

The Able-bodied Disabled: A Study of Social Disability of Widows in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water*

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Abstract

This research work delves into delineating the manners in which the widows in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* are reduced to socially disabled beings. Their disability is socially constructed and is dependent on the multiple advertent practices that ensure its generation and sustenance. This paper navigates its main contention by employing the findings of two relevant theorists, Rosemarie Garland and Erving Goffman. Garland's work on freaks and enfreakment, becomes the lens through which the alteration in the widows' physical appearance to disable them is researched. While, Goffman's concept of stigma theory, accentuates the part stigmatization holds in socially disabling the widows. This paper additionally relies on the work of Marie Luisa Frick to explain how this social disability culminates into dehumanization. Social disability then in *Water* is a deliberately and systematically orchestrated phenomenon.

Keywords: Social disability, enfreakment, stigmatization, dehumanization.

Introduction

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* is set up in an ashram located in India, where the widows have been condemned to spend their remaining lives as socially ostracized and oppressed beings. The novel is narrated through an eight-years old widow Chuyia, who had been unfamiliar with the grim realities of widowhood in India until she arrived at the ashram. The society has denied them not only equal but basic human rights. This ostracization transforms them into disabled women who

are confined to perpetual dependence. This dependence extends into the personal, communal, emotional, and fiscal spheres of their lives.

This disability as proposed by the Social Disability Theory is socially and not biologically constructed. The social factors that contribute into this disability include but are not limited to stigmatization, turning the widows into ‘freaks’, and fostering an imbalanced power dynamic in societal hierarchies.

This paper focuses on elaborating and investigating these factors to comprehend how women, an already marginalized community, have been further subjected to oppression due to the cultural mores persisting in the Indian society. The widows in *Water* are denied every means of earning livelihood except for prostitution; a stigmatized profession that aggravates their status in the society, and they are through their attire labelled and marked as the inferior beings; a phenomenon which Rosemarie Garland Thomson’s work on people’s fascination with non-normative bodies (freaks) explains. Their disability then does not stem from their impairment but is a consequence of the practices that society perpetuates and encourages to deliberately impair them.

Another essential theorist in comprehending this social disability is Erving Goffman. His works revolve around the concept of stigma. In this case, this stigma is inculcated enforced on the widows by cultural and social myth and by turning them into freaks. Goffman and Thomson’s work then becomes consequential in understanding this process of socially disabling the widows in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Water*.

In a nutshell, disability and impairment emerge as two distinct realities, where the latter is socially created to turn the able-bodied widows into disabled beings, who depend on the society that oppresses and subjugates them, for their basic necessities and survival.

This paper aims to investigate the manners and practices through which the widows in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Water* are not only transformed but also through internalization of stigma made to believe that they are ‘disabled beings’. It focuses on how the disability of these widows is a culturally curated phenomenon that is sustained through the process of generating and inculcating stigma around widowhood.

This research is qualitative and the analysis it furnishes is based on Close Textual analysis of the novel *Water*. Through this research method, the primary text and the subject matter under

contention have been contextualized, interpreted, and synthesized into a coherent argument using social disability theory to uncover and delineate the manner in which able-bodied widows were relegated to the status of socially disabled women.

It grounds its analysis in the characterization of widows and investigates the plot with a focus on symbols and occurrences/interactions that unveil the intentional nature of disability thematized in the novel. For this purpose, the Close Textual method adequately aids in analyzing and tracing the practices, events, and instances where the deliberate disabling of widows is manufactured.

The study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the cultural practices and myths that sustain and lead to internalization of the social disability in widows in *Water*?
2. What is the symbolic significance of enforcing physical disfiguration on widows?
3. How does the phenomenon of ‘gaze’ become integral in establishing a social reality where the widows identify themselves as disabled?
4. How does the alienation bred by this social disability dehumanize the widows’ existence?

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To underline how social disability of the widows is not an arbitrary but rather a systematized phenomenon
2. To highlight the pivotal role played by physical alterations and appearances to perpetuate and sustain this disability
3. To understand and elaborate the importance of stigma in creating social realities.

Literature Review

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* is a novel centered on the plight of widows residing in an Indian ashram through the perspective of a child narrator and widow, Chuyia. These widows have been relegated to the status of 'the untouchables and impure', which not only hampers their financial freedom but social mobility as well. This paper aims to investigate and unveil the manner in which these widows are stigmatized and turned into beings who are socially disabled. This paper is an attempt to delineate and comprehend the means and the practices through which the widows became the 'able-bodied disabled'. This literature review encapsulates the research work that has been carried out on this novel, and is arranged chronologically to navigate and trace the scope and objectives of these works in a sequential manner.

Stephani Mercanti in the paper *Displacing Androcracy: Cosmopolitan Partnerships in Bapsi Sidhwa's Water* (2011), establishes how the widows are disfigured in order to tone down their sexual attractiveness; an act which marks the beginning of their civil death. The emphasis on the female characters becomes the central point of Syrina Ali Haque's research paper *Goddesses and Women: The Dichotomous Coexistence of Religio-Social Inflected Vision of Indian Feminism in Bapsi Sidhwa's Water* (2017) where the author dissects how the Indian culture is rooted in the reverence for goddesses and female deities and the practice of sati and the regressive attitude towards women is a social construct. The idea of womanhood is reiterated again in Afreen Faiyaz's research titled *Bapsi Sidhwa and Her Rebels in 'Water'* (2019), in which she administers the feminist theory to shed light on the female characters particularly on their quest for an identity and their resilience.

Deviating from the grimness of this reality, Sana Chaudhary and Samar Shahid Bokhari's research work "*Learn to Live Like a Lotus Untouched by the Filthy Water It Grows in*" – *A Study of Contention in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "Water"* (2020) underlines the optimism and strength of the protagonist, Chuyia, who despite being trapped in the inescapable ashram not only finds glimmers of hope and joy but also keeps on questioning the patriarchal norms and traditions. This optimism fades away in Vinayak Kute's paper titled *Idealism and Reality: A Study of The Theme of Widow Remarriage in Bapsi Sidhwa's Novel Water* (2020). This study zeroes in on the obstacles that the laws and religious hypocrisy of Hindu society and culture that ensures the sustenance of violence

in widows and concomitantly denies them the basic right of remarrying and living their lives as human beings. Shaista Naaz in her article *Depiction of Deracinated Widows in Water* (2020), however, furnishes a portrayal of the lives that was enforced on these widows, instead of aligning it with any theoretical framework.

Naik Alam in his paper *Analysis of Existential Perspectives in Bapsi Sidhwa's Water* (2020) contrastingly focuses on the plight directed towards the male characters, primarily towards Narayan. Both these ideas of existentialism and feminism find themselves intertwined in the work of Dr. Veena R. Ilame titled *Bapsi Sidhwa's Water: Pangs of Widowhood* (2020), where she traces the adversity faced by each female character and draws a conclusion that the pursuit of these women to realize and rebuild their identities in the regressive Indian society instills an existential crisis in them which ends in utter despair and desolation. Numaira Hamid Khan in her paper *An Intersectional Feminist Reading of Bapsi Sidhwa's Water* (2020), incorporates a feminist perspective but what sets it apart from the prior researches is the use of Intersectionality's framework. Research aimed at feminist analysis of the novel is further found in Eiko Ohira's paper titled *Bapsi Sidhwa's Water: A Novel: The Widows in Subjugation, Revolt, and Jouissance*. This paper emphasizes on how the widows' body is a space in which the contradictory meanings of their sexuality are exploited for the convenience of a patriarchal society.

Sneha Chaudhary and Priyanka Chaudhary in their research work *Stagnant Development in Indian Child Widow Narratives: A Psychoanalytical Approach to Bapsi Sidhwa's Water: A Novel* (2021), analyses the novel using John Bowlby's Attachment Theory. It explores how initial interactions with the primary care givers i.e. her mother and later Shakuntala, constitute the way in which Chuyia responds to the changes around her. Hence, the focus shifts towards the internal factors instead of fixating on the changes in the external environment. Another article that explores the crevices found within foundations of the Indian culture is *Representation of Sexual Exploitation in Bapsi Sidhwa's Novel Water* (2022) by Shaima Gul Khan. It draws stress on the hypocrisy of Indian culture; where the raped and sexually exploited widows are deemed untouchables but the perpetrators and rapists are revered. Contrarily, Indrani Atul Borgohain's research titled *Diasporic Home: Existence of Widows in Bapsi Sidhwa's Water* (2023), shifts this focus back to the external surroundings. Borgohain argues that the widows are diasporic beings that are doubly marginalized and doubly displaced i.e. physically and mentally.

These displaced widows then become voiceless; a phenomenon that is researched in Sulaiman

Khan and Irfan Ali Shah's paper titled *Subalternity of Indian Widows Due to Patriarchy with Special Emphasis on Bapsi Sidhwa's Water* (2024). This research underscores how the male dominant Indian society not only devoid these widows of their basic rights but also gave the male characters the authority to take life altering decisions for them. This exploration of patriarchal dominance is continued in the research paper titled *Bapsi Sidhwa's Water: A Critique of Patriarchy and Gender Discrimination* (2024) authored by Khushi and Dr. Manjari Johri. They build their research upon Cultural Studies and elaborate how patriarchy has evolved to become a culturally practiced vice that perpetuates the oppression and subjugation of woman.

This literature review highlights how the various facets and factors of widowhood in India have been researched and analyzed, however, the manner of actually transforming these widows into these socially disabled women is not investigated adequately. This research aims to accentuate not the implications and miseries that come along with widowhood in India, but rather on the manner in which these able-bodied women are socially disabled by altering their physical appearance and the means employed to inculcate this disability not only in the society but also in the minds of these widow.

Analysis and Findings

Water (2006) by Bapsi Sidhwa chronicles the miserable lives of widows in an Indian society. The story is narrated by an eight years old widow, Chuyia, who is compelled to spend the rest of her life in an ashram after her forty-five years old husband passes away. The ashram is controlled by a seventy-years old pompous widow Madhumati; who runs the ashram by prostituting another widow Kalyani. As Chuyia spends her days at the ashram she befriends two other residents of that ashram; Kalyani and Shakuntala.

Shakuntala's character throughout the novel shelters and protects Chuyia; be it in teaching her compliance and submission to shield her from the wrath of Madhumati or sending her away with Narayan (who loved Kalyani) after Madhumati decides to turn Chuyia into a prostitute after Kalyani's suicide. The subplot of this novel revolves around Narayan and Kalyani's love. Narayan's unconventional desire to marry Kalyani; a widow, is impeded by the grim reality that

Kalyani unveils once she realizes that she has been a prostitute for Narayan's father. This separates the two paramours, where Narayan along with Chuyia joins Gandhi's political rally and Kalyani commits suicide.

Through the character of Chuyia, Sidhwa introduces her readers to the marginalized life that the widows in that ashram were condemned to live. They were reduced to the most fragile and dependent of beings. Despite being able-bodied the social construct that encompassed them transmogrified them into disabled people; who internalized their social disability and became subservient to the social norms dictating the trajectory of their lives.

The disability cultivated into the lives of these widows can be comprehended through Social Disability Theory. This theory propounds that disability is a social construct. It argues that impairment and disability are two distinct things and they do not share any causal relations. Disability is a consequence of societal practices that perpetuate 'disablement' and every socially disabled person does not have to have a physical or mental impairment (Waldschmidt 45). Similarly, not every impaired person is disabled. For example, the presence of stairs disables a wheel chair bound person, but a ramp does not.

Rosmarie Thomson Garland, a professor, bioethicist, and author has extensively researched and worked on disability studies. Her works encompass the manner in which disabled bodies become a spectacle, the representation of such bodies, and the consequences and compounded motives social disability. Her book *Extraordinary Bodies* (1997) situates disability as a social constructions and correlates disabled bodies with the freaks and freakshow that were prevalent in American society in late 19th and early 20th century. These concepts explain Sidhwa's representation of widows as socially marginalized freaks. Additionally, Erving Goffman; a sociologist and social psychologist, whose works are centered around 'impression management' researched the manner in which stigmatization leads to internalized stigma in his book *Stigma: Notes on Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963). His stigma theory becomes essential in comprehending the compliance of widows with the social status thrust upon them.

This paper aims to explore the manner in which these able-bodied widows were metamorphosed into socially disabled people; the practices through which they internalized the stigma associated with their beings; and the ramifications of these socially established norms.

Enfreakment and Stigmatization

Enfreakment and stigmatization are intrinsically intertwined, as practicing the former yields to the presence and inculcation of the latter. When an individual is turned into a freak, he becomes socially distinct from other people; this distinction or otherness initiates and instills the process of stigmatization. The term ‘enfreakment’ was first used by David Hevey, and it refers to the deliberate practices and propagation of ideologies through which individuals are turned into freaks (R. G. Thomson 82). Similarly, disability and exclusion are founded upon something that is tangible and discredits the other person are ‘different’. Since, the widows were devoid of what Thomson termed as mark of freakdom’, their appearance had to be altered to disable their beings.

The widows were enfreaked, i.e. turned into freaks by a deliberate process of enfreakment. The society’s fixation on stripping away their identity by metamorphosing their appearance was rooted in their deliberate decision to ostracize and set them apart from others. This was possible only by making them atypical. This alteration was then a label and marker that the society thrust upon them to categorically establish their atypicality. In *Water*, Sidhwa narrates this practice in the following manner:

She grasped Chuyia’s hand and, using a brick, violently smashed the red glass bangles that hung from her wrist.... The smashing of the bangles was the first of many rituals designed to mark Chuyia’s descent into widowhood.... As he snipped off the first of her long tresses, the barber initiated the next ritual in Chuyia’s passage into widowhood. (Sidhwa 30-31)

The unstitched white cloth, the shaved head, and the prohibition of any jewelry become the tools through which the widows were turned into freaks. It marked them as widows, as the ‘Other’ who were systematically enforced to appear as outcasts. In *Water* when Narayan meets Chuyia, he to Chuyia’s fascination is cognizant of her status as a widow. On her inquiry, he silently caresses her bald head. Thus, their socially curated appearance serves as their identification. This enfreakment constitutes their identity as widows, and make their bodies a public spectacle.

In this spectacle, body, or rather non-normative body, instilled inquisitiveness among masses. This fascination with bodies dates back to early times, when monsters of antiquity frightened masses. These monsters evolved to become freaks of nineteenth century, which transformed into the

disabled people of late twentieth century. The necessity of enfreakment, then in the case of widows can be explained through the following lines:

Freaks are created when certain bodies serve as raw material for the ideological and practical ends of both the mediators and the audiences...In freak shows, the exhibited body became a text written in boldface to be deciphered according to the needs and desires of the onlookers. (R. G. Thomson 84)

This curiosity and the desire to explain a non-normative body became the established response to these atypical bodies and it allowed these freaks to register their alienation and difference from the rest of the group. These physical differences that these freaks exhibited is what made them be categorized as 'freaks' or the socially ostracized beings. It underlined their existence as a differentiated one.

In *Water* since the widows lack any such non-normative physical characteristics, their appearances were deliberately manipulated and refashioned to turn them into creatures that instilled and inculcated inquisitiveness among masses. Therefore, widows were advertently turned into freaks. This transformation becomes vital as it not only sets them apart from the rest of the crowd but also constitutes the foundation of their disability. The shaved head, the white unstitched clothed, the unadorned bodies were then not merely an attire of mourning but a method of turning them into freaks, and socially atypical beings whose appearance turned them into freaks and rendered them socially disabled and different.

The foundation of this disabled identity also rests on the process of stigmatization. Erving Goffman's stigma theory explains how this stigma is inculcated in disabled and atypical bodies during social interaction. Since the widows are made to believe that they are socially unacceptable through the incessant hatred, intolerance, and repulsion directed towards them; their constant response to these 'places of mixed contact' and social gathering will either be exhibiting an overly self-conscious behavior; where they monitor and carefully examine their actions, or entirely avoiding these interactions by re-organizing their lives (Goffman 12). The intervention of stigma, however, is not limited at this re-organization. Its contribution is essential in ensuring that the widows not only realize themselves as the discounted beings but also internalize the stigma and shame associated with their disabled social status. As a consequence of this internalization they

become complacent in the place society assigns them. For instance, when Chuyia initially rebelled against the rules of the ashram, she was silenced by Shakuntala and other widows. The widows through the inculcation and internalization of stigma were made to believe that the societally constructed social reality was their actual reality. Erving Goffman explains the working of stigma in the following manner:

The term stigma and its synonyms conceal a double perspective: does the stigmatized individual assume his differentness is known about already or is evident on the spot. (4)

This divides the stigmatized beings into two categories; one who are cognizant of their disability or discredited nature and second, of those who realize it through the societal reactions directed towards them. In *Water* all the widows fell into the first category. They had for years been accustomed to the repulsion and seclusion directed towards them and had gradually internalized and accepted their renegotiated identity of disabled beings. Subsequently, they remained passive, obedient, and never rebelled or questioned the social hierarchies which positioned them as the most compromised citizens with no agency and rights.

However, Chuyia; who was so confounded by the new world surrounding her, gradually comprehended the loathing gazing directed towards her, through her interaction with other people outside the ashram (the second category of stigmatized beings). Her consistent protestations were grounded in her unfamiliarity with the taboos and stigma encompassing her existence. While the other widows did not rebel simply because they knew their place in the society. Using Goffman's stigma-theory their lack of revolt can be explained by borrowing the concept of shame. Goffman states:

Shame becomes a central possibility, arising from the individual's perception of one of his own attributes as being a defiling thing to possess, and one he can readily see himself as not possessing. (7)

Since the widows internalize this shame - which is inculcated in them through the staring ritual; a ritual initiated by altering their appearance – they never attempt to question the norms and societal practices alienating them. This shame consumes their desire to live and experience life like any other human being

The widows in *Water* were forced into disability by the social institutions around them. This social disability demanded certain 'marks of freakdom' to set these widows apart from the other women and to suggest a plausible reason for their ostracization. For this purpose, they were enfreaked and their physical appearance were deliberately altered. This enfreakment led to stigmatization. They were disrespected, disregarded, and discouraged. Their existence was stigmatized; they were believed to be bad omen and cursed creatures. These factors constructed their identity as the socially disabled women

The Widows as the 'Cultural Other' and Dehumanized Beings

Rosemarie Thomson uses the terms 'cultural self' and 'cultural other'; where the cultural self is the observer and the cultural other is the observed, who possesses some non-normative characteristic (R. G. Thomson 89). This binary becomes essential in allowing the widows to internalize the stigma associated with their being and accept themselves as the disabled. This concept of cultural self and other, then engenders a staring ritual; where the disabled body becomes the object and the able-bodied person the starrer.

The disabled body in an ableist society demands a narrative; as to why the body is different, what happened and how did it happen. This demand for the narrative is not categorically put forward rather it is implied and understood through the gaze and stare that these bodies invite. This stare and tell ritual establish the autonomy/power of the starrer and the subjugation of the object being stared at. Rosmarie Garland-Thomson in her paper *Staring Back: Self Representation of Disabled Artists* (2000) explains this phenomenon as:

In the social context of an ableist society, the disabled body summons the stare, and the stare mandates the story. This stare-and-tell ritual constitutes disability identity in the social realm. This exchange between starrer and object registers both the anonymity that confers agency on the starrer and the singularity that stigmatizes the one who is stared at. (335)

When one person assumes the role of the starrer and the other of the object, a hierarchy is formed. In this hierarchy, the former recognizes himself as the autonomous and dominating entity whereas, the latter becomes the meek and oppressed being. The prerequisite for this hierarchy is the staring

ritual; which only occurs when the object (to be oppressed) is capable of initiating this staring phenomenon i.e. his appearance is demented so as to garner gazes. In *Water* the enfreakment of widows serves similar purpose. This socially formed hierarchies constituted through the staring rituals are observed at places where the starrer and the object interact.

The sites of social interaction for the widows and the ableist society was either the temple or the *ghat*. Whenever the widows came into contact with other women or men, the hierarchy through the staring ritual was evident. For instance, on the outskirts of the temple the widows were turned into beggars and the people who saw, helped, and passed by them were conscious of not engaging in conversations with them and neither letting their children do so. Concomitantly, the widows who were cognizant of their status as the subjugated beings neither questioned nor rebelled against these discriminations. For instance, when Shakuntala was rebuked for passing by a marriage ceremony and instructed to not let her shadow touch the new bride, she complied instead of rejecting the societal taboos that identified her as a disabled and cursed entity.

This was a consequence of her internalizing the stigma that society directed towards her through the staring ritual and by generating cultural myths that labelled them as cursed and ill omened. The staring ritual, as Thomson points out, further cements their status as disabled people, as it established social hierarchies and structures the society in terms of this hierarchies. The able-bodied widows were thus first enfreaked, to turn them into objects for the staring ritual and later, stigmatized to eventually manufacture a sustainable social disability; where the widows were systematically taught to be subservient and accepting of their status as the 'Cultural Other'.

This social disability thrust upon the widows culminates and yield into them been relegated to the status of de-humans Marie Luisa Frick in the chapter *Dehumanization and Human Rights* (2021) explains this dehumanization as expressive dehumanization; that views the other persons as a counterfeit being, devoid of real emotions and sentiments. This dehumanization, according to her exists at two levels, the first is supra-humanization, and the latter is sub-humanization (189-190).

In case of supra-humanization, the person is dehumanized to delegate him to a position superior to that of man i.e. a deity etc. In case of sub-humanization the person is relegated to a position inferior to man. In either case, the individual ceases to be a normal functioning human capable of erring,

entailing and exhibiting flaws. In *Water* Sidhwa's portrayal of the widows relegates them to a sub-human level.

This sub-humanization occurs as a consequence of compounded factors, which include the enfreakment of widows to socially disable them, stigmatizing their existence, and establishing social hierarchies through the staring ritual. As a result of this sub-humanization the widows lose their fundamental rights. The women at the ghat avoided the water the widows touched, brides were protected from their shadows, children were restricted to interact with them, they were excluded from the society and had no means of livelihood other than begging and prostitution, and they were denied the most fundamental human right of deciding their lives for themselves.

When an individual is dehumanized, i.e. the human is removed, the question that arises is as to what remains behind. In case of *Water* the widows became subjects that the society could rule upon. Their fate was decided by the social norms encompassing them. Their means of livelihood were determined by the society. They were, due to the stigma and myths of being cursed attached with their being, denied a place in the society but the same ruling elite; which ostracized them, turned them into prostitutes and benefited from their plight.

This prostitution fostered and further extended their dehumanization. It generated an exhausting loop of being disabled and disregarded. The widows were meticulously and systematically disabled and the social ostracization co-existing with this disability had obstructed their access to earn their livelihood. Concomitantly, it had rendered them economically dependent on the very society that had discarded them. For this purpose, in the novel the widows were either beggars or prostitutes; two professions that are least respected and most loathed in the society. And because of being associated with these professions they were further ridiculed, oppressed, and marginalized. Thus, creating a debilitating loop of being disabled and marginalized.

This dehumanization, which was a result of socially disabling the widows by transforming them into the 'Cultural Other' which initiated a staring ritual and subsequently stigmatized them ensured the perpetuation of the inhumanity directed at them. This intentional and deliberate curation of disability as traced in this paper, reflects that widowhood as portrayed by Sidhwa, is a mediated state of being; where societal structures and practices aggravated and extrapolate it to

social disability curtailing both the liberty of existing as autonomous individuals, and of exercising fundamental human rights.

Conclusion

The widows in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* portray the grim mechanisms and practices through which the society transmogrified the able-bodied widows into disabled beings. This paper emphasizes on how the manner of turning the widows into socially disabled women was not random or arbitrary. Rather it was schematized and adeptly practiced. From altering their physical appearance and turning them into 'freaks' to invite gazes that could initiate the staring ritual; a practice that enabled them to associate themselves with the stigma society ascribed to their beings. This stigma, subsequently, was so adamantly cultivated that it prevented them from calling the societal injustice into question. Rather they became meek, submissive creatures who accepted whatever society decided for them which culminated into the denial of basic human rights and liberty.

This research on the mechanism of socially disabling them will aid in deciphering the compounded motives behind this deliberate enfreakment in a more comprehensive manner. It also, by furnishing a ground for understanding as to why the widows accepted their status as sub-humans in *Water*, provides an insight into the manner in which the widows unconsciously internalized the stigma directed towards them and became the society's facilitators in socially disabling themselves. Social Disability, in the novel, as proposed in this research is by its nature a methodically engendered phenomenon that strives to suppress and subjugates widows according to societal expectations and social hierarchies. The altercations of physical appearance, the process of enfreakment, their transition into the 'Cultural Other', the inculcation of stigma, the initiation of staring ritual, and the eventual dehumanization of the widows then can be read as a culturally dictated and sustained process of marginalizing weak and frail communities such as the widows.

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