



## **UTILIZING WOMEN IN *THE BUDDHA IN THE ATTIC* (2011) BY JULIE OTSUKA**

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### **Abstract**

This thesis is the analysis of a novel which written by Julie Otsuka entitled *The Buddha In The Attic* (2011). It explores the issue about utilizing women. It is also intended to find out the contribution of fictional devices such as character, plot, and setting in revealing the issue of utilizing women. This analysis is related to the concept of exploitation and subordination from Kamla Bhasin that is supported by the text-based and context-based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows women are subordinated and exploited by men.

**Key words:** exploitation, subordination, utilizing.

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Society creates some norms generally consider acceptable, appropriate, and desirable for people. For example, men are the highest authority while women must obey and submit to decisions of men. This idea that gender differences is socially constructed. It tends to separate men and women which are perceived differently from another. This concept makes men to have control in every movement of women in every aspect of life.

Substantively, man and woman are equal. They have the same opportunity to participate in all kinds of social activities. However, in reality society believes that man is powerful and woman is powerless. In other words, men hold power in all of the important institutions of society and they have full control of women. While, women have no power and are marginalized in all aspects of life. Woman's duty is to take care of the household and children. For instance, in early 1900 Japanese women are restricted to pursue education. They are only taught about how to farm, cook and clean the house. It can be said that woman's role is only in domestic area. Even worse, marriage and motherhood have been made as tools of oppression. However, they do not rebel to man because they adhere patriarchy system. Hence, they suffer most both in society and in family.

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Moreover, men have unlimited access to any important aspect. They can pursue their dreams. They are allowed to contribute in politics, economics, laws, academic works and many more. In other word, men are the leader who make decision and can changes in society.

As time goes by, women are allowed to work in public area. However, men still take control of women. Their job in public area tends to reflect woman's role in domestic area. Their job is limited such as being maid. Other jobs that's allowed for woman relates to household work; their role are being nurse or taking care of someone, cleaner, waitress, labor. Even worse, they get abused at work. They get exploitation and sexual harassment in workplace.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The analysis of novel *The Buddha In The Attic* (2011) by Julie Otsuka is done through text and context based interpretation. It is done by analyze some fictional devices, such as; character, plot and setting. These devices are related to each other. The character is used to reveal the transforming self by analyzing character belief, attitude, and behavior or action. The plot is used to acknowledge the conflicts character faced. Furthermore, the setting is also a crucial device as it is situation and condition that exist in the novel in order to reveal character way to utilize woman. In addition, these elements are analyzed based on the concept of exploitation and subordination from Kamla Bhasin (2000).

## **C. DISCUSSION**

This chapter discusses the issue about utilizing women in novel *The Buddha In The Attic* (2011) by Julie Otsuka. Utilizing women refers to how women are controlled and profitably used by men. This chapter analyses the fictional devices such as character, setting and plot/conflict in revealing this issue. The concept of exploitation and subordination by Kamla Bhasin is used to analyze the novel. Utilizing women is reflected through two forms, exploitation and sexual harassment.

### **1. Exploitation**

Exploitation is the main point to show the issue of utilizing women. Utilizing women takes in two places; at workplace and home. At workplace, women are often controlled, disregarded and marginalized by people. They get unfair treatment from men in order to take huge advantages. Women are forced to work hard, however they do not get standard of living, welfare and security. They are paid less but they have to work on seven days a week, without day off.

At home, women are also exploited by their husband. They are forced to work husband's duty in the workplace. Even worse, they would get experience severe forms of violence such threat and intimidation from their husband if they do not obey their husband. They are also considered as subordinate.

In the workplace, men exploit women. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“We wandered from one labor camp to the next in their hot dusty valleys-the Sacramento, the Imperial the San Joaquin- and side by side with our new husbands, we worked their land.” (p.23)

The above quotation shows how women are exploited. Through this sentence, We wandered from one labor camp to the next in their hot dusty valleys, shows women are forced to work hard. However, they do not get protection and security during they work. It can be seen from the setting, hot dusty valleys. It displays women work under extreme weather. In the other words, they get unfair treatment in the workplace. Whereas, they are still young women who are fourteen years old and they are new to that place. Mentally and physically, they are not yet ready to adapt to the environment in which they work. It can be seen through this utterance, with our new husbands, we worked their land. This utterance shows that they work with their husband in the same land. It means that they do the same occupation and work together with their husband. This condition can reduce their physical condition and complicate them to grow and develop. Moreover, they are not ready to do heavy work because they get tired more quickly.

Other unfair treatments occur when they do not get standard of living in the workplace. It can be seen from their place to take a rest. It is shown from the following quotation:

“Home was a corner of the washhouse at Stockton’s Cannery Ranch. Home was a bunk in a rusty boxcar in Lompoc. Home was an old chicken coop in Willows that the Chinese had lived in before us. ” (p.24)

The quotation above reveals that women do not get a good standard of living. The word of Home, it means that a place to get rest for them. Actually, worker would get a standard place to live which is clean and comfortable. It can be said that they get a place which is proper for human. However, through the setting, it shows that they do not get proper place to take a rest. It can be seen from the setting; the washhouse at Stockton’s, a bunk in a rusty boxcar, an old chicken coop in Willows. This setting, it can be revealed that they are not given the appropriate place to live. It means that they are not considered as human because the place is not clean and healthy. Besides, they only get the place which is used to keep things and for animal cage.

Women are not only forced to work hard but they also get unclear working hours in the workplace. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“THE FIRST WORD of their language we were taught was water. Shout it out, our

husbands told us, the moment you begin to feel faint in the field” (p.23)

The quotation above implicitly reveals how women are forced to work with unclear work time. It can be seen through this word water. This word means a sign for them to have a rest when they are over tired. It can be revealed that they do not get rules of working hours. In fact, every worker is allowed to work and has working hours during work. They are allowed to work for eight hours, more than that hours they would get extra fee. Also, they would get time off during their work. However in reality, men exploit women to work hard and disregard them by not giving them fair treatment which includes working hour's rules. Hence, they begin to work from morning till night but they do not have specific time to take a rest.

Other exploitation can be seen from man's treatment to women who often get torment in the workplace. They are forced to work every day but they do not get welfare and security in the workplace. It can be seen from the following quotation:

“We worked in the fields late at night by the light of our kerosene lamps. We never took a single day off.” (p.30)

The quotation above shows women get unfair treatment in the workplace. Through the setting, it shows women are disregarded by men. They are forced to work until late night. It displays that their health is not considered while they are working. In fact, they have rights to be protected. In the other words, they need to be prevented from various diseases. Even worse, they work with inadequate equipment. It can be seen from this utterance, our kerosene lamps. It means that they work in dim conditions. This condition can occur bad impact for their health and safety while working. Further, they often work under extreme conditions without day off. It means that they are not considered as human beings who have rights to be protected in health and safety.

Other exploitation also occurs when they are restricted by men. Also, they are required to work every day but they are paid less. It is shown in the following quotation:

“We were there when they needed us and when they did not, poof, we were gone. We stayed in the background, quietly mopping their floors, waxing their furniture, bathing their children, cleaning the parts of their houses. We spoke seldom. We ate little. We did not bother them with questions.” (p.36)

The quotation above reveals how women are restricted by man. Even though they are obedient but they are still marginalized. They are not given rights to be treated fairly and equally. In the other words, they get unfair treatment from men.

It is seen through this sentence, We spoke seldom, We did not bother them with questions. It displays they are not given freedom of expression. It includes the right to seek, receive and convey their opinion. Other bad treatment can be seen through this utterance, We ate little. It shows that their rights are restricted to get food at workplace. It can be revealed that they are not given rights as human.

Utilization also occurs at home. Women also get tormented by their husband. However, they cannot run away from man's control. It is caused that they will get threat if they do not obey man's rules. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“Some of us worked quickly because our husbands had warned us that if we did not they would send us home on the very next boat.” (p.26)

The quotation above shows that women are intimidated by their husband. It is seen through this word warned. It means that they are under threat of their husband. This word shows how husband utilizes wife to do his work. In this case, they work together in the same land. It clearly shows that husbands are superior and have the right to control women. It means husband often monitor women's behavior and activities in the workplace. Even worse, husband will punish women if they against their husband. It can be revealed that the husband put pressure on them during work. Through this word of next boat, it means women can get trouble if they break the rules. The internal conflict occurs when women are not only tortured from men in workplace but also get threat from their husband. They get a lot of suffering from men. They are marginalized and get unfair treatment in the workplace. Moreover, they are also miserable by the harsh treatment of husbands who often intimidate them.

Their husband often utilizes women in the workplace. They use women to work hard for themselves. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“Our husbands worked us like slaves. *They imported those girls from Japan as free labor.* We worked in the fields all day long without stopping for supper.”(p.28)

The quotation above shows that how women are utilized by their husband. It is seen through this sentence, *Our husbands worked us like slaves*. From this utterance, it clearly shows that how women are miserable by bad treatments of their husband. Then, they are used as slave by their husband. They are considered as subordinate and have no dignity. It can be revealed that marriage ease men to exploit them. Besides, men take huge advantages from them. It can be seen through this utterance, *They imported those girls from Japan as free labor*. It shows how women are realized that they are utilized after they are in America. They realize that they are adopted by their husband. Then, they are forced to work and get abuse from the husband. Through this sentence, *We worked in the fields*

*all day long without stopping for supper*, it shows how women are not only exploited by men in the workplace but also from their husband. They are forced to work hard in everyday without day off. Although, they married but the husband is not responsible for wife. It clearly shows how husband persecute their wives. Women are abandoned to earn money and protect themselves.

In summary, from all quotations above, it proves that men take huge advantages through utilizing women. Exploitation is the main point to show the issue of utilizing women that takes in two places; at home and workplace. At home, women tend to experience more severe forms of violence. They get threat from their husband. It includes action of intimidation from their husband.

At workplace, women are often controlled, disregarded and marginalized by people. They get unfair treatment from men in order to take huge advantages. They do not get standard of living, welfare and security. They are paid less but they have to work on seven days a week, without day off.

## **2.2 Sexual harassment**

The second point concerns with sexual harassment. Mostly, women are victim of sexual harassment. It causes most of men treat woman as sex tools. Men persecute women in two places, at home and workplace. At home, women get harassment from their husband. They are forced into sexual intercourse. Even worse, they get physical abuse such hitting, slapping and strangling if they refuse their husband's desire.

At the workplace, women also get harassment. They get unwelcome touching such as pinching, patting, rubbing up their body. Sexual harassment also can be seen from men give suggestive letters or notes and making inappropriate sexual gesture. Then, men give women money. Moreover, they are forced and raped by man. They are forced to work into sexual slavery. Even worse, women are also forced to do abortion.

Sexual harassment occurs when women are forced by their husband to fulfill their libido. It happens at their first day when they meet. Their husband force and pull them roughly. It appears in the quotation below:

“FIRST NIGHT. That night our new husband took us quickly. They took us violently, with their fists, whenever we tried to resist. They took us even though we bit them. They took us even though we hit them. They took us even though we insulted them-You are worth less than little finger of

your mother-and screamed out for help  
(nobody came).”(p.20)

The quotation above shows that at the first time women get harassment from their husband. They are forced to serve man’s desire. However, they are tormented with their husband's treatment. It can be seen through this sentence, *They took us violently, with their fists*. From this utterance, it shows how women are forced into sexual intercourse and get psychical violence from their husband. It is seen through this words *their fists*. It shows that most of worse treatments women get from their husband. Although, they against the treatment but they are powerless to avenge the violence. Through this utterance *we bit them, we hit them, we insulted them*, it clearly displays that women are not ready to serve their husband because they are still young women. Mentally and physically they have not been able to fulfill the desire of husbands. However from the setting, it can be revealed that they will not be given mercy by their husbands. Although, they refused but the husband still forced them. Even worse, their husband also considered them as subordinate. It can be seen through this utterance, *You are worth less than little finger of your mother*. It shows that how they are underestimated by their husbands because they are considered powerless and worthless.

Sexual harassment also occurs in the workplace. Women tend to get harassment when they work. They are approached and get unwelcome touching from men. Most of men seduce them when they work. It appears in the following quotation:

“Sometimes we were approached by a well-dressed fellow countryman who appeared out of nowhere and offered to take us back with him to the big city. *If you come work for me I can pay you ten times what you earn in the fields*. Sometimes one of our husband’s unmarried worker friends approached us the moment our husband stepped away and tried to slip five-dollar bill. “Just let me put it in once,” he’d say to us. “I promise you I won’t even move it.” And every now and then we’d give in and say yes. “Meet me tomorrow night behind the lettuce shed at nine,” we’d tell him”(p.29)

The quotation above shows that men tend to persecute women in workplace. It can be seen through this utterance Sometimes one of our husband’s unmarried worker friends approached us the moment our husband stepped away and tried to slip five-dollar bill. It shows how women get sexual abuse by men in the workplace. Man stands closely to woman and talks in an intimate way. He moves

quickly without attracting notice and gives women money. From this word of slip five-dollar bill, it clearly displays how men assume woman as an object. They can pay woman as tool of sex. The setting from this utterance Meet me tomorrow night behind the lettuce shed at nine, it clearly shows that men ask women to serve them. Through this setting show the persecution and harassment often occur at night.

Other quotation shows that man utilizes women in order to gain the profitable for themselves. It proves when women work into sexual slavery. This issue appears in the next quotation:

“Some of them gave us money, which we slipped into our stockings and gave to our husbands that same evening without saying a word. Some of them promised to leave their wives for us, even though we knew they never would. Some of them found out we were pregnant by them--*My husband has no touched me in more than six months-* - and then sent us away. “You must get rid of it,” they said to us. They said, “I will pay for everything.” They said, “I will find you employment elsewhere at once.””(p.38)

The quotation above shows how women work into sexual slavery. It is seen through this sentence Some of them gave us money, which we slipped into our stockings and gave to our husbands. The setting in the texts is very clear showing how women work into sexual slavery for man's advantage. It can be revealed that men utilize woman as a tool for sex. Their husbands are forced women to have sex with other partners in order to get money. Moreover, men tend to suggest women to adhere them. It can be seen through this sentence, Some of them promised to leave their wives for us. It shows that men tend to tease women's by giving them fake agreement. It can be said that women are often deceived by men. Other disregard occurs when women get pregnant and they are forced to do abortion. It is seen through this utterance “You must get rid of it”, shows that men do not want to take responsible for women. This obviously shows how men are very interested in taking advantage but they do not want to take risks.

Briefly, from all quotations above, it proves that men take huge advantages through utilizing women. Sexual harassment is the second point to show the issue of utilizing women that takes in two places; at home and workplace. At home, women get abuse from their husband. They are forced into sexual intercourse. Even worse, they get physical abuse such if they do not obey their husband's desire.

At workplace, women also tend to get sexual harassment. They get unwelcome touching such as rubbing up their body. Sexual harassment also can be seen from men are making inappropriate sexual gesture. Then, men give women money. Moreover, they are forced to work into sexual slavery. Even worse, women are also forced to do abortion. Through the settings, plot and the character, it reveals how women are utilized by men.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

The issue utilizing women can be revealed in novel *The Buddha In The Attic* (2011) by Julia Otsuka. The fictional devices such as character, setting and plot contribute in uncovering the meaning beyond the novel. Text-based and context-based interpretations also have the important role in discovering the issue utilizing women. This analysis also deals with the concept of exploitation and subordination by Kamla Bhasin (2003). Utilizing women refers to how women are controlled and profitably used by men. Utilizing women is reflected through two forms, exploitation and sexual harassment.

Exploitation is the main point to show the issue of utilizing women that takes in two places; at home and workplace. At home, women get tormented by their husband. They often get intimidation and threat from their husband. However, they cannot run away from man's control. They get threat if they break the rules. At workplace, women are forced to work. They also get unfair treatment during they work. They do a lot works without day off. They also do not get standard of living, welfare and security.

Sexual harassment is the second point to show the issue of utilizing women that takes in two places; at home and workplace. At home, women tend to get more physical abuse from their husband. They are forced to serve man's desire. While in the workplace, a woman is used as sex tools. They often get unwelcome touching when they work. Even worse, they are raped by man. Men take more advantages by working them into sexual slavery.

Overall, this novel shows how men get more advantages from women. This case can make hard for women to stand up. The cause of the utilizing women is from the lack of knowledge and courage of the woman to rebel. However, many factors that women cannot rebel because of the family and society. They are not only exploited by their husband but also from other men in the workplace. However, they still obey with men's rules. They do every command that men force to do. This reality is related to the concept from Kamla Bhasin in her book about exploitation and subordination. It is able to open our minds that a power ease man to get more benefits. They have an authority to control and make decisions in all important aspects. While women are dominated and controlled by man's treatment. This treatment is shown through the way they exploit and harass women.

Substantively, women have to show their intellectual and ability. They have to pursue their dreams and upgrade their knowledge and experience to compete

with the patriarchal system. They also have to work hard to prove that they are worth as human. Women deserve respect because they are able to contribute based on their intellectual. They can be proud because they can be a leader. This is what women must have in order to stand up and against the patriarchy system.

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