Dosh

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Dosh

Abstract
This is a film review of *Dosh* (2023), directed by Radha Mehta.

Keywords
Mental Illness, Disability

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Author Notes
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Dosh (2023), dir. Radha Mehta

*Dosh* (“fault” in Hindi) is a short film in which Radha Mehta tells the story of a young mother, Karishma, who is hard of hearing and uses hearing aids. We first see her late at night with tired eyes coming downstairs. In the soft light, she removes the hearing aids and begins to glide and dance, embracing the silence. As she twirls, her eye catches a brief flash, and she is alarmed by something outside. She puts the tiny wires back in her ears, returning her to the hearing world. As the silence disappears, Karishma confronts her husband, Ram, who is teaching their son, Rishi, to swim in the middle of the night. She reminds Ram that she put Rishi to bed hours ago and that he needs to go back to bed.

Karishma finds herself dealing with a husband who is suffering from and denying his bipolar condition. She also sees the danger in his denial and how it is affecting their family. Hoping to enlist support from her mother-in-law, Shilpa, Karishma discusses her fears about Ram’s mental health with her. Karishma thinks Ram will listen if his mother intervenes. Shilpa dismisses talk about mental health as a Western sham. She states Ram’s problems are with his stomach. As Shilpa
rejects her son’s mental health issues, she also discounts Karishma’s hearing loss by covering the hearing aids with strands of hair.

At the family’s pre-wedding ritual Ram is angry with Karishma for talking with his mother. Karishma pleads with Ram and states she can’t rest because she can’t sleep without her hearing aids. She is afraid to take them out because something bad might happen, and she won’t be aware of it. Rishi sees Ram pull out her hearing aids and throw them in the swimming pool.

As the party guests laugh and dance, Rishi slips out to the pool and sees the hearing aids at the bottom. He knows his mother needs them and jumps in to retrieve them. Since he hasn’t yet learned to swim, he begins to drown. Karishma looks for Rishi and sees him floating in the water. She jumps in to save him. As they lay Rishi on the cement, Ram and Karishma see the hearing aids in his hand. Ram now realizes his denial has created a dangerous situation for his son and family. Karishma’s tired eyes still shine with love for Ram as she tells him this is not his fault. We see Ram reach for and hold Karishma’s hand as she drives him to get the help he needs.

At the end of the movie, Karishma puts Rishi to bed and as she lays down, she puts her hearing aids on the nightstand.

This short film is about how difficult it is for many people to deal with mental health issues, either their own or those of others. In many cultures it is taboo to talk about mental illness, let alone seek professional help in dealing with mental illness. But Dosh is also a beautiful film about unconditional love, acceptance, forgiveness, and not finding fault with others.

Dosh is a film from the “Unstoppable” program of the Slamdance Film Festival. The Unstoppable program features films that represent the disabled community without tokenism, as Dosh clearly does, and encourages members of the disabled community to tell their stories through film, as Radha Mehta, who is hard of hearing, has done.