

Padman: A thought provoking movie on status of women

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Abstract

India is a country of contradictions. On the one hand, women are worshipped as deities, without whose blessings, work cannot be initiated. On the other hand, crimes against women and girls are increasing day by day in India. People are talking about Women Empowerment and improving status in Indian Society but on the other side they are mistreating girls and women like slaves. Often we read in newspaper about malpractices such as rape, molestation, acid attacks etc. going on in different states of the country, and some incidents perhaps don't publish. There are many films made depicting role of women and their contributions in development of Nation, but are they all influencing society to give prestige and dignity to women? Films like Lajja, Mother India, Gulal, Parched, Marry Com, Secret Superstar, Queen, Kabil, Damini, Dangal, Arth emphasised the problems and difficulties faced by women in society. Such movies are made to create awareness among people about importance of women rather people learn to behave in a wrong manner from movies. This shows that attitude and mind set of people towards women should be changed. The great example is the movie Padman. Women are treated badly for her real gift of women-hood. The present paper focuses on the critical analysis of a movie Padman and problems of women in society.

Key Words: *Women Empowerment, Molestation, Acid Attack, Women-hood*

PADMAN: GLIMPSE OF A MOVIE

The main characters of the movie are Radhika Apte as Gayatri in movie (wife) and Akshay Kumar as Lakshmikant Chauhan (Husband). The movie is based on the theme, menstrual hygiene of women during their menstrual phase. Film depicts the arrange marriage between a simple girl of a village and a kind and helpful man (Lakshmi) of the other village. Lakshmi loves his wife a lot in the film, not only Lakshmi loves his wife; he is also sensitive towards women and their problems. The film traces Lakshmi's fight with the society, his family and

even his wife, and his own financial and educational limitations, in order to ensure women start using hygienic alternatives when they are menstruating.

Initial interval of movie shows the happy marriage life of husband and wife but later some conflict arises. When Gayatri fall under menstruation, she was asked to stay away from other members of family; she was given food in isolation and was asked to sleep out in balcony. She was using dirty cloth in her menstruation period, seen by Lakshmi. Lakshmi urges Gayatri to avoid the dirty cloth and use sanitary napkins. Gayatri was reluctant to go for disposable pads as they are expensive. Lakshmi tried to make sanitary napkin using cotton fibre in a cloth and gave it to Gayatri. She used it but it didn't work somehow, she denied to use it again. Lakshmi again tried to make it of more cotton to absorb but she didn't accept. Lakshmi started giving sanitary pad to every girl he sees but everyone was looking towards him annoyingly. People of society started neglecting Lakshmi saying he don't have any sense of talking with girls. Lakshmi continued his attempt of convincing girls of schools and colleges to use sanitary napkin prepared by him. He also took help of a girl studying in medical college but failed to get feedback of the pad prepared by him. Lakshmi wanted his mother and sisters also to use those napkins but he couldn't rather his mother and sister started looking him with humiliation. He tried very hard to make all girls understood about the importance of using sanitary pads but couldn't succeed. Somehow while working he heard somebody saying before giving to customer, you should try it first. He followed it and he tried self-made pad but failed due to less absorption capacity. He was pulled to Gram Panchayat and was asked to take divorce. His wife also left him and he decided to leave village. He left it and went to a metro city for the search of a good quality cotton. He asked for the difference in cotton he used and the cotton used in sanitary napkins. He got the idea that it is not cotton but cellulose fibre. He worked as servant in the house of a college professor to get more knowledge about cellulose fibre. But the professor made a fun of him saying emotional and mad person. Professor's son helped him to find about cellulose fibre with the help of internet which was too costly. He managed to get it but the machine of making pads was too much expensive. He decided to prepare the machine and he got success in it. He made a pad using that machine. One day a lady, Pari (Sonam Kapoor) was in an urgent need of sanitary napkins and she used the pad prepared by Lakshmi. Lakshmi was happy and he went to ask feedback which really seems stupid. But he got positive feedback. She came to visit Lakshmi and the machinery he created. She motivated him to present it in the concert of IIT, Scientific Invention for the society. He presented his invention and got

recognised for his research at National Level of making cheap sanitary napkin for women. He identified all over the world for his invention. He started the same business at large scale and appointed ladies staff to give employment to women. The climax of the movie shows that people appreciated his work and rewarded him with many awards and trophies. Finally it was again happy ending with happy marriage life.

PADMAN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The film tackles the “shame” that our society insists on imposing on periods, head on. From women being ostracised during “that time of the month” to young girls shying away from school to avoid any “embarrassment”, co-writer Balki and Swanand Kirkire have managed to put it all out exactly as it is. Some of the exchanges that Lakshmi has in the course of attempting to find a cheap alternative to sanitary pads seem in-your-face, but these also bring forth issues that our society needs to address.

A young girl teases her brother when he wants to romance his wife, but runs away horrified when she sees a sanitary napkin in his hands. A loving but naive wife is scandalised as her husband is “obsessed with women’s problems”. It is moments like these that make Akshay Kumar’s Padman elevating, without being didactic. R Balki’s much hyped film is based on the real life story of Arunachalam Muruganantham, called India's "menstrual man" for transforming the lives of underprivileged women who had to use old rags, sand and leaves during their periods. Despite being peppered with melodrama and some scenes that go on for too long, the entertaining PadMan delivers a robust message -- the importance of women’s menstrual health.

In one of his arguments with Gayatri, while pleading with her to use a sanitary pad, Lakshmi says he tried convincing his three sisters and mom to use sanitary pads instead of dirty cloth but they didn’t understand his objective. No, this man does not restrict his sensitivity to his wife alone - he wants every woman to fully live life just like a man and not be banished to a portion of the house for a few days every month. Sonam makes quite a late entry in the narrative, but adds charm to every frame she inhabits. Her character is beautifully etched, perhaps to balance Radhika’s naive and self-destructive wife. Sonam’s character not only offers marketing and financial help to Lakshmi, but also shares a modern and chilled-out life mantra when the former is unsure of him-self.

The menstruation is the gift of God given to women. They are only given a beauty of becoming mother. They are only given the supreme position after God. It is said in our

Shashtra, that God resides where the women are worshipped. People adore women as Devi Lakshmi, Devi Sarswati, Durga but on the opposite they don't respect women of society. They don't consider importance of women in the progress of society. They don't care about women's problem and their health issues.

CONCLUSION

The custom shown in the padman movie while girl is in menstruation period still perceive in this so called 21st century. Many women who belong to tribal family don't have even dirty cloth to use in their menstruation period. They don't have money to have good food to maintain their health and strength during menstruation. Many women fall under the category of malnutrition. It is observed in some families that women should take food once all other members of family take it. In Indian society the works are divided where in women are always there to look after family, child and all other household activities where in men has to perform outside functions. Why is it so? Is it not a joint responsibility of men and women? What can we do to overcome such problems of women? Making movies on women is not enough to bring change in society about women's status but it is mind set and attitude of people in society. People must have to change their approach towards women, then and then only women empowerment can be made possible in the real sense. Give EQUALITY to women, give OPPORTUNITIES to women, give RESPECT to Women, give DIGNITY to women.

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