



BODHI

International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Science

An online, Peer reviewed, Refereed and Quarterly Journal

Vol : 2

No : 1

October 2017

ISSN : 2456-5571



**CENTRE FOR RESOURCE, RESEARCH &
PUBLICATION SERVICES (CRRPS)**

www.crrps.in | www.bodhijournals.com

PREDICAMENT OF THE EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN IN “THE FARM” BY CHAMAN ARORA

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Abstract

Women exploitation is an undeniable happening throughout our history and society. The malpractice of women exploitation is present in the activities in which a person achieves sexual gratification, financial gain and other advancements. The sexual exploitation is more to happen to those women who are already the victims of poverty. Women are being exploited in various ways by culture and society. Due to patriarchal oppression, the status of women in society can be degraded and they are used as commodities or as an object to please men. The present paper attempts to explore and analyse the problems, sufferings and predicaments of oppressed and exploited women who face obstructions at their workplaces and also sexually assaulted in ChamanArora's "The Farm". The author has beautifully interwoven their voices in the narrative and their plight reverberates through the characters of the story. The paper also aims to analyse the extent of exploitation and oppression and their miserable condition which they accepted silently. It also points out that how women have reduced themselves to sexual commodities.

Key words: *oppression, identity, exploitation, women, labourers, innocence.*

“The Farm” is the story on the exploitation of women. The story presents the hybrid of patriarchy and capitalism which renders women a reserve labour force. The story presents that whether the women are active in their work, but they do not compete against men for high paid jobs. Marx is of the opinion that the participation in economic activities does not benefit women at home. Their secondary status in the labour market implies that women workers are unable to acquire the attributes of ‘free wage labour’, viz. the worker has the freedom to sell his labour power as his own commodity and is free of all the objects needed for the realisation of his labour power. Elson and Pearson maintain that a woman is never ‘free’ in this sense:

She has the obligations of domestic labour, difficulties in establishing control over her ownbody, an inability to be fully a member of society in her own right; but also the possibility of obtaining her subsistence from men in exchange for personal services of a sexual or nurturing kind, of realising her labour power outside the capitalist labour process (97).

The opening of the story tells us about the natural beauty of the valley Karsog (literally means condole), and on the other hand the story tells us about the ugliness of

women exploitation. The protagonist of the story Babu comes to the valley to take the charge of his job. On reaching there he is enjoying the natural beauty of the farm, valley, rivulet and tall pine trees and deodars. On the next day while putting the signature on the charge sheet formshe notices that there are no labourers and gardeners for the farm. He worries how the work will be done on the farm with no labourers. He asks his assistant about the labourers and he smiles on his question.

The next morning, I asked Milakhi Ram, the gardener, to get some labourers for weeding the rice field. Fifteen to twenty workers turned up; there were more girls and women among them, there rages ranging between sixteen and fifty five. I had never before employed women. I asked the gardener whether there was any problem in getting men. He replied that if the females did not work properly he could through them out. But they had been working in this farm ever since its establishment. Otherwise also in these hills, most of the work on the farm and in the fields was done by women, except ploughing. “Sir, all of them are subsisting on the farm and with them around we have never felt labour shortage.” That is why this farm is famous in the whole of the district.(98)

The story shows that the women are preferred to work in the fields as it is easy to exploit them. Women have been subjected to various forms of exploitation as they are paid less, sexually harassed and tortured both in physical and sexual capacities. Women irrespective of their caste, class have been the victims of exploitations since long time in different fields in their life both physically, socially, mentally and economically. Women are facing problems in every sphere of life. It is realized that the long run supremacy of male over female in all respect in the patriarchal society is highly responsible for their deterioration. The author in the story presents the condition of working women in the fields. They are so poor that they don't even have proper dress to wear. They are in rags, some of them are old but all of them are working with all their power and energy without worrying about anything. They are dedicated to their work. The author tells about them:

There were the older ones among them-Bilmoo, Seti, Malatu and the middle-aged ones Murtu, Durgi and Papalu, who never missed a day's work. Then there were Bishno, Savatri and Kamalo who worked less but were more lively and full of fun. They were young and pretty and laughed uninhibitably. The red, blue and yellow scarves in movement looked like butterflies in flight. I felt like *Kahna* among *Gopies*. I would keep standing at the boundary on the pretext of supervising there works. My eyes would sometimes wonder among the collars of their shirts and at other times catch the beauty bursting out of their torn clothes. I would pull up one and get blessed by another. Days past like this. And Bhakhs in enlivened the weeding of rice fields sometimes and digging of maize fields at other times. (99)

The story present that the women cannot build their capacity and are often suppressed by man folk in the society without any protest due to their in-built fear of socio-economic isolation. To meet their economic condition, some of them without tolerating the exerted force by the men folk choose, dark way of living by selling their bodies and by indulging in the profession of

prostitution. Milakahi Ram knows how to exploit women for his benefit. He serves these women as a commodity or an object in front of the Babaus who came there for work. These Babus use them and then throw them without any tension. The author in the story presents the miserable condition of the women that how they are exploited and sexualised by these rich class people. These women because of their poverty forced to do work like this so that they can meet their family needs. The author tells that how Milakahi Ram presents these girls as a commodity in front of the Babu;

One day Milakahi Ram said to me hesitantly, "Sahib, you are still alone. Days pass somehow. I wonder how you pass nights. If you wish, shall I make some arrangements?" I gave him the go ahead signal but on condition that no one should get to know of it. The same night Savitri came. But I had considered as the most difficult thing, till my age of twenty-one, was such a simple matter. That night converted me from an awkward boy of twenty-one into a man. And then, sometimes Bishno and sometimes Kamalo continued to help me become a full fledged man. In order to please them, I had to give them something-sometimes hay, sometimes corn and sometimes money also. It did not cost me anything. I was surprised that nobody talked about this matter. Savitri was the prettiest of the lot and it was she who kept me company on most of the nights. (99)

The Babu uses these women for their pleasure and gives them basic things like money, food, clothes. The story portraying women as using sex to barter for male resources dehumanizes women because it signifies that their bodies are the most precious which they have to exchange for money. These poor women use their bodies to earn money and these women are exploited as Savitri is exploited in the story. She is going to have a baby and when she tells this to Babu his whole enjoyment come to an end. He feels that what a blunder he has done. He thinks about his family that what happens when his family comes to know about this. He is only twenty-one years old and cannot understand the

situation and becomes tensed. His tension is shown as, "That night it was Savitri. Somewhere near, a drum was beating; Bhakhs were being sung and perhaps nati was being danced. But when Savitri told that a "Little babu" was on its way, the songs coming from outside turned into a pandemonium. Each beat of the drum was like a hammer blow on my head (99)." He becomes so tensed that he do not even talk to anybody and lives all alone in his own world.

It was an off day perhaps! I was reading the newspaper seated in a chair in the courtyard of my quarters when Milakhi Ram came in. He had three or four small boys with him. One of the boys, about five or six years old, was very handsome and he smiled looking at me. When he laughed, his eyes narrowed a bit; he was squint eyed. I beckoned him to come close but he did not come and continued to laugh. Milakhi Ram said, "Sir, can you guess whose son he is?" I remembered that I had seen someone laughing like him. Who was it? I was not able to recollect. After a few moments my predecessor's face flashed before my eyes. The same hesitant smile, the squint eyes. The hammering in my head started again and my face became flushed. I looked towards Milakhi Ram. He was also smiling. The blue gums over his yellow teeth gave me a strange feeling of revulsion. His upper lip was raised like a dog's. I turned white and with mouth open I blurted out. "The previous Babu?" The hunter was quick to grab its victim. "Yes, sir! The previous babu.... You have got it right. But why are you alarmed? You are not going to remain here for ever. A year, or at the most two or three years. Then a new babu. This Murtu and Durgi and Papalu, Kamalo, Bishno, Savitri they are all products of this very farm. And they are all there to render service at the farm.

Whatever the form of service. This arrangement must continue, otherwise there will be dearth of labour here also. What's more, *Sahabs* must leave behind some memento."(100)

The story presents how women are being exploited and how their needs are being repressed in the orthodox society. These poor women have children from these Babus and these Babus have no responsibilities towards them even do not even dare to ask anything about them. They are busy in their lives and do not even try to think that what they have left behind. The same thing is done by the protagonist Babu. He left Savitri and her child and do not even look at the face of the girl child and do not even give anything to that poor fellow and left her in her destitute. He knows that when her girl child will grow up she also works in these fields like her mother and exploited in the same manner because of their poverty as they have no other source of earning money, but still he does not think about them and left the village. Through the story we come across the experience of those women who are not only treated as subordinate to men but are also subject to exploitation, humiliation, oppression.

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