

A Triumph over Adversity in the Movie Parched

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ABSTRACT

Women have been the victims of customs and rituals in the Indian society since ancient times. Despite of modernization and government's effort to empower women still they have to face lots of social discrimination due to age old customs and rituals. Why such practices are continuing even today? The women live in a tightly controlled world, hemmed in by tradition. This paper shows about the physical dangers, prejudice, and discrimination women face in contemporary society, and the consequences of rebellion. The film highlights the issues of domestic violence, marital rape, child marriage, and male entitlement. The paper tries to show the condition of women in the family and importance of women outside the world. Oppression, exploitation are the nature of male dominated society.

Keywords: society, domestic violence, discrimination, exploitation rebellion.

Marginalization in general describes the exclusion or removal of a person, a group or community by a dominant force. Nowadays people get marginalized from the prevalent system of main stream without their desire to walk out. It happens in every part of the society because this society has got a reason to justify everything. People are forced to adhere to these rules or

else they won't be able to survive. Marginalization is a process equally of domination and subordination where the one rules and the other become mere survivors.

In India, there are many individuals and groups that are marginalized in the name of social, cultural, economic, caste, creed, class and other factors. In the case of women, they are the most exploited and marginalized members of the society especially those living in the rural areas are victims of this exploitation in the worst level. It is in India where women face more issues than in other countries. Even in the present scenario, after feminism, post-feminism, after numerous struggles and riots undertaken for equality among gender, still women are subjected to suffer the age old-ridiculed traditions like forced child marriages and other social issues like financial difficulties, spousal and familial rape, and physically and emotionally abusive alcoholic husbands. The best part is that it is woman who is the victim of exploitation and at the same time it is she who becomes the source of exploitation.

Literature as a mode of discursive articulation always endeavors to give voice to the marginalized sections of the society. It sensitizes us to the physical and mental conditions of the oppressed, the alienated, the discriminated and the one who exists on the margin. It probes into the psyche of various characters and we are made to undergo and relate to the situations that they come across. *Parched* is an Indian drama film written and directed by Leena Yadav which brings an authentic portrayal of the deprivations faced by women in rural India. The film captures the stories of three women living in a patriarchal village of Rajasthan. The village is a microcosmic reflection of the male dominated Indian society, where women often have subservient and

submissive roles. The film brings into the forefront how these characters are exploited emotionally, financially and sexually.

It prominently revolves around 3 women named Lajjo, Rani and Bijli who takes bold steps to change the trajectory of their lives for the better. Rani is a 32-year-old widow, whose goal is to get her son married to a beautiful girl. Lajjo is married to a sadistic alcoholic, Manoj and faces violence from him for being barren. The only solace she has is with her friendship with Rani. And the final character Bijli is a carnival dancer and prostitute who is a close friend of both these women and she is the only bright spark in their miserable existence. She represents the 'other' for village women, who are free from the society's regressive shackles. Yet she is also emotionally and sexually victimized by the society.

These three protagonists are not the victims of patriarchal culture but they are the rebels in a male-chauvinist world. Rani represents the deep roots of patriarchy wherein women are not nurtured to respect themselves. But she knows self respect and she stops her own son from becoming the cheating and wife-beating husband. Rani is given multi-faceted roles in this film, as a bride, she was brutally tortured by her husband, who had an extra-marital affair with Bijli, one of the protagonist who later on turns to be a person of comfort for Rani and then as a widow, she had to bear the curses of her mother-in-law and had to suppress all her feelings inside the burqa even though she is tempted by the people around and finally as a mother-in-law at first she becomes a stereotype later on she was able to succeed in escaping her daughter-in-law from the brutality of her son because she was able to sense the real problem that she faced years back. This film focuses on how oppression ripples across generations. We don't realize how you slip

into those roles because that's the way you've seen it happen generation after generation. After Rani becomes a mother-in-law, she is compelled to be abusive towards Janki, the new bride in the house, forgetting how she was herself treated in the same circumstances, in the same place.

Lajjo, the second protagonist herself has been made to believe that she can't conceive a child. She is a skilled seamstress. She and Rani, along with other women, work for a local entrepreneur Kishan, the only male voice for freedom of females in the village, and with the help of Kishan they are saving money for the village to get a television- their first connection to the outside world. He tries to bring changes in the village and thereby making the women empowered.

Lajjo suffers beatings at the hands of her husband for being both the household's breadwinner, and for failing to give him a child. These women are indoctrinated with the belief that childbirth is their primary purpose in life. Her husband uses sex not as a fulfillment of his physical hunger but as a weapon of torture on his wife. Lajjo's supposed infertility is treated as a curse. Bijli's offhand observation that maybe Lajjo isn't infertile after all and that perhaps the fault lies with her husband sets in motion a series of events with the potential to change each of the women's circumstances in ways even they can't entirely imagine. She is conceived by a stranger to eradicate the curse and torturing.

The entwined story of these four women shows how they live in a stubbed world by men and tradition. In private spaces, they talk about love, sex and their dreams for the future. Life seems like an unending cycle of hardship punctuated by small bits of happiness. But it all breaks down. On the wedding day, Rani discovers that Janki's hair has been cut off, dishonoring her in

her village. Janaki cut off her hair to stop the wedding because her parents couldn't afford the dowry. Lajjo is tired of the brutality of her husband, and Bijli is jealous of a new girl who might replace her. This leads to a journey of freedom and finding solace in each other together. The men in the village are pigheaded, arrogant, self-righteous and as smug in their power as to be repellent. They believed that educated women make bad wives and women can't survive without the support of men. They fear the development and skill of the women and they wanted them to follow the lifestyle left by their forefathers.

'Parched' literally means thirst. There is a thirst, a longing in all the four women. Their lives are dry and barren because of the climatic feature of the space they live in, represented both by the geography and the men in the village. They all desire companionship, passion, love and affection, which they find within each other and that binds these women to each other. Every woman in the village, Ujhaas are tightly controlled by the patriarchal society and hemmed by manmade custom. It talks about everything from child marriage to marital rape, from girls being discouraged on education to physical abuse. The one scene where a girl named Juhi is forced to go back to her in-laws house, even after she begs her parents and tells them the horrifying atrocities that she faces there. Her mother could realize the truth but in her position she was helpless because the society forbids a woman the right to go back to her own village after marriage.

The film thus gives us a complete feel of "rural India". The three women characters i.e., Rani, Lajjo, and Bijili stays a little different from other women of the village in the sense that they are shown to be liberated by their thoughts & dreams. While majority of the women in this

film believe that they are not supposed to study, be silent towards the atrocities of men, be child bearing machines & behave like docile and good wives they shows the courage to come out of it by breaking the shackles of the society where they find freedom more important than the rules and customs. This film thus alludes how to empower oneself with the inner strength that one can always draw upon to make one's own rules and break old ones.

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