

Pangs of widowhood in Water by Bapsi Sidhwa

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Abstract

This paper deals the theme of marginalization, in the novel "Water" by Bapsi Sidhwa, focusing on the difficulty of widows in Indian society during the 1930. The main theme in "Water" is gender-based marginalization. The novel explain about a secluded widows ashram located in Varanasi and they are restricted to their own freedom Sidhwa portrays the widows as victims of imperious control highlight the marginalization due to the gender. Another marginalization explored in the novel is religious and cultural marginalization. This makes the widows to follow the religious practices strictly and it separated them from the society of common people. Sidhwa portrayed the financial dependency of the widows by the visitors of Varanasi. They have no means to make themselves as a independent people. Sidhwa shows the contrast between the widows from poor and rich. In overall this paper presentation explore the themes of gender- based, religious and cultural in Bapsi Sidhwa novel "Water".

Keywords

Gender roles ,Cultural Identity, Survival and Faith and Religion

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This novel was written by Bapsi Sidhwa. Bapsi was a Pakistani writer, and this was his fifth novel. It is based on a true story. There are many that are placed in this novel, like marginalization, gender inequality, colonization, etc. Marginalization is nothing but any group or person separated from the society. In this novel, we can see marginalization in many places. In 2006 the novel was published novel raises awareness of widowhood.

The novel starts with a story about a little girl. She was 8 years old, and she got married to an old man who was dead. The little girl, Chuyia, became a widow when she was eight years old. She even didn't know about the entire world. After the funeral of her husband, she was sad, and her father asked her whether she got married. But Chuyia was very innocent, and she didn't know that she had gotten married. After that, her mother-in-law broke the bangles of Chuyia and shaved her head. Chuyia was taken to an ashram of widows in Varanasi, India. In 1938 story was happened. The author indirectly discusses the system of child marriage in her novel before independence.

There, Chuyia asked about her mother. Her father thought the thing Chuyia was asking was impossible. After that, a lady from the ashram took Chuyia to the ashram. Chuyia saw many women with bald heads. She saw an old lady too. She asked the lady if she wanted to go home, but her father left the place. Here, marginalization took place, and the ashram was separated from society. The old lady saw Chuyia and said, This is your home. The name of the old lady was Madhu. The old lady, Madhu, said she was half dead because of the death of her husband. Chuyia questioned that at least she was half alive. The old lady started scolding Chuyia.

Chuyia got angry and bit the legs of the old lady, Madhu. Chuyia ran into many rooms in the ashram, and a lady chased

her. Chuyia met Sakuntala there, and Sakuntala asked the lady to leave Chuyia with her. Sakuntala was a kind-hearted woman, then she grinded some turmeric and applied it to Chuyia's head and asked her to be calm.

Next, Chuyia meets a sweet grandmother; there, she wants some ladoos. Even here, marginalization takes place; widows are not allowed to eat sweets. But the sweet granny wanted sweets madly. Then Chuyia met Kalyani, a woman who only had long hair. Chuyia felt happy when she saw Kalyani. Kalyani was a young woman, and she was beautiful too. After that, Chuyia and Kalyani took a bath in a river, and they saw an ordinary woman, and the woman said she wanted to bathe again because of seeing them. Chuyia was confused, and Kalyani asked Chuyia to accept that. She considers the ashram to be her own space. And her world revolves around it. Because the whole society, due to marginalization, refused to accept her as their own. So she created her own world in a place where she was treated in a good way.

The woman only sees them, but her superstitious mind makes her take a second bath. Chuyia had a dog in her hand. The dog ran away from her, and Chuyia chased the dog. It was helped by a man named Narayan; he was very fond of Gandhi and a follower of Gandhi. Chuyia says that she was a widow, but Narayan didn't care about that. Only the character Narayan sees Chuyia as an equal individual. The author expressed the theme of marginalisation in most of the other characters. They all treated and viewed Chuyia as someone who was filled with sins and someone inferior to them. Here, the author highlights the physical discrimination that prevailed in their society. The ashram was covered with more illegal businesses like prostitution and drugs.

Kalyani is a way of earning for the old lady Madhu. Chuyia didn't know about the situation at the ashram. The

next day, Narayan came to the ashram to meet Kalyani because they both had feelings for each other. But Sakuntala didn't allow Narayan to meet Kalyani. After that, Kalyani asked Sakuntala to meet Narayan, but Sakuntala remained silent.

The next day, all the widows were sitting at the entrance of the temple, and they begged people for money. Chuyia got some money, and she went to the sweet shop to buy sweets. The sweet seller asked Chuyia for money and told her that widows are not allowed to eat sweets here. Bapsi Sidhwa shows the act of marginalization by saying that widows are restricted from eating sweets, and then she brought Ladoo to Sweet Granny. The grandmother was sleeping. When she woke up, she saw the sweet and ate it with full happiness. She reminded me of his childhood, and she was on her last stage, so she wanted to die outside the ashram and asked for holy water. The granny was dead, but she didn't drink the holy water.

The old granny didn't have money for her funeral, so Kalyani gave her savings to the funeral of the sweet granny. After that, Kalyani met Narayan, who confessed his love, and Kalyani accepted the love. After that, Kalyani says everything about their love to Chuyia. One day Chuyia accidentally told Lady Madhu, so she asked Gulabi, the old lady's assistant, to lock Kalyani in a room. The old lady says there is no remarriage for widows, and then Sakuntala went to the temple, where she met an Pandit, who said according to the scriptures, remarriage is allowed to widows, and they can only marry her husband's brother if it is possible. Sakuntala asked for the keys, old lady, and freed Kalyani, and Kalyani wanted Narayan. But the Narayan family was against the widow lover. Kalyani and Narayan were crossing the river on a boat when Kalyani saw his home. She was shocked because Narayan's father was her client. Narayan convinced his father, but it was impossible. Kalyani went to the ashram and attempted suicide.

After that, Narayan came to the ashram and asked for Kalyani. Sakuntala said that she was dead. He felt very sad for the overall widow's situation. He felt deeply saddened by her death. He can't digest the thought that widows are treated this way in his society. On the other side, Gulabi takes Chuyia to a place, and she faints after seeing a man. Next, the old lady tried to use Chuyia for prostitution. Sakuntala searched for Chuyia all over the ashram and knows about Chuyia's situation. Sakuntala found the place, rescued Chuyia from there, and went to the railway station. Gandhians were there to listen to Gandhi's speech.

After that, all Gandhians were moving to another place with Gandhiji when the train started moving. Sakuntala carried Chuyia and ran after the train. She asked someone to get Chuyia inside the train; luckily, Narayan was there, and he got Chuyia. Sakuntala cried with good tears at the railway station. For giving a second life to Chuyia, she gave Chuyias hand to Narayan. She is filled with holy tears that finally Chuyia is going to live in an ordinary society without any

marginalization or discrimination.

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