CHAPTER - I

Introduction
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1.1 Widow and Widowhood Defined:

Vidhava, a Sanskrit word, meaning one without a husband, is the synonym for the English word widow. The latter is derived from the Latin root, 'Vidua' meaning to bereave of one's husband, (or wife), a woman having lost her husband by death, has not married again. This condition or state in a woman's life is known as widowhood (Chamber's 20th century Dictionary). Thus it refers to the marital status of a female after the death of her husband.

Widowhood is considered to be a curse and almost equivalent to death for a Hindu woman. A widow laments, "To be a woman is a curse, to be also poor is to be doubly accursed. And to be a poor widow is a curse without redemption" (Interview with one Narayani Basak, a Bengali widow living in the pilgrimage centre at Vrindavan (The Telegraph, 19th Oct. 1987)).
1.2 Causes of Widowhood:

There are many reasons which may lead to Widowhood. The most prevalent cause at one time is child marriage or early marriage. It was once practised by almost all upper castes and has been institutionalised for several centuries. In the traditional familial setup, that being largely joint, the groom was not necessarily required to be economically independent. He could be married early as marriage did not impose on him meaningful responsibilities. The average age of marriage for girls was 8. The most significant reason, however, was the shastric injunction that the girls were to be married before attaining puberty. This customary practice had been partially responsible for the preponderance of widows among the Hindus. A child of 8 to 10 was generally married to a man of 20 to 25 years leaving a wide gap between the age of the husband and the wife leading to widowhood sooner or later (S.K. Ghose, 1984). 1971 Census of India records 11.70 percent girls married at the age between 10 to 14 years. Thus a Hindu girl, married as an infant runs the risk of facing widowhood even before functionally acquiring the status of a wife. Mahatma Gandhi vehemently opposed the practice of child widows. He said that in the name of
religion we force widowhood upon our girl children who hardly understand what marriage is. This practice of child marriage enforced thousands of girls to be child widows/childless widows (Vina Mazumdar, 1976).

Thirdly the percentage of widows in any given age group is a result of masculine mortality. Men have higher mortality rate than women at the same age, and if the age difference is considerable, as is typically in India, widowhood becomes inevitable. The number of widows in India is on the increase as their remarriage is almost a taboo. A widow in the society faces a double edged problem: being a woman and a widow.

1.3 Status of Widows and Their Problems:

However, the problem of widows are not only confined to traditional society. The widows in contemporary society also face a number of problems which need to be understood.

The widows are identified from other women through their white dress, abstinence from using vermilion or bindi on their foreheads and no ornaments on their body. They are supposed to eat only one meal a day, and restricted to vegetarian diet. Even vegetable
items like mushoor dal, onion, garlic, mushroom, etc., suspected to arouse sexual desire, are forbidden.

The breaking of her bangles symbolises her loss of independence and individuality (India Today 15th Aug. 1987). The widows have to go through the widowing process, which stretches over 12 to 13 days. The details differ from community to community. Widows have to follow a strict ritualistic schedule from the very day of the husband’s death. Apart from the taboo on remarriage a number of other taboos are imposed on her. She is made to reconcile with the ascribed status of widowhood, manifested in her white cotton saree and no jewelry and no make up. She is expected to follow a new schedule, observing several fasts and vows throughout the year, like Ekadashi, Sadhayantri (Madan, T.N. 1976). The widow would have to keep out of the mainstream of life. She is only allowed to visit temples and pilgrimage to holy places. Her presence is viewed as an ill omen in any auspicious gathering or celebration. She even is not expected to present or join her son’s thread ceremony or the daughter’s marriage. Sooner, she is viewed as a nuisance as well as an economic burden. Sighting a widow in the morning is considered an ill omen. It is also a bad omen to come across a widow on the eve of a journey.
She is required to live a life of "denial and abstinence." "For a Brahman girl, her first marriage would definitely, have her last until recently" (A.S. Altekar, 1959). After the death of the husband, the widow becomes a non-person and her position in the family as well as in the society declines. She is looked down by the society. The condition of the Hindu widow has been on the whole, deteriorating during last two thousand years (William Goode, 1970). They are even viewed as second class members in their own families (Lopamudra, 1983 and Hairy Spider in Dalmon Sara, 1980).

The widows are found to face a number of problems such as of food, of shelter, of emotion, of finance and of educating and upbringing of children, of ill-treatment and of denial rights over property, etc. The most important is financial, because this problem is associated with all other problems. Generally, the death of the husband leads to a drastic fall of income and consequently of the standard of living. There are widows who face the problem of food and shelter in acute intensity and land in Mathas' for food and shelter.

Upbringing of children is a vast responsibility. In such cases the single parent (widow) face difficulties in guiding and educating the children. Following the
death of the father children in the school are often compelled to discontinue their studies to support the family. An elderly widow is often much better off than a young and middle aged one, a young widow with small children, if she belongs to a nuclear family, experiences more difficulties (B.M.M. Aradhya, 1987 and Marris 1958). She would have to bring up the dependent children single handed.

Widows are often ill treated by the relatives. Many are not better than maid servants of the household and are required to perform all household chores such as moping, washing and cleaning utensils, etc., (S.K. Ghose, 1984, Rami Chhabra, 1975). Often the death of her husband is thought to be a punishment for her misdeeds (Doranne Jacobson, 1977), and that provokes her relations to ill-treat her. The young high caste widows are helpless victims of family neglect and even torture. Some old childless widows are largely from the upper castes, widowed in the childhood. They look forward to death as the only solace. The young widows sometimes, face the problem of sexual harassment by their close relatives. The widows also are often cheated of their jewellery and rights over property by relatives. Though the Hindu succession Law of 1956 has given the right to a
widow to inherit the husband's property, widows are still struggling for their right over such property. The young childless widows and widows with young children and widows having only girl children are the worst victims of property dispossession as they are not strong enough to fight legal battles with their relatives.

Though an elderly widow, if she has considerate adult children, is often much better off than young and middle aged ones; the widows, in general feel the indifference, negligence and, ill treatment from the family members and the relatives.

As the last resort, some widows are found to renounce the world and silently slip away from home on pilgrimage in search of dignity and religious solace to places like Haridwar, Rishikesh and Brindawan where they are totally on their own, waiting death, chanting Bhajan and Kirtan, living on the mercy of the Ashram authorities or some rich devotee.

1.4 A glance at the reform Movements for Female Emancipation:

Concerted efforts to root out social evils in India were primarily 19th century phenomenon. The attention was focussed on sati, the ill-treatment of
widows, the ban on widow marriage, polygyny, child marriage and denial of property rights to woman in that chronological order (Mazumdar 1976: 48). However, those who spearheaded the movement are M.G. Ranade, N.G. Chandravaskar, K.V. Pantulu, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Jyotiba Phooley, Lokhitavadi, Gopal Hari Deshmukh and later by Mahatma Gandhi and D.K. Karve. However, movements to liberate women was largely concerned with the problems of the upper class women. The life style of the upper caste Hindu women, associated with their marriage and widowhood were the targets of change. The childless woman and the widows suffered most under the prevailing customs and conventions. The sympathy of the reformers was stimulated by the harsh treatment of the society towards the latter group. The reformers concentrated their efforts on three important aspects of a women's life: age of marriage, the conditions of life of the widows and the widow marriage.

The prevalent Hindu custom of marrying girls at a younger age was closely scrutinised and analysed. Similarly, the widows prohibited to re-marry evoked the sympathy.

The young age of marriage and the question of widow re-marriage was particularly relevant to women from
wealthy and higher castes, such as the Brahmin and the Kayaystha. But it was mostly the constraints imposed and miseries inflicted upon women, of higher status in caste/class which were closely scrutinised by the reformers. In the early 13th century, the average age of marriage for girls was eight or nine. Almost all Hindu marriage were arranged by the parents of the couple keeping the traditional norm, before the children attained the age of puberty. Many future reformers and political leaders were themselves married at a young age. Ram Krishna Paramahansa married a girl of six, M.G. Ranade’s at marriage was eight, D.K. Karve’s was nine. The practice of child marriage was institutionalised by Hindu society for several countries.

The Governmental legislation to improve the situation of minor girls resulted in the first bill on the age of consent passed in 1860 which made sexual intercourse with a girl of less than 10 years amounted to rape. Though Dr. Margaret Balfour, in charge of collecting data for maternity and infant welfare in Bombay hospitals, reported the average age of marriage as 18.7 years.

In 1884, Behramji Malbaris, a Parsi journalist published his Notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced
Widowhood. It was an appeal for sympathy and action. Malbari's argument was based on humanitarianism and justice rather than on an interpretation and of the smritis. The government in pursuance of their policy of neutrality and non-interference with the social and religious practices of the people expressed sympathy but was reluctant to legislate.

The majority of the Indians who replied to the Notes favoured legislation or some form of deterrent action to restrict child marriage.

Indian social reformers interpreted the government's refusal to legislate as an indirect means of keeping the people backward. The All India Social Reform Conference led by M.G. Ranade supported the legislation. As a result of the subsequent debate, the forces supporting the legislation gained strength. In 1891, the Government passed an amendment to the existing Penal Code raising the age of consent for marriage to 12 (Agnew ibid: 22).

In 1929 Hari Bilas Sarada introduced a bill to raise the minimum age of marriage for the girl to 14. Kesub Chandra Sen advocated a minimum age of marriage of
girl at 16, explaining the difficulty of early marriage of his daughter. Maharshi Karve supported Sen.

Then the campaign for Hindu women’s Right to Property Act and Widow Re-marriage Act of 1856 was led by the reformers to improve the position of widows and to ensure economic security among the propertied classes. The reformers like Pandit Iswar chandra Vidyasagar, Kesub Chandra Sen and Maharshi, D.K. Karve supported legislation to enable the widows to re-marriage without losing their property rights.

But the Hindu Women’s Right to Property Act, a very limited measure to bring a small minority of women into the line of succession took eight years to legislate and the civil marriage Act was passed after two defeats. The movement in fact needed new dimensions of understanding, a wider and more radical ideology, and a new leadership.

1.5 Studies on Problems of Women

From time to time studies on women focus specific problems of the widows.
It has been observed that widows face uncomfortable situations and are constantly humiliated, harassed, sexually exploited and are considered easy prey to male relatives (Rao : 87, Bidarakoppa : 71, Subramaniam : 1988). Smart and Laura (1976) have found that the sexual needs and activities of the widowed are virtually unresearched. Those persons widowed early in life, or still sexually active with their partners, would suffer more sexually than those who do not have interest in sex.

The Indian widows are subjected to a number of restrictions. The permitted colour of the dress is white and the food is strictly vegetarian (Jacobson 1977, Mahinder 1980) she is supposed to live the life of an ascetic observing several fasts, restricting the foods and taking special interest in God (Madan, 1976, Mahinder ibid). Badhwar (1987) found widows living in religious seclusion in Brindawan, are dressed in white with white Tilaks on their foreheads. The rigidity of the custom required a widow to shave her head, wear borderless white saris and no under garments, no ornaments, cook her own vegetarian food in a separate kitchen, keep regular fast on prescribed days, not allowed to stir out of the house alone or receive any male guest in the house (Ghose
Meheta (1976) observes that the rituals that followed the death of a husband are painfully inhuman. Her hair was shaved, her bangles broken, and shorn all her jewellery. She was required to sit at one place confined to one room for the next year to receive condolences. Her ghungat was kept drawn over her face. In most parts of India the unfortunate widow breaks her bangles, shaves her head and wears only white (Jacobson 1977). These restrictions of food apply to India as a whole. The widows are denied onions, garlic and even masur dal. These food items are apparently suspected to arouse sexual desires as do the high protein meat and fish. The widows have to go on regular fasts as well, have a minimum personal possession, sleep on the floor and lead a secluded life.

The custom of the tonsure of widows, which is very ugly and unfortunate one, is of recent introduction. The motive underlying it seems to make the outward appearance of the widow resembling a sanyasi, whose way of life she is expected to follow. The procedure is also followed to destroy the beauty of the face supposedly ensuring greater protection against the unwanted attention of undesirable characters (Altekar : 1962, Bidarakoppa 1971, Aradhya, 1987). Widows do not appear to
use bodices. The colour of their sari is plain white in the early period. Later the colour varies from region to region. In Deccan, widows wear saris like the Buddhist nuns. In Bengal and Northern India, however, the normal wear is white plain sari without any border (Altekar, 1962). A high caste widow is denied the simplest pleasures of life. She is allowed eat only once a day. Chewing betel, nuts or takes pickles is prohibited (Agnew 1979). She would seldom go out of the house, except occasionally, to visit a temple. The sight of a widow is inauspicious and unlucky. She can, therefore, never attend a wedding or any such festivity. The belief behind this that the fate of a widow is divinely ordained.

Children are the most sufferers who are at school at the time of the death of their father. 23 percent children in our sample had to dropout from the school and compelled to take up petty jobs like tea-shops, workshop, restaurants, garages. A widow finds it difficult to control and discipline the children in the absence of the father. More than seventy percent widows of the sample reported that in the absence of sound financial position and lack of support they found it extremely difficult in
getting their children, particularly daughters married (Yojana : 1978).

Kitehlu (1979) observed that 59.90 percent widows have failed in the task of properly bringing up their children and could not control them due to the interferences by relatives.

A report published in the June 16, 1978 issue of the Yojana records that there is an appreciable reduction in the family income after widowhood. Many husbands did not leave behind any savings, forcing the widow to resort to an all round reduction in the family budget. Haricharan (1982) found that 66 percent widows in his sample ran into debt to meet the hospitalisation expenditure and later for education and marriage of her children and 96.50 percent of the widow households are below the "poverty line".

Thus income is the major intervening variable. It influences the mobility and social interaction of the widowed (Atchley : 1975 in Morgan : 1976). In a few cases, however, the widows' household income increased after widowhood but it is not the real income of the widow. Higher income is attributed to various sources such as other working members in the family or children.

More than 79.00 percent widow's in Kitchlu's sample (1979) had to economise on various items of expenditure such as milk, vegetables, recreation, clothes etc. Only 15.40 percent widows in his sample did not face any financial problem.

Income inadequacy is a major contributor to problems of adjustment in the case of young widows with children (Marris, 1958 in Morgan, 1976). Rao (1987) found that financial or economic support is very important. Without this, a widow is handicapped in every dealing not only with others but with her own children.

Almost equal proportion of working and non-working widows felt the financial stress of maintaining the family. At the time of husband's death, 70 percent of the respondents were wholly dependent. For the non-working, the major sources of income are those of the employed children, husband's pension (Subramaniam, 1988). Bidarakoppa, 1971, observed that whether the widow belongs to rich, middle or poor family, when her husband dies the income of the family naturally decreases. The
widow, if poor, has to depend upon herself, and make efforts to find herself a job, sometimes, reluctantly as she finds no other way of making both ends meet. The widows belonging to the middle and rich classes also face financial difficulties particularly when they are uneducated and ignorant. There are cases where widowed mothers are driven out to the streets by their sons. This is particularly true when the sons get married and set up their independent families.

The traditional Hindu custom did not permit a woman to inherit land or house from either the parents or the husband. A widow cannot sell her husband's land or give it to her natal relatives; and if she has no sons, the land is claimed by her husband's closest male patrilineal relatives upon her death (Doranne and Wadley : 1977). Though in 1937 the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act permitted the widow to inherit the property that their husbands had, but the widows were still not accepted as their legal heir (Goode : 1970, Lopamudra : 1983). Agnew (1979) observes that the child widows or the childless widows suffer much where they are denied property rights. The widows do not inherit but are entitled only the 'benefits' as maintenance (except in Bengal where she had greater legal rights). Monohar
(1976) asserts that the 1956 Act of Women's right over property is on a piece of paper. The Supreme Court and the high courts gave a favourable decisions in favour of Hindu widows. As a result, a number of Hindu widows got their husband's property. She has illustrated the case of Munnalal vs. Raj Kumār in which the supreme Court (1967) gave a good bye to the Old principle and gave the widow the right to share in joint family property if not already partitioned. She, therefore, became a complete owner of that share.

Ghose (1984) noticed that a widow is treated as a maid servant and required to perform all household duties - sweeping, washing floors, cleaning utensils, etc. She treated harshly, since the death of her husband was thought to be a punishment for her misdeeds in a previous life (Jacbson and Wadley : 1977). She is a glorified servant or a household unpaid drudge in the in-laws house and relatives. (Chhabra : 1975, Agnew : 1979, Bidarakoppa : 1971). Vina Mazumdar (1976) reported cases of a number of young high caste widows who are helpless victims of family neglect and torture. Subramaniam (1988) found that they are not welcome to take part in special functions. They feel discriminated and preferred to remain aloof than constantly being pointed at as
inauspicious. A report based on survey in Bangalore city by Subramaniam 1988 is that most of the respondents do not attend or take part in special functions as they feel discriminated, they even complained of ill-treatment at such functions. Most of them felt ill at case in social gatherings and preferred to be remain aloof than constantly being pointed at as inauspicious.

Following widowhood, women experienced decrease in the total number of kin contacts within a given period, but when the size of kin network is minimised, there is an increase in the average frequency of meeting kin for the widowed women (O'Bryant : 1988). Lopata (1979) observed that siblings were not actively involved in the support systems of her respondents (quoted in O’ Bryant, 1988). Gender of siblings supporting or sympathising with the widow is another area that has received some research attention. The sister-sister relationship has been found to be closest (Scott, 1983). Sisters generally provide more help than brothers (Cumming and Schnider 1961, Kivett, 1985).

Widowhood is much more common in old age than in younger years, and widows find it easier to associate with other widows during old age (Blau 1961, 1973). Arling (1976) found that friendship with neighbouring or
family involvement are associated with a widow's participation in daily activities. Majority of the widows receive help from distant relations, neighbours and friends (Tunstall 1966). The pattern of relationship is influenced, largely by the force of the attachment between mothers and their children. However, when they leave home for any reason, the frequency of visits is proportional to physical distance. They look to their mothers as head of the family, turn for advice and help for bringing up their children and the brothers and sisters meet often at her home but when the mother dies, they gradually lose touch (Marris 1958).

There were 234 lakh widows in India (1981 Census). Though widowhood is a phenomenon of advanced age, the age gap between the wife and the husband is its main cause (Lopata 1925 : 98). The most prevalent cause of a man's (husband's) death, reflecting the national trend, relates to vascular problems, heart attacks, strokes and related disorders (Lopata ibid, 100). Over half of the men in our sample died from these complications, cancer is the second most frequent cause claiming 18 percent of deaths. One tenth of men died in accidents the majority being related to road and automobiles, including those related to jobs. A few (2
percent) men are murdered or committed suicide. The 'Other' diseases causing death, we have noted is cyrrhosis of the liver, followed by pneumonia, tuberculosis and such rare diseases as yellow fever (10 percent) (Dalmont: 1980, Karkal and Rajan 1989, William 1970, Nagesh, sara 1987, Kitclu 1976, Yojona 1978, Aradhya 1987). The other major cause of widowhood is the widespread prevalence of child marriage (Aradhya 1987 ibid) 11.70 percent Indian girls are married at the age 10-14 years (1971 Census).

Observations (Glick etal; Parkes, 1964 : Maddison and Walker) have focussed the severity of depression symptoms with younger widows following the breavement more than what it is with Older widows (quoted in Blanchard, G.Christian).

A study on the symptomatology and management of reactions to grief by Lindeman (1944) observed that although symptoms do decline overtime, widows continue to show marked depressive symptomatology, at least for a year following the death of a spouse. It is reported that anticipating the husband's death made no difference in the initial grief reactions.
Following the death of the husband, widows are reported to have suffered from physical as well as mental symptoms such as feeling of indifference to life, detachment or remoteness from others and a sense of unreality (Hubson, quoted in Dalmont Sara, 1980).

The effect of the bereavement is a compared crisis and the immediate effect is an unberable shock due to unexpected death of the husband. A widow is stunned and almost immoblised with extreme grief. She undergoes intense physical and emotional suffering, a feeling of helplessness and gloom which may lead to mental disorder or drive her to commit suicide (Aradhya : 1987, Gerber, 1975).

The negative impact of bereavement and loss of mate cannot be minimised. Damage to the self often accompanies widowhood but the duration of damage to self depends upon the intensity of damage to self depends upon the intensity of the involvement with the departed spouse (Heymann and Gyianturco, 1973).

Hiltz (1978) has focussed on the stages of grief. In the first stage the surviving spouse is stunned and immobilised with grief and the second stage is a period of intense suffering physical as well as emotional. The
third stages is a gradual reawakening to an interest in life (quoted in Rice: 1979).

It has been observed that the level of social involvement decreases in widowhood due to the impact on emotional and physical suffering (Antos: 1982).

Smart and Laura (1976) have found that the problems of widowhood among the aged are compounded and perhaps superceded by the feelings of usefulness and isolation.

Bidarakoppa (1971) observed that the problem of emotion refers to psycho-physical diseases. The widow loses interest in her daily life, and neglects her health and this will have its repercussion upon her health. Lack of social contact, sense of loneliness and other factors affect her health adversely. Moreover, the widow gets emotionally disturbed by the sudden shock she receives from the death of her husband. She becomes restless, agitated and creates a tense situation for herself and for others. She becomes irritated and frustrated because of her distressed mind. She becomes apathetic and overwhelmed with a sense of emptiness of life. She may show signs of withdrawal from friends and relatives and lose of all interest in her life. It is
particularly true with those widows who are young and childless.

Marris (1958) has reported a tendency for the widows to withdraw from others and reject consolation and make an adjustment to loss in income as well as of the person. Rice (1979) noticed that the biggest adjustment relates to role changes of women. Young widows have to assume the total role of care and socialization of children as well as the provider, home-maker, and maintaining ties with the extended family. Widowhood requires a greater number of necessary changes in the role of life for younger women than for the older. Widowhood at all ages, however, changes the basic self identity of many women, as the woman, playing the role of wife, has to reorient her thinking to find other identifies. The role and authority appreciably changes after widowhood. (Mehta 1975) Death of the husband is a source of stress requiring more readjustment than any other event in life (Marris 1958, Morgan 1976, Lopata 1979).
1.6 Objectives of the Study:

Universally widowhood is not a happy state of life. It is more so in India, particularly those who belong to upper castes.

The objectives of this exercise are to document the causes of widowhood and the problems faced by the upper caste widows in western Orissa. Though the intensity of the problems of a widow varies according to her age, educational qualification, occupation, income, size and the structure of the family, they vary from region to region. Therefore we have chosen the principal city of western Orissa to understand the problems of the widows and widowhood in the context of a region.

Culturally Orissa can be divided into three regions. The northern, the southern and the western. The western Orissa consists of nine districts namely Sundargarh, Bolangir, Sonepur, Kalahandi, Nuapara, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Deogarh and Bargarh. It is distinguished by its language, popularly known as Sambalpuri. The research is primarily exploratory in design. The analysis is partly quantitative, and partly qualitative and is descriptive in nature.
1.7 The Area of the Study:

Sambalpur, the regional as well as the district Head Quarter city was selected. Sambalpur is an ancient habitation and is the epicentre of western Orissa. It is situated on the bank of the river Mahanadi which flows from north west to south east through Orissa and falls into the Bay of Bengal. It has a number of tributaries. The river Mahanadi is now in the world map because of the Dam built across it near Sambalpur. The district is situated in the north-western border of Orissa. It lies between 20-34’N and 22-11’N latitudes. It is bounded on the north by Bolangir district, on the east by Dhenkanal, and on the west the district of Kalahandi, and the Raigarh of Madhya Pradesh. The city Sambalpur is surrounded by villages and a few Industries. The town seems to have been named after the Goddess, Samalai or Samaleswari, the tutelary deity of King Balram Dev who had his capital here from 1550 A.D. to 1560 A.D.

1.8 Field work and Field Problems:

Initially the respondents were randomly interviewed and with their help we located other widows according to our objectives. Thus the sample is drawn
partly through random and partly through cluster sampling. Care was taken to see that the sample includes young, middleaged and old widows and those from upper castes, such as the Brahmin and the Karan. Accordingly, we collected 250 samples. On further scrutiny we could select 206 for our analysis.

The questionnaire was prepared with the help of Lopata (1925) keeping in view of the Indian situation. It consisted of 25 questions relating to the causes of the husband's death and its consequences, age gap between the husband and the wife, annual income before and after the death of the husband and the day-to-day problems, religious and leisure time activities, and so on. The questionnaire was translated into Oriya. A reasonable rapport was first established with the respondents during the sample selection. Each question was first readout to the respondent and explained in Sambalpuri dialect. The response was recorded.

Data were collected over a period of 13 months (from Feb. 1987 to April 1988). The interviews were mainly conducted from noon to evening. The festival days were avoided. Each interview took about two and half hours. The interviews were conducted at the respondent's working place or religious places synchronising the
widows' visits to such places. Subsequent meetings were arranged for the collection of case data according to the convenience of the subjects. Data from the 206 schedules were tabulated and tables on individual responses were prepared. The frequency is calculated in terms of total numbers and percentage. A score or weightage is assigned to the problem related response. For example, the response indicating minimum problem is assigned 1 point, 2 to the problem of moderate intensity and three to the response indicating acute difficulty.

14 problem areas were identified. Thus the minimum points, a respondent to score is 14 and the maximum is 42.

The socio-economic status of the respondents is determined taking into account three variables such as, education, occupation and income. Following Kuppawamy, weightage 1, 2, 3 is assigned to the low, middle and high respectively. The socio-economic status is taken to be low when the score value is 3 and 4, middle when it is 5, 6 and 7.5 and high when it is 8 and 9.
1.9 The Sample:

The respondents are from the age group of 21 years to 90 years. Nearly 15.54 percent are from the young age group, 23.78 percent are from the middle and 60.68 percent are from the older age group (Tab.17).

Only less than 1 percent (0.97 percent) are highly educated (M.B.B.S., M.A.), 6.31 percent are considered middle (B.A., Inter, High school) and 92.72 percent have lower level education (Non-matric, M.E., L.P. etc.) (Tab-12).

The respondents belong to four occupational grades. 0.97 percent are in higher occupations, 7.77 percent are in middle occupations and 14.08 percent are in low occupation and rest 77.18 percent are not employed. The latter is classified as 'no occupation' group (Tab-13).

The sample is grouped into high (annual income Rs.25001 and above), middle income (7001-25000) and lower income (1-7000). Income groups 1.94 percent respondents are in the high income group (Rs.25000 and above per annum). 22.82 percent are in the middle income group upto (Rs.7001- to less than 25000 per annum). The majority
75.24 percent are in low income (less than Rs. Upto 7000 income per annum) group (Tab-14).

Nearly 53.40 percent respondents are from small families (upto 5 members), 28.15 percent are from medium (6-10 members), and 18.45 percent from large (Above 10 members) families (Tab-1).

II

2. The Socio-economic Background of the Respondents

53.40 percent in the sample come from small families (five members or less). 28.15 percent are from medium (six to ten members), and 18.45 percent are from large (more than ten members) families (Tab. 1). 52.91 percent are from composite and 47.09 percent are from nuclear families. (Tab. 2)

The status of the widow largely depends upon the social and economic background of her parental as well as of the husband’s families. Among the variables, education, occupation, and income of the members of both the families are taken into account in determining the social backgrounds of the informant.
2.1 Education, Occupation and Income of the families of Orientation and of Procreation

24 widows in the sample (11.65 percent) have their parental families are highly educated. 25 others (12.13 percent) are from middle education level and the rest 157 (76.21 percent) are from low education families (Table.3).

28 subjects (13.59 percent) are from families of high occupations. 78 (37.87 percent) are from middle occupations, and rest 100 subjects (48.54 percent) are low occupation families (Tab. 4). 50 (24.27 percent) belong to families in the higher income group, 55 (26.70 percent) are middle and 101 (49.03 percent) are in the lower income group (Tab. 5).

The husbands of 33 (16.02 percent) subjects are from high educated families. 43 (20.87 percent) are from middle, and rest 130 (63.11 percent) are from low educated families (Tab. 6). 32 subjects (15.54 percent) are from high occupation families, 87 (42.23 percent) are from middle and 87 (42.23 percent) are from low occupation ones (Table 7). 62 (30.09 percent) are from the higher income group. 66(32.04 percent) are from middle and 78 (37.87 percent) are lower from the income group (Tab.8).
2.2 The background of the Husbands of the Respondents: Education, Occupation and Annual Income.

15 informants (7.28 percent) had highly educated husbands (M.B.B.S., L.M.P., B.E., M.A., M.Sc., M.Com. etc.). 25 (12.14 percent) had husbands with bachelor degrees in Arts, Science or Commerce. Husbands of 9 subjects (4.37 percent) were educated up to intermediate or Post high school levels. Of the rest 55 (26.69 percent), they were matriculates. The Husbands of the majority of respondents (74, i.e., 35.92 percent) had read only up to the middle school stage (VII class). 22 (10.68 percent) had husband's literate up to the primary level. A few 6 (2.92 percent) had non-literate husbands (Tab. 9).

24 in the sample (11.66 percent) had their husbands in higher occupations, like Doctor, Engineer, Magistrate, Bank Officer, Professor etc. The husbands of 76 respondents (36.89 percent) were in grade-II positions, like teacher, Research assistant, etc., and of 57 were working in grade three posts like Lab-attendants, Junior clerks, Compounder, etc. The husbands of 35 (16.99 percent) respondents were fourth grade workers, like Postman, peon, watchman, and other unskilled occupations. In the sample there are 14 (6.79 percent) respondents
whose husbands were not in any defined occupation (Tab-10).

The subjects reported that of their husbands', incomes, on the eve of death, varied from less than Rs.500/- to Rs.30,000/- annually. They are grouped under three levels as per 1988 Government classification. 3.88 percent were found to be in the higher income group, 32.04 percent in the middle and 64.08 percent in the lower income group (Tab. 11)

2.3 The Respondents : Education, Occupation and Income :

Most respondents in the older age groups are non-literate or have very little education. 92.72 percent have low-education. Only very few (0.97 percent) can be taken to be highly educated in contemporary standards. 6.31 percent have middle education (gone beyond the high school and attained Bachelor's degrees (B.A., B.Sc.). (Tab.12).

47 (22.82 percent) are found in salaried occupations and 159 (77.18 percent) had no specific occupation at the time of our study. Only 4 (10.81 percent) had been in salaried jobs before their widowhood. However, most among the working widows, are
in lower positions and have low income. Many have got the jobs on rehabilitation grounds after the death of their husbands. The working widows (from high and middle income families) say that they work to meet the expenses of their children. Very few (0.97 percent) only are in reasonably high positions (Doctor, Principal, etc). 7.77 percent are in middle occupation (posts, like Junior Officers, high school teachers) etc., The rest (14.08 percent) work in low occupation (as Peons, Ayyas, etc.). Those unemployed are largely in elder age groups and are dependent on their families (Tab. 13).

Among these respondents who earn for themselves, 25.73 percent are in the lower income group, 22.82 percent in the middle and 1.94 percent are in higher income groups. The rest are reported to have no income. (Tab. - 14)

2.4 The Living Conditions: Housing

The data indicate that the housing conditions of 90 in the sample are not good. They live in delapidated houses with no electrification or regular water supply. Out of 206 respondents 99 (48.06 percent) continue to live in the same house where they were staying with their husbands, the conditions of which fast deteriorated for
want of proper care and repair. Only 16.51 percent have proper houses with electrification and water supply. 21.84 percent were made to leave the houses where they were living with their husbands and are forced to take residence in poor houses. Among the rest, 28 respondents (4.85 percent) have gone back to their parents; and 8.74 percent live in mathas or old age homes (Tab. 15).

2.5 The age at Marriage and the age difference between the bride and the groom:

In this region the accepted difference between the age of the bride and that of the groom is between 2 and 9 years. However, marriages do take place when the groom is older than the bride by several years beyond the accepted higher limit of 9. In such cases there is a likelihood of the husband dying before the wife, inflicting a widowhood on the latter, a factor also noted by other studies (Karkal and Rajan 1989). Marriages of the type, a 7 month old girl marrying a 8 year old boy (a News report from Rajasthan: Telegraph 13 May, 1990) are not rare.

In this region boys and girls are also made to enter matrimony at a very early age. In such cases also there is a likelihood of one of the partners or both dying due to childhood diseases (Aradhya 1987). Early
marriage has been fairly a common practice of western Orissa. Our data show that 48 (23.30 percent) of our respondents had pre-puberty marriages between 6 and 10 years. A large number of respondents were married between 11 and 15 years of age. 26.70 percent married at between 16 to 20 years while only a few 6.32 percent married between 21 to 25 years and only one respondent was married at the age of above 36 (Tab. 16).

The widows in the sample are all from the upper castes - 180 Brahmins and 26 Karans. They are grouped according to their age, young, middle aged and old (Tab.17). 15.54 percent are young, 23.78 are middle aged and 60.68 percent are old.

Majority of our respondents are married before they attained the age of 5 years. 30.58 percent are found to be younger to their husbands by 6 to 10 years. 6.31 percent by 11 to 15 years, and only a few by 16 to 20 and 21 to 25 years respectively. Our data do not indicate a wide age gap difference between the husbands and the wives. Our subjects were overtaken by widowhood in different ages of marital life. The general belief, that widowhood is a phenomenon of the advanced age is not indicated by our data. It occurred at different ages. 19.91 percent were overtaken by widowhood between 21 to
30 years of age, 18.93 percent between 31 to 40 years, 20.39 percent between 41 to 50 and 16.99 percent between 51 to 60 (Tab. 18 and 19) (Figure 1). Thus a majority of our respondents became widows at the age of 41 to 50 years.

2.6 Type of Marriage and Pre-marriage Kinship Relationship between the Families of the Groom and that of the Bride.

Majority of our respondents, i.e., (97.57 percent) were married through parental efforts within their own caste; 2.43 percent entered matrimony through romantic love within their own castes (Tab. 20).

It is found from the sample data that 189 of our respondents have no kinship relation with their husbands' families before their marriages. In 17 cases, however, the marriage are between cousins: with the mother's sister's son or daughter and with the father's sister's daughter and not vice versa. (Tab. 21)

2.7 Causes of Husband's death and the Duration of Treatment and the Expenditure Incurred.

Death is something which cannot be foretold. Generally, it is anticipated in old age or when one suffers from some incurable diseases. Sometimes it comes
suddenly. Death is believed to be prefixed. It comes in different ways. It may be natural or accidental but the impact is the same and painful to the close survivors. In case of sudden and the unexpected death of a man, the surviving widow and her children suffer socially, psychologically and financially.

There is considerable debate in the literature as to which form of death, sudden or lingering is more painful for the close survivors (Parks 1964 : 1975). Glick, Weiss and Parks (1974) view that "untimely and unexpected breavements constitute a special risk to psychological and social adjustment" (Parkes 1975, Lopata 1925). The widow suffers more when she is young and have small children. If the widow is old or the death of the husband is anticipated because of prolonged illness, its impact is less painful compared to those deaths following short illness (Gerber, 1975 and Rice 1983).

The husbands of 2.92 percent respondents expired between the age of 11 to 20 years. Husbands of 14.56 percent died at the age of 21 to 30 and of 14.56 percent at the 31 to 40 years. Husbands of 23.30 percent died when between the age of 41 to 50 years. The data show a decreasing trend in terms of percentage as the age of the husbands increases 51 to 60, 61 to 70 onwards (Tab. 22).
Thus maximum number of husbands died at the age of 41-50 years.

The most prevalent cause of male death, reflecting the national trend relates to vascular problems, heart attacks, and related disorders. Higher percentage of death occurred due to these diseases than any other cause. Our sample data show that 20.39 percent died in hypertension/heart attack and related diseases. Cancer is the second most prevalent causal factor for death. 9.23 percent died from such ailment. Paralysis has taken third place as the killer. 6.31 percent died from these complications. 2.43 percent, 3.40 percent died of Small pox and Asthma. 5.34 percent died of tuberculosis, kidney diseases. Husbands of nearly one tenth of our respondents died in road accidents. Drowning took the toll of 0.97 percent 1.45 percent were murdered. 2.43 percent committed suicide. The others died of various diseases, the most frequent being diarrhoea, cyrrhosis, pneumonia, followed by Typhoid, Jaundice and addiction to alcohol. The old age toll was only 1.45 percent (Tab-23). Those who died of diseases were duly hospitalised, or subjected to prescribed treatment. They underwent suffering in varying intensity before death overlook them (Tab-24). The treatment
expenditure ranged from Rs.1000/- to more than Rs.30,000/-. The higher expenditure related to Cancer, heart diseases, paralysis and kidney diseases (Tab.-25).

2.8 The Routine of the Widows:

A Hindu widow is expected to lead a "pure" life. This is expressed through performance of ritual fastings and a large number of religious activities. Some widows shift to religious places, like Varanasi or Brindawan or even to a local 'Matha'. For the widow the husband is almost equivalent to a God. After his death another God had to be searched out (Lopamudra, 1983).

There are many widows who lost their husbands in their very young age. Many of them are poor and non-literate. They have taken shelter in local Mathas where they spend their time in religious activities organised around lord Krishna. Almost all widows observe Ekadashi, twenty four in a year, one in every fortnight. It is a day of prayer and fasting. It is believed that those who observe it for continuously twelve years have their desire fulfilled. The Padmapuran records that fasting on Ekadasi releases the soul from the worldly bondages, for Ekadashi is the incarnation of Lord Narayan or Hari. Widows in our sample are the devotees of Lord Krishna.
He is worshipped at home or in the 'Matha' (temple), every morning and evening.

Fasts known as 'Sadayantri (birth days of the Lord) in different incarnations were also scrupulously observed. They are Ram Navami, Janamastmi, Bamandwadashi, Shivaratri, Aditya Janma, Radhaastmi and so on. Janmastmi is the date of birth of Lord Krishna.

The objectives of the fasts are reported to be many. Our sample data show that majority observe Ekadashi. 17.96 per cent observe both Ekadashi and Sadayantri. Only 1.95 percent do not observe these fasts. (Tab-26) These respondents reported that they wanted to forget that "they are widows". Some believe that fasting in honour of the God invokes His love and kindness. Some believe that, that would help their souls to be freed from the bondage of life. Thus 52.43 percent observe Ekadashi for the release of their souls from the cycle of birth and re-birth. 26.70 percent simply do as it is customary and 6.79 percent for release of soul and as it is customary. 2.91 and 3.40 percent observe it to express their love to the dead husband and to invoke the love of God respectively. 5.83 percent do it for mental peace. 1.94 percent do not like to observe it (Tab-27).
2.9 Leisure time activities:

Most of our respondents reported that they maintained a distance from the common entertainment programmes. They visit temples and of late watch, if opportunity presents, mythological serials on the television. Only 2 respondents watch observing feature films.

The older widows visit temples and Matha every day in the noon time or in the evening, where they listen to Prabachana (religious discourses). In the evening they join Kirtan and Bhajan groups. All widows visit temples and Matha on such occasions as Janamastmi, Radhaastmi, Ekadashi, Dola purnima, etc. 13.11 percent spend some time in watching television. Thus the most frequently engaged activities is visiting temple and 'Mathas'. Nearly 60 percent of our respondents visit temples, Mathas, listen Prabachana, join Kirtan and bhajan groups; 9.71 percent engaged in chanting the name of the lord through their rosary at least twice a day. 13.11 read religious books. Only 2 of our respondents go out to watch movies whereas 0.97 percent do nothing due to their very advanced age. A lone widow writes poetry in her leisure time. 6.79 percent spend their working time in
household chores taking care of their children and grandchildren. 0.97 percent do tailoring in their leisure time (Tab - 28).

III

The changes following the death of the husbands:

3.1 Change in the Income:

The death of the husband often pushes a woman to face financial problems. This is one of the major problems of the widows. "Widowhood represents both crisis and problem" observe Stevens and Laura (1976). The death of husbands and the sudden discontinuation of income not only deteriorates the standard of living of the widows' families. It also pushes the family to misery and deprivation. The standard of living of a family is likely to become erratic (Lopata, 1971). Young and middle aged widows having small children are shocked and stunned with the sudden demise of their husbands and cannot properly chalkout their future course of action. They undergo intense physical and mental suffering and a perpetual feeling of helplessness (Aradhya and Marris, 1958).
The sources of income of the subjects of our sample are noted as 1. Salary from paid work, 2. Husband's salary, 3. Children's salary, 4. Income from agricultural land, 5. House rent, 6. Old age pension, 7. Widows pension, 8. From savings like C.P.F./G.P.F. and sale of property. Some of sources dry up with the death of the husbands. We tried to compare the present income of the widows (1988) the year when the data was collected with the income when the husband was alive. Saving and investment are calculated in terms the bank rate of interest. The total annual income is taken as widows household income. From the sample data we found that majority (45.15 percent) widows have lost a significant part of their income after the death of the husbands. Since the majority of the household income in this country is derived from the earning of a male (husband) his death removes a major source (Morgan, 1974). It shows that income of the families of the widows decreased from 25 percent to 100 percent (Tab 29-A).

Only 7.28 percent could maintain their status quo even after the death of the husbands. Surprisingly some of the widow's household income increase significantly after the death of the spouse (Morgan, 1981, Lopata (1925). It shows that 47.57 percent of widows household
income increased from 25 percent to more than 100 percent (Tab - 29B) as new sources, such as working sons appeared in the scene.

Our data show that most widows have no occupation. Only 47 (22.32 percent) work for their livelihood and rest 77.18 percent are not either required to work or not properly qualified to work. Among the working widows, only 2 (0.97 percent) are in higher occupations, 16 in middle and 29 in low occupations. The rest 159 (77.18 percent) are in 'no occupation' group. The working widows put up hard work from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. Their relationship with their boss is reported to be good. These 22.82 percent working widows, more or less, are economically independent. The 77.18 percent probably find no necessity to work due to various reasons. We observe that most of the dependent widows are relatively better off and satisfied than the economically independent ones. It is largely due to the financial and moral support they get from their adult earning children. 'No occupation' widows have also various sources of income, such as old age pension, widows' pension, savings, income from land and house rent, etc.
3.2 Steps taken by the Widows to Manage Themselves:

Following the death of the husband some young widows tried to equip themselves to manage their households. Our sample data show that 23 (11.16 percent) had to seek paid work for their livelihood. 1.94 percent had to put in efforts to complete their school or college education and 3.47 percent had to undergo training to suit for the concerned job. 5.82 percent (in the no-occupation group) deposited a lumpsum amount in bank to live on the accrued interest. 0.97 percent letout their houses on rent. These are the major decisions the widows have taken to equip themselves to manage their households. It seems from the sample that almost 20 nos of widows are close to poverty line. Of them 10 no. (4.85 percent) making Badi², Papad³, masala⁴ powder and paper packets to meet the deficit income.

3.3 Effect of the Father's Death on Children:

The death of a man has also traumatic effect on his surviving children. 0.97 percent fatherless children developed lunacy. The school and college going children were affected more. Some have to discontinue studies due to financial constraint and were compelled to take up
petty jobs to support the families (Yojana 16, 1978). In our sample 23.3 percent discontinued studies. Among them 12.6 percent were compelled to do so and landed in petty jobs, such as mechaics, Ayyas, and tailors. Rest were employed as Peons and Clerks against the father's job (Tab.30)

3.4 Early Widowhood Experiences:

There are 159 informants who have no specific occupation. They can be classified as 'housewives'. In this group 15.09 percent face the problem of food in acute intensity, 66.04 percent moderately and for 18.87 percent the problem is negligible. The problem of shelter is acute for 14.46 percent, moderate for 33.33 percent and least 52.21 percent. Nearly 50 percent suffer emotionally in acute intensity, a little less than 50 percent moderately, and only for a few it does not surface as a problem. Finance is a problem of acute intensity for 45.92 percent, moderate for 44.65 percent and least for 9.43 percent. Up-bringing children is an extremely difficult task for 13.21 percent, moderate for 23.90 percent tolerable for the rest (a little more than 60 percent).
For 23.90 percent in the no-occupation group, establishing rights over the husband’s properties proved to be extremely difficult. A few are even partially deprived of their rights. But for the majority it did not surface as a problem. 13.83 percent in the group have faced the problem of educating their children in acute intensity, 25.16 percent moderately and for 61.01 percent the intensity of the problem was least in nature. 8.17 percent were victims of cheating of their gold and money, 2.51 percent faced this ordeal moderately; and the rest were lucky to have remained safe. 18.24 in the group are treated very badly by the family members. For more than 50 percent the treatment is moderate and the rest 23.27 percent have no complaint of illtreatment.

For 5.03 percent in this group, death of children brought in acute misery; it was moderate for 0.63 percent. The majority (94.34 percent) did not face it. 8.81 percent were forced to sell their property. A few were under moderate pressure. The majority, however, was safe. 6.92 percent in group reported to be sexually very much harassed and for 10.69 percent the harrassment was moderate. The majority, however (82.39 percent) remained safe. For more than 60 percent, the problem of adjustment in the family was moderate. Real difficulty
is seen to be faced by 19.49 percent. For a few (16.09 percent) the problem was of least consequence. For 15.72 percent in group, arranging marriage of daughters was a very difficult task. For 75.47 percent, however, it was smooth. For a few of it was of moderate difficulty (Tab. 31).