Preface

Four years back, while undergoing a Law course, I happened to note the unique position of Hindu Widow in jurisprudence and law relating to her rights. The unequal legislation for the two sexes, religious tradition and customs made the institution of widowhood more tragic and represented lowest position for Hindu widow.

When I got exposed to the vast literature in the field of women studies, I learnt that much is written on the status and role of Indian women in general, but very little about Hindu widows. There are very few Indian studies which have taken into account the problems faced by Hindu widows, though the problem has attracted the attention of reformers and social workers.

The plight of widows in this country is highly deplorable. A woman cannot lead an independent life in a male dominated society. She has always been looked down upon with a certain amount of suspicion by others. For a Hindu woman, widowhood is considered a punishment for the crime committed by her in her previous life. Hence, she is looked down upon as a sinner. The death of a woman during the lifetime of her husband is often praised. A widowed woman has no right to participate in any socio-religious functions and her presence is considered as inauspicious.

Widows were encouraged to become sati. In the past sati was presented as an ideal for womanhood. Unfortunately this has been revived and a few cases were recently reported in Rajasthan. But
today, though the practice of sati is prohibited, the brides are burnt alive not for the same reason but only to inherit her wealth.

Even today, remarriage of widows is not encouraged by the people. As we find that widow remarriage is considered a matter of great dishonour and infidelity in Hindu society. Religion prohibits remarriage though it has been legalized.

The problems of the widows are numerous, it is the problem of a woman and a widow, it is the problem of attitudinal change, it is a problem of realistic measures to be taken for their welfare.

Various scientific studies on western widows, encouragement by many people and moreover a sustained interest in this special field have inspired me to take up the present research task. It is my ardent hope that the present study will be a contribution in this field.

The present study was taken up in the district of Dharwad with an aim to evaluate the problem faced by the widows. The study also made an attempt to assess the extent of deprivation faced by them. The study is exploratory in nature, and also makes an attempt to test the significance of relationship between independent, infrastructural and independent variables with dependent variable like deprivation in the fields like economic, social, psychological and cultural.
The present study points out the need for an in-depth analysis on a larger scale in respect of widowhood as a social role, and of sexual involvement of widows. The study is successful to the extent of pinpointing certain requirements like tackling the problem of widows with determination and jointly by women; development of widows' profile; need for follow up and vocational training for illiterate and poor widows, and coordinating the efforts of government with the heads of religious institutions and voluntary organisations in changing the attitudes of the people according to the changing times and needs of society.