



Unveiling Truth In Chinese Cinema: An Indian Perspective On "Dying To Survive"

Vikash Kumar Asst. Professor, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad , Maharashtra.

Abstract: The cross-cultural appeal of cinema enables audiences worldwide to engage with narratives that reflect universal truths. "Dying to Survive," a Chinese film directed by Wen Muye, transcends geographical boundaries to resonate with Indian audiences as it addresses issues that extend beyond China's healthcare system. This research paper offers an Indian perspective on the film's exploration of truth, morality, and social justice. By analyzing the cultural resonances and shared challenges, this paper demonstrates how "Dying to Survive" strikes a chord with Indian viewers and highlights the significance of cross-border cinematic dialogues.

Keywords: Cross-cultural appeal, Cinema, Universal truths, "Dying to Survive", Chinese film, Indian audiences, Healthcare system, Truth, Social justice , Indian perspective.

1. Introduction:

"Dying to Survive" is a 2018 Chinese film directed by Wen Muye that garnered significant attention and acclaim for its powerful storytelling and exploration of complex social and ethical issues. The film is based on a true story and revolves around the struggles of a man who becomes involved in the illegal smuggling of affordable generic medication for cancer patients in China. Cinema serves as a bridge between cultures, allowing audiences from different nations to connect with stories that touch on shared human experiences. "Dying to Survive," provides a lens through which Indian viewers can engage with the narrative's themes and confront their own societal realities.

The film's plot is both engaging and thought-provoking. It follows the protagonist, Cheng Yong, who initially engages in the illegal trade of generic leukemia medication to make money but gradually transforms into a compassionate advocate for affordable healthcare. The storytelling is well-paced and effectively balances dramatic tension, humor, and emotional depth. The narrative skillfully portrays the challenges faced by the characters and keeps the audience invested in their journeys. The character development is a highlight of the film. Cheng Yong's transformation from a self-serving opportunist to a selfless advocate for cancer patients is depicted convincingly, making his journey relatable and emotionally

resonant. The supporting characters also contribute to the story's richness, offering diverse perspectives on the ethical dilemmas surrounding the illegal drug trade.

"Dying to Survive" provides a scathing critique of the high costs of life-saving medication, not just in China but globally. The film sheds light on the desperation of patients who cannot afford treatment and are forced to turn to illegal means to survive. It also delves into the bureaucratic hurdles and legal barriers that hinder access to affordable medication, sparking conversations about the need for healthcare reform. The film's emotional impact is one of its strongest aspects. It effectively tugs at the heartstrings, eliciting empathy from the audience for the characters' struggles and sacrifices. The poignant moments and genuine performances make the emotional journey of the film resonate deeply. The film's exploration of cultural values, moral dilemmas, and the healthcare system in China adds depth to its narrative. It offers insights into the societal pressures and challenges faced by individuals in the country, contributing to a broader understanding of Chinese society.

The cinematography captures both the urban and rural landscapes of China, providing a visually engaging backdrop to the narrative. Director Wen Muye manages to balance the serious subject matter with moments of humor, creating a well-rounded viewing experience.

2. Cultural Resonances and Shared Challenges:

India and China share demographic, economic, and social similarities that form the basis for the film's cross-cultural resonance. Both nations grapple with issues of healthcare accessibility, pharmaceutical monopolies, and the plight of marginalized populations. These commonalities create a space for Indian audiences to empathize with the film's characters and the truths they confront (Chen, 2018). "Dying to Survive" touches upon several themes of cultural resonances and shared challenges, enriching the film's narrative and contributing to its emotional depth. Here's how these concepts are portrayed in the film:

2.1 Cultural Resonances:

Healthcare Disparities: The film underscores a shared challenge faced not only in China but globally – the high cost of life-saving medication. This issue resonates with audiences across cultures who may have experienced or heard about the struggles of patients unable to afford vital treatments.

Cultural Values and Compassion: The protagonist's transformation from a self-centered entrepreneur to a compassionate advocate for affordable medicine resonates with cultural values of empathy, selflessness, and caring for others. This theme transcends cultures, as empathy and compassion are universally valued qualities.

Societal Pressure and Expectations: The film reflects the cultural pressure to succeed financially and conform to societal norms. This is relatable across cultures where individuals often face expectations to provide for their families or maintain a certain lifestyle.

Human Connections: The relationships developed among the characters demonstrate the universal importance of human connections in overcoming challenges. The bonds formed between Cheng Yong and the cancer patients, as well as the support network he creates, resonate with audiences regardless of their cultural background.

2.2 Shared Challenges:

Access to Affordable Healthcare: The film addresses the shared challenge of limited access to affordable healthcare, particularly for life-threatening illnesses. This issue transcends borders and underscores the need for global solutions to ensure everyone has access to necessary treatments.

Legal and Ethical Dilemmas: The film presents the ethical dilemma of engaging in illegal activities to save lives. This dilemma is a shared challenge that arises in various contexts, prompting viewers to consider the lengths they would go to in order to address injustices.

Bureaucratic Hurdles: The bureaucratic obstacles depicted in the film resonate with audiences familiar with the challenges of navigating complex systems to access necessary resources. This shared frustration transcends cultural boundaries.

Social Stigma: The film highlights the social stigma associated with certain illnesses, particularly cancer. This stigma is a shared challenge faced by patients worldwide, impacting their emotional well-being and societal integration.

2.3 Interplay between Cultural Resonances and Shared Challenges:

The cultural resonances in "Dying to Survive" enhance its portrayal of shared challenges by making the characters' struggles relatable and emotionally impactful to a diverse audience. By highlighting cultural values and universal emotions, the film helps viewers empathize with the characters' experiences and understand the complexities of the issues at hand. In turn, the shared challenges depicted in the film provide a platform for cultural resonances to emerge. As characters from different backgrounds come together to address healthcare disparities, their shared humanity and determination to make a difference exemplify the power of collaboration across cultures.

Overall, the film's exploration of both cultural resonances and shared challenges creates a compelling narrative that encourages viewers to reflect on their own values, societal norms, and the ways they can contribute to addressing global issues.

3. Truth and Morality Across Borders

"Dying to Survive" presents a moral conundrum that transcends national boundaries: the dilemma of prioritizing human life over legalities. The protagonist's journey resonates with Indian audiences who witness similar moral debates in their own society, such as issues surrounding generic drugs and healthcare inequalities. This resonance invites Indian viewers to contemplate their own societal values and ethical dilemmas.

3.1 Truth and Moral Complexity:

Smuggling Medication: The protagonist, Cheng Yong, initially engages in smuggling illegal generic medication to make money. This decision raises questions about the morality of breaking the law to save lives, blurring the lines between legality, morality, and compassion.

False Identity: Cheng Yong adopts a false identity to evade law enforcement. This deception highlights the complexities of truth and morality when faced with dire circumstances and societal pressures.

Bridging Cultural Differences: The film portrays the cross-cultural interactions between Cheng Yong and the foreign supplier, and later, between him and the cancer patients. This interaction prompts reflection on how cultural differences impact moral judgments and understanding.

Compassion Across Borders: The compassion Cheng Yong shows towards the patients transcends cultural boundaries, emphasizing the universal aspect of empathy and the shared moral duty to alleviate suffering.

3.2 Global Perspective on Access to Medicine:

Shared Challenge of Healthcare Access: The film underscores the shared challenge of limited access to affordable medication for life-threatening illnesses. The moral dilemma of prioritizing profit over human lives resonates across borders, sparking conversations about the ethical implications of such situations.

Bureaucratic Obstacles: The bureaucratic hurdles faced by the patients and Cheng Yong reflect the global issue of navigating complex systems to access vital resources. The film invites viewers to consider the ethical implications of such barriers.

Personal Gain vs. Altruism: The evolving motivations of Cheng Yong highlight the struggle between personal gain and altruistic intentions. This ethical conflict is relatable across cultures, as people grapple with their own values and desires.

Collective Responsibility: The film raises questions about collective responsibility and the ethical obligation to help those in need. It prompts viewers to think about how individuals and societies should respond to shared challenges that transcend borders.

Media Coverage: The media plays a role in shaping public perception of Cheng Yong's actions. The distortion of truth by the media highlights how information can be manipulated to fit certain narratives, emphasizing the importance of critically assessing sources of information.

"Dying to Survive" effectively navigates the intricate interplay between truth and morality across borders by presenting a range of ethical dilemmas faced by the characters. It prompts viewers to reflect on universal values, cultural influences, and the ethical challenges that arise in the pursuit of truth and compassion. The film's exploration of these themes adds depth to its narrative and invites audiences to engage in thoughtful discussions about the complexities of moral decision-making in a global context.

4. Healthcare Inequity and Societal Reflection:

In both India and China, access to affordable healthcare is a critical concern. "Dying to Survive" mirrors the struggle against pharmaceutical monopolies and the inadequacies of state healthcare systems in both countries. Indian audiences can relate to the film's depiction of societal injustices and reflect on their own efforts to address similar issues. "Dying to Survive" offers a poignant exploration of healthcare inequity and its implications on society. The film sheds light on the challenges individuals face when seeking life-saving medication, and it encourages viewers to reflect on broader societal issues. Here's how the film addresses healthcare inequity and prompts societal reflection:

4.1 Healthcare Inequity:

Affordability and Accessibility: The film portrays the harsh reality that many individuals with life-threatening illnesses cannot afford the medication they need. It highlights the stark disparity between those who can access expensive treatments and those who cannot, emphasizing the critical issue of healthcare affordability.

Illegal Activities for Survival: The film showcases how individuals resort to illegal activities, like smuggling medication, as a desperate measure to save their own lives or the lives of their loved ones. This underscores the dire consequences of healthcare inequity and the lengths to which people are willing to go when faced with limited options.

Bureaucratic Obstacles: The bureaucratic hurdles faced by patients reflect the systemic challenges that hinder access to affordable healthcare. The complex regulations and approval processes for medications illustrate how healthcare systems can inadvertently exacerbate inequities.

4.2 Societal Reflection:

Ethical Dilemmas: The film prompts viewers to reflect on the ethical dilemmas posed by healthcare inequity. It raises questions about the moral responsibilities of individuals, governments, and society at large to ensure that life-saving treatments are accessible to all, regardless of their financial status.

Collective Action: The film portrays how individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to address healthcare inequity. This reflects the potential for collective action to drive change and highlights the importance of solidarity in addressing societal challenges.

Media Influence: The media's role in shaping public perception of Cheng Yong's actions invites viewers to contemplate the role of media in spotlighting or distorting issues related to healthcare inequity. It encourages critical thinking about how media can impact public understanding and awareness.

Cultural Values and Compassion: The film underscores the universal values of compassion and empathy. Viewers are encouraged to consider the cultural and societal factors that shape our perceptions of others' struggles and how these factors influence our willingness to take action.

Responsibility and Advocacy: "Dying to Survive" encourages viewers to question their own role in addressing healthcare inequity. It prompts individuals to consider how they can contribute to creating a more equitable healthcare system through advocacy, policy changes, or support for organizations working in this field.

"Dying to Survive" challenges audiences to contemplate the far-reaching consequences of healthcare inequity on individuals, families, and society as a whole. By weaving a compelling narrative around this issue, the film encourages viewers to engage in conversations about systemic change, societal values, and the moral imperative to ensure that quality healthcare is accessible to everyone, regardless of their economic status.

5. Realism and Cinematic Engagement:

The film's realistic portrayal of characters and situations is a storytelling technique that appeals to global audiences, including those from India. The fusion of realism and cinematic storytelling creates a relatable narrative that invites viewers to emotionally invest in the characters' journeys and the truths they unveil. "Dying to Survive" effectively blends realism and cinematic engagement to create a compelling narrative that resonates with audiences. The film's balance between these elements contributes to its impact and emotional depth. Here's how "Dying to Survive" achieves this balance:

5.1 Realism:

Authentic Characters: The characters in the film are relatable and multi-dimensional. They exhibit flaws, vulnerabilities, and motivations that mirror real-life individuals. Cheng Yong's transformation from a self-serving individual to a compassionate advocate feels authentic and grounded in human experiences.

True Story Basis: The fact that "Dying to Survive" is based on a true story adds a layer of realism to the narrative (Chen, 2018). This real-life foundation lends credibility to the challenges faced by the characters and the moral dilemmas they confront.

Societal Issues: The film addresses real societal issues, such as healthcare inequity and the struggles of cancer patients. The portrayal of bureaucratic obstacles, the desperation of patients, and the emotional toll of their situations contributes to the film's authenticity.

Ordinary Heroes: The film highlights the potential for ordinary individuals to become heroes in their own right. Cheng Yong's journey from a small-time entrepreneur to a figure of inspiration resonates with the concept that heroism can emerge from unexpected places.

5.2 Cinematic Engagement:

Narrative Pacing: The film maintains a well-paced narrative that balances moments of tension, drama, and emotional depth. This pacing keeps the audience engaged and invested in the characters' journeys.

Emotional Impact: The film uses emotional storytelling to connect with the audience. The struggles, sacrifices, and triumphs of the characters evoke genuine emotions, creating a strong bond between viewers and the story.

Humor: "Dying to Survive" intersperses moments of humor throughout the film. These lighter moments provide relief from the heavy subject matter and contribute to a dynamic viewing experience (Su, 2018).

Visuals and Cinematography: The film's visuals capture the urban and rural landscapes of China, providing a visually engaging backdrop for the story. Cinematic techniques enhance the storytelling, making it visually appealing and immersive.

Character Dynamics: The interactions and relationships between characters are well-developed, offering engaging dynamics that drive the narrative forward. These connections keep the audience invested in the characters' journeys.

Symbolism and Metaphors: The film uses symbolic elements and metaphors to convey deeper meanings. For example, the "Dying to Survive" brand itself becomes a symbol of hope, resilience, and the human spirit's fight against adversity.

The interplay between realism and cinematic engagement enhances the film's impact. By grounding the story in real issues and relatable characters, the film draws viewers into a world that reflects their own experiences. Simultaneously, cinematic techniques and storytelling choices elevate the emotional resonance of the narrative, making it a memorable and thought-provoking cinematic experience. This balance between realism and engagement results in a film that not only educates and raises awareness but also entertains and leaves a lasting impression.

6. Cultural Exchange and Dialogue:

"Dying to Survive" exemplifies the potential for cross-border cinematic conversations. The film invites Indian viewers to engage with Chinese perspectives on truth, morality, and social justice, fostering a dialogue that extends beyond geographical boundaries. This cinematic exchange facilitates a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by both nations and the ways in which they respond to them. "Cultural Exchange and Dialogue" play a significant role in "Dying to Survive," fostering understanding, empathy, and collaboration among characters from diverse backgrounds (Feng, 2018). The film showcases how these elements contribute to the story's development and the characters' growth. Here's how cultural exchange and dialogue are portrayed in the film:

6.1 Cultural Exchange:

Foreign Supplier Relationship: The relationship between Cheng Yong and the foreign supplier emphasizes cultural exchange. Their interactions highlight cultural differences, language barriers, and the nuances of conducting business across borders.

Cancer Patient Diversity: The film brings together cancer patients from various walks of life, showcasing their cultural diversity. This diversity fosters a sense of community that transcends cultural boundaries and reinforces the idea that illness unites people despite their differences.

Stereotypes and Misconceptions: The film challenges stereotypes by showcasing the unique backgrounds and struggles of the characters. The interactions among them lead to the dispelling of stereotypes and the development of genuine connections.

6.2 Impact and Significance:

Fostering Empathy: Cultural exchange and dialogue humanize the characters' experiences, making them relatable to a wide audience. This fosters empathy and encourages viewers to see the shared humanity in people from different cultural backgrounds.

Conflict Resolution: The film showcases how open dialogue can resolve conflicts and misunderstandings. The characters' willingness to communicate enables them to find common ground and work toward a shared goal.

Collaboration and Unity: The characters' cultural exchange and dialogues lead to collaboration and unity. Their shared experiences and conversations demonstrate the potential for individuals from diverse backgrounds to come together for a common purpose.

Encouraging Reflection: The cultural exchange and dialogue in the film encourage viewers to reflect on their own beliefs, biases, and the importance of open communication in addressing complex issues.

In "Dying to Survive," cultural exchange and dialogue serve as bridges that connect characters from different cultures and backgrounds. These elements underscore the power of communication in breaking down barriers, fostering understanding, and building meaningful relationships (Chen, 2018). The film highlights that through conversations and shared experiences, people can find common ground, challenge preconceptions, and work together to overcome challenges that transcend borders.

Conclusion:

"Dying to Survive" is a thought-provoking and emotionally charged film that successfully addresses complex issues related to healthcare, ethics, and social responsibility. Its powerful storytelling, well-developed characters, and exploration of cultural nuances make it a must-watch. The film's ability to provoke conversations about healthcare accessibility and the moral dilemmas surrounding such issues demonstrates its impact and relevance beyond the screen. "Dying to Survive" illustrates the capacity of cinema to transcend cultural differences and provoke thought on shared human dilemmas. Through its exploration of truth, morality, and social justice, the film speaks to Indian audiences who identify with its themes and narratives. By fostering cross-cultural dialogue, the film exemplifies the power of cinema to forge connections and encourage collective reflection on universal issues.

Reference:

"Dying to Survive" (2018). Director: Wen Muye, Bona Film Group. Cast: Xu Zheng, Wang Chuanjun, Zhang Yu.

Chen G. (2018). Return of realistic writing spirit in "Dying to Survive". Wen yi bao, no 4 , pp. 62-63

Chen J (2018). The role of realistic artistic creation in "Dying to survive". Audio-visual, no12, pp.96-97

Chen, L (2018). An incomplete realism work in “Dying to survive”. Audio-visual, no 12, pp.98-99

Feng S.Y. (2018). “Dying to survive” Unlock the correct way of “Realism” opening. China reform news, no.5,pp1-2

Su, S. C (2018). Mirror image of Grassroots Hero’s life in “ Dying to Survive”. Contemporarily TV, No 8, pp.104-105