

DIALECTICS OF SOCIO-SPATIAL SUBTLITIES IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S WATER**A. Katariya¹ and P. Chaudhary²**^{1,2}Department of Languages, Manipal University Jaipur, Rajasthan, India²priyanka.chaudhary@jaipur.manipal.edu**ABSTRACT**

Water-A Novel (2007) by Bapsi Sidhwa, Pakistani-American writer, that portrays British Raj India of 1930s and the setting or space /place is a village on the Bihar - Bengal border during the time of the Gandhi movement who was against sati, purdah, child marriage. An orthodox thinking in sharp contrast of Gandhi ideology is revealed in light of the ideological Implications of 'Lived Space'. Gender discrimination through demarcation of unequal abode spaces as per gender and social spaces and their historical, political, and social implications based on background of a traditional village is critically examined in the study. It sheds light on how power structures space and how this is endorsed and deconstructed, resisted or even subverted by the subjugated.

Keywords: Bapsi Sidhwa, Water, Space, Gender discrimination

Introduction

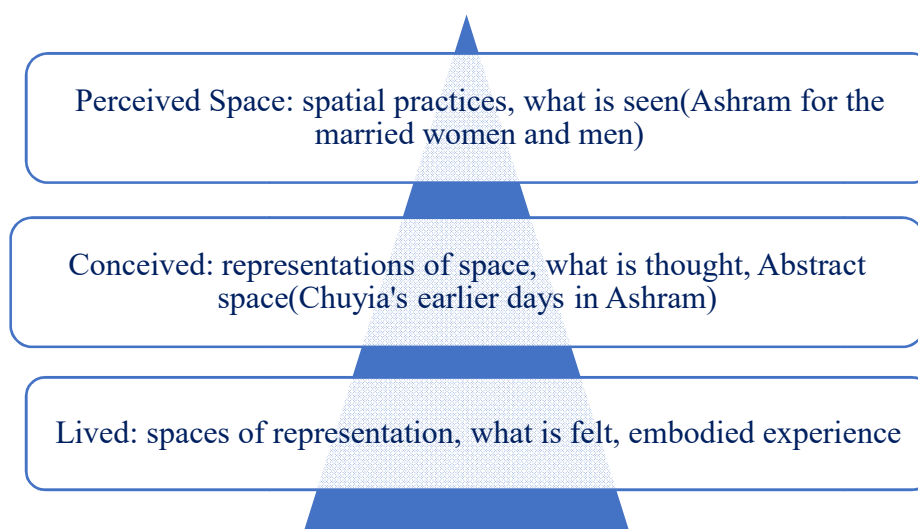
The latter half of 20th Century is turning towards multidisciplinary theme of space and spatiality or topographical turn—emplacement of space and cultural geography which aims to study the relationship between geospaces and cultural constructs or vice versa. Earlier research had dispensed solely with time, without taking its link with spatiality into consideration with writings of Bertrand Westphal's géocritique and Barbara Piatti's Literaturkartographie. The paradigm shift from time to space in analyzing literary texts is now witnessed as a center that was only taken as a background for actions earlier. Space and place significantly impact how people relate to each other and to the world and also assists in the formation of individual identity like in case of each widow, Shakuntala, Madhumati, Bua, Chuyia and Kalyani and collective identities—more or less they are destined to same origin and fate.

Space and place are examined in many forms—real and imagined, public and private, manufactured and natural places, sacrosanct and profane, and mental and physical. Leading their remaining life of widowhood in seclusion and refrain from all worldly pleasures is seen as sacrosanct space that has consent of the society. Any kind of desire related to femininity, sexuality, love, eating *ladoos* and having long tresses is profaned. Ashram is also a space of seclusion and exclusion for widows where they considered to live their life in repentance due to their previous birth's sins.

Space, thus, is a container within which history and human passions unfurl. The experience of 'lived space' is now considered as 'ideological' in political, religious, philosophical, power and society. Ashram, at the first sight, is connected to purity and salvation for widows, is perceived space. When Chuyia is abandoned there with the assumption that she has to stay in this ashram for a few days and she perceives herself not connected to her or vice versa—is her conceived space. Later, when she understands that now this ashram is her only home and she started mingling up with her fellow widows, then it is her lived space that give her all type of experiences and harsh realities of life of being a widow. Gaston Bachelard 'felicitous spaces' and 'spaces of intimacy' may be similar or different for an individual, Kalyani's room is felicitous space for Chuyia and Shakuntala's care and nurture is 'space of intimacy' for her. The house or home space is inner and private space for women, but the city space is outer and public space of men that is perilous and intimidating. The binary opposition, states Yuri Lotmann (1990), deciphers cultural divergences of 'lived space' inner-outer, safe-unsafe, low-high, and city-home. These lived spaces are flexible spaces in relation to the subjects experiencing them as one space can be intimate for one and threatening by another. The tripartite model of Henry Lefebvre (1974) in *Production of Space* suggests 'perceived space' as result of senses, 'conceived space' as comprehension of brain and 'lived space' as result of interface on the basis of social relations. Edward Soja (1996)

devised his triad model—firstspace as real, secondspace as imagined space, thirdspace as lived space. Lefebvre (1974), Foucault (1986), and Soja (1989 and 1996) are of the view that social being is a product of ontological trio of time, space and society that is expressible as historicity, spatiality and sociality. No event and memory can take place without spatial essence. Moving, behaving, sensing, communicating all are spatial as memory, thought and action need a place. Lefebvre Othering space or other's place investigates the dialectic relationships. poststructuralist discourse analysis. Discursive performative

performances, place making and identity formation of women in the neo liberalized. Otherness seeks to examine how majority and minority identities are constructed. discursive institutionalization of differences in space have started to show resistance. Borders and boundaries represent a social practice of spatial segregation. "The signifiers, whether they are images or characters or episodes, or even so called structures and archetypes, may be the same in different periods and regions, but the signification goes on changing".—A.K. Ramanujan.



Keeping in view the urban spaces that he took a product of dominant as well as ostracized societal relationships. As per Edward Soja's categorization, the viewpoints of 'firstspace' that is physical space is the similar to Lefebvorean perceived space of the picture of Ashram and life of widows in all men and women, 'secondspace' as mental space similar to Lefebvorean conceived space, when Chuyia arrives Ashram and at the first glance of dilapidated condition of it and started crying and 'thirdspace' as imagined space or lived space where all widows came to know the realities of life at Ashram. For Soja, space must be understood as simultaneously real and imagined 'Soja's thirdspace', for it always represents a link between physical, geographical spaces and mental, cultural constructions of space. The ashram is the symbolism of exclusion, and which deconstructs the natural formation of this

space, rather, it is socially constructed by the Brahmanical laws to keep an upper hand of men over women. They want to curtail their responsibilities towards the widows in their families of nurturing them. Thus, Ashram is the best option that they made up. Soja's lived space as marginalized space or racist and sexist space is draw similarity to the Foucauldian heterotopic space of 'otherness and deviation' where all forms are opposed, inverted, and subverted. The space of exclusion created exclusively for widows, is a space of otherness and deviation which marginalize them from the mainstream society. Space is inseparable from time as per Foucauldian *Heterotopia* and Bakhtinian *Chronotope*.

The representation and evaluation of space will vary depending on the voice is of dominant group or subaltern section of society. Space is produced and controlled consequently by varied hierarchically segregated voices,

similarly in case of widowed space is created, segregated, and also controlled by powerholders male dominance where they can easily satisfy their carnal desire by the widows who are left helpless. The powerholders force unknowingly the artificial and random spatial arrangements on the marginalized. Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak reveal the point that space cannot be claimed as an equitable custody of one race, caste and class, on the contrary it is product of unequal division of power over bodies and space. The grasp on theoretical manner is not sufficient to understand literary representation, but ideological transposition of the characters is necessary. Michael Foucault's distinction between utopian and Heterotopian space points to the fact that utopian space tends to political intangibility whereas Heterotopian leans to visual actualization. Thrift opines, "[S]ubjects do not make places, but, in a sense, are places" (1991, p. 462).

We realize not only an emotional space, but also a real and practical world of distinct objects—representational space. It is the graphic view of things, persons, buildings, or landscapes received according to our experiences which leads to conceptual knowledge. Smith mentions, "By setting boundaries, scale can be constructed as a means of constraint and exclusion, a means of imposing identity, but a politics of scale can also become a weapon of expansion and inclusion, a means of enlarging identity" (1993, p. 114). Foucault announces a modern form of power in which everyone is not under spectacle but under surveillance. In this new logic of power, everyone is enclosed in "a great, enclosed, complex, and hierarchical structure (1977, p. 115). "Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile bodies" (1977: p. 138). It is extensively admitted now that literary texts being a transdiscursive aesthetic domains are not merely the creation of intuitive minds of authors but they are the products of social, political, economic and cultural milieus. Authors, according to Foucault, are "initiators of discursive practices" (What Is an Author? 145). Both production and reception of a text is led by ideological social structure. The "inviolable" sanctity of space, or Foucauldian

"sacred" space is pursued in "practical desanctification of space" (1977: p. 23). No practice is 'sacred', it rather resists and inverts the existing authorial norms at a particular time and space. Space is a virtual product of discursive 'gaze' and it is the 'eye of power'. Space, as per Foucault is not a temporal plurality but it is a discursive category. Space is a production of power and creates margins and social differences. A critical spatial methodology to deconstruct hegemonic spatial paradigms and identity politics. Politics and space are correlated to each other, and domination and marginalization are its repercussions. Some spatial conceptualizations, that are hegemonic, marginalize "Other" spatialities and limit their access to discourse making process. Imagined is unmeasurable and unseen. Thirdspace is the 'Other' space or social space for real/imaginary binary in terms of Soja and Lefebvre. All conceptual, real, imagined and material spaces interrelate with each other. The specific institutions and powerful people in a capitalist structure, have the actual invisible rights to identify socially lived, perceived, and conceived spatialities, and then structure their own versions into what becomes disciplinary knowledge and institutional control.

"What is required, therefore, is an interrogation of the relationships between the production of space and the construction of identity" (John Paul Jones III & Pamela Moss, 1995, p. 256). The literary discourse is profoundly "polyphonic", simply because language itself is not a closed and static entity but a cultural and social movement open to all ideologies and social power-structures. Gaston Bachelard in his *The Poetics of Space* (1958) ingeniously delve into the inhabitation of the architectural space of the house similar to Heideggerian idea. The classification of societal space as public and private realms, affects individuals' mental states, regulates their behaviour, and covers a long-extended term structure onto human societies and the spaces they inhabit. Literary space plays an independent variable as the locale/place has important factor in the formation of the character, moreover, the idea of place invokes the imagination in the mind of the reader to give a varied perception. Space is examined in the perspective of social,

geographical and psychological phenomenon in Humanities and Social Sciences. Spatial critics like Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974), Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), Edward Soja, Paul Carter, Edward Said's *Literature and Society* (1978), Mikhail Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) and Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1964) who had promulgated numerous elucidations of Space by discussing about, "cognitive space", "narrative space", "social space", "ritual space", "heterotopias" and "heterochronias", "historical space", "chronotopes" to give wide analytical areas.

"The mapping of a place or location onto gender identities has been a key part of the establishment and maintenance of women's position and is reflected in both the materiality and the symbolic representation of women's lives." (Eagleton, Mary, ed. Linda McDowell, 2003)

Chandra Talpade Mohanty and many female critics discuss the map-making of political struggle; Adrienne Rich has long insisted on the importance and role of a politics of location. Griselda Pollock, Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, Kathleen Kirby are other names in this list. Gaston Bachelard published his magnum opus, *The Poetics of Space*, in the year 1964 where he talks about the home being the identity of a person. It plays the first role in framing the identity of a person, it acts as a container of various memories, experiences that people have had over the period of time.

Henri Lefebvre extended Marxist spatial theory. The idea of third space matches to the hybridity concept where people mix the concept of varied things in a cosmos that forms their identity.

Water-A Novel depicts Gandhi ideology as he was in favour of widow remarriage; "her face was full and round like the moon that had arisen and now shone through the window" (16)

Women has no recognition without men as Chuyia's father says to Bhagya, "Outside of marriage the wife has no recognized existence

in our tradition. A woman's role in life is to get married and have sons. That is why she is created: to have sons! That is all" (2006, p. 15). Chuyia innocently asks to the priest and Shakuntala, "Didi, where is the house for the men widows?" There was a stunned silence. Then pandemonium broke out. A chorus of scolding erupted from the shocked widows: "Good God" "What a horrible thing to say" "God protect our men from such a fate!" "May your tongue burn!" (2006, p. 98).

Widows are considered to be bad omen, stigma and responsible for the death of their husbands. They are confined to the isolated space of ashram from where they are in search for a new space very new day, "Kalyani continued her different walk toward the ashram exit much like a captive deer stepping out of its pen" (189)

Women can't decide in a lot of matters as they are incessantly considered liked servants to men, "a women is recognized as a person only when she is one with her husband" (15)

Internal conflict and helplessness of Bhagya can be observed as she is not able to decide in chuyia's case: "Bhagya's eyes became moist, and she was swept by a wave of tenderness and pity she had not allowed herself to feel before" (17)

Chuyia is seen as a burden on family by her father, Somnath, after the death of her husband. Somnath who never considered her equal to her brothers—Mohan and Prasad; "A girl is destined to leave her parents' home early or she will bring disgrace to it" (14)

When Kalyani and chuyia run after the puppy around the corner shops, the customers remarked, "they shouldn't allow widows to run around like this. They bring bad luck to our business" (60). Bhagya says to herself, "a woman's sexuality and fertility, which so valuable to her husband in his lifetime [is] converted upon his death into a potential danger to the morality of the community" (Sidhwa, 2006, p. 24).

As per Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, the ideological implications of the 'Lived Space' is seen as Chuyia is separated from her mother's care and safeguarding at her tender age and later in the ashram, she has to learn and face the hardships like a matron. Gender discrimination through demarcation of

unequal abode spaces as per gender and social spaces and their historical, political, and social implications based on background of a traditional village leads to marginalization of widows which are seen as bad name on society but they are used by the hypocritical males to satiate their sex desires, otherwise, they remain untouchables. The powerholders and hotdogs of the society structures spaces of marginalization for the weaker and downtrodden section of the society and this is endorsed even by women of the society and used as a weapon to outcast the widows from

mainstream. Kalyani is thrown in the quagmire of prostitution to earn livelihood for the widow ashram. When Kalyani falls in love with a young man, Chuyis is sent unknowingly for prostitution where Shakuntala tries to save her but couldn't. Hereafter, chuyia is recued and handed over to give anew beginning to Kalyani's lover, who was Gandhi's follower. Thus, the societal and religious hierarchy is throughout deconstructed, resisted and subverted by the powerless marginalized widows.

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