Chapter - I
Introduction
INTRODUCTION

Introduction: Suicide is a human act self inflicted, self intentioned and untimely cessation of life. It's a human act, with a conscious wish to be dead; his or her action carries out that wish. It implies that the motivation of the deceased may have to be inferred and his behavior interpreted by others by suicide notes, spoken testimony or retrospective reconstruction of victim's intention, goal related to death rather than self injury, self mutilation or inimical self reducing behavior. It focuses on the concept the cessation of life.

Fluctuations in social and economic conditions frequently result in changes in the suicide rate. In the United States for example, suicide rates declined during World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945), when unemployment was low, but increased during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when unemployment was high. Similarly during the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) crisis in1998 many farmers in U.K were reported to have committed suicide due to mental depression caused by crisis and loss in farming. The disintegration of the Soviet Union also prompted many suicides among Russians who couldn't digest the gamut of changes they witnessed sequel to the disintegration Russia in 1990 and thereafter.
Definitions:

Suicide is the act of producing our death, deliberate killing of oneself suicide. (The word suicide derived from Latin word of ‘Suicidium’ Sui means oneself and cidium or caedere means a killing.)

Suicide refers to – the act of taking one’s own life voluntary and intentionally; self-murder; specifically (law), the felonious killing of one’s self; the deliberate and intentional destruction of one’s own life by a person of years of discretion and sound mind.

Medical dictionary defines Suicide as- “The act is causing one’s own death. Suicide may be positive or negative and it may be direct or indirect. Suicide is a positive act when one takes one’s own life”.

Theoretical Perspectives on Suicides: Emile Durkheim published his monumental work, “Le Suicide” in the year 1912, wherein he explained suicide as a social fact inversely related to the degree of social cohesion. Durkheim in his monumental work analyzed suicide phenomena as the occasion to work out four types of factors in suicides-altruistic, egoistic, anomic and fatalistic. Of these, he felt that, the high incidence of suicides in Europe sequel to industrialization were, of egoistic and anomic types. His argument was that the suicidogenic tendency runs in every individual like a current and it would propel the person impulsively towards suicide, when terrible isolation is experienced or when the societal norms crumble letting loose normlessness ending in suicides. The sociological analyses of suicide after Durkheim were

Sigmund Freud's (1917) envisaged suicide as an ‘intra psychic’ phenomenon being the result of a process when feelings of love and affection which has originated been directed towards an internalized love object has become as a result of rejection and frustration, angry, hostile feelings.

Freud’s approach ignored social factors. Individuals kill themselves not only with hate and revenge but also due to dependency, shame, guilty, fear, hopelessness, loyalty, fealty to self image pain even as ennui. No single psychological pattern is sufficient to contain all human self destruction.

Karl Menninger (1938) identified the sources of suicidal impulses in wish to kill, the wish to be killed and the wish to die. He classified suicidal phenomenon as Chronic Suicide (asceticism, martyrdom, addiction, Invalidism, and psychosis); Focal suicide, (Self mutilation malingering, multiple accidents, impotence frigidity) and organic suicides involving the psychological factor in organic disease). Studies by Shneidman & Farberow (1960) emphasized the interplay between both the social and psychological factors as mutually enhancing roles in each individual suicide. This is similar to the view of Halbwachs (1930), who opined that the social and psycho-pathological explanations of suicide are the complementary rather antithetical. Arkun Nezahut (1963) examined the suicide rates in Turkey between 1927-1946,
1950-60 after World War II and felt that the startling suicide rates could be attributed to upheavals in culture sequel to the reforms of Ataturk.

Suicide has emerged as an increasing public health problem in India. According to National Crime Records Bureau’s latest statistics (2009), 1.22 lakh suicides take place every year in India.

Suicide is a complex problem for which there is no single cause, no single reason. It results from a complex interaction of biological, genetic, psychological, social, cultural, financial and environmental factors. The causes of suicides of the farmers are many. They vary from situation to situation, place to place, family to family, and person to person. But they are the products of complex processes of interaction of many forces operating from different sources and directions.

Suicide is one of the most selfish, cowardly and irresponsible acts that a person can commit with the possible exception of extreme distraction or mental illness, only a person completely consumed with selfishness and living to please him or herself would voluntarily end their own life. Suicides are not the acts of people who hate themselves, but who love themselves inordinately and cannot bear to see themselves in pain, shamed, dishonored or rejected because of the enormity of their pride and the immenseness of their self love. The self - murderer is dominated by thoughts about him and gives thought nor consideration to the feelings of others. Suicide is an irresponsible act.
The self murderer leaves a family and friends behind. It is not an isolated act committed in a vacuum. It brings humiliation and disgrace to those family members who remain. It brings deep anguish and pain of spirit to relatives and friends. This is consideration alone should put a stop to any suicidal thoughts one may have. Lastly, by committing suicide one is leaving a very bad example for others who will observe and be tempted to repeat the crime themselves.

**Farmers’ Suicides in India & Karnataka:** Farmers’ suicide in India is a phenomenon that emerged as a sequel to globalization and other economic reforms. According to National Crime Records Bureau, between 1997-2007, 1, 82,936 farmers have committed suicide. Of these, two thirds suicides have occurred in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

During 1999-2001, it was estimated that 110 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka. According to one estimate, 3,000 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka between 1998 and 2006. (Muzaffer Assadi: 1998 & 2005). Nonetheless, if we take the report prepared by the Crime Branch of Karnataka, the number of suicide under the heading “farming and agricultural activity” comes to 15804 between 1998 and 2002. The year 2000 saw the maximum number of suicide 2630 followed by year 2001 – these are the years when agriculture saw the negative growth. Interestingly, as per the crime branch
report, between 1996 and 2002, 12889 male farmers and 2841 female farmers committed suicide followed by -.

One of the problems is the fact that the Crime Branch report also includes suicide committed in cosmopolitan city such as Bangalore or Mysore under “farming and agricultural activity”. Secondly in the districts such as Dakshina Kannada the suicide is the reflection of another form of capitalism- it is the reflection of the crisis of metropolitan/cosmopolitan or Middle Eastern capitalism than the agrarian one. Clubbing such issues would make the counting or numbering the farmers’ suicide a difficult one. It is in this context report of agricultural department is important, although its report does not give complete picture. Karnataka had no history of farmers committing suicide even during the situation of acute agrarian crisis. Even the unorganized farmers would resort to other tactics such as throwing the agricultural commodities on the roads, burning their crops, etc. Andhra became the harbinger for such a trend in Karnataka. This is the reason why suicide in Karnataka was first reported in the northern parts of Karnataka or close to the border areas of Andhra Pradesh.

The beginning of the suicides can be traced back to the year 1998, when two farmers in Bidar, who were involved in cultivating Tur Dal, a market-oriented agricultural crop committed suicide. In the initial two years, farmer suicides were largely concentrated in the drought-prone districts in north Karnataka, or confined to economically backward, drought-prone regions such
as Gulbarga and Bidar. However, after 2000, the phenomenon shifted to relatively advanced agricultural regions, particularly Mandya, Hassan, Shimoga, Davanagere, Koppal and even Chickmagalur, Kodagu and it also covered ground water region, (Belgaum) assured rain fall region (Haveri), Sugar Cane and Cauvery Irrigation Belt (Mandya). However, in the coastal belt, the number of suicides reported was less. This is because of the fact that by and large, in these districts, the people depend more on the non-agricultural activities, with wider linkages which extend to the metropolitan cities like Bombay, and even to the Middle East. Moreover, in these regions, the primacy of agrarian sector is slowly being replaced by the industrial sector, notwithstanding the fact that certain pockets of coastal belt saw the commercial farming of the areca nut and coco, grown for the past one or two decade. This has linked the farmers to larger market, in the process, making them a vulnerable category. In fact, the land reforms of the 1970s had created autonomous categories in this region. The autonomy was effectively used to enter into the domain of larger market. In fact, there is no precise number of suicides, as the number of suicides accounted by the state had been different from that of the civil society groups.

The Farmers Suicides in Karnataka in particular can be included in the Chronic Economic Suicides precipitated by the prolonged phase of economic distress which drives people to suicide in utmost desperation and agonizing economic condition. It is indeed pathetic to see the Farmers taking away his life.
in utmost frustration never experienced before on the Indian soil. Misery has
not been new to the Indian farmer, but the swiftly changing economic scenario
forced by the Economic reforms and the economic forces that it has unleashed,
had transformed the world towards a global market where in the poor and the
lagging societies are bound to get socially excluded and buckle in the process.

It is a fact that despite the technological and economic advancements
that are sweeping across the societies on the globe with enhanced quality of
life, the condition of the farmers continues to be gloomy and a cause for
concern. Price fluctuations and the persistent drought conditions or natural
calamities add on to the misery of the farmers in one way or the other.

Indian agriculture ran into crisis by the opening of the seed sector to the
Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and the introduction of Intellectual
Property Rights for the seeds and plant varieties. The new seed policy has
resulted in a shift from the indigenous varieties, which involve a shift from a
farming system controlled by peasants to one controlled by the agrochemical
and seeds corporations.

With Modernization and Commercialization and greater use of
purchased inputs, Indian agriculture is no longer a way of life profitable to the
farmers. These waves of change without corresponding progress in irrigation
potential apart from aggravating regional inequalities within the state or even
within the district also increased the risk in farming today. The farmer is also
greatly exposed to the vicissitudes of market economy on the one hand and
declining institutional support on the other in the wake of new economic policy ushered in 1991. Added to all these, is the role of mass media which evoked rising expectations even among the rural masses for a better way of life especially, the present young generation of small and marginal farmers in perpetual danger of suffering from disproportion between their expectations and aspirations and real life realities and satisfaction. This restlessness and dissatisfaction has sown seeds of suicidogenic impulses among the farmers when they buckled.

Farmers’ distress and their suicides are not a new phenomenon. They were prevalent even prior to the ushering in of market economy in 1991. However, they remained invisible for long and came to the fore only during the second phase 1997-1998.

Agricultural economy is a typical combination of large spans of drought prone areas coexisting with regions having assured irrigation potential. Drought is a frequent visitor to the state especially in Karnataka. Apart from these, the current liberalization process has brought forth the emergence into prominence of the role of markets, safety nets, and the process of commercialization. There is clear evidence of strongly emerging informal money lenders and the inter-locking of input-credit-product market (Deshpande: 2002). As a result, in the last decade the area under surface irrigation declined by 2.5 lakh hectares. The farmers began to exploit the groundwater to sustain farming. The expansion of irrigation under wells and
bore wells in areas with low surface irrigation led to the depletion of ground water, Hence the failure of bore-wells and wells in such regions.

It is an established fact now that the spread of new agricultural technology has not only widened the regional imbalances but also disparities among different size and classes of farmers (Bhalla and Tyagi: 1989). The declining capital formation, public investment, share of agriculture in GDP. The disturbing trends, which emerged of late on the agrarian scene which made India boast about self sufficiency in food production, is now wrought with severe problems in terms of sustaining the achievements (Vidyasagar and Sumanchandra: 2004).

Most of them came from small sized nuclear families and had all the typical qualities of an entrepreneur. They displayed change proneness and a willingness to take risk on persuasion by the agricultural extension workers and agents of companies selling hybrid seeds and fertilizers. It is sad to note that such enterprising farmers are led to commit suicide, because they felt they have pawned the future of their families by making wrong choices. It is because of the belief that they have lost control over their lives, their developed a sense of helplessness, in them forcing them to take the extreme step of ending their lives.

The prevailing situation points to a crisis in the sustainability of modern farming and raises questions about the state of rural economy and society in the region.

The suicides of the farmers, has posed severe challenge to the governments. The interventions brought in were aiming to provide relief to the families of the farmers who have committed suicide. The implications of the suicides of the farmers do not end with that. It is of vital sociological interest to know, as to how these households are trying to cope up with the suicides of their bread winners? Was the relief provided adequate enough? The Widows of the farmers are now a disadvantaged group with indebtedness and the social stigma of widowhood. How do these women cope up to wriggle out of the socio, economic and psychological distress, is the issue the present study seeks to examine.
**General View of Woman:**

The concept of Women has been described in an ancient Sanskrit saying “Yatra Nary Pujante” women have been given the description of mother goddess and is considered the source of Sakti. A Woman mirrors the wealth and Prosperity of the Society to which she belongs. Her role has been duly recognized by the civilized Societies and developed economies. The level of development of a country can be best judged by the status it attributes to women. A country progresses with women or regress with her.

A woman is not only a daughter, wife or mother, but, she is also a social being. A mother’s role in more important as she has to mould the children into a dutiful member of the society. Modern women are highly endowed with intelligence, foresight, dignity and thought fullness to face difficult situation in their homes (Padmanabhan 2006).

**Concept of Widowhood:**

Widowhood is a crisis in a women’s life, involving new social adjustment for the family as well as for her. The life of the women whose husband dies while she is alive has been institutionally made miserable by the norms of patriarchy. She faces emotional trauma, familial exploitation and social stigma. She has to adjust with in-laws, find some job for supporting her young children, adjust with sons and daughters-in-law, and has to face the male gaze, seductive overtones and even molestation attempts.
Definitions of Widow:

The English word widow is related to a Latin root meaning to place apart, widows are often treated as distinct from married women.

The Oxford English Dictionary define, widow as a women whose husband is dead & who has not married again and a wife bereaved of her husband.

N. Dutt (1968) defines ‘widow as a woman whose husband is dead and who has not married again’.

Agarwal (2000) describes, Widow who in the learned tongue are called ‘Vidhava’ a word akin to the Latin ‘vidua’ are given less respect than ‘Sumangali’ and when they happen to have no children, they are generally looked upon with the utmost scorn. The very fact of meeting a widow is considered to ‘bring ill lack’.

The term ‘widowhood’ is used in the work, to refer to female widowhood specifically.

Leslie (1979) remarks that widowhood is long term proposition widowhood and the accompanying deep sense of loss and frustration come to an end with death.

Widowhood is a crisis in a women’s life, involving new social adjustment for the family as well as for herself.
Widowhood is almost always accompanied by deep sense of shock, due to the sudden and unexpected death of the husband. The death of a husband entirely changes the social identity of women.

According to Greg, widowhood in an event that brings about the greatest change in the status of a woman, for it is often accompanied by deleterious consequences. In India, widowhood represents the last and lowest stage in life for the Hindu women.

Widowhood implies a shift in position from that of a wife with economic, social and emotional security to an economically dependent and socially and psychologically insecure woman.

Widowhood can be viewed as a social category consisting of individuals' whole life partner is dead.

Hyman (1983) observes that widowhood is one of the sad facts of existence. Millions of women experience this misfortune and generally bear its burden for many years.

Rosow says that widowhood hits women, particularly harder than men. A widower, being economically independent, does not feel the stigma and the loss of the spouse, as much as women.

Radhadevi observes that widowhood brings about both subjective and Objective consequences. Whereas, subjective consequences can be almost the same for widows and widowers. The objective consequences differ due to the distinctively different roles between men and women. The Social consequences
brought about by widowhood have a damaging effect on the self concept of a 
widow.

Problems of Widows:

Widows come to be regarded as inauspicious and had to suffer great 
disabilities. Many widows committed ‘Sati’ voluntarily to avoid inhuman 
sufferings at the hands of their relations including sons. They did not receive 
any sympathy from society. The greatest danger that can overtake women is 
widowhood say Ramayana with in twelve day of widowhood, the Sindoor and 
Bindi in her forehead are smudged, her bangle, nose ring, the coloured sari and 
Mangalasutra removed. Her long black stress is cropped short. Among the 
orthodox Brahmin widows, in the south, they must shave their heads. A white 
sari will replace her coloured one. A Widow is ill omen. She is not allowed to 
attend marriages. In some village in the south a prostitute is given a higher 
status in society than a widow.

In Hindu society widowhood has been considered a curse for women 
and for centuries widows were exploited, humiliated and denied opportunity to 
lead a dignified life. Time old restrictions on marriage of widows had pushed 
them old restrictions where they became dependents for life. Widowhood 
brought along with it the stigma of impurity for a woman who had distrust 
towards her.
A widow was expected to look ugly and not attract any attention, what so ever. Her ‘spaces’ within and outside her home were limited. She had to give up virtually everything that would bring her joy or give her an identity.

It was mentioned earlier that women reconcile to the situation of widowhood with greater strength than men. However, widowhood is likely to have serious consequences on a woman not only because of social values but also economic reasons. The initial years’ following the death of the spouse creates feelings of helplessness and symptoms of withdrawal from routine life. The sense of loss is also very strong. It was learnt from interactions with our respondents that those who had acquired some level of formal education could cope with the changed situation with greater confidence than those who did not have either a job or economic security (Padmanabhan 2006).

**The problem of widows with examples of three cases:**

One is the case of a girl who becomes a widow within one or two year of marriage and has no children. Next is the case of women who becomes widowed after a marital span of years and has one / two smaller kids for support, and last is the case of women who is a widow and is of 50 years of age or even above.

Similarities in the three cases are that:

a) All posses the status of a widow.

b) All have to face problems of adjustment in terms of expected roles they have to perform and
c) The possibility that like the third type, the second and even the first type of widows will spend the rest of their life in widowhood. But what is important is the difference in the three roles.

The first widow has no obligation as such but she is faced with the problem of economic, emotional and sexual.

The second widow has social obligation of bringing up children and performing even the role of a father for them, of course, she has also to face the problem of social, psychological adjustment too. The third widow has no obligation of supporting the young children. Nevertheless, she is confronted with some problems. Widowhood is both a crisis and a problem, when it occurs, its suddenness and intensity make it a crisis and as the individual finds ways of coping it becomes a problem (Padmanabhan 2006).

**Economic deprivation**

One of the most immediate problems following widowhood is economic deprivation. The widows face deprivation due to the economic disadvantages rather than widowhood itself. Almost all widows face two big problems, both closely related (a) Money (b) finding jobs, because of their inexperience in dealing with financial matters and their lack of occupational skills. This makes their economic condition worse.
Emotional Deprivation

The widow becomes physically weak and mentally distressed. Sometimes, a widow becomes so highly disturbed that she even doubts her husband's death. Emotional reactions may include anger, guilt, depression, anxiety or adjustment due to individual hindrances like nervousness, moods of depression and morbidity, tendency to worry and general emotional instability.

The widows face physio-psycho problems and she loses interest in her daily life and neglects her health. Along with these, lack of social contacts, sense of insecurity, isolation and other factors affect her health adversely. She becomes restless, irritated and frustrated due to her distress of mind pathetic and over whelmed with the sense of emptiness of life widows, particularly young, show withdrawal from friends and relatives and suffers from personal loneliness in life loneliness, may reflect social isolation, psychological isolation or a combination of both.

Cultural Deprivation:

In general, a Hindu widow is deprived of wearing the tali, flowers, glass-bangles nose-ring and applying kumkum. A widow cannot wear the above insignia of saubhaghya under any circumstances. However, the life of an orthodox Brahmin widow had to face much against her will, the horrible and inhuman rite of tonsure. Even today, widows are discouraged from taking part in any auspicious ceremonies and ritually sacred activities.
Social Stigma:

Social stigma and financial crisis combine to make loneliness the hallmark of widowhood. Their changed and reduced social status as widows makes establishing new relationship difficult. The stigma of widowhood becomes aggravated when she deviates from the traditional attitude of a widow. The deviation gets socially transferred from generation to generation as they get fixed with the generalized financial status. Such families become part of 'avoidance' for matrimonial purposes and also interactional arena.

Goffman (1963), refers social stigma to a relationship of devaluation in which one individual is disqualified from social acceptance stigma can be physical, documentary, contextual, ascribed or achieved. In some instances the stigmatized person has relatively little control over the character or display of his / her disfigurement. In other words, the appearance may be so organized that revelation is suppressed or ambiguous in its impact. Its sociological significance reside in its importance for the analysis of information, management ascribed deviance and conventional character of social control.

Widows in all communities, suffer from limited freedom to participate in religious and auspicious social functions. They carry the stigma of inauspiciousness and hence, have to keep away from functions. They are not allowed to touch those objects used during marriage or religious ceremonies. A widow cannot cook rice fed to a prospective bride or bridegroom, nor can
attend or even witness a marriage ceremony. In fact, a widow is not even entitled to perform the ritual to welcome her own daughter-in-law.

Ranjani Kumari (1981), found that a widow is held personally responsible for the death at her husband and is treated as the personification of the inauspicious and the profane her presence at any kind of social function and festival ranging from marriage and child birth, to sowing of crops is considered to be very inauspicious.

**Social Exclusion:**

Widows are not to laugh or even talk loudly and not to speak with outsiders. They are impressed upon to visit the temple in the evening and eat the Prasad of parched rice and dhal. If possible, they do some religious work for their spiritual welfare therefore; they may devote free time to bajana, visiting temples and places of pilgrimage. After the death of the husband, they are not to think of other men. They should never re-marry.

Social restriction on the life style of women tends to become more rigid as one move up in the caste hierarchy. For instance there is more exclusion of female, among upper castes than lower castes. With in the upper caste communities in north India, Women are strictly secluded and denied access to gainful employment outside their homes. Low caste women have greater freedom to take up gainful employment (Padmanabhan 2006).

Martha Alter Chen (1998) said that the well being of widows is not just a question of economic security, but also one of dignity, self respect and
participation in society. Many widows in his sample suffered from different forms of social isolation, psychological abuse or emotional distress. He found that social marginalization of widows frequently took one or more of the following forms.

1. **Rumors & accusation**: Widows are often accused of being responsible for the death of their husband, regarded as sexually threatening and generally considered as inauspicious.

2. **Enforced dress & behaviour codes**: Many widows are under strong pressure to observe restrictive codes of dress, appearance and behaviour. Some of the traditional restrictions have become quite rare; even among the upper caste, but other remain widespread.

3. **Social ostracism**: A widow is often excluded from the religious and social life of the community due to her perceived inauspiciousness.

4. **Physical violence**: Violence against widows primarily takes the form of sexual harassment or properly related violence.

The death of husband in India changes the very status of woman and her social life. Her very presence is considered as inauspicious. Her social world of interaction shrinks, limiting to a few. It’s a life of withdrawal and isolation. According to Hindu Dharma Shastras, the widows are forbidden from using Sindoor and Bindi, bangles, nose ring and Mangalsutra. Some women are forced even to tonsure their head. She must wear white sari only. She is isolated from the public life. She should not laugh or even talk loudly.
Moreover she should not speak with outsiders. Most of the widows suffer from one form or the other form of social isolation, psychological depravity or emotional distress. If the widow is young in age the restrictions are severe and more so in rural society, where the traditions are followed meticulously.

A widow is an inauspicious person. Her very presence at any social ceremony ranging from marriage, child birth to sowing of seeds, is considered very inauspicious. In addition to this, Widows are forced by the society to give up working, withdraw from social activities, and become dependent on others. As different studies reveal, the problems faced by Indian widows are unique, as they are socialized for traditional stereotypic roles and their mobility is bound by temporal and spatial limits. Landownership and agriculture being predominant, widows face problems in management of farm, mobilization of finance and in performance of male oriented tasks due to inadequate socialization.

It is of sociological interest to see how do the widows of farmers coping up with the trauma of sudden demise of their spouses and the loss of companion? As she is forced to play multiple roles stepping into the shoes of their spouses, to continue debt ridden agriculture, clear off the debts and to lonely shoulder the responsibilities of the family. It has to be brought into light whether they are reeling under the load and pressures, or are they able to come out of the melancholic situation? How are they managing the family and the debt ridden agriculture with their changed status as widows, with so many
socio-cultural restrictions? All these issues need to be probed, so as to evolve suitable comprehensive social intervention to stem further suicides from the farmers’ households.

In India, as in many parts of South Asia, widowhood is viewed not as a period in the life cycle of a woman, but as a personal and social aberration, to be devoutly wished away. This attitude to a great extent governs the social, cultural and even economic implications of widowhood. In the Indian psyche, there is acceptance of the inevitability of death, but the natural inevitability of the death of a spouse (husband) is often glossed over.

A truly effective intervention should take cognizance of the plight of the widows of farmers’ suicide, and save the families of the farmers not to drift towards suicide. The Indian agriculture now in a sort of chaos triggered by globalization and the very fact of continuance of farmers’ suicide in different parts of the country, among different occupational groups signal the impending social catastrophe in Rural India in the coming decades. The widows and their problems in general were examined by different researcher’s like—.

Anil Mudbidri (1993) discussed the role of legislations and non-governmental organizations in the lives of widows. He clearly brings out the factors like legal empowerment, right to property and remarriage in enhancing the living standards of widows and the existing lacuna in all aspects. He also makes note of women conferences and their role in mitigating the problem of widows.
Vignesh N. Bhat (1993) analyzed the status of widows in historical perspective providing, in brief, the global picture. Throughout the World widows face problems but they vary from east to west. In today's Western world the problems of widows are less and even these problems are takes care of by their welfare systems and liberal marriage traditions. In the Eastern societies the problems of widows are stupendous resulting in marginalization in majority of the cases.

C. Aruna (1993) explored the relationship between the widows and their siblings. Interestingly, Aruna notes that the widows receive more moral support from their female siblings while material support comes from their male siblings. But there is some problem in the relationship with the male siblings, there is very likelihood of widows coming into conflict with them because of the issues arising out of ancestral property.

Parthasarathy et al. (1993) in their study examined the status of women highlighting the social discrimination; economic deprivation, legal marginalization, and lack of governmental support the four important factors for the marginalization of Indian widows.

T.N. Kicthulu (1993) studied on problem of the widows and their expectations with regard to the kind of assistance they expect for their social and economic rehabilitations.

Martha Alter Chen (1994) exclusive survey of widows across seven states reveals that even today widows are accused of being responsible for their
husband's death. They are pressurized to observe restrictive codes of dress and behaviour. They are excluded from religious and social life and physically and sexually abused.

Marty Chen and Jean Dreze (1995) explained life style of the Indian Widows and their socio-economic conditions of widows and type of coping mechanisms need to survive in their present life. To them, in the context of social science research, it is right to give attention to widowhood as a particular cause of deprivation. And in the context of social action, it is right to organize and support widows in their specific demands relating to pensions, property rights and other entitlements.

Jean Dreze and P.V.Srinivasan (1996) examined the relationship between widowhood and poverty in rural Indian in terms of standard poverty indices based on household per capita income, expenditure and argue that the mortality rates among Indian widows are almost twice as high as among and women of the same age.

Margarate Owen (1996) studied about poverty, income and work support of rural widows. The husband's death will make them think of their own future as old women and they will live in fear unless, through their own efforts, they can find paid work and save for the future or know that they will be accorded inheritance rights and acknowledgement that they have contributed to the family resources, problems, nutrition and harassment.
Uma Chakravarthy (1998) studied about gender, caste and labour. The ideological and material adjustment of widowhood is examined.

S.Gulati and Leela Gulati (1998) conducted study in Kerala about social security provided in the form of widow pension schemes and its impact on their lives.

L.S. Ainapur studied of widows among the Veerasaivas. The Veerasaivas, also known as Lingayats constitute the largest caste group in the state of Karnataka, their representation in the state population being 18 per cent. To him widowhood has always been one of the most terrible realities in a women’s life but sooner or later she has to continue her normal life activities. He subjected to state how much time it took for them to reconcile to the changed conditions in their life. As many as 90 per cent of the respondents seem to have resumed their normal life activities by the time an year had elapsed after the passing away of their husbands. A further investigation revealed that nearly 45 per cent of the subjects had decided to accept the reality of widowhood by the third month after the death of their husbands.

Hutokshi Doctor (2003) explores his ideas on the topic of India’s Widows. To him, a part from the economic problems, widows even in educated, middle class families continue to be placed under immense psychological and social pressures. In his study 51 per cent widows have rights to a share in their husbands land, but these rights are often violated in practice by brother-in-laws.
C. Thara Bhai (2004) studied of socio-economic status of widows, problems of widows and their constant development and problems of working widows. This study conducted in Tamilnadu, its high lights the living conditions of widow of all age and income groups.

P. Adinarayana Reddy (2004) studied problems of widows according to him- ‘entering into widowhood is more hazardous, painful and humiliation to women than to a widower because of the discrimination and ritual sanctions of the society against widows. Suffer by social and economic sanctions but also face many psychological consequences, loneliness and in many cases, deprivation causing emotional distribution and imbalances’.

Meera Khanna (2005) studied about tribal widows, education and legal services. Property rights, protective measures provided for widows in rural areas. Including farmer suicides an running tend discusses the constitutional rights for the widows and the plight of the widows in rural India.

Padmanabhan (2006) studied about the socio-economic status of widows in Hindu Mudaliar community, documenting their socio-economic profile.

Suja (2007) studied about problems experienced by rural widows in India. To her widowhood has always been considered a social stigma.

M. Thaha and C. Dheeraja (2007) studied about the plight of widows of famers who committed suicide. They discussed in their study about after the death of the farmers how the widows coping up. To them, the suicide farmer leaves his dependents in distress on several fronts- economic, social and
psychological. The entire burden of running the family as well as agricultural operations falls on the shoulders of his widow. This study focuses mainly on the plight of such widows in the immediate aftermath of the suicide in the family and their coping mechanism.

Dr. Nehaluddin Ahmed (2009) studied about sati system in modern India and work of legislations. According to him the social evil of sati continues to hang around in Indian society. The recent shocking incident (2008) of a seventy one year old woman performing sati has been a part of Indian society for ages with its inception being traced to the time of the Gupta period.

Amoo Arvind (2009) studied about customs of widows. According to her estimates would make up about half a billion lives that are affected, either directly or indirectly, by the fact that widows today continue to lack both rights and recognition.

Jyotsna Kamat (2010) studied about gender discrimination experienced by Hindu widows and the impact spread of education and especially the awareness during India’s freedom struggle. She argues that after independence of India and the subsequent reforms that followed; the dress code for widows became less rigorous and has disappeared.

Judithoc (2010) in her study of widows in Vrindhavan and calls it as the city of widows in Uttar Pradesh, where institutional care is offered to many upper caste Hindu widows, who have been disowned by their families.
**Statement of the Problem:** A review of the above studies reveals that the studies made on distress suicides of farmers have ended up with documenting the causes of suicides and the amount of debts these they have accumulated. The relief that was provided to farmers was based on these reports. They did not try to go beyond and see as to how these widows and her family cope up with loss of the bread winner? The studies that were made on widows by different authors, have examined widows and their problems mostly in urban contexts in a superficial way. None of them have examined the plight the widows of farmers’ suicides the new social pathological phenomenon that has emerged in the Indian society, as to how do these widows cope up with the trauma of their spousal suicide and the management of the farm and the family activities, is the issue the present study seeks to examine.

**Objectives:**

The specific objectives of the present research study are:

1) To examine the incidence of Farmers Suicides in Karnataka with special reference to Tumkur, Chitradurga and Davanagere districts of Bangalore division of Karnataka State during the period 2001-07.

2) To portray the socio-economic profile of the farmers who had committed suicide and their spouses.

3) To examine the amount and nature of assistance received from Government and other sources.

4) To indentify the nature of problems faced by the widows of farmers and the extent to which these could be solved.

5) To analyze in depth as to how the wives of the victims are coping up with the suicides of their spouses. To document the mechanisms
adopted by the widows to cope up with the situation and manage their families as well as farming.

6) To suggest suitable policy interventions.

Methodology:

The design structure for this study is descriptive design. The purpose of descriptive design is to provide description of an individual, community, a society, an event or of any other unit under investigation. This study describes the coping up of the spousal suicides by the widows of farmers' suicides in Karnataka.

a) Universe for the present study comprises of widows of the Farmers, who have committed suicide in Tumkur, Chitradurga and Davanagere districts of Tumkur, Chitradurga and Davanagere districts of Bangalore division of Karnataka state during the period 2001 to 2007. The numbers of farmers who have committed suicide in these three districts were 291 during the reference period. The three adjacent districts were chosen due to the high, moderate and lesser level of suicides in these districts of Bangalore region of Karnataka state. The lists of farmers who have committed suicides in these three districts were compiled from Police and Revenue records for drawing the sample. As the researcher hails from Tumkur district, it is her sheer familiarity with the area has lead to carry out the research in Tumkur and neighboring districts.
b) **Sample:** The sample for the present study was drawn from among the list of farmers' households by using purposive sampling method. The 227 units were chosen purposefully as the households, where suicide of the head of the household had taken place. Those households, where both farmer and her wife who had committed suicide were left out. Those households where the widows were present alone were purposefully chosen for this study.

c) **Tool:** As a sizable proportion of the respondents were illiterates. An extensive Interview schedule was carefully prepared for collecting detailed data pertaining to the profile of the farmers and their families to know as to how the widows are coping up with their spousal suicides and managing the households in the absence of their spouses. The Interview Schedule was tested through a pilot study. The instrument was perfected to elicit data on the specified objectives.

d) **Analysis:** The quantitative data collected from the respondents through Interview schedule were encoded and analyzed in tabular methods by using SPSS package. The simple two way tables were prepared and inferences were drawn from these tables. Simple averages and mean were calculated. The qualitative information collected was analyzed manually taking into consideration the significance of the issues under investigation.

e) **Data Base:** The data was collected both from primary and secondary sources. As far as the primary data is concerned, the respondents were interviewed with an in depth structured schedule. The secondary data was
collected from books, journals, reports, documents and newspapers to compliment the primary data and to add validity to the analysis. Information was also collected from the office of the District Commissioner of Tumkur, and Deputy Superintendent of Police Chitradurga, Davanagere, and Kisan Raitha Sangha, Chitradurga.

The data collection work was carried out in the month of April 2001 to April 2007-08 is considered the reference period for the study.

Limitations:

The present research is confined to only three districts of Karnataka. The time and economic constraint has come in the way of extending it to other districts in Karnataka as well. Secondly, collecting minute details about the life of widows was indeed very difficult. The emotional state of the mind of the widows who were made to answer queries during the process of interview would have some distortion of facts. However much care was taken to ensure reliability of data by the researcher at the time of interview.

Scheme of the study

The present study is divided in to five chapters. The chapter scheme is as follows.

Chapter – I INTRODUCTION

The first chapter title “Introduction” covers the introductory part of the study. It throws a beacon of light on the scope of the study, the objectives of the study, review of literature and the Scheme of presentation of the thesis.
Chapter -II LOCALE

The second chapter title “Locale” is divided into two sections. Section-I presents the profile of Karnataka in general and the Section-II presents the profiles of Tumkur, Chithradurga and Davanagere in particular to form the socio, economic, geographic, demographic profile of the locale where the present study is being carried out.

Chapter-III  SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SUICIDE VICTIMS AND THEIR WIDOWS

The third Chapter “Socio-economic profile of suicide victims and their widows” contains a thorough analysis of the causes that has lead to suicides of the farmers and their profile. The latter part of the chapter presents the socio-economic profile of the widows of the farmers’ suicides

Chapter -IV  COPING WITH SPOUSAL SUICIDE

The 4th chapter title “Coping with Spousal suicide” examines how families of the farmers particularly the widows cope up the challenges posed by the death of their spouses. It tries to document the type of assistance received from different sources like Government, relatives, Non-governmental Organizations and friends in helping the widows to overcome the crisis. The chapter examines how the widows are managing farming activities, their families, face the problems encountered therein, are examined to highlight their coping up mechanisms.
Chapter -V

The concluding Fifth chapter highlights the findings of the study. It also includes the summary, conclusions and Suggestions drawn on the basis of the findings.

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