CHAPTER 1

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...... INTRODUCTION
The rich heritage in Indian customs, manners and ceremonies attach more sanctity and sacredness to the institution of marriage and imposes restrictions with prescriptions of code of conduct on those 'failures or unsuccessful' persons of this institution. This achieved marital status brings respect, status and appreciation to a woman while break down in this 'sacred bond' jeopardise their position along with a questionable future, forces them to ascribe the role and status of single woman - deserted, seperated, divorced and widowed. As a mark of success in planning and development though changes have been brought in many aspects of life including the substantial integration of farming community with urban industrial milieu the outlook of Indian society towards women and their position has changed only marginally. The condition is to be worse when it comes to a specified deprived group such as widow.

In India, unlike in the west, widowhood suffers from lack of proper recognition. Widowhood, one of the most common reasons for increasing number of female headed households who account for 33 million and equal with total male agricultural labour, is paid lesser attention by the planners, in terms of social security measures, and researchers, especially Sociologists, in terms of explaining their real life style, roles, status and position. These deprived groups, in the traditional set up, took shelter under the broad wings of joint family systems. But, today
the slicing down of Joint family and the resultant segmentation of property have only left the widows amidst of those citizens who are bred with traditional values, ideologies, norms and behavioural patterns without even a minority status.

The absence of a male bread winner in the structure of the family and the resulting cutoff in family income brings an adverse effect on a woman's roles, rights, exchange practices and support systems. Critical issues arise in interaction and exchange of every individual which gain significance and predominates in the life of a widow, especially so when she plays the role of heading a household. This stage of widowhood disorganises prior support and social engagements of household and often necessitates the modification of old, even the forming of new social roles and relations or a construction of social life space (Lopata, 1979). In a religion where the importance is given to institutions like marriage and customs, and beliefs like sanctification of husband there may prevail an uncertainty in survival and future life style of a single woman. Again the usual abuses and distinctive set of codes of conduct given to her, further alters her living style and patterns of interaction. The social taboos, on the one hand, restrict her from interacting with different members of different sectors and on the other hand, her new role as the head of
the family along with the need for survival forces her to keep in touch with people around her.

Moreover, the predominance of patriarchal system, increasing number of widows, total dependence on male as bread winner, compound their problems. Various works have highlighted the unique problems of the widows such as lack of opportunity to grieve including sanctification, pressing need to return to the tradition or the development of new rituals, lack of emotional support after the official mourning, lack of daily services beyond the funeral, the lack of proper advice and problem of misguidance in decisions, lack of role model for children, lack of financial support, etc. Along with these problems the status and position of single women are unpredictable in a rural society where they are at lesser tendency to remarry and where in particular they are valued positively only if they are mother of a son. For women born in communities which do not permit remarriage, these problems persist till the end of their life along with forcing them to head the household. Specifically Indian rural women who are socialized in the traditional milieu are seldom allowed and are rarely inclined, to take part in important spheres such as financial management, decision making and visiting various offices and administrative institutions. She is bewildered with these unusual roles suddenly on widowhood while they are least prepared to cope with. The society which is soaked in tradition provides very little room for changes. This sudden
fall in marital status resulting in the 'role-less-role' (Hiltz, 1978) along with the new role as head of the household underscores the importance of support mobilization. This in turn brings in the network approach and hence, to focus on rural single women's supportive network pattern.

Widows as a major sub group of female headed households are bound to face certain unique problems pertaining to emotional state, resource mobilisation, complete change in life style and even a lacuna in getting information. She is forced to calculate her readily available human and other situational resources to mobilize various types of support.

The first and foremost change expected in a widow's life is the change in her living arrangement basing on her economic position or personal choice or available sources or all of these (Sweet, 1976). Research linking widowhood and living arrangement shows that extended kin networks do provide a substitute for single mother family arrangement who continue to live as mother of older adults (Hogas, Hao and Parish, 1990). Literature on kin network suggest that ready access determines certain types of support, thus necessitating personal contact (Litwak, 1981) and thus, enable us to conclude that local kin may constitute an important source of daily support to mothers. The extensive work on widowhood by Lopata also highlights the
importance of kin members in widowed life. Thus, the availability of kin representing a kind of opportunity structure, is a major determinant of her living arrangement, support system and above all the network structure.

The available human resources include availability of first degree kin members such as siblings, This may be supplemented by other kin and nonkin ties developed and maintained by them. On the other hand the non-human resources include property, income, savings and role experiences. The availability of human resources provides her the readily available support senders and is likely to influence the inclusion of new members in her network. And the sufficiency or insufficiency in non-human resources will enable a widow to work out the cost-benefit in course of support mobilisation.

With the given resources and the chosen living arrangement a widow in her regular course of life tries to tap supportive sources. The gamut of social supportive system can be well understood by a cross-sectional investigation of the different phases of widowhood (Bankoff, 1979) and the measures of a versatile framework of analysis, that is, network. Also studies carried out on different population with support and network as focal objective are either based on Cantor's hierarchichal model (1979), explaining the preference of support from blood ties, or Litwak's task
specific model explaining the properties of group extending support. But neither of the models explains the complexity of social support functioning (Peter, et al 1987). Hence the present study was planned as a cross sectional and cross cultural survey to explore the combination of support and network, viz expected to throw new insights.

Integrating the available literature on widows, support system and network a conceptual framework has been developed for the current study. It is hypothesized that the availability of human and non-human resources, living arrangement and various socio-economic and demographic variables will have a bearing on the support level of widows. The present study also attempts to explore the influence of network properties such as size, composition, etc. tie characteristics such as proximity, frequency of contact, and attributes of tie (network person) such as age, marital status, etc on level of support.

The existing few research works on widows focus selectively on their personal or familial problems (Bharat, 1990; Gurmeet and Sukdeep, 1987), problems relating to their children (Bharat, 1986, 1988), Socio economic condition (Kitchlu, 1979, 1993; Roy, 1987), remarriage practices, and deprivation of widows (Patil). Intensive studies on support systems and interpersonal relationships of widows are required to understand their social world and the way they
basis for planning for social security measures for the traditionally tabooed despaired women and their development.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The increasing number of female headed households especially out of widowhood gets little attention in terms of their position, in spite of their registration in demographic records. This major subgroup experience stress and strain at a greater length and degree and are bound to face certain unique problems like set back in emotional state, complete change in lifestyle, change in living arrangements, inexperience in decision making, financial cut off, lack of security, lack of advisor, gaps in information and suggestion etc. The extent and degree of these problems vary in accordance with the stages of widowhood (Bankoff, 1985) and according to their socio economic status.

The studies which have included older sample have failed to segregate the problems associated to widowhood and problems arising out of old age. Studies tracing the problems of widows have underestimated the importance of the stages of widowhood. Also research works on support and network pattern of any sample is either based on Cantor's hierarchica l model (1979) or Litwak's task specific model (Dono et al, 1979). The former model explains the preference of support from blood ties and close associates while the latter explain the structural properties of the group.
extending support such as proximity, long term commitment, size and physical resources and affectivity. But neither of the models explains the complexity of social support functioning (Peter et al, 1987).

Many life cycle studies have neglected the household heads resulting from divorce, desertion or widowhood. But ignoring a few millions of population from planning underscores the seriousness of widowed life and their position. In developing countries we find that increasing extended families are less likely to care for the old and widowed. This implies decline in the traditional support system. To wit, widows are less likely to find their husband's brother prepared to save them from such a plight (Erickson, 1975; Cain et al, 1979).

The gaps in previous research could be overcome by the following modifications. The structural limitations could be overcome by approaching the problems of widowhood models of support systems (Cantor's and Litwak's) the complexity in social support functioning could be traced with the help of network analysis. The focus on different kinds of support by different ties will show the content and relations involved in the support systems. This above discussion on the focal problem of the study leads to the following organization of thesis into chapters and sections within chapters. This chapter is followed by a resume of literature, both Indian and western, on widowed population
and, support and network dimensions. The third chapter on methods of research explains the conceptual flow, study setting, tools of data collection and analysis. Details pertaining to living arrangement are discussed under two sections in the fourth chapter. The first section portrays the socio economic and demographic profile of the study population. Living arrangement and associated factors are dealt in the second section. The fifth chapter pictures the active social world of the study population and its association with personal, human and situational factors and living arrangement. The four sections in chapter six examines the various dimensions of support - Emotional, underlines the influence of various socio-economic and demographic variables, living arrangement and resources on level of support. The focal theme of final chapter is to discuss the impact of resources on level of support through networking and living arrangement along with stating the areas of research in future.