

# Movie Review: Toilet - Ek Prem Katha: A Tale of Emotion with a Concern of Sanitation

Deepika Tiwari\*

Basic Details of the Movie	Cast of the Movie
Release Date: 11 August 2017 Director: Shri Narayan Singh Genre: Romance/ Satire.	Akshay Kumar, Bhumi Pednekar, Divyendu Sharma, Anupam Kher, Sana Khan

## Introduction

Cinema being a popular media has potentially influenced the society. India has a strong history of using cinema as a medium to communicate the prevailing social scenario in an appropriate genre. One of such recent attempts was the movie *Toilet-Ek Prem Katha*, which satirically presents the current state of Toilet usage and attitude pertaining to it. The very beginning of the movie gives a clear message of how the film attacks superstitious beliefs and baseless practices, When Keshav is getting married to a buffalo in order to negate and neutralize the effect of his manglik stars. The film takes an interesting turn when Keshav, not so educated but a progressive man falls in love with an educated young girl, Jaya but this was not enough for them to marry rather they had to find out unusual ways to convince Keshav's father who is a staunch Brahmin. They somehow get married and Jaya moves to his husband's house which is a devout place without any access to lavatory. Now here all the twists and turns start and the movie attempts to highlight the problems in rural India pertaining to open defecation in a humorous way giving a touch of Romance. The film shows how lota parties are organized in the morning when women collectively go to the fields for defecation. Jaya reveals that she is not at all comfortable in joining the lota party and firmly tells Keshav that he will have to construct a toilet in the house. Keshav's father considers construction of a toilet in the house as inauspicious and goes against children. Jaya

tries to adjust to the situation with the help of her husband when he takes her to railway station every morning. Tired of this chaos one day Jaya goes back to her parents and is not ready to return unless she has a toilet. Keshav, in turn fights with a lot of factors viz. Superstitious beliefs, Cultural boundation and even administration and corrupt system and people's attitude to construct a toilet so that he can bring his wife back. The movie is a satirical take on open defecation and insightful piece to show how women are treated insensitively. In a very subtle manner the film has been successful in touching upon very crucial issues like women empowerment, misinterpretation of religious and cultural norms., gravity of martial relationships and corruption to name a few.

The various elements in the movie can be discussed as follows:

**Superstition:** According to horoscope Keshav has strong Manglik effect and that is the reason he remains unmarried till long. As per his father who is supposedly a learned man and has all the knowledge of shastras, he will have to marry a buffalo in order to neutralize the effect of mangal. The very concept of marriage and human relations seems to be deviating from its set pattern, when it is believed that the quality of marriage is determined not by the dynamics and level of affection between the spouse but by some meaningless stars who have nothing to do with one's life and on top of that its effect can be negated by marrying a buffalo or a tree.

**Breaking Gender Stereotypes:** The film not only depicts negative stuff rather it has shown the tussle between the two generations and that of a transition period when there is a paradigm shift. Jaya, who is also a Brahmin's daughter portrays a symbol of positive change how we are welcoming a change in nurturing our girls. Jaya rides

\* Amity University Gurgaon, Gurgaon, Haryana, India. Email: [dtiwari.psy@gmail.com](mailto:dtiwari.psy@gmail.com)

a gents cycle. Thinks more progressively than her male counterparts, Jaya's decision to marry the man of her choice is respected in her family and her parents are ready to meet Keshav and even acknowledge the fact that their daughter is educated if she has chosen a boy she must have done the same with wisdom.

**Marital Bonding:** Both the lead roles have extended support to their counterparts and proved to complement each other despite a lot of differences in terms of Educational qualification, Socio Cultural Background, age etc. After getting into ruthless arguments with her father in law Jaya cooks for the family and even serves dinner for him, this act was recognized by her husband when he acknowledged that incident. Keshav is no less than Jaya in extending support to her. This can be seen by seen in the series of gestures when he first took Jaya to meet the old lady of village (exceptional case where lady was bed ridden and because of this there was an attached toilet in her room) so that Jaya could use toilet over there. In between the events he tries to convince Jaya that she should be a part of lota party and be a leader of that group. Jaya gives it a try and goes to the field but the scene turns worse when she was spotted by her father in law. Keshav was in stress because of the continuous arguments and gets to know that on the railway station train has some minute's stoppage. He, then takes Jaya to the railway station every morning so that she can use toilet in the train but this couldn't last long and one day Jaya gives up and goes to her parents. Keshav is also shown stealing a portable toilet of a movie's production unit and is sent behind the bars, even in this stressful situation Jaya comes to his rescue and helps him to get free.

Jaya also extended her support (despite staying away from him) to her husband by preparing all relevant documents and files to fight with the administration and ensures that Keshav is not alone in this battle of bringing about a positive change.

**Role of Media:** Role of media is shown as an integral part of the film, when the news of separation is spread and even reason for the same is quoted in the local newspaper. This probably turns the story upside down and draws the attention of Keshav that how crucial the issue is. Now he shows firm determination to anyhow construct the toilet and takes a pledge to do so.

**Misinterpretation of Religious Beliefs:** Religious beliefs have been drastically misinterpreted by countrymen when they say how inauspicious it is to construct a toilet inside the house. Keshav in turn attempts to convey the correct interpretation of the slogans from shastras how the concept of sanitation and hygiene is clearly explained in the holy scriptures. It's just that some people (Supposedly learned ones) have been spreading incorrect information and misguiding people in order to satisfy their ego.

**Generation Gap:** The film shows both the pictures of inter generation dynamics one is full of tussle and chaos when Keshav's father shows a very rigid attitude to welcome any change. Many a times it is seen that he is less concerned about the culture but more about his ego. It seems like he is taking everything not from a very rational open minded perspective rather a view that he will lose the battle against his daughter in law. On the other side of the scene there are Jaya's parents, who are although troubled from the condition but continuously support her keeping in mind her motive.

**Corruption:** The initiative of Government of India that of constructing a toilet in every community has been found on papers only. The movie also throws light on corruption not only at administrative level but also at society level when people have used toilets constructed by Government for commercial and residential purposes. This is a very good take on how people's participation affects implementation of various policies and how it becomes merely a number game.

**Say of Women:** Movie is a powerful depiction of Women empowerment with a series of satirical statements like how women have taken things for granted and it won't change unless they raise their voices. Jaya attacks the system of veil by calling it hypocrisy when they cover their face and poop under the open sky where any man can spot them. After repeated attacks by Jaya women of the village finally come collectively to raise their voice against open defecation. However, the protest of women is totally sexist in nature when they call off their household chores and refuse to cook unless there is a toilet in either house or community. It indirectly says that cooking is a female thing. This take should have been rather more rational than sexist. Even man can cook.

**Resistance in Bringing a Change:** Jaya filed a case of divorce, Keshav was locked in the jail for one night, he fought with people around, community, society and administration but did not give up. Once toilet was constructed, it was broken by villagers but Keshav did not lose hope. Because of one couple and their continuous efforts, most important being moving out of the marriage gave rise to a kind of campaign and shakes the entire administration. They won by the collective efforts of their persistence, media, strong administrative leadership

and their romance results into granting the permission of constructing a toilet just before their divorce. In the end even Keshav's father realizes that it is necessary to have a toilet in the house which is important not only for sanitation but also for dignity.

The essence of the movie can be simply interpreted as a romantic tale with full of emotions which satirically attacks the practices that lead to the downward mobility of the progress any modern society achieved or tend to achieve.