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Deconstructing Androcentrism in ‘*Dakhal*’: A Feminist Intersectional Study of the Woman Protagonist, ‘Andi’

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Abstract:

The movie, *Dakhal* (1982), directed by Gautam Ghose, primarily focuses on the exploitation of underprivileged people by the gentry class amidst changing times. The movie focuses on the struggle of the woman protagonist, Andi, a resilient woman and a single mother of two who belongs to both the underprivileged class of farmers and the most marginalized and dehumanized tribe, ‘*Kagmara*’ in the androcentric village that perpetuates patriarchal oppression, and misogyny. The sole purpose of the paper is to analyze the character of the woman protagonist, Andi, from the perspective of intersectional feminism and demonstrate how that deconstructs androcentrism.

Keywords: Underprivileged; Single Mother; Marginalized; Dehumanized; *Kagmara*; Androcentrism; Patriarchal Oppression; Intersectional Feminism; Misogyny.

Introduction

Androcentrism is the conscious or unconscious practice of placing a masculine perspective at the center of one’s worldview, culture, society, and history, consequently marginalizing the female and femininity. Intersectionality is a way of understanding social relations by examining intersecting forms of discrimination or oppression being present and active concurrently in a person’s life. Andi’s intersectional form of oppression and discrimination culminates in the fact that she is thrice as marginalized and oppressed as the underprivileged class. In the movie, *Dakhal*, the men in positions of privilege exert systematic control over the social structure and hierarchy, resulting from which underprivileged men are vanquished socially and economically, but women are the most disadvantaged individuals affected by this power inequality. Their existence is pushed to the periphery in public and private spheres. The conspicuous aspect that could be gleaned from

it is that the societal structure and hierarchy are patriarchal, and it is perpetuated by an androcentric worldview where women are twice as marginalized as underprivileged men. However, the exception to that systematic and structural patriarchal oppression is the character of Andi, a self-sufficient, resilient single mother of two who, albeit enduring verbal and physical misogyny, invariably goes against all the odds on her own and resolutely remains committed to defending herself and her children, declaring that she would not surrender.

Literature review

This paper aims to explore the character of Andi, the woman protagonist in the movie *Dakhal* (1982), from the perspective of intersectional feminism. The movie highlights the exploitation of underprivileged people by the gentry class in a changing society, with Andi as the central figure embodying the struggles of the marginalized and dehumanized *Kagmara* tribe and the underprivileged farmer class. The movie also sheds light on Andi's androcentric village's patriarchal and misogynistic power structures.

To the best of my knowledge, no previous works have explored the character of Andi from an intersectional feminist perspective. Therefore, this paper aims to fill this gap in the literature by analyzing Andi's character through an intersectional lens. The paper seeks to demonstrate how Intersectionality can deconstruct and challenge the androcentric norms and power structures perpetuated in the movie and society.

Intersectionality is a framework that recognizes the interconnected nature of social identities such as gender, race, class, and sexuality. It acknowledges that these identities do not exist in isolation but are mutually constitutive and interact with one another. By applying an intersectional lens to Andi's character, this paper aims to shed light on the movie's complex interplay of social identities and power dynamics.

The paper will draw on the intersectional feminist theory of Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw's intersectional feminism theory will be used to analyze Andi's experiences. In conclusion, this paper aims to contribute to the literature on Intersectionality and feminism by providing a new perspective on the character of Andi in the movie *Dakhal*. Through an intersectional lens, the paper seeks to demonstrate how Andi's experiences can be deconstructed to reveal the complex interplay of social identities and power dynamics in the androcentric village.

Ultimately, the paper aims to provide insights into how Intersectionality can challenge and deconstruct societal androcentric norms and power structures.

Problem statement

The problem statement of this paper is to analyze the character of Andi, the woman protagonist in the movie *Dakhal*, and explore her intersectional identity as a member of both the underprivileged farmer class and the marginalized *Kagmara* tribe intersects with the patriarchal and misogynistic structures in her androcentric village. The paper aims to demonstrate how an intersectional feminist perspective can deconstruct and challenge the androcentric norms and power structures perpetuated in the movie and, by extension, in society.

Research Methodology

This qualitative research study aims to explore the character of Andi, the woman protagonist in the movie *Dakhal* (1982), from the perspective of intersectional feminism. The research seeks to understand how Andi's intersectional identity as a member of the underprivileged farmer class and the marginalized *Kagmara* tribe intersects with her androcentric village's patriarchal and misogynistic structures.

The study will employ a qualitative content analysis approach to analyze Andi's character in the movie. Specifically, the study will use an intersectional feminist lens to examine Andi's experiences and interactions with the androcentric power structures in her village. The analysis will draw on the intersectional feminist theory of Kimberlé Crenshaw.

The data for this study will be drawn from the movie *Dakhal*. The movie will be watched several times to identify key scenes and dialogues related to Andi's character and experiences. The identified scenes and dialogues will be transcribed and analyzed using the intersectional feminist lens.

The analysis will identify patterns and themes in Andi's experiences related to her intersectional identity. The analysis findings will be presented in a narrative format, highlighting the complexities of Andi's experiences and how her intersecting identities shape her interactions with the androcentric power structures in her village. The analysis will also demonstrate how Intersectionality can be used to deconstruct and challenge androcentric norms and societal power structures.

The researcher will conduct the research alone and review the analysis to ensure its rigor and accuracy. The study's limitations include the exclusive use of the movie *Dakhal* as the data source, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the subjective nature of the content analysis approach may lead to some degree of researcher bias.

In conclusion, this qualitative research study aims to explore the character of Andi in the movie *Dakhal* from an intersectional feminist perspective. The study seeks to provide insights into the complex interplay of social identities and power dynamics in Andi's experiences and to demonstrate how Intersectionality can be used to deconstruct and challenge androcentric norms and power structures in society.

Research objective

The research objective of this paper is to analyze the character of the woman protagonist, Andi, in the movie *Dakhal*, from the perspective of intersectional feminism to deconstruct androcentrism. Specifically, the research will focus on exploring the intersectional oppression experienced by Andi as a member of the underprivileged class of farmers and the *Kagmara* tribe and as a woman facing patriarchal oppression and misogyny in the androcentric village. Through this analysis, the paper will demonstrate the relevance and significance of intersectional feminism in understanding the complexities of oppression faced by marginalized groups and how this perspective can be applied to deconstruct androcentrism in the context of the movie *Dakhal*.

Intersectionality and Intersectional feminism

Intersectionality is a word coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*. It is a way of understanding social relations by examining intersecting forms of discrimination or oppression being present and active concurrently in a person's life. Traditional one-dimensional approach to equality tends to focus on one type of discrimination (racism or casteism or gender inequality or sexism or classicism, or ableism) and then work to address only that specific concern. The problem with the one-dimensional approach to equality is that it tends to solve only one form of discrimination, leaving out other forms of intersectional discrimination or oppression emanating from social variables a person identifies with. So, Intersectionality identifies and resolves all social barriers to an individual's well-being. In intersectional studies, social variables, not limited to gender, religion, class, caste, race, culture, age, nationality,

language, (dis)ability, and sexuality overlap or intersect and thereby influencing a person’s life, as shown in the figure:



Fig.1: Overlapping social variables in Intersectionality

The most distinct and unique feature of Intersectionality is that there are no defined fixities to the social variables since it understands and predicts that there will be new forms of intersectional discrimination or oppression emanating from new kinds of social variables as society changes with time. Specifically, intersectional feminism focuses exclusively on women who endure intersecting forms of discrimination or oppression and aim to ensure and establish the following objectives:

- Equity
- Equality of outcome
- Equal opportunity
- Eliminate intersectional oppression or discrimination

So, from the percipience of Intersectionality, the following social variables of Andi have been identified:

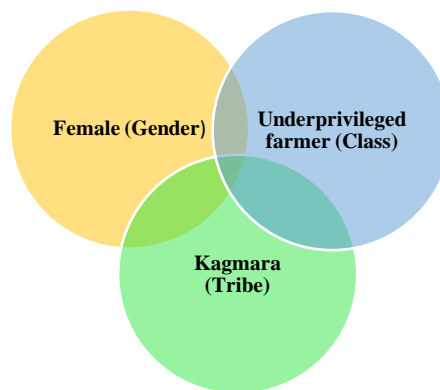


Fig.2: Andi’s intersectional matrix

Thus, the following observations could be made based on the abovementioned intersectional matrix of Andi:

- **Gender:** Since she is a woman, specifically a single mother of two, who is self-sufficient, resilient, and robust enough not to acquiesce to the patriarchal oppression, she continues to endure misogyny invariably, both verbally and physically.
- **Class:** She belongs to the underprivileged class without access to basic amenities such as literacy and education. They consist mainly of impoverished farmers and artisans who barely make the minimum wage, and as a result, she is also divested of fundamental education, literacy, and knowledge concerning human rights.
- **Tribe:** She is from the nomadic tribe called '*Kagmara*,' who are marginalized and dehumanized. Although she marries Joga initially to evade the stereotype and humiliation perpetuated by people of both privileged and underprivileged classes, she realizes after the demise of her husband that, in the end, she can never obliterate her inherent identity and stereotype and all that she can do is brave it and take it in her stride.

Thus, it is concluded that Andi's intersectional form of oppression and discrimination is present and active concurrently in her life, which culminates in the fact that she is thrice as marginalized and oppressed as the underprivileged people.

The patriarchal hierarchy of the society of the androcentric village

In the movie, *Dakhal*, the societal structure and hierarchy are systematically controlled by the privileged men in power, specifically the gentry class and government officials who take advantage of the underprivileged people's illiteracy and destitution. Since the gentry class possesses generational wealth, the government officials work through the law's loopholes to benefit the gentry class, giving them the power to levy on the underprivileged's disadvantageous condition. However, the most affected underprivileged people of power inequality are the women whose existence is pushed to the periphery in both the public and private spheres. The following diagram demonstrates the patriarchal hierarchy in the androcentric village:

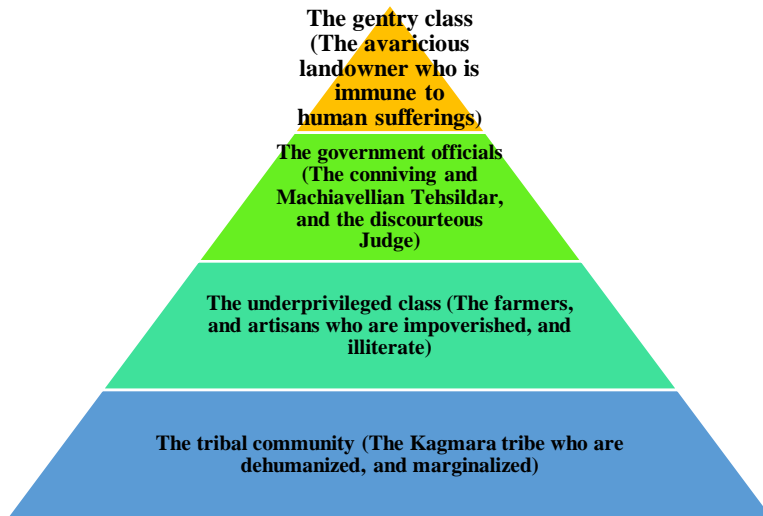


Fig.3: The systematic patriarchal hierarchy in the androcentric village

Thus, it is conspicuous that on the summit echelon of the systematic patriarchal hierarchy, the most powerful, privileged, and corrupt of all is the gentry class, followed by the government officials who exploit and devour the underprivileged class and the tribal people at the expense of their impoverishment, and illiteracy. In the movie, the landowner, who represents the gentry class, is immune to human suffering, and all he cares about is acquiring as many pieces of land as he can. He has the conniving and Machiavellian Tehsildar working for him since he knows the loopholes to the changing laws concerning immovable properties such as the land. The Tehsildar is quite as Machiavellian as working as a mediator between the landowner and the judge to benefit the landowner and himself. In the movie, he was instrumental in setting the judge up against Andi, allegedly bribing a random man into testifying against Andi's virtue as a widowed single mother of two on the day of the trial, deceiving the *Kagmara* tribe in the guise of a magnanimous person by offering them hospitality with the sole purpose of tricking them into testifying against Andi, and finally arson Andi's hut, livestock, crops, and the land. Additionally, the judge, presumably from the city, was also discourteous to Andi and the villagers in general in the aspect that he was naïve of villagers' illiteracy, innocence, and impoverishment, and the Tehsildar's art of deception since the judge possessed an ossified urban perspicacity that previews the public homogeneously literate, educated, law-abiding, and affluent. On the day of the trial, at the behest of the unscrupulous, disingenuous, and devious Tehsildar, the judge even asked Andi to display her 'marriage document' as if she belonged to a privileged class, with sophisticated education and

awareness of legislation and the law. Thus, the gentry class and government officials perpetuate systematic patriarchal oppression, subduing the underprivileged and marginalized and dehumanizing tribal people by levying on their illiteracy and destitution.

Andi, the exception

The most distinct and unique attribute of Andi's character, which the director of the movie has incessantly stressed and reiterated, is her distinguished individuality which is a stark contrast to the men who always are allied with groups they identify with. However, the fact that she is a woman, a single mother of two, living without a man, self-sufficient, robust, and compelling enough to persevere infuriates the privileged men in society while leaving the underprivileged men in awe. The privileged and underprivileged men possess an androcentric worldview where women, especially single women with two kids, are interpreted as incapacitated, frail, fragile, puny, feeble, and ceaselessly susceptible to the assistance of men in times of crisis. If the same men detect any aberration to their androcentric perspicacity, then the consensus is that women are 'Lamiatic' creatures deserving of misogyny. In the movie, when her late husband's friend asked her, "*Aren't you scared alone (Dakhal)?*" "*Living without a man (Dakhal)?*" in response to that, she said with resilience and determination, "*I know men. I am not afraid. The kids and I are fine (Dakhal).*" On the day of the trial, inside the courthouse, when she tried to defend the land she acquired by law, the Machiavellian Tehsildar, after his several attempts at discarding Andi's marriage as valid, denigrating her children as illegitimate bastards and continually disparaging her as a "*gypsy bitch (Dakhal),*" and a "*gypsy whore (Dakhal),*" when he realized she would not give in, he had an allegedly bribed random man testify against her virtue by saying he had been sleeping with her since Joga, her 'husband' died. It is unquestionably irrelevant because the trial was not based on domestic disputes but on the case of land acquisition. However, since she was a woman, relatively young and a single mother of two who was self-sufficient without a man, which was considered an impossibility in the patriarchal society, an assault on her virtue was deemed necessary to bring her down as if preserving one's virtue after the death of one's husband would strip a woman of her right to acquire the land. However, the false allegations about her dignity compelled Andi to obliterate the androcentric worldview that perpetuates systematic patriarchal oppression and misogyny by verbally and physically fighting the men in the courthouse all by herself for her rights, dignity, and her children. To avenge such an unthinkable insurrection on himself and the

government officials, and the fact that she defended herself and did not acquiesce and conform to the patriarchal system, presumably, the Tehsildar and his accomplices burned her hut, livestock, crops, and the land down on the same night. However, the following day when one of the *Kagmara* tribesmen asked her to let go of the fight, she chose to remain staunchly devoted to fighting for herself and her children with indomitable fortitude by asserting, “*Why should I go (Dakhal)?*” Thus, the dichotomy of women’s existence in the androcentric world is indisputably misogynistic, where if they are not dependent on men, they are devouring coquettish means to lure men, and if they are dependent on men, then they are incapacitated and unpropitious. However, Andi is the only exception to the androcentric worldview, and who, albeit enduring verbal and physical misogyny, does not conform to its patriarchal system of oppression.

Conclusion

The story of Andi is a powerful tale of resilience and strength in the face of overwhelming oppression and marginalization. Despite being three times as marginalized and oppressed as the underprivileged people in the film, Andi possesses an unabated and robust individual identity that starkly contrasts the men who are permanently allied with groups. As a single mother of two, Andi fights both verbally and physically against the misogyny perpetuated by the patriarchal and oppressive men in power in her androcentric village.

Andi’s story highlights oppression’s pervasive and insidious nature, which can affect individuals in many ways. Despite discrimination, including her gender, socio-economic status, and family situation, Andi refuses to be silenced or marginalized. Instead, she asserts her individuality and stands up to the powerful men who seek to keep her down.

What makes Andi’s story so compelling is her unwavering determination and resilience in the face of overwhelming adversity. Despite facing tremendous obstacles, she refuses to give up or give in. Instead, she fights for herself and her children, taking on the powerful patriarchal structures that seek to keep her oppressed and marginalized.

Andi’s story is also a reminder of the power of individual identity in the face of groupthink and conformity. While the men in the village are permanently allied with groups, Andi stands alone as an individual, refusing to be defined or constrained by the norms and expectations of her community. In doing so, she demonstrates the importance of maintaining a sense of self in the face of overwhelming pressure to conform.

Ultimately, Andi's story serves as an inspiration to all of us. It reminds us that even in the face of tremendous adversity and oppression, we have the power to stand up for ourselves and assert our identities. It also highlights the importance of fighting against the patriarchal and oppressive structures that seek to keep us down and the critical role individuals can play in effecting real change.

In conclusion, Andi's story is a powerful testament to the human spirit's resilience, determination, and strength. Despite being three times as marginalized and oppressed as the underprivileged people in the film, Andi refuses to be silenced or marginalized. Instead, she asserts her individuality and stands up to the powerful patriarchal structures that seek to keep her down. Andi's story inspires us all, reminding us of the power of individual identity in the face of groupthink and conformity and the importance of fighting against oppression and injustice, wherever it may be.

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