Feministic Perspectives in Bapsi Sidhwa's Novel Water

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***Abstract*—Feminism is a movement that aims to establish and achieve equal rights for women in all spheres of life: political, social, and economic. Feminism focuses on the subordinate status of women and strives towards equality and freedom. In the West, a group of women combatants exercised their right to political involvement through the Feminist Movement. The movement metamorphosed the attitude and perception of the world. It provided a better understanding of women's issues and rights and endeavoured to bring them forward because they had been marginalized for so long. The underprivileged were not given a chance to voice their issues, which were either ignored or neglected. Thus, feminist perspectives surfaced with the realization that there was a universe of experience that was crucial to history. Published essays and novels of women writers in English proliferated in modern India during the latter half of the twentieth century. The writings of Bapsi Sidhwa scooped up several note-worthy honors and are now widely read across several countries. *Water* brings home loudly and explicitly that rigid religious traditions and gender inequities can stain reputation and warp lives irrevocably. It also raises relevance to the personal lives of women in patriarchal societies, haunted even romantically by forbidden fears.**

***Index Terms*—Feminism, underprivileged, marginalized, patriarchal, societies, subordinate**

I. INTRODUCTION

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* has experienced a succession of scans, rewritings, restorations, and adaptations, accompanied by the inevitable controversy expected of a politically and creatively contentious narrative. *Water* follows the ultimate fate of a young widow, the teenage Chuyia, incarcerated in a convent-like bathhouse in Benares. A product of the British Raj, this institution is glimpsed early in the film as a somewhat grim communal space that picks up where social man oeuvres fail. The widows here share their haunting over colors, food, clothing, or simply those small remnants of a living existence which they have been forced to forgo, cut off from their homes, families, men, and their scope of action and imagination. On the outskirts of apprehension and astonishment, Chuyia resembles a prickly tumbleweed entering the loop of a trumpet-shaped eddy, too wizened to absorb the shock of being expelled/heaved away by the whirlpool, but tender enough to catch the compassion of her once Ostrich feathered, her faltering protégé (Mercanti, 2011). In the novel, Chuyia's father seems helpless as she is sent to Vidhwa Ashram. Sidhwa writes,

Somnath gazed at her as if he wanted to fix her form forever in his memory. Every line in his weary face reflected his grief at her untimely widowhood and the parting that loomed ahead of them like a curse. Finally, giving way to the pain that seemed to have squeezed his heart into something wrung-out and dry, he lay his head on the stone and began to weep, releasing his anguish in half-stifled sobs that racked his body (31).

Originally written in the wake of the tumult following Empress Victoria's proclamation as the Empress of India, Bapsi Sidhwa's Water stands apart from the immediately preceding monumentalist fantasies in the corpus of De-cultured filmic heritage through its disassociative narratives. The film pieces together a broken continuum across time and location, interpolating a raw range of experiences, pearling sameness out of multitudinous shreds. Unlike the hallowed matriarchal domains of interminably wiggling films from mainstream Bollywood, Water's staggered seams unfold Ignescent anguish at the sight of the inexplicably idolized 'Vulture' feeding off the desecrated image of 'Nirmala', its unblemished prey. The feral eye, fixated on the choreography of sanguinary spoliation, lays bare the bitter panopticon of a remorseless 'udupi', its insatiable hunger restlessly netted like the vapid gaze of Metro cities scarfing down the Missing

Nomads at erstwhile Freeways (Srivastava and Kumar Singh, 2016).

The events of the narrative of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Water* occur between the years 1938 and 1947, a politically and socially tumultuous period in Indian history. The 1947 partition of British India into Muslim Pakistan and secular India set the stage for the novel's events. The lives of the subcontinent's people changed dramatically, as unimaginable horrors were unleashed by the violence of communal rioting. However, even before the plague of partition, the shadow of colonialism's far-reaching consequences was being cast over Indian society through its excruciatingly oppressive and patriarchal traditions. India's private concerns and personal dilemmas were played out on a grand scale in a world of social, economic and political upheaval (Mercanti, 2011). The horrific events that engulfed the subcontinent in 1947 bear testimony to the lingering shadow of colonialism on the newly-formed nation. It is within the larger context of Indian society's struggles against external imperialism and internal patriarchy that Water's smaller focus on the plight of widows and concerns for the subcontinent's water supplies are firmly set. It was only after the 1935 Government of India Act granted Indians some political autonomy that the wider struggle for Independence gathered momentum. The society depicted in Water is one largely untouched by modernity or nationalism, and in which the machinations of the political leaders attempting to court mass support have little bearing. Set-in south-eastern Punjab, the home of the protagonist, the story was placed in the context of the widow's plight. To contextualise the significance of widow marriage, it was necessary to briefly review the status of women in Hindu society and the historical context of women's movements as expressed through legislation enacted by the Hindu, and later the British courts.

II. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Water is a multifaceted novel, possessing both in terms of theme and narrative style. The novel examines the complexity of the situation and considers it from various points of view. It is a socially relevant, historically consistent, and humanly essential film and text. A minute analysis of the characters, mainly of the female cast, replete with contextually crucial factors, reflects on Sidhwa's perception of the evils of a conservative society. The importance closes with a brief mention of the role of culture, tradition, and audit. Picturing an era has to be taken in stride with the gentler gender's roles assigned by the culture, tradition, audit, and society of play. To witness the omnipresence of morals, it suffices to look at oneself, its ensnaring presence, sating and splurging with patriarchal dominion (Bari, 2014). *Water* on the other hand, focuses on the resentment to evade. A few points of observation seem silly, but at the same time, sad. Eastern society, here, refers to somewhere old when civilisation and modernity loom only as a prick to the ego. This also explains the greed for Western green pastures among the masses. Water, meaning the 'life' of the earth, here in the Indian subcontinent, is endowed with a different connotation. Bathing in the 'holy' river is cynically observed for washing off 'sins' (Mercanti, 2011). While Gandhi worked for the freedom of India, Kasturba, with his ashram mates, was busy in cleaning the 'holiness' of the Ganga. In between the clerical power of old wives is favoured. The sacred river Ganga is slandered. Here, the symbol of purity waters with the name of Brahmaputra, Jhelum, and Ganga serves the hereditary 'clause de non-responsabilité.' The Ganga, the 'holy' river resorted by all who committed sins is a place where either those with the unmatched will not come or complain against despots, Wordizer in particular. With Chaud returns the vision-resolute water of Qaiser Shaqul, criminal rebellion, fear, those unprepared to cross civil order's seas. But it is least possible unless s/he relinquishes their forefathers' transgressions. Out of pride, it is denied and lived in mess, in hunger, mist, to melt in the ambiance. Unattractable shape can hardly move because it has neither alternatives nor courage to change. Those without acts are either shaped or adripped underneath.

III. THE JOURNEY OF KALYANI

Kalyani is made a widow at a tender age by widow burning. She finds herself among the other widows in the temple of Varanasi. Sadunanda is Kalyani's husband's brother and her guardian in the colony. He wishes to take her away to put her into a temple. Sadunanda can't understand the plight of Kalyani, which is omnipresent in the temple. Shakuntala

becomes the surrogate mother in the colony and urges Kalyani to wear ochre-colored sarees. Displaced from her parental home, married at a very tender age, made a widow, and brought to a place of torture, the alienation from her womanhood, Kalyani's sense of helplessness is articulated through a plaintive song while taking holy water in the morning. Her being tortured can also be seen through this line in the novel,

She grabbed Kalyani by the arm and said, "You have no morals! You are a widow, and yet you run around like you are an unmarried girl?" Then she yanked her arm away as if she'd been stung and hissed, "You've polluted me. I have to bathe again!" She retraced her steps to the river. Chastened, Kalyani lowered her head and pulled the pallav edge of her sari right down to the tip of her nose: if she could, she would have burrowed into the earth (Sidhwa 41).

Sadunanda believes that Kalyani becoming a Devadasi is to ensure the necessity of female exploitation. He is adamant about doing so, as he is irritated by Kalyani singing in the temple, thus endangering the colony and orders Shakuntala to silence Kalyani's singing. Shakuntala persuades Kalyani, stating that she only eats from the plates of men and can't retain her original personality. Kalyani repulsively states, "You're all living stone statues, mute stone sculptures. At least I am alive!" Shakuntala wonders why Kalyani wished to ruin herself. Kalyani states that while all of hers is old and dead, he was alive. She refuses to be taken there, but Shakuntala points out that the Sankranti celebrates women's marriage, but in Kalyani's case, she lost it all. Kalyani dares her to argue womanhood and Shakuntala flares up retorting that the colony dosed by shame and defeat isn't a share. She leaves her abruptly.

Kalyani is chastised by consternation of losing her love, Narayan is insulted by the outrage of Kinshuk, torn off scrutiny by Kalyani's looming disgrace. Chuyia is bludgeoned by being ungifted by her ear-ring. Entering the light, Kalyani and Narayan notice love birds, while elsewhere Chuyia senses the entrapment of freedom. Meeting Shakuntala Poojan, Kinshuk warns this isn't a shair and it's a sin and disgrace. Kalyani observes Narayan burn down the feudalists. She interprets it as condensed love for Bhadrakali and philosophizing life. The console mocking, "Yes." Narayan thunders. The tell-tale Kalyani is transformed into Chuyia's motherly mode. Kalyani becomes Kalyani's agent to seek her lady love mollification, Narayan states his Babu inspires him, while disturbed Kalyani states he should clear deluge from the pasture. Kalyani and Narayan gift materiality as husband and wife at the party. They are given an expression of Jatavashi as apprised of inappropriate propriety. That night is a black hole into sordidness. Chuyia survives the pain of demeaning by an elder widow who throws stones with a croaking warning "don't be misled by the duped tenderness of Kalyani," admonishing her to refrain from going near Narayan, warning she is a fallen woman.

IV. SUPPORTING CHARACTERS AND THEIR ROLES

Apart from the main characters, the novel consists of some minor characters who play major roles in the narrative. The lives of the supporting characters unfold on Styx's banks. And it is in the dangerous waters of life that through the impossible wire and skill of these supporting characters, the passage from mortal fear to elemental calm is made. The characters in this Passage can be divided into those crossed by the wire, those waiting to be crossed, and their shadows.

The background seems to be a successful one. Her family was relatively affluent, and her father was a noted sugar magnate and philanthropist. At no time did the prosperous family think of leaving Lahore. They were too well integrated into the socio-economic fabric of the burgeoning city. In a country disintegrating into sordid communal politics, where riots were mangling lives, the family was free of discordant notes, a magnificent irrationality continuing to run lives sheltered and affluent. They were a rare blend of the Western and Indian worlds. Witty, open-minded, proud of their lineage, they seemed to be hanging between two worlds (Bari, 2014).

The novel depicts the flourishing and languishing dimensions of an interstitial community, afflicted by the age-old problem of diasporic existence. Their position vis-a-vis the larger historical processes finds double significance for exploring the public landscape of this exotic yet familiar community; it suggests unfledged and half-formed feminist

perception by transforming gender relations into immediate political idioms (Mercanti, 2011). As an item of the marginal condition, the research argues the shared anxieties of the community, a pattern borne out of their ambivalence to both hegemonic literature and indigenous forms. The romanticization and tragedy of multiple exiles in the literary representations do highlight a widely recognized fixture of the diasporic condition: forced separation, longing for memories of trauma, juxtaposition and juxtaposing cultures. But displacing the hegemony of public political questions, it transforms the embarrassing subjection of women into the safer space of 'cultural representation'. Mercanti aptly remarks,

the couple secretly meet until Kalyani discovers that she used to visit Nayaran's father as a prostitute and decides to end the relationship. This, and the rejection from the Widow's House as she is discovered breaking the colony's rules, pushes her to commit suicide as an ultimate refusal of any further exploitation. Madhumati finds a substitute for prostitution in Chuyia who is taken away to a client by Gulabi (2011).

V. THEMES OF GENDER AND OPPRESSION

The oppression of women in *Water* resembles the theme of oppression of women in other novels by female novelists in South Asia. In these novels, the marginalisation of women can be noticed at the primary level of life. In many ways, the created women remain the same and are dependent on men for their existence. A woman is viewed through patriarchal lenses; hence, she is nothing but a householder. Sidhwa has portrayed this concealed and suppressed movement of women against a repressive patriarchal system in Water. The idea of a child temple widow has been showcased as a microcosm of old Victorian India, where divorce was considered taboo. Widows in Hindu societies are pitiable and marginalised categories. They are blamed as bad omens, which is one reason hindering their remarriage. Water, set in turn-of-the-century India, is incredibly relevant to the time but also timeless in the ways it examines likely human conditions. It displaces urgency and topicality; the film immediately assesses the themes of caste, class, religious tension, primitive injustice, child marriage and widowhood; but as a whole, it explores comprehensive questions (Mercanti, 2011). The widow's perspective treats her state with dignity, depth and detail and centres on the injustice of a widow's situation but also illuminates the tragic intricacies of the practice and conundrums of female patience, intelligence, love and desire. Bapsi Sidhwa transforms a rare perspective on the broad topic of widowhood, caste purity, and a social system that spins the subcontinent into a prescriptivity of blame and pragmatism.

Hearing a clamour of bells and some voices rising in unison, Chuyia turned into a street to investigate the source and discovered a temple hall where a daily service provided by the widows was taking place. She spotted the ashram women here and there in the thicket of widows dancing in the centre… Where had all the other widows sprung from? There must have been at least a thousand widows and they must have come from other ashrams in the town. The anaemic-looking widows were clapping as they pleased, singing and swaying clumsily without any effort to keep time. The entire performance was so joyless that it was frightening. The widows' discordant voices mingled with ringing temple bells, and, suddenly, Chuyia's senses were overwhelmed by the sadness emanating from the croaking voices. She ran back to the relative sanctuary of the ashram (33).

In her novel, Sidhwa contrasts the lives of Hindu and Muslim women. On the one hand, the heady freedom and property rights enjoyed by the Muslim widow are stressed, the witch-like character of the child widow is portrayed, and the joyless, humourless marriage of the widower man and widow woman is productively parodied. Sidhwa's ridiculing of the Marwari culture, headed of which is Ratan, and his dour, controlling wife, exemplifies in a rather comic way a subculture and religious insulations that reach lucidity in the village of the 'wretched'. To this depiction is juxtaposed the equally incomprehensible ways of the widow-like women left behind by the dwindled population after the 1947 partition and bloodshed (Bari, 2014). Sidhwa squeezes meaning from these lives of extreme poverty and eccentric bonds by matching their uncharacteristic delight with the calamity that has befallen their menfolk. Intermittently, this theme broadens out into a feminist discourse on widowhood, custom, cleanliness, personal choice and control over self. It may be

argued that Sidhwa continues to transcend this feminist discourse and understands scope for action from the positions of both the 'upper' and the 'working' class women.

VI. SYMBOLISM OF WATER

Water not only signifies life and preservation, but also carries different cultural meanings, social significance and literary implications. In fact, water is one of the most important elements of life. "Water has been endowed with vital significance all through human history. Civilisation and culture–however disparate they are-- could be seen to be often so intimately linked to this dynamic fluid" (Murali 120). The wisdom of ages has taught mankind to esteem and venerate water. The ancients conceived water to be holy and pure. A water pot, water-bearers, and persons closely connected with water and word imparting spiritual knowledge are all considered holy. Even today rivers and streams are worshipped. Adi Ganga, Yamuna, Ganges, sacred tanks, lakes and springs are places of pilgrimage. Some sacred waters are said to contain the essence of the world, the very vital. It is believed that a bath in these waters removes all sin and grants immortality. Sacred waters are thematised in antiquity epics equally across continents. River themes form motifs in many works dealing with the creation of the world and the evolution of mankind. Descriptions of the Nile, Ganges and Jambudvipa, holy Tank Sagar, confluence of rivers like the Ganges with sacred waters have occupied a preeminent place in the literature of different countries. Simon Schama writes,

if the self-regulating arterial course of the sacred river, akin to the bloodstream of men, has constituted one permanent image of the flow of life, the line of waters, from beginning to end, birth to death, source to issue, has been at least as important. It has, moreover, dominated the European and Western language of rivers: supplying imagery for the life and death of nations and empires and the fateful alternation between commerce and calamity. In classical Eastern and near Eastern cultures, the great sacred rivers were seen as temporal and topographical loops (261).

In response to the dehumanising experience of men, the earth has been personified and the Perspective of water delineated in imaginative language. The scriptures depict earth as the madam and widow of the Urban Man, dispossessed of her better half, without which her joy has departed; Mother of all goddesses and priceless Mother, God and goddess of husband and wife and goddess of plenty (Lopez, 2016). Eloquent metaphors have been borrowed from water to delineate the chastity and fidelity of the wife, and Rahu at the same time, has been conceived as a demon with a head only. Such a conception of Rahu pictures the moon and the sun eclipsed as lapis lazuli; water with poetic gifts confines it to beautiful lapis lazuli, Amrangandhanam and thus represents heaven and bliss. As pleasantly calm and clear skies, heights stand for arms, oval and round shapes for water and as water always retreats and the impulse is ever for whiteness. The works of major poets express the playful occasion of the ever-comforting beverage of water. Some water songs taper down with honey, lushness and green flowers.

VII. CLEANSING AND RENEWAL

Religion is portrayed through ritual and symbol that foster brotherhood between sacred sites, thus enabling a cosmopolitan habitat of cooperation across difference. For Sidhwa, history is shaped by women's oppression but, in Water, she cautions against focusing on individual victims of patriarchal violence. Instead, she aims to decenter narratives of victimhood to shed light on the complicity of other characters in maintaining the structures that cause such oppression. This is done through the depiction of the physical abuse and normalization of the same ideologies that run across the three religions and their sacred sites that present, therefore, a moral equivalent to each other. The 'lonelies' are men with all their frenetic activities. The 'lonely girls' are hidden in the dangerously sexy, strikingly silent pages of García Márquez and Vargas Llosa. Any character or actor is inspired: things, stories, gestures, moments, nameless faces, winds, rain, colors. A rose is a rose is a rose, and it matures obstinately with a delight edging on cruelty. The novel critically intertwines nation and religion bringing each other into existence long before new ideas and emotions come into play. A woman subsequently becomes 'nation' and is passionately desired by men who erect and demolish her sacredness through their violent metaphors or, if

dealt with respect, praising her as 'Mother'. Using all its diverse stages, she stars in the triadic cosmology of substances and solstices, rivers and oceans, and in the four elemental vibrations of grace. Water is on a larger scale than history, leaving the reader with an impression of an overwhelming dimension to religion and sacred solidarity, which are turned into beautiful, humble, degrading bottles. Therefore, the pastoral gardens of secularized belief systems appear out of place. More than rivers and doors to mutual understanding, they are abject dwellings waiting to be cleansed and renewed (Mercanti, 2011).

VIII. FEMINISTIC CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL NORMS

In her novel *Water*, Bapsi Sidhwa presents an in-depth examination of the life of young widows in India during the 1930s. Under British rule and Gandhian reforms, where child marriage held a social preeminence, widows, by nature of an accident of chance, were consigned to the most wretched state of social ostracism. The then-in-vogue custom of Sharda left behind vast hordes of widows, whose plight merited attention. *Water*, thus, demands consideration. The social injustices wrought on society by customary law are the focus of the book. Society languished under these laws for generations, resulting in the feministic critique of social norms. A young widow's condition therefore can be but one of social condemnation. Widowhood was denigrated to the lowest status in the hierarchy of women. Like the low-caste tribes and outcastes, widows were but pariahs, living scorned and spurned, stripped of their family, home, and kin. Thus, caste and widowhood in society are synonymous. The life of child-widows in India is governed by caste: for higher castes, widowhood is a state forbidding remarriage altogether, while in lower castes widow-remarriage is permissible. But both groups of women face social ostracism. The plight of better class widows, like Chuyia, is more grievous. The married girls sacrificed in the altar of myth and custom, the married children whose husbands died shortly after marriage, are destined for a life of Brahmanic strictures, communal seclusion, and cruel oppression (Bari, 2014).

IX. MARRIAGE AND DOWRY SYSTEM

Water is both a blessing and a curse. Water becomes a boon for marriage and banquet occasions as well as the blessings of a child. This is a national interest as viewed by the patriarchy. With no objectivity, in the names of all these occasions marriages are solemnized. Nikah is conducted. On the days of importance in the temple, on the days of immerse, in the identities with a prevalence love, these auspicious cultures sway sway through the rivers of sacrifice and blood. In the name of mother, sister, daughter, and daughter-in-law, Goddesses and bhagats and nakhodas they are deemed Nigod and Wadi. The entire infatuations of a society destructed on one day for the mere pittance of twelve district officer pichhad shudras of 1867. (Kodoth, 2006) State wisdom and knowledge used as a weapon of war. State religion and nationality are fabricated as a weapon of war. Death of Allah, Jahwa and Jena. Dominance of patricademocracies potholes thoughts. Post-harmony-a society bereft of water, a temple of hypocrisy, conceit, and naivete, states shamefully penned it down to be preserved in a moment of utter resignation. A pen soaked in tears refusing to hold back. In the pot-filled tiles of green gulistan, in the shade of a tree, stories of someone's greed are glimpsed. Lyrical and narrative, poetic and historic and touching truths of a collective consciousness. Such voices in verse are doomed. However, this tale-telling is drawn from such a sanctuary of a self-sweetened plea. Bathroom panics and hysterics. There was a pregnant lady in pain, a juvenile snatched away, an old lady and mother lived into shattering loneliness, a fiery young maiden lost for effulgence, sheltered once upon a twilight, a perennial hunger for a hug, a being in innumerable identities, known or unknown, brave and fearful, kind and cunning, moist and dry.

X. WIDOWHOOD AND SOCIAL STIGMA

The widowhood is one of such burden, including damage of dignity and loss of power. Such women have to suffer a character assassination which has a snowball effect. It will proliferate the 'loss of power' and 'loss of dignity'. Sidhwa shows widowhood patterns in two generations: the one typified by the matriarch Kumud, the other typified by the

elementary widow Chudail, but they share a similar fate. Their suffering is compounded by prejudice against Barhans. Widowhood in Sidhwa's depiction results in domestic abuse and external vilification ranging from berating to ostracism. Kumud has seen splendid grand palaces and gardens before the loss, and when she saw Viswa's 'tall trees and lavish green lawns' withodolitees muted into whimpers (Srivastava and Kumar Singh, 2016). Kumud seemed not to suffer loss of power until she arrived at her riverside house, the scene of Sidhwa's trilogy, since she and her husband were then alleged to provide oppressive comfort. Kumud lost power, dignity, leisure and love with the death of Viswa. She was gradually convinced of impossibility and was expected to commit 'ctrl + alt + delete' of a grand life. As a matriarch, she ruled the Bhandari clan militarily and financially. Kumud had fierce combats in Torys, and Sidhwa represented her commands by indents. As a widow, Kumud was inexcusable for having lost the command when slaves turned up their noses and punished her anger with 'lookscakes and brickbats'. Kin husbands resulted in the 'loss of power'. Maddhaji used Kumud as the guillotine to wipe out Bhandari opposition. Bhandari cousins chose to jilt a grand marriage to avoid entanglement with a faithless widow. Kumud's old embroidered sarees, brocade blouses and nose rings were shed in exchange for liberation dresses of thin cotton and horrendously ugly spectacles. Kumud, once savoring the most exquisite flavor in full bloom, had now to live in retrospective bitterness as told by Sidhwa in the poignant rhyme. 'The worldly joys I tasted all don't exist, they are gone. Nothing remains to share their wrath except the numberless lives, numberless dreams which flickered and limped by, just like a lover is forsaken.

XI. SIDHWA'S CONTRIBUTION TO FEMINIST DISCOURSE

Feminism as a socio-political movement, which turned into an organised consciousness-raising task, has been an important aspect of post-colonial studies. Bapsi Sidhwa enriches the feminist discourse in South Asian literature through her creative writing. Sidhwa presents the view that the primary arena in which patriarchal society exercises its control over women is the family, specifically through the institution of marriage (Mercanti, 2011). It suggests that perhaps the politicisation of family life is the most significant contribution of feminist social researchers in South Asia. It claims that the family ideal, symbolising male supremacy and female subordination, is the central institution through which culture is produced and sustained. Patriarchy is thereby entrenched in the global capitalist economy, wherein husbands work undercover in the labour force, and wives work in the home. Thus, the family or kinship group will be studied first as a site for class power based on property ownership, showing how women's status is determined by their subordinated class positions. The family is also a symbolic arrangement mediating change, resisting commodification. Despite state policy, rapid social change and growing democratisation, women's roles in the family remain largely unaltered.

Many of Sidhwa's novels depict the agonies and aspirations of women typically ignored in historical and fictional accounts. As a Parsi woman, Sidhwa is doubly nuanced on how the majoritarian frame of reference in Pakistan and India marginalises women, labour, non-Muslims, and the poor in the construction of the nation. Common to these works is also an interrogation of the body and the female milieu. Feminist concerns drawn from feminist literature, studies in class and caste exploitation, and an examination of colonial, patriarchal and neo-colonial control imprint Sidhwa's narrative spaces with their specific frames of reference. Her deft screen adaptation of Anita Desai's novels is marked with an obscene Indian patriotism that abhors the non-Hindus (Srivastava and Kumar Singh, 2016). The account of the plight of widows banished to Varanasi and the mode of filmic rendering further affirms a deft narration ruptured by ruptures of memories, enclaves and eerie soundscapes embedding the audience in collusion with suchness. This makes it the perfect template of adaptation. Further, post-independence novels fall abroad the present tenurial in focusing on the colonial past, as civility remains a privilege reserved for some, containing the tamest insights on the political and movant.

XII. CONCLUSION

Bapsi Sidhwa's Water is a diasporic text that meditates upon the fate of the dwindling Parsi

community in post–Partition India. At the same time, it tackles a series of universal questions about political and social oppression, gender discrimination, exploitation, and rights over the domestic and public spheres. It depicts minorities' feelings of estrangement and what they lose in the process of migration while in transit and after settling down in a new land. Water is primarily a feminist text linked to issues of gender. The negotiation of Sidhwa's diasporic identity tells how the Parsi community's fate cannot be detached from the post–colonial fate of subaltern women. The community is borne upon the shoulders of this sexually marginalized people, for whom denial of sexual agency is a way of life. This denial reflects on the community's psyche, social identity, and political position on a larger scale. For centuries, the dots of Zoroastrianism practiced in drones on the subcontinent have carried a sharp focus upon the mutually reinforcing triangles of the mundane, the ritual, and power.

Water offers a theory that does justice to the unfathomable violence inflicted on women by men, ritual, and ecological conditions. The trauma run parallel to a parallel in cultural abduction, where untouched, untraded, undiluted pristine Earth is abducted and reduced to pit watertight containers, unable to overflow, unable to grow beyond her confines. The traumatic narrative of this abduction and attendant violation, what Menon and Bhaduri call "communal frenzy," builds up in such a way that it enters the domain of the unspeakable. Hence, the narration's politics rebutting the hyperrealist post–modernist project that would confine signifier to signified, preferring instead narratives run parallel to a mytho–trait approach. Sidhwa's Water comprises an array of stories of trauma exorcising their narrative upsurge at a point where the desire to give account exploded in pieces of narrative; hence it did not recede to the lucid memory of sequenced events, which would be merely poetic in its unnatural restraint.

Where these desires run high, the inner historicity of storytelling akin to fictive deities takes over. Anumati abduction radiates to grab at once the two fullest grants–a wife, the Sidhwa, the Chaudharani, bringing in the traumas of a different kind, brimming the pitting Earth with one shade of moon and star, not grieved in humid yet burnished remembrances. Bharat touching the limits of her offer on Wealth time mulls over removing its properties, giving space to the inside nest in Northern heights. The abduction repeats a game put of "domestication" or "enculturalization." In the case of Bharat, it recovers to speech, inviting the curved races and scents feigning an absent complexion, even on the screen. In the case of the Chaudharani, the mental abduction recedes to verbal silence, being shattered at the instant by the definition left out of primal chance. At this, nothing is left to said or heard where the memories stuck deformed the esthetic space to petrified impressions, ruptured voices.

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