



# Padman: Successfully challenging the Stereotypes

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## Abstract:

The article tries to focus on how a Bollywood movie named “Padman” becomes successful in highlighting the highly sensible issue pertaining to women menstruation and challenges the myths and humiliating stereotypes associated with it worldwide. The article tries to promote the practice of highlighting such issue pertaining to stereotypes. The article identifies how a movie helps in changing the age-old conventional thought process; it should be welcomed with hands held wide. While making the movie, the producers have also carefully showcased the “Make In India” Idea, Swaying away from gender discrimination and women empowerment is shown during few scenes in the movie.

**Index Terms:** Menstruation Cycle, Stereotypes myths, Movie’s and overcoming societal taboos

Padman focuses on a bigger issue that is the humiliation and restrictions which are framed with menstruation. These taboo’s, in India are, no entry in the holy places, staying away from people and food in the kitchen, also barred from eating or touching pickles. Such restrictions regarding periods are wide spread across every nation in the world and not only India, which shows that huge number of females, face discrimination. Few of the humiliating practices around the world are:

**Nepal:** The ethnical custom called Chaupadi in western Nepal is a practice associated with menstrual taboo in which the females in periods are forced to sleep out of their homes, in places like cowsheds. This custom of Chaupadi was barred in 2005 and was announced as illegal in 2017. However, a lady lost her life in January 2018 due to this practice (Miglani, 2019).

**Japan:** The women are not allowed to become Sushi Chefs as it is believed that the menstruation period adversely affects their taste buds. However, a lot of brave women are fighting this by starting their own restaurants (Ethan, 2018).

**Afghanistan:** A bizarre thought process is followed which says that bathing or washing self leads to infertility.

**Bolivia:** The females are told that they can get affected by cancer if they discard their used sanitary pads with other garbage.

**USA:** Period shaming is widespread and almost 42% of the women have experienced it, around 58% of the women were ashamed of it and a whopping 73% of the women hide the sight of sanitary pads and tampons (Govender, 2018).

I had a proud feeling for the makers of the movie, the day I first saw the movie. The director, actors and the makers even considered the topic of menstruation, serious enough to make a movie. Since then, I scribbled about my share of experience of this very normal monthly physical happening. Later a lot many of the people turned out to tell their part and experiences. This movie helped a lot to start discussing about a topic, which till now was considered to be a feminine only issue.

A challenge went viral and was trending on the internet in which a lot of celeb’s posted their pictures holding a sanitary pad. Even though this challenge attracted some bashing as it was considered as publicity stunt to promote the movie, it attracted lot of women and they posted their own pictures while holding a sanitary pad. I believe that it should be given a chance – if this trend helps in changing the age-old conventional thought process, it should be welcomed with hands held wide.

While making the movie, the producers have also carefully showcased the “Make In India” Idea, Swaying away from gender discrimination and women empowerment is shown during few scenes in the movie. Still, when a person moves out of the cinema hall, those awesome sentiments of honor/enthusiasm/encouragement while watching the story of a societal businessman fades away shortly. That’s where Padman loses out on creating an ever-lasting impression on its audience. The movie takes the right path from the beginning, crafts the highly required attention of the issue and makes the people start discussing about the topic, but later steers away from its target when it stats following the typical standards of a Bollywood movie.

This movie takes its plot from the life of A. Muruganantham, a professional mechanic. Lakshmikant Chauhan and gayatri gets married who are played by Akshay Kumar and Radhika Apte (Airoldi, 2004). Lakshmikant is worried about his wife using a dirty cloth in the 5 day menstrual period. Lakshmikant being a reasonable and sensible person by nature, never believes the centuries old beliefs related to menstruation and doesn’t want his wife Gayatri, to fall prey to the unhealthy ways of handling the menstrual periods and get sick. This makes him buy a packet of sanitary pads for his wife. His wife couldn’t digest the cost of 55 rupees for one packet and asks him to return it for a refund.

Lakshmi gets baffled by the heavy price for such a light weighing packet. This motivates Lakshmikant, a critical thinker, to start working with cotton and muslin cloth to come up with a cost-effective, homemade variety of pads to convince his wife start using one. After much persuasion, Gayatri starts using them but declares it as a dripping fiasco in the next month. Being

the good wife, Gayatri continues to use the fresh ingredients but fails in agreeing any lady for trying them for feedback. Lakshmikant is labeled as a pervert by the villagers when he does an experiment on himself and his family disowns him. Further, his sisters are dispatched far off from him, his in-law's take their daughter back to their home and he moves out of the village.

The story progress in the first half stays true to the story of the real PadMan. The second half shows Lakshmikant moving to Indore with his task to produce sanitary pads in order to give Gayatri an illness free and easy life. In a short while he understands that he needs to design an easy and uncomplicated pad producing machine. He meets Pari by a coincidence, who is a master table player and is an engineering scholar which leads him winning an award for his creation at the IIT. He gives up the idea of getting a patent and making tons of money, instead decides to use it for the improvement of the society. This route, however, turns out to be full of obstacles.

Does Lakshmikant get acknowledgement of his good deeds and approval from the society and does Lakshmikant and Gayatri's family give up the age-old taboo of humiliation is what is revealed in the end of the movie.

As per a data, a meager 18% of Indian females use sanitary pads. Menstruation is still a topic which needs to be spoken with quietness and is supposed to be discussed behind closed gates. That's where the producers of the movie merit an ovation for thinking and discussing the closed and conventional thought process. The scriptwriters of the movie – R. Balki and Swanand Kirkire are the two pen magicians who created a story on the topic which is usually limited to women and is considered unspeakable. The movie may have turned into overly dramatized Bollywood story during the second half but it carries the true essence of the idea.

A thumbs up to the maker, Mrs. Funny Bones, who summed up the journey of A. Muruganantham not only through her book *The legend of Laxmi Prasad* but also made full scale movie on his life.

Akshay Kumar has raised the standards of acting by the choice of roles he has been making these days. His charm as Lakshmikant makes the audience love him and leaves the women praying for a husband like him.

A few scenes of the movie which shows him wearing a sanitary pad over female undergarment makes the audience think about the sheer daring and persuasion that a star of his might would have required to picture such scene. Radhika Apte, as usual, is dedicated and genuine. She showcases the struggles of her character on the screen with real ease. Sonam Kapoor shares the screen only during the second half of the film. She comes like a breeze of fresh air and is delightful and authentic.

Further to the film: Long-standing effect?

The film has got a fantastic release across the world. The wait here is to find out for the time it needs to grasp the real worthy spectators – the rural Indian's. The impact that it has on them, will decide its achievement in terms of quality in the long run.

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