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## Social malpractice in the movie laapataa ladies

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### Abstract

This film explores the complex social issues faced by women in rural India. Through the narratives of characters like Manju Mai and Pushpa Rani, the film sheds light on social evils like the purdah system, the dowry system, and domestic violence.

The film criticizes traditions that restrict women's freedoms and explores the devastating consequences these practices have on their lives. It argues for women's education and empowerment, highlighting the importance of breaking free from social norms that perpetuate gender inequality. The film also delves into the issue of corruption within the police force, showcasing how societal problems are often exacerbated by a lack of justice.

**Keywords:** Chhani, consumption, fuel-wood, households, Lanchaan

### Introduction

Laapataa Ladies 2024 Indian Hindi-language comedy-drama film directed by Kiran Rao and produced by Rao, Aamir Khan, and Jyoti Deshpande. The film stars Nitanshi Goel, Pratibha Ranta, Sparsh Shrivastava, Chhaya Kadam, and Ravi Kishan. It revolves around the tale of two recently married young women who are mistakenly swapped while traveling by train to their respective husbands' residences. The movie was showcased at the 48th Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) on September 8, 2023, and was then released in cinemas on March 1, 2024. The film received good feedback from both reviewers and audiences, who appreciated its narrative, script, and the performances of the cast.

It's a simple movie based on the subjects like rural society, women education, women rights, broken dreams of a woman, Orogenic Farming, art of cooking, corruption in police department, women empowerment, political lying, business startup etc.

India is a nation abundant in traditions and cultures. Under the guise of social problems, some traditions that were originally formed with good purposes are currently taking on a more detrimental manifestation. Social evils are issues that have a direct or indirect negative influence on the members of a society and are considered morally questionable or problematic. Many serious social evils that represent significant challenges to the progress of our nation and have profound humanitarian implications includes:

- Dowry - A valuable possession acquired by someone's hard work and effort
- Female foeticide is equivalent to female suicide
- Gender inequality is a factual reality
- Domestic Violence
- Female physical abusive

The film talks about many social issues. The film sheds light on the recurring incidents that we often overlook, despite their obvious presence. Upon viewing the film, we gain significant insights and acknowledge the frequent occurrence of such incidents in our surroundings, prompting us to discuss them. The film depicts events that also occur in our homes, yet we fail to notice them. This film inspires us because many serious issues come before us. Some incidents and characters in the film are truly inspiring. The characters of Manju Mai and Pushpa Rani are so good that they are a great inspiration for women. The narrative skillfully depicts the pervasive evils in Indian rural society and the characters' efforts to combat them.

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The film also talks about some social malpractice, like the purdah system, the dowry system, female physical abuse, etc. How does this film highlight social evils? We will discuss them one by one.

### **Social malpractices in Indian society**

In the present age, called the 21st century, both men and women have equal rights and freedoms globally. Despite the significant efforts made by social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the early 19th century, India remains conservative in its approach to granting equal rights to women in comparison to men. Lack of access to education for girls hinders a country's progress when the female literacy rate is poor, as the lack of education for women has a detrimental effect on every member of the family. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar exhibit the most minimal female literacy rates. The incidence of violence against women in India is shockingly high, with about 70 percent of women experiencing domestic abuse. According to the National Family Health Survey, 33% of married adolescent girls had encountered physical violence from their partners.

One of the most prevalent and ongoing societal evils is the practice of killing girls when their families are unable to provide a dowry to the groom's family. The incidence of harmful customs such as the solicitation and endorsement of dowry is extensive throughout the state of Rajasthan. The middle-class society has a higher prevalence of the practice of dowry payments is more prevalent in middle-class society. Even women with advanced education from prestigious universities are compelled into arranged marriages with strange men against their wishes. According to the latest figures from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Odisha has the highest number of dowry deaths. In 2012, Odisha reported 1,487 cases under the Dowry Prevention Act, which accounted for 16.5% of the total cases registered in the country.

Apart from all this, there are many evils in society that are hollowing it out in different ways. Many changes take place in society with time, but this is a unique truth of Indian society that has not changed till now. Social evils like the dowry system have increased instead of decreasing. Education causes big changes in society, but social evils are proving to be capable of averting these changes. The best example of this we can see is that nowadays educated people, even teachers, are taking dowry. How such incidents can give a new turn to society.

The movie also addresses social malpractices such as the purdah system, dowry system, and physical abuse of women. This film effectively illuminates various social vices, which we will analyze individually.

### **Purdah system**

Purdah, originating from a Persian word meaning "curtain" or "veil," comprises a set of religious and social traditions that are widespread in some Hindu and Muslim communities in India. These rituals prescribe that women must conceal their faces and bodies from public view. Purdah can also refer to the particular dress worn by women to cover their faces in compliance with the purdah regulations. The practice of purdah is similar to another tradition known as ghoongat, which is mostly followed by Hindu communities. Ghoongat, like purdah, encompasses both the action of covering oneself and the particular veil or

headscarf used for this purpose. The purdah system is believed to have been introduced to India via Persia and became prevalent during the Mughal era. Nevertheless, some historians argue that the tradition of head covering, such as wearing a headscarf or veil, predates the advent of Islam and was already prevalent in some areas of the country. Purdah can be categorized into two basic types: strict purdah, which involves covering the full body and face, and moderate purdah, which mostly involves covering the head and face. Purdah pertains to the practice of wearing garments such as the hijab, the naqaab, the burqa, and the chador. In specific areas of India, women often don a dupatta over their head and use it to cover their face while wearing the traditional salwar-kameez attire. The implementation of purdah, whether voluntary or passed down through generations, is of utmost importance as it serves as a means of oppression, protection, or empowerment. The question of purdah and its varied forms has been a contentious one that is sensitive to different levels of the social structure. Modern times have utilized this subject as a tool in societal conflict, pacifying certain individuals while singling out others.

In the movie, we can see at least two or three elements where Purdah is the real problem of the story. The first incident in the beginning of the movie is when Deepak returns to his home after marriage. He wakes up and learns that his station has arrived. He immediately wakes up his wife. However, the veil (ghoongat) caused him to wake up Pradeep's wife, Pushpa Rani, rather than his own wife, Phool Kumari. The second incident in the movie is when Pushpa Rani goes to the temple, and after a long time, she doesn't come home, so all the family members get in trouble and think that she left the home. Deepak's father goes to find out about Pushpa Rani in the village; he searches for her almost everywhere, but he is unable to find her. When Pushpa Rani returned home after a prolonged absence, everyone inquired where she was. She says, "I am at the temple." Deepak's father says that he also searched for her at the temple, but you were not there. Pushpa Rani responded, "I'm new here, which is why my veil was so large." Then Deepak's father says, "This veil will take our lives one day." By these words, we can understand that veil is a social malpractice; everybody faces trouble just because of the veil, but no one raises their voice against it. Even we can hear the words of Deepak's father that veil is not a good thing.

According to my opinion, the veil is social malpractice because its women have lost their identities; nobody identifies them as the ones behind it. The best example of this is the first element of the movie, when Deepak wakes up Pushpa Rani in the train. One other thing is that because of the veil, women can't see the colors of the world with their eyes. In Indian rural society, the veil is a very popular type of system, so women have to wear it the whole day; they have to look down while walking.

### **Dowry system**

The concept of dowry originates from the ancient Hindu traditions of "kanyadan" and "stridhan." In the ritual of "kanyadan," the father of the bride presents the father of the groom with money, property, or other valuable items. On the other hand, during "stridhan," the bride receives jewellery and clothing during her marriage, typically from her relatives or friends.

The Hindu marriage system is considered to be sacred. According to this philosophy, marriage is considered to be a lifelong commitment with no possibility of separation. This type of marriage began the custom of dowry, wherein initially, the bride's family would get presents and financial compensation from the groom's family as a substitute for violence during the abduction of the bride. A subsequent adaptation of this system has given rise to the current dowry system, which is predominantly observed in society. The dowry tradition still governs society. In most Indian families, the boy typically receives inheritance rights, while the girl is provided with a substantial amount of money during her marriage as compensation for the government-mandated equal rights for girls in parental property. The pernicious nature of the dowry system has permeated various regions of the country and different segments of society. The predominance of the dowry system can be attributed to various factors, with the primary cause being its compulsory requirement for marriage. The concern of not receiving a dowry is prevalent and can hinder the possibility of marriage. In the context of a newly globalized economy, there has been a noticeable rise in a feudal mindset characterized by a materialistic attitude. The cost of the groom has increased significantly and is now more prominent. The perpetuation of the dowry system in modern India is mostly attributed to the rise of a wealthy middle class, which serves as the driving force for social change. Traditionally, families are responsible for arranging most marriages. In cases where a man does not marry for love, he may discover that he can enter into a marriage based on accumulating goods.

The second social malpractice depicted in the movie is the dowry system, which is prevalent in Indian society. Now that we've read what the dowry system's meaning and history are, we will see where in the movie dowry malpractice occurs. After marriage, when Deepak returns home with his wife Phool Kumari, they catch a train to Murti railway station. When Deepak boarded the train, there were already two newlywed couples sitting in it; one of them was Pradeep and his new wife, Pushpa Rani. Pradeep's mother asks Deepak, "What did you get in the marriage?" Deepak doesn't reply to that lady; suddenly, a man says, "Motorcycles are trending nowadays." The third groom said, "I got a bike in dowry with full tank fuel." Then, Pradeep's mother announced, "We received a bike, one and a half lakh cash, and a mobile phone in the marriage."

Through this conversation, we can understand that in Indian society, dowry is a very popular malpractice. This is an evil system of society. First of all, parents send their daughters to the groom's house and give them cash, a vehicle, and all the furniture. This kind of system damages the social structure. Rich people are not affected by this practice because they take dowry in their son's marriage and give dowry in their daughter's marriage because they have a proper income from sources like property and business, but poor farmers and the working class suffer a lot because of this practice. They dedicate their entire lifetime earnings to dowry. Before their daughter's marriage, they save money for dowry, take out loans at the time of marriage, give more dowry, and then spend the rest of their lives repaying that loan. It is the custom of society that dowry has to be given in the marriage of a daughter; if you do not give it, then you will not get a good boy and a good relationship. Giving dowry ensures the happiness of the groom's family. Some

poor farmers sell their farms for dowry in their daughter's marriage, which is their livelihood through which they run their household. The movie best illustrates this concept when the father of Pushpa Rani sells his farm to finance Pushpa's marriage.

Some people are so greedy for money that they consider it their right and will go to any lengths to acquire it. Pushpa Rani committed the offense in front of the police. At the climax of the movie Pradeep, her husband abused her mother in front of everyone because the dowry amount was ten thousand rupees short. Another element of dowry greed we can see in Pradeep's mother is that when Pushpa Rani goes missing, Pradeep's mother says that Pushpa has dowry gold. His mother was not worried about the fact that her daughter-in-law was missing; she was only worried about the dowry gold.

### **Domestic violence or Female physical Abusive**

Domestic violence occurs when a member of the victim's household commits a violent act. This encompasses both present and former spouses, individuals belonging to your immediate family, relatives beyond the immediate family circle, and intimate acquaintances who are considered close family friends. We use the term "domestic violence" when there is a strong connection between the attacker and the victim. They generally exhibit a disparity in power. The criminal relies on the victim. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. Domestic abuse refers to any form of gender-based violence inflicted upon women that results in, or has the potential to result in, physical, sexual, or emotional harm or suffering. This includes threats, coercion, or unfair restriction of freedom, whether occurring in private or public places. Physical violence includes the act of employing physical force against one's partner, which may involve actions such as slapping, striking, kicking, and beating. Sexual violence includes unauthorized sexual activity and various forms of sexual compulsion. Emotional abuse includes behaviors such as insults, belittlement, persistent humiliation, intimidation, and threats of damage or child custody loss. Controlling behaviour encompasses actions such as isolating an individual from their loved ones, closely monitoring their movements, and limiting their access to financial resources, career opportunities, education, or medical assistance. Economic violence includes actions such as closely monitoring an individual's financial resources and maintaining their reliance on others for financial support.

Throughout humanitarian conflicts and other disasters, women have been oppressed and confined, never allowed to break free from their limitations due to the worry that they are too delicate. Civilizations and societies worldwide persistently fail to acknowledge the reality that women are capable individuals who have been underestimated. Ancient societies with a long history of harshness gradually deprived women of their rights, ultimately denying them the capacity to speak. Women had minimal legal rights within the legal system of ancient Athens. They were prohibited from accessing both the assembly and judicial sessions. Moreover, there are claims that women in influential roles were prohibited from showcasing themselves or engaging in public discourse about themselves. Domestic violence in India presents a perplexing paradox: while it is the most prevalent form of fundamental human rights abuse, it is simultaneously the least documented and openly talked

about. The firmly established patriarchal norms and hierarchical structure of traditional Indian society, along with the clear demarcation between public and private spheres, have contributed to the intricate and subtle nature of the issue of domestic violence. Consequently, there has been an extended and relentless fight for justice against this abhorrent practice. The purdah system was unfamiliar, yet polygamy was widely practiced. The issue of women's rights and gender equality was a prominent and influential topic throughout the nineteenth century. The matter at hand did not pertain to the desires of women. Instead, inquire about the methods for updating them. Western ideals and values began to influence our society for the first time following the arrival of the British. Women's social awareness was heightened by the national and reform movements. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, significant modifications were made to the legal system that impacted the social standing of women in Indian culture.

The first element of domestic violence in the movie is the conversation between Manju Mai and Phool Kumari at Mai's house. Phool Kumari asked Mai, "Live you alone, grandma?" Mai replies, "I forgot everyone—my husband, son, everybody. They were consuming food from my earnings and physically abusing me, arguing that if someone loves you, they have the right to do so. Mai also said, "It is better to learn to leave alone than to live with them. Yes, it is a little difficult, but once you learn to live alone, no one can harm you." With these words, we can understand how much domestic violence Manju Mai faced.

She used to endure beatings from her husband and son; she would work all day, cook for them, and then suffer further abuse. Through Manju Mai's character, we can see how a patriarchal society treats women as mere tools. A woman puts forth a lot of effort for her husband and children, only to face brutal abuse from them. In India, we frequently hear about such incidents; occasionally, we come across reports of a surge in domestic violence leading to women's deaths. We can see an example of this in the film when Pushpa Rani tells inspector Manohar, "I came to know from a relative that Pradeep's first wife died in a fire due to not having a child." Nobody can determine whether she suffered the brunt or if her death was intentional.

Some people find it so normal to beat a woman that they don't even look at the place and time. The film's scene best exemplifies this: after arresting Pushpa and escorting her to the police station, Pradeep publicly slapped her. It is not normal for a man to publicly slap a woman in front of the police, but society has historically viewed women differently, a perception that persists to this day. Pushpa Rani's marriage to a man like Pradeep is also viewed as a form of social evil, as it prevents her from pursuing further education and instead targets her for abuse. In Indian society, individuals such as Pradeep frequently disregard a woman's aspirations and future, viewing women solely as domestic workers and child bearers. Exploitation is not only physical; mental exploitation and suppressing someone's freedom are also forms of social exploitation. No one aspires to combat evil; instead, they perpetuate long-standing traditional practices. In such a situation, we witness a woman's inability to understand another woman, exemplified by Pushpa Rani, who requested a period of study from her mother, saying, "Don't marry me right now; I need to study further." She excelled in class but received no recognition, forcing her into marriage with Pradeep instead.

She sold her field and gave her dowry. When the dowry fell short of ten thousand rupees, Pradeep verbally abused Pushpa's mother in public. He doesn't know how to respect a woman; he didn't respect Pushpa or her mother.

### Conclusion

This film talks about many serious issues in our society and our surroundings. Nowadays, a large number of films are made and released, but such films force society to think. It is one thing for a good film to be released and people to watch it enthusiastically, and it is another thing for an inspirational film to be released and people to watch it. My purpose in writing this research paper is that it is very important for such films to be released in society because they present some dark aspects of society in front of us that we ignore even after seeing. In this research paper, I have talked about the social evils shown in this film. Apart from these evils, this film talks about many issues that are very inspiring for women.

The film's story revolves around a variety of social issues. Many issues, like the dowry system and the purdah system, emerge in this film. The story foreshadows significant societal changes. Due to social evils, the lives of women have become no less than hell; women have lost their identity due to the veil; due to the dowry system, a father of a daughter cannot recover from debt throughout his life; and even after doing all this, women have to become victims of domestic violence. Because of all these evils, society's progress is a sham. This film discusses all of these issues, and this research paper also discusses them in depth.

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