

Dark Comedy ‘Darlings’: Inspects Complexities of Domestic Abuse

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Abstract

A woman's existence can be profoundly transformed by a single act of physical aggression. A single instance of physical abuse within a marital relationship has the potential to shatter all illusions of love, trust, and security. Sexual and physical violence against women that occurs repeatedly in relationships can leave victims emotionally and mentally drained and with long-term effects. The widespread problem of domestic violence blatantly violates women's basic human rights. Domestic violence refers to acts of assault or physical altercations that occur within domestic environments, like marriages, living together, or romantic relationships. Domestic violence is a long-standing issue in civilization as a whole, affecting individuals of all races, cultures, and ethnicities. It stems from patriarchal systems that seek to impose male dominance and control over women within houses.

This article assesses the portrayal of domestic violence in "*Darlings*," a black comedy available for streaming on Netflix. Despite the serious and dark subject matter, one might expect *Darlings* to be a challenging film to watch. However, it pleasantly surprises viewers by incorporating elements of comedy, including comedy of errors. The film skilfully balances the seriousness of the proceedings with well-crafted black humour.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Toxic masculinity, Domestic Violence, Abusive marriage, revenge

Introduction

In the new Netflix film *Darlings*, a Muslim lady from the lower middle class navigates the challenges of domestic violence. Despite what the title would have you believe; this is actually a black comedy about retribution. Both the film's excellent acting and its unique approach to the serious topic of domestic abuse have contributed to the outpouring of praise for *Darlings*. The film, which stars Alia Bhatt, deftly navigates the emotions that bind women to terrible domestic abuse scenarios while still managing to be darkly humorous. The protagonist, Badrunnissa Shaikh, is stuck in an unhappy marriage with no way out. Badrunnissa, a courageous lady, marries the guy she loves. The film opens with the revelation that Hamza Shaikh, a ticket collector for Indian Railways, is madly in love with another character. Her honey phase was short-lived since her spouse began physically abusing her over insignificant matters. As far as Hamza is concerned, domestic violence is an inevitable component of any relationship between a man and a woman. She sobs, he apologises, and she begins to suspect that the alcohol in his stomach, rather than the emptiness in his mind, is to blame for his violent outburst. It is a poisonous pattern that everyone sees but chooses to disregard, much like the beautician who resides on the level below the couple. When Badru's husband goes too far, she and her mother decide to take matters into their own hands. Her darkly comical and vengeful retaliation ensues. Through its protagonist, a charming young woman who appears to have

acquired battered wife syndrome, the story addresses the tragic and regrettably ever-present problem of domestic abuse.

However, the film addresses larger topics and transcends the confines of a single home. It highlights issues such as gender inequity in marriage, toxic masculinity, and the domestic abuse that middle-class housewives endure.

Exposing abusive marriages

"Darlings" deftly brings attention to the pervasive problem of domestic violence, lays bare the brutality of toxic masculinity, reveals the gender inequality that is firmly embedded in the idea of marriage, and shows how middle-class aspirations are met with the consequences when they clash with community and economic realities. Because she refuses to face reality and believes in Hamza's false promises of love and nonviolence, Badru stays in a relationship with him while suffering tremendous pain. During a particular scenario, a police officer contemplates the idea that males adopt animalistic behaviour due to the permission granted by women. Although this may appear to assign blame to the victims, it accurately acknowledges the challenges that women face when trying to leave violent relationships. Badru's unwavering affection for her husband Hamza causes her to disregard all the warning signs in their relationship. Shefali Shah's mother's persistent cautions are also disregarded. Hailing from a humble upbringing, the youthful spouse perseveres in her aspirations for a brighter future until circumstances escalate beyond her control. Despite Hamza's regular tendency to physically assault Badru while intoxicated or consumed by unwarranted anger, she dutifully prepares an omelette for him the following morning. He offers his apologies to his loved ones, and she graciously accepts his apology. The cycle persists. She acknowledges that their relationship is based on love and recognises that fights and instances of abuse are likely to occur in many marriages. Nevertheless, a devastating event compels her to reassess her life choices and her perspectives on her deceitful spouse. Violence engenders violence, but can seeking retribution liberate you? Who is the true victim in this situation: the one who retaliates using morally ambiguous tactics or the individual who perpetuates abuse under the guise of love? The issue of morality is a recurring theme in the film, particularly towards the conclusion when Badru is faced with a pivotal choice that will have a lasting impact on her life. Badru ponders the most suitable method to exact vengeance upon her violent spouse. However, subsequently, she also contemplates whether she is undergoing a transformation into a monstrous being as she pursues justice. The film promotes the use of legal action instead of seeking revenge.

Statutory warning



The message that "Violence against women is injurious to health" had a profound impact on me when I encountered it in the movie *Darlings*. In a particular moment of the movie, Shefali Shah's character poses a question to a police inspector on the transformation of men into monstrous beings after consuming alcohol. In response, the inspector asserts that this occurs due to the acquiescence of women. Are women to blame?

Upon viewing the film, I came to the realisation that women may be complicit in granting males the authority to physically harm them without resistance. Indeed, although certain women choose to retaliate, others yielded to the circumstances and endured it throughout their entire lives. *Darlings* is an example of a situation where a lady endures abuse until she crosses a threshold where she can no longer bear it. The film presents a sombre yet comedic perspective on domestic abuse. In the narrative, despite the presence of several bruises on her fair complexion, Badru generously offers her husband multiple chances and pardons him for all his atrocious actions. She endures physical abuse due to her husband's discovery of stones in the rice, however she pardons him the next day. What is the reason for her forgiveness? The reason is her deep affection for him. Indeed, *Darlings* portrays the unfortunate reality of women enduring such circumstances instead of actively opposing them. I appreciate *Jasmeet's* ability to accurately depict the reality of a woman facing domestic abuse, since these kinds of individuals do indeed exist within our culture. When Badru's spouse oversteps a boundary, she retaliates by reciprocating the same action that he previously inflicted upon her.

Darlings

The film directed by *Jasmeet K. Reen* focuses on three primary characters. The individuals involved in this situation are Hamza Shaikh, who exhibits abusive behaviour as a husband, Badrunissa, the wife who maintains optimism despite the cruelty, and Shamshunissa, the woman's mother who is less inclined to forgive. The spouse, prone to using physical force, refuses to recognise the seriousness of his behaviour and maintains the belief that it may be pardoned. The woman, who endures marital violence, seems to have come to terms with her circumstances. Nevertheless, the mother, who has prior knowledge of such detrimental partnerships, firmly feels that it is necessary to educate the spouse as a means of imparting a valuable experience. The conflicts arising from the differing perspectives of both mother and daughter give rise to a nuanced and understated form of drama. Revenge is meticulously strategized and executed in an unorthodox manner. Badrunisha Ansari Shaikh, a determined lady, enters into matrimony with her beloved partner. Hamza Shaikh, an Indian Railways ticket collector from the start of the movie, is shown as being completely in love with one another. The marriage has been characterised by abuse from the year they got married, and her first honeymoon phase was short-lived as her spouse began physically assaulting her for trivial reasons. Hamza, a ticket collector in the Indian Railways, remains composed even when his supervisor coerces him into performing tasks that are much beyond his personal integrity. Maybe he carries his unsatisfied existence back to his house and transforms into a creature. During their three years of marriage, Hamza Shaikh physically assaulted his wife Badrunissa nightly due to his alcoholism. Among Badru's several tactics for helping Hamza kick his drinking habit is the suggestion that he settle down and raise a family. As the chawl they reside in undergoes renovations, Hamza finds himself embroiled in ongoing disputes with his fellow society members. Badru participates at a meeting where the final decision on the building's refurbishment will be made. Badru defies Hamza's request and attends the conference, resulting in another instance of physical assault. Zulfi, a person who performs several tasks in the chawl, frequently pays visits to Badru and her mom Shamshunissa "Shamshu" Ansari. He is cognizant of the

torment that Badru endures on a daily basis. He lodges a formal grievance against Hamza for the act of physical assault. Hamza is apprehended, but he assures Badru that he would cease using alcohol once they conceive a child. Badru liberates Hamza from incarceration, only to endure further mistreatment by an unaltered Hamza. Hamza thereafter discovers that he has developed cirrhosis in his liver, necessitating his cessation of alcohol consumption to avoid mortality. Upon arriving home that evening, Hamza discovers that Badru is expecting their kid, prompting him to feign abstinence from alcohol in order to uphold his commitment. Indeed, his decision to stop drinking was motivated by cirrhosis rather than Badru's pregnancy. Meanwhile, Hamza is determined to discover the identity of the person who lodged the grievance against him. Ultimately, he discovers that Zulfi was responsible for it and that Badru was aware of the situation from the beginning. Despite being aware of Badru's pregnancy, Hamza persists in physically assaulting her due to his suspicions of an illicit relationship between Badru and Zulfi. He harbours suspicions that the kid conceived by Badru is not biologically his. Hamza violently assaults Badru, inflicting severe injuries and causing her to fall down a staircase, ultimately leading to the loss of her unborn child. Hamza abstained from consuming wine on this particular day, revealing his true malevolent nature. After Badru's traumatic child loss and hospitalization, she makes a serious vow to repay Hamza for the kindness she showed her. After he returns home, she mimics the ways he hurt her by giving him sedatives, limiting his movement, and torturing him emotionally and physically. Meanwhile, Hamza's employer returns home to inquire about him. Badru and Shamshu fabricate a story about Badru going to the village due to his father's demise, but their deception is ultimately unsuccessful. They inform him that Hamza is unwell. With the help of Kasim, Badru administered the injections to her mother, and then she gave them to Hamza. For his escape, Hamza fools Zulfi into letting him go by claiming that the women didn't accompany them on their shopping expedition. Upon returning home, Badru and Shamshu are taken aback. The police were quick to respond after receiving the news that government employee Hamza had disappeared. They suspect Zulfi of having an affair with Badru and attempt to apprehend him. But Zulfi claims to be head over heels for Shamshu. Everyone is being told to come to the station because the police are perplexed. Through her physical expressions of love, Shamshu verifies her deep desire with Zulfi. According to Hamza, Badru and her mother are torturing him, and that is why he has gone to the police station. His story is not believed by the cops since he appears intoxicated. When he gets back to his house, Zulfi, Shamshu, and Badru all head to the police station to get him. Shamshu and Zulfi propose a scheme to kill Hamza by suffocating him on a railroad track. Badru captures Hamza stating his intention to escape, therefore it seems like he plans to take his own life. Badru fastens him to the railway track, but then realises that she is becoming similar like Hamza. She promptly releases him just prior to the arrival of a train. Tragically, a train kills Hamza just as he announces his determination to exact revenge on Badru; he had only recently been freed from prison. Shamshu tells Badru on their way home that her father abused her severely, even after Badru was born. After killing Badru's father, Shamshu had Kasim help him dispose of the body. When her husband was still unable to be found, she filed a missing person's report. Shamshu tells Badru that she was correct to end their relationship for good just before he passed away. On top of that, according to Badru, this result is due to Hamza's actions. We then pay our respects to Hamza by holding a funeral. Badru grins, wanders across the city autonomously, content in her newfound freedom, and optimistic about a more promising future

'Darlings' employs dark comedy to illuminate the intricate 'cycle of abuse'.

Essentially, the film revolves around the unwavering nature of optimism in the face of shattered aspirations

and explores how individuals who share a close bond become ensnared in these recurring patterns.

“Comedy makes the subversion of the existing state of affairs possible”: Dario Fo.

Humour has been a key element in several genres of art, theatre, music, and poetry. The Commedia dell'Arte, a theatrical style that emerged in Italy during the 1530s, utilizes masks to portray various characters. In this genre, the lower class exploits physical comedy to satirize the authority of the upper class. The Social Grotesque movement in 20th century theatre employed surreal comedy and dark humour to provoke, disturb, and interrogate societal norms. A notable instance of this genre was the theatrical production *Ubu Roi*. The play is a satirical portrayal of the deranged monarch Ubu, evoking parallels to Nero's apathetic behaviour during the burning of Rome. Authored by Alfred Jarry and initially performed in 1896, it left the audience perplexed. Indeed, the play incited such strong indignation in them that it was promptly closed down following its premiere.

What makes humour controversial or uncomfortable?

On one hand, we derive great pleasure from humour, finding amusement in jokes, and witnessing the proliferation of laughter clubs. However, several artists of humour, such as stand-up comedians, cartoonists, film and theatre makers, often find themselves being criticized for "trivializing a serious issue" or even facing persecution. Humour that is directed towards oneself, including self-deprecation, slapstick comedy, or is aligned with those in positions of authority, is generally regarded as 'safe'. Humour, when employed as a means of empowerment, can be profoundly disconcerting. When employed to undermine systems of hierarchy and the constructs of gender, caste, and class, it is frequently met with condemnation and prohibitions. Similarly, we tend to readily embrace the commodification of women in 'item numbers' while expressing outrage at the depiction of a woman confidently expressing her sexuality. Humour is a powerful tool that may challenge our preconceived notions, expose our own foolishness, critique authority, and give a voice to those who are marginalized.

The movie opens with a nocturnal aerial perspective of southern Bombay, as Badru (Bhatt) disembarks at a bus stop. With an optimistic manner, she purchases a pair of cinema tickets, eagerly anticipating a romantic outing with her boyfriend, Hamza (Varma). The opening credits roll in the front as a unique title music called 'Pleaj' plays in the background. Upon viewing the film, it becomes evident that the first two-minute song and its accompanying images serve as a premonition of the entire film. Badru eagerly awaits Hamza, clutching movie tickets and carrying two kulfi. While she waits, occasionally on the sidewalk and at other times observing the nocturnal flow of vehicles, she enjoys her kulfi. When Hamza's kulfi begins to melt, Badru starts chewing it, and around the midpoint, we observe a countenance concealed beneath a rosy-hued furry bear. Hamza's tardiness prompts Badru to angrily discard the partially consumed kulfi and go. What was the reason for her decision to wait for his arrival, only to start walking away in a state of anger? Women who are stuck in violent situations or who disclose incidents of violence long after they occurred are frequently posed with this inquiry. The film defies a definitive response due to its complex nature, and it exposes the intricate dynamics of emotions inside close relationships.

Hamza matches Badru's speed on the sidewalk and states, "I have said sorry na" (referring to the teddy bear he brought for her), without explicitly apologizing and indirectly disregarding her feelings of distress. Badru dismisses the reason of being delayed at a job interview by stating that he frequently attends interviews. Hamza confidently announces, "We will marry this year." Badru comprehends that he has secured the position and experiences an immediate sense of joy for himself and others. With increased

assurance, he reiterates, "We are getting married," and deftly removes the hair-tie that secured her hair in a high ponytail. This is how her desires to marry him are subtly influenced, by disregarding her feelings and exerting control over something as trivial as her haircut. The potential marriage proposal scene is transformed into a moment where her personal desire is forcefully revealed to her, depriving her of her autonomy, at a time that is convenient for him.

The lyrics of the introductory song, "*I fall into his arms and become his prisoner ... As days and weeks go by, I become his jailbird,*" possess a prophetic quality.

After three years of being married, it is true that she is indeed his prisoner. Hamza's true nature is exposed as he is seen to be a habitual drinker who physically abuses his wife on a nightly basis. Badru has a deep fear of the evenings due to the potential triggers that may lead to his abuse. These triggers include discovering a shard of stone in his food, coming across a stiletto in the house, attending a neighbourhood meeting, his partner's efforts to help him overcome alcoholism, and her intimate bond with her mother. Shamshu (Shah) possesses a profound understanding of her daughter's challenging circumstances and frequently encourages her to separate from him. However, she observes Badru's suffering without negating or exerting control over Badru's autonomy.

When Zulfi, the errand boy of the neighbourhood, files a police complaint on behalf of Badru, Shamshu urges Badru to officially report the physical violence to the authorities. During a significant moment, following Badru's experience of gaslighting by Hamza and being coerced into retracting the police report, Shamshu recounts the tale of the frog and the scorpion, emphasizing that it is inherent to the scorpion's character to cause harm and remain unchanging. She does not make indirect references to 'all males' or booze, but directly to Hamza, who has consistently shown that he is incapable of changing.

The movie delicately portrays the harsh truth of domestic violence experienced by numerous women and the intricate nature of their entrapment within the cycle of abuse. The notion of the 'cycle of abuse', formulated by psychologist Lenore E. Walker, has faced criticism due to its oversimplified depiction of violence and its tendency to make generalisations without sufficient empirical evidence.

Nevertheless, it was a groundbreaking and crucial endeavour to comprehend interpersonal assault.

Darlings, unlike numerous other Bollywood films that address domestic abuse, "Darlings" accurately depicts the intricate psychology of abuse, encompassing phases of anxiety, violent episodes, reconciliation, gaslighting, and tranquillity. As a result of the recurring pattern of this relationship dynamic and the underlying patriarchal context that supports harmful masculine behaviour, numerous women mistakenly equate violence and dominance with love. The perplexity arising from Hamza's embrace and declaration of love, followed immediately by his act of choking her, serves as the snare that confines her as a captive in his embrace.

Furthermore, alcohol is frequently attributed to men's abusive behaviours. Nevertheless, the film unfolds gradually and agonizingly, employing understated physical movements and moments to convey that this problem, represented as a 'disease' in the film, has a profound impact beyond mere substance abuse. Hamza becomes suspicious of Badru's fidelity and questions whether the baby she is carrying is his own when she becomes pregnant, suspecting that she may be having an extramarital affair with Zulfi. Driven by intense anger without the influence of alcohol, he forcefully shoves her down the staircase, displaying a lack of patience to listen to her perspective or ascertain the truth. The fetus is terminated, along with all its aspirations.

While maintaining the belief that he could undergo a transformation, either out of love or for the sake of their child, she managed to seek support from her mother and endure her pain without being swayed by

external influences to leave. However, while experiencing complete devastation and isolation, she realized that the root cause of Hamza's violent behaviour was not related to drink or love. Essentially, the film explores the unwavering power of hope in the face of shattered aspirations, and how those who share close bonds become ensnared in these repetitive patterns. Despite experiencing numerous disappointments, Badru's unwavering hope fuels her seemingly illogical belief in Hamza's capacity to transform himself, all in the name of love. Hamza's character is portrayed with a remarkable level of empathy, which allows the audience to experience a sense of repulsion against his activities without him being portrayed as a villain. The patriarchal authority that he represents is referred to as a 'sickness', and in the film, he is just as much a victim of repressive power structures as any other individual. According to American novelist Jessica Bennett, *"It is possible to both hold people accountable and be open to the possibility of change. But they must show that they have evolved."*

The core of the sorrow depicted in the film is in Hamza's persistent resistance to change, despite being presented with numerous opportunities. This sadness is further emphasized as the film transitions from a serious tone to a comedic one, particularly after the hospital scene where Badru gains a clear understanding of her circumstances.

The remaining part of the film *Darlings* unfolds in a comedic fashion, as Badru, with the help of Shamsu and Zulfi, seeks revenge against Hamza. She restrains him, administers sedatives into his body, and even tries to retaliate physically. Although the scenes are shown in a humorous manner, the profound sorrow and sense of being deceived are evident.

In the moment when Hamza is tied down, it is disclosed that the sleeping tablets Badru acquired from the hospital were intended for Hamza, rather than for her own demise. Badru says to her mother, *"Fielding bahut ho gayi Ammi, ab battling shuru"* When Hamza uses his typical gaslighting strategies, the anguish caused by his theft of her optimism is clearly apparent in her reaction, *"pehli waali Badru yeh chaat leti."* Shamsu eventually inquires jovially about Badru's scheme, *"Toh feelings kab aayegi beta?"* and Badru said, *"pata nahin Ammi."*

By adding dark humour into these sequences, Badru is able to confront the concept of reclaiming her agency or choosing to persist in her current situation. By adding humour, Badru is able to find amusement in her own mistakes, making her more relatable and avoiding the portrayal of a flawless lady or a helpless victim. It is clear that the story is not about revenge, as she is not attempting to assert dominance over Hamza. Several Bollywood films have explored the theme of a woman who has been wronged and seeks revenge, transforming herself into a powerful figure. The goddess Kali is invoked in films such as *Anjaam* (1994) and *Kahaani* (2012). Women in Bollywood are often shown as either victims of injustice or as highly respected figures. Their portrayal of strength and determination empowers them to seek revenge, and in some cases, even resort to violence. However, it is important to clarify that feminism is not synonymous with misandry, and it is unfortunate that this fact needs to be reiterated repeatedly.

According to the late American writer and feminist Bell Hooks, "Feminism is for everybody. Badru's struggle is centered around the preservation of his dignity and the pursuit of autonomy despite lacking authority. The video portrays males as victims of patriarchy and also showcases examples of healthy manhood within their community, such as Zulfi and the silent butcher.

Hard hitting scenes from ‘Darlings’ That Expose the Harsh Reality of Our Society



1. Badru extends her hands towards Hamza as he discovers a stone in his food and chews it: This was the initial encounter of the viewers with the actuality of Badru and Hamza's matrimony. The promptness with which she extends her palm for him to expel the stone indicates the frequency of this occurrence within their residence. Upon rediscovering a stone, Badru's remorseful countenance sends an immediate shiver down one's spine.
2. Upon observing the choking mark on her neck, Shamsunissa, Badru's mother, reacts: Her initial inquiry is "*ab kya ki?*" (translation: *what did you do now?*). Shamsu notices Hamza's behaviour towards her daughter very clearly. She often asks her daughter to leave her husband and move in with her. Nonetheless, Badru adheres to the conventional wisdom that her husband's behaviour is a result of his alcohol usage. We see Badru's acceptance and routineness of violence throughout, which is a sobering fact.
3. When Badru shatters the plates: This is perhaps the sole occasion where we witness the typically submissive Badru displaying her fury. Contrary to her typical behaviour, she refrained from bidding farewell to Hamza before his departure for work. She was on the verge of reaching her breaking point.
4. The gaslighter, Hamza: "*Pyaar nahi karta, toh maarta kyun? Tum pyaar nahi karti, toh sehti kyun?*" (Translation: "*If I didn't love you, would I hit you? If you didn't love me, would you tolerate it?*") Instantly, Badru succumbs to this deceitful ploy once more and declines to lodge a formal complaint against her oppressive spouse. She holds the belief that her spouse has undergone a transformation, however, it is only the audience that is aware that the most dreadful events are still to occur.
5. When Shamsu and the policeman provide the audience with a glimpse of actuality: During this particular scene at the police station, the law enforcement officers inform the pair that they have the opportunity to oppose domestic abuse at this moment. However, Shamsu informs the police that the actual situation is rather different. As Shamsu goes through the papers, she wonders why men treat women so badly after they've had a few drinks. The officer claims that the women's consent is the only thing that allows them to do what they are about to do. There is a suggestion that Badru endured Hamza's abuse.
6. When Shamsu discusses the lack of change in certain individuals with Badru: It is imperative that you view the particular moment in which Shamsu recounts the tale of a frog and a scorpion to her kid, immediately following the incident at the police station. She cautions Badru that certain individuals possess a scorpion-like disposition, wherein causing harm to others is an inherent and unalterable aspect of their character. The audience is aware of the person she is referring to, but Badru's judgment is once again obscured.

7. When Badru prioritizes Hamza over her mother: Hamza strikes Shamshu in a state of intense anger. Shamshu is fed up and demands that Badru immediately depart from her husband. However, due to Hamza's gaslighting and manipulation of Badru, she ultimately chooses him. Shamshu is deeply wounded because despite physically assaulting her, Badru deliberately chooses to ignore the harm he has caused.
8. Upon Badru's departure from the hospital: Badru has experienced a miscarriage. This experience leaves her psychologically traumatized, however it also brings about a newfound awareness of the extensive mistreatment she has undergone throughout the years. She departs from the hospital with a determined focus on imparting a valuable lesson to Hamza.
9. When Badru comes to the realization that she is unable to demand respect from others: It is only after Badru abandons Hamza to his destiny on the train rails that she comprehends that she has transformed into his likeness. She chose this path in order to elicit a sense of respect from him. However, she comes to the realization that the respect she seeks can only be obtained from her own internal source.
10. When supernatural forces intervene in Hamza's situation: After Badru makes the decision to separate from Hamza, he mocks her by questioning how someone as submissive as her would be capable of doing things alone. However, Badru has firmly decided. She departs from him. As they depart off the tracks, supernatural forces exert their mystical influence.
11. When the pair becomes aware that Badru has been liberated from mistreatment: This particular scene involving the mother and daughter lacks substantial speech. However, one might observe a flicker of optimism in their gaze, indicating that there has been a noticeable improvement.

Conclusion

Netflix film, *Darlings*, thoroughly examines the issue of domestic violence with an unwavering focus on its distressing and emotionally challenging aspects. However, there are positive aspects to consider. Shamshu, the mother of Badru, has had significant hardships throughout her life, including the loss of her husband. As a result, she has developed a coping mechanism of relying only on humour. She serves as Badru's companion, protector, and guide, imparting valuable wisdom, teasing her, and even humorously recommending that she eliminate Hamza. Zulfi (Roshan Mathew), their friend and neighbour, is a dubious salesman aspiring to be a scriptwriter. He possesses qualities that are the complete opposite of Hamza: he is pleasant, friendly, and abstains from alcohol.

However, amid the financially constrained and conservative environment of Badru and Shamshu, who are always full of ideas and aspirations, the most light-hearted elements originate from an unexpected origin: the English language. The mother-daughter duo, although fluent in Urdu, do not simply speak the language, but rather treat it with tenderness and proudly display it. Their linguistic eccentricity is purposeful. Simply pay attention to the words that casually flow from their mouths: *“shits”*, *“loves”*, *“good lucks”* and, *of course*, *“respects”*.

They have eliminated the distinction between singular and plural, and are aggressively attempting to break down social barriers. They are utilizing communication as a means of compensating for their perceived deficiencies.

The remarkable tone fluctuations guarantee that *Darlings* is consistently surprising. Badru and Shamshu's connection helps maintain a light-hearted atmosphere after a serious start, particularly during the amusing part where they mistakenly assume they are being arrested for plotting to harm Hamza. This makes the succeeding difficult moments even more challenging to accept. A narrative cantered around appalling

domestic violence carries the potential of becoming excessively sombre, overwhelmingly stifling, and excessively straightforward. However, filmmaker, skilfully increases the level of suspense and maintains a captivating sense of curiosity. Each instance of Hamza's abusive behaviour reveals additional information about him and Badru. Instantaneous events are non-existent. Hamza engages in physical aggression, justifies his actions, controls others by deceit, and makes a decision to transform himself - and, for a short period of time, successfully achieves this transformation. Badru experiences a range of emotions including soaking, pleading, rationalizing, hoping, getting manipulated, pleading, hoping, and begging - and, for a short period of time, he does feel joyful.

Badru's affection for Hamza is akin to a clear aqua sky: soothing, unwavering, and ever-present. His presence in her life is like to an ominous dark cloud: problematic, obstructing, and fickle. Their marriage appears to be a juxtaposition of brightness and darkness. In an instant, Hamza changes from a cheerful demeanour while having supper to aggressively choking someone. The following morning, he embraces her. This cycle of affection and mistreatment has repeated itself over the course of several years. Every evening, the sky is filled with ominous dark clouds, and every morning, it transforms into a clear and vibrant blue sky. As the duration of mornings decreases and the duration of nights increases, Badru experiences an increasing sensation of hunger, desiring something that is unattainable: dignity.

Indian film has experienced substantial transformations in its depiction of male hegemony and patriarchy throughout the years. Historically, these portrayals mostly emphasised the physical dimension, highlighting aggression and portraying women as lacking strength, restricted to conventional roles as spouses and mothers. Nevertheless, in contemporary society, this depiction has transformed to encompass the emotional and psychological dimensions, frequently emphasising the plight of women who are locked within their homes and facing abuse from their spouses. *Darlings* is a dark comedy that depicts the harsh realities of marital violence, in which the protagonist ultimately achieves liberation after grappling with and dismantling societal expectations regarding the docile and forgiving temperament typically associated with Indian women. This film affirms the fact that there isn't an opportune moment to defy or vocalise opposition to the violence that one endures on a daily basis due to the detrimental conduct of an individual in any form of relationship. The movie depicts the prevailing submissiveness of the majority of women in our society. Regardless of the level of toxicity and abuse exhibited by their husbands, these individuals would endure it silently and staunchly defend their spouses against any negative remarks, no matter the source. Women are mostly afraid of the stigma associated with getting divorced. The film portrays domestic abuse occurring in both directions, yet it effectively conveys a crucial point.

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