

# QALA MOVIE REVIEW



IMDb RATING 7.2/10

Qala released on Netflix set in the 1940s, the movie focuses on the complicated relationship between a singer famous within the film industry and her perfectionist mother. The interplay between the present and how Qala played by Tripti Dimri reached the successful heights of her career. The never-ending pursuit of perfection with the art from the debilitating effect it has on the individual constantly seeking for validation of her blood and finally how decisions were taken up in the past come to haunt and torment. Qala, despite having everything she ever dreamed of, forms the basic storyline of this effective, engaging and heartbreaking film. The movie is directed by Anvita Dutta with Tripti Dimri, Babil Khan, Amit Sial, Varun Grover, and Swastika Mukherjee in the lead role. The movie has been shot partly in Himachal Pradesh and in Kolkata which captures the

snow-capped mountains and the nostalgic by-lanes adding to the movie's flavor. the beautiful songs by Amit Trivedi and background score by Sagar Desai demand constant attention from the viewer.

Qala the main protagonist, who is born into a musically inclined family and is the only child of her mother. Qala is allowed to learn music, but her mother Urmila (played by Swastika Mukherjee) wants her to become a “Pandit” just like her father, and she trains her. Urmila herself was a famous singer and her husband who was a renowned musician died before the birth of their daughter. Qala had a twin brother who did not survive, as sometimes the stronger of the two fetuses will take the nutrients meant for the other. Urmila spends the rest of Qala’s life punishing her. Qala tries to win her mother's approval but never succeeds. Qala is shown even pleading for the love she rightfully deserved from her mother.

Urmila meets Jagan, a self-taught singer who has no family of his own. Urmila adopts Jagan (played by Babil Khan), and becomes his mentor. She undermined Qala’s talents as she was a girl. Urmila stops instructing Qala in music and tries to find her a husband. Hoping to make Jagan a popular movie singer in Calcutta. The film depicts the male authority over art and how people show great importance to men over women. Qala is smitten with jealousy for Jagan. She uses every trick that she can think of and she goes against her mother’s she forges ahead to make her name in the music industry. She becomes a successful

singer, but her guilt and deep-rooted insecurities haunt her and drive her toward a destiny that she has herself scripted.

The story follows how Qala had to pay the price for just wanting to achieve her dreams. Most of the film covers her traumatic life. The main character's sole aim was to make her mother proud, who stopped talking with her. Urmila's emotional abuse takes its toll on Qala and it is also her guilt to see Jagan dying by suicide that doesn't leave her mind. After achieving what her mother wants for her she still keeps visualizing her guilt.

The film gets darker when Qala falls into trap of her trauma and starts living in a parallel world while talking to Jagan and confronting him. One of the most pertinent and strong themes in the film is the portrayal of mental health and trauma as not only psychological but physical as well. The film also tells us the gloomy picture of how patriarchy has been the reason for women facing abuse, trauma, and other mental health problems. It gives a narrative of patriarchy destroying women not just physically, but mentally as well. At the end of the film, when Qala dies by suicide, her mother cries for help. But little does she know, it wasn't Qala losing her long battle, it was women losing their battle to break the chain of misogyny.

*Qala* is not a film but a message to vocalise the discrimination that goes through with art being gendered. It is a message that enunciates patriarchy as a physical and mental assault. *Qala* is a voice for women in the industry facing gender discrimination.

