CHAPTER IV

Facing the problems and devising methods to solve them
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1. Support from the Children:

Children are the most dependable and reliable resources to the widows, (Lopata 1979, O'Boyaut 1987). Children, it is noted, become more considerate to their widow mothers. The concern of children for the mother become pronounced during her illness. Capable children free their mothers from the responsibility of outdoor jobs, namely transportation, shopping, etc. Daughters, living close by, come to help their mothers in housekeeping. Those living at a distance also do so periodically. In certain specific occasions, particularly illness, our informants felt, that daughters are more helpful than sons. When it comes to physical services, the daughters are much more involved than the sons. Lopata (1925) also drew the same conclusion from her studies. The service component from daughters, after marriage, however, gradually decreases and varies according to the distance between the parental and the husband's households as her responsibilities in her family of procreation increases. In a patrilocal
sons. It is, therefore, obvious that the sons and daughters in-law figure more frequently as service givers in the area of sick care.

2. Support from parents:

Widows expect help and support largely from the parental house. All widows, however, do not always get such help except the young. Those who are widowed at a relatively younger age have normally their parents alive. Thus they feel close to their parent household. The middle aged and the older ones are not always lucky to get their parents living at the time of their widowhood. Some young widows prefer going back to their parental homes not only to get over the shock and grief but also to avoid the scare of loneliness and responsibility of taking care of the children without the help of the children’s father. However, such situations are rare, and tend to occur when the husband’s death is sudden. Our case studies indicate that women who become widowed in young age, get some help from parents and siblings. Widows, now old, widowed at their youth, moved into their parental homes and continued to live there till their children became old enough to support them. Our sample data show that 10.68 percent stayed with their parents.
Those who became old, widowed at the middle or old age, also expected aid from parental homes. But all of them do not get it. A woman, inflicted with widowhood when she is sufficiently old, may not have parents alive, or if alive, may not be in a position to provide help, as they themselves may have become old and dependent (Tab.60).

3. Support from siblings:

Ironically the siblings and even their parents are not always necessarily very helpful for a widow to wade through the crisis of widowhood. The brothers and the sisters largely live scattered and are engrossed in their own lives (Lopat 1925). For some of our informants, help from the siblings did come initially and for a certain period in the form of transportation, shopping, house repair, house keeping and in such other routine matters of life. Our data indicate that brothers are more helpful than sisters (Tab.60). We noted that the widows are not only received help but also rendered help to their benefactors while staying with them.
4. Support from friends and Neighbours:

A friend is someone to whom you are important and who makes you feel important. Friends are people to whom you turn in times of crises for help (Lopata, 1925). As there is a saying that "A friend in need, a friend indeed", that means a true friend is a friend who helps in times of needs.

Mostly friendship develops in a place/community where people know each other from birth, see each other frequently, and cannot, "hide secrets" (Simmel, 1950). These community friends are more helpful to the widows than any other. Friends do help in shopping, transportation, etc. In sick care they offer sick-diet. These activities are, however, reciprocal. Neighbours do not support or help unless they have been converted into friends (Lopata, 1971a, 1973a). Neighbours are generally people whose style of life is almost similar to each other, with whom contact is almost guaranteed, and who are thus potentially close associates (Lopata, 1973a). The friendship particularly develops in a neighbourhood, if assistance can be offered voluntarily and by regular interaction which can be maintained by the mutual gratification. But in most cases close friendship between
couples slackens after widowhood. A widow finds herself restrained to associate with couples. Widows find easier to make friendship with other widows where they can share feelings and release tension (Tab.60).

Lopata (1971a, 1973a) has seen that neighbors do not generally appear in the support system of widows, unless they have been converted into friends. From our sample it is observed that neighbours are not helpful in any respect, unless they are prior friends.

The data indicate that those who belong to the same area and have friendly relations are more helpful in times of sickcare, legal complicacies, in repairing the house, making decisions and house keeping. Among the personal friends of a widow or those of her husband, very few are helpful. Only 1 respondent seems to have got supports from her friend in her activities as house repair, shopping and legal matters. 4 others got such support in house keeping only. Five widows got help in legal matters from the friends of their husbands 2 got support in housekeeping and 1 in decision making (Tab.60).
Transportation:

As many as 39.81 percent do not get any help when they need transport. They arrange it themselves. Those who help the widows in this task are normally their children, and grand children. Daughters seem to be more helpful than others. 3.88 percent get help from daughters in this activity. The rest 'manage' it through brothers, fathers, brothers-in-laws sons-in-laws'. 8.74 percent respondents donot have any transportation need.

Household repairs

Nearly 50 percent respondents (43.20%) have found the need to repair their houses. The houses of many of these are in a detoriated condition. The married sons took over this responsibility in case of 68.93 percent respondents. For (3.40 percent) help came from brothers, sisters, sisters-in-law and neighbourhood friends. For 2.43 percent it came from the daughters. Very few, i.e., 1.46 percent have it from husband's brother, 0.97 percent from maternal uncles, 2 from nephews, 3 from sons-in-law and 1 from a personal friend. 13 did it by themselves.
Shopping:

A large number of widows do their shopping themselves. For nearly one fourth, the married sons do the job. For 7.77 percent it comes from daughters. 11.65 percent get it from their children. The rest receive random help from relatives such as, brothers, husbands’ brothers, sister, brothers-in-laws (Sister’s husband) sisters in-laws (brother’s wife) daughters-in-law, mother, uncles (mother’s brother) and son’s-in-law.

In sickness:

For almost 30 percent, the daughters-in-law are the care takers. For 8.25 percent the sons act as sickness attendants. 5 respondents have reported to help from sisters and brothers-in-laws. 4 respondents depend on their mothers. For 1 it is the mother-in-law. For 7 the attendants are grand children; for 13 neighbourhood friends (other widows), for 8 the brothers’ wives, for 2 their fathers, for 2 their uncles and aunts for 2 the nephews (sister’s and brother’s sons). 26 others donot receive help from any body. 5 have reported to have received sickness assistance from the old age home.
Legal Matters:

The sons took care of the legal matters of 41.75 percent respondents. For 13 nos. Their fathers had shouldered the responsibility. The brothers came forward for 25 others. The sisters and their husbands helped 18 respondents. 2 received it from sisters in law (brothers' wives). The neighbourhood friends (themselves widows) provided assistance for 7. The friends of the deceased husband assisted 5 respondents. It came from the daughters-in-laws for two and for 1 it was from the mother. 3 respondents engaged lawyers on their own. 4 widows received it from the old age home and the Matha. For 11 it came from their bosses. For 9 it came from their sons-in-law, 2 got it from grand sons, 5 from nephews (Brother and sister's son) and only 4 have not sought any help from anybody on legal matters.

In making important Decisions:

For 37.38 percent the decision partners are the sons. The fathers figure in 5.34 percent cases, brothers 11.16 percent, daughters in 6.31 percent, sons-in-law in 3.40%, and the bosses in 3.88 percent cases. Among the rest, 2 consulted advocates, 2 old age houses/Maths, 2
fathers-in-law, 4 nephews, 2 grand sons, 4 friends, 1 husband’s friends, 1 brother’s wife, 3 daughters-in-law, 1 neighbourhood friends (widows) and lastly 4 consulted husband’s elder brother (Brother-in-laws).

In housekeeping:

Daughters-in-law who should become partners with the mother-in-law in housekeeping are available to 18.93 percent respondents. For 15.54 percent, daughters are seen to help their widow mothers. 2 of respondents receive help from their sisters-in-law (Brother’s wives). 10 respondents are helped by their children. 32.52 percent are entirely dependent on themselves. 23.78 percent do not require housekeeping. 1 is helped by her son-in-law and 1 by a friend who herself is a widow.

Close Personal Relationship with (Relatives and Non-relatives)

Close or intimate relationship is important (with relatives as well as non-relatives). One can find herself/himself handicapped without close relationship. The intimate relationship is important as human lives are always at stake and the widows’ needs are intense (Barrett 1981). Arising out of needs, an alternative
form of intimacy with some one else evolves in widowhood, which was once largely met by the husband; for example, to pay electric bill, admit the child to school/college, etc.

To meet the day-to-day problems, which cannot be solved alone, a widow requires other's help particularly when she is in a small family. This dependency, sometimes may lead to very intimate relationship with some one of the opposite sex (relatives or non-relatives). They may even be parents, children or siblings who are more sympathetic and who can share her feelings.

The emotional demands on the widow increase by the necessity for her to assume total responsibility of parenting the children. However, this may give her more satisfaction as children are the most valuable resources of the widows (Lopata 1979, O'Boryant 1987). Our respondents report that the children are more sympathetic and provide all types of help and services. It is also seen that daughters are more attached to their mothers than the sons, but personal relationship with relatives like siblings, parents depends upon their proximity. However, the development of the nuclear family in the modern industrial society has broken down the extended families and the associated kinship obligations.
Therefore, often the widows mother stays with children only leading to high degree of contact with them and in course of time with their families.

The next nearest relatives are siblings. Following the death of the husband, a woman turns to the siblings for help in the absence of parents. The siblings help in performing some of the deceased husband's male stereotypical tasks (Cicirelli 1982). And another cause of association of a widow with her siblings is the natural tendency of the latter to share the widow's grief. Our data indicate that some widows in our sample are more attached to siblings some to other categories of relatives like (Brother and sister's children, the sister etc. The non-relatives are husband's friends and her own friends.

On the other hand there is a definite decline in the frequency of interaction between the widow and her husbands parents and siblings (Marris 1950). Young widows, by and large distance themselves from the deceased husband's families and closer to the parental household. Our data, however, have brought out 8 cases where the husband's brothers proved to be more helpful. 16 respondents show more attachment, to their brothers' families (8 before widowhood 6 more after and 2 families
of the brothers children). 7 numbers of respondents have intimate relations with their sisters and 3 with the sister’s husband (after widowhood 6 numbers more attach to their sisters and 4 more with the sister’s husband).

Our studies also found that the daughters and sons-in-law come closely to their mothers and mothers-in-laws, 19 daughters and 10 sons-in-law are more close to their mothers.

Parents naturally are more helpful and come close to their widow daughters. The data show that 16 respondents are very close to their parents and 16 to their brothers. 13 close to their own friends and 7 close to their husbands’ friends who receive help in any time when she needs. The exceptional relationship are as follows: 3 respondents are very close to their husband’s brother’s wives, before another respondent is with her maternal uncle and aunt, 1 is attached to her daughters-in-law, 1 is attached to her widow mother-in-law, 2 are attached to their sister’s sons, 2 other widows are attached to their husband’s brother’s sons and 2 are close to their fathers-in-law. The rest widows are satisfied with the company of their children only (Tab.61).