he feels sad. So as a sweet gesture, Susanna has that dance with him in an elevator and in the end also kisses him on the lip. When asked how it made him feel, he replies "Wet." This shows how something as simple as kissing doesn't make sense to him. For him, it was difficult to comprehend how he felt like while kissing, so he just answered with what he thought was most appropriate, the tactile feeling of two lips touching, and hence "wet."

Overall, I think this movie does a fairly good job at portraying the needs and challenges of a person with autism. It shows some of the typical symptoms like constant rocking movement, repeating words, following routines and difficulty in engaging in conversations. But it also very beautifully shows his unique abilities like having the ability to memorize and recall detailed information or solving big math problems within seconds. The movie helps its viewers empathize with Raymond and at the same time it challenges societal norms regarding intelligence. Ray's exceptional memory and unique skills challenge conventional ideas of what it means to be "normal" or "intelligence," encouraging viewers to question their preconceived notions.

The movie *My Name Is Khan* typically deals with the stereotypical and prejudiced way of how people and society reacts and deals with situations. Being having Asperger's syndrome, a disorder which makes it difficult for people to interact socially, makes a certain person hardly communicate with other people in which it can lead them to be bullied or discriminated against by other people. But in the case of Rizwan Khan, even though he had this kind of syndrome he also has precious abilities where he is able to repair any machine that is broken. Khan's portrayal with Asperger's syndrome is a mixed bag. On one hand, the film makes an effort to depict certain characteristics of autism, such as difficulty with social interactions, and a strict adherence to routines. Rizwan's character has also been shown as a sharp, intelligent and an avid learner, being sensitive to touch and noise. However, there are instances where Rizwan's condition seems oversimplified, potentially contributing to misconceptions about autism, as his easiness to overcome a huge challenge of moving to another country and doing a 'Sales' job considering his uncomfotability to social interactions. Rizwan's exceptional abilities, his unique perspective on the world, and his journey might not fully capture the diverse range of experiences within the autism spectrum. A more nuanced portrayal could have delved deeper into the complexities of autism.

The depiction of autism in "My Name is Khan" often aligns with layman's knowledge rather than providing a clinically accurate representation. While it introduces certain aspects of autism, it falls short of capturing the full spectrum of challenges faced by individuals with Asperger's. The film later takes its own turn and deviates from the depiction of autism. It leans toward a more digestible portrayal for a mainstream audience. The film's emotional core is Rizwan's journey, and the soul lies in the exploration of love, resilience, and societal acceptance, rather than a clinically precise depiction of autism.

While some elements of the plot may be dramatized for cinematic effect, the core issues addressed in the film—discrimination, tolerance, and understanding—are grounded in real-world concerns. The emotional intensity and larger-than-life events serve the film's purpose in creating a powerful impact on the audience. The film effectively uses its plot to shed light on societal prejudices and the quest for acceptance, providing a relevant and engaging story. One poignant scene unfolds at an airport, where Rizwan Khan faces unwarranted scrutiny due to his Muslim identity. This initial encounter sets the tone, portraying the harsh reality of racial profiling and discrimination faced by Muslims in the post-9/11 world. The film challenges religious stereotypes and explores the possibility of solidarity between Muslims and Christians, particularly in the face of shared grief and discrimination.

The film concludes with a resolution that emphasizes Rizwan's determination to meet the President and deliver a powerful message about the importance of love prevailing over hatred. This resolution serves as a poignant reminder of the film's central themes, conveying a message of tolerance, love, and the capacity to overcome societal prejudices.

In essence, the portrayal of autism, though imperfect, serves the film's broader purpose of highlighting the resilience of an individual facing societal prejudices. While a more accurate depiction of autism might be desirable, the film's focus on social issues and the human experience justifies its approach. "My Name is Khan" effectively utilizes its narrative to shed light on pressing societal issues, advocating for acceptance and understanding in the face of discrimination.

### **Resolution/Result**

As their trip unfolds, hopping from one motel to another, Charlie realises the complications of Ray's condition. He starts understanding his routine and compulsions. Once when Ray had this compulsion to watch his favourite show 'The People', Charlie went at lengths to make it happen. He showed up at the door of a stranger and requested them to let him watch the tv, because he knew that if Ray doesn't get to watch the show he might have a frantic episode. Later on, Charlie buys him a mini portable tv, that he can watch anywhere. As surprised as he was since the very beginning, Charlie gradually began to recognise and appreciate Ray for his special abilities. He realises that Ray is a unique individual who has exceptional memory skills and is great with maths. He can read phone numbers only once, memorize dinner menus, and calculate baseball statistics. In addition, he has quick math skills and can quickly count 46 spilled toothpicks. Charlie begins to use these abilities to his advantage. He takes Raymond to casinos so that he could use this money to pay back all the debt of his company. Meanwhile Susanna returns, who tries to make Charlie understand that he cannot use Ray like this.

Finally, Charlie and Ray begin to develop a deep bond between each other. Charlie teaches his brother how to dance for a date, and this scene is very beautifully depicted in the movie. Ray's keenness for learning new things and getting new hobbies gets reflected in the fact that he watches dancing videos on his mini tv and tries to learn them. Soon, Charlie realises its no more just about the money. He cares about his brother, he cares about his well being. He even gets a brand new apartment with the money they won from the casino, so that they could both live together. By the end of the movie, Charlie was willing to take responsibility for his brother, who he once only saw as a burden. We can finally see a sense of acceptance on Charlie's side of his brother the way he is and loves him for that. In the end, he lets Ray stay at Wallbrook, because comes to realise that his needs will be catered there, and that the professionals will give him the kind of treatment his condition requires. Raymond also feels a kind of contentment in the mind, the feeling that he has a family, a brother out there. At the end, they both sit together, their foreheads touching, feeling a sense of warmth, they both had been deprived of since their childhoods, when Ray was taken away to the institution.

In the movie *My Name is Khan*, the climax begins with Rizwan Khan finally getting the opportunity to meet the President of the United States. As news of Rizwan's quest spreads, strained relationships begin to mend. The film emphasizes the power of one individual's resilience to bring about positive change. The scene is charged with emotion as Rizwan, a man with Asperger's syndrome, finally delivers his message: "My name is Khan, and I am not a terrorist." This moment marks the fulfilment of Rizwan's quest and is a turning point in the film. Some people are moved by his struggle and the injustice he faced, while others remain skeptical. Rizwan's meeting with the President attracts significant media attention. News of his arrest at the political rally and subsequent encounter with the President became a national headline. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and challenging the stereotypes associated with Muslims in post-9/11 America. At the end of the movie, the family- Rizwan, Mandira, Zakir and Hasina live together.

The film portrays instances of people questioning their preconceived notions about Muslims, highlighting the potential for change in societal perceptions. Rizwan's impact extends beyond his personal journey, influencing the lives of those he encounters. It provides us with a vision of a harmonious society where people introspect, embraces and reevaluates each other's differences.

### **Coda**

In conclusion, *Rain Man* is a poignant exploration of familial bonds, personal growth, and societal perceptions. Through the journey of Charlie and Raymond Babbitt, the film navigates the complexities of acceptance and understanding in the face of autism. The narrative beautifully unfolds, revealing the transformative power of human connections and challenging preconceived notions of intelligence and normalcy. As Charlie undergoes profound personal growth, the movie advocates for empathy and sheds light on the importance of recognizing and appreciating the unique qualities of individuals, especially those with autism. *Rain Man* remains a timeless cinematic piece, leaving audiences with a lasting reflection on the strength found in unconventional relationships and the potential for positive change when one opens their heart to acceptance and connection.

In the poignant coda of "*My Name is Khan*," the film masterfully weaves together various threads, drawing on powerful scenarios that resonate with the audience. As the narrative reaches its conclusion, there's a sense of fulfillment and closure that goes beyond individual character arcs. Rizwan Khan's determined journey to meet the President, symbolises a personal pilgrimage that transcends into a broader societal narrative. This scene encapsulates the film's thematic core, addressing discrimination and prejudice. Rizwan's unwavering pursuit becomes a metaphor for individual agency in combating societal ills. Whereas, Mandira's narrative, particularly in the aftermath of profound loss, contributes to the emotional weight depicting her resilience and the complexities of her relationship with Rizwan adding layers to the film's exploration of love, acceptance, and the human spirit in the face of tragedy. It reinforces the film's central thesis that, despite

societal prejudices and personal tragedies, love and acceptance can prevail. The audience is left with a lasting impression of the characters' journeys and a call to action to cultivate compassion and understanding in the face of adversity.

### 3.2 Psychological Character Analysis

#### *Rain Man*

Charlie Babbitt was an autistic savant with exceptional memory and mathematical abilities, residing in a mental institution. He becomes the focal point of the narrative as Charlie attempts to understand and connect with him. Raymond exhibits challenges in verbal communication and social interaction. He often communicates through scripted phrases and has difficulty expressing himself in a conventional manner. His communication tends to be literal, struggling with nuances such as sarcasm or figurative language. This is a common characteristic in individuals with autism who may interpret language in a concrete manner. Raymond also engages in repetitive behaviors, such as rocking back and forth, particularly when faced with stress or discomfort. These behaviors serve as self-soothing mechanisms, which is a common feature of autism. Raymond displays sensitivity to sensory stimuli, particularly loud noises. This sensitivity is consistent with the sensory processing challenges often observed in individuals with autism. Raymond has a strong need for routine and predictability. Changes in his environment or deviations from established routines cause distress.

Other than that, he has exceptional memory and savant abilities. Raymond possesses a photographic memory, allowing him to recall vast amounts of information with precision. His ability to perform complex mathematical calculations demonstrates savant abilities, a phenomenon often associated with certain individuals on the autism spectrum. Raymond's expressive language is limited, and he may struggle to convey emotions verbally. This limited emotional expression is a common aspect of autism. His attachment to routine and specific objects serves as a form of emotional regulation, providing a sense of security and familiarity. Raymond finds it challenging to adapt to changes in his environment or routine. This resistance to change is a typical characteristic of autism. Raymond often avoids direct eye contact, a behavior common among individuals with autism. Eye contact can be challenging for those on the spectrum due to the social demands it imposes. He may not fully comprehend social cues and norms, leading to challenges in forming and maintaining relationships. In summary, Raymond Babbitt is a multifaceted character in "Rain Man," portrayed with depth and nuance. His behavioral traits, cognitive abilities, social challenges, and unique strengths contribute to a rich portrayal of a person with autism, emphasizing the individuality and complexity of those on the spectrum. Raymond's character not only serves as a representation of autism but also plays a pivotal role in the broader themes of the narrative.

#### *My Name Is Khan*

Rizwan Khan, portrayed by Shah Rukh Khan in "My Name is Khan," is a complex and deeply compelling character whose journey serves as the focal point of the film. Rizwan is a Muslim man with Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism, and his character is nuanced, challenging stereotypes and offering a layered portrayal of an individual navigating a world marked by discrimination and societal expectations. At the core of Rizwan's character is his unique perspective on life, shaped by his Asperger's syndrome. His condition manifests in difficulties with social interactions and a literal interpretation of language, which contributes to both moments of humor and poignant insights throughout the film but at the same time, over exaggerates and oversimplifies the symptoms of autistic disorder contributing to misconceptions about it.

In the past, Asperger's syndrome was seen as a different diagnosis from autism. But the fifth version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) was published in 2013 by the American Psychiatric Association, and it significantly altered how neurodevelopmental disorders were categorized. A modification that took place was the removal of Asperger's syndrome as a distinct diagnosis. Instead, the DSM-5 now classifies people who would have been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome under the more inclusive heading of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The understanding that there is a spectrum of symptoms and traits within autism and that it is not always easy to distinguish between different subtypes led to the decision to combine these diagnoses.

The term "autism spectrum disorder" refers to a group of developmental disorders marked by confined and repetitive behaviors, as well as difficulties with social interaction and communication. The spectrum includes individuals with varying degrees of impairment, from those with significant challenges in daily functioning to those with milder symptoms.

From a clinical perspective, Rizwan exhibits several features consistent with the diagnostic criteria outlined in both the DSM-5 and ICD-10. For instance, his straightforward and honest responses may be perceived as socially inappropriate, reflecting challenges in understanding the nuances of communication. This aligns with DSM-5 criteria highlighting impairments in social-emotional reciprocity. The character's adherence to routines and specific interests reflects the repetitive behavior associated with Asperger's



syndrome. Rizwan's fixation on the concept of echolalia, sliding back and forth, fidgeting the marbles whenever he is tense, remembering the message the police officer asked him to give this to the president out of sarcasm, aligns with the clinical depiction of the character. Rizwan's struggles with nonverbal communication, including difficulties interpreting facial expressions and body language, contribute to his unique way of interacting with the world. While the film does not explicitly explore sensory sensitivities, individuals with Asperger's syndrome often experience heightened sensitivities to sensory stimuli. Rizwan's avoidance of physical contact and his discomfort in crowded or noisy environments may suggest sensory sensitivities, aligning with the broader autism spectrum. He is hypersensitive, be it in terms of noise as in case when he roams and gets frustrated by traffic, yellow colour, or touch as he avoids hugging people. While individuals with Asperger's syndrome may face challenges in empathic attunement, Rizwan's emotional depth and capacity for love challenge stereotypes associated with autism. This portrayal adds a layer of complexity to the character but may not fully align with traditional clinical expectations.

Rizwan's adherence to honesty and his struggle to comprehend societal nuances form the basis of his character, making him a distinctive protagonist. Rizwan's identity as a Muslim man with Asperger's syndrome is handled with sensitivity, His character challenges preconceived notions about individuals with autism, emphasizing his humanity, emotions, and capacity for love. Shah Rukh Khan's portrayal adds a layer of authenticity to Rizwan, capturing the intricacies of his condition with empathy and depth. One of the defining traits of Rizwan is his unwavering commitment to truth and justice. His journey to meet the President of the United States becomes a symbolic quest for acceptance and understanding, showcasing his resilience in the face of discrimination.

The film also portrays Rizwan's relationships, particularly with Mandira, played by Kajol. Their love story becomes a central element, and Rizwan's devotion and innocence contribute to the emotional depth of the narrative. The challenges they face, including the tragic loss of their son and the subsequent strain on their relationship, provide a canvas for exploring themes of love and resilience. He can't understand or feel what's left unsaid, his inability to express gets compensated through his habit of writing or expressing himself on paper.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

*My Name is Khan* and *Rain Man* are both compelling films that explore the lives of protagonists with unique abilities, yet they differ significantly in terms of cultural context, genre, and narrative structure. In both movies, the central characters, Rizwan Khan in *My Name is Khan* and Raymond Babbitt in *Rain Man*, are perceived as different by society due to their condition. However, a notable dissimilarity lies in the cultural context and overarching themes of the two films. *My Name is Khan* is set against the backdrop of post-9/11 America, addressing issues of racial profiling and discrimination against Muslims. In contrast, *Rain Man* revolves around family dynamics, brotherhood, and the complexities of living with a neurodevelopmental disorder. The narrative structure further distinguishes the movies, with *My Name is Khan* following a linear path that chronicles Rizwan Khan's journey, while *Rain Man* adopts a road trip format, emphasizing self-discovery and change during the journey.

What truly makes these movies exceptional is their ability to go beyond mere entertainment. They use their originality not just as a gimmick but as a means to deliver powerful messages about humanity, acceptance, and the strength found in our differences. They touch our hearts by making us reflect on our own prejudices and challenging us to be more compassionate, making the viewing experience not only memorable but transformative. These movies exemplify the lasting impact of cinema in educating, inspiring, and emotionally connecting all of us.

The study primarily focuses on mainstream narrative films, potentially excluding alternative cinematic genres that may offer diverse and unconventional portrayals of mental illnesses. The findings of this study hold significant implications for media literacy, as they contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which cinema shapes perceptions of mental health. The insights gained from this research can inform strategies aimed at reducing stigmas associated with mental illnesses. By promoting accurate and empathetic portrayals in cinema, the study contributes to broader efforts to destigmatize mental health conditions. Finally, by advocating for a broader spectrum of mental health experiences in film, the study encourages a more inclusive representation of ASD and other mental health conditions, fostering empathy and understanding.

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