CHAPTER V

Summary and Conclusion
The empirical data generated through this study bring to focus problems faced by widows in varying intensity. These are the problems of food, shelter, emotions, finance, bringing up and educating children, property rights, cheating and ill-treatment by close relatives, sexual harassment, adjustment in the households, arranging marriage for daughters, and facing crisis situations when a child dies premature.

The study establishes that a large number of widows do not escape these situations. The intensity of suffering, however, varies from person to person and from group to group. For example, arranging the daily bread is found not very easy for 69 per cent in the sample, many among whom are from families of moderate means. Similarly, in finding a suitable shelter, consequent upon widowhood found to be difficult, particularly for those in the lower and middle socio-economic status. Ironically, however, respondents from the families of higher means are not always immune to these problems.

Widowhood is a traumatic experience. Its immediate effect is beyond description. However, women
facing widowhood at a comparatively younger age are more disturbed than those who face it in advanced years. A very small percentage of people only (5.26 per cent) are found to be undisturbed emotionally.

Widowhood often ushers financial crisis of varying intensity. We have found some widows in richer families are also overtaken by financial constraints though it is of certainly of more intensity for their counterparts in lower economic levels.

Bringing up children and educating them are found to be uphill tasks for younger widows; whereas arranging marriage for daughters unnerve widows in higher age groups.

Property is found to be a bone of contention between the widows and their immediate families, particularly with those in the families of procreation. We have seen that widows in our sample are often not only denied their rights of succession to the properties of their husbands, but also are seen to be deprived of their rightful possession of settled properties. Unscrupulous friends and relatives quite often cheat the widows of their properties, cash, jewellery, etc.
Ill and improper treatment by the relatives in households do not seem to spare any. Victims of ill treatment are found in all age groups and in all socio-economic levels. The victimising agent can be any one including a son. Expectedly, the parents are not in this group of tormenters.

The widows, particularly those in lower age group, find it difficult to adjust with the members of the families of procreation following widowhood. Young widows, sometimes, are subjected to sexual harassment by close relatives.

Nothing is found to be more devastating in the life of a widow than death of a child. Those who have faced this crisis have a feeling of unspeakable despondancy haunting them throughout their lives even more intense than the death of the husband. By and large, widows of low levels of education find it more difficult to cope with such a situation consequent upon widowhood.

II

Among the causes of death of the husband, it is alarming to note that nearly 10 per cent of lives are
claimed by road accidents. This is particularly, disquieting because the universe of the study is a small town with moderate traffic. Unfortunately most of the victims of such accidents are from the younger age groups leading to a long period of infliction of widowhood on the surviving wives.

Conclusion:

Widowhood is an inevitable socio-cultural situation. For upper castes in India the tradition has made such a situation irreversible. Powerful and persuasive social reformers and their well intentioned movements, legislative efforts and decades of governmental coercion have not been able to ease the situation for the widow. These efforts at the micro level have not found way into the tradition bound societal nucleus to usher sustainable social change. As long as the effort to emancipate women come from the opposite gender, meaningful and sustainable emancipation of women will remain incomplete. In conclusion, therefore, we assert that women regiment themselves and assert their own rights and status. The governmental and legislative efforts be directed to educate women in their rights; and the society at large will adjust itself to the emerging gender role models, wherein the traditional
to the changing situation. Coercive legislation have only limited impact.

The empirical data at our command enables us to suggest that the age difference between husband and wife should be reduced to maximum of 5 years. Though educating the female at all levels is the only long term solutions to free women from the shackles of tradition, suitable programmes in the form of non formal education, vocational training etc., for the widows in conformity with their age and socio-economic status, shall provide immediate relief to the victims of widowhood. Further, welfare schemes, such as free medical facilities, bank loan facilities at low rate of interest should be formulated exclusively for the widows. They should provided with suitable employment to enable them to support their children. The widow pension scheme should be made applicable to all widows irrespective of the status of the deceased husband. Special governmental attention should be paid where the widows have children halfway through their studies. State managed suitable widowhomes can be established to accommodate widows who are without family support.

The mass media should highlight the ongoing atrocities on women and arouse societal concern to
rehabilitate the needy widows and other such women. The state should also encourage female activist groups fighting for the overall emancipation of women.

Thus providing educational, economic and social protection, legislation, building awareness strengthening female organisation, etc. should be tied into a single integrated programme to be of meaningful consequence.