WIDOWHOOD: AN OVERVIEW

Life events like widowhood bring a change in the social relations and role involvement of societal members which are institutionalised into several stages. Starting from the official recognition of the event it passes through identification of affected persons, "limbo" location of the affected person (depending upon other people who fill the gap produced by the withdrawl of the individual and who could support until next stage) re-engagement work where grief work is undertaken to rebuild their life, giving new orientation toward a new social environment and ends in establishment of new lines of connection through social roles and social relations. Though all societies have institutionalised death, grief and bereavement as social events, most, if not all, have restricted these rituals, feeling that they cannot afford prolonged disorganisation and 'limbo' location in the life of survivors whose role clusters are affected by an event. Every society defines the degree to which people should be disturbed by a specific death, how they should handle the process of re-engagement, limbo location and its maximum period and how re-engagement should take place.

Each society develops and works out solutions to widowhood providing alternate ways in which women can re-enter the social system after widowed. But the mismatching in the wishes and expectations of an individual and reality of her...
life in societal expectation and cultural values, like practice of sati in India, make the life difficult. Societies with strong patrilineal patterns offer completely different role cluster to widows than the bilineal and neolocal American system.

Life stages in widowhood varies from country to country depending upon their societal structure, composition culture, institutions and the characteristics of widows. Levirate—one of the purest form in the world—and the inheritance are the two basic choice/rights for widows in Africa. Their society is invariably polygamous and favour a full marriage relationship. A woman who could not enter levirate relations or who do not wish to remarry is assigned to a guardian and their status is in par with a minor in U.S. A young woman can go back to her natal family paying back the dowry and is free to enter again into a full marriage. Widows with grown up sons usually remain with them in their lineage community and her eldest son heads the family with an assurance for the maintenance of members of household.

American middle class society compared to other societies provide a wider set of choices to a widow. she can remarry; choose a husband from any defined circle; she can focus upon the role of mother or grand mother; she can become or continue being involved in voluntary association; she can intensify her relations with friends drop old ones and make
new ones; she can remain in the house shared with the husband or move anywhere. She can ignore or keep her life around the kin of her husband/herself. The direction and forms of life changes of an American woman are left up to her with little institutionalized guarantee of any specific pattern.

Mate selection is increasingly based on 'love' developed during a dating or courtship in their teen years. The fundamental isolation of married unit-neolocal residence-make the couple heavily rely on each other for various socio-economic and child bearing functions. They inherit all or sizeable portion of the estates or at least act as a guardian for the estate that is on their children's name. They follow a bilateral and egalitarian family. Levirate is criticized and most of them cut the relation with husband's side as and once the connecting line is gone. In case of remarriage of young widows living with young children, the children also take the last name of their new father. Most older people as in European countries of England and Denmark do not wish to live with their married children and define "Intimacy at a distance" as an ideal one. Most of the older widows hold some jobs full/part time and join voluntary association and some become "perpetual widows" and some increase their involvement in lives of their grandchildren. The usual problems of young widows is of returning to work, child rearing and re-establishing themselves eligible in the remarriage market—most of them remarry and hence studies...
deal with older widows. The average age at widowhood is 56 years (1980). Old widows, predominantly ruralite, with out any savings are the most sufferers. Many are home owners, self sufficient, self reliant and voluntaristic in individual action. Their value system are so secular (Geoffry Gorer, 1965) that even rituals such as those of mourning and bereavement have become de-institutionalised. The life of a widow is less controlled in American societies due to neolocal family groups, self-selective partner choice, relatively high status of women in the nuclear unit, weak kin connections and strong rights of property inheritance on the part of the wife.

Similar to Indian setting Chinese widows are virtually under the control of mother-in-law and the husband line who retain their rights and inheritance even after widowed. Family of orientation loses all rights of determining her fate, unless and/until it returns the bride price. Many parts of the Chinese society forbade widow inheritance and so either she has to stay with husband's family without remarriage or work in in-laws family till she return the bride price and move out. Traditional China honoured 'chaste' women who never remarried and even erected statues on their honour. The ratio of widowed to a married in U.S., China and India is 1:5.55, 1:3.02 and 1:3.14 (1978). A widow can return to her family of orientation after the
49th day of her husband's death and generally remarriage is forbidden as labour is highly valued in this country.

A number of biographies and autobiographies on widowhood in India uniformly holds that a woman/wife is expected to 'revere her husband as a God'. The ideal act following the death of a man became sati where a woman is forced to self immolate on the funeral pyre of her husband on the belief that she serves him in his later life. In regions where this is not followed the death of her husband is taken as a 'proof of the widow's sin' and there was a routine persecution of the widow by a barber who is paid to shave her head once in fortnightly. The status of these widows who did not commit sati became defined in the code of Manu '... she must never even mention the name of another man after her husband has died'. The code is still embellished in practice into a complex of rules aimed at making widows as unattractive and as isolated from the on-going life of society as possible.

They were deprived of every gold and silver ornament, of the bright-coloured garments, and of all the things they love to have about or on their persons.... The widow must wear a single coarse garment, white, red or brown. She must eat only one meal during the 24 hours of a day. She must never take part in family feasts and jubilees with others. She must not show herself to people on auspicious occasions. A man or woman thinks it unlucky to behold a widow's face before seeing any other object in the morning. A man will postpone his journey if his path happens to be crossed by a widow at the time
of his departure. A widow is called 'inauspicious thing'. (Pundita Rematai Seravati, 1988).

The most basic common causes of deprivation are the restrictions that widows experience in the domains of residence, inheritance, remarriage, employment and community support. These restrictions vary from region to region and from states within region. Considering the two extremes of caste spectrum—'sanskritised castes' and the so called 'untouchables'—it should be remembered that the restrictions on the lifestyle of widows tend to become rigid as one moves up in the caste hierarchy. To wit, Brahmin widows are still under strong pressure to lead a life of seclusion, austerity and chastity dedicated to the memory of their husband while the widows belonging to other group have greater freedom to remarry, to take up employment and lead their own life. However, lesser gender discrimination among tribal communities and better position of women in Islam law in terms of extensive land inheritance rights, lesser alienation from parental family after marriage and greater freedom to remarry is also noted. Remarriage in India is, however, governed by many individual factors such as age, length of widowhood, length of first marriage, motherhood status and the number of children, her vulnerability in the absence of other husband (land inheritance), her relation with in-laws (sexual exploitation) and her own experience in conjugal life (Chen, 1995).
The ideal women is still expected to identify with the family of her husband and to remain with it in widowhood especially when the children are born. The practice of patrilocality and patrilineal inheritance is of profound significance for widows. Women have less freedom to "return" to their parental home and themselves feel a 'fall of status' to return to their parental village empty handed. In North India widows are forced to leviratic union and get less support from their affinal relatives. In some parts of eastern region women do enjoy better status and exercise their rights to express their liking and disliking in marriage, remarriage, supportive sources, employment, etc. In South India the shorter marital distance and preferential forms of marriage facilitate her residence in amidst of known members such as members of clan and lineage.

Age of a woman decides her role position and status and it is linear with widowhood rate. The raise in legal age of marriage and medical advancement increases the probability of survival of woman and hence, there is a rise in proportion of old widows in recent times (Census of India, 1960-1990). Most of the rural widows are either illiterates or dropouts. One of the typical characteristics of Indian widows is the early age of marriage and wider spousal age difference mostly causing shorter marital life. Young girls marriage to a middle aged/old man, sometimes as a second
wife, widens the spousal age gap and increases the probability of survival of women as widows. The mate selection is predominantly by family members. A large number of women are widowed in reproductive age group. One of the characteristics of Indian widowhood is poverty and fall of standard of living.

Thus, the overview of widowhood in few different countries shows the difference in the characteristics of widowhood and their life styles. The descriptions of present research is drawn from the above settings. Keeping the broad themes of research in mind the following pages on reviews of earlier works are compartmentalised under the headings of living arrangement, social network and support dimensions.
LIVING ARRANGEMENT of a woman and its choice gain importance as and when marriage breaks down. Decisions on residential choice revolves around many factors such as attachment, resources, quest for autonomy, child status, economic status, age and above all the residential arrangements prior to widowhood and her established relationships with kin and non-kin. The resultant social structure of families obviously affects the rights, duties, exchanges and support systems (Lopata, 1973) of a widowed and others. Living arrangement of widows portrays an opportunity structure in terms of nature and strength of family relationships. It is a vehicle demonstrating family solidarity and responsibility and establishing a joint household is believed to be the most direct support to the widowed. These socio economic and demographic factors may enable a widow to either stay alone or run an independent family with children or supplement the household with another kin. However, social scientists have concluded that any sense of uniformity in the living arrangement of widows is impossible (Carter & Glick, 1970).

The rural farm family shelters effectively the widowed females without any special measure for their rehabilitation and in fact benefit from their efficiency in agricultural operations. However, the relative absence of the widowed in rural farms and their movement from farm to nearby areas is also noticed and a few reorganise their
family by moving into another home shortly after husband's death (Bowling & Cartwright, 1982). In this British study five percent moved to a new residence after they became widowed. A study on rural widows in India (Chen, 1994) in contrast shows that there is no much change in the locality of dwelling while an Indian urban study in Tamil nadu (Aruna, 1993) finds half of the study sample to change their living arrangement. However, it is not uncommon for old people to cling to their own houses for sentimental reasons or fear of change. Kashivasi small town widows pose a typical picture of traditional India. Almost all of them (99%) were married in childhood, most of whom became child widows, and hence, child less. Most of these widows moved away from joint families, one third out of tension, conflict and compelling circumstances where young are suspected of illicit relationships and older of witchcraft. More than half stay as rentiers and nine percent beg for their livelihood. O'Bryant (1983) reports that 91 percent of older Columbus widows who lived alone are homeowners planned to continue in the same homes as long as they could manage (73%) or for the rest of their lives (18%). Lopata (1979) observes that after an average of 11 years of widowhood, over a half of the Chicago widows lived in the same housing units.

In the rural family organisation most of the widows live either with their children, brother or parents. Bose & Sen conclude that most of the daughters-in-law and
sisters-in-law continue to live in their husband's family even after the demise of their spouse particularly when they have children. It is also supported by other scholars who investigated in different regions of India (Audilakshmi, 1986; Sweet, 1972; Sivagnanaselvi, 1993; Aruna, 1993). Widows migrating to parental village reside with blood relatives like members of natal family particularly father and relatives through father (Chen, 1994; Nagesh & Katti, 1984; Chakrabarti, 1989; Aruna; Sivagnanaselvi). Young widows are taken back by parents particularly when their families plan to remarry her or when widows complain of her sufferings from indignities and oppression in the family (Bose & Sen, 1966). This is also true of Kashivasi widows where one out of 4 (Saraswathi, 1984) stay with kinsmen. They stay often with natal or affinal kin irrespective of rural urban background (Audilakshmi, 1988) and particularly if they are young living with one child (Sweet). Contradicting this Jambagi (1989) reports that Lingayat widows rarely go back to their parents.

A cross sectional rural study in Kongu region finds a sharp decline in proportion of joint households from two thirds before to 3.67 percent owing to widowhood (Sivagnanaselvi). While a majority of aged widows in West Bengal live under joint families. Family structure is found to vary across the caste groups by a large scale survey on female headed households in India (Ranjana Kumari, 1989).
Members of four generations live under one roof in upper caste groups while the family branches out in the case of lower caste. In Western rural India 80 percent of widows live in extended families and pose no problem to society (Chakrabarti). An ethnographic study of widows in Tirupati and surrounding areas in Andhra pradesh (Audilakshmi), a comparative study of working and non working widows (Krishnakumari, 1992) and a study on rural widows (Chakrabarti) highlight the inferior status of widows and being considered a burden ending up in tension and conflict, and the prevalence of sub nuclear type of households (Premalatha; Aruna; Sivagnanaselvi). Two thirds of the urban widows with sons (Nagesh & Katti), women over 60 years and living with adult sons (Chen) and with children less than 18 years (Sweet) opt to stay nucleated. Children being brought up by grand parents and the hesitation of the relatives to accept a woman with two or more children is said to be the reason for the presence of more subnuclear families (Chevan & Kerson, 1972).

A few studies do highlight rare incidences of living arrangement such as linked with married daughters (Chakrabarti; Chen, 1994) non kin members (Manna & Chakrabarti) and sharing a home with one another of a similar status (Lopata, 1971, 1973).

In contrast to Indian set up an overwhelming

1. Authors with single publication in bibliography are not prefixed with year of publication.
proportion (90%) of Columbus widows, U.S., keep themselves away from married children only with the view to avoid the anticipated conflict and tensions and partly because of their desire to live alone with autonomy (O'Bryant, 1984). Lopata (1973) finds desire for autonomy as a critical factor for single member household in Chicago. Belcher (1967) reports that widowed constitute a large proportion of single person households and this is supported by the study on racial differences and kin network and family structure by Hoffereth (1984); and Berardo (1967) who points out females to be 'isolated'. Women with previous roles as wife and mother find living alone as a crisis (Kahana & Kiyak, 1980) and widows, unlike separated and divorced, are less prepared for single life style (O'Bryant, 1989). Political activists and ethnographic researchers have concluded that U.S. Black families, specifically when women are in employment (Chevan & Kerson, 1972), less tend to follow single parenthood than Whites (Angel & Trienda, 1982; Stack, 1974). Bachrach (1980) in his investigation with National probability sample finds widows without children to live alone with limited social contacts. Home ownership and senior age are cited as promoters of single member household (O'Bryant, 1983; 1984), especially for elderly (Rix, 1984). Older people prefer to live apart from their children preferably in their own homes (Troll, 1971) for their 'attachment to husband's house' (O'Bryant, 1983) or decisions on neighbourhood (Cantor, 1975;
Hartmann, 1977) or housing satisfaction and intention to stay in their homes (O'Bryant & Wolf, 1983). An Indian study finds old childless widows opting their inlaws' home to spend the remaining life in the memories of their husband (Audilakshmi). Indian studies too notice the presence of aged (Chen), irrespective of rural and urban background (Audilakshmi) to establish single member household (Saraswathi; Manna & Chakrabarti) unlike Dharwad widows who are less likely to stay alone (Jambagi, 1989).

A cross sectional survey by Sweet reveals that widows compared to other categories of single women are likely to act as head of the household (85%) and it is bound to vary by education and more by age and number and age of children. Hoffereth, adds that a greater proportion of Blacks live as head of the household facing financial constraints. A Comparative study covering 562 widows in 14 villages spread over states (Chen) finds 62 percent to head their household, 26 percent living in the household headed by son and one percent with married daughters. Ranjanakumari in her study on female headed households concludes that women shall not be accepted as a dejure head of the household by both the family members and the neighbours, owing to many reasons like inheritance rights to men making them central part of family and the patrilineal form of social structure attaching more value to sons. The proportion of Brahmin
widows of Tirupati under 'self authority' is high in religious centers (36.20%) than in urban centers (24.06%). Religious widows are found to be often under the authority of father-in-law (27.43%), brother-in-law (19%) and mother-in-law (10%) while widows from business centers are found under the headship of brother-in-law (35.38%) or father (12.74%).

Decisions on living arrangement particularly in deciding to stay alone or joint with some one is subjected to factors like preference, options and affordability of widows (Sweet). Regarding opportunity structure the attachment between relatives and the widowed is found to decline as widows grow older and lose their senior members such as parents and parents-in-law. Home, for a widow, is an independence (Lopata, 1979) and homeownership serves as a symbol of status and competence for widows in particular (O'Bryant & Nocera). Widows who are rentiers either live in same economic position or fall from high to low income level causing poverty (Rix, 1984). In India widows do stay alone, usually enter labour force (Aruna) though some resort to begging (Saraswathi) for their prime source of living. Consistent with this, O'Bryant (1983) concludes economic considerations to be the leading predictor of older widows' decision to move from their homes.
Supportive social relationships enhance successful coping with stressful life events. Studies on well being of elderly widowed women report social relationships to constitute an especially important resource for them (Cantor, 1980; Pilisuk & Minkler, 1985). Social exchange is used as an explanatory framework within which the support interaction and social networks of various people are studied (Lee, 1985). Widows in most societies are more likely to be poor, socially segregated, psychologically or socially or emotionally troubled and are left without a meaningful life pattern or social function (O'Bryant, 1985; Lopata, 1973, 1979; Bankoff, 1983; Morgan, 1990). Supportive networks fill a great void in their life by acting as a buffer between life events and adaptation (Henderson, 1977). A married woman's social relationship tends to occur in a 'couple context' and 'stable in interaction with less exchange oriented' (Shulman, 1975). But, when marriage dissolves the shared network is likely to be pulled apart to some extent either by choice or not and is likely to resemble premarital characteristics, become less kin centered, less heterosexual and less couple centered (Rands, 1992). Social networks are necessarily considered supportive by many scholars as they provide comfort, information, material aid and other resources (Caplan, 1974; Procidono & Heller, 1983). Hence a positive interpersonal experience or measure of
positive social ties is the number of people toward whom the respondent felt close and comfortable (Rook, 1984).

A typical picture of the widowed is circumscribed by kin and family network fusing individuals into social aggregates with helping and visiting patterns as their important aspect. Relationship with family, friends and neighbours involves separate realms of activity complementing each other which could not be substituted for each other. Compared to married kinship functionality is more integrated with widows (Gibson, 1969) and their extended kin network is hypothesised to be the basic family system so integrated than non kin. Research linking living arrangement and widowhood shows that extended kin network to be a substitute for single mother family arrangement where in widows continue to live as mothers or older adults, highlighting racial differences in single parent families (Hogan, Hao & Parish, 1990). Importance of kin members in a widow's life is also enhanced in the extensive works of Lopata (1973, 1978, 1979). The primary network of the widowed encompasses a larger number of relatives both 'consanguineous and extended kin' (Anderson, 1984) and involvement of distant kin when children and siblings involve more (Babchuk, 1978) is also underlined. Densely knit structure of most kinship ties intersect with the norm 'Blood is richer than Water' encouraging support relationships among kin. According to Gibson (1969) earlier works failing to control for the availability of kin have also under estimated the importance of kin network for those
living alone. American Black households tend to include more relatives and non-relatives than households of Whites (Bernard, 1966) and strong intergenerational ties are observed in Black families (Andel, Tienda, 1982; Stacks, 1974). Hoffereth (1984) reports that Blacks are kin centered and rely on kin for support and Stacks (1974) finds near-by kin to be important participants in Black kin networks.

Gibson (1967) identifies the important role of non-kin and formal supporters for the shrinkage in kin network. The studies on effects of social involvement (Lowenthal & Robinson, 1976) however suffer one limitation: they construe the frequency of interaction with friends and neighbours to be an indicator of social support. Lopata (1973) stresses the importance of peer network in helping the widows adjust to their bereavement. Childless elderly have networks of friends (Ramphel, 1985). Compared to widowers, widows succeed better in sustaining a reasonably sized networks while they are isolated (Allan & Adams, 1989) but smaller size is reported in both rural and urban India (Aruna; Sivagnanaselvi).

Generally sibling relationships are more stable and predictable due to shared values and family patterns, going back to childhood (Ross, Daltor & Milgram, 1980). In support of this Cicerelli (1981) states that feelings between siblings increases in a positive direction as years go on.
Availability of greater number of siblings is also positively related to effective coping mechanisms of a single woman (Dimond et al, 1983). O'Bryant (1988) in her study of Columbus widows finds that siblings account for 38 percent, are special category for wellbeing, influence positive affect more than length of residence and represent a cohort of consanguine peers to widows. Siblings assume the responsibility of former deceased spouse for some elderly widows (Shanas, 1973) and Cunningham Schneider use sociability between siblings as a special factor in their study. As witnessed in many research works (O'Bryant) siblings function as a 'role model' for later life. Decline in close emotional attachment to siblings and more confinement to them (Anderson, 1984; Martin Mathew, 1987). Shanas (1973) notices 'great contact' and 'closeness with siblings' among older widows.

Based on data elicited from 75 widows Anderson finds that widows have more primary relationships than the married and they feel that their relationships with children, siblings and other relatives are strong. He concludes that widows are not isolated after the death of spouse but, on the contrary, their relationships are strengthened; they build intimate ties with siblings and other relatives. Likewise, Kohen (1983) with his National Sample of 226 widows presents evidences that 'widows are viable for informal support network groups' and adds that widows have more contact, greater involvement and multiple role relations as married,
with friends, relatives and neighbours. This finding is supported by Hyman (1983) who also finds widows' religious activities to be more than any other group of women. Arling observes a strong consistent family contact among older widows compared to older married women. Tietjen (1985) in her study on Swedish mothers' network structure and functions assessed the fact that network members are met by single women, often implying that they are active. Studies reveal more extensive contacts with friends and family ties and kin (Longico & Lipman, 1981) specifically children by older widows (Morgan, 1984) which are maintained as long as the ties extend support. U.S. Black widows are found to have more frequent contacts with children than White widows. Dean et al (1993) in their study on effects of widowhood on networks of elderly persons find widows meeting their children 1-4 times a month. An Indian urban study in Tamil Nadu reveals three tenths to have contacts with more than 4 tie members; nearly half of the respondents (47.76%) contacted daily and the remaining either fortnightly or monthly. In Delhi (Kitchlu, 1993) visit by parents and male siblings increases after widowhood.

On the other hand less contact with both kin and nonkin is reported by many (Ferraro & Barreri, 1982; Longico & Lipman, 1981). Consequently loneliness is the biggest problem of half of the widows (Bowling and Cartwright, 1982) in Britain and according to Derardo, widows perceive that their friends avoid them, feel uncomfortable and fear to
express their grief, despair and loneliness while some hypothesise that in response widows with most problems and difficulties tend to have the stronger family support participation' by widows compared to married (Ariens, 1982-1983). Their friends view them essentially as widows and not as friends and half of them feel like 'fifth wheel' in their network of couple friendship. Possibly friendship nurtured in such a context and sustained as a 'core network of spouse' tends to whither as it could not be maintained by single women. As a result they feel as if their central aspect of their life is gone and hence meaningless. They face difficulties in both establishing relationships as well as maintaining the existing old ties. They cope with this situation by visiting siblings, grand children, niece or nephew to reduce, though marginally, feeling of the loneliness (Arling, 1974). Older widows' frequency of contact with kin declines (Morgan, 1984; Dean et al, 1993) specifically with inlaws (Lopata, 1979) relatives and friends of late husband (Katti & Nagesh) and even parents and siblings (Audilakshmi). The average contact with children is 'less than week' and even less frequent with siblings (Lopata, 1979) and thus, causing reduction in kinship and support networks (Lopata, 1973). A large proportion of women did not name any children (68%) and siblings (62%) as primary even where most of them (85%) live with children and siblings (Anderson, 1984). Chevan & Kerson report that irrespective
of educational status only 31 percent attached importance to siblings after widowhood and only a small proportion rebuilt their lives around family members and siblings. Ihinger-Tallman (1980) explains low contact with siblings by older unmarried. Regarding sex of siblings the sister-sister relationship is found to be closest and sister-brother relationship in intermediate strength (Cicerelli, 1980; Goetting, 1986). Kitchlu (1993) observes decline of visits by parents-in-law, siblings-in-law and friends while sisters stop visiting widowed sisters. He also reports an overall decline of widows visit to their relatives, friends and neighbours after widowhood.

Rural neighbouring is thought to be disappearing in the face of improved transportation and the consolidation of churches, school and stores (Rogers et al, 1988). Grieder and Krannich (1985) conclude that neighbourly interaction continues during rapid population change although reliance on neighbours for social support decreased. Neighbourhood is the immediate residential environment, is probably 'the best reservoir for potential friendships' (Clark & Anderson, 1967; Rosenberg, 1970). For many older widows particularly those with long standing residence and less access to transportation, 'neighbour is their world' (Golant, 1976). Lopata (1973) also uses the term 'neighbouring' and points out that such 'relationships require health, money and
sufficient education in order to have the self confidence and skills to enter and retain new social connections.

Friendship and neighbouring foster a kind of "belonging" based upon conviviality (Hochschild, 1973) and egalitarian norms. For neighbourhood involvement and friendship one might find that those widows who are low in neighbouring and friendship are able to substitute family ties, and therefore experience higher morale. Generally individuals have special attachments to their neighbourhoods as well as to their homes (Cantor, 1979) and in the words of Arling (1976) 'Friendship neighbouring is related to less loneliness and worry along with a feeling of usefulness and individual responsibility with the community'. Chicago rural widows turned to neighbours immediately after the spousal loss as a human contact when they felt lonely (Lopata, 1973). Dono et al (1979) suggest that neighbours may be reluctant to make various types of long term commitments because of anticipated short term residency and future mobility. In early years of residence in a community, having children might have served as a basis for neighbourly interactions and friendship (Dean et al, 1993). A rural comparative study concludes that those with more education and income are able to choose their neighbourhoods and perhaps more likely to become familiar with them. In contrast, those with fewer economic choices may be less inclined to interact with neighbours, partly because they
have less ability to choose their residential setting (Krannich et al, 1984). Length of residence is found to be the important predictor of number of neighbour contacts by many with different population (Ishi-kuntz & Seccombe, 1984). An Indian rural study notice the presence and visits of 'Neighbours as friends' to reduce loneliness, feel useful and instil greater community respect for elderly persons (Sivagnanaselvi).

Reciprocity helps develop (Anderson) and sustain old ties with friends (Masako Ishi Kuntz & Karen Seccombe, 1989). While examining whether people prefer relationships that are currently reciprocal and whether they receive more than they give, the support given to more enduring and intimate relationships can be considered as 'a long term deposit which can be withdrawn in future times of need' (Antonucci & Jackson, 1990). Arling holds family ties to be characterised by a dissimilarity of experience and an unequal exchange of aid and friends normally relate to each other through common interests and generally are equal in their ability to exchange assistance.

Attributes of both ego and the ties such as age and sex govern the choice of friendship and formation of peers are strictly governed by age and sex (Patil). Ties with peers in the same life stage can facilitate the transition by introducing the widow to members of new network more
supportive to her newly acquired needs as a single person and by helping her learn the norms, standards and expectations in performing her new role (Lopata, 1973, 1979). Blau contends that widowhood is much more common in old age than in younger years, widows will find it easier to associate with other widows during old age as widowhood kindles peer socialization as one of the functions of friendship. As reported by Dono et al. (1979) age peers become important sources of support and knowledge for unique generations or life stage problems. Widows face an additional difficulty for she may find it awkward to be with couples in the absence of her husband (Arling) and since friendship may decrease with age, loss of income and physical incapability. The latent function of the close tie between widowed and female offspring may be the opportunity for anticipatory socialization for younger generations too (Brubaker, 1992). A Black widow frequently serves as a focal person in a household inclusive of children, relatives and non relatives in various combinations (Bernard, 1966).

Scholars who find them failing to address the possibility of such interaction resulting in occasional disputes, embarrassments, envy, invasion of privacy or other outcomes proceed to delineate the positive ones. But networks can be a source of stress as well as support (Barerra, 1981) and an impediment to change when such change
is required (Barrera, and others). Lopata (1979) reports that only one fourth see the deceased husband's relatives with any frequency. The relationship with inlaws, endowed with the potential for tensions and conflict, is found to decline resulting in low support (Lopata, 1970). Secondary kin and non kin members are the most involved ties in such conflicting strands (Sweetser, 1963). Observing both problematic and supportive relationships in her rural study setting in coimbatore region Sivagnanaselvi observes that the negative ties are a continuous source of problem (22%), hinder support extended by others (20%), criticise their living style (21%) and let down when support is sought (19%). It is the secondary kin, along with non kin, who are involved more in such problematic relationships.

The global conception of individual relationships with specific others or generalised others as family is the willingness to provide for others in time of need and assuring the receipt of assistance as and when they need (Fischer et al, 1983). Widows with most problems and difficulties tend to have the stronger family support networks. Zena Blau (1961, 1973) states that confidants are most apt to come from a close age cohorts which could include siblings rather than across generational lines. Siblings are the most preferred network members even prior to children (Lopata, 1973, 1978). They also perceive more closeness to siblings than the married (Anderson, 1984). However, an Indian urban
study (Aruna) identifies parents too in this role. An elderly female displays a closer relationship with her children, especially daughter, than the male (Shanas, 1968; Lopata, 1973, 1979; O'Bryant, 1986). To ascertain and identify the quality and quantity of primary kin ties, Anderson (1984) distinguishes ties into 'primary ties' and 'confidant ties' and asked the respondent to identify the closest person, where, one out of every five widows identified one or the other relatives of all kinds as primary. Blood relatives and inlaws are cited as primary with regard to extended kin and have confidant relationships with distant kin (Anderson, 1984). In Kongu region (Sivagnanaselvi) the close associates of widows in the order of preference are brothers, daughters, sisters, parents and brothers-in-law. However, scholars also find less intimate friends in widowed network (Lowenthal & Haven, 1968; Dean et al) and fewer primary and intimate relationships with kin than the married. Either widows lose contact with their inlaws (Lopata, 1970) or siblings form less as confidants (Lopata, 1973).

SOCIAL SUPPORT The terms 'Social Integration', 'Social Networks' and 'Social Support' are often used interchangeably referring to three distinct aspects of social relationships - their existence or quantity, their formal structure, their functional content i.e., social support. In the words of
Barerra, the 'enacted support' is the action or assistance rendered by the supporter. The functional content of social support may include the degrees to which the 'supportive networks' involve in the flows of affect or emotional concern, Instrumental and tangible aid, Information, companionship and the like (Gottlieb, 1985; House & Kahn, 1985). A Social Support Network can be defined as the degree of involvement in a specific type of relations from which one can receive psychological as well as physical assistance(Masako Ishikuntz & Karen Seccombe, 1989). As emphasized by many personality and Social Psychologists the level of support perceived by oneself is a function of how well individuals generate and utilize supportive relationships as are provided by the social structure or environment in which they are located. Clark (1984) with her interest in 'Social Relationships' and 'Exchange' distinguishes relationships into 'COMMUNAL' and 'EXCHANGE'. Communal ties are those in which both parties feel obligated to the responsibility to each other's needs and assure certain level of relationship from varying social contexts such as kin, romantic partner, friends, coworkers etc. And Exchange relationships are more pragmatic where benefit preponders like exchange among acquaintance or businessmen. In a way the current investigation with its focus on 'ties providing different kinds of support' concerns with both communal and exchange ties from different sectors and the

Social scientists have seriously pursued the issues with respect to how widows' support system differs from those of married women (Anderson, 1984; Kohen, 1983; Lopata, 1979). The effects of widowhood on social support may also vary by kind and/or or by source of support. Since not all personal relationships provide the same kind or the same amount of support, it is beneficial to make distinctions with the help of role relationships. The most frequent categorization of role relationships are family, neighbour and friends (Litwak & Szelenyi, 1984; Arling). Close kin are further supplemented as parents, children, siblings and extended kin (Lopata, 1978; Fischer, 1982; Leigh, 1982) and also inclusive ones are colleagues, acquaintances and fellow member of organisations (Lowenthal & Robinson, 1976; Schultz, 1978; Fischer, 1982; & Van der Poel (1991).

Informal support system falls into two prevailing models. Cantor's Heirarchical compensatory model (1979) which proposes that providers of support are chosen on the basis of blood ties and closeness. To wit, elderly prefer support from kin rather than 'non kin' and prefer non kin for formal dealings. An alternative model is Litwak's task specific model (Dono et al, 1979) which postulates that it is the structural properties of the group that determine who can
most effectively handle particular tasks for the elderly person. In other words, characteristics of the caregiving group such as proximity, long term commitment, size and physical resources and affectivity appear to influence those who help. But neither of these models explains the complexity of social support functioning (Peters et al, 1987) and less research has been carried out synchronizing both. With the interest in tracing the social support functioning of widows reviews relevant studies focusing on the sector wise contribution of different relationships in different dimensions of support.

Research works in U.S and U.K highlight the problems of loneliness or social isolation (Lopata, 1973, 1980; O'Bryant, 1985; Anderson, 1984) and link this to childless status (Shanas, 1962) and living arrangement (O'Bryant, 1984; Lopata, 1973). The childlessness or presence or absence of children (Dean et al, 1993; O'Bryant, 1984, 1987; Longino & Lipman, 1980; Lopata, 1973, 1979), number of children (O'Bryant, 1988), presence of adult or middle aged children (Lopata, 1973, 1979; O'Bryant, 1984; Bankoff, 1983; Martin-Mathew, 1982; Aruna; Anderson) and the propinquity of children to older widows (O'Bryant, 1987) are widely reported to affect the inflow of support to widows in one or the other dimensions of support.
Childless widows do receive more help from less close kin (O'Bryant, 1984). The inflow of support from kin, especially extended kin (Sivagnanaselvi) and 'distant kin' (Kivett, 1985) is reported to be greater than from others. Siblings are felt important resources by older widows (Scott, 1983; Lopata, 1979; Shanas, 1979; Anderson, 1984) especially sisters by those below 45 years (Glick, Weiss & Parkes, 1974) but considered less important by those with children (O'Bryant, 1988). The frequency of support by siblings-in-law appears in some cultures as frequent as help from consanguine (Kivett, 1984), there is little inflow of support from inlaws in others (sivagnanaselvi; Lopata, 1979) and less expectation by widows from inlaws (Krishnakumari). However, the role of inlaws and their relatives (47.00%) is more significant than that of members of consanguine (23.00%) and friends (25.00%) in transitional phase (Kitchlu, 1993). However, the biological closeness of collateral family relationships is not translated into enjoyment of association, source of comfort in depression or the reasons for feeling of important (Lopata, 1973). Parents may be an important source of support to widows (Brubaker).

The neighbours and kin arrived for mourning is expected to fulfill the emotional need of widows (Bankoff, 1983). Research with an interest to trace the social support of single women finds religious ministers, priests and
doctors to be important source of emotional support than sib and parents (Gibson, 1969, 1970). Also, friends and neighbours are often mentioned more than adult children in strands as "who help you being available when you feel blue" (Arling, 1976; Blau, 1973; O'Bryant, 1984). Emotional support received from non-kin sectorwise reveals that friends extend more support than neighbours and coworkers in strands like sharing emotional feelings (37.50%), confiding personal matters with (27.88%), discussing personal problems (9.66%), receiving or giving gifts (6.73%) and providing emotional warmth to widows' children (4.81%).

In the absence of children friends and neighbours emerge as the single most important element in the informal support network (Cantor, 1979; Lopata, 1979, 1982) and Indian ruralites receive it from relatives and friends (Nagesh & Katti, 1984). Also research shows that very few widows turn to professional for support or assistance (Lopata, 1979) and they do not utilize the array of resources available to them (Lopata, 1979) though the need for formal support is stressed for long term management (Scott & Kivett, 1980). Studies while stressing the importance of education for more exchanges (Lopata, 1973, 1979) find lack of education and social policies (Scott & Kivett, 1980) contributing to widows' inability to make friends and revolving around relatives and childhood chumships (Lopata, 1973, 1975). This is supported by the finding that neighbours, coworkers, co-
members of voluntary organizations, religious persons and professional helpers are less represented in social support (Audilakshmi).

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT Absence of male spouse deprives the widows causing stress and grief and enhances the need for social support (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987) especially for emotional involvement, confiding and trust (Wellman, 1985). Studies on well being conclude that widows who have or perceive more support are less distressed than the widows with less support (Dimond, Lund & Caserta, 1987; Morgan, 1976; Pilisuk & Minkler, 1980). Many scholars stress the need for empathy and emotional support for recent young widows (Bankoff, 1983). However, it is widely held that the death of one's spouse constitutes by age and sex status affecting primarily older women (Martin-Mathew, 1980). Studies in India have also hinted the emotional problems of widows irrespective of age (Saraswathi; Bharat; Audilakshmi; Kitchlu; Patil; Krishnakumari; Aruna; Sivagnanaselvi)

Children are said to be the readily available resource in emotional sphere (Lopata, 1975) and an important source of 'emotional outlet' (Lopata, 1979) when ever they are worried (Anderson, 1984). While in India children take the role of husband and atleast one offspring stays back with widows to take care. Though widows feel close to daughters and share their problems with them children make widows feel
important and turn to them during crisis. Anderson (1984) observes that widows seek more emotional aid from adult children - sons (36.00%) and daughters (32.00%) - and frequently mention them as primary resources. Daughters provide frequent emotional assistance (Adams, 1968) be crucial emotional aid provider (O'Bryant, 1986) and be closer to their mother after the loss (Lopata, 1979) along with playing the confidant role. Widows also report that they turn to daughters for emotional aid as and when they feel depressed (Lopata, 1973, 1979). An Indian rural study (Sivagnanaselvi) observes daughters as a major source of emotional aid sharing personal feelings (24.35%) and discussing (20.35%). On the other hand, Bowling and Cartwright (1982) find survivors to have more emotional problems inspite of the increase in social contact. There is no difference by gender in the provision of emotional support by children in the study carried out by Longino & Lipman (1983) who add that number and absence of children too affect the number of persons providing regular emotional support to older widows.

In general close family members tend to provide both tangible and emotional support, and kith and kin extend help during loneliness (Kitchlu). Bowling and Cartwright report widows to rely more on relatives than friends for comfort. Natal relatives dominate in the emotional support
of widows in the initial stages of widowhood (Audilakshmi). Guelph area widows quote extended kin, particularly siblings, as a major source of emotional and social support (Martin Mathew). Sivagnanaselvi underlines predominance of consanguineous kin accounting for emotional contents ranging from 56 percent to 68 percent. O'Bryant (1988) report that the primary functions of consanguineous peers is 'to be right there in stressful situations'. Fifty percent of widows report that they seek the assistance of at least one primary kin when they have personal troubles like worries, illness, depression and short of money (O'Bryant, 1988).

Siblings who are role models for widows (O'Bryant, 1988) thus helping them perform this 'role-less-role' satisfactorily (Hiltz, 1978). In the process they act as challengers and stimulators to encourage new activities of a widow. In fact, the existence of sibling is by itself a great important 'potential resource of support irrespective of its utility and available support' (Cicerelli, 1981). As compared to tangible assistance, emotional support is considered a developmental task of siblingship (Goetting, 1986). Sisters and nieces were registered as primary sources by many for emotional support (O'Bryant, 1988). Canadian widows 'confide' with female siblings or other such relatives when ever they need advice on solving their personal problems. Sisters play significant role in the emotional support and widows confide every matter to sisters who
account 42 percent in support network (Anderson, 1984) thus asserting emotional attachment and confinement. In the city of Coimbatore (Aruna) siblings form a major proportion of kin ties who share emotional feelings (50.00%) confide personal matters (41.80%), gift with dresses and other kinds (15.12%), pay casual visit (11.67%), provide emotional warmth to children (9.70%) and play guardianship roles (2.32%). However, in Chicago, widows do not find siblings or other extended kin being very helpful or important sources of support (Lopata, 1979) while in Columbus the frequency of support from siblings is less (O'Bryant, 1988). Though widowed enjoy being with grandchildren it cannot be translated into real emotional support as they are 'ineffective as comforters, confidants or suppliers of self feelings of usefulness, self sufficiency or independence' (Lopata, 1973).

On the whole emotional aid is predominantly extended by those perceived as close associates (83-97%). With a considerable mean number of ties involved in discussing personal problems (2.49) and sharing personal feelings (2.37). About two thirds (62.76%) are dependable always and more than half are (56.91%) confided to (Sivagnana selvi). In case of urban widows (Aruna) these significant others console (30.00%), visit to know their wellbeing
(26.93%), help to overcome minor upsets (26.46%), are dependable (23.42%) and act as confidants (22.72%).

The studies categorising different support received by gender, indicates that women who are more likely to experience stress and loneliness turn to other women for emotional support and understanding (Sapadin, 1988). Members similar in status are found closer and helping in various emotional strands substantiating the theory that ‘women with past experience can sense out and render timely support’ (Aruna). Female ties are emotionally closer (30% to 75%) and widows who gives moral support also act as confidant, listen to personal problems and share emotional feelings. Ties members who are unemployed (47.26%), similar in caste status (39.04%) and physically proximate involve more in emotional support (Aruna). Given all these variations, the elderly widow receives more emotional support than what she is able to return (Anderson).

ECONOMIC SUPPORT Studies on female headed households underline the economic hardship and eventual poverty (Kitchlu; Lopata, 1979; O'bryant, 1985). Many of the surviving mothers bear the dual responsibility of homemaker and child care in addition to playing the father role as and when there is severe economic crisis (Chakrabarti). In addition to seeking employment consequent to widowhood (Kitchlu) economic support is the most frequently sought one
by widows (Audilakshmi) but may remain the most unmet need (O'Bryant, 1985). Rural widows depend on their earnings or that of their children while farm women work in their or joint family farm (Kitchlu). Non farm employment is normally inaccessible due to poor education. Another study in South India find widows to raise the household income by keeping milch animals, renting out a portion of house, investing in trade run by kin and by running petty shops (Premalatha).

Audilakshmi attributes greater sex segregation, division of labour to patrilineal orientation. She also adds that widows with sons enjoy benefits in patrilateral society and that support exchange between the widows and others are asymmetrical in view of sex typed roles, unequal control over resources and the precedence enjoyed by male descent.

Blacks generally prefer extended family residences and have more exchanges, particularly money exchange, between relatives (Hoffereth, 1984); kin and friends networks are ready sources of economic support especially for ethnic minorities (Angel & Trienda, 1982; Stack, 1974). Apart from the income from employment and property either of husband or his relatives, there is also an inflow of economic support from natal relatives, late husband's relatives and children (Audilakshmi).

Anderson (1984) finds that most of them turn to at least one but none has cited more than three relatives,
often adult children, in financial support whereas in Columbus children constitute ninety percent of the widows' helpers (O'Bryant, 1985). Sons top (60%) and daughters provide regular support for maintenance. Periodical gifts too are provided mostly by sons (37%), daughters (28%) and brothers (19%). Parents and parents-in-law play very little role in economic support (Chen). Anderson (1984) finds widows seeking siblings support whenever they are short of money and sisters provide generally more money than brothers (Kivett, 1965).

Lopata (1973) finds ten percent to receive gifts or help with the payment of bills through the 'parent-child line'- eleven percent receive help in the form of payment of food and eight percent from siblings. Aruna (1993) finds coworkers to extend more support in all financial strands than neighbours and friends and three out of four widows have a ready source to rely on. An Indian rural survey in Delhi observes assistance in form of cash, kind or non material aid for widows from married brothers (35%), married sisters, married brothers-in-law, parents (26.60%), parents-in-law (19.40%), other relatives (7.205), friends and neighbours (3%) and welfare agencies (1.60%). State aid is marginal. In village around Delhi only 11 percent of these eligible 28 percent are receiving pensions.
The noticeable small financial assistance and very less frequent inflow of large financial assistance are common in India (Audilakshmi; Aruna; Sivagnanaselvi). As for the attributes that influence the economic support flow to Indian urban widows is subject to factors like employment, gender, marital status and not to physical proximity. Both small as well large financial assistance at times carry interest and employed men extend more financial support compared to females. The unmarried give gifts and dress and pay casual visit (Aruna).

SERVICE SUPPORT Division of labour in typical marriages and loss of the spouse's parents add more responsibility of unfamiliar tasks to the survivor (Lopata, 1973). This life event not only implies a loss of a key member or 'socio emotional supporter' but also a provider of task support in daily life (Heiss & Soldo, 1985; Kahana & Kiyak, 1980). In the 'transitional phase', to create a new life, (Bankoff, 1983) the survivor reorganizes and rebuild both the existing social relationships and support systems which were disorganised once. Krishnakumari observes the sources of help in the 'transitional phase' to be parents (44%), friends and relatives (35%) and parents-in-law (16%) for working (23%), relatives and friends (6%) for non working widows. Premalatha points out that siblings, parents and parents-in-law assume farm management after husband's death and shift
to the widows and their sons to a greater extent when their children grow.

The most frequent services are care during illness, travel, household repairs, in house keeping (Tietjen) and help for decisions (Audilakshmi) regarding children (Aruna). More than half (55.72%) involve in minor services and errands - child care, nursing and company to hospital, marketing, exchange of provisions and information - (Sivagnanaselvi; Aruna) and in household tasks (74.48%) in rural communities (Sivagnanaselvi) with the mean number of ties ranging from 2.15 to 3.05.

Geographical proximity is consistently related to the type and amount of assistance provided to the receivers. Proximity is both a 'valuable and necessary' aspect for various services (Dean et al) and more than half (55.72%) of the ties involve in services like running errands and other major services (Aruna) requiring physical mobility and proximity (Tietjen; Kitchlu; Audilakshmi; Krishnakumari; Sivagnanaselvi; Aruna). The patrilateral system and marital migration allows widows to stay amidst of affinal kin triggering their contribution, along with non neighbours in the same locality, in tasks - watching possessions, carrying out repair jobs, fulfilling formal requirements, providing security - demanding 'Physical proximity and physical mobility' (Sivagnanaselvi; Aruna; Kitchlu; Audilakshmi).
However, physical proximity is not to affect the information and advice support received by widows (Sivagnanaselvi; Aruna; Audilakshmi). Services demanding physical presence bring in more involvement of coworkers and urban neighbours (Aruna). It is also reported that widows hesitate to call upon adult children for everyday tasks when the travel distance is greater and such help beyond a distance becomes 'impractical' (Marshall & Rosenthal, 1985).

Interaction and support from neighbours contribute to widows' adjustment, particularly in the early phases of widowhood (Ferraro & Barreri, 1982). Neighbours come out as the best helpers at this stage and owing to length of dwelling and physical proximity they provide assistance like provision of food, childcare and transportation as they were providing during husband's illness. This immediate need and support by others is pointed out in many research works (Lopata, 1971, 1973, 1975; Krannich, 1985; Sivagnanaselvi; Aruna; Audilakshmi; Kitchlu).

Rural dwellers identify the 'physically closest perceived community' to shop, buy gas or find medical services (Hoga & Folse, 1971); thus local neighbourhood is the locale within which social and mutual aid among families take place. Given higher status, in terms of education and income, task reliance on neighbours may be an adaptive mechanism for those who have less access to family or long
term friends. Task oriented neighbouring may primarily occur instantly when a need arises due to unusual circumstances or situations, but not as 'a patterned neighbouring activity'. In the presence of any friend or family, such neighbours may be perceived as burdensome and 'less cultured' to tax them for such tasks and rely more on extended or 'Modified extended family' for some tasks. Neighbouring with the two key features - residential proximity and possibility of regular face to face contacts- reiterates that 'proximity permits speed of reaction' and renders some unique support (Dono et al, 1979; Lopata, 1973; O'Bryant, 1985; Aruna; Sivagnanasevi). Thus, all of them opine that 'time emergencies', as long as they are within the capabilities of non experts, would seem to be the special province of neighbours, especially immediate neighbours and 'densely knit neighbourhood solidarities' are filled with mutual aid. Neighbours may extend instrumental tasks like helping items in emergency situations which are reciprocative and not any function of intimate nature (Masako Ishi Kuntz, 1985). Widows staying away from members of affine and consanguine receive more help from neighbours (Audilakshmi). However, neighbours play limited role in the support systems of older widows who are childless (Dono et al, 1993).

Kin along with friends have remained a major source of childcare assistance to widows and thus, facilitate educational and occupational achievement of those mothers.
(Presser, 1980; Stacks, 1974). Kin (Lopata, 1979) or only distant kin involve more in service support of urban widows (Aruna) as against rural widows who depend upon consanguine rather than affinal kin (Sivagnanaselvi) irrespective of physical distance. Single mothers receive more 'timely help' during emergencies mostly from kin in lower income groups (Tietjen, 1985).

Task support to widows is sex typed: sons provide help with traditional male tasks and daughters with traditional female tasks (Lopata, 1973, 1979; O'Bryant, 1988). Sons play a key role in the lives of Columbus widows who live alone (O'Bryant, 1988). Support from daughters (Lopata, 1973, 1979; Aruna; Harowitz, 1985) and daughters-in-law (Lopata, 1973, 1979) is more rather than from sons who provide advice, especially throughout an illness (Lopata, 1973, 1979). Close associates play a very significant role in child related activities varying from 61 percent to 75 percent (Sivagnanaselvi).

The genderwise categorisation of support received and rendered reveals that widows depend on men for instrumental aid (Aruna). They often turn to siblings for various services (Shanas, 1979) and siblings are important potential resources irrespective of their utility (Cicerelli, 1981) expected to fulfill some of the roles of the deceased spouse, a brother of an older widow performs male stereotypic
tasks (Cicerelli, 1982). Brothers extend maximum support (40-78%) with the sisters at the middle (35%-48%) followed by brothers-in-law (26-28%) (Sivagnanaselvi). Goetting (1986) concludes that direct aid and services may be one important aspect of siblingship. Yet siblings compared to other kin provide relatively small amounts of instrumental support (Cicerelli, 1980; Kivett, 1985; Scott, 1983; Sivagnanaselvi). However, siblings and siblings-in-law less form part of service support in Chicago (Lopata, 1979) in spite of their expressed need for male stereotypic tasks by widows (O'Bryant, 1986).

Children predominate (Krishnakumari) supplemented by siblings and other relatives (Lopata, 1978), Kin and neighbours (Lopata, 1979), relatives and friends (Dean et al, 1993) in contributing instrumental support for widows. In contrast childless widows were assisted more in transportation (mean=2.57) than those with children residing in the same city (mean = 1.97) and children residing elsewhere(mean = 2.09) (Dean et al, 1993). Lipman and Longino (1983) find daughters, more than sons, providing more social, instrumental and task oriented support to widowed mothers and add that level of instrumental support increase after widowhood. Daughters are preferred the most for services like care of sick and house keeping and sons for decision
making and repair jobs and daughters overwhelm sons in all service strands (Audilakshmi).

Among the non kin ties friends and neighbours emerged as a single most important element in the informal support network of childless (O'Bryant, 1985), and coworkers (95%) and neighbour for a cross sectional sample (Aruna).

Helpers in decision making could be child, relative, friend or professional and many studies find daughters, brothers, parents and sisters to be the important sources (Soldo, Wolf & Agnes, 1986). Assistance is received in the form of advice or suggestions for deciding long term financial commitments (Harris & Harvey, 1987) and children's education, occupation and marriage (Sivagnanaselvi; Krishnakumari). Widows decide with 'others' (Premalatha; Krishnakumari); Children (Harris & Harvey, 1987; Krishnakumari; Sivagnanaselvi; Kitchlu); Parents (Premalatha, Sivagnanaselvi; Kitchlu) and parents-in-law on childrens' marriage and occupation (sivagnanaselvi; Premalatha; Audilakshmi). Decisions are also made independently by widows (Kitchlu; Krishnakumari; Aruna; Sivagnanaselvi) and by others without the consent of widows (Premalatha). The role of non kin is generally limited in decision making and living arrangement has no bearing on decision making (sivagnanaselvi).
It is not always true that absence of male spouse ends in a total dependence on others by the surviving partners (Bankoff; Kahana & Kiyak). Chicago widows develop 'self confidence' and 'self sufficiency'; less depend on others for task support and prefer independence and receive only very little amount of help with tangible support (Lopata, 1973). Inspite of their frequent interaction only very little exchanges took place (Lopata, 1979). Columbus widows live with an "ethic of independence' seeking help only when extraordinary circumstances arise (O'Bryant, 1985). Similarly farm management was taken up by one third of the rural widows immediately after widowhood (Premalatha). The other reason offered for low service support is that tasks requiring expertise such as car care and legal assistance are rendered by people with expertise while menial tasks and low cost jobs are done by paid helpers. Age and living arrangement influence the inflow of material and service support as widows gain experience and internalise their roles as the age of widows (Sivagnanaselvi; Aruna) and their children increases. Gibson (1969, 1970) finds ninety one percent to perform household tasks by themselves without any kin help; and middle class widows are more likely to have paid help (Bowling and Cartwright). The same is noticed among Chicago widows (Lopata, 1979) where widows with higher income are able to purchase help on some tasks for which poorer widows must rely on kin. Tietjen (1985) reports that
single mothers from moderate income group heavily relied on kin and are reported to be less satisfied with support rendered. Also widows rely more on others for tasks requiring specific expertise, physical strength, or non recurring circumstances like car care, household repair and legal advice (O'Bryant, 1985) and adds that hired labour is more sought for some of the male tasks. The presence of female sex typed activity - provision of household tasks and child care - rather than a full range of activities might have over estimated the role of female.

COMPANIONSHIP There are two broad ways of acquiring social support. One, be outgoing, happy and sociable. Two, be in depression thus tapping wider social support system. Widows who are outgoing and happy receive more social support thus, enhance the well being (Green Feld, 1989). Going for movies, picnic and marketing are the routine outings of widows irrespective of employment status (Krishnakumari). Brahmin widows less involve in social activities than in services and indulge in activities like 'going to temples, sacred song recitation centers (bhajans), scripture reading halls, cinema theatres, attending festivals, visiting relatives and travelling. Though they involve in various social activities the support is sought and company is extended to visit temples, cinema halls and some ritual celebrations (Audilakshmi). Employed widows in urban setting attend religious functions (77%) while among the unemployed a
large proportion (39%) attend both religious and social functions.

Chicago widows frequently engage in activities such as celebration of holidays, 'holiday sharing', attending church and visiting people (Lopata, 1974) while Aruna reports more companionship for outing (65.56%) and chitchatting (69.32%).

Engagement in varied socio-recreational activities varies by socio-economic and demographic factors like social networks, constrained by age, presence of small children and dependants' health and income. Lack of time, energy, income and interest hinder companionship (Audilakshmi). Non working widows stay away from religious and social functions (krishnakumari). Considerable proportion of Chicago widows are reported as 'non engagers' in various social activities and over one half of them claim never to go to public places such as movie houses or to engage in sports, card or games. Absence of an escort for 'couple companionate activity', is added by Lopata (1973) as a constraint for companionship.

Companionship is provided by kin for ethnic minorities (Angel & Trienda, 1982), women relatives for Brahmin widows (Audilakshmi) and parents(8%) and relatives (8%) serve as companions for casual outings (Krishnakumari). Extended kin less form part of Companionship of widows in
Chicago and 'other relatives' usually grand children are entertained by widows than visited (Lopata, 1973).

According to Goetting (1986) companionship is one of the developmental tasks of siblingship. 'Sociability' (Cumming and Schnieder, 1961) and greater amount of social activities between siblings in comparison to provision of direct assistance (Scott, 1983) have been noted. The presence of sisters and nieces more than brothers and nephews as primary resources of social support reiterate the role of females in maintaining kin bondage (Adams, 1968; Sweetser, 1963; Anderson, 1984). Cicerelli (1982) argues that sisters may 'Challenge' each other to maintain their social skills and activities. Research also highlights that the childless are particularly isolated (Bachrach) and turn to siblings when they need them (Johnson & Catalona, 1981). Siblings are the most 'visited and preferred' next to children by widows to travel out of town, but less frequently appear in the social support system of Chicago widows (Lopata, 1978).

Children are the crucial resources for widow for recreational and other outings. According to Adams (1968) the 'son-widowed mother' relationship is viewed as obligatory in contrast to 'daughter-widowed mother' relationship which is viewed as enjoyable as they involve in wider range of activities. Since widowhood, relationships with daughters are found enjoyable and they engage in a wide range of
activities (O' Bryant, 1986). Widows with children are found to appear more in the groups that are "Socially active" (Dean et al., 1993) and children are the first preferred companions to spend holidays for Chicago widows (Lopata, 1978). Children remain as a crucial supporter for widows irrespective of their employment status (Krishnakumari).

Friendship is one of the most preferred relationships for companionship. Friends form eleven percent as companions in the study of working and non working widows (Krishnakumari). Friends tend to appear as companions in social activities (Lopata, 1978). Friends are believed to be one of the readily available resources for ethnic minorities (Angel & Trienda, 1982; Stacks, 1974) and company without any expectations. Arling (1976) finds a relationship between widows' activity level and availability of family, friends and neighbours and points out elderly widows to have frequent contact with neighbours and more likely to engage in greater number of social activities.