CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study is to look into the problems faced by widows, the ways they manage these problems and their problems of adjustment. We have tried to analyse the consequences of widowhood on widows of different age-groups. In this study, an attempt has been made to study the factors responsible for the inferior status of widows.

Throughout this research exercise, an attempt has been made to explain how widows suffer from deprivation and social stigma in India. We have also collected the opinions/attitudes of the widows toward the status of Hindu widows, factors that improve their status and their re-marriage. We have also tried to understand the relationship between background factors and the problems and the differences between the urban and rural areas, and between the upper, intermediate and lower castes.

The major variables used in the present study are

1. Independent variable - Caste, age, income and education.
2. Infrastructure variable - property left by the husband.
3. Dependent variable - deprivation.

Independent Variable (a) Caste - depending on the caste, widows are broadly classified as (1) Hindu lower caste (2) Hindu intermediate caste and (3) Hindu upper caste (b) Age - Widows are classified into three broad groups such as young, middle aged and aged widows (c) Income - depending on the level of income, widows are classified into (1) High (2) Middle and (3) low income group.
II (1) Background variables - This includes husbands' occupation, their income and the property left by them. Husbands' occupation is divided into 'high', 'medium' and 'low' occupations.

(2) Attitudinal variable - This variable concerns the subjective aspect of a widow's life.

In this research exercise, an attempt has been made to understand widowhood, with all its important ramifications from a social problem perspective rather than a historical one.

The important findings of the study are as follows.

(1) The findings pertaining to the demographic characteristics of the widows indicate that the mean age at marriage of the urban widows is higher (13.34 years) than that of the rural widows (10.34 years). It is also found that the mean age at widowhood of rural widows is 38.11 years and of urban widows is 41.50 years.

(2) The findings pertaining to the duration of married life of widows indicate that the mean duration of married life of urban widows is higher (28.39 years) than that of rural widows (27.01 years).

The mean duration of widowed life of rural widows is higher (14.20 years) than that of the urban widows (12.65 years).

The mean age difference between the rural spouses is higher (11.25 years) than that of urban spouses (9.87 years).

(3) With regard to the widows who started working after widowhood due to sheer economic necessity it is found that a little over half of them (25.67%) started working. It is also
significant to note that a greater number of urban widows (16.00%) than the rural widows (12.00%) started working after becoming widows. In both urban and rural areas a majority of widows (46.67%) are helped by their parents/brothers in getting employment, and about 40.74% of the urban widows, as against 66.67% of their rural counterparts faced problems in getting job/work due to the lack of proper education. It is also interesting to note that among working widows a significant majority of those based in rural areas (87.33%) are not satisfied with their present employment. The figure is much higher than that for urban widows. About 44.87 percent of the total working widows have mentioned low emoluments, as a reason for their dissatisfaction. In support of the above-mentioned fact, it may also be stated that in urban area 42.67% of the widows and in rural areas 81.33% of the widows fall in the low income group.

(4) As high as 77.34 percent of the urban widows, in comparison to 84.67 percent of the rural widows, have stated that they are living with their children. In support of this, it may be stated that 81 (81.00) percent of the total respondents expressed their wish to live with their children.

(5) Coming to the type of accommodation of the widows the data indicates that about three fourths of the respondents both in the urban and rural areas are living in their own houses.

(6) A larger number of the urban widows (82.67%) expressed happiness with their earlier life than rural widows (78.67%).

(7) With regard to the age at death of the deceased husbands, the study reveals that there is no significant difference between urban and rural area. But there is a
significant difference between the urban and the rural husbands as to the causes of their death. In support of this it may be stated that about 21.33 percent of the urban husbands died of heart attack whereas the same number of rural husbands died of prolonged illness. This seems to have been so because a large number of rural husbands did not receive treatment as, according to the respondents, no time was left to take effective treatment. This may be mainly due to the low level of literacy among rural people, coupled with inadequate conveyance (transport services) and delay in getting the required treatment from the doctors.

(8) With regard to the educational level of the deceased husbands, the findings reveal that a significant majority of the rural deceased husbands (76.67%) were illiterate compared to urban deceased husbands. They differed from their urban counterparts in terms of the occupation followed, income earned, savings garnered and property left behind. In support of this, it may be stated that about 47.33 percent of the rural husbands were land labourers while about 48.66 percent of the urban husbands were government/private employees. The urban husband's income (Rs.20,000-above) was better than the rural husband's income (Rs.1001 - 2000). Further, it can be stated that urban deceased husbands left behind more savings and property than the rural husbands.

(9) A greater number of the rural widows are saddled with dependent children than the urban widows. The level of illiteracy is higher among the rural children than the urban children. Among those studying, as many as 49.33 percent of the
urban children and 20.00 percent of the rural children did not discontinue their education.

Those who discontinued their education, started working in order to support the family. Widows received fuller financial support from the unmarried children rather than the married children. The hypothesis that absence of father influences the children's behaviour is not rejected.

(10) With regard to the persons taking care of the children, a greater number of urban widows (66.67%) take care of their children than rural widows (56.00%). And it may also be said that about 71.33 percent of the rural, and 66.33 percent of the urban, widows have said that their children seek advice from the widows' kinsmen. And with regard to the children seeking advice from their widowed mothers, the findings indicate that a majority of the total widows (71.00%) stated that their children seek advice from them sometimes, if not often.

(11) The study also reveals that a majority of the widows (43.00) faced difficulties in controlling their children. And about 26.00 percent of the urban widows and 57.33 percent of rural widows have reported that they have noticed changes in their children's activities. This may be due to the absence of the male member at home. A majority of the widows (42.33%) stated that they consult close relatives while taking decisions about their children.

(12) With regard to the economic deprivation faced by the widows, the findings suggest that both urban and rural widows, irrespective of their castes, have faced economic problems. Among widows belonging to different age groups, young and middle
aged widows have faced more economic problems than the aged widows. Both working and non-working widows have faced economic problems. About 16.00 percent of the urban widows and 12.00 percent of the rural widows started working in order to overcome the economic deprivation. About 38.67 percent of the total widows have found the expenses on food, clothing and shelter most difficult to meet. Economic insecurity is felt by 38.67 percent of the widows. The first hypothesis is that the income of the husbands has influenced on the widows level of economic deprivation is not rejected and the second hypothesis examined in the study that husband's age at death has influence on the economic deprivation of widow is rejected.

(13) With regard to social deprivation faced by the widows the findings reveal that both urban and rural widows have faced greater social deprivation after widowhood than before. The hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the social deprivation level of rural and urban widows is not rejected. Upper caste widows have faced more social deprivation than the other caste groups. Widows belonging to different age groups faced social deprivation after widowhood. Both working and non-working widows have faced social deprivation. There is a decrease in the frequency of kinsmen's visits to widows and vice-versa after widowhood irrespective of their locality, caste, age and occupational status. The frequency of visits between widows and friends was also greater before widowhood than after.

(14) With regard to the emotional deprivation the study reveals that both urban and rural widows, irrespective of their
caste, age, occupational status, have faced emotional deprivation because of their feeling of insecurity. The hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the emotional deprivation of rural and urban widows is not rejected. After widowhood, over half the number of widows had indifferent health. They suffered from headache, loss of weight, depression and falling of hair etc. Almost all the widows are not treated warmly by the members of their family after widowhood. About 42.33 percent of widows have said that their daughters-in-law quarrel with them. About 68.33 percent of them have expressed the conviction that widows should not live because they find it difficult to manage the family without the bread winner. About 32.00 percent of the widows talk to their siblings when they are unhappy. A significant majority of them (32.33) remember their husbands on family celebrations.

(15) With regard to the cultural deprivation faced by the widows the findings indicate that both urban and rural widows have faced more cultural deprivation after widowhood. It is also found that the higher the caste the greater the cultural deprivation (62.8%). The hypothesis that the caste has influence on the level of cultural deprivation of widows is not rejected. Aged widows faced more cultural deprivation than the young and middle aged ones. Both working and non-working widows faced cultural deprivation. A significant majority of them started eating simple food and wearing simple cloths due to economic problems. Among the upper castes this change was due to the taboos imposed on them. Over 90 percent of the widows do not use "saubhaagya" signs. Over half of them have not attended socio-
religious functions because they do not feel like doing so but send their children instead. Almost all the widows observe the practice prescribed for them in their own communities.

(16) A majority of the widows (32.67) received help from their sons/daughters, though there is a difference between the urban and rural widows in this respect. About 45.33 percent of the urban widows and 39.33 percent of the rural widows received help in the form of food, clothing, shelter. About 80.00 percent of the widows opined that husband's relations should share a widow's responsibilities while, in reality, nearly half of the widows approach their sons/daughters in difficulties because they are supported by them.

(17) With regard to reaction towards death, about 40.67 percent of the urban widows as against 61.34 percent of the rural widows felt insecure. A significant majority of them (73.33%) took one year's time to get over their grief. Over 90 percent of the widows feel the loss of their husbands. About 70 percent of them blame themselves for their widowhood and believe that Karma' is responsible for their plight. Further, regarding the status of widows in Hindu Society, about 63.33 percent of the urban widows, in comparison to 42.00 percent of the rural widows, have stated that their status is inferior. About 25.00 percent of them held religious conventions as responsible factors for their inferior status. A large proportion of the widows (34.00%) have reported female education as one of the factors that help widow's cause most. About 29.33 percent of the urban widows and 36.67 percent of the rural widows have said preference in employment.
improve widow's economic status. And about 42.00 percent of them have stated that today's young adults display indifference toward widows.

(18) The findings pertaining to the approval of widow remarriage indicate that about 24.67 percent of the urban widows as against 45.33 percent of the rural widows have reported that widow marriage is permitted in their community. Over half of the widows (54.33%) know about the practice of widow re-marriage. A significant majority of them (80.00%) favoured widow re-marriage and about 39.32 percent stated one year as the ideal gap between widowhood and remarriage. About 39.08 percent of the widows have said that in their opinion only child/young widows should re-marry while about 81.67 percent of them have stated that they would accept/welcome re-married widows. About 87.00% of the widows had not thought of marrying again because they hate this idea or were not of marriageable age or were afraid of religious and social opposition etc. With regard to the difficulties foreseen in remarriage, about 46.34 percent of the widows have opined that it would be difficult for a married woman to adjust to a second marriage.

About 67.00 percent of the widows have preferred to live in the joint family with sons, because they need money and protection.

(19) With regard to the widows' plans for their own future life and for their children's life the findings indicate that about 35.00 percent of the women wish to continue the job and about 28.67 percent of the widows worried about their sons' ability to find and settle down in good jobs/businesses.
About 45.33 percent of the urban widows and 43.33 percent of the rural widows wish to be self supporting. About 31.00 percent of them have stated that widows should be given free vocational training in order to become self-reliant.
RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) Young, illiterate and poor widows should be given opportunities by voluntary organisations and government to improve their education and profession competence to enable them to take to remunerative work.

(2) Vocational training centres should be opened at district and taluk-levels either by government or voluntary organisations.

(3) Educating the people regarding how one should face death should be introduced at higher secondary level. For rural people this should be imparted through folk songs and dramas.

(4) Like in some Government service, a man's job should be given either to his widow or children in the private sector too.

(5) Information regarding the different welfare schemes existing in different parts of the country should be made known to people through the mass media time and again.

(6) Doordarshan covers a vast part of the country, hence programmes on marriage of widows, problems of widows, and welfare schemes for widows should be broadcast.

(7) Reservation of certain percentage of jobs in the government and public institutions for widows/children is necessary.

(8) Community-based agencies should start "the widow to widow program", i.e. a group of widows who reach out to recently-widowed women and offer support in helping them adjust to their new life.
Areas of Future Research

(1) Similar studies in different areas may be conducted to make generalization about the impact of widowhood on the individual and society, which may perhaps help in redesigning our welfare programmes.

(2) Various kinds of problems faced by different categories of widows like working, non-working, educated and uneducated, rich, poor, and middle class, should be studied in detail, which might help in formulating our welfare scheme network specially in rural areas.

(3) Indepth studies should be conducted covering not only widows but also widowers, so as to know clearly their feelings about widowhood and the problems faced by them.

(4) A systematic study concerning the effect of bereavement and adjustments during the first few months of widowhood must be planned.

(5) Forms and components of loneliness as experienced by widows and the problem of adjustment should be studied in detail.

(6) Variations in widowhood from nation to nation, from state to state and between country and city should be studied in order to understand the future trend of widowhood in this country.

(7) Roles played by widows in a community, from what phases of social life are they excluded? In what activities do they play prominent parts etc., should be studied and a similar study of widowers can also be made.
(8) A case study of students who have suffered the loss of a parent some years ago to know how has their life been affected by this loss can be studied in detail.
Major Findings

1. The study indicated that intermediate agencies be developed as a follow-up programme to train the widows educationally and vocationally to find a suitable employment and to ensure social security.

2. The study also pointed out that there is a need to register the names and addresses of the widows either with Municipality or Village Panchayat Councils. This would be helpful in implementing any welfare schemes meant for widows.

3. It is evident from the study that widows' disapproval of remarriage clearly points out that religious and social sanction for remarriage is lacking. Hence, favourable atmosphere through welfare agencies, especially religious/voluntary organisations should be oriented.

4. The study also indicates need for more social participation by widows in order to reduce their general dissatisfaction in life.