A Reflection on the Indian Society - Padmavati Controversy

Click **here** know more on the controversy.

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What is the issue?

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A social understanding of the whole uproar over a movie, Padmavati, raises some crucial questions on some perceptions in society and the status of women in India.

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> **"*All disputes about history and myth are indeed the reflection of concerns at present*"**
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What social perceptions does the controversy reflect?

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- **Sacrifice -** Celebrating the myth of a woman who embraced death to protect medieval honour is nothing but embracing the idea of Sati which was abolished as a practice nearly two centuries ago.
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- Evidently, some upper-caste establishments and political leaders have hailed Padmavati as “rashtramata Padmavati”, the mother of the nation.
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- **Community -** The controversy highlights the reality that the clan and the community are increasingly becoming more powerful than the individual.
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- The marital and sexual choices of an individual are largely being controlled and conditioned by the caste and communal identities.
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- E.g. there is a rising trend of discouraging all inter-faith love relationships as “love jihad”.

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- The marriage of a 25-year-old Hindu girl, Akhila (now Hadiya) who chose to marry a Muslim was annulled by the court.
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- In Kerala, there are “reconversion centre” that coerces Hindu women who have relationships with men of other religions to “return” to the fold.
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- Evidently, in many of these cases, it is usually the woman who faces the double burden of caste and gender identities.
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- **Masculinity** - The Kshatriyas are offended because the film Padmavati has allegedly shown Khilji, a Muslim ruler fantasising about Padmavati.
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- More than the concern for a woman, this is more a violent reaction for the challenge posed for Hindu masculinity.
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- **Patriarchy** - The agenda of ardent proponents of patriarchy has often been to control and subjugate woman in her individual choices.
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- But the very nature of patriarchal deception is that it does it with the tag of 'protecting women'.
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- **Media** - Indian cinema, especially Bollywood, has for long been a playground of desire, especially for men.
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- It has shown blindness to the culture of stalking being a social evil and has often only romanticised it.
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- But when it is portrayed to be done by someone with a well known caste or religious identity and tag, it is opposed with all fervour.
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What do the real Padmavatis need?

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- In a country with a shocking record on gender equity, the women do not want the Kshatriyas to protect them.
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- They need the right to health, equality and justice to protect themselves, which a feudal order has always denied them.
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- But the democratically-elected governments have the responsibility to ensure

these basic rights to women, for them to have a dignified life in a gender equal society.
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Source: The Indian Express

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