CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Western studies
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Different scholars in social sciences have highlighted a variety of studies on widows and there is an array of studies in India and abroad. The following pages will give a review of those related literature in order to have a fair idea on the subject.

2.1 Western Studies

Dickerson and Thompson (1977) made a comparative study of Role Exit of the widows and divorcee. They suggested that the widow and the divorcee share mutual problems as (i) Loss of friendship, (ii) Loss of love and security, (iii) increase in work loads and economic problems. Regarding role exits, emphasis was placed on (A) the lack of continuity and the consequential conflict which normally followed (B) the ambivalence with which society viewed persons losing their spouses. An availability sample of widows and divorcees who answered a list of questions developed for this study was utilised. A non statistical approach in the analysis of data was employed. Conclusions noted that (a) role alternatives for both widows and divorcee have changed radically (b) that the difficulty of negotiating the role exits depends upon the voluntary versus
involuntary action of the individuals in the crisis setting.

Sheila, (1979) investigated the economic problems of old widows. The main focus of the study was on the economic resources that is income. The findings stated that old widows were dependent on income from public pensions, public assistance, private pensions, earnings and income from assets. In addition to the objective measures of financial resources, the subjective dimension of income adequacy was also investigated. Financial skills helpful to older women in the economic adjustment to widowhood was also discussed and implications for policy was also suggested.

Carey (1979) made study on the problems and adjustment of the widowhood during the first year. 78 widows and 41 widowers were interviewed 13 to 16 months after they were widowed. An 8 item self report measure of adjustment depression was developed. The factors related to adjustment, the problems faced by the widowed during the first year of bereavement. Results showed that adjustment was more difficult for widows than for widowers, that anticipatory grief was an important factor in the adjustment of widows.

Spanier and Glick (1980) used data from the US Bureau of Census Current Population Survey to examine the extent and timings of re-marriage, social factors associated with remarriage, and the impact of the event - divorce or widowhood that preceded remarriage. The analysis was primarily descriptive indicating how remarriage experience
is influenced by several demographic variables of interest. Length of first marriage, age at widowhood, age at first marriage, number of children from first marriage and education were all relevant factors in the assessment of one's livelihood and timing of remarriage.

Sandsberg (1981) discussed a variety of problems confronting society. Substantial problems concerned were practical, financial or legal matters.

Linda (1981) investigated support systems used across the life cycle of widowed women in terms of (i) their frequency of use and (ii) problems. In depth interviews were conducted in 1977 with 298 widows in the Melbourne Australia area. Results indicate relatively little use of organized social service for personal problems. In contrast, family and local physicians were called on to help with a wide range of personal and economic problems. Many widows had problems for which they perceived little or no help as being available in the community. Expectations of having "front line" professionals such as physicians, teachers and bankers for help and consultation were frequently not met.

Amir and Sharon (1982) examined predictors of adjustment to widowhood in women who lost their husband in the six-day war and the Yom Kippur War (studies were conducted in 1972 and 1975 respectively) A questionnaire assessing economic functioning, employment, domestic arrangement, social activities, family relationships, mental
status, relations with the Israeli Ministry of Defence, daily schedules and relations with their children were administered, along with Tennessee self-concept scale to 198 widows. Differences between the widows of the two wars were examined along with implications for improving support and readjustment services for widows.

Vachon (1982) interviewed 162 widows (aged 22 to 69 years) one, six, twelve and twenty-four months after bereavement to determine which socio-demographic, pre-bereavement and response variables and circumstances of the husbands death were related to distress level, as measured by the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ). Findings stated that the most important variable associated with high distress at one month was the S’s perception that she was seeing old friends less than before her husband’s death. At two years it was possible to predict distress levels with 86% accuracy by means of a multiple regression analysis using 10 variables, including one month GHQ score.

Morgan (1986) examined reports of 606 white widows from the Longitudinal Retirement History Survey (LRHS) conducted by L.M. Trelan (1972). Results suggested that many widows had experience in managing money, some had discussed financial survival with their spouses but less than one-third received financial counseling as widows. A majority of the widows were poor and experience in handling money did not decrease risk of poverty.

Zick and Smith (1986) examined immediate and delayed
effects of widowhood on poverty patterns from the 1970's. The investigation examined the economic consequences of widowhood for both men and women over time and compared their financial well-being with that of a matched group of continuously married couples, using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (1993). Findings of this Longitudinal study indicates that the loss of a spouse has negative economic consequences for both widows and widowers relative to continuously married couples. The results of both descriptive analysis and a test of a simple multivariate model show that the death of a spouse translates into a substantial economic loss, particularly for widows. A key finding was that the economic situations of the continuously widowed and the remarrying widowed differ markedly throughout their respective spells of widowhood.

R. Amato, and Partridge (1987) made an investigation of widows and divorcees with dependent children, 22 widowed mothers with dependent children were matched with 21 divorced mothers and 21 married mothers, and based on an interview schedule comparisons were made on 4 types of well-being - material, personal, family and social. Results showed that widowed S's tended to have lower levels of personal well being. Aspects of well being tended to be higher for S's who were young and well educated, regardless of family type. Length of time since loss of spouse was positively related to aspects of well being among widows and
negatively related to aspects of well being among divorcees. Results suggest that intervention with divorcees should primarily address economic problems, whereas intervention with widows should primarily address problems of depression and loneliness.

Simon et al A Jones (1988) investigated the phenomenon of sensing the presence of a deceased spouse. 294 widows responded to a questionnaire concerning health, financial matters, psychosocial problems, social support networks, depression, drinking behaviour and social activities. S's were grouped according to whether or not they reported having had a sensing experience. Findings indicated that 14 variables formed a function capable of 67.31% accurate prediction. An additional analysis utilizing the five most powerful variable resulted in a function capable of 66.49% accurate prediction. Generally, S's who reported the sensing experience evidenced more worry and anxiety than those without sensing experience.

Keith and Lorenz (1989) examined the extent to which financial strain (Fs) affected physical health over time in 1,085 widowed, 372 separated and divorced and 325 never married older persons (mean age 60.5 years). S's completed measures of health and Fs in 1969 and again in 1979. Greater Fs did not consistently appear to aggravate health.

O'Bryant, and Moregan (1989) analyzed interview data from 300 widowed women aged 60 years and older regarding financial experience prior to widowhood, planning undertaken
before death of spouse and their effects on well-being in early widowhood. Findings show that preparation was associated with somewhat better well-being among widows, but financial experience prior to widowhood had no effect. The most significant factor in explaining preparation was the amount of resources accumulated by the couple.

Other western studies have also been reviewed, to mention in brief Wenz, (1976) made study on suicide and marital status, a case of high suicide rate among the widowed. Greenblatt (1978) made a study of the grieving spouse.

Kivnett (1978) made a study on loneliness and the rural widow. Fooken (1980) investigated the biographical factors, in the perceived aging process of never married women and long time widows.


INDIAN STUDIES

Harichandran (1982) investigated the family size, educational background, work, work participation and family income of 175000 widows of Kanyakumari district. The income was assessed from three sources (i) income from working widows, (ii) income from properties and (iii) income from
other working members of widows household. Results from the study showed that majority of the widow households were over populated, 62% of the widows were illiterate, work participation was very less and 96.5% of the widows households were living below poverty line.

Saraswati (1983) conducted a research project sponsored by ICSSR New Delhi on "Social and Economic Profile of the Kashivasi Widow – an anthropological exploration" wherein investigation was made regarding ethnicity, age, family and kinship, education, urban social life, sources of livelihood, living conditions, style of life as consumption pattern, religious observations, taboos, daily routine, remarriage, immediate problem and long range solutions of the Kashivasi widows. Problem of sex, hunger, family ill-treatment and social apathy were also discussed.

Ray (1985) of the Australian National University Research Library (Asian studies) in his book "Widows are not for Burning" analysed the attitudes, actions and achievements of the Christian missionaries, a group of Hindus led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Lord William Bentinck on the custom of widow burning or "Sati".

Singh and Gill (1986) made an exploratory study of 140 widows from Ludhiana city and identified the widows problems regarding money, child rearing and social life. Financial strain to purchase luxuries and provide good food and clothing for children were common. Taking care of children especially when they were sick, arranging for their wedding,
lack of companionship, dressing up soberly and running the entire household on their own were the major problems.

Singh (1988) undertook a survey of 140 randomly selected widows from Ludhiana city between the age of 25 years to 70 years. A structured questionnaire was administered to identify the restraints to widow remarriage. The data was analysed by collecting frequencies, percentages and ranks. Four major restraints (i) love and respect for husband, (ii) children welfare (iii) disrespect by society and (iv) too old children emerged in the analysis.

Krishnakumari (1987) in her book "Status of Single Women in India" has given an account of the socio-economic background and problems of spinsters, widows and divorced women. Demographic details and attitudes of working and non-working spinsters, widows and divorced women were discussed. The findings of the study concluded that single women suffered from psychological problem, economic problem, problem at home and work, and social problems. A comparative analysis of single women showed that the degree of intensity of problems differs for different categories of single women. Results showed that psychological problem for working spinsters was 90%, working widows 100% and working divorced women 100%. Economic problem was 16% for spinsters, 80% for widows and 87% for divorced or separated women.

Ullrich (1988) examined the Havik Brahmin widow from a village in South India. Data was collected from more than
95 women, gathered over a period of 23 years. The investigator argued that cultural factors predispose widows to depression which meet diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorder (DSM III) A.T. Beck's (1971) pathognomonic factors for depression (negative self-image, negative view of the future and negative interpretation of life events) were considered integral to the lives of widows. It suggested that women gained increased control over their lives during the past 23 years, the situation of the widows improved. Increased educational opportunities and age of marriage were factors associated with decrease in the belief of a wife's devotion as a life preserver. Women have been instrumental in decreasing a widows stigmata and in instigating improvements in the widow's situation. Accompanying these changes have decreased the depression among widows.

Dandvate et al (1989) in their book "Widows and Abandoned and Destitute Women in India" discussed the development of women's rights through the centuries and finds that in the process more has been undone. It analyses the torture and harassment inflicted on widows and it poignantly describes the personal trauma of the widow of the November 1984 riots. It makes a case study of the widows of Varanasi and critically assesses the role of the state in improving their living conditions. Three essays make a detailed examination of Sati. The study makes a social audit of the legislation, highlights the shortcomings of the
implementation machinery and supportive institution's and states that without requisite political will women cannot attain equity and justice. The study concludes with policy recommendations to alleviate the plight of widows, abandoned and destitute women.

Chen (1993) of Harvard Institute for International Development Cambridge, Massachusetts, is presently working on the economic status of rural widows in seven states in India.

Barooah, J (1993) in her book "Single Women in Assamese Hindu Society" has made an anthropological study of the status enjoyed by single women and the social and familial problems they face in life and career. The book focuses attention on the single women in Assamese Hindu society. The study scholarly attempts to scientifically explore and analyze the life history and problems of single women. It reviews the social horizon of the single women and examines patterns of living arrangement, work situation, social and cultural contact and widow's position in Assamese society under the provisions of enacted legislation.

Other Indian studies reviewed include Dutta (1938) which gives us an account of widows in Ancient India. Dubey (?) made a comparative study on marriage, widowhood and widow remarriage in some selected villages of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Ghoshal (1989) made a study on socio-economic profile of the widows in Varanasi city.

Gupta (?) made a sociological study of 400 widows in
the city of Lucknow on the status and role of Hindu widows. Mehta (1958) investigated the Hindu widows problems with special reference to Gujarat.