



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

THE PLIGHT OF WIDOWS OF VARANASI WITH REFERENCE TO DEEPA MEHTA'S "WATER".

Harshita Mishra

M.A. English(Semester 4)

Department of Modern and European Languages, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, India

Abstract: The research paper aims to show us that widows are much more than victims. They are birth givers and heads of house. Widows of all the ages should be treated as equal citizens. They are absent in factual research and statistics, not noticed by researchers, neglected by authorities and overlooked by society organizations. The situation of widows is invisible. Their abuse constitutes one of the most serious violations of human rights and obstacles to development. Millions of the widows live and die in extreme poverty, exclusion, assault, homelessness, health risks and discrimination in law and traditions. The research is an effort to throw light on the harassing miseries and hardships faced by such widows in India and especially in Varanasi with reference to the movie "Water" which aims at bringing the issue in the limelight to improve the situation.

Keywords:

Index Terms - Abuse, degradation, hardship, trauma, widowhood.

I. INTRODUCTION

"Saubhagyavati Bhava" A gift given to wedded Hindu ladies so they may spend their entire lives being joyfully hitched. Yet, when they outlast their spouses, a similar gift transforms into a revile. Varanasi has 38,000 such reviled ladies. Throughout the years the widows of Varanasi have been considered as a vital research theme for social researchers and women's activist researchers of India and world. Most researchers have attempted to ponder the financial condition of this disregarded gathering throughout the years. From their investigation some imperative issues of social sparing issue of widows has been recognized. Varanasi can be considered as one of the recovery center for the penniless widows of Indian culture. Widows basically from east India pick this place as their protected haven of widowhood.

Varanasi, one of the seven consecrated urban areas and is the social center point of northern India. A great many people who visit concur that the most seasoned city on the banks of the River Ganges is otherworldly and has its very own wonder. However the city holds a darker mystery. It is home to more than 38,000 widowed ladies. They are the minimized and overlooked populace which live beyond words neediness as well as lead an existence of benevolence having no character of their own. Taken off alone in the city and looked around society, many look for protection in the diverse ashrams for widows. Varanasi is known as the City of Widows. The most unpleasant corners are involved by a group of ladies whom everybody has disregarded. The widows of Varanasi might be extraordinary in number however they have all become mixed up in the tight paths of the city, in shrouded ashrams, far from the psyches of the policymakers.

Widows have a low economic wellbeing in the social framework and their sight is considered an evil sign. They are normally rebuked for their spouses' passings and abused by the general public and outcasts as well as by close relatives and relatives as well. They are relied upon to lead an existence by committing themselves to God and practice renunciation. The traditions and conventions which are followed for the sake of religion and old lessons are unfeeling and brutal. Notwithstanding passionate hardships like loss of life partner, no conviction that all is good and loss of pay, warmth, care and support, the widows are additionally not permitted to participate in any propitious service. They are additionally not allowed to go to the capacities like marriage, house warming services and considered as an indication of antagonism. Despite India's incredible stride of entering the 21st century with a feeling of ethical quality mixed with innovation, such practices not just cut down the yearnings of moving towards a more created stage and receptive society additionally are a dark spot on the rich social legacy and economic wellbeing of our nation.

Life is unending hardship for many millions widows living in India. While widowhood is unwelcome for anybody in the Indian milieu; it's the Hindu widows who have it the most noticeably bad. The ladies on one hand are considered god yet then again India's greater part religion Hinduism and a large portion of its followers regard ladies and especially widows as stays of the dead who have no privilege to lead their very own existence. The range depicted in the motion picture "Water" by Deepa Mehta is found so close to the stream Ganges with a reason. Water is essential for both physical and profound life. It is at the same time consecrated and befoul. The fiery debris of the dead are yielded in the water and individuals bathe in the same. This connection demonstrates to us the way that the weight of the demise of the spouse is conveyed by a dowager for the duration of her life.

II. ORIGIN OF WIDOWHOOD AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE AGES

India has the biggest number of widows on the planet, that is around 33 million, approximately 10 for every penny of the aggregate female populace. Fifty-four for every penny of ladies who have matured sixty or more are widows. Remarriage is an uncommon case. Just around 10 for every penny of widows wed once more. India is maybe the main nation where widowhood exists as a social foundation. Dowager's hardship and revilement are attacked by custom and religious imagery. The Indian culture, like all patriarchal social orders, gives economic wellbeing to a lady through a man. Consequently, after the demise of a man, she herself turns into a non existential and endures a social passing.

Widows are the rough casualties of a non adaptable, inconsequential, antiquated custom of the general public. They are constrained to give up all solaces and dreams. They are bound with no misstep on their end. In India, as indicated by class and standing structures the religious customs and limitations are unique in relation to each other. In high class and high standing society, ladies need to confront more social limitations. In bring down class the ladies' money related commitment is the fundamental deciding variable of their power and control over sources and choices inside the family. In request to comprehend the present mental state, it is of extraordinary significance to toss light on the religious sacred writings and writings which are the starting point of the current practices and creed.

The Manusmriti also called the Manav Dharma Shastra, is thought to be the most established work on Brahminical Dharma. Concurring folklore, the Manusmriti is the expression of Brahma, and it is considered as the most definitive work on Dharma. The sacred writing comprises 2690 verses, separated into 12 sections. It is said that the real maker of this gathering utilized the eponym 'Manu', which has driven the content to be connected by Hindus with the principal person and the main ruler in the Indian convention. While guarding Manusmriti as awesome set of principles for all, apologists frequently cite the verse: "yatnaryastopojantay, ramantayatrdevta (where ladies are given place of respect, divine beings are satisfied and live there in that home), however they purposely overlook every one of those verses that are loaded with disparity, scorn and bigotry against ladies. The laws are rehearsed at show time also. The ghastly Laws were consolidated into Hinduism since they were good just to the Upper stations which shape the dominant part of India. Till today in the advanced circumstances, we see the serious mishandle and abuse of Dalit ladies. Unquestionably, the Indian social request has been based upon the mainstays of the Manusmriti. Since the Code of Manu (Manusmriti) mixes with the Indian culture and Hindu religion, it is difficult to evacuate those against Dalits and hostile to ladies messages in Manusmriti as individuals consider it as holy.

In Indian stories and puranas the life cycle of a perfect man has been isolated into four phases. In the first stage (brahmacharya) he is prepared to end up noticeably a well householder while in the second stage (garhस्थ्यo) he keeps up his family unit obligations, get hitched, keep up his ancestry. In the last two phases (banpresto and sanyas) he and his better half expel themselves from the servitude of family and society to spend an existence repudiating the physical world. In each stage a lady helps a man there by legitimately playing out her obligations as mother, significant other, spouse, and sister, little girl. Her satisfaction exists in the bliss of her significant other and relatives. A lady is just ready to play out her part in the last three phases on the off chance that she has the organization of her significant other. Her better half's demise pushes her into the life of widowhood. Once in a while she might be blamed for her significant other's passing. She is informed to go through an existence with respect to salvation, without each solace, satisfactions, and joy. As an outcome till now Indian ladies go to kick the bucket before her better half end.

In the good old days ladies were hitched at youthful age to more seasoned men. Adolescence widowhood was a definitive peak of their life. They needed to confront physical, sexual, mental badgering on account of society. In a report it was forcefully brought up that in Bengal the whole class is by all accounts predominantly selected from the positions of Hindu widows. In 1856 when the dowager remarriage act was passed, it was polished in less parts of the Hindu society. Youthful, delightful, adolescence widows turned into an ethical frenzy for their relatives. To dispose of this sudden weight they were sent to Varanasi or Kashi. There the widows began living in gatherings however because of monetary emergency they were constrained to serve the rich individuals of Banaras as escorts as depicted in Deepa Mehta's Water.

Contemporary talk on widowhood in India tends to focus vigorously on quantitative assessment. Discourse of the stories of the female is confined to a more well known medium, and tends to concentrate on the need of the ladies to be engaged. By essentially going to ashrams in Vrindavan it turns out to be evident that the term strengthening is limitlessly up to elucidation. There is by all accounts no bound together vision of what constitutes strengthening for any two ladies to the degree that while most aversion the condition of widowhood, a huge and shocking number appear to lean toward widowhood to marriage. Altogether, strengthening of ladies, an expression utilized by about each ladies' association, is equivocal and on occasion abused.

In concentrating the states of widows in India, there rises the need to separate between individual power and outside strengthening. Inside the structure of Brahmin sexual orientation parts is the presumption that the prohibition on remarriage of widows is saved as a benefit for the higher ranks. Moderately less appropriate types of marriage, gotten from the eight structures recorded in the Hindu shastras were subscribed to the lower stations as ladies in these social orders are viewed as makers and reproducers of makers, their proceeds with sexual movement after widowhood is seen in parallel to the accomplishment of their economy.

For every one of these reasons, a chronicled distinction has been drawn between terms of widowhood for the higher and lower standings. While this old depiction of widowhood is as yet considered a romanticized space for a dowager to possess, the degree to which any given lady adheres to these structures today is to a great extent subordinate upon an assortment of variables, including financial status. Due to these monetary considerations, most widows from bring down wage families are not ready to stay in the place of their in-laws without working or, in a few conditions, getting remarried. Generally, if these ladies can't, or don't wish to, work or remarry, they will leave their family structure for an assortment of reasons. Some of these incorporate, however are not restricted to, a yearning to mitigate the weight on their family, an absence of association with their in-laws or kids, or a desire for freedom from an existence of familial ties. Obviously, ways of life and personalities received by widows are profoundly individualized, and basically no two ladies' stories are precisely the same. Maybe the most troublesome variables to evaluate among these activities are those of individual decision and strengthening.

III. THE SOCIAL SCENARIOS OF VARANASI AFFECTING WIDOWS

There are numerous critical establishments, behavioral examples, and exercises encompassing widowhood that influence the prosperity of widows, for example, regardless of whether the widow is demoralized from remarrying, whether she holds full control of her better half's territory upon his demise, and whether she works. While widows' rights in these cases are secured by law, genuine results are probably going to be formed by societal requirements, customs, and practices.

Further, there are an assortment of other social practices, traditions, dispositions, and convictions that influence the status and prosperity of widows. For instance, following the demise of their significant other, ladies are frequently anticipated to experience a time of separation (staying in a remote room in the home), trailed by repression to the home (or town) for a timeframe, and additionally for all time evolving there. Widows are frequently additionally unwelcome at get-togethers, services, and customs, and kept away from socially on the grounds that they are viewed as misfortune, to some extent as a result of their relationship with death. Sati is the most extraordinary case of such practices, despite the fact that the proof proposes it is amazingly unprecedented and in reality has never been exceptionally boundless.

Social mores regularly dishearten widows from remarriage and manage changes in their eating regimen and conduct. All the more by and large, there are an assortment of traditions, standards, practices, convictions, and foundations that influence the financial, social, and political open doors and the economic wellbeing of the elderly, particularly widows. These practices are huge not as a result of the financial limitations they may put on widows, yet in their own perfectly fine, as a component of a more extensive origination of prosperity that extends past absolutely monetary terms.

Indian ladies by and large face surely understood limitations on work openings, relating, bury alia, to the sex division of work. Beside these general limitations, widows confront particular challenges in looking for profitable work openings. These include: absence of access to inseparable beneficial resources possessed by the expired spouse's family (e.g., wells, furrows and bullocks); feeble bartering power versus male accomplices in financial exchanges; visit nonattendance of an educated part in the family; restricted access to institutional credit; and, especially on account of widows with youthful kids, the weight of residential work.

The confinements on living arrangement, possession, remarriage and business place widows in a circumstance of intense reliance on monetary help from others. Without compelling types of state-based government managed savings measures, family and group support or upkeep is the essential wellspring of potential help. The degree and nature of family and group support can be examined regarding three determinants living game plans intra-family unit bolster and between family unit bolster. The prosperity of widows is an issue of monetary security, as well as one of poise, dignity and cooperation in the public arena. Many widows experience the ill effects of various types of social separation, mental manhandle or enthusiastic trouble. The social underestimation of widows was oftentimes found to take at least one of the accompanying structures:

- (1) Rumors and allegations: widows are regularly blamed for being "mindful" for their spouses' passings, viewed as sexually undermining, and for the most part considered as unpropitious.
- (2) Enforced dress and conduct codes: many widows are under solid weight to watch prohibitive codes of dress, appearance and conduct. A portion of the customary confinements (e.g., shaving of head) have turned out to be very uncommon, even among the upper positions, however others (e.g., not wearing "bindi" or kumkum) stay across the board.
- (3) Social alienation: a dowager is frequently avoided from the religious and social existence of the group, because of her apparent foreboding.
- (4) Physical savagery: brutality against widows principally appears as lewd behavior youthful widows being considered as sexually powerless as well as unbridled) or property-related viciousness (since widows are viewed as undesirable inquirers on hereditary property).

Obviously, not all widows confront these sorts of abuse. Numerous more seasoned widows who live with their children (and their families) make the most of their regard and love. Some more seasoned widows are cheerfully coordinated in their little girls' family units. It is youth for widows who are most powerless against abuse unless they have the help of their folks or siblings.

IV. DEPICTION OF THE PLIGHT OF THE WIDOWS IN THE FILM

Deepa Mehta's arrangement of three works which are set in India challenges distinctive types of religious narrow mindedness and social backwardness. The sexual bias (Fire), religious sectarianism (Earth), and the persecution of widows (Water). This is the motivation behind why Mehta turned into the objective of different political assaults. The radicals arranged mobs and silver screen burnings following the arrival of Fire in 1996, endeavored to have Earth restricted in 1998, and in mid 2000 constrained her to desert her generation of Water.

In spite of the fact that she was compelled to wipe out Water in 2000, she never surrendered the venture and one year from now was at long last ready to continue the creation in Sri Lanka under an alternate name and with another cast and code of mystery. Lisa Ray supplanted Nandita Das, with Seema Biswas (Bandit Queen) playing Shakuntala, the part beforehand doled out to Shabana Azmi. Water has various piercing scenes with extraordinary exhibitions by Seema Biswas and Sarala and some incredible cinematography and music by Giles Nuttgen and A.R. Rahmans individually. Its title is figuratively the most appropriate to the film's topic of widowhood wrapped by Hinduism, which considers water as the heavenly and preeminent blessing to humankind. Scenes of water happen over and over, with rain and the waterway making a setting to the focal sentiment and it's hopeless decision.

The impactful scene that highlights the profound sufferings of the widows happens when Chuyia figures out how to get a laddu (broiled sweet) for the Aunt, the old widow. This is one of the numerous sustenance things prohibited to widows. Close relative, who was additionally hitched as a tyke, is overpowered and eats the laddu, reviewing that the main time she tasted it was the point at which she was hitched.

Water's most grounded character is Shakunthala, who turns out to be more noteworthy towards the finish of the film. The chief uses her to highlight the social and mental contrasts by going up against people who look for peace in the religious esteems that are in charge of their mistreated state. Seema Biswas' execution is monstrously impactful as she unobtrusively depicts Shakuntala's endeavors to decrease the hole between her regular graciousness and the conventions that request her to be rigid. Against the overarching religious authoritative opinions, she underpins Kalyani and Narayan's sentiment. Being the main instructed dowager in the ashram, she peruses every one of the messages and letters of Narayan to Kalyani and offers to help the couple to flee, persuaded that she is giving another person a more joyful life that she has been denied of.

Water likewise indicates a portion of the basic financial factors behind the corruption of widows. As Narayan in the film clarifies, when widows are isolated from their significant other, family and property, they are: "One less mouth to bolster. Four saris spared. One overnight boarding house corner is spared in the family house. There is no other explanation why you are sent here." And while the treatment of widows is veiled as religion, he presumes that it is at last greed. These few sentences light up the circumstance in an amazingly intense manner. The film adequately amplifies the human cost of these barbarous and dehumanizing customs. It additionally contains components of Bollywood strategy and show, which are inconsistent with the motion picture's testing topic and tend to lift the spirits its emotional impact.

The closing scenes including Gandhi give an impression of his mass help and the expectations of millions that he and the Indian National Congress would put a conclusion to British management, the position framework and different types of monetary and social mistreatment. In any case, only the expectation and no strict action taken against the issues additionally ensured that none of the fundamental issues concerning the majority could be fathomed and that the dispossession and isolation of widows and different types of social persecution will be expelled. Furthermore, in this manner all the issues still existed in India.

The film finishes up with Shakunthala's harried face and afterward blurs to titles bringing up that in 2001 there were more than 34 million widows in India, living in states of social, financial and social hardship and enthusiastic debasement. Just a couple would watch and need to know why Gandhi's development demonstrated unequipped for closure this and how the expectations of the Indian masses could have been so shockingly dashed. For her mettle Deepa Mehta must be valued and praised. Her never surrender state of mind and refusal to be scared will energize those in India and in any piece of the world battling religious backwardness and other social ills. "Water" is an essential accomplishment in the field of film as well as to bring the issues and hardship confronted by the widows in Indian culture to the front.

V. CONCLUSION

For Deepa Mehta one doesn't discover truth by looking for edification in religious fellowship with God. When one looks for reality in activities and, once one has discovered it, it is likewise discovered that otherworldly truth lies there. Once widowed, ladies in numerous nations regularly defy a forswearing of legacy and land rights, debasing and life-undermining grieving and entombment rituals and different types of dowager mishandle. Widows are frequently ousted from their homes and mishandled. A lady's economic wellbeing is inseparably connected to her husband's, so when her better half kicks the bucket, a lady never again has a place in the public eye. To achieve economic wellbeing back, widows are relied upon to wed one of their significant other's male relatives, now and again unwillingly. For some, the demise of a spouse is just the principal injury in a long haul difficulty. In numerous nations, widowhood is derided and seen as a wellspring of disgrace. Widows are believed to be revealed in a few societies and are even connected with witchcraft. Such confusions can lead widows being excluded, manhandled and more awful. Research has discovered that there have been situations where widows have been executed in light of allegations of being witches.

Widowed ladies are not given the privilege of legacy and numerous such rights. They are regularly expelled from their homes and mishandled and on occasion even slaughtered. At the point when the spouse kicks the bucket, a lady loses her place in the general public. They are relied upon to wed one of their better half's male relatives or carry on with an existence far from all joy and brimming with hardships. Over the years the widows of Varanasi have been considered as an essential theme for social researchers and female researchers around the world to work and research. Most analysts have attempted to a the financial state of this minimized gathering in various times.

The offspring of widows are regularly influenced, both candidly and financially. Widowed moms, now supporting their families alone, are compelled to pull back youngsters from school and to depend on their work. Additionally, the little girls of widows may endure different hardships, expanding their weakness to mishandle. Such savageries are frequently observed as legitimized as far as social or religious practice. Exemption for misuse of the privileges of widows is overflowing, with a couple of culprits at any point effectively conveyed to equity. Indeed, even in nations where legitimate assurance is more comprehensive, widows can endure social minimization.

No other gathering is more influenced by this demonstration of exclusion by the general public as are widows. They are missing from the insights as well as unfortunately from the different reports created as well. The lamentable advancement of their defenselessness both financial and passionate inquiries, the perspectives, suspicions and the condition of this "imperceptible" gathering of ladies considered half or totally dead.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I want to thank all my faculty members for their guidance and support. I also take the opportunity to thank all faculty members, my parents and friends for encouraging me to complete the project.

REFERENCES

[1]Kumar Neeta. "Widows Education and Social Change in Twentieth Century Benaras" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26: No. 17. 19-25.

[2]Verma Preeya. *Born to serve: The State of Old women and widows in India*, Off Our Barks, Vol. 35.No 9/10.38-39.

[3]Young Kate. *Widows without Rights challenging Marginalization and Dispossession Gender and Development*. Volume 14. No.2 .

