The trauma of the women particularly among the poor and deprived groups in India defies imagination of any civilized society. The single women are the worst sufferers as they are the victims of vagaries of social environment; they are subjected to all kinds of exploitation, sexual harassment, abuse, physical and mental tortures. The increase in numbers of single people has been described as one of the greatest social phenomena. Most women are spending periods of their lives alone, without a committed partner relationship. Yet, there is still a degree of social stigma attached to this status of singlehood. It is an irony that woman—the life giver, the protector and the preserver of human race is by sheer compulsions of social environment is forced to seek protection and care from those very persons whom she rears, brings up and nurtures. The marriage and family is sought by her and her parents and guardians not as a basic natural need for living a fuller life but as the sole escape available for her for mere survival in the hostile environment. Even single women live under constant fear of mental and physical torture, harassment and exploitation. The state of single women is beyond imagination.

However, Indian society is changing fast in this era of globalization and liberalization. The position of those women who are economically independent and have got a requisite will power to lead an independent life
of their own choice has improved considerably. The requisite foundation has been already laid down for such types of women by the constitutional and legal system of the country. There is absolutely no legal hitch of even tiniest kind which can obstruct the path of the single women in any way. It would not be exaggerating to state here that single women can contribute a lot in the creative fields such as literature, music, art, paintings etc. Not only that, they can also enter scientific and defense fields of the society provided they are able to cultivate strong nerves.

Future aspirations of the single women have been analyzed in terms of their opinion about increasing phenomenon of singlehood, the challenges faced, special social institutions needed for single women, decision about future and major suggestions by which their life can become more useful and meaningful in society. The following table provides data about their opinion on increasing the phenomenon of singlehood in future:

Table–6.1
Distribution of Single Women according to Age Group and Opinion about Increasing the Phenomenon of Singlehood in Future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Opinion about Increasing the Phenomenon of Singlehood in Future</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, it will increase</td>
<td>No, it will not increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 35 years</td>
<td>17-4 (8)</td>
<td>39-1 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 40 years</td>
<td>16-7 (11)</td>
<td>36-4 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 40 years</td>
<td>15-8 (6)</td>
<td>47-4 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>16-7 (25)</strong></td>
<td><strong>40-0 (60)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 1.346; DF = 4; Significance < .05
Correlation Coefficient = -.023; Significance < .05
Contingency Coefficient = .094
It may be seen from the data presented in the preceding table that four out of every ten selected single women, irrespective of their age group, have foreseen that the phenomenon of singlehood will not increase, whereas, one out of every six has speculated that singlehood will increase. Majority of the selected single women has not given any opinion on this. It seems that age has no impact on the opinion of single women about increasing the phenomenon of singlehood in future. Both the values of Chi-square and Correlation Coefficient show insignificant association/correlation between age and such an opinion.

An attempt to understand the problems and challenges faced by single women was made in chapter five of this thesis. Here we wanted to enquire about the challenges being faced by single women in general. Their responses on the perceived challenges are contained in table–6.2 on next page. Data contained in this table show that the main challenge before more than one-third of the selected single women is fear of old age/illness. The proportion of such single women shows a significant increase with the increase in age group. It means that this fear is more among the single women in the age group 40 and above. Another challenge before one-fourth single women is social insecurity. In this category the proportion decreases with the increase in age meaning thereby that insecurity is more among those comparatively young and decreases with the increase in age. The challenge of loneliness/emotional problems is stated by one out of every eight single women. Other challenges stated are harassment and exploitation, social stigma, financial problems and physical stress. There are few single women who have no problems/challenges and another few equate their problems with women in general. The calculated value of
Chi-square shows significant association between age and the perceived challenges, whereas, the value of Correlation Coefficient is insignificant.

Some of the scholars have advocated for the need of special social institutions for single women for reducing their multi-facet problems/challenges. This question was asked to the selected respondents and their responses are shown in table–6·3 on next page.

It may be observed from the table mentioned above that a little less than one-third of the selected single women, irrespective of their age group, don’t feel the need of any special social institutions for single women. The remaining single women have suggested different types of institutions and/or facilities to be made for them. One-fourth of them have suggested single women’s associations, while others have underlined the need for women’s clubs, social service centres run by NGOs, special hostels for single women, safe and secure religious centres, special old age homes and opening of multi-purpose information and awareness centres for them. Here also, the calculated value of Chi-square shows significant association between age and the need for special institutions for single women, whereas, the value of Correlation Coefficient is insignificant.

An attempt has also been made to find out the future plans of the selected single women. Table–6·4 provides data on the distribution of single women according to age group and views about their future plans, which show that one-third selected single women want to fight against social stigma attached to singlehood. Almost the same proportion of single women wants to devote time for serving the God. One out of every eight single woman wants to serve the people, whereas, the remaining want either to live
meaningful life, searching a job/higher job, to serve the society through an NGO, to join politics or to fight for just status in society. There are five single women who are afraid of their insecure future and have no plans at the moment. The calculated value of Chi-square shows significant association between age and the future plans of single women, whereas, the value of Correlation Coefficient is insignificant.

We have tried to elicit the suggestions for making the life of single women more useful and meaningful in society. Their responses are shown in table–6 on next page. Data contained in this table show that more than half of the selected single women have opined that it is necessary that every one has positive attitude towards singlehood and hence it should be encouraged. The proportion of such women shows significant decrease with the increase in their age. This means that more proportion of younger women want that positive attitude should be encouraged so that single women make their life more useful and meaningful in society. Next comes the suggestion of involvement of single women in social service with NGOs as they have ample spare time. Then comes the suggestion of providing separate hostels for single women. Both these suggestions have been given by one out of every eight selected single women. The other suggestions given include engagement of single women in spreading the message of God, adopting an orphan, to work for removing social inequalities, special facilities for educational advancement, removing social stigma and working with devotion. The calculated value of Chi-square shows significant association between age and the suggestions for making the life of single women more useful and meaningful in society, whereas, the value of Correlation Coefficient is insignificant.
Single women in Indian perspective are going to command and be commended. Certainly, they are bound to play a very active and all important role in this age of globalization and liberalization in 21st century in the all round peace, progress and prosperity of the country. Indeed, the day is not very far off when the single women will have highly dignified hold in the society—their marvellous achievements in the air, on earth and deep down the sea will take every body with a surprise.

It must be recognized that single women are part and parcel of society. Many of these women have enlightened mind, enriched heart and empowered hand and they no longer look upon marriage as the ultimate goal of girl’s life because they feel that there are bittern thinks and higher goals to be achieved in life than merely dancing to the tunes of the devil whose dubious designs can, at any moment, drag one to a life of denial, despondency, dejection etc. Single women should also realize the power of the hidden self within them to rise above the physically of man-woman so that they can channelize their energies to look into the basic problems of society and humanity. Fearlessness, asceticism and good for all are the pillars on which single women must rest their life. Society should also reciprocate by trying to understand their view point, meet their needs and help developing positive attitude towards them.