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# A Satirical representation of domestic abuse in the film Darlings

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## **ABSTRACT:**

The study examines the representation of domestic violence in the film Darlings. It also aims to understand how the characters are represented in such abusive situations and how the film tries to show the abuse towards women despite being erratic lovers. In the film we see that Badhru and Hamza the lead characters have distinctively different personalities. However, we see another side of their personalities when they start abusing each other. The film takes a drastic turn when Hamza pushes pregnant Badhru off the staircase. After which she avenges her child death through violence towards her husband in the film.

Darlings understands that abuse's tragedy lies in its pervasive malignancy rather than in a few horrifying acts of violence. It draws attention to how, in certain ways, the abuser is either a victim or a monster.

## **KEY WORDS:**

Women, culture, atrocity, Society, change.

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## **Introduction:**

Films are an effective and popular medium of mass communication. It helps in communicating messages and information through visuals and gestures. Gender, love, intimacy, and romance are all themes explored in films. (Segrin and Nabi 2002). The stories seem to influence people's perceptions toward relationships and intimacy by depicting social norms for acceptable conduct in partnerships (Aubrey, Rhea, Segrin, and Nabi 2002).

The problem with socially conscious Hindi film industry (also known as Bollywood) is that the films lack of authenticity. Not by confronting the issue, but by incorporating it into an engaging story. Once you get past the mechanics of its social significance, the plot frequently falls flat.

Another distinguishing feature is the absence of discomfort as a viewer. The depiction of anguish and pain cannot avoid "filmy" exaggeration and is frequently troubled by generational issues.

For a long time, domestic violence has plagued the Indian households. Abuse and entitlement stems from the belief that the female is a "property" of the man. This worldview is a generational heritage that we as a nation have carried into the twenty-first century. It does not necessarily represent our identity or our philosophical thoughts on the role of women in society.

However, with the advent of new media, it challenges these norms and attempts to break these pre-determined notions. New media has also changed the way the films are being made and its messaging over time.

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## Research Methodology:

The study aims to examine how domestic violence is represented in the film Darlings. Also aims to study how the other characters are represented in such abusive situations and how the film tries to show the abuse towards women despite the lead characters being erratic lovers.

The methodology used is qualitative content analysis under the theoretical framework of critical feminist theory. In the early days of qualitative research, fields of natural science like biology, chemistry, and physics were where it all began.

A subfield of feminist theory is critical feminist theory. According to Brandi.N.G (2011), critical feminist theory is one of many theories that emerged from critical race theory in response to the various forms of oppression that exist in American society.

Qualitative research has assisted the researchers in developing concepts and theories. The researchers can now see beyond the ‘what’ of a problem or a subject. As a result, it helps gain better understanding of the subject. It also allowed the researchers to make connections between theories and reality.

## Movie Summary:

It is a story about a love marriage of a lower middle-class couple. Hamza and Badhru who live in the chouls of Mumbai. After Hamza is hired by the government to work as a ticket collector for the Indian Railways, Badrunissa (Badru) and Hamza get married. However, Badhru ‘s mother Shamshunissa is unhappy with her decision.

Three years later, things between Badhru and Hamza are not going well as he has developed an alcoholism problem. He drinks and abuses Badru frequently, also wants her to live his way. He also opposes the idea to redevelop his building. Shamshunissa is aware of the daily abuse of her daughter and wants her to come back home. But Badhru holds out hope that Hamza may one day change. Zulfi, a close friend of Badhru and Shamshunissa, complains to the police that Hamza is a wife-beater, but in the police station, Hamza persuades Badru to take back the report against him.



**Fig 1.1 Darlings movie Poster**

On their ride home, Hamza assaults Shamshunissa, forcing Badhru to choose between her mother and her husband. Since she chooses Hamza, the mother and daughter are compelled to break their relationship. A few days later, Badhru learns of her pregnancy and reunites with Shamshunissa at about the same time. As Hamza discovers from Inspector Jadhav that Zulfi had complained about him and Badru is well aware of it. Badhru miscarries after Hamza pushes her down the stairs because he thinks they are having an affair. However, Badhru does not stop there. She chooses to hold Hamza captive in their home and torch him in retaliation for what he did to her.

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**Analysis:**

The Study closely observes the stairs sequence, where pregnant Badhru is pushed down the stairs by Humza. Here we see hamza takes an extreme step of pushing Badhru from the stairs over the doubt that she is having an affair with Zulfi.

The setting of this sequence is at night and the usage of light in the entire sequence is minimal. Indicative of the fact that it is a dark and social evil that is still persisting in our society. It could be said that it is one such social evil that continues to damage our society from generations.

The sequence begins in a dark setting where we see Hamza walking with a sense of anger and rage. His tiffin box tapping the stairs hints towards a buildup of tension in the air. Badhru locking the door and running to hide shows that she knows what to expect from Hamza. There are other clues in the sequence like the broken mirror, boiling milk on the stove reflect the anger and tension in the situation.

Hamza checking Badhru's phone shows his lack of trust on her. The dialogue 'Yeh Baccha bhi usika hai kya' goes on to show the hegemonic masculinity in Hamza's Character. He in the way of speaking to Badhru dismissing the fact that she has the right speak and clarify the stated allegations by Hamza. He assumes that woman can easily be lured into choosing a man for his looks and charm over her husband. Without hearing what Badhru has to say, Humza concludes that she is cheating on him with another man.

In between we see that the shot cuts into a scene where the lady at the parlor hears the sound of glass breaking and knows what is happening yet choose to ignore it. Also, it is

interesting to note that in this sequence we see Hamza mercilessly dragging Badhru through the corridor. Yet no one comes to her rescue. It is reflective of what happens in our society. Where people despite knowing the wrong doings around them, choose to turn a deaf ear to such social evils.

Badhru cries for mercy pleading him to stop hitting her considering the fact that she is Pregnant. However, this does not stop Hamza from continuing to abuse her. He then takes an extreme step of pushing her down the stairs. She falls down and cries in pain having no affect or a sense of regret, Hamza leaves her and walks away.

This goes on to show that men in the society have a sense of entitlement over their women, where they treat her like an object that handled as and how they like.

### **Conclusion:**

The film encourages women to confront the abuse head-on rather than try to negotiate with the scorpion, the violent husband in the story. Darlings is a funny social thriller that deconstructs the crutches that allow patriarchy to amble into living rooms and eventually almost turns into a well-made film on domestic abuse.

It shows how the man has a sense of entitlement from birth, which he displays when he imagines being provoked by the so-called inferior sex. According to Darlings, there are no exceptions to the rule when it comes to domestic abuse. It prevents an abusive husband from slipping into the trap of social conditioning and dietary habits.

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