



Epitome : International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research

ISSN : 2395-6968

Patriarchal Hegemony in *Dangal*



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Abstract

In *Dangal*, the dialogue like “*tum jo bolegi ham wo sab karenge, bas hame is pailwani se bacha le*” shows a tremendous psychological pressure of a father upon daughters and a male-dominated society. The dialogue like “*sal bhar ke liye bhul ja ki tumari koi maa hai*” shows patriarchal hegemony and socio-cultural status of a woman who got stuck within the four walls, Another dialogue “*aaj se tum dono pehelwani ki zindagi jiyo*” show gender equity, the dialogue “*rukna nahi hai*” demonstrate male domination. The famous song “*bapu sehad ke liye, tu to hanikarak hai; ham pe thodi daya karo, ham to nanha balak hai*” show patriarchal hegemony in this film. But the film rises above all such criticism and proves itself to be the best in terms of generating gender sensitizations and equity.

Keywords

Aamir Khan, *Dangal*, women’s wrestling, male-dominated society, patriarchal hegemony

Research Paper

Dangal (2016) is one of the best films of Aamir Khan. Different perspectives reaching the core of the film can interpret it thoroughly. It is a real story about women's wrestling and consequences thereafter in India in a socio-cultural context. This film demonstrates the man who is maddened by his male ego with stubborn temperament and gladdened by victory. Mahavir Singh Phogat is motivated by the sporting glory. He desires to get it through his kids at any cost as he himself failed to do so. The weakness of the film is the quest of a man whereas ironically its strength lays in the submission of his kids' will to fetch him his desired results.

Dangal documents a remarkable story of how women's wrestling blossomed in the most misogynist state in India. And yet, this film is not about the women, but about one man driven by his male ego. (1)

It is a realistic reflection of Phogat's quest for glory. However, the Phogat of *Dangal* is an unbearable character who merely makes his daughters as an instrument to bring his vision into reality. What's about human rights? Can a father be brutal to make his dreams true? The film does not keep a balance between little dreams and their desires. Man's quest for glory is the crux of the story, woman's submission in a socio-cultural context. Save a Girl Child is a cry in this film.

Dangal is a realistic film along with the portrayal of wrestling scenes and actions. The story of this film is not complicated but runs in a linear motion with interesting characters and their performances. About the acting of Amir Khan, the film reviewers opine :

Aamir Khan is a man of great intelligence, good taste and immense power within the industry – he can make pretty much any film he wants. If there is one person who can make a mainstream Bollywood film that doesn't merely exemplify Bollywood but *transcends* it, it is him. And that is why I must end by asking, both as a rhetorical lament and a hopeful challenge: Is this the best you can do, Aamir Khan? (2)

Both Geeta and Babita Phogat hate wrestling. Still they were forced to follow the instructions of their father. This is the representation of patriarchal hegemony as the story mirrors their father's determination to make them gold medal winners for India. In addition, it shows will-power of girls when she says : “*Chhori hai samazke ladiyo, par chhori samazke na ladiyo*”

The story goes as follows:

Nitesh Tiwari's third film as director is based on the real-life story of Haryana's Mahavir Singh Phogat, patriarch and coach of one of the country's most unusual sporting families: his daughters are all wrestling champions, the eldest two — Geeta and Babita — are Commonwealth Games gold medalists, and Geeta is the first Indian woman wrestler to have ever qualified for the Olympics.(3)

Haryana has the worst child sex ratio in India. It is a terrible track record in the matter of female feticide and infanticide.

Dangal is all about single-mindedness of Mahavir who clashes with his wife, his community, wrestling as a sport in India and Geeta. The role of Mahavir is played by Aamir Khan who thinks that medalists never grow on trees but they should be nurtured with love, passion and hard work. He always wanted to bring his dream into reality through his sons and make India feel proud about it, but he had daughters unfortunately. He opines that gold is gold whether a boy or girl wins it. He expects the birth of a son but the forth one is also a daughter. His wife repents that she is not able to give birth to a boy-child. However, he does not give up his efforts as his mind is obsessed with India's winning of wrestling championship. He always dreams to bring a gold medal to his country. He gives up his wrestling dreams in order to support his family in financial matters. He wanted to turn his would-be sons into wrestlers who can bring home gold for India. This dream is more due to the births of four daughters by his wife Daya. Here, the birth of daughters creates problems in the family. But their strength is shown later.

Geeta and Babita fight with a couple of local boys for abusing them one day. Mahavir is delighted to see the strength of girls. He thinks of winning a gold medal either by a boy or a girl. The lyrics and songs have beautifully been woven with the scenes. The acting is flawless and catchy. Zaira Wasim and Suhani Bhatnagar play the role of children as Geeta and Babita as children. Mahavir in the film is a dictator at home and a terror outside. It is a realistic presentation of patriarchal hegemony in a socio-cultural context. The local people talk about the attitude of the father for his own sake as he forces his daughters to do what he aspires and ruins future. The hegemony of Mahavir still continues till the interval and thereafter which is demonstrated in a hectic, interesting and touching matter. The society has been crazy for the birth of sons and perhaps remains so. This human temperament brings out many social issues like Save a Girl Child, the status of a woman in the society, rights of women and the ongoing hegemony of patriarchal society. The film demands for a social change. Mahavir plays different

roles as a feminist, patriarch, traditionalist and visionary. The transformation of girls is shown from unwilling wrestlers into targeted sportspersons is very captivating in this film.

Geeta clashes with Mahavir. The father-daughter conflict is a climax in *Dangal*. But Geeta's father becomes a new coach in the course of time. She follows different new strategies from her father. It is not a game only but the realistic presentation of feminine stamina, will power, determination, optimism and perseverance to achieve the goals set.

The national anthem strengthens the will power of women and celebrates the victory at the end. Aamir Khan as Mahavir Singh Phogat symbolizes a strength, conviction and commitment. He is maddened and in pursuit of perfection for his daughters. His acting is excellent undoubtedly, he increases his weight and maintains the physique. He ably makes the screen live with his usual dedicated and targeted action for the audience. He also proves himself as Mr. Perfectionist playing the role of Mahavir Singh Phogat in a socio-cultural context.

Dangal is not just a movie; it is an experience to be cherished. It is extremely engaging, brilliantly entertaining and phenomenally patriotic in its feel. It is as much a film for the young as for the old, as much for the classes as for the masses, as much for the city audience as for the viewers in small towns and villages, as much for the rich as for the poor, as much for the multiplex audience as for the single-screen cinema audience, as much for the men as for the women. It has special appeal for the ladies and it has terrific repeat value. To say that it will prove to be a blockbuster is to state the obvious. The film is destined to be one of the biggest blockbusters of Indian cinema. In fact, it can turn out to be THE BIGGEST BLOCKBUSTER EVER! (3)

Aamir Khan as Mahavir Singh Phogat, Geeta and Babita as daughters, Sakshi Tanwar as a mother, and Aparshakti Khurana as supportive cousin, Fatima Sana Shaikh as Geeta Phogat and Mukesh Chhabra as the director in *Dangal* are of excellent presentation on the screen. The second part shows Geeta's wrestling matches. Her multiple encounters on the mat catch our attention in *Dangal*. The film sheds light on the sports in India, the corruption, prejudiced minds of people about the wrestling game in a socio-cultural context. It is a perfect blending of drama, emotions, sportsmanship and patriotism. The film is about gender discrimination in the beginning and ends with gender equity or even more than that.

Dangal may be confusingly cautious around popular notions on the parental front, but in the matter of sporting achievement it does not mince words : silver is second best, it tells

us unequivocally, and there is nothing wrong in aiming for gold. In an India that remains doubtful about the virtues of ambition, in a world that continues to consider ambition a dirty word for women in particular, such clarity is remarkable and inspiring. (4)

The film puts forth the personal sacrifices of long hair, nail polish and even pani puri and other luxuries of life. In this context, the theme of patriarchal hegemony dominates over the film. But, Dhangra Geeta and Babita's historic wins at the Commonwealth Games and championships are noteworthy.

In "Dangal," is Mahavir a domineering stage father, using his kids to live out his failed dreams? No doubt. That's why he prays to have sons. But when God blesses him with daughters, he transfers his obsession with molding a champion right onto them; as a coach, he's both a domineering egotist and a de facto feminist. If the movie has a theme, it's that Mahavir is a patriarchal thinker forced, by circumstance, to move into the 21st century. He's a lot like India itself. That means, among other things, that he's going to treat his daughters with no mercy. When they're teenagers, he subjects them to a grueling training regimen (worst restriction: no spicy food), and the defining moment comes when he cuts off their hair. It's a lot like a Marine cut; as the two see it, they've been shorn (tearfully) of their identities, which their father will now rebuild from the ground up. There is — or could have been — a resonance to all of this. But Nitesh Tiwari, the director of "Dangal," works strictly on the surface. (5)

The Phogat's bring India glory and motivates other women to seriously consider *kushti* as a sport. In this film, the man makes his daughters chase his dreams willingly or unwillingly. His cries, frowning, extreme anger, tired but determined nature symbolizes patriarchal hegemony in the beginning but a father's love for his daughters is beyond interpretation. He is shown not as a dictator in its true sense but one of the beings from all of us as viewers. The incredible script of a real story sends out a feminist note of inspiration. Dangal is a true story based on the life of Mahavir Singh and his two daughters, Geeta and Babita Phogat who are trained to become world class wrestlers.

The other is a strong feminist statement about girls being the equal of boys, if not better, in an area they've never been seen, let alone accepted. When Mahavir steps into that tricky arena, he is derided and ridiculed: so are his young female charges, as well as their mother (Sakshi Tanwar) who could not bear sons. In the Khap-ridden state of Haryana,

where baby girls are still murdered at birth, and ‘honour killing’ is practiced with impunity and condoned (you may be over 18, but you have no right over your life), there cannot be a more important statement, especially when it comes from a big star. (6)

In *Dangal*, the dialogue like “*tum jo bolegi ham wo sab karenge, bas hame is pailwani se bacha le*” shows a tremendous psychological pressure of a father upon daughters and a male-dominated society. The dialogue like “*sal bhar ke liye bhul ja ki tumari koi maa hai*” shows patriarchal hegemony and socio-cultural status of a woman who got stuck within the four walls, Another dialogue “*aaj se tum dono pehelwani ki zindagi jiyo*” show gender equity, the dialogue “*rukna nahi hai*” demonstrate male domination. The famous song “*bapu sehad ke liye, tu to hanikarak hai; ham pe thodi daya karo, ham to nanha balak hai*” show patriarchal hegemony in this film. But the film rises above all such criticism and proves itself to be the best in terms of generating gender sensitizations and equity.

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