



## WIDOW, THE SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN & THE SLAVE OF THE PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY (FEMINISM & SOCIAL MOVEMENT THOUGHT)

**DIBAKAR PAL <sup>1</sup>**

**<sup>1</sup> RETIRED EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE (CIVIL SERVANT) & PHD STUDENT, DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA, INDIA.**

### ABSTRACT:

Slavery is a primitive concept. History is the witness of it since time immemorial. History deals with 'his story' not 'her story'. It is the story of kings and even of clowns seldom of queens or heroines. As such, it highlights the name and fame of kings seldom of queens. The queens and heroines are so unfortunate. They are so cursed. Their existence thereby contemporary presence is simply ignored. Thus history is blind, biased and partial as well. Woman due to natural partiality is weaker than man. Further, a woman becomes pregnant but never a man who merely enjoys just to get physiological relief. But labor pain is experienced by a woman only. Thus nature is not impartial. There are two types of people- one likes to torture and the other likes to be tortured. A woman belongs to the second category. A woman bears silently the torture of man for the sake of the family. A man takes the advantage of this noble sentiment of woman. A slave has no right except imposed duty and obligation. Widow, in a patriarchal society, is considered merely as a slave only. A married woman has husband. Similarly, a slave has its master. Husband cares while the master squeezes. With the loss of husband a woman also loses security. A rich and educated widow can somehow tackle the situation. But, if the widow be old, inactive and poor then she dies unfed, unwept, unsung and unknown as well. Again, if the poor widow be young and illiterate then she is compelled to satisfy the sexual urge of the society as a whole. She becomes everybody's wife but nobody's wife. For nobody takes her liability. She has no dignity at all. Thus wife means- 'wonderful enjoyment for enjoyment'. The users i.e., so-called gentlemen are escapist. To them wife stands for- 'worries invited for ever'. This is the real picture of widow in an undeveloped country. A widow experiences 'use and throw' material just like a slave faces hiring and firing. They are squeezed till death. But a nation can never prosper if her women are neglected. In an undeveloped country, especially in the third world, where human rights have no existence at all in practice, the widow faces different unprecedented problems, injustice and countless tortures as were faced by the slaves of the dark continent of Africa. The condition of a poor widow is beggar's description. They are legal slave like marriage being legal prostitution according to George Bernard Shaw. A widow having no issue is simply murdered by the widow-hunter to get her property unclaimed.

To illuminate the dark assertions of widow-life, widows, as per various life-styles they are compelled to lead, can broadly be classified into ten different categories viz., (1). True widow, (2). Illegal widow, (3). Married widow, (4). Imaginary widow, (5). Half widow, (6). Unofficial widow, (7). Unrecognized widow, (8). Happy widow, (9). Mutual widow, (10). Would-be widow.

Lastly, a widow of the third world country is dependent both economically and mentally. She cannot ignore the whips of the patriarchal society. So-called social and religious gurus, just to serve and satisfy their own interests, have openly chained the women mainly the widows by the bindings of society in the name of religion thus converting them simply into slaves i.e., the second-class citizen only.

### KEYWORDS:

**WIDOW, FEMINISM, PATRIARCHY, SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN, SLAVE.**

### INTRODUCTION

Creative writing is based more on manifestation rather than on expression. It does not inform rather reveals, so this style of writing bears no reference. The best creative writing is critical, and the best critical writing is creative. The present article is the outcome of creative writing meant for lay readers. As such free style is the methodology adopted so that pleasure of reading can be enjoyed by the common mass. As you may know Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the immortal essayist, wrote many essays and notably, "Of Love", "Of Friendship", "Of Ambition", "Of Studies", etc. The myriad-minded genius

rightly pointed out that all the words of the dictionary can be the themes of essays one can write. But little has been done, in this regard since his death, in order to finish his unfinished monumental works. In fact Bacon's way of presentation i.e., his unique style kindled the imagination already in me and encouraged me as well to write essays, in the light of creative writing, thus to get relief through Catharsis.

### ARTICLE

There is a good relation between widow-life and window-life. Generally, through a window a sincere lover of nature gazes at the vast sky just to serve and satisfy his

artistic tastes and temperament. Similarly, a widow is also seen to look at the sky through the window. One adopts window-life for enjoyment, whereas the other follows the same avenue being afraid of the unknown future.

If a woman becomes a widow and her husband leaves nothing except a few sons then each of them thinks that their mother will be looked after by the other brothers. But, in practice, the mother is so unfortunate that no son is willing to look after her. It seems, she has become a living luggage. Thus, 'everybody's mother is nobody's mother'.

A son can ignore his mother but seldom his mother-in-law due to curtain lecture. Again, curtain lecture is so powerful that it befools a son easily. Now the widow mother, if she becomes ill, is hospitalized whereas the mother-in-law for mere a petty illness is admitted to a costly nursing home for better treatment. Again, if a woman having no issue becomes a widow with huge property many people want to be her ideal sons. As a result, an unhealthy competition among these strangers is observed to serve their 'mother'. Thus, 'nobody's mother becomes everybody's mother'.

Sudden death of a husband, if he be the only earning member, simply breaks the backbone of the family. Then the lone widow becomes a victim of many expected and even unexpected problems. The situation may remain within control when mature death of the husband takes place leaving issues with property of which she is the sole owner, but it becomes worst, if nothing is left except minor children. Again, the mature death of the husband having property may occur but no issues or the issues may die in mature or premature stage of life. In such a case, the widow should not face financial hardship at least. It becomes pathetic when the poor old husband leaves nothing for the old, lone widow. Such a widow dies unfeared, unwept and unknown as well. The above mentioned four situations become really very sad by the premature death of the husband.

The birth of a female baby, in a patriarchal society, does not receive cordial reception, because this type of society considers a male baby as its sole representative and the right of heiress, especially if it is judged in the light of preservation of so-called generation, is fully declined. So there is no difference between the two families, the former having a daughter and the latter bearing no issue at all. Therefore, the daughter of a poor widow is simply a burden only, but a daughter sometimes, becomes promising more than a son. Yet anxiousness persists till her daughter gets married.

Premature death of a rich husband saves the widow from financial hardship, but wealth cannot always accelerate her remarriage. Social contact caused by employment or by any means generates opportunity here. Also busy-life offers relief from melancholy.

Further she may choose her new life-partner from many applicants who applied against one post temporary, likely to be permanent. Actually, in every sphere of life, permanency of an applicant in any temporary post

depends fully on the likeness of the big boss.

If a rich widow has no social contact then social whip refrains herself from dreaming a new life. Such dream is not general. There are many widows who nurture the memory of their first husbands and decline to remarry. Here the society encourages a widow having no issues to do this just to deprive her from property. Otherwise the un-shaded widow is tortured or murdered to get her property unclaimed. Again, at times, grown-up issues of the widow hate to call a stranger as their new father. Thus the widow realizes the mistake in her decision. She appreciates the serious consciousness regarding social status as well as good sentiment of her beautifully innocent issues and enjoys an echoing green life with them.

A widow is considered as a second-hand body. So a bachelor refuses to marry her.

Then a man either hailing from low socio-economic status or a wide-hearted fellow rescues her. Further, if a poor, illiterate and young widow has none to look her after then the helpless widow supports her livelihood either working hard or by begging or through prostitution. Here a rich and educated widow may discover her second life-partner, but seldom she marries an inferior one. Since Indian mothers are most fertile, chance of a widow for remarriage naturally faces tough competition due to abundance of unmarried girls. Here a widow and a widower match well, for none can claim sacrifice, rather both of them are victims of bad luck.

In a male-dominated society, a widower gets a bride easily but seldom a widow gets a groom of her choice. Here a widow, rich both in beauty and wealth may get chance of remarriage, but a widow having issue gets regret letters instead. Here the widow-hunter says that he may accept the application i.e. widow only, but not her enclosure i.e. issue.

For this uncompromising attitude many widows are compelled to remain as widows forever.

Society blames a woman to be singularly liable for her husband's death. Thus a widow is regarded as the second-class citizen, if not more. She becomes isolated from the main stream of the society. Really a widow is seriously alone. She is deserted not only by her husband but also by the whole world. She finds no avenue except mourning. The whole creation seems to her as if a disappearing and dark smoke full of frustration. A widow is deprived of her property. Also she is cheated and ill-treated due to her poverty. This happens so because of the fact that a widow is quite helpless in absence of her husband.

She has lost her husband i.e. the immediate guardian as well as all the fair-weather friends. As a consequence, the widow at times is used or compelled to satisfy sexual pleasure of the society.

A widow, willy-nilly, has to bear various social whips of the society to control her hopes and desires. Widow-life, thus,

is identified by its unique style. A widow is taught to follow that avenue with unquestioned surrender so that the departed soul of her husband may rest in eternal peace. Unfortunately, many widows believe the matter of heavenly existence. The social dacoits are fully benefited by this trick. But the widow loses all charms of life. This is why many spinsters decline to marry in fear.

A widow, generally, is allowed to take part in the religious festivals but seldom in the enjoyable ceremony like wedding, lest the bride be a widow. Thus she becomes the victim of such superstitions in each footstep. Now being deprived of the sweet side of life, a widow, many a time commits suicide.

A widow faces different problems. Amongst these, financial hardship is the most terrible one. So instead of wasting much in the marriage ceremony both the families of bride and groom who decline to give her food and shelter, may keep the money for her rainy days.

Really pathetic it is when a newly-married bride becomes widow. Then she is tortured for being ominous. This torture becomes severe if the husband be the only son of the dynasty to give birth to the next generation. The death of husband is nothing but a bolt from the blue to a woman. Then her mental agony becomes intolerable when she is identified as an unlucky woman. Also a widow, in course of time, begins to believe it and she ultimately considers herself as the cause of her husband's death. Such a widow isolates herself from the society, lest even her shadow harms others.

Sometimes, a pregnant widow, willing to remarry declines to give birth to a posthumous child. But it does not happen to all the pregnant widows. Again the widow unwilling to remarry becomes affectionate much to give birth to the posthumous child, the last memory or message of her beloved husband. This noble affection becomes very serious if the previous issues died earlier and the posthumous child be the only living embodiment.

Further, a widow if illegally be pregnant after the expiry of her husband then to save herself from scandal she either kills her unborn babe or commits suicide. Sometimes she banishes herself with the baby or she donates the innocent infant to a home for orphans.

These homes thus become overcrowded by the ceaseless supply of human babies i.e. by-products of the society since time immemorial. This secret fact of the society is so pathetic that many writers around the world drew vivid pictures of these cursed hearts.

So far I have discussed different problems and injustice of widow-life. My fiction would be far too long were I to mention all the countless tortures faced by them. So for convenience of further discussion, just to illuminate the dark assertions of widow-life, widows, in the patriarchal society especially in the third world countries, as per various life-styles they are compelled to lead, can broadly be classified into ten different categories as detailed hereinafter.

### **1. TRUE WIDOW / LEGAL WIDOW / PERFECT WIDOW**

A true widow is a woman who has lost her husband by death and not married again.

She may again be called a legal or perfect widow.

### **2. ILLEGAL WIDOW / DESERTED WIDOW**

An unmarried girl, before marriage, may give birth to a child. Then her lover may die or leave her. Thus she becomes an illegal or a deserted widow.

### **3. MARRIED WIDOW**

A married widow is not a widow who has married again. Rather in spite of her widowhood, she likes to lead the life of a married woman.

### **4. IMAGINARY WIDOW / BACHELOR WIDOW / SPINSTER WIDOW / UNMARRIED WIDOW**

Parents, generally, do not allow their daughter to marry a stranger whom she loves.

Simultaneously, the daughter shows audacity to negate parents' choice. Now if her lover dies or betrays then the sentimental girl marries never and lives like a widow nurturing the sweet memory of her unrecognized husband. Such a devotee may be crowned as an imaginary widow or a bachelor widow or a spinster widow or an unmarried widow.

### **5. HALF WIDOW**

A divorcee may be called a half widow. Because she has lost her husband who is still alive. But if that divorced husband dies then the half widow who did not marry further, unofficially, may be called a full widow instead of perfect widow. Also a married woman becomes a half widow if she lives with another man in addition of her legal husband.

### **6. UNOFFICIAL WIDOW**

Sometimes a married woman if, without taking legal divorce from her husband, lives for full time with another man may be called an unofficial widow.

### **7. UNRECOGNISED WIDOW**

A married woman whose husband has been missing since long is an unrecognized widow. However, for acquiring widowhood she at first obeys legal procedure. Then she observes ceremony thus to show adequate respect to the departed soul. We may consider this as an advance respect to that very soul yet to leave the human body.

Perhaps, our society is interested more with the life beyond death than the life of mundane existence.

### **8. HAPPY WIDOW**

A happy widow considers her husband as a living luggage and becomes happy at his death. Also the same face of husband bores her. She likes to face new faces regularly.

So she either departs or murders him to enjoy a happier

life. Further if the husband is a drunkard or tyrant or insane or an impotent or suffering from an incurable disease then she may welcome premature death of her husband.

### **9. MUTUAL WIDOW**

Sometimes discontentment inspires a couple to exchange their life-partner with another willing couple mutually. But they cannot be blamed as divorcee. Thus the two married women become mutual widow to regain their marital status further.

### **10. WOULD-BE WIDOW**

A woman is so lunatic that she always apprehends her husband's death without any reason. She suffers from such a phobia of being a would-be widow.

Since a divorcee enjoys better status than a widow, some cautious women take divorce before the death of their husbands. Widows of any class including divorcees are not called so after their remarriage. But they cannot regain their previous status due to the lackadaisical attitude of the society.

In some conservative societies there is ban to marry a person of another community.

These orthodox cultures are always very vigilant lest their daughters cannot marry a fiancé of another community. In such a situation if a widow marries a person of forbidden community then the brutes of her society kills her mercilessly in open daylight. They enjoy this unprotected murder that protects their social status. None protests against this heinous crime. This murder they crown as honor killing. But the murderers are so stupid that hardly can they realize that they murder their own honor in the eye of both law and humanity as well.

### **CONCLUSION**

A widower also mourns for his departed wife for a long time, only when his love is genuine. Since time is the best healing balm, a widower forgets his wife and marries again. It is easier for a widower to remarry but very difficult for a widow in a patriarchal society where a widow is valued merely as a second-class citizen only.

### **REFERENCES**

No reference, since the present article is an outcome of Creative Writing.