A Hindu Womans Life Essay, Research Paper

Reva s Life Story

As Reva carefully opened the temple door, she noticed the bright light filter in from the hot afternoon sun. The woman hoped this was a sign that the gates of heaven would open for her (Hinduism). The slight woman placed a small, brightly colored package of food at her feet and began to pray to Shives, the destroyer and regenerator. Underneath her ghungat, Reva felt the sweat trickle down her tanned neck and off her blackened brow. She felt faint, to think of her upcoming fate. Reva thought back on all of her past deeds, praying that her karma was good enough to overcome her final deed here on earth

Hala, Reva s father and Roha, her mother, lived a simple life as farmers of the vaishya class in Nepal, India (Hughes 48). Everyday Hala woke up early and worked on his farm. He was very proud of his small plot of land and modest house. He was also very pleased with his young wife. Hala was eighteen years her elder, but Roha was his choice and came with a respectable dowry (Hughes 48). The couple had been desperately trying to have a male child to carry on the family name, unfortunately the only results were four miscarriages. But finally, Roha was with child and the couple prayed to Brahma, the creator, every day for a strong male baby. Much to Hala s grave disappointment, a girl was born while he worked in the fields. When word reached Hala that his much-awaited child was female, he stormed home, ordered Roha to get rid of the child, and didn t return for five days.

Reluctant and scared, Roha began to prepare a tub of milk to drown her infant in ( Society and Culture ). For those five days, she tried to convince herself to perform her

order, but could not. Roha felt an attachment to her daughter, even if she wasn t an asset to the family (Altekar 3). Roha also feared that her karma would be ruined if she killed her daughter. When Hala came home to find the child still alive, he refused to perform a Jatakarma, and he welcomed the child into the world ( Society and Culture ). For four months he would not even touch the girl, but after much pleading from Roha, a Namakarma was performed and the baby was named Reva ( Society and Culture ).

As Reva grew up, her parents were very distant toward her and wondered if Roha hadn t made a mistake by keeping the girl alive. Reva became the focal point of her parent s worries and misery. Roha and Hala continued to pray for a son daily. A son would be the hope of the family, but Reva was just the source of trouble to it (Altekar 5). Her father started looking right away for a suitable and respectable husband for Reva to ensure a marriage as soon as she turned fifteen, so she could move out of the house and stop being a burden for her parents (Altekar 47).

Reva s childhood consisted of learning how to take care of a household and how to become an obedient wife. Under her father s care, Reva never received any formal education. Her mother taught her about the household chores. She also had daily gardening and farming tasks to help out her father, since Roha and Hala still hadn t produced a son. Although Reva knew of her father s search for a proper husband, she couldn t help but fall in love with a young, strong, dark skinned farmer. Jains, at the age of 31 was well known and liked by many. He too was of the vaishya class and worked a plot of land adjacent to the garden Reva worked in (Altekar 67). Reva had little dowry to offer Jains and his family, but Jains was willing to take Reva alone, as his wife and dana. Hala, happy to learn that his search for a husband would be over and Reva wouldn t trouble him anymore, agreed to the arrangement.

Once Reva was bedecked and ornamented modestly, the bridegroom was invited into the house and Reva was offered to him according to the proper Brahma religious rite (A6). The wedding ceremony was somewhat elaborate and lasted about three days.

Reva enjoyed her new life as a married woman. After the ceremony, she was taken to her husband s home, where she was expected to care for Jains mother and father. She ran the house smoothly and with ease. This is what she had been practicing for all of her young life and was suddenly grateful for her mothers persistent teachings. For the first time all of her existence, Reva felt needed and was respected by her husband. Never feeling wanted like this before, Reva was overcome by love for her new husband and his family. She prayed to Vishnu, the preserver, daily to allow her to remain happy in this life for as long as possible. Her fate would soon change after seven months of marriage.

It was a rainy and dark morning when Jains prepared to work on his farm. Reva moved about the house softly, so not to wake her mother and father-in-law, while she did her morning tasks. Jains told Reva of all the jobs she must have completed before the day was done and then vanished into the fog and rain of the morning. The day went

quickly as Reva got into her daily routine of preparing meals and cleaning up the house. When nightfall came and Jains didn t return, Reva became worried.

Reva was abruptly woken from a restless sleep by much commotion around the small house. It was now early dawn and Jains still hadn t returned from his chores of yesterday. A small group of servants of the upper varnas class walked nervously up to Reva and began to explain their gruesome discovery (Hughes 48). The servants were traveling up a dirt road to collect supplies for their master when they found a body on the side of the road. Recognizing Jains badly beaten, crumpled body, they rushed over to inform his wife and family. Jains had apparently been robbed and left to die during the night. Whimpers from Reva s mother and father-in-law could be heard in the background. Reva felt her heart pounding hard in her chest, her mouth went dry, and the world around her went black.

Reva gathered her package of food and slowly walked out of the temple. She gently brushed the tears away from her dampened cheeks. The previous night all Reva could think of was how she never provided an heir for her husband, and what a disgrace this must be to his family. On her way down the rocky terrain, she continued to pray to Shiva, in high hopes of being reborn into the world as a respectable creature.

As she reached the funeral site, Reva gave the package to the Brahmins, for the benefit of her deceased husband (Hinduism). She looked around at the small gathering and noticed her parents, Jains family, and others there to pray for Jains rebirth. There was a gentle breeze and the sun began to go behind a threatening cloud. The smell of human flesh and hair burning filled the air and nauseated Reva. There were horrified screams from the crowd, as Reva slowly climbed up the funeral pyre of her husband and flames engulfed her body (Hughes 50).

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