



Radical Feminism and Female Resilience: Surviving the Storm in *Do Patti*

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims to provide an interpretation of the *Do Patti* (2024) movie using the Radical feminist theory perspective. Portrayal of women and gender-based violence is a common and growing trend in Bollywood movies, although the movie *Do Patti* (2024) dealing with domestic violence has not been subjected to such analysis. The current paper will focus on interpreting the representation of patriarchy, domestic violence, and female agency in the film. This qualitative study adopts a hermeneutic interpretive approach to examine the ideological and thematic dimensions of the film. It will apply the theoretical framework of Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, and bell hooks known as Radical Feminist Theory. Judith Herman's theory of trauma will be another theoretical framework used to analyze the *Do Patti*'s central themes. The analysis demonstrates how *Do Patti* portrays gender-based violence as a structural manifestation of patriarchal power rather than merely an individual act of violence. Moreover, the study elaborates on the depiction of female agency and domestic violence and to what extent the movie challenges patriarchy and gender stereotypes. The study also contributes in addressing the research problem by analyzing *Do Patti* (2024) with recourse to the Radical Feminist Theory and elaborating the themes of patriarchy, gender-based violence, and female agency in the movie.

Key Words: Radical feminism; *Do Patti*; Gender-based violence; Trauma; Patriarchy; Gender stereotypes; Female agency.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As a means of feminist discourse, cinema has long served as a powerful medium for interrogating social inequalities and challenging dominant ideological structures through visual and narrative representation. Directed by Shashanka Chaturvedi, the latest Bollywood thriller *Do Patti* (2024), with the star cast of Kajol and Kriti Sanon, offers a nuanced representation of female resilience and resistance in the face of patriarchal violence. The movie is set in the remote hills of Uttarakhand; it is not just a psychological thriller but also a radical feminist statement against gender-based violence (GBV), institutional ineffectiveness, and the emotional price of living in an overwhelmingly patriarchal world. Radical Feminist Theory provides an appropriate analytical framework for examining the ideological dimensions of *Do Patti*, which posits that the main cause of women's oppression is patriarchy. Radical feminism, as opposed to liberal feminism, is characterized by the need to destroy the systemic frameworks that support violence against women. *Do Patti* shows it through the main female characters, Saumya and Shailee, both identical twins, performed by Kriti Sanon, who find themselves in various spheres of patriarchal influence. Saumya's abusive marriage exemplifies the normalization of domestic violence within patriarchal social structures, whereas the multifactorial motives of Shailee illustrate the difficulties of feminine solidarity in the context of oppression. The portrayal of the failure of institutions for women is one of the most notable aspects of the film. The character played by Kajol, Vidya Jyoti, a persistent police officer who fights against the legal system, which often marginalizes or diminishes the experiences of women. This is in line with actual criticisms of the law enforcement agencies in how they tackle domestic violence cases, reiterating feminist legal theorists like Catharine MacKinnon, who claim that the justice system is fundamentally designed to disfavor women.

The movie is reflective of the exasperation in real-life scenarios where the victims of domestic violence are reluctant to make complaints because of the pressure imposed by society and the negligence of the institutions. This is a theme that is also found in other Bollywood movies such as *Pink* (2016), which criticizes the victim-blaming nature of the judiciary; *Thappad* (2020), *Lapata Ladies* (2024), and *Mrs* (2025), which criticize the culture of blaming victims in marriages. *Do Patti* adheres to this pattern by having the main characters fight not only those who do it but also a completely social system that does not want to admit their suffering. On the international level, *Do Patti* could be compared with feminist movies like *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), which follows the story of a woman seeking justice against sexual violence, and *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991), which follows the story of a woman pretending to be dead to get rid of her abusive husband. Similar to these films, *Do Patti* does not simply portray the victimhood; it highlights survival as a rebellion and resistance. *Do Patti*, with its compelling storyline and multiple feminist undertones, is a part of a greater Bollywood interest in gender politics. Although critics say that the movie fails to capture the intricacies of domestic violence, its radical feminist overtones make it a significant contribution to the developing discussion of female agency in film. Psychological suspense and gender critique create a message that *Do Patti* emphasizes: survival is difficult, and it is a storm women must sail in, and in a system that is meant to quiet them down.

1.1. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it examines *Do Patti* (2024) for its representation of gender-based violence, patriarchal oppression, and women's resistance and



solidarity through the lens of Radical Feminist Theory. It shows how modern Bollywood cinema can subvert patriarchal norms and values, unveil male violence, and advance women's emancipation. Therefore, the present research makes a meaningful contribution to feminist film studies and gender studies by providing further research findings on domestic violence and institutional oppression in Indian cinema. Moreover, this study may be considered significant for the academic audience, including students, researchers, and scholars interested in feminist film criticism and gender studies research as well as other areas of study, including women's studies, as it promotes further research into the themes of gender-based violence and patriarchal oppression in contemporary films.

1.2. Research Questions

- In what way does *Do Patti* depict the issue of patriarchal control and systemic oppression using the female characters?
- What does the film do to the conventional understandings of victimhood, and how does it put women in charge of their freedom?

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Domestic abuse and patriarchal oppression, women's empowerment and strength are themes that have been widely discussed in feminist literature and cinema studies. *Do Patti* constitutes a significant cinematic text that interrogates gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and women's resistance within patriarchal social structures. Being a cinematic piece that incorporates certain elements of thriller and social commentary, *Do Patti* is a deep exploration of what patriarchal oppression is and the hardships women have to endure in a male-dominated world. The themes of the film are very close to the radical feminist theory that considers patriarchy as a systemic and extensive phenomenon, which has to be broken to attain real gender equality. Radical feminism, as theorized by Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, claims that social structures of male dominance are perpetuated by both culture and institutional practices. *Do Patti* is an example of such thoughts, as it shows how the story of its female protagonist, Saumya, is trapped in an abusive marriage. Her experiences reinforce the radical feminist argument that domestic violence is a systemic manifestation of patriarchal domination rather than an isolated interpersonal conflict. The persona of Vidya Jyothi VJ Kanwar, portrayed by Kajol, can also be said to be a form of resistance since she aims to avenge Saumya as a way of emphasizing women's solidarity and laws against GBV. Besides portraying the atrocities of domestic violence, *Do Patti* also shows the psychological and emotional repercussions that the victims pay. In the discussion of the representations of female suffering in cinema, feminist film theory is applicable, specifically the theory of the so-called male gaze developed by Laura Mulvey.

In contrast to most Bollywood movies that tend to romanticize violence against women, *Do Patti* proposes unedited and sometimes awkward images of violence against women, which forces the audience to face the reality of GBV. The movie further falls under the feminist discourse by depicting the strength of their female characters, especially in the unswerving quest of the female protagonist, VJ, in her pursuit of justice. Several Bollywood films address the issue of domestic violence, empowerment, strength, and the challenge of patriarchy, as *Do Patti* does. These movies deal with the emotional, psychological, and physical violence women experience and how they come to empower themselves, usually challenging the social norms that restrict their free will. *Thappad* (2020), directed by Amrita Sinha (Taapsee Pannu), is slapped once by her husband, which leads her to begin to understand how the patriarchy is ingrained in her life and how it



condones domestic violence. The movie is in line with radical feminist ideals as it questions societal norms, which require women to be subjected to violence in the name of family. The fact that Amrita does not tolerate even a single act of harm is an excellent illustration of ultimate resilience as she regains her autonomy as well as self-worth. Her story highlights the feminist idea that no type of abuse can be justified, and *Thappad* is a strong argument against the oppression of women by patriarchy and a testimony to the fight of women. An additional appropriate movie is *Piku* (2015), which, although not directly focused on domestic abuse, touches upon the emotional trauma and manipulation women are frequently subjected to in the family. *Piku*, the main character (Deepika Padukone), is a symbol of female strength, is able to survive in the world of taking care of her aging father and retains her independence and career. Her storyline brings out the entrenched patriarchal rules that subject the burden of caregiving to the woman, with the cost being their own ambitions.

Nevertheless, these obstacles do not stop *Piku* and her resilience and willpower as they defy the conventional norms and show how women can still prevail and establish their independence in the structures of oppression. *Maatr* (2017) reveals the horrors of sexual violence, showing how a woman never gives up in her quest to seek justice and revenge following the trauma. Although its plot is closely connected with gender-based violence, the movie is closely correlated with radical feminist ideas, as it reveals the systemic inefficiency of law enforcement and the patriarchal institutions, which support such offenses. It questions a society that tends to silence survivors and to impose its own will, which is then countered by the protagonist, who takes power back on her terms. The story of her life is the epitome of perseverance because she does not allow herself to be oppressed by an unjust system but rather she is the quintessence of the fundamental radical feminist ideology that women should resist and destroy patriarchal structures in order to achieve justice and freedom. This thematic echo can be related to *Do Patti* (2024), in which women's empowerment is achieved by rebellion and breaking of societal norms. *The Dirty Picture* (2011) sheds light on the exploitation and objectification of women in the movie industry, and how Silk Smitha (Vidya Balan) rose to prominence in an industry that was full of manipulation, abuse, and dehumanization of women to please men. The movie is a critique of how women's bodies are commodified and how this is a root cause of their systemic oppression that is ingrained in patriarchal systems.

Similarly, *Do Patti* discusses emotional manipulation and control, which women experience in abusive relationships. The ultimate opposition of Shraya is a reflection of radical feminist principles since she does not want to be a victim anymore but reinstates her agency. Both movies advocate the importance of breaking down the systems of oppression, and the main characters of the movies represent the ultimate resistance to overcome the social conventions that are aimed at the oppression of women. Other similar topics in *Do Patti* have been addressed in several other Bollywood movies, such as *Pink* (2016), *Thappad* (2020), *Lapata Ladies* (2024), *Mrs* (2025), and *Provoked* (2006). Released in 2014, *Pink*, played by Taapsee Pannu and Amitabh Bachchan, argues in favor of consent and breaks victim-blaming myths, similar to *Do Patti* about the social imperative to silence survivors. On the same note, *Thappad* attacks the normalization of domestic violence in marriage and is thus a good companion book to *Do Patti*. Inspired by the true-life tale of Kiranjit Ahluwalia and portrays a survivor who takes revenge against her abuser, a theme that is similar to that of *Do Patti*, which discusses the issues of justice and female empowerment.

2.1. Research Gap

Although gender-based violence and women's empowerment have been widely explored in the feminist literature and Bollywood cinema, the film *Do Patti* (2024) has received only a limited



amount of scholarly attention from radical feminist perspectives. At the same time, the issues of domestic violence, gender-based oppression, women's solidarity, and patriarchal abuse are at the center of the movie. This research aims to provide a relevant analysis of *Do Patti* from radical feminist perspectives, complementing the existing literature and reviews on gender-based violence in Bollywood films. The films *Pink*, *Thappad*, and *Darlings*, which have been extensively analyzed from various feminist perspectives, will provide a useful basis for this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative interpretive research design grounded in hermeneutic textual analysis to examine the portrayal of gender-based violence, patriarchal oppression, and women's plight in *Do Patti* (2024). The choice of a qualitative study is justified by its ability to interpret phenomena that cannot be captured in quantitative terms. The study is theoretically informed by Radical Feminist Theory, primarily drawing upon the works of Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, and Bell Hooks. This theory explores patriarchy as the active force of women's oppression, which has been the main concern of many feminist movements throughout the centuries. The research is descriptive-analytical in nature. *Do Patti* (2024) is the main subject of this study, while books, journals, and articles on feminism, gender-based violence, and film critique serve as secondary sources of information. Particular attention is drawn to the film's central themes to reveal how it interprets domestic violence, oppression, female trauma, and empowerment.

The collected data are subjected to qualitative thematic analysis. Thematic analysis aims to identify patterns or themes that emerge from the data. The themes of patriarchal power structures and female solidarity in overcoming oppression are further explored using the concepts of Radical Feminist Theory. The analysis is based solely on published data, which adhere to ethical and formal requirements. This study does not assess the film's impact on society or its commercial success; rather it focuses on analyzing the source material itself.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1. The Concept of Radical Feminism in *Do Patti*

Bollywood has traditionally swerved between idealizing female victimization and women as agents of transformation. Directed by Chaturvedi, *Do Patti* (2024) is a notable movie in the radical feminist context, which addresses female strength, justice, and oppression in society. The story of Saumya (Kajol) and Shailee (Kriti Sanon), who are trapped in the maze of domestic violence, politics, and ethical problems, is presented. In contrast to the mainstream Bollywood revenge movies, *Do Patti* foregrounds the radical feminist assertion that patriarchal institutions systematically deny women meaningful access to justice and women are portrayed as pursuing alternative forms of justice when institutional mechanisms fail to protect them. The scene in which the two characters talk, saying, "*Main usse end tak nahi chodungi*" (Kajol) is the point of the feminist theme of the film being rebellious to male violence and institutional indifference. Such a feeling is consistent with the feminist discourse in *Thappad* (2020), where the main character does not agree with domestic abuse, which breaks the societal rules.

4.2. Institutional Oppression and Radical Feminism

Radical feminism as theorized by Andrea Dworkin (1979) and Catharine MacKinnon (1989) criticizes patriarchy as a systemic process that supports the continuation of male dominance via marriage, law, and family. *Do Patti* is a manifestation of such criticism in the character of Dhruv (Tahir Raj Bhasin), who is not only a bad man who abuses Saumya but also a continuation of the rights of the patriarchate. The authorities get rid of Saumya when she tries to get assistance, which





reflects the opinion of MacKinnon (1989) in *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* that the legal system is set up to reinforce male dominance. This exasperation is portrayed in the sentence "*Rulebook follow karte karte aa gayi main fasne*" that underscores how women have been let down by society due to conformity to norms. This can be compared to *Pink* (2016), in which the female characters fight against a legal system that favors privileged men and accuses victims.

4.3. Women Solidarity and Resistance

Feminist scholar Bell Hooks believes that only collective resistance and not personal survival would give female empowerment. *Do Patti* investigates this with the development of the relationship between Saumya and Shailee, who at first are against each other because of internalized patriarchal conditions. The cynicism of Shailee in the suffering of her sister portrays the victim-blaming in society that is summed up in the line, "*behno mein itni nafrat*" and this reveals the way in which patriarchy creates rifts among women. But, as the story progresses, their relationship grows stronger, which fits into the theme of female solidarity as explored in *Darlings* (2022), when a mother and daughter reassert their control over domestic violence. This motif is also reminiscent of *Hidden Figures* (2016), in which women of color help one another to break the barriers of racism and sexism in NASA.

4.4. Trauma and Psychological Resilience: Feminist Approach

The trauma literature in feminist literature usually focuses on how the psyche of women is affected by systemic violence. *Do Patti* explores the inner ambivalence of Saumya- her ambivalence between her power to withstand abuse and to recover. Her vulnerability and the impossibility of breaking free of toxic relationships are stressed in the dialogue "*Saumya ne zindagi mein pehli baar pyaar ko mehsoos kiya tha.*" This is consistent with Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), which proposes that to recover after patriarchal violence requires individual healing as well as transformation in the society. Such movies as *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014) also portray women heroes who go through trauma by taking charge of their lives by taking radical action.

4.5. Bringing Autonomy Back: Ethics of Revenge and Justice

The questioning of justice is one of the most disputable issues of *Do Patti*. Saumya pursues justice in court, but Shailee pursues justice outside the court in line with radical feminist ideology that the system cannot provide women with justice. This is alluded to in the dialogue "*Tumhe toh pata hain naa sach kya hain, kya karti hain woh*" which may be translated as: can true justice ever be served in a patriarchal system? Such a theme is reminiscent of *Kill Bill* (2003), in which the revenge of *The Bride* is an empowerment and criticism of male-dominated narratives. In the same vein, *Promising Young Woman* (2020) asks viewers to think about the morality of vengeance with regard to gendered violence.

4.6. *Do Patti* as a Radical Feminist Text

By examining the resilience of women, their solidarity and justice, *Do Patti* positions itself as a radical feminist film that is challenging to the traditional gender roles. The movie, in its presentation of alternative models of resistance, namely the seeking of legal justice by Saumya. The radical action of Shailee and their joint resistance criticizes the inefficiency of the patriarchal systems and promotes other feminist futures. The last verse, "*Main usse end tak nahi chodungi*" is a very strong reminder that the ability not to die is not passive survival but feminist fighting. *Do Patti* is one of the films in the feminist Bollywood filmography that includes *Thappad*, *Pink*, and *Darlings*, a push towards films that do not focus on victimhood but rather on empowering women.





Do Patti is a very interesting but not perfect piece of radical feminist narrative which underlines the strength of women against the oppression of the patriarchy. Although the themes are similar to those of radical feminist theory, the movie sometimes loses its way, as it tries to strike the right balance between its ideological richness and an engaging thriller story. Nevertheless, Kajol and Kriti Sanon play strong roles in it, and it is noteworthy as one of the increasing number of films in the Bollywood genre, centered on women. Similar to *Haseen Dillruba* and *Manmarziyaan*, *Do Patti* adds to the dialogue about women taking agency back, although the implementation of this aspect could be improved.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that *Do Patti* conceptualizes gender-based violence as a structural consequence of patriarchal power relations operating at institutional, interpersonal, and cultural levels. The results of this study support the views of Radical Feminist Theorists, such as Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, who argue that patriarchy is the root cause of women's oppression and violence against women. The results of this study also coincide with the findings of previous studies about *Pink* (2016) and *Thappad* (2020) in terms of raising awareness about domestic violence and combating victim blaming. However, unlike in *Pink* and *Thappad*, in *Do Patti* the narrative of gender-based violence is intertwined with a thrilling plot and a message of female solidarity. This study also shows that Radical Feminist Theory is still relevant to the analysis of contemporary Bollywood cinema. Movies such as *Do Patti* enable the critique of patriarchal social institutions and relations and promote female emancipation. Furthermore, the results of this study also contribute to feminist film studies by providing theoretical grounding for further research on recent Bollywood films that engage with gender justice issues.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper attempted to critically analyze the movie *Do Patti* (2024) using the lens of Radical Feminist Theory to examine the extent to which the film portrays gender-based violence, patriarchal oppression, institutionalization of abuse, and women's agency in society. The study found that the movie primarily focuses on women's victimization and resistance to patriarchal domination, highlighting their role in fighting for their rights and achieving justice. Therefore, the main strength of this research is that it contributes to growing feminist scholarship on cinema by providing an in-depth analysis of the selected film. Apart from that, the current research provides empirical evidence that Radical Feminist Theory can be used in the field of cinema studies to analyze gender-based violence and women's empowerment in Indian movies. Moreover, this paper serves as theoretical groundwork for further research exploring patriarchal abuse in Bollywood cinema. Additionally, the conducted analysis can inspire other scholars to become interested in cinema as a tool for studying gender inequality and advancing women's rights. Yet, the present study has a number of limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results and conducting further research. Primarily, this study's primary limitation is that it focused on one film, namely *Do Patti* (2024). Secondly, in this study, only Radical Feminist Theory was employed to analyze the movie. As a result, future studies should attempt to explore how gender-based violence, patriarchal oppression, women's agency, and other themes are depicted in other films using various theoretical frameworks. Finally, additional research is needed to understand how the target audiences perceive gender inequality and women's oppression in movies and what impact such movies may have on their attitudes towards the issue.



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