MEGA INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Journal of Arts and Linguistics Studies
ISSN Print 2959-0957 ISSN Online 2959-0965
Volume 4 Issue 7 2026
Pages 461-479
Open Access

Power, the Widowed Body, and Resistance: A Foucauldian Reading of Hindu Widowhood in Bapsi Sidhwa's Water

Publication Details
Paper Received:
May 20, 2026
Paper Accepted:
July 22, 2026
Paper Published:
July 25, 2026

Mubeen Ijaz
Teaching Assistant (English), Government College University Faisalabad. Email: mubeenijaz484@gcuf.edu.pk
Madiha Sadiq
Visiting Lecturer (English), Government College University Faisalabad. Email: madihasadiq69@gmail.com
Shajeea Mujahid
Teaching Assistant (English), Government College University Faisalabad. Email: shajeeamujahid@gcuf.edu.pk

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.71281/jals.v4i7.723

Abstract
This study offers a Foucauldian reading of Bapsi Sidhwa's Water, employing the theoretical lens of Michel Foucault to examine how discourses of power/knowledge shape subjectivity, construct the self, and provoke resistance within the socio-religious context of colonial India. Through qualitative textual analysis, the research investigates the institutional and cultural mechanisms that discipline female bodies, particularly widows, by embedding them in a rigidly patriarchal and religious framework that legitimizes marginalization as sacred duty. Applying Foucault theory on the novel particularly the characters like Chuyia and Kalyani, the study reveals that how religious bodies act as a disciplinary power producing "docile bodies" who internalize and perform their prescribed roles. These characters become the product of disciplinary power as they obey the rules set by the religious authorities, but the study also highlights the resistance power. The study further explores how the self is formed through intersecting axes of gender, class, and colonialism, revealing a dynamic tension between submission and rebellion. By situating Water within Foucault's theoretical framework, the research underscores literature's role in exposing and challenging the hegemonic structures that govern human lives.

Keywords: Power/Knowledge, Docile bodies, Disciplinary power, Surveillance, Widowhood, Self and Subjectivity.

Published by MIARD. Copyright: © the author(s). This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY NC) license (https:// creativecommons.org/licenses/by/ 4.0/).

1. Introduction

Michel Foucault is considered one of the most influential thinkers, social theorists, historians, and literary critics of the 20th century. His work critically examined how power functions in society, especially through institutions, discourse, and knowledge. Foucault's extraordinary contributions to literature and criticism include the concept of the power-knowledge relationship. According to Foucault (1977): "Power produces knowledge... that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (27).

Foucault (1978) argues that knowledge and power are blended with each other. Knowledge is used to possess power and authority, and power exists through knowledge, as authoritative bodies use knowledge to subjugate others. He further argues that power is productive, as it urges people to question about their identities that are produced by power through identity-making discourse, establishing a truth that shapes individual subjectivities. His concept of power/knowledge posits that knowledge is not neutral or objective but is always bound with power and functions as a means of control in defining norms, recognizing legitimacy, and maintaining hierarchies. This framework allows this study to analyses Bapsi Sidhwa's (2006) *Water*, a book that wrestles with the daily lives of Hindu widows in colonial India.

Water (2006), Bapsi Sidhwa's novelization of Deepa Mehta's controversial 2005 film of the same name, deals quite directly with an oppressive socio-religious structure that forces widows to live in asceticism, social exclusion, and often into sexual exploitation. In the novel, the widow ashram is an example of disciplining religious power. Religious discourse shapes women's dress, food, company, location, and, most significantly, perception about self. Thus, the widow ashram

can be examined in Foucauldian terms as a place of biopolitical control. Religious doctrine exists as a mechanism of rule, and power is exercised not just from the outside by institutional forces but also internally through surveillance, guilt, and self-policing. The widows, such as Kalyani and Shakuntala, embody the tension between compliance and non-compliance, as they start to question the knowledge systems that create identity, while simultaneously restricting the freedom to negotiate their own identity.

This article draws on Foucault's framework of power and knowledge to explore how Water dramatizes the ways in which religious and cultural discourses enforce social hierarchies, especially with respect to gender, sexuality, and widowhood. It considers how resistance arises simultaneously within this network of power and against it, not only in overt defiance but also in the formation of new subjectivities, as well as in the subtle unmaking of inherited truths. In this exploration, the article further shows how Sidhwa's narrative questions not only the oppressive structures of the past but also the practices of contemporary culture that promote the normalization of marginalization under the guise of morality and tradition. The research is qualitative in nature and includes extensive reading of articles, journals, and books.

1.1. Research Objectives

1) To examine how Sidhwa portrays the widow ashram in *Water* as a religious institution that disciplines the bodies of widows
2) To explore how the widows in Water, particularly Chuyia, Kalyani, and Shakuntala, react to or challenge the control exercised over the bodies of women in the ashram.
3) To analyze how Foucault's theories of power/knowledge and docile bodies explain the relationship between discipline and resistance in the portrayal of Hindu widows.

1.2. Research Questions

1) In what ways does Sidhwa portray the widow ashram as a religious institution that disciplines the widowed body in *Water*?
2) How do the widows in *Water*, particularly Chuyia, Kalyani, and Shakuntala, react to or challenge how the bodies of the women in the ashram are being controlled?
3) How does Foucault's approach to power/knowledge and docile bodies account for the concept of discipline and resistance in the depiction of the Hindu widows?

1.3. Significance of the Study

The study is important both from a literary and theoretical perspective in relation to gender, religion, and the body. The research initiates the Foucauldian understanding of Sidhwa's *Water* and extends to investigate the functionality of religious institutions as disciplinary institutions to regulate and control the body of women, especially from the lens of Hindu widowhood. The study holds significance because it not only explores a thematic reading of widowhood as a form of social oppression but also echoes Foucault's theorization of "discipline" and "docile bodies" as a scene to inhabit not as an autonomous field of institutional power. Moreover, it examines Foucault's concept of resistance through the character of Chuyia, Kalyani and Shakuntala. The study is of importance not just for readers of South Asian literature but also for postcolonial studies scholars, feminist theory scholars, and Foucauldian critics because it shows how closely literary fiction, when shaped by the embodied experiences of marginalized women, can follow and illustrate theoretical ideas and concepts. Overall, it adds to current debates about the nature of power in religious and cultural institutions and how subjects, despite the conditions of constraint, can question, resist, or in part reconstruct the norms imposed upon them.

2. Literature Review

The critical evolution of gender, religion, and power in Anglophone Pakistani literature has become a hot topic in critical studies, particularly when it comes to themes like widowhood feminism, patriarchal oppression, and subjugation. Sidhwa's (2006) *Wate*r has attracted a lot of scholarly attention for its in-depth look at Hindu widowhood during a double-colonized India, along with its sharp critique of oppressive religious practices. Sahoo (2016) argued that Hindu widowhood has become a topic of consideration in Hindu literature. In modern India, Sati has become outlawed and banned, but this practice has now turned into another custom: sending widows to ashrams and forcing them to live a miserable life.

Adhikary (2020) provided a feminist critique of Deepa Mehta's film rather than Sidhwa's novel because of its portrayal of the ashram as a form of institutionalizing patriarchy through the pretext of religion. Applying Beauvoir and Spivak's theoretical framework, Adhikary interpreted Chuyia's enforced widowhood and Kalyani's forced prostitution as proof that Indian Hindu customary practice turns widows into objects of exchange within a patriarchal economy, and perceived that Kalyani's choosing to get married is an act of revolt against it. But Adhikary's research used Spivak's theory of subaltern to analyze the film and revealed the dual marginalization of widows in British-occupied India by emphasizing the ways in which patriarchy utilizes religion, custom, and social norms to oppress widows. This study applies a Foucauldian approach to the novel, highlighting the concerns about the disciplinary role of the ashram and the widow's inability to resist that discipline.

Pandith and Bhat (2021) viewed the novel as exposing the situation of women in India, where gender discrimination is entrenched in the longstanding tradition and superstition of the Hindus and is a social and religious construct.

Khushi and Johri (2024) extended this discussion by pointing out the role of religious practice as a tool of marginalization whereby widows are pushed to renounce the world and, at times, become the sexual property of others. Ilame (2020) made a specific focus on the "pangs" of widowhood and how customary practice brings physical and psychological stress on the widow of the ashram. Iqbal et al. (2023) have a Marxist feminist lens in which they discuss how class and gender intersect and the varying amounts of abuse and voicelessness that various women in the novel experience, as well as how some resist the dominance of male characters in the novel.

Asif et al. (2021) illustrated how the production of gender roles is not a straightforward outcome of men's intention, but instead it is a process resulting from the cultural discourse. In the view of Khan (2020), power is manifested in multiple interactive systems simultaneously rather than coming from a single source. Both studies used a Foucauldian argument that could be applied directly, but neither study applies Foucault's framework directly. Neither research analyzes power's actual discipline of the body of a widow, and neither employs Foucault's specific terminology, including docile body, surveillance, biopolitics, etc. This is where this present work begins. This study examines the widow's body in *Water* by applying Foucault's theory of power and knowledge, and reveals how the ashram disciplines the body but also opens up space for the widows to resist.

Foucault's concept of the power/knowledge system has been employed in many narratives, and these studies provide theoretical predecessors for the current study. Drawing on Foucauldian discourse analysis, Ghosh (2021) demonstrated how disciplinary power works on Bama's *Sangati* and Sivakami's *The Grip of Change,* manifesting in the constant scrutiny and prescribed gesture which create docile bodies, as well as contexts that allow for resistance. Ismael and Saleh (2023) utilized a similar Foucauldian reading analysis of Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*,

demonstrating how discursive power enables discourse resistance of the oppressed women. Both studies show Foucault's apparatus, specifically the notion of discipline and docile bodies, and its related ideas of productive power, and this makes it applicable to Sidhwa's Water.

McNay (1992) and Butler (1997) have developed Foucault's ideas further to apply them to the sphere of gender: Foucault's thinking on subjectivity extended to the domain of gender suggests that subjective is formed from normative discourses which can also be inverted and challenged. Butler makes a comparison between ideas of Freud and Foucault to make a compelling case that subjection is not just about oppression; it is actually a fundamental part of how we become who we are. Subject is constructed upon the norm and power that were never ours. Resistance does not stand outside of the power; it is intertwined with it. The person resisting has to continuously recite those norms, ones by which he/she is shaped. However, with the process of resignification, the norms' meaning and instigation can be altered, and new paths become possible for asserting the individual's agency.

This article, therefore, fills a critical gap by applying Foucault's theory of power and knowledge on *Water*, analyzing how the novel dramatizes the formation of female subjectivity under religious and patriarchal regimes, and how resistance manifests through cracks in dominant discourse.

3. Theoretical Framework

Almost everyone has come across Michel Foucault at some point, whether in a lecture hall or a dog-eared paperback left on a train seat. Foucault, a French philosopher and poststructuralist thinker, tries to redefine the relationship between power and knowledge, how self and subjectivity are formed and how people resist power. In *Discipline and Punish*, he claimed that power slips around like alley smoke, threading through school bells, hospital gowns, payday notices, and even

the way we finish a sentence, making it clear that power is everywhere. Power does not knock us down from above, Foucault insisted; it is like a net in which we all become tangled together, compliant, confident, or half-ashamed.

Foucault's (1977) idea of power/knowledge stands at the heart of his critique of modern life. Foucault threw out the old concept of knowledge and power, where knowledge is considered neutral and power is centralized and dynamic. He insists that knowledge never travels alone; it always drags a bundle of power with it. He argues that what we call facts or truths are already shaped by the institutions and authorities, justifying it with examples of educational, medical, and prison departments. So, when doctors sample blood, judges tape confessions, or mathematicians chalk equations, they are not merely sifting what is true; they are signing an invoice for the shape of tomorrow's rules.

Power for Foucault is not a shiny baton passed from hand to hand; it is a current that ripples through chatter, street routines, committee reports, and even the way hospital shifts are scheduled. That current quietly carves out norms, stamps things as true or false, and nudges people into certain ways of standing, speaking, or even believing. Knowledge supplies both the ruler and the measuring tape, telling us what counts and what can safely be ignored. In that sense, the stuff we call information is less about enlightenment and more about stirring us into line, where people internalize norms and practices in their lives. Here, he introduces the concept of disciplinary power, showing that power is used to control bodies and populations, where people believe that they are under control and watched by societies. Authoritative bodies justify it, setting rules and regulations that are used to measure the behavior of individuals and for correction of societies.

Foucault's later writing complicates his concept of power. His early writings focus on the production of docile bodies through the use of disciplining tools such as surveillance and normalization. In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault (1985)

describes different forms of objectification (power that acts upon a person from the outside) and the practices of the self (an individual acting upon his or her own body). In this second version, power is not just exercising force over the subject but is exercised through the subject's transformation. Personal identity is constitutionally shaped by the power exercised in practices such as diet, confession and reflection, according to moral norms of the dominant group (Foucault 1985). This self-work is not completely autonomous. It remains in a moral and cultural framework of a given historical moment. Foucault's concept of constraint and autonomous practice can contribute to the study of resistance and accountability. Foucault's (2005) notion of the "patchwork" self helps explain why no purely disciplinary account of power can capture the fact that subjects sometimes challenge or revise the norms that shape them. External authority and personal invention play a part in shaping the self. It enables power to spread everywhere without closing off the avenues for ethical becoming.

Foucault's concept of resistance is not like others who argue that resistance comes from external forces; rather, Foucault believes that resistance is an intrinsic part of power relations. In *The History of Sexuality,* Foucault (1978) writes, "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (p. 95). This statement reflects his view of how power is diffused and exercised through networks of relationships, institutions, and discourses. He also theorizes that resistance is immanent to power, that it develops in the very networks and discourses that oppose power. Resistance exists in these networks and in several forms: refusal, subversion, critique, the generation of alternative discourses and alternative identities. Importantly, Foucault does not idealize resistance; rather, he invites individuals and scholars to engage in the critical ontology of the present, a practice of questioning how we are governed and how we govern ourselves. In *The*

Subject and Power, Foucault emphasizes the importance of "struggles against the submission of subjectivity". These are not just struggles against economic or political repression but struggles over the ways in which people are made into subjects; struggles over identities, norms, and the limits of intelligibility.

Foucault's theory offers a variety of key concepts, including the concepts of power and knowledge, disciplinary power, governmentality, technologies of the self, and resistance. He rejected traditional views of knowledge (knowledge is neutral) and power as solely repressive or held by centralized authorities. Foucault reveals that power is diffused, relational, and productive, and it creates norms, identities, truths, and institutions. This study will use three major aspects of Foucault's theory, such as power and knowledge, disciplinary power, and technologies of self and resistance. These key aspects are applied to Bapsi Sidhwa's adapted novel *Water,* where she explores all these concepts with the themes of marginalized widows and how they are oppressed by society in the name of religion and social norms.

4. Methodology

The research uses a qualitative, interpretative approach and applies Foucault's theory of power and knowledge to Sidhwa's *Water*. The novel describes the destinies of Hindu widows in the colonial India of the 1930s, reflecting power relations between patriarchy, religion, and imperialism. Thus, this article examines how language and characters' interactions reflect and resist power relations. The research incorporates scholarly articles, historical texts, and critical feminist/postcolonial studies, including analyses of discussions on Hindu widowhood, Foucault's theories in literary and gender studies, and historical materials related to Sati and colonial legal frameworks affecting women.

4. Textual Analysis

4.1. The Discursive Construction of Widowhood

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* is an adaptation of the Deepa Mehta film of the same name. Michel Foucault's theories of power/knowledge and subjectivity and self serve as a strong lens to examine the novel's representation of widow's lives. The novel is set in the late 1930s in British-occupied India, focusing on the women's lives in an ashram after their husbands' deaths. It reveals the ingrained social and religious systems that govern how women are allowed to exist in the world after their husband's death. Power, which remains firmly anchored in religious/normative discourse, is sanitized and made legitimate through the characters of Chuyia, Kalyani, and Shakuntala, and it is this power, positivized as knowledge, that disciplines and marginalizes subjects, especially women.

According to Foucault, power and knowledge are not separate entities; knowledge is not neutral but simply a product of discourses shaped by power. What we consider truth is simply constructed by those who are in power and authority. Sidhwa's *Water* represents this fact. Society uses Hindu religious discourse as a tool of social control and to justify the truth that widows are impure, misfortunate, and renouncing, thus making it a social and religious norm. Hindu scriptures and holy books are selectively used to justify the exclusion of widows from society and forcing them to live in isolation. As Sidhwa writes in *Water*, "According to the Holy Scriptures, a widow has three choices. She may throw herself on her husband's funeral pyre. She may marry her husband's younger brother, or she may live a life of self-denial and pray for her husband's soul." (p.40)

An example of this discourse emerges when a priest tells the widows that they are burdens on society and must live a life of renunciation. Since the Hindu priest holds sacred power, his statement is considered absolute and true, and his

voice becomes the voice of religion rather than merely religious opinion. This knowledge is not neutral in accordance with Foucault. It serves to reinforce structures of patriarchy and to stabilize the social order by disciplining women through ritual, isolation, and enforced self-denial.

Foucault argues that discipline is a power mechanism that controls how people behave in social groups. This study highlights this power mechanism by analyzing the novel where widows are considered unholy to the other married men and women. Sending widows to ashrams is considered a societal and religious norm, making it normalizing. They are kept in an ashram, a confined place where their bodies are controlled, constantly observed, and their desires are suppressed. People practice these norms by sending widows away regardless of whether they are older or children. This behavior is normalized as it is enforced by authorities and practiced by individuals. The women must follow strict routines, wear plain white saris, eat lentils and tasteless food, live on alms, and renounce any personal identity beyond their widowhood. Their physical appearance is decided by society that they should shave off their heads, and individuality is wiped off. Thus, the widow ashram serves as disciplinary institutions where religious knowledge is practiced and reinforced. Sidhwa asserts, "Widowhood was the punishment for a sinful existence in the past, and she atoned for it with prayer and the observance of fasts as prescribed". (p. 44)

4.2. Disciplinary Power and Surveillance in the Ashram

As Foucault argues, surveillance, both external and internal, is a key mechanism of control. In the novel, external surveillance refers to the continuous monitoring by religious figures (priests and holy scriptures), family members (Kalyani's and Chuiya's family), society (Hindu society), and institutional authorities (authoritative bodies that regulate ashrams), all of whom enforce proper widow behavior. The novel presents that religious bodies defend the marginalization of

widows by declaring it a moral and spiritual tradition. By doing so, the priest becomes not just a man of faith but a gatekeeper of social order, using religious knowledge to legitimize suffering. In the ashram, widows are being watched by the head of Madhumati, an older widow who enforces the rules of renunciation, punishes disobedience, and upholds the ashram's strict moral code. "Stay in your place! A widow should know shame!" Similarly, priests, families, and neighbors are also there to measure the purity and behavior of widows.

This research argues that internal surveillance happens when the widows begin to monitor and interrogate themselves even in the absence of direct authority. According to Foucault, this internal surveillance is the most insidious form of power. The widows are afraid of social and spiritual punishment that keeps them compliant. With time, widows internalize these enforced religious regulations so much that they begin to police their thoughts and behaviors. Many of the widows, especially the older ones, believe fully in their inferiority and sinful status. They accept that their suffering is divinely ordained, as the novel exhibits, "God is in control of everything... we are born with our destinies." and shame those who question it (e.g., Kalyani or Chuyia): "Desire is a sin for us. We are already cursed—why anger the gods further?" Thus, Foucault's idea of the panopticon, where people regulate themselves because they believe they are being watched, manifests in the constant moral scrutiny the widows face from both within and outside the ashram.

Foucault's idea of self and reflexivity proposes that people are not born with fixed identities; rather, identities are constructed through a combination of power, discourse and societal norms. This phenomenon is defined as the self, or subjectivity. One of the most compelling contributions of Foucault is to explore how individuals become subjects through power. They perceive the society's moral and ethical codes set for themselves and absorb power. However, it is also

argued that power not only affects our actions but also our self-perception. But Foucault pointed out that power also comes with the possibility of resistance. Individuals have the ability to transform their identities by actively contesting prevailing social norms and accepting the possibility for change, even within challenging contexts. The novel shows this self and reflexivity where widows' personalities are defined by Hindu culture and scripture.

In *Water*, the widows are classic examples of subjects shaped by religious and patriarchal discourse. They are told that their identities are defined entirely by their widowhood, that they are sinful, burdensome, and spiritually impure. Widow's subjectivity has been absorbed and integrated into his suppression. At first, the young Chuyia resists her constructed widow identity when she repeats, "My mother will come for me…. She will take me home" (p. 43), rejecting the ashram's reasoning. Her repetition is a reflection of both her innocence and her growing desperation within the oppressive environment of the ashram, but slowly, her resistance is overwhelmed by the institutional power. According to a Foucauldian perspective, Chuyia's repeating actions are a form of resistance; she is resisting the 'truth' that she is merely a widow destined for sufferings and miseries. Each woman being subordinate to the other feminine identity provides template systems of information that delineate social structures and arrangements through which relations and systems function; even if her voice is hushed, it signifies opposition to the power/knowledge system that swallows the other women.

4.3. Subjectivity and Resistance

This study uses Foucault's theory of power/knowledge and reveals how widows in *Water* subtly yet significantly challenge the oppressive structures around them. In the novel, widows are not just physically but also mentally imprisoned within the confines of religious and patriarchal discourse. However, subversive acts and

thoughts emerge when widows start to question the religious discourse and societal power as one widow asks, "Then why did you send me across the river?" This moment marks a shift in her subjectivity; she begins to redefine herself outside the boundaries of widowhood imposed on her. The novel also subtly and powerfully illustrates that resistance is not only possible but inevitable, and it often begins in the mind, in the form of questioning, doubting, and imagining alternatives to the dominant narrative.

Kalyani and Chuyia's resistance is revealed through feelings, imagination, or passive protest. Kalyani is a young widow who has been forced into prostitution by Madhumati; she quietly resists her plight by clinging to hope and love. Her dreams with Narayan create an image of freedom far beyond that which the ashram confines her to. She boldly declares, "He wants to marry me... I can be a wife again" (p. 135). Her statement contradicts the theological narrative that renders widow's untouchable and sinful, but her longing for love and dignity reveals the inner feelings of every individual. However, her hopes are soon crushed when she discovers that Narayan's father was her former client, revealing the hypocrisy of society, which allows men to exploit the widows. Thus, Kalyani's suicide becomes a final act of defiance. In choosing death, she refuses to submit again to spiritual and sexual exploitation.

Another widow, Shakuntala, begins to challenge the moral and religious legitimacy of the system. She begins to doubt but still feels guilty for questioning the scriptures. Her beliefs are shaped by what she has been told is "true," and that shows power resides in the mind as well as outside the body. The impact of reformist discourses and Gandhi's teachings brings a rupture to her subjectivity, for she begins to develop a new self that does not fit into the ideology of the ashram anymore. It coincides with Foucault's later work on technologies of the self,

wherein people begin to shape their identities based on choices about how they relate to predominant discourses.

Foucault's theory suggests that power is not merely repressive, but it also serves as productive when power is challenged by oppressive people. It shapes how people see themselves. However, he also notes that "the individual is not powerless in the face of discourse" (Foucault, 1982, p. 781); there is always a strong power in mind that forces individuals to refusal, doubt, and redefinition. In *Water,* resistance is not marked by revolution, but it is shown by small acts of resistance like dreaming of love, questioning religious laws, or simply refusing to believe one's fate is fixed. Through these moments, Sidhwa emphasizes that the human spirit can still push back, even when surrounded by silence and control.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to discover the depiction of the widow ashram in *Water* as a religious institution that disciplines the widowed body, and it has revealed that the ashram is not a place of spiritual retreat but a disciplined, controlled space. In the Ashram, the body of the widows is controlled through rituals, dress code, diet restrictions and supervision at every moment. It reflects Foucault's account of how bodies were disciplined. All these elements reinforce each other and create women who must be compliant and denying, as Foucault described the docile body in his concept of "women and docility".

The research shows that absolute discipline is never observed in other worlds. Chuyia's and Kalyani's reactions to the ashram's control are both open, defiant, and violent, while Shakuntala is silent yet demurs with questions before eventually engaging in an act of resistance. Chuyia's refusal of the ashram as his home, the ashram's growing acceptance of being broken by Kalyani, and Shakuntala's desire to break the rules of the ashram together are illustrations that show that power in the novel does not just descend from the top to passive victims.

On the other hand, resistance comes from an inside source; the relationships and the structures that are supposed to limit resistance are those that embody it.

These findings support Foucault's theories of power/knowledge and docile bodies in a useful framework of discipline and resistance in Sidhwa's depiction of the Hindu widows. The novel doesn't suggest that widowhood is an unalterable state of complete domination; neither does it romanticize their fight as an easy route out of institutionalized domination. Instead, it illustrates a constant dialogue with the authority that might be interpreted as disciplinarian and the ability of the widows to question, challenge, and, in part, make their own rules. Here, Water is a literary representation of the very sort of power Foucault identifies, one where control and resistance don't conflict but are mutually implicated in the day-to-day pattern of life

References

Adhikary, R. P. (2020). Plight of widows in Hindu religion (A feminist critique of Deepa Mehta's film Water). International Journal of Management, Entrepreneurship, Social Science and Humanities, 3(2), 37–49.

Asif, M., Noreen, M., & Akhter, M. S. (2021). Gender vs culture: A critical discourse analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel Water. PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology, 18(18), 858–868.

Butler, J. (1997). The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection. Stanford University Press.

Foucault, M. (1977). Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1975)

Foucault, M. (1978). The history of sexuality, Vol. 1: An introduction (R. Hurley, Trans.). Pantheon Books. (Original work published 1976)

Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. Critical Inquiry, 8(4), 777–795. https://doi.org/10.1086/448181

Foucault, M. (1985). The history of sexuality, Vol. 2: The use of pleasure (R. Hurley, Trans.). Pantheon Books. (Original work published 1984)

Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, & P. H. Hutton (Eds.), Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault (pp. 16–49). University of Massachusetts Press.

Foucault, M. (2005). The hermeneutics of the subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982 (G. Burchell, Trans.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Ghosh, A. (2021). Disciplinary power and practices of body politics: An evaluation of Dalit women in Bama's Sangati and P. Sivakami's The Grip of Change through Foucauldian discourse analysis. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 8, Article 184. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00866-y

Ilame, V. R. (2020). Bapsi Sidhwa's Water: Pangs of widowhood. International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 5(4), 921–925.

Iqbal, N., Khan, Z. A., & Bibi, R. (2023). Social status and abuse of women in United India in Bapsi Sidhwa's Water. International Journal of Politics & Social Sciences Review, 2(2), 38–48.

Ismael, H., & Saleh, H. (2023). The discursive strategies of power and female resistance in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale: A Foucauldian reading. Humanities Journal of University of Zakho, 11(3), 555–561. https://doi.org/10.26436/hjuoz.2023.11.3.1096

Khan, N. H. (2020). An intersectional feminist reading of Bapsi Sidhwa's Water. University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature, 4(2), 1–15.

Khushi, & Johri, M. (2024). Bapsi Sidhwa's Water: A critique of patriarchy and gender discrimination. International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies, 3(4), 9–16.

McNay, L. (1992). Foucault and feminism: Power, gender and the self. Polity Press.

Pandith, M. A., & Bhat, G. A. (2021). Gender discrimination: An assessment of Bapsi Sidhwa's Water. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts, 9(2), 885–892.

Sahoo, D. M. (2016). Analysis of Hindu widowhood in Indian literature. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 21(9), 64–71.

Sidhwa, B. (2006). Water. Milkweed Editions.