CHAPTER FIRST

PART - I

- REVIEW OF LITERATURE -

The present study is designed to understand the impact of Deprivation of Hindu Widows and the problem of adjustment of the widows. Hence, keeping in view the objectives of the study the relevant review of literature has been done on the following lines.

1. Death and bereavement
2. State of Widowhood
3. State of Deprivation
4. Consequences of widowhood
5. Economic Deprivation
6. Social Deprivation
7. Psychological Deprivation
8. Cultural Deprivation
9. Widow Remarriage
10. Welfare Measures
11. Hindu Widows-Historical Information
Death and Bereavement

The post marital family consisting of the widow or widower is a widely known feature of every society. Facing loss of one of the marital partners is a sad event. Death is the extreme shock. It may come suddenly and without previous warning. It can be a crisis for the family and for the individual. The very term death is enough to create panic among many people. It robs a loved one and thereby destroys the strong ties and close relationships that bind a family. It changes the habits of eating, sleeping, dressing and conversing, habits of sex and ego support and makes the surviving partner numb and bewildered. Reorganisation is often very painful, for it involves adjustment and readjustment to a new situation, which often comes suddenly. Hence, death can be viewed as social, not biological. The unique qualities of each relationship make the universal experience of death peculiarly painful. No one can truly replace the person who has died.

The death of one's spouse is a traumatic event. Loss of the husband is felt more than any other loss and disorganises a

woman's life deeply. The death of the husband is a devastating blow. For the widow, life may not seem worth living and she may look forward to her own early death.

Somerville mentions that death is a significant and universal family experience. However, many people and many families treat bereavement, crisis, death and widowhood with extreme brevity. Even then bereavement has not been well studied. Much of this lack can be attributed to the inertia of totems and inherent methodological difficulties that surround studies of this nature. Society in general is against investigating this most universal crisis.

Eliot asserts, bereavement is usually unexpected, often a shock, seldom planned for, either personally or by the family, though it is the natural form of family dissolution. He rightly quotes that, "as the Renaissance, Dance of Death' warned Memento Mori: hodie mihi, cras tibi (Remember today for me, tomorrow for you)"

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He further says that physically one must recognise bereavement as "a major shock, often requiring physical or medical care like any other illness or accident with time for recovery".

Psychologically, bereavement is a major type in the general class of traumatic frustration-situation. Arrested impulse or thwarted habit is the root of all sorrow.

Sociologically bereavement is the dismemberment of an affectional group by death. It is thus a problem in intrapersonal conflict, accommodation and/or assimilation-disorganisation-and in interpersonal accommodation and group reorganisation-disintegration.

Bereavement and grief represent a Crisis and Critical transition for the family of the deceased. This is particularly so for the widow who has to face the crisis of not only losing the spouse but stepping into the status of the head of the family. She has to bear the onus of being the breadwinner. Waller while studying the social aspects of bereavement points out that bereavement may be the loss of a mate, partner, child, sibling or other close relative or associate and that its effect necessarily varies, with the age of the bereaved, his


emotional involvement with the deceased, the manner of death, the other relationships of the bereaved and the degree of emancipation of the bereaved person.

Eliot while making a deep and significant analysis of bereavement classifies some of the ways in which families and their members respond to the crisis of bereavement.

He classifies, the effects of bereavement into immediate and later or primary and secondary, and among them he noted several as typical:
1. Abandon
2. Refusal or rejection of the facts (including dissociation of emotion or sense of unreality).
3. Preternatural or detached calm.
4. Shock, in the neurological Sense
5. Exaltation
6. Self-injury
7. Repression
8. Blame of self or others, revenge
9. The intense longing of grief.

He opines that the first eight occur in various sequences and in combination with the last, because without grief the others would not arise.

The secondary reactions

He says that the following types of responses noted correspond to certain well-known 'mechanisms' of the psychoanalysts:

(1) Escape or attempted escape from the conflict e.g., use of drugs, moving of residence, suicide, social distractions, or illusions.

(2) Defense and repression e.g., removing all reminders, deliberate forgetting, postural self-control, or certain "mental diseases".

(3) Compensation (in the narrower sense) e.g., rationalization, belief and cults, rituals of guilt or contribution, perpetuation of memory of deceased or of wish or supposed will of deceased, revenge, penance or "overdetermined" grief.

(4) Masochism and exhibition e.g., voluptuaries of grief, recluses, ascetics, and the like.

(5) Identification (introjective) e.g., stepping into the role of the deceased or "carrying the spirit" of the deceased.

(6) Transference and substitution (involving projection) e.g., reattachment of affections to new mother, child or spouse; espousal of charities or cause. Most of these behaviour patterns are secondary and socially conditioned. They take time and social interaction for their development. Some mores of bereavement correspond to and also offer channels for these mechanisms.

Many of the above reactions may prove successful or unsuccessful, depending upon the inner resources and current social situation.

**Individual Effects of Bereavement**

A. Total failure to readjust

1. Suicide

2. Early death
3. Insanity
4. Moral disintegration
5. Obsession

B. Partial failure
1. Eccentricities
2. Physical illness or prostration
3. Aboulia, purposelessness
4. Isolation
5. Embitterment, misanthropy, Cynicism
6. Reversion to or recurrence of griefs
7. Self-blame or personal hates
8. Fears
9. Loneliness

C. Partial Success
1. Resignation, "God's will", etc.
2. Stoicism
3. Stereotyped formula of immortality, misery escaped, etc.
4. Sentimental memorials
5. Effective repression of memories
6. Intensification of affections
7. Extension of affections
8. Deliberate absorption in distractions or duties
9. New or fantasied love objects

D. Conspicuous Success
1. New love object
2. Thoroughgoing religious rationalization
3. Spontaneous forgetting, relaxation of tensions
4. Devotion to life work
5. Identification with role of deceased
6. Creation of constructive memorials
7. Transmutation of the experience into productive reintegration of the personality

He says that the pattern of family behaviour during bereavement, and after bereavement, is influenced by these types of individual compensatory behaviour. These behaviour patterns are contagious but they are more consciously, imitated or resisted than the immediate impulsive responses.

The most frequent results are infinite combinations of B and C-partial success and partial failure.

**Effect of Bereavement on Family**

The Bereavement makes the family change some of its ways in the following ways:

1. The role of a family member exists in relation to the configuration and functioning of the family as a unit. Death tends to disturb this unity. The shifting of the roles of the various members under bereavement represents a reshaping of the configuration.

2. The consensus of the family in respect to these roles, i.e., in respect to its own pattern, may result; or, family conflict may develop as a sequence to incompatible conceptions of the role of certain members under the new conditions.

3. Such conflicts or jealousies, or the lack of a common personal or domestic object or symbol of affectional attachment (conditioning stimuli) may result in decreased family solidarity.
4. Acceptance of new, interpersonal responsibilities may increase family solidarity.

5. Removal of authority, of habit stimuli, of home, or of support may lead to revision of family folkways.

6. Maturity of children who lose their parents may lead to individualism or turning to their own families.

7. The will or personality, of the deceased, acting psychologically as a dynamic complex in each member's memory, and re-enforced by consensus, may activate the behaviour of the entire family. Men behave differently in bereavement from women, because of differences in cultural expectations and, in part, because they not only have occupational activities demanding their attention, but they are more likely to spend more time away from the objects which remind them of the deceased.

As Parkes Murray observes, in his study on bereaved people in London, one-third of them had no contact with a clergyman apart from the funeral service, whereas three-quarters consulted a general practitioner during the six months following the bereavement. He noticed a sharp increase in consultations after bereavement, the reason for seeking advice being different at different ages. Young widows suffer from psychological difficulties whereas old widows suffer from physical symptoms.


He further describes the phases, characteristics of grief and mourning, during which the widow was initially shocked or numbed and then suffered from pangs of intense pining. In the final stage there was revival and gradual return to normal life.

Thus, bereavement is a compound crisis. It is a painful emotional shock, a sharp change in social status, often an economic catastrophe and usually a philosophical challenge. It calls for reorganizing the habits and routines and ways of a life time of married living.

Therefore, Martinson rightly says that knowing about a critical event and preparing for it in advance mitigates the hardship and improves chances of recovery.

State of Widowhood

Widowhood is unique and its most basic features are as follows.

a. One must have been married.

b. Widowhood is not welcomed because most people wish marriage to continue.

c. The loss is irreplaceable and widowhood cannot be avoided.


Widowhood is a Crisis in a woman's life, involving new social adjustments for the family as well as for herself.

It is an event that constitutes the greatest and saddest change in the life of a woman. It also leads to the loss of status resulting in a state of helplessness and hopelessness.

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 a woman. Widowhood is, primarily, a female phenomenon. Hence, recent researches have focused on widows more than widowers.

It is rightly said that widowhood, at all ages, changes the basic self-identity of many women. This is especially true of traditionally-oriented women for whom the role of wife is central to their lives.

Hyman 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.


According to Gerg, widowhood is an event that brings about the greatest change in the status of a widow, for it is often accompanied by deleterious consequences. This is not only because of the loss of the husband, but also because of the lack of clear-cut cultural expectations regarding the proper role of the widow.

The plight of widows is indeed miserable for, almost inevitably, it carries with it, problems of ill-health, insufficiency of money, unemployment and strained social relations with one's children and one's friends for both men and women.

Christianity has accepted widowhood and re-marriage as natural. Widowhood is therefore not considered a very serious problem, since, both men and women enjoy equality, Christian women and widows are treated with respect.

In Islam, widowhood, like divorce, is a non-issue. Its acceptability in society should be free from inhibitions and taboos. Even in Jainism widowhood is not a serious problem. Though widow re-marriage is not allowed, they enjoy freedom in the religious, social and political fields. A widow becomes a direct

heir to the property of the deceased husband regardless whether or not she has a son.

In India widowhood represents the last and lowest stage in life for Hindu Women.

Caton and Merielli conceptualise Hindu widowhood as a life of agony, pain, suffering and austerity. It is a life which has been inflicted by social customs.

Cormack in her study on "The Hindu Women" asserts that there is probably no aspect of womanhood that has received more sympathy than that of widowhood in India. For the majority, widowhood is certainly an unhappy and miserable state.

It is observed that throughout India, Hindu women regard widowhood as a punishment for some horrible crime or crimes committed by them in their previous birth, such as disobedience or disloyalty to the husband or having even having killed him. Widowhood, and its accompanying miserable existence, is considered as an atonement for some sin committed in a previous birth.

In India, widow remarriage is not encouraged, though it is legalized. In the light of such conditions Mahatma Gandhi rightly remarked, "Enforced widowhood upon little girls is a brutal crime for which we Hindus are daily praying. Widowhood imposed by religion or custom is an unbearable yoke and defiles the home by secret vice and degrades religion, whereas voluntary widowhood consciously adopted by a woman who has felt affection of a partner adds grace and dignity of life, sanctifies the house and uplifts religion itself".

An exploration into the folklores of the different regions of India widens our awareness about the condition of widows. In the folklore of West Bengal women considered widowhood as a great curse. While Tamil folklore mentions that the condition of the widows in all castes is miserable. Her presence was considered inauspicious and hence, a widow was discouraged from appearing at any social and cultural happening. She lived an unseen existence. In the folklore of Orissa, widowhood is considered much more sorrowful than even the death of a loved daughter, for the misery over the loss of a daughter can be overcome, but widowhood dogs a woman till her own death.

Moreover, widowhood is a life-event that removes not only persons, closest, support persons but also reduces the size of informal support network at the same time.

Brubaker is of the opinion that widowhood is a family event and the loss reverberates throughout the later family network. The spouse has lost a mate; children a parent; siblings a brother or sister.

Further, he points out that widowhood represents cut-off of former roles and relationships and commencing of a new set of relationships and expectations.

Leslie remarks that widowhood is a long-term proposition. On an average the period of widowhood lasts from eight to sixteen years as based on his study. Widowhood and accompanying deep sense of loss and frustration comes to an end only with remarriage or with death.

In all cultures, widowhood is a crisis in a woman's life. But cultures differ significantly among themselves in their ways of overcoming crises. Some cultures allow their widows to remarry, some allow it only in exceptional cases; some do not allow it under any circumstances. The last course has been


adopted by orthodox Brahmanic Hindu culture. A culture that allows widow remarriage does not necessarily become inferior to the one which disapproves of it. But what may bring about the real difference between one culture and another is their reordering of marital values.

State of Deprivation

In our country the problem of deprivation is a complex phenomenon. The intensity of deprivation is much due to social taboos and cultural prejudices in a traditional society. Deprivation in the nature of discrimination leads to several social problems.

Deprivation is a necessary product of class character of the society. Widows are deprived of the privileges and even the necessities, which every widow has a right to enjoy. Deprivation results in a systematic exploitation and dehumanisation of widows.

In the present research the term 'deprivation' has been used to denote, "a social setting in which widows are physically, socially, economically and psychologically handicapped to fulfil their bio-social needs". It has been shown that deprivations and disadvantages create many problems which widows are expected to face all their lives.

The death of a child may be seen as a personal calamity but the death of a husband is seen as altering the social identity of a woman. Widowhood is almost always accompanied by a deep sense of shock due to the sudden, and often unexpected, death of the husband. A woman is stupefied and immobilised with extreme grief. The loss of the husband creates a deep void in her life and she immediately, becomes dependent on her children or relatives. Often such a wound is healed only by time.

Rane, in her study on "Rehabilitation of Widows: Problems and prospects", argued that widowhood brings sudden and unhappy changes in the life of a woman. Death of a husband causes not only a loss of financial and emotional support, but also severe physical and emotional suffering. Often the women is left feeling helpless and in some cases a deep sense of depression may lead to either a mental disorder or suicide.

Widowhood marks a transition from a marital to a widowed status which is not smooth, for it means not only a loss of status but also a loss of pride, privileges, prestige and independence within the family. For a man, the loss of a spouse

is only a personal grief but for a woman it means additionally a difficult adjustment to be made. Many women are unable to cope with such a transition. Thus the consequences of widowhood to a woman is more hazardous than to a man.

Many a time, a widow faces difficulty in adjusting to her new status because the social norms and taboos put her in most disadvantaged position, and restrict her social interactions. She is confronted with a new set of expectations after widowhood.

In a study of the social and economic conditions of widows in Dharwad, Katti and Nagesh report that, in most communities after the death of the husband, a woman loses some of her privileges and rights in family and in society and in most social and cultural rituals (functions). In Hindu society a widow is expected to lead a life of an ascetic. She has to wear simple clothes, eat simple (satvika) food and keep herself away from all auspicious functions. Remarriage is prohibited for her. Inspite of the protection accorded to widows by the regulations and important Act, their position has not improved much. Thus widows are put in most


disadvantaged position.

Often a widow's life is made miserable by her in-laws. She becomes practically a slave, a chattel forced to do all kinds of manual and physical labour. She is meted out harsh treatment and often held responsible for her husband's death.

Considering the above cited studies it could be surmised that the death of a husband brings about a stigma, in Hindu Society and along with it, severe deprivation of status. Every phase of widowhood is critical, hard, challenging and deranging and brings about severe social, economic, emotional and cultural deprivation.

**Indian Scene**

In India girls are normally married before the onset of puberty. Men usually marry girls much younger to them in age. Hence, our girls become widows earlier, due to the age difference between the two and are destined to widowhood for much of their adult life. Females do not marry again as much as do males. Moreover, widow remarriage is socially disapproved among the high caste Hindus in India. Early marriage of girls and social disapproval of widow remarriage are found among other communities also. Touba cites the example of Iran where similar

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Kitchlu in his study on the socio-economic conditions of widows in the Union Territory of Delhi, reports that there is a direct correlation between the age of marriage and age at widowhood. In India, girls marry at an early age. The wide age difference between husband and wife is often the reason for the high incidence of widowhood. In India it has been observed that a boy generally gives preference for education. Thus a man often marries late and not until he is educated and finds employment, while a girl is often married in a hurry before she completes her education. This results in a wide disparity in the age at marriage, of men and women in India. This is one of the causes of high incidence of widowhood. As it is confirmed that according to 1971 and 1981 census the girls who had married at the age of 10-14 years were 11.53 per cent and 6.59 per cent respectively, while in Karnataka the females who married at the age of 10-14 years in 1971 and 1981 were 6.58 per cent and 3.80 per cent respectively.

Thus, it can be said that the institution of widowhood with all its hardships and disadvantages, is a result of discrimination between the sexes, which characterises all archaic systems.

In India, the majority of reformers, men and women, have worked tirelessly for the amelioration of the widow's lot. Inspite of these efforts, even today widows are treated as second class citizens in our country in addition to being considered as second class members within the family.

Consequences of Widowhood

Widowhood can be viewed as a social category consisting of individuals whose life partner is dead. Most couples do not think or refuse to accept that this change of status will befall them, for people are reluctant to face death and its consequences. Few in fact understand what it means to be widowed. It represents a role and status change. When an individual loses a spouse, that individual acquires a new status, widow or widower, instead of wife or husband. Eshleman points out that society makes adjustment to widowed status difficult by placing a taboo on the discussion of death between husband and wife, or parent and children. As a result, the surviving partner and others are often unprepared for the decisions that have to be made.

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. Kelphart argued, "Widowhood is a problem of many dimensions; numerical-financial-emotional".

Berardo asserted, "Widowhood status presents more serious problems for both individual and families. It must be viewed as a social, emotional crisis situation and it is a neglected aspect of the family life Cycle".

Widowhood also brings about a variety of social problems at the local level being related to adult and child dependency, poverty, unemployment, illness and family disorganisation and women's insecure status. Morgan viewed widowhood as a complex transition, with multiple possible consequences.

Radhadevi observes that widowhood brings about both subjective and objective consequences. Whereas, subjective consequences can be almost the same for widows and widowers, objective consequences differ due to the distinctive different

roles between men and women. The major role of man is that of
provider, and of woman as home-maker. When death strikes the
spouse, a man loses a home-maker, but a woman loses a provider.
Hence the widow faces a much more serious situation than the
widower. Apart from these two basic roles the marital partners
play at least eight roles. The spousal loss causes a traumatic
role change. The social consequences brought about by widowhood
have a damaging effect on the self-concept of a widow.

In every age group women experience more widowhood than men
and, in the middle-age group, nearly three times more than
men. For the aged, widowhood is a critical situation which
involves both social and personal disorganisation.

The widow faces negative, longterm and severe problems.
They seem to be derived from social, economic, cultural and
emotional deprivations than from widowhood itself. The problems
are not only manifold and severe but they are inter-related and
affect each other. And the degree of their seriousness varies
with the widow's age, economic conditions, education, caste,
family structure, religion, norms and others.

9. Radhadevi: Work Participation of widows in India-A census
Analysis a paper presented at the National seminar on
widowhood in India Op cit pp. 1.

919.

11. Berardo, F.M.: Social Adaptation to Widowhood among a Rural-
Urban Aged Population Washington Agricultural experiment
station bulletin. College of Agriculture Washington State
University pp. 4.
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.

The burden of widowhood is not the same for both the sexes. The widow is at a great disadvantage insofar as supporting the family is concerned. The poverty that follows the loss of the bread winner can send a widow into a demoralising economic tail-spin. It often forces her to move into a poorer neighbourhood with a restricted budget and out of touch with her former friends. Nimkoff wrote "In Chicago in 1920 about three-fourth widows started working due to sheer financial needs. And many widows who were either unable, or unprepared, to work for a living, became more dependent upon the economic aid of the children, than widowers. The plight of the family bereaved of father is much greater, when the children are young to make financial contribution. In some cases the family, collapses and ceases to exist as a unit and in other cases the family takes the crisis as a challenge to pull itself together and to reorganise its life on a new basis".

Landis points out that in most homes the husband has almost complete charge of business affairs, aside from those of buying consumer goods for the family. The widow, who knows little about real estate titles, mortgages, contracts, stocks and bonds, and who knows nothing of handling financial affairs, may easily be exploited by others. Almost all widows face two big problems, both closely related: 1. Money; 2. finding a job, because of their inexperience in dealing with financial matters, and their lack of occupational skill. This makes their economic condition worse, because as Gorden says, "Most of today's widows came to maturity in much more traditional times.

Morgan, in his study on 'Economic change at mid-life widowhood: A longitudinal Analysis' has found out that the cross-sectional result showed a consistent difference between the income levels and adequacy of married and widowed respondents as a consequence of widowhood. But the longitudinal comparisons showed that many women were poor prior to being widowed. Hence, widowhood is not the major cause of poverty in this group.

In India, even today, a woman is a dependent on her husband for support, decision and protection. She has no independent identity, whether she works in the house or in the farm or in a factory, because here the man is the head of the family, owner of the property, and he is in charge of the family exchequer. Under such circumstances, when a husband dies the wife, who is unprepared for such a situation, faces several problems connected with finance, property and other matters. She has to depend upon herself except for the help received from parents, kinsmen, and others which may not be either adequate or a constant source to depend upon. Her plight is heightened when she is uneducated, poor and ignorant. A widow, whose husband leaves property, may be cheated by others who pretend to help her, if she is not careful and intelligent in self-management. Her plight, in a nuclear family, where the husband alone is the earner and manager, is far worse than in a joint family.

Kitchlu, in his study, reported that about 78.48 per cent widows started working after widowhood, due to economic necessity. Among rural widows 30.43 percent faced problems in getting jobs in comparison to 14.29 percent of urban widows because the educational attainment of the latter is better than that of the former.

He further reported that Muslim widows had to face problems in getting jobs in comparison to Hindus and Christians, due to their illiteracy. Also, the earnings of Christian widows are higher than their Hindu and Muslim counterparts. The economic condition of the majority of self-employed widows is worse than that of widows in Government employment.

Singh et al., in their study on "Problems of widowhood" write that about 85 percent of widows faced a variety of financial problems. They were unable to purchase items of luxury, maintain "give and take" with friends, previous standard of living, fulfil their husband's liabilities, meet personal and wedding expenses of children.

Baidyanath in his report on Kashivasi widows has found that more than half of the widows receive no economic support from their parental or husband's family. About 99 percent of them follow begging as the primary source of livelihood, but among those whose secondary source of livelihood is begging the Brahmins outnumber the other three varnas.

Bansal, in her study on "Widows-Marauna", reported that about 58 percent of the widows were unhappy with their present condition due to their bad economic condition.

Finding employment is often a major problem for widows. Though occasionally, employers may favour widows as a gesture of social responsibility, yet they are not employed easily or paid as much as men, because they have neither proper education nor training. A majority of working widows are employed in low skilled part-time occupations only. Unemployment among widowed mothers is three times higher than other women. Many widows who seek employment were unsuccessful in obtaining jobs. Many widows leave their children uncared for while they work. Middle class widows have more job-skills and income and more friends, and are more widely engaged in social activities than the working class widows. According to Philiprice the latter experience less grief than the middle class widows, because they do not have close emotional attachment. It has also been noticed that the home-bound widow feels more oppressed by the stresses of widowhood, than the working widow, because the work may alleviate the distress of behaviour.

According to 1981 census there are 8,574,088 family units in age group 15-49 who have dependent children. A widow who has dependent children faces more economic problems along with other

responsibilities, which could be seen in about one-third of all new cases. She is forced to play the new roles of bread-winner and care-taker. She undergoes a period of strains and stresses in bringing up her children. The problems of widows are comparatively major because her financial resources usually are considerably less than those of a widower. The widows with dependent children expect some help from the savings or insurance of their husband and also some financial help under social security Act. About four-fifths of families are insured with an average of $6,000 insurance per family.

Kaur in her study on "Social Adjustment of War Widows" observed that among widows who had a total monthly income of Rs.300/- a majority were found maladjusted. Because of their insufficient financial status they had perceived the fear of worsening economic position. The reduced income, affected their consumption patterns and living arrangements in various ways. They spent more money on food and housing than the average family, and this meant there was less money available for other needs. Many a time most of them had to economise on various

items of expenditure like milk, vegetables, recreation, clothes etc. In such situations the children are forced to discontinue their education. They start taking up petty jobs or get self employed to make a contribution to their family income. The unemployed widow becomes dependent upon grown-up children, parents, inlaws or other relatives. She is reduced to a drudge, and, sometimes, she has to face taunts from the family which supports or gives shelter to her. Thus, most widows faced financial difficulties in meeting the basic needs of minor children such as providing good food, clothing and school fees.

When widows start playing dual roles, they cannot adequately supervise or control their children, and thereby they face various negative consequences such as delinquency, mental illness etc.

Berado in his study on widowhood status in the United States has observed, "widowhood among aged is a critical situation. The aged widows are unemployed and are partly or wholly dependent on the assistance of children, relatives, public or private funds. But often confine to their sister or such other related kin when they need advise on solving their personal problems.

22. Ibid pp. 5.
Therefore, close kinship ties only can mitigate socio-economic problems of the widows.25

Harvey and Bahr in a cross-cultural review of researches on the elderly suggest that the negative characteristics typically found with widowhood are probably attributable to economic disadvantages rather than widowhood per se.26

In the United States a majority of the widowed are aged, their economic condition is usually far below average, particularly in the case of surviving wives and their families.27 Hutchison, in a study on the life-satisfaction among the low-income elderly, has found that the lower-income widows have more worries about economic problems than do either male counterparts, or the poverty level female counterparts. He also says that the lower-income widows, compared to lower income married,28 experienced more unhappiness. Hence, Grog in a study has revealed that aged widows who try to maintain some sort of autonomy, need to be respected in terms of their basic rights and freedom.29


Familial and Social Deprivation

Since woman has derived most of her social position from her husband. He is, in most cases, the "Significant other". It is said, a home is everything to a woman, whereas it is a part of a man's life. When such a significant other dies, the role and functions of his widow are completely changed. She often misses the familial roles played by her husband such as sex-partner, caretaker and companion. For most of the traditionally-oriented woman the basic self-identity is the role of a mother. He quotes Atchley's findings that woman with egalitarian marriage may face lesser identity problems than the woman with traditional marriage.

Lopata writes that in American social life the status of the widows tends to be peripheral. Her status, in general is not as high as that of wife. Her single status excludes her from the leisure time activity in a couple companionate environment.

Since the couple-based society attaches some kind of stigma to the role of the single person in the transition phase, when the widow is trying to establish a social identity, her "spoiled identity" from the point of view of her former

friends may have negative consequences for her. Anderson says that intimacy support is necessary for the widow during transition phase to build up a new sense of self and social identity in relation to other world. He further says that both widowed and married women had primary association with their children. Widows, however, are more close to sisters and brothers, than married women. In situations like worry, illness, depression widows relied more on children and siblings than the married. The close relationships with children based on obligations are not much affected by widowhood.

While Morgan, in a study on "Changes in Family interaction following widowhood" reports, "average frequency of interaction with available kin increases for both married and widowed persons, but the number of interactions decrease due to family attrition. Widows are seeing their remaining kin more frequently on the average than the widowers. These changes do not result from the difference in age, race, health or income". Vinick finds that widows are more involved with children, relatives and friends than the widowers, since, several men stated that they had no friends because at this age all of them have passed away.

Lopata in her study on "Contributions of extended Families to the support system of Metropolitan Area Widows: Limitations of the Modified kin network" reports that in the case of Chicago area widows, the extended kin made less contributions to the economic service, social and emotional support systems since, they are not viable resources for the widows to build their support system. In case of younger widows, children and parents are frequent contributors to this support system. Most of the widows did not mention siblings, cousins, nephews or nieces and grand children, who, very infrequently and selectively, contribute to those support systems.

In making a transition from married status to widowhood, the surviving partner faces various difficulties not only due to lack of cultural expectations, but also due to lack of supportive relationships. Intimacy support is necessary to build a sense of self and social identity. Research studies have showed that relationships with the kins, neighbours and friends tend to strain and dissolve loneliness. As Lopata says, The death of the husband breaks up the pattern of engagement, in the life of the wife, in varying degrees and ways. Urbanisation and industrialisation, and societal complexity, result in a constant shift of people and roles. This fact leaves a rather sizable number of widows who are relatively isolated or living on a minimal level of contact with a few nearby children, siblings and friends.

because they have not been socialized to analyse their environment to choose desired social roles.

Lopata, in her study on "Social relations of Black and white widowed women in Northern Metropolis" has observed that two-thirds of both white and black widows report little or no contact with siblings. Often, a sibling lived temporarily with the respondent during crisis situations. Lopata, in another study on widows in America, reports that only one-fourth of the widows saw the deceased relatives with any frequency. Kitchlu also observed reduction in the contacts with the relatives and friends of the late husbands.

Lopata, in a study on "The meaning of Friendship in widowhood" writes; that over half of the widows report that they had no personal friends before and after death of their husbands. In order to know whether the absence of friends lead to loneliness, asked to measure the level of loneliness in comparison to others. Since, loneliness is often a matter of relative deprivation, the person experiencing it compared his or her level of social interaction to a higher level experienced by others and reported that they did not expect social interaction.

with people identified as friends. They face problems in maintaining such friendships in widowhood, because, they often feel that being the "fifth-wheel" on social occasions, there is an unwillingness on the part of married friends to include them. They are often left out of such interaction. Among the least educated and disadvantaged widows, friendships are least frequent and least deeply involved. White-collar and middle-class widows wish for friendships and have more personal sources to develop them than the blue-collar widows.

For a woman, the spousal loss means a plunge in social status. This curtails her activities and transforms her into an awkward "Fifth-Weel" at two-by-two social function. The Indian woman, soon after widowhood, is excluded from caste rituals and ceremonies. Her social, cultural and economic activities are controlled. Her mode of dressing, eating habits and social contacts all change. She is subjected to total segregation. The reason behind this segregation, putting restriction and disfiguring her is to prevent any kind of intimacy with men. As Gurmeet et al. have observed, a great majority of the widows found it difficult to entertain male visitors in the house and felt the lack of a male escort for functions. They also stated that they missed the companionship.

References:

Sometimes, widows are invited by close kinsmen for ceremonies, parties and congregations. But their, deep-felt conviction that the presence of a widow is inauspicious prevents them from participation in these functions. Most of the widows felt a sense of insecurity and loneliness. Their visits to relatives, friends and neighbours also decrease. Widowhood compels them to be away from the social milieu. Thus they are forced into a life of colourlessness, hopelessness and loneliness.

American widows are acculturated to live in the homes of male providers. Hence, most of them prefer to live alone rather than be unwanted guests in their children's homes and suffer the loneliness and inconveniences involved, whereas in India, a woman/widow cannot have a separate establishment, for she is not culturally trained to lead an independent life. If a widow is young or middle aged with minor children, she has to live with her near relatives. She often needs help to manage the property of the husband, but frequently these very relatives may plot against her and exploit her helpless situation. If the widow is aged, she has to live with her sons, over whom she has no authority. A widow's life in her family and with close relatives becomes miserable, if she does not have any property. Often, due to conflicts between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, she is made to cook separately.

Her emotions remain bottled-up. And sometimes she is driven out of the family.

Baidyanath Saraswati reports in his study, that about 60.22 per cent widows living in the joint family system left their homes under compelling and painful circumstances. A majority of the relatives do not visit them in Kashi. These painful experiences within the family seems to be a contributing factor to most widows not maintaining contact with family members. In Kashi, begging is the primary source of livelihood for many widows. Hence, in India, a widow's life is full of loneliness and exploitation except in some sympathetic families.

A younger widow learns to adjust to a life without a spouse in whom she confided and trusted for many years. She establishes, more easily new friendship and discovers ways to integrate herself in the wider community, than her elderly counterpart, for whom widowhood is a critical situation which involves both social and personal disorganisation. Younger widows face problems of child rearing, returning to work and re-establishment of themselves in the marriage market. Older widows, on the other hand, hold full or part-time jobs or join voluntary

organisations, because they do not like to live with their married children. According to Lopata, 49 percent of widows aged 50 and over in Chicago are solitary dwellers. Besides their body weakness, they face multiple problems such as social, emotional and financial insecurities.

Greg, in his study on "The elderly widow, her family, neighbours and friends", has found, Widows, whose children are living very closeby have no higher morale than those who do not have children at all or have none living very closeby. The frequency of contact with the children has no significant association with morale, since, the members of family actually do little to elevate widow's morale. In contrast, the frequency of contact with neighbours and friends elevates morale. Family involvement is viewed less meaningful because of the differences in the life-styles and interests between the elderly widow and her adult children, and also the reversal of roles or interaction between them. If a widow is healthy and financially secure, then she can structure the interactions on her own. Whereas, if the widow is ill or poor, she must rely upon her children to initiate interaction. Dependency changes the nature of interpersonal interaction, then family involvement should be negatively related to morale. As dependency increases the widow's relations with the

family members become more problematic. Due to lack of supportive relationships the aged widows and widowers often find themselves in an isolated situation.

Widows have lower morale and are less affiliated than their married counterparts because they are poorer than the latter. It has recently been discovered that the likelihood of poverty is greater among the female headed households than the male headed households.

Glad writes that elderly widows who are members of other ethnic and racial minority groups, have had less contacts with American society. This foreignness also cuts them off from their own ethnic community, which is Americanizing itself faster, and thereby their loneliness is intensified. Their adjustment is retarded because of lack of education, harmony and strong affection in the home, foreign background, un-Americanisation etc.

Duval notes that two-thirds of widows report that their single life is unsatisfactory in loneliness of living. Middle class widows have more friends than the working class. The widow, thus, may find herself socially marooned in a community.

According to Lopata both white & black older widows lead lonely lives. The social isolation and withdrawal of her relationship with kin network, friends and neighbours lead to higher incidence of mental disorder and a higher suicide rates than their married counterparts. Hence, the condition of the aged widows is deplorable and insecure.

It is clear from the above cited studies that the widow is socially incapacitated and her position is deplorable. Widowhood reduces her social roles and makes her socially isolated, thereby social relationships tend to deteriorate.

**Emotional Deprivation**

Among all types of deprivations, that of emotion is harmful to personal development, but, deprivation of love is especially damaging and results in emotional starvation and self-pity at any age. A Widow, quite often finds it difficult, and takes a long time to overcome the grief.

The death of a loved one is like an amputation and is an extremely traumatic experience. There is conflict between wish forces, which refuse to give up the object, and reality which demands that it shall be given up. Hence, the widow faces problems of overcoming this difficulty.

Usually, there are three stages of grief. The first is a short period of shock during which, the surviving spouse is stunned and immobilized with grief and disbelief. The second is the intense suffering during which the individual shows both physical and emotional symptoms of great disturbance. The third stage is a gradual reawakening of an interest in life. The grief-stricken, bewildered, widow finds no safe corner consoling her. The following are the signs of grief: (1) Physical symptoms (2) Loss of ability to believe the loss/reality. (3) Thinking always about him and expecting him as if he is still alive. The widow becomes physically weak and mentally distressed. Sometimes a widow becomes so highly disturbed that she even doubts her husband's death. In this connection Marris has narrated, in his study, the agony and deep-rooted grief of the widow. He gives an example of a widow with a young daughter and son who is not ready to accept the fact of death of her husband. She remembers her deceased husband time and again. She harbours illusions of hearing his voice and has obsessive memories of the dead husband. Emotional reactions may include anger, guilt, depression, anxiety or preoccupation with the thought of the deceased.

In Peterson and Briley's study on "Widows and widowhood", the role losses and psychological deprivations caused by the spousal loss are recorded. They also quoted the finding of Schoenbery and others who studied typical and important aspects of grief. They have reported, "About 99 percent of the consultants predicted that death of a mate causes depression, loss of weight, sleeplessness and despair, 90 percent predicted that the bereaved would have dreams about the deceased. About 74 percent and 70 percent expected the widows to have illusions about the presence of the dead persons and angry thoughts directed toward the deceased respectively. The author felt that widows develop guilt reactions, loneliness, fear, regrets and feeling of abandonment".

According to Barret, the leading problem of widows is loneliness; grief and family difficulties come second while finance and legal affairs are the further problems. They face difficulties in adjusting to the loss and to their new role in the family relationships. Barret further says "Widows suffer from grief as well as stress that male oriented youth oriented and couple oriented society subjects them to long after the husband's death".

Mathieu, in his study, has reported that two-thirds of widows had never considered the possibility of widowhood which, inevitably, leaves the survivor ill prepared to cope with the

practical or psychological problems like the shock of loss, depression and despair that follow death. Both Urban and Rural people share a cultural tradition in which the possibility of death is denied.

The widow faces problems of adjustment due to individual hindrances like nervousness, moods of depression and morbidity, tendency to worry and general emotional instability.

Marris says, "The widow has to adjust to her new state while she is preoccupied with a painful struggle to master her grief. For months, even years after his death, her energies may be so absorbed in this struggle and her feelings so deeply disturbed, as to affect all her needs and her response to those who try to meet them." Widows face a number of emotional problems because often the wife has not been prepared for the death. Widow also faces difficulties in making new living arrangements and new social life. Either she has to live with her adult children or alone. Each choice represents a number of unavoidable problems.

Toth and Toth conducted a group work with widows and have reported, "The group members experienced many somatic problems only after widowhood like sleeplessness regularly, headaches, backaches and a general feeling of malaise. They also

10. Ibid pp. 48.
experienced other symptoms of depression in varying degrees, including a sense of aimlessness, difficulty in making decisions and an inability to get going in the mornings. The widows felt guilt for the sorrow of not doing more to prevent her husband's death. Lopata's study has revealed that depression, weight loss, insomnia and irritability appears for a few months after the death of the spouse. She also reports of one in five widows never having recovered from grief. Jambagi notes that a majority of widows suffered from psychosomatic diseases. And the health problems lead to the origin of some other problems. If she is not healthy, she becomes a burden to the family and may be neglected or segregated.

A widow faces physio-psycho problems because 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 overwhelmed with the sense of emptiness of life. Widows, particularly young childless and old widows, show withdrawal from friends and relatives and suffer from personal loneliness in life.

Loneliness may reflect social isolation, psychological 

isolation, or a combination of both. The aged widow feels, as if the most central, important aspect of herself has gone and what is left is meaningless and irrelevant. She faces difficulties in establishing new friendships as the former ones are either strained, broken or not easily available.

This is because of inability and lack of her skills needed to build new relationships. Thereby loneliness in widowhood is compounded. Many widows experience disengagement from a prior life style and sets of relations and express loneliness as an alienation due to status drop. There is a significant difference in the frequency of loneliness experienced by older women in each marital status. The formerly married women feel lonely more frequently than the married and the never married women. The never married, who see their close friends less often feel lonelier and the formerly married are lonely often if they do not see their close family members.

Durkheim writes that there is a connection between widowhood and suicide. "The suicides occur at the crisis of widowhood .... are really due to domestic anomie resulting from the death of husband or wife. A family catastrophe occurs which affects the survivor. He is not adapted to the new situation in which he lives." 


finds himself and accordingly offers less resistance to suicide.

Berardo has found that widows, typically, present higher death rates, a greater incidence of mental disorder and a higher suicide rate than their married counterparts because of greater isolation and feelings of insecurity and non-usefulness. Suicides are more common among the widowed than the single, and the rate is lowest among the married. The seriousness of difficulties faced by widows can be seen in the higher rate of suicides than that of married women within the same age group. Harvey and Bahir observe: Widows have more negative outlook than the married. The widows readily express negative feelings, loneliness and depression or unhappiness than the married and they have lower morale than the married.

They further write that the damage to the self often accompanies widowhood, some of the widowed commit suicide, others are in mental hospitals and others express anomie feeling, unhappiness, low morale and personal isolation. If the spouse is a "Significant other" damage to the self is likely to follow widowhood. Urban widows have developed a greater sense of

insecurity, after losing their husbands, than their rural counterparts. The deprivation of love, security, and sex makes the widows feel insecure, lonely and helpless.

Bankoff, in a study on "Social Support and Adaptation to Widowhood", has noted that the death of a husband not only primarily disrupts a woman's social environment but also removes a key relationship in her emotional life. And the data on the effects of social support on psychological well being of widows indicate that the role of such social supports is important but complex.

He further reports that of all types of social supports, intimacy support appears to be the most important for widows in the transition phase but emotional support is modestly associated with the well-being of widows in crisis-loss phase. Parents and widowed, or single, friends are the two important sources of support in crisis-loss phase. But in the transition phase, widowed or single friends are important sources of support. However, support from their neighbours, parents, children is also positively related to the widow's sense of well being.

Veroff, Douvan and Kulka's study indicates that widowed women are positive about their marriage and more unhappy about their present and future. Yet, widows are more positive about

themselves than either women or men, because they have maintained and built the social network which is helpful to them. Widows who are positive about themselves tend to visit more and to be more satisfied with their friends, than those who are neutral or negative about themselves.

During intense grief, a widow should be allowed to talk about her loss with relatives or friends. This helps her to adjust to her new status more easily. Borstein opines that those who had experienced previous losses were less likely to be depressed than those who had not lived through such an experience.

Cultural Deprivation

In fact, widowhood pervades all the spheres of a widow's life and there is a drastic change in her life-styles after widowhood. Widows have to start altogether a different life in food habits, dress etc. The norms of widowhood are essentially the norms of asceticism in Hindu Society. The basic emphasis is on simple, satvic-food i.e., pure food which does not produce passions, whereas Muslims and Christians are not forced to lead a life of abstinence and are at liberty to enjoy life. There are no restrictions on food habits, dress and remarriage.


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 is most pitiable. According to strict, orthodox rites, a Brahmin widow had to face, much against her will, the horrible and inhuman rite of tonsure. She is also culturally isolated and is made to spend her time in constant devotion to God, a total separation from worldly affairs and pleasures.

In Maharashtra, the widow had to wear a deep red colour sari and red bangles to parade her separate identity. In South India, she could not wear blouses and had to wear an almond colour sari. In Bengal eating fish and combing the hair was forbidden. In North India she had to wear a white sari. Most of these customs, it may be noted, are continuing today in some regions. The south Indian widows are more particular in observing these taboos than their North Indian counterparts.

Kitchlu says, that due to widowhood there are drastic changes in the life-styles of widows although there are group variations. About 62.60 percent of the widows had undergone change in dress and were not allowed to use Kumkum' or Sindhur' 28.20 percent widows had to change to simple diet after widowhood. A majority of Urban Christian widows (32.35) were least affected by their change in status in comparison to Hindus (15.57%) and Muslims (11.11%) widows.

Even today widows are discouraged from taking part in any auspicious ceremonies and ritually sacred activities. Nagesh and Katti have observed that the participation of widows in religious activities had decreased after widowhood in rural areas from 97 percent to 40 percent and in urban areas from 64 percent to 58 percent. Kitchlu has also drawn similar conclusions and feels that widows are still considered as bad women.

Widow remarriage is socially banned in India. However, some cultures allow their widows to remarry, some allow it in exceptional cases and some orthodox Brahmins and Rajputs do not allow it under any circumstances. A widow is made to wear coarse, plain clothes, she is prohibited from wearing jewellery, eating good food, and has to lead a hard life of penances. All these are designed to make a widow look unattractive enough for any man to want to marry her.

Re-Marriage of widows

In general, the status of widows has been difficult in most societies. In traditional Indian and Chinese societies a widow is not allowed to remarry or is socially discouraged. While in modern societies a widow is allowed to remarry, the right is subjected to certain restrictions.

In Chinese society, and to a lesser extent in Japan, widow remarriage is not encouraged. If a son marries a widow, no matter how intelligent, interesting and handsome she is, he is thought to bring disgrace to the family.

And quite often remarriage may be prevented by members of the husband's family. But a large number of widows remarry if the husband's family is poor or if the widow has no son. When a widow does marry she must ride in a black-covered chair instead of real bridal chair, from her residence to the that of her intended husband. She is not allowed to take any of her property into a second marriage.

In America, remarriage has always been an accepted institution. It is thought to be an easy solution to overcome the problems of widowhood, although it is encouraged between widowed people. But the widowed person is expected to complete a set period of bereavement. Following this he/she can remarry readily. In many communities, if a widow remarries soon, she is considered to be lacking in respect for her dead husband. This means, a widow is usually required to exhibit her status as widow longer than a man is officially required to.

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In Rome, though widow remarriage is allowed, she is required to observe a certain period of mourning before remarriage, the reason is to avoid the turbatio sanguinis, "Confusion of the blood". A widow can however, remarry, immediately after giving birth.

In India widow re-marriage is allowed among some of the lower castes and encouraged especially in rural areas but is in disfavour in all the castes.

Census report of 1911 (Mysore) puts, "The marriage of widows is prohibited only among Brahmins and in a very few other castes. Among the rest such marriages are allowed. In few castes like Besta and Uppar a fine has to be paid for the benefit of the caste people if a man marries a widow.

Nair asserts that widow marriage is universal among the tribal people of India and the proper groom is her younger brother-in-law. A person who wishes to marry a widow has to return the bride-price to the deceased husband's family in case widow marries an outsider. The Dhanuks and Chamars of Bihar prefer widows and pay a higher bride price for them.

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Contrary to popular and widespread belief, Singh’s findings in Madhyapradesh villages confirm that some Brahmins marry widows and separated women. Those who don’t do so are known as Byahate and those who do as Karike. Karike is a peripheral group of the caste, the economically well-off, who seek to retain their status, however gain acceptance as near-equals with the Byahate in three or four generations and as equals with them in some more generations.

In North India the system of levirate is in practice. Under levirate marriage, a widow has to marry her husband’s younger brother, or in the absence of a younger brother, to a cousin. Marriage with the elder brother of the deceased husband is generally not favoured. Jats, Gujars, and Ahirs (all warrior Kshatriya castes) follow this system. Bhangis and Chamars do not have restrictions on marriage of their widows.

Such marriage is not called marriage but Kareva. It is a marriage of convenience whereby society provides protection to a widow or her children and in which there is no formal marriage ceremony. The Kareva normally takes place after 12 months of the death of the husband or in fact, on the day of the first death anniversary. At a small community gathering, the person places bangles on the head of the widow or wraps a piece of cloth around her. After this ceremony the widow enjoys all the rights and privileges of a married woman.


The Punjab Gazetteer of 1904 accurately comments on the "widow inheritance" practised by the Jats and Taneers, "The first husband's brother takes the widow to wife, very often they have already been on very intimate terms. It means the legitimization of previous sexual relationships through the ceremony called 'Kareva' or 'Chadur Puana'.

Dube, in his study on widow remarriage in Madhya Pradesh, points out that the prevalence of widow marriage was high due to early marriage of girls; but many of the widows were encouraged to remarry, particularly if a widow had no son. A similar conclusion is drawn by Bose who found that widow remarriage is not only prevalent in rural areas but it is even encouraged, especially among lower castes, but prohibited among Rajput, Brahmin purohit and Mahajan castes of North India. Among Rajputs, Punwar Rajputs allow widow remarriage and sometimes pay a bride price up to Rs. 1000/- for widows.

Mann writes: In the past, if a Brahmin or a Bania widow married, she was usually excommunicated. But recently the Banias and Brahmins started following widow marriage. They have termed the practice of junior levirate as "Churi Pahrana". The

ceremony is observed on the 13th day after the death of the first husband and the deceased husband's brother accepts the widow as his wife.

Baron et al say that in Kerala, a negative levirate marriage, is in practice. Under this practice a widow is allowed to marry other than the brother-in-law.

Almost all the tribes of Chota Nagpur allow their widows the right to marry. They perform such marriages through the sagai or sanga form. In such second marriages, the rituals of marriage are simple and less elaborate.

In South India, the Thanda pulayan castes in Tamil Nadu permit widow remarriage but not to the deceased husband's brothers. This is also the case among the Halepaik caste. Baron and Ehrenfels however suggest that widow marriage is more prevalent among such of these castes which are Matrilocal or Matrilocal.

In Karnataka though widow marriage is in practice among certain lower castes, there are certain restrictions on the choice of the group. The Bedas, Okkaligas, Holeyas, Madigas, Vaddas, Vayindas, Mandas, Dasari, Bilimagga, Uppar and many other castes

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do not permit the marriage of a widow with the brother-in-law. The Bedas and Madigas and Bilimagga, sanyasi and Uppars allow the widow to marry within the close circle of husband's "kula". The Bilimagga, sanyasi and vodda limit her choice of the bridegroom to a still narrower field, prohibiting the members of the widow's father's "kula". Widow remarriage is allowed among some sections of Lingayats and the practice is called "Udaki".

A widow marriage takes place in Krishna Paksha or the dark fortnight of the month. It is never held in the morning but only after sundown. It is performed in a temple or unoccupied house. The Uppars perform the ceremony in a village different from the one in which the first husband and the widow's father live. Generally remarried women and widows attend such marriage ceremony.

In American society no system of levirate or widow inheritance is in operation, although sometimes a deceased husband's brother may marry the widow. Most widows do not continue a close relation with that group once the continuing link is gone. It is the duty of the children to retain their late father's family name but sometimes small children may take the last name of the mother's new husband.

Though widow marriage is allowed, the widows receive less

encouragement than widowers to remarry. The majority of women are widowed at a more advanced age, and thus it is much more difficult for her, than for a widower, to change her status through remarriage. Hence, proportionately, more widowers than widows remarry. In a recent year 38.4 percent widowers re-married in comparison to 10.2 percent widows in all age groups: for widows over 65 years it was only 2.0 percent.

Leslie in a study on "Marriage in a changing world", has noticed that widowers usually remarry more quickly than widows, and most of them get married within one or two years after the death of their first wives. In comparison widows often wait for several years, since they have to complete the rearing of all their children before remarrying. He further says that over half of the couples had known each other before they were widowed, as neighbours or members of some church or were associated socially and related by marriage. Men usually marry sisters of their first wives and women favoured brothers of their first husband.

Smart and Smart have opined that marriage itself is a complex subject, and the marriage of previously married is more complex. Divorced persons marry more often than single and

widowed persons. Widowed persons are happier in their remarriages than their divorced counterparts. Regarding the reactions of the children and peer group towards remarriage, Vinick writes: Majority of them told their children about their plan to remarry and over half had received positive reactions, but their peer-group showed negative reaction initially, later they approved.

Though remarriage is the most satisfactory adjustment to Widowhood, this practice among widows depends upon several conditions like (1) Duration of widowhood: Recently widowed have greater chances than those bereaved much previously. The second year of widowhood is considered better for remarriage. (2) Number of children: There is a correlation between the chances of remarriage and the number of children. More the number of children lesser the chances of remarriage. (3) Widow's pensions: The widow who receives the pension that terminates upon remarriage may be unwilling to forefeit this benefit, or examines such offers with care.

Apart from the abovementioned conditions for widow remarriage, there are important restraints like love and respect for the late husband, concern for the children and apprehension of disrespect by society. Middle-aged widows mention these

restraints more than younger and older widows. Employed widows mentioned these restraints more frequently than the unemployed widows.

The negative attitude towards remarriage of widows is so strong that even today, people believe that this practice does not have either social or religious sanction. Katti and Nagesh, in another study in Hubli city and some neighbouring rural areas, point out that 97 percent of the rural respondents and 92 percent urban, are not willing to marry again.

In order to avoid prejudice against widow re-marriage and to introduce it among all the castes, an attempt was made during the 18th century by Raja Rajballabha of Deccan, and by the Chief of Kotab of Rajasthan, to get Shastric sanction in support of widow marriage by pandits. In the first half of the 19th century, the social reformers of Bengal made continuous efforts in that direction and succeeded in abolishing sati system and legalising widow remarriage.

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar conducted the first Hindu Brahmin widow re-marriage in Bengal after the passing of the Widow Remarriage Act on July 26, 1856, inspite of bitter opposition from the orthodox. He emancipated widows, lived for them and

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even died for them. Babu Sasipada Banurji who had been an advocate of the widow re-marriage movement, solemnized the marriage of his widowed niece and rescued her from the hands of her orthodox relatives.

Veerasingham, a social reformer from Andhra Pradesh, along with a band of devoted workers, succeeded in performing the first widow remarriage on Dec. 11:1881 at Markandeya, Andhra Pradesh, in the teeth of opposition from the orthodox.

Bhate, the Secretary of Widow Remarriage Association, Poona, in his book on "Permitting widow marriage", has strongly argued that widow marriage had the sanction of the Hindu Laws and Texts. He strengthens his argument by quoting the reasons for permitting widow marriage in Hindu society.

Pathare Prabhus Association solemnized a marriage of a Brahmin widow openly and publicly on June 1869, an act which received great favour by a very large number of liberal and unprejudiced men belonging to the highest classes of Hindu society.

Madhowadas Ragnathdas has explained his personal experiences of marrying a widow in 1872 among shetti's caste. In the eyes of Hindu orthodoxy marrying a widow was a crime which was inexpiable. He was accordingly subjected to excommunication by his caste people.

In the 1860's the widow marriage and rehabilitation movement made maximum progress in Bengal, followed by Bombay, thanks to the efforts of a number of Indian Humanitarians.

Agarawal's study on "Widow Marriage in some Rural Areas of Northern India" reveals that the percentage of widow remarriage is high among Muslims (between 35.37 percent) because they do not put restrictions on widow marriage. And among lower caste Hindus it is 30 percent whereas among high caste Hindus, it is only around 7 percent, because of the prohibition of widow marriage among them.

In America, during the decade 1905-56 half of those widowed and one-fourth of the divorced women remarried. The remarriage rate is higher among blacks than among whites, due to higher death/divorce rates. The rate is high among lower classes. The remarriage rate among


widowed is lower than among the divorced. Remarriages of widowed persons seems to be successful because they re-marry cautiously and slowly.

Sudhir Chandra, in an article entitled, "Widow marriage and later nineteenth Century Indian Literature", illustrates the difficulties faced in the operation of an unresolved problem of widow remarriage within the structure of belief itself. He says, "The historiography of social reform in modern India is familiar with the dichotomy between belief and action that, almost invariably, cast a shadow between the profession and practice of social reformers. To this, is attributed the failure of the middle class Hindu social reform movement, and the dichotomy itself is ascribed to the hypocrisy of social reformers".

One more reason for the negative attitude towards widow remarriage, as M.N. Srinivas observes, that due to sanskritic civilization, the Non-Brahmins wish to rise in the social scale by imitating intolerably-stupid Brahmin customs and ceremonies. The simple tribes like the Soligas, the Korachas and and the Dombas present the desire to climb the higher rungs.

He further says that among the Devangas and the Nayindas, widow marriage prevailed originally, but now they prohibit it in imitation of the Brahmins. Among some castes, widow marriage is

generally allowed, but is not popular among some groups. For example, among Sajjans, widow marriage is generally allowed but is not allowed among Sajjan kumbaras. While allowing a widow to re-marry the other Non-Brahmin castes except lowest and primitive tribes look-down upon the widow. They feel that widow marriage is not socially approved but it is inevitable as it is better to marry than to burn the widow.

The above cited review reveals that prohibition of widow marriage is a peculiar phenomenon of Hindu culture. Although marriage of widows is allowed among a few lower castes of Hindus, the married widow is looked down upon with disfavour and the practice is not encouraged. Hence, cases of widow marriages are few. In India, remarriage for divorced and widowed women carries with it a certain stigma, while, in American society, remarriage is thought to be an easy solution to overcome the problems of widowhood. There is a significant difference among the cultures in overcoming the crisis. This is because of their reordering of marital values.

Welfare of Widows

There are various legislations passed both before and after independence and important resolutions passed by Indian National Social Conference in order to improve the condition of widows or at least to try to reduce the discriminations against them.

Before Independence

(1) Bengal Sati Regulation XVII of 1829 declaring sati or self immolation of widows illegal.

(2) The Hindu Widow's Re-Marriage Act 1856 legalising the marriage of Hindu widows.

(3) When a Hindu, governed by the Dayabhaga school of Hindu law, dies intestate, leaving any property, and when a Hindu, governed by any other school of Hindu law, or by customary law, dies intestate, leaving separate property, his widow, or if there is more than one widow, all his widows together shall be subject to the provisions of sub section (3) be entitled to the property in respect of which he dies intestate to the same share as a son. Provided that the widow of a predeceased son shall inherit in like manner, as a son, if there is no son surviving of such predeceased son and shall inherit in like manner as a son's son if there is surviving a son or son's son of such predeceased son.

Provided further, the same provision shall apply mutatis mutandis to the widow of a predeceased son of a predeceased son.

(4) An interest developing on a Hindu widow, under the provision of this section, shall be the limited interest known as a Hindu Woman's estate provided however that she shall have that same right of claiming partition as a male owner.

(5) Indian Succession Act 1925 there is no distinction between those related through the father and those related through the mother. The husband surviving his wife has in her property the same rights as she would have in his property if she survives him.
(6) The Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 fixing the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for boys and 15 years for girls.

(7) The Hindu women's Rights to property Act as amended in 1938. Notwithstanding any rule of Hindu Law or custom to the contrary the provision of section 3 shall apply where a Hindu dies intestate.

After Independence

(1) Hindu Marriage Act 1955. It fixes:
1. Minimum age for marriage as 15 years for girls and 18 years for boys. Now it is 18 years for the girls and 21 for the boys.

(2) Hindu succession Act. 1956. It confers the right of absolute ownership over property and the woman can make a will leaving her share of property to the heirs. Section 10 provides that the property of an intestate shall be divided among the heirs in accordance with the following rules.

Rule 1. The intestate widow, or if there are more widows than one, all the widows shall take one share.

Rule 2. The surviving sons and daughters and the mothers of the intestate shall each take one share.

Rule 3. The heirs in the branch of each deceased son or each pre-deceased daughter of the intestate are also entitled to get one share in the property.

(3) Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956 Section 8, any female Hindu (a) who is of sound mind (b) who is not a minor and (c) who is not married, or if married, whose husband is dead or has
completely and finally renounced the world or has ceased to be Hindu or has been declared by a court of competent Jurisdiction to be of Unsound mind, has the capacity to take a son or daughter in adoption. According to Section 9, the consent of father and mother is necessary for giving the child in adoption unless (I) They or one of them are dead or (II). The father or mother has completely and finally renounced the world or (III). has ceased to be Hindu or (IV). has been declared by a court of competent Jurisdiction to be of Unsound mind.

The following resolutions were passed in different sessions by the Indian National Social Conference (INSC). They are 1. Resolution No. 7, Sixth conference Allahabad 1892 INSC. That the disfigurement of child widows before they attain the age of 18 and even after that age, without the consent of the widows recorded in writing before a panch and a magistrate be discouraged and caste organisations be formed to arrange for social penalties to be inflicted on those who aid in disfiguring child widows without their consent (Repeated in 12th conference, 1899, 16th conference 1902, 17th conference, 1903, 18th conference 1904 and 22nd conference 1908).

2. Resolution X Tenth conference, Calcutta 1896 INSC that in the opinion of the conference, it is desirable not to discourage the remarriage of child widow, when their parents or guardians wish to give them in marriage according to the Hindu shastras (Repeated at every conference from 12th conference 1899 to 30th conference 1916).

3. Resolution VII, eleventh conference, Amaravati 1897 INSC.
That the experience of the last 40 years working of the widow marriage Act of 1856 has, in the opinion of conference, established the fact that the Act fails to secure to the remarrying widow the full enjoyment of her rights in the following respect:

First, that such widow is made to forfeit her life-interest in her husband's immovable property for doing a lawful Act when such forfeiture would not have resulted if she had misconducted herself, secondly, that even in respect of stridhan property, over which her power of disposal is absolute, there is a general impression that she loses proprietary rights over moveables in favour of her husband's relations who otherwise could not have interfered with her free disposal of the same.

Thirdly, in many cases she and her second husband are not only ex-communicated but the right of worship in public temples has been denied to them and no relief has been given to them in civil courts. Fourthly in some parts of the country she is subjected to disfigurement before she has arrived at the age of majority with any freedom being given to her to exercise her choice. In all these respects the law of 1856 has proved inoperative to protect her and the conference is of the opinion that steps should be taken by the social Reform Associations who favour such reform to adopt remedies to relax the stringency of caste usages and to secure a reconsideration of the principles of the Act with a view to remedy its defects.

Resolution XVI, Eleventh conference, Amaravati 1897, INSC.
That, as the law at present stands, there is apparently no
protection to a widow or an unmarried girl above twelve or below Sixteen-who is a consenting party to an act of personal dishonour at the hands of strangers. In the opinion of the conference the consent of such a girl between twelve and sixteen should, as in the case of kidnapping be held to be inoperative to protect the man who violates her honour.

The Government of Karnataka has undertaken a major policy decision which benefits all destitute widows all over the state. This was the introduction of the widow pension scheme under the social security pension scheme since, 1984. Under this scheme every destitute widow who is a resident of Karnataka and who has no son is entitled to get pension of Rs. 50/- per month. It is sent to her by money order through Postal Service. The scheme now covers 5400000 lakhs widows and entails an expenditure of Rs.27,0000,000 crores from the state exchequer for 1989-90, while in Dharwad District 28370 widows are the benificiaries of this welfare scheme.

As in many other countries, we in India have also relied on legislation to bring about social change. Women have been and still are, discriminated against, in family, life, education and training, employment and in several other social and political fields.


Among Hindus, women are assigned inferior status while widows are conferred still inferior status. Despite the protection accorded to widows by legislations and reforms effected by social reformers, social workers there has been no change in the basic position of the widows. Hence it is felt that there is need for conducting such studies.

1. Hindu Widows: Historical Information

To study the status of the Hindu widow in India it is necessary to have a glimpse of her changing status through a historical lens. We will start with the conditions prevailing in the vedic age because the Hindu civilization goes a beyond this period and data is not available on the prehistoric phase as it is unexplored. The portrait of a widow as coming out of the study of vedic literature is the picture as drawn by several authorities on the vedic period.

Before we turn to depict the changing status of Hindu widows, we feel that it is essential to know the origin and definition of the term ‘Vidhava’ or ‘Widow’.

The term ‘Vidhava’ or ‘Widow’ is very old and can be traced beyond the vedic language to Indo-European origin. In most Indo-European languages one finds similar words*. The widow or Vidhava can be defined as a woman whose husband is dead and who has not married again.

* In Latin-Vidua; Italian-Vedava; Spanish-Viuda; French-Veuve; old slavonic-vidava; Russian-vidova; Old German-Wituwa; Gothic-Widuowo; old English-Widewe and Wideuwe and persian-beva.

According to Sanskrit grammarians the word विद्वान is derived from the word धवा meaning a man or a husband. Although, the word विद्वान was in general use, the basic word धवा was not mentioned in the Vedic literature. In the निरुक्त for the first time the word was used to mean a man or a husband. In the अथर्ववेदा धवा is the name of a tree. In the Vedic times the word अविद्वान—a double negative word in the sense of a woman not widowed was used, instead of a positive word like सद्वान. Even in the European languages the word धवा is not found.

The word विद्वान is said to be wrongly split up by the Indian grammarians. The word व in the word विद्वान is not a prefix but part of the main root word. It must be derived from a root like Teutonic विद to lack, Latin विदे to separate and Sanskrit विध to be bereft. Yaska says that when the true derivative meaning was lost in India the word धवा in the sense of a husband came into existence in the Sanskrit language by wrongly splitting up the word विद्वान. विद्वान or Widow therefore is a woman whose husband is dead and who has not married again. Silverman writes, the very word विद्वान has very native connotations. Many widows feel as if it implies they are damaged, a second class citizen. The same associations are not true for the word widower.

2. Ibid pp. 247.
For the Hindu woman widowhood is more tragic and disastrous because of the superstition and the oppressive, loathsome rituals attached to it. As Abbe Du Bois quotes, "The happiest death for a woman is that which overtakes her while she is still in a married state. Such a death is looked upon as a reward of goodness extending back for many generations; on the other hand, the greatest misfortune that can befall a wife is to survive her husband." Hindus have a belief in the "Theory of Karma" and therefore every widow thinks that her sorrow or plight is the result of her "Karmas". It is due to her bad deeds done by in previous births that she has to suffer widowhood. The one who has auspicious signs could not be a widow. However, it is important to note that she is not considered among the sinners.

In Hindu society the husband is elevated to such a superior position as to almost enjoy the status of a God vis-a-vis his wife. A widowed woman is considered as a luckless and unfortunate woman and an object of pity. Quite often she has been compared to a veen without strings and to a cart without wheels. Thereby the motivation or urge for life is lost to her.

Nevertheless, it may be stated that the state of widowhood is a great calamity in all societies, but it is more so in a patriarchal and traditional society like India. The reason for it is that here woman is known as 'Abala' or the one without

7. Ramayana II 39.29
power and therefore she has to depend upon her protectors. Manu, the Hindu Law-giver, in fact, states that a woman can never be a free maiden, is to be cared for by her father, brother or husband. A woman considers her husband as her greatest protector and hence his death is a great calamity to her.

**Vedic Period**

The Hindus of the Vedic period had a patriarchal society. As in other patriarchal societies, the woman's social, religious or economic status had never been higher than that of men. But, in some respects, the Vedic woman and widow enjoyed certain privileges of which they were deprived in a latter age.

Widows then, were permitted to remarry. This practice seems to be have been accepted as normal from the Vedic period onwards. Enough references are found in the Vedas to show that widow remarriage was common though the re-married widow could not aspire to the status of (wife), where she could become the mistress of the house. The use of the word "Parapurva," a woman who has had a second husband, proves that widows remarried. The word "Didhishu," used in the Rg Veda, means the second husband of a woman. Atharvaveda refers to a "Punarbhu," that is, remarried widow. This shows that marriage of widows was not opposed. The custom of a widow marrying the brother of her deceased husband. Seemed to be common. Hence, the word "Devara" literally means a woman's brother-in-law.


The economic condition of widows was not unsatisfactory. A widow was given her husband's share in the property. A brotherless maiden was an heir to her father's property. A man was reluctant to marry such a maiden, apprehensive that her father may make her a putrika, or an appointed daughter. As it is believed that the woman's parinahya was not her absolute property. But a childless widow inherited her husband's property by right. A widow who had a son by Niyoga (levirate) received her dead husband's property as the guardian of the property during her son's minority. If a widow remarried, her financial difficulties and problems were solved, since her second husband looked after her.

Niyoga (Levirate)

The institution of niyoga was in practice during the time of Dharmasutras since, in the Rug-veda, we find the widow married to her brother-in-law. But there is no reference to the necessity of his producing an heir for his dead brother and even in, Grhya sutras there is no ritual connected with niyoga. There are differences of opinion among different Dharmasutras about its practice, as it can be assumed that the institution of niyoga came into Aryan society from some non-Aryan source. For a long period the sacred law was inclined to adopt the growing custom, although with misgiving.

10. Rugveda X, 102.11.
11. Ibid X, 40.2
The term Niyoga is of later origin, but its implications were freely practised in the Rugvedic times. Frequent allusions are made in the Rugveda to the practice of levirate. We have several references to the wives of weaklings procuring children from agencies other than their legally married husband.

Under the system of Niyoga a widow, or a woman whose husband was not virile, was allowed to have conjugal relations with her brother-in-law, who was regarded as the most eligible person for this duty, or some other near relation, till she gave birth to offspring. It is also significant to note that there is no reference in the whole of the Rugveda to a woman marrying the elder brother of her deceased husband. Even today, a widow's marriage with her husband's elder brother is taboo.

A widow was allowed to have two sons through niyoga. Such a son had the right to perform the funeral oblations. Like vedic Indian, in early societies also, a son by levirate was always preferred to a son by adoption. Hence, adoption of a son by a widow was in vogue but it was looked down upon with disfavour.

Widow burning

We do not find any reference to burning of widows in the whole range of the Rugveda. The vedic hymns refer to the remarriage of widows rather than their self-immolation. Widow-burning was, evidently, a defunct custom at this time. It was

13. Rugveda I.116.13;117.24;VI 62.7;X.39.7;cf X 65,12.

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represented only by the symbolic ritual of the widow lying beside her husband on the funeral pyre, until upon which she was asked to rise up. Both the Rgveda and Atharvaveda expected the widow to get up from the pyre and marry the husband's younger brother.

Immolation can be expected to have existed among the early Indo-Aryans in some form or the other. This Indo-European custom of widow burning came to end when Aryans entered India and had become only a symbolic ceremony. But prof sarkar observes, "The vedic literature shows very few traces of such a custom; partly, no doubt because these texts are priestly in character, and widow burning is known to have prevailed elsewhere, mainly among non-priestly warrior families, and partly because, even amongst the ruling classes, cases of widow burning were rare and prevented throughout the vedic period as shown by authentic kshatriya dynastic traditions; while in the "Brahman" society Sex-relations seem to have been too lax to admit of the prevalence of such a practice."

The status of a woman began to decline gradually in the patriarchal vedic society where importance is attached to the birth of a male child which, in turn, become responsible for the gradual rise in the status of man. The widow was given inferior position as she was unfortunate enough to lose an all-powerful protecting male partner.


The position of the widow in the epic period, the sutra period and as found in the Buddhistic literature, gives a full picture as these are the connecting links between the vedic and the smruti period.

The deterioration in the status of widows commenced from the epic period. From Shantiparva of the Mahabharat, we can generalise about the miserable position of widows through the words of a she-pigeon, who says, "Widows, even if mothers of many children, are still miserable. Bereft of husband, a woman becomes helpless and an object of pity with her friends. Limited are the gifts from the father or the brother or from the son to a woman. The gifts that her husband alone makes to her are unlimited. A woman has no protector, no happiness without her lord." Hence his death is a great calamity to her. Her hopes and happiness are shattered for even if she has several sons, a widow feels uprooted and her honour is destroyed. Even a woman of aristocracy is feared this calamity of widowhood. It is therefore but natural that widows are full of selfpity. They referred to themselves as 'Anatha' and the state of widowhood as 'Paschimavastha' which means the later state. This implies, that just as sun going to the west loses its splendour and light so does the widow.

18. Ramayana IV. 208.
19. Ibid VI 110.20; IV 23.9.
20. Ibid VI 32.8; III 38.
Niyoga

During the Vedic period the custom of widow marriage was in practice, whereas during the epic period Niyoga came into existence. As Jayal says, no account of a woman's life in the Epics would be complete without the mention of the practice of Niyoga. The reason behind this practice, again, might be the husband's desire for securing spiritual and family interests. Such sons were, known as 'Kshetrajja' i.e. born of Kshetra, or field i.e wife. He was always preferred to a son by adoption and had a legal status in the family. Most of the heroes of the Mahabharata were born of levirate (Niyoga). In epics Niyoga was practiced for spiritual or dynastic interests.

In ancient times, in several civilizations, the custom of levirate was quite common. A parallel custom is found among Jews where a widow becomes her husband's brother's wife without any ceremony. If he refused to marry her, she could spit on his face.

Gray and Gulliver point out that Lobeder, Gussi and Shambala of Africa practise the levirate, a custom by which a man could marry his brother's widow. The levirate husband acts as a substitute for the dead man. They further say that "levirate" can be distinguished from "Widow-inheritance". This process, maintains the discrete unity of the bereaved family group, thus the members retain exclusive rights to their own estate.


In the first case the arrangements for the widow could be termed as "husband-succession". The 'Sonjo' practice husband succession.

Widow Remarriage

Remarriage was another course for a widow. Among the Aryan widows examples of remarriage are not to be found in the Epics. There are instances of non-Aryan widows marrying Aryans. Mahabharat says, "a child widow can remarry and her sons by the second marriage can offer oblations to the manes". Hence, Mahabharat sanctions widow remarriage in positive terms and gives a social as well as religious, status to the children by second marriage of a widow. Child widows therefore remarried without fear of social ostracism. During this period niyoga was preferred to widow remarriage. Though widow marriage was mentioned in some form in great Epic it was slowly dying.

The Custom of Sati

The custom of widow burning was known, but not prevalent, when the Epics were composed. In the later parts of the Epics we do find a few references to sati. This custom came into existence by about 400 A.D.

During this period we do have scores of instances of widows surviving their husbands and offering them funeral oblations. They also accompanied funeral processions. In cases of calamity when all the male members of a family were wiped out, the burning of the pyre and the watering rite after the corpse was burnt, were performed by widows. Unlike modern standards, the behaviour of these widows was comparatively free of restrictions. On the whole the position of widows during Epic period was not so honourable as in the past.

Sutra Period

It was clear from version that widowhood was both undesirable as well as inauspicious in the sutra period. Hence, prayers were constantly chanted both before and after marriage for the longevity of the husband. No such prayers are said by the husband for the longevity of the wife. Polygamy was prevalent, hence he did not dread being a widower. From the time of sutras the position of widows become more pitiable than before because the sutras ordered a widow to avoid, for the duration of a year, the use of honey, meat, spirituous liquor and salt, and to sleep on the ground. At the expiry of six-months, she could with the permission of her Guru, bear a son, by her brother-in-law, in case she had no son. Although widow was permitted remarriage, her social status was inferior. Hence, widowhood was much dreaded by women.

27. Ramayana II 76.23.
Widow Burning

The custom of widow burning was not prevalent in the sutra period. Although widowhood was dreaded, the widow was not expected to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Apastambîya Gruhya sutra states that the widow was brought back from the funeral pyre either by the dead husband's brother or an old trusted servant.

Buddhistic Period

During this period a widow did not suffer any social and moral degradation due to widowhood. No stigma was attached to her by the society. There were no restrictions on her dress or food habits and she did not have to shave her head. She used to participate in socio-religious functions as in the later periods. Widow enjoyed high social status and maintained the social status of pre-widowed days.

Widow Remarriage

Widow remarriage was permitted as freely as the marriage of a widower. As Honer opines, "there were no religious or social obstacles to be overcome in being remarried; but as if it were a step that could quite easily be taken without raising any scandal.

In practice, a widow faced difficulties in remarrying as much as any other widow anywhere in the world owing to her greater age, look, poverty and number of children.

According to Buddhist literature also, a widow's position has never been elevated. Her condition, in our society, has been the same through the track of centuries. Vasantara jataka describes. The condition of widowhood; "Terrible is widowhood, she eats the leaving of all, a man may do her any hurt, speak unkindly, a widow may have ten brothers yet is a naked thing, oh terrible is Widowhood".

Widow burning

The custom of widow burning was not practised during this period. In Guatama's, Preachings there is no reference to this custom of sati. Hence he custom did not exist.

Widow Inheritance and Succession rights

During this period husbands left their property to their widows rather than sons and daughters in preference. There were no rules laid down against widow inheriting her husband's property "If the husband left any property to the widow; often she managed it all by herself".

32. Ibid pp.73.
Smruti period

During this period the Buddhism declined and Brahmanism which was detriment to the status of woman and the widow was restablished.

The Hindu law-givers of this period imposed certain duties on widows, who did not ascend the funeral pyre but choose to survive the husband. All the sages, prescribed a life of severe discipline and penance on such widows for their whole life.

Niyoga

The custom of ‘Niyoga’ was condemned by smriti writers when chastity (Celibacy) had become the main qualification of marriage. Manu disapproved this custom of niyoga as fit for cattle. The custom of niyoga appears very strange and unacceptable to the modern mind. However, ‘niyoga’ is still practiced in some communities in India.

Widow Remarriage

During the smriti period, widow marriage was prohibited, and thus, widows were not allowed to marry even the husband’s brothers. As Manu expressed “in the sacred texts nowhere the appointment of widows is mentioned nor is the remarriage of widows prescribed in the rules concerning marriage”. In most of the smritis there is no passage which permits the marriage of widows. However, Manu permitted the marriage of only virgin widows. But Narada and Parashara permit widow-remarriage.

34. Manu IX 65.
The practice of sati is not sanctioned by the older smritis of Manu and Yajnavalkya. It is however alluded to, and recommended by, many of the later authorities such as Arti, Harita, Usanas and parashara. The practice prevailed as early as Alexander's invasions, about 325 B.C. Travellers like Strabo, Magasthenes and Diodorus who accompanied Alexander, allude to this practice. The custom of sati had been well established by the end of 6th century A.D. The lawgivers from smriti period forced the widows to lead a life of austerities, fasting and abstinence from pleasure.

Manu, the Hindu lawgiver says, 1."Until her death, let her be patient of hardships, self-controlled, and chaste and strive to fulfill that most excellent duty which is prescribed for wives who have one husband only.

2. At her pleasure let her emaciate her body by living on pure flowers, roots and fruits but she must never mention the name of another man after husband has died.

3. A virtuous wife, Manu says again is one, "who after death of her husband constantly remains chaste, reaches heaven though she has no son, just like those chaste men."

There are numerous texts prescribing the number of meals a day that a widow may take, the nature of bed she is to sleep upon and other particulars relating to her conduct. In short, she is

35. Manu V. 157, 158. 160.
ordered to lead a pious life for the spiritual benefit of herself as well as of her dead husband. But Vishnu, the later smriti writer, prescribes an alternative to widows either to survive their husband or to burn themselves.

The manms/codes of Hindu law which are commended for a widow to lead a chaste life are not only moral precepts. Unchastity of the widow affects not only her social status but also her proprietary position. But the injunctions, to emaciate her body and to live on frugal and abstemious diet, were in the nature of religious or moral injunction.

The Age of Later Smritis Commentators and Digest Writers (C. 500 AD to C 1800 AD).

The unjust, foolish social customs like child marriage, sati, polygamy reduced the status of women to the level of mere goods and chattel. They were regarded as nari-sudras. The status of widows was still more inferior.

Widow Remarriage

During this period widow re-marriage in general was prohibited. Altekar says that the prohibition of widow marriage began to be imposed from about 1000 A D even on the child widows. It was totally prohibited in Hindu Society from about 1130 A D.

36. Vishnu XXV 17 pp. 201.
In Hindu society upper caste widows were prohibited from remarriage whereas lower caste widows were allowed to do so. During the last century due to sanskritization and the desire to increase their respectability the lower caste began to impose upon themselves the prohibition of widow remarriage.

Alberuni, the famous Muslim traveller who came to India, in 11th century A.D. states, "If a wife of a Hindu loses her husband by death she cannot marry another man. She has only to choose between two things, either to remain a widow as long as she lives or to burn herself." And the latter eventually is considered preferable because as widow she is ill-treated as long as she lives.

Among the high castes of Rajaputs, the second marriage of women were never permitted, though, in some lower castes, such as kadoa Kunbi a widow was eligible for natra or second marriage.

**Tonsure**

The practice of tonsuring widows was prevalent among many high castes until recently. The origin of tonsure is not definitely known. None of the Vedas or Gruhya Sutras or Epics refer to the practice. Widow retained their hair but did not part it.


Widows were ordained to lead a strict, ascetic life. And an ascetic is expected to remove the hair on the head. Hence, the custom of disfiguring the Indian widow appears to have originated from this source.

Tonsure is believed to have come into vogue in about the 8th Century A.D. Once widow marriage was prohibited, society desired to make the widow as un-attractive as possible so that no man would ever want to marry her. With this idea in mind the widow was tonsured and made to wear white clothes, only sleep on the bare floor, and partake of a frugal meal only once a day. This deprived her of all her good health and good looks so that even if she wanted to marry no man came forward to do so.

Veda Vyasa in 10th Century A.D. says "If a widow does not become a sutee, she should shave her head" 39. This is the first Smriti to mention the custom. Some puranas and the skanda purana Kashikhandha advocating tonsure seem to be clearly a later interpolation.

From 12 Century A.D. tonsure was prevalent all over India. It prevailed more in the south than in the North of the country. Foreign travellers who visited India in the 16th Century A.D. mention having seen tonsured widows.

Horner asserts that this system is believed to have been followed by the Brahmans due to the influence of Buddhism where the Buddhist nuns underwent tonsure in imitation of the

39. Veda Vyasa I 53.
Monks. However, Kane seems to suggest that a widow was tonsured, just as the son of a deceased man underwent tonsure, as a matter of purification and as a symbol of bereavement. Though the cruel practice to tonsuring is dying out it is still practised by some orthodox sects of Brahmmins in southern India, but in Northern India it is generally not practised.

Widows' dress

From ancient times widows wear white. Manu smriti asks the widow who is appointed for nityoga to wear white. The idea might probably have been borrowed from the Buddhist or Jain nuns who wore white clothes, when they renounce the world, since the widow too, was supposed to have renounced the world. Later, black became the colour of mourning, since this colour depicts darkness and unhappiness. She was forbidden to wear any jewels.

Practice of sati

Widows had to follow strict rules and restrictions. So they frequently preferred sati to the tiresome life prescribed for them. Most widows voluntarily ascended the funeral pyres of their husbands. Sometimes the heartless relatives of widows burnt them forcibly, because they were either afraid that they

41. Kane, P.V. Op cit pp. 587.
42. Ibid. pp. 593.
43. Manu IX 70.
might misbehave and bring disgrace to the family, or wanted to misappropriate her share in the family property. This cruel procedure of sati was widely practised during this period.

The institution of 'Sati' which was peculiar to Hindu widows came into existence from about the 700 A.D. 'Sutee' was not originally a religious practice but the supposed consequence of a widow's grief at the death of her husband. A Widow was expected to prepare herself for a frightful death by burning herself on her husband's corpse. Sir Henry Maine opines that the superstitious belief, coupled with the Brahmanical dislike of the enjoyment of property by women, had led to the practice of sati, and was intended to fight the ancient rule of civil law, which made her tenant for life in respect of her husband's property. The rewards dangled before a sati were, as Shankha and Angiras say, that she who follows her husband in death, dwells in heaven for 3.5 crores of years.

Sati became more frequent among royal families in northern India and quite common in Kashmir during the period of 1500 to 1800 A.D. The custom of sati had however, obtained the status of a well recognised, but optional practice, in Hinduism. The practice of sati was also prevalent among the Rajputs and Marathas of Central India.

Several Muslim emperors discouraged sati and adopted

45. Kane, P.V.: Op cit pp. 635.
measures to prevent it as far as possible. Traverneir, the French traveller who came to India during Aurangzeb's time observed, "there is no woman that can burn herself along with her husband's body till she has the leave of the governor of the place where she inhabits, who being a Mohamedan and abhorring that execrable crime of self Murder, is very shy to permit her".

During the Muslim period women faced a number of hardships and cruelty due to backward practices like child marriage, purdah system, sati, enforced widowhood, prostitution and devadasi system. This era led not only to the degeneration of women's physical, mental and social life, but her rights in the educational, social, religious and economic fields were also lowered gradually.

From time to time, protestant movements like Buddhism, Jainism Vaishnavism, Veerashaivism, Sikhism and thee Bhakti movements made sincere efforts to improve the status of women. They regarded women as mothers and wives but inferior to men. Orthodox forces in society, however, erased the salutary effects brought about by these revolutions.

British Period

The British were the first rulers who unified the country as a whole and were liberal in thinking. They believed that rational thinking had to be the basis for all customs and institutions and all customs and institutions not so based on had to be done away with.

Liberalism and the rational thinking of the British, set the educated Indians to thinking about Indian problems like child marriage, female infanticide, the practice of sati, prohibition of widow-remarriage among high caste Hindus and the need for emancipation of women.

The social reform movement in the British period gave rise to various schools of thought. (1) The Liberal school of thought wanted to free women and bring them on par with men, because to them, this was true democracy. (2) The Revivalist school of thoughts which wanted to bring the ancient period into the modern era, but were confused as to which ancient period. But the orthodox section opposed both these movements. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar belonged to the liberal school of thought.

The Practice of Sati

Inspite of the cruelty of this practice, its incidence was on the increase throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, because at this time religion had become corrupted and people were governed by the priests. The Hindus, at this time, were unenlightened and strict followers of customs and conventions. People firmly believed that a man's sins were completely washed out, if his widow was burnt alive with his dead body. However, in 1829, the custom of sati was abolished during the tenure of Lord William Bentinck by Regulation XVII, mainly through the active exertion and moral influence of that "Friend of humanity" Raja Ram Mohan Roy, inspite of many orthodox
petitions against its prevention. This Act of 1829 declared the observance of sati penal within British India; it continues to linger in Rajasthan even today. Several cases pointing to resurgence of sati were reported recently.

**Widow Remarriage**

The controversy over the sanction, by the shastras, of the marriage of Hindu widows was put to an end by a distinguished sanskrit scholar pandit Ishvar Chandra Vidyasagar. He proved, with quotations that widow remarriage was not prohibited either by vedas or by the sutras or even by the shastras, in his book entitled "Widow Remarriage", which created a terrific uproar in the society of 19th Century. He based his argument on the famous text of parasara and maintained that the institutes of parasara must be held specially binding in the present age.

The sage Parasara permits a widow to remarry. The passage runs as follows:

The institutes of Parasara are considered as the law for kaliyug that is, widow marriage is meant exclusively for the present age.

Hindu widow's marriage was legalised by the Act XV of 1856 known as an, "Act to remove all legal obstacles to the marriage of Hindu widows" and enacted that the issues of such marriage


would be legitimate, any customs and any interpretation of Hindu law to the contrary notwithstanding (Section, I). The prejudice against widow remarriage was so deep-rooted that the said Act did not receive any effective response for more than a century.

Widow in Hindu Law

It is not possible to define the legal status of Hindu Widows by any general statement. Right of Inheritance For a long time the widow was not recognised as an heir because Niyoga was a common practice. Hence she could get her husband's share in the family property if not as a direct heir but as a guardian of her minor sons. By 1200 A.D. when niyoga disappeared and childless, widows came on the scene, then Hindu Society realised the necessity of recognising the widow as an heir to her husband's property. The widow, no doubt, was regarded as a limited heir. This limited heirship was given to her with reluctance by society, since one of the functions to be discharged by the person who inherited a man's property was the performance of his shradhas. Since women were not permitted to perform any religious ceremonies, it seemed to follow that women could not hold any property. Even Medhatithi (Kulluka on Manu IX 187) generally a liberal writer, holds that the widow is prohibited from inheriting her husband's wealth.

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52. Kane, P.V. quoted Op cit pp. 706.
Brahaspati gives the widow the right to inherit her husband's property, as well as offer funeral oblations to the deceased husband in the absence of a male issue.

Vigneshwar, who wrote Mitakshar, II, 135, 136 says, "The chaste and regularly married wife of a sonless man who dies separated and not reunited inherits his estate". Yajnavalkya, II 131 lays down that when members of a family reunited, after separation, the surviving coparceners will succeed to the deceased husband's property and not the widow.

According to Dayabhaga law, which is prevalent in Bengal, a widow of a man without a son, even in a joint family, succeeds to his share in the family property and there is no difference between joint family property and his separate property and moveable and immovable property. The mitakshar school requires the husband to be separated from the joint family and she has absolute power over the moveable property. A widow has no power to bequeath moveable property inherited by her from her husband. Under mitakshar, a widow is not competent to make gift of the moveables inherited. A widow, who has not been faithful to her husband at the time of his death, is not entitled to inherit his property. But, once the husband's estates have been vested in her (which could only be so if she was faithful at the time of his death). She cannot be divested of it by her subsequent infidelity.

54. Mitakshara on Yajnavalkya II 135, 136 see para. 39.
56. Vide Moniram V. Kerry ILR 71. A. pp.115.
The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act of 1937

Today, under this Act the widow gets a share in the joint family property, as well as in the separate property of her husband. But prior to this Act, the birth of a son, or adoption, deprived her from inheriting the property, even if the son was born posthumously.

The widow is a limited heir to her husband's property means (1) that she cannot alienate the property; she cannot sell, mortgage or gift away the property (11) She is only entitled to the income out of it. (2) after her death the property reverts to her husband's heirs.

One of important conditions for inheritance is that the widow has to be faithful at the time of her husband's death. Her subsequent infidelity does not matter.

Today, a widow who changes her religion or who remarries forfeits her husband's property.

Though she is a limited heir to the moveable and immovable property of her husband in practice she is the absolute owner of the former if it is in her hands. Although a widow cannot sell, mortgage or gift away her inherited property, she can alienate her life interest in the property.

Maintenance

A widow does not succeed to her husband's property entitled


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to maintenance out of her husband's separate or joint property. Her right to maintenance however is dependent on the possession of her husband's property by the husband's heir whether by survivorship or by inheritance.

Even during her life time, if she was living away from the husband, she does not lose her right to maintenance. This right is conditional upon her chastity. Unfortunately the proof of her chastity is taken into account. And other private income and property are all deducted when allotting maintenance to her.

According to all the schools of Hindu law the obligation to maintain the widow is not absolute. It is conditioned by the fact that the man who inherits the dead man's property such as the son, or brother of the dead man, becomes responsible in maintaining the widow. However if the dead man does not leave behind property then the widow could not claim maintenance.

Mr. Justice Mahmood in his judgement, in the context of granting maintenance said "The amount of maintenance should not be determined with reference to the principle that the life of a Hindu widow should be a peculiarly ascetic character and that she should have only a starving allowance". The austerities enjoined on Hindu widows are matters not of legal obligation but only of moral injunction and cannot be enforced by courts of Justice.

"The courts should bear in mind that Hindu widows are by ancient custom, debarred from remarriage and should fix the maintenance at a sum sufficient to the degree of the widow being

A widow cannot be deprived of her right to maintenance by will or by making a gift of whole property by her husband. But if the husband's property is sold for his debts or for joint family debts or even without any cause, she cannot ask the purchaser for value, unless she has acquired a previous charge on the estate for her maintenance. The husband's debts take precedence over the maintenance of the widow and the infant child.

The only person who is under legal obligation to maintain, out of his own property, the widow of a deceased Hindu, is her own son. The others will only maintain out of the husband's property.

**Adoption**

With regard to the question as to the power of a widow to adopt or give away a son in adoption, all the schools based their conclusions on the text of vasistha which says, "Nor let a woman give or accept a son unless with the assent of her lord". But different schools interpreted the text differently and expressed divergent opinions with regard to the power of a widow to adopt and its limitations.

The Bombay school views that the widow of a separated coparceller, who inherits her husband's estate, can adopt without the consent of her husband, in the absence of an expression of or implied prohibition by him. The basic

60. Ibid pp. 418
theory on which it is based is as Nilakantha says, "Even a woman has like the sudra, authority to adopt because women and sudra are governed by the same rule" thus a widow's right to adopt to her separated husband is inherent and not merely delegated.

Before the Hindu women's right to property Act of 1937, the birth of a son or adoption deprived the widow of her inherited property. The adopted son received the whole of his father's property to the exclusion of the widow. Her estate was diverted and thereafter she could not alienate any portion of the husband's estate for any purpose. Adoption would deprive her of her husband's property, but after adoption she received only a maintenance.

After the 1937 Act, the widow is a co-heir along with the adopted son.

The Widow Remarriage Act of 1856

This Act has been a revolutionary step in the social and legal reforms pertaining to the widow. After 1856 Act, a Widow's second marriage is legal and her children by her second marriage are considered legitimate and are heirs to their fathers property. Even in those castes which permit widow re-marriage, the widow, upon her second marriage loses all her rights to her first husband's property.

This Act gives rise to a curious anomaly. If the widow leads an immoral life after she inherits her husband's property, she

can remain an heir to the property, but if she is chaste and
remarries, the property passes on to her husband's next-of-kin.
A widow by her second marriage loses her preferential right to
the guardianship of her children by the first husband, except
where such marriage was allowed by custom. She does not lose her
future right of succession.

For the purpose of remarriage of a widow who is a minor and
whose first marriage has not been consumated, she must get
consent from her father, mother, brothers or that of a close male
relative. If her first marriage is consumated, her own consent
is sufficient as well as necessary. The mother-in-law can give
her consent for the second marriage but not after consummation.

A minor widow is one who is under 16 years of age.

Hindu Code Bill

The Hindu Code Bill applies to all Hindus and in all provinces of India.

Adoption

Any Hindu widow over 18, can adopt a son provided her husband had not expressly forbidden her to do so, or her power to adopt has not terminated. A Hindu widow's right to adopt shall not revive after it has once been terminated.

The Maharastrian widow is entitled to make an adoption on the presumed authority from him, and this she may do whether he had died a joint or a separate member of the family.

The Hindu code, like the Hindu Law, does not permit the adoption of a daughter.

If the widow is not 18, but if her husband had named a certain boy for adoption, she can adopt him. A widow's right terminates when she remarries, or if her son dies leaving a son, or a widow or son's widow or if the widow ceases to be a Hindu.

Widow's Interest in Coparcenery

When a coparcener dies, his widow and daughter shall, amongst themselves, have interest in the property, in case of an

unmarried daughter an interest equal to one half of that of the son, and in the case of a married daughter one quarter of that of the son. The share of the widow of the predeceased son, will be equal to that of the son of the predeceased son.

Women and Property

Any property acquired by a woman after the commencement of the Hindu Code Bill would be her absolute property. The Code eliminates what has been known to Hindu law as woman's estate. Both moveable and immoveable property, even when acquired during widowhood, shall be the women's and widow's exclusive and absolute property.

A Hindu woman's estate shall devolve upon the heirs of the last full owner if obtained by inheritance or if obtained by partition.

Dowry would be the bride's absolute property.

Intestate Succession

Intestate woman's property would devolve first upon the husband and children or if the husband is dead to all children equally. If a woman dies without mentioning her heirs, her property goes to her mother or father or husband's heirs etc.

If a man dies leaving only a widow or daughter, the widow or daughter takes his whole property.

For intestate succession no distinction will be made between an undivided and a divided son or divided and reunited son or
between a married daughter or an unmarried daughter or a childless daughter or a daughter with children.

An unchaste wife (unless a court of law has found) and any remarried widow cannot succeed to the husband's property.

In Bombay, women who receive property of the family of their birth, own it as absolute owners. The same privilege will now be conceded to female who acquire property belong to their families by marriage in Bombay and it will be extended to all females in the rest of India after the code is passed.

**Maintenance**

A father-in-law will have to support his widowed daughter-in-law only in so far as he has the means to do so and if she cannot support herself in any other way. No maintenance will be given to her when she remarries or when she becomes unchaste.

A widow, a widowed daughter-in-law, a father, a mother, an unmarried but needy daughter, the widowed daughter of a deceased person should be maintained from the husband's or the son's or the father-in-law's or the father's estate.

A widow is entitled to maintenance out of her husband's share in the joint family property, from those coparceners who hold that by survivorship.

The widow does not forfeit her right to property or maintenance merely on account of her going and residing with her family. Accordingly the claim for arrears of maintenance cannot
be resisted on the ground that the widow went away to live with her brother.

Share of the deceased coparcener at the time of partition determines quantum of widows maintenance.

The right of a widow for maintenance and partition of joint family legally arises because of the fact that her husband left an interest in the joint family at the time of his death. There is nothing in this Act to suggest that the position of the son's widow has improved in this respect under the Act.

The Hindu Code has brought about some important changes, one of them is it abolishes the woman's estate and makes the woman's property absolute.

SECTION - III

The Hindu Succession Act 1956

This Act has introduced revolutionary changes as far as widow are concerned. This act applies to Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists and others who are Hindus. The clauses are as follows. The property of an intestate shall be divided as follows.

Rule. 1.: The intestate's widow or all widows together shall take one share.

Rule. 2: The surviving sons and daughter and the mother shall each take one share.

Rule. 3.: The heirs in the branch of each pre-deceased son, each pre-deceased son or each pre-deceased daughter of the intestate shall take between them one share.

1. Among the heirs in the branch of the pre-deceased son shall be so made that his widow (or widows together) and the surviving sons and daughters get equal portions; and the branch of his pre-deceased sons get the same portion.

2. Among the heirs in the branch of the pre-deceased daughter shall so made that the surviving sons and daughters get equal portions.

Property of a Female Hindu to be her Absolute Property

Any property possessed by a female Hindu whether acquired before or after the commencement of this Act, shall be held by her as full owner thereof and not as a limited owner.

"Property" includes both moveable and immovable property acquired by a female Hindu by inheritance or devise or at a partition or in lieu of maintenance or arrears of maintenance or by gift from any person, whether a relative or not; before, at or after her marriage or by her own skill or exertion, or by purchase or by prescription or in any other manner whatsoever and

also any such property held by her as stridhan immediately before the commencement of this Act.

Nothing contained in sub-section above can apply to any property acquired by way of the gift or under a will or any other instrument or under a decree or order of a civil court or under an award where the terms of the gift, will or other instrument or the decree, order or awarded prescribe a restricted estate in such property.

General Rules of Succession in the case of female Hindus.

1. The property of a female Hindu dying intestate shall devolve.

Firstly, upon the son and daughters (including the children of any pre-deceased son or daughter) and the husband. Secondly, upon the heirs of the husband. Thirdly, upon the mother and father. Fourthly, upon the heirs of the father. Lastly, upon the heirs of the mother. The biggest change brought about by this act is that it has done away with what is called "The limited estate of a woman". Any woman acquiring any property by any of the ways mentioned above, is considered her absolute owner of the property except where it is specifically stated otherwise. This make the widow an absolute heir to the property inherited by her from her husband. This Act solves many problems of the widows. Even as a daughter a woman receives the same share as a son. A woman's property (intestate) devolves upon her sons and daughters.

67. Ibid pp. 830-831.
This Act is a blessing to the widows. Dwarikanath opines that there is no system of Jurisprudence, where the status of the widow has passed through such varying stages of legal development as in Hindu Law.

It is clear from the above cited studies that no authority either in Vedas or Upanishads prescribed stern austere measures for widows. According to Altekar it is a sheer misinterpretation of Vedas. During the medieval period several cruel, restrictive practices came to be introduced into Hindu society much to the detriment of widows. And it is surprising to note that till today the Hindu Widows are governed by age old oppressive and abominable customs. Hence their lot in Hindu Society is miserable and unenviable.

In the socio-demographic literature, marital status occupies an important place. Marital status like age and sex is an important demographic characteristic of any population. Usually the population by age and sex is categorised into two groups viz, the never-married (single) and the ever-married. Among ever-married, currently-married set up the largest proportion. In a number of demographic studies marital union or marriage level, trends, differentials and determinants of age at marriage have been given more attention as they have implication on fertility rate. However, enough attention has not been given, to the study of problems widowed, divorced or separated firstly because they constitute an insignificant proportion of the total population. Secondly due to the increase in the age at marriage, the
proportion of widowed has been gradually declining. Thirdly, it may also be due to the difficulty in collecting information from widows. In most of the societies the size of the family and family-building process are determined by the patterns of marital dissolution and remarriage and also by the patterns of age at first marriage. The dissolution of marriage which includes widowhood and divorce, brings about demographic and socio-economic implications like marital union but the effect is reversed. Both widowhood and divorce represent withdrawal from the married population and tend to have effects on fertility. Davis and Blake (1956) highlighted the importance of widowhood as an important intermediate variable affecting fertility. The age at widowhood and the extent of remarriage determine the fertility differentials. In traditional societies, the influence of widowhood on fertility would be higher than in modern societies because of the higher age difference between the spouse and prohibition of widow marriage in certain communities. Whereas, in modern societies, the age difference between the spouses is less, widow re-marriage is permitted and the age at widowhood is relatively at a later age.

The extent of spouse-loss in either sex in a population will depend on several factors such as the rate of mortality in the opposite sex, the age distributions, the shape of the mortality curve, the age at marriage, the distribution of the differences, the ages of husband and wife, the rate of population growth and the rate and age pattern of remarriage.

In India, the widowed form a major group while in developed countries, divorced or separated form a major group. For instance, in India during 1980 the divorced or separated formed only 0.3 percent; in U.S. this percentage was 6.7. However in India during 1981 the percentage of widowed to the total population was 5.2 and in U.S. this was 5.7 percent.

The recent trends and differentials in the incidence of widowhood in India in general and Karnataka in particular are discussed, as below.

In India the prevalence of widowhood is higher than widowerhood. Table-1 includes the data of post independence period only, since the data of the pre-independence period seemed to be unreliable, as they show great fluctuations.

TABLE 1

Prevalence of Widowhood in India and Karnataka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>15.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>10.82</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>12.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>12.67</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>10.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>08.06</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>9.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In India from 1951 to 1961 the percentage of widowhood remains more or less stable around 12 percent. However, in 1981 this figure has come down by four points. On the other hand there is a steady decline in the percentage of widowerhood which was 5 percent in 1951 and has come down to 2.4 percent in 1981.

In Karnataka also the percentage of widowhood was 15.4 percent in 1951 has come down to 9.6 percent in 1981, while the percentage of widowerhood in 1951 was 4.3 has come down to 1.8 percent in 1981.

The prevalence of widowhood is determined by the decline in mortality, sex differentials in mortality in adult and old ages and the incidence of marriage of widowed persons.

Widows have been outnumbering widowers as can be seen in Table - 2 because females live longer than males. Also men usually marry women quite younger in age and lesser widows remarry. The sex differential immortality in late adulthood and
TABLE -2 : AGE AND SEX SPECIFIC PREVALENCE OF WIDOWHOOD IN INDIA-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Prevalence of Widowhood</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>32-34</td>
<td>2.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-44</td>
<td>5.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>8.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>12.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>15.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>21.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>25.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>36.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age not stated</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1. Social and cultural tables, 1961, census of India.
2. Country monograph series-10: Population of India(UN)

old age are universally favourable to women. These factors cause increase in the incidence of widowhood.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>25.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>117.1</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>104.0</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ages</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SRS Bulletin.

There has been a steady decline in the levels of mortality in all the age groups for both the sexes, as could be seen in Table-3. The female death rates are not only lesser than that of males from early adulthood onwards but also steadily widens in margin between the sexes as age progresses.
The percentage of widowed population in each age-group by sex and residence has been given in table-4. and the percentage distribution of widows and widowers of India has been presented in Table-5. at three points of time, by residential status of the population. Table 4 and 5 shows the rural and Urban differentials in the prevalence of widowhood in India. In Urban areas both widowhood and widowerhood appear to be at lower rate up to 45 years age-group. In the later age-groups the rate of widowhood increases sharply. For instance in rural areas the size of widowhood is more than 5 times higher than widowerhood, in the 60-64 age group. It is also noticed that in the later age-groups widowhood appears slightly more in Urban areas. This may be due to the unfavourable mortality pattern for males in Urban areas.

In Table 5 it is noticed that there is a progressive decline both in widowhood and widowerhood over time, in both rural and Urban areas and male, female distribution of population. In 1961 the percentage of widowed was 10.8 percent which has declined to 8.1 percent by 1981.

Table 6 provides the percentages of widows and ever married women in 1981 for Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists. Among Hindus 84.49 percent were widows, and 83.89 percent were ever married women, among Muslims respective percentages were 10.17 percent and 10.57 percent, among Christians.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male Total</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All ages</td>
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<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
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<td>20-24</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.53</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
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<td>0.24</td>
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<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
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<td>1.94</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.86</td>
<td>10.83</td>
<td>10.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.96</td>
<td>15.68</td>
<td>16.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7.34</td>
<td>8.05</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29.71</td>
<td>29.41</td>
<td>30.87</td>
</tr>
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<td>55-59</td>
<td>8.97</td>
<td>9.73</td>
<td>6.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.97</td>
<td>30.74</td>
<td>35.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>14.11</td>
<td>14.88</td>
<td>10.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.05</td>
<td>55.60</td>
<td>57.92</td>
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<td>14.61</td>
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<td>61.94</td>
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<td>70+</td>
<td>27.04</td>
<td>27.74</td>
<td>24.06</td>
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<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notstated</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Census of India, '981 series-1. Paper 2 of 1983 key population statistics based on 5 percent sample Data, Registrar General, India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Widowed/Widower</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1981</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>8.86</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
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<td>Rural</td>
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<td>8.15</td>
<td>7.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 1961, Part-II-C (1), social and cultural Tables; census of India 1971, series 1 India, Part II-C(11), social and cultural tables; Reports and Tables based on 5 percent sample data, series 1, India part II-special census of India, 1981.

they were 2.32 and 2.19, among Sikhs they were 1.21 and 1.78 percent and among Buddhists the percentages were 0.80 and 0.71 percent. It is observed among all the religions Sikhs had minimum proportion of widows and Buddhists had maximum proportion of widows. It is also noticed that the differences in the proportion of widows by age were negligible among all the religions except sikhs.

It is noticed in Table 7 that 24.5 Million that is 90 percent of total widows were reported to be illiterates, whereas the corresponding number among ever-married was 79. The percentage of widows among illiterate, ever-married
### TABLE-6: PATTERN OF WIDOWHOOD BY RELIGION IN INDIA: 1981:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
<th>Budhists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.12</td>
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<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<td>25-29</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
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<td>12.80</td>
<td>7.29</td>
<td>12.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
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<td>9.18</td>
<td>17.36</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>15.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 +</td>
<td>49.36</td>
<td>72.34</td>
<td>48.92</td>
<td>69.55</td>
<td>44.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>15.73</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>15.02</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>16.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean age at widowhood:

<p>| | | | | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.08</td>
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<td>34.29</td>
<td>2767996</td>
<td>34.43</td>
<td>631645</td>
<td>33.89</td>
<td>329211</td>
<td>32.67</td>
<td>217716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(84.49)</td>
<td>(10.17)</td>
<td>(2.32)</td>
<td>(1.21)</td>
<td>(0.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1981. Series-1. India, Part-II-special, Report and Tables based on 5 percent sample data.

* Refers to mean age to widowhood.

Figures in the brackets refers to the percentages of total widows.
TABLE 7: PERCENTAGE OF WIDOWS AND EVER MARRIED WOMEN BY AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL 1961 INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Illiterate</th>
<th>Literate but below middle</th>
<th>Educational level above Middle</th>
<th>Matriculate but Below graduate</th>
<th>Graduate and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 14</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 39</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 44</td>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 49</td>
<td>17.17</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>10.68</td>
<td>12.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 &amp; above</td>
<td>49.93</td>
<td>74.51</td>
<td>41.06</td>
<td>59.62</td>
<td>33.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>17.73</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean age at Widowed: 37.74* 24498993 34.60* 214316 35.29* 352693 36.19* 192511 37.36* 325665

Widowedhood: (30.00) (7.88) (1.30) (0.70) (0.12)

Source: As mentioned in table 6.

* Refers to mean age at widowedhood

Figures in the brackets refers to the percentage of total widows.
women was 17.73 percent. The corresponding percentage among literate, middle-class has come down to 9.75 percent. A sharp decline in the percentages is noticed i.e. 3.34 among matriculate and above and 2.17 among graduates and above. The reasons for the high association between the level of education and the proportion of widows may be due to existing differentials in adult male morality and age at marriage at each category of educational level. In each category of educational level a reduction in widows rates in all the age groups is noticed. In the younger age group the percentage of widows ranged from 1.94 percent among illiterates to 0.31 percent among graduates and above and in the age group of 50 and above it ranged from 49.93 among illiterate to 20.75 among graduates and above, this percentage showed a consistent sharp decline in each category of the educational level.

It is also observed that the percentage of widows, in the age-group of 50 and above declined rapidly from 74.51 among illiterates to 37.34 among graduates and above. This shows that female education plays an important role in reducing the proportion of widowhood not only now but also in the past. It is also surprising to note that 18.25 million widows, that is 67 percent of the total, were not only illiterate but also aged 50 and above.

Table 8 provides the mean age of widowed and widowered by age 45, 50, 60 and 70 years. These estimates give an idea about the average length of married life before the death of either of the spouses. As mentioned earlier, early widowhood is one of the
Table 8: MEAN AGE AT WIDOWHOOD AND WIDOWERHOOD BY RESIDENTIAL STATUS FOR INDIA 1981.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Widowhood/Widowerhood</th>
<th>Mean age at Widowhood</th>
<th>Mean age at Widowerhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>URBAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 years</td>
<td>36.33</td>
<td>37.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 years</td>
<td>41.42</td>
<td>41.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 years</td>
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<td>48.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 years</td>
<td>56.24</td>
<td>55.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Computed from reports and tables based on 5% sample data, Series 1, India part - II - Special census of India, 1981.
factors which tends to reduce the length of fertile union. The mean age at widowhood for those getting widowed by age 45 is 36.5 years and for widowered 32.2 years. And for those getting widowed and widowered by age 70 the mean age is 56.1 years and 58.5 years respectively. It is observed that maean age at widowhood is always higher than their male counterparts until the terminal age, where it is reversed.

Table 9 provides the intercensal estimates of mean age at widowhood for those getting widowed by age 45 for India and Karnataka. During the past three decades the increase in the mean age at widowhood is because of improvement in the mortality. It was 33.2 years in 1941-51, 34 years in 1951-61 and 35 years in 1961-71 decade. Agarwala has noted that, "In India the mean age at widowhood was more than 30 years except for the 1911-21 and 1931--41 decade. The low mean age at widowhood for the 1911-21 decade was presumably because of the influenza epidemic which followed world war I, and in the 1931-41 decade, due to a large number of child marriages which took place before the enforcement of the child marriage Act. The spouses of these girls experienced high mortality hence the mean age at widowhood declined". In the 1911-21 decade, the mean age at widowhood was low in Karnataka presumably because of the influenza epidemic. It is observed that this age has been rising in Karnataka also. In 8 years of time there has been an increase of 6 years in the mean age at widowhood in both India and Karnataka.


Mean age at widowhood in different decades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decades</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Karnataka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1901-1911</td>
<td>31.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911-1921</td>
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<td>33.0</td>
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<td>1931-1941</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>32.2</td>
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<td>1941-1951</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-1961</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>1961-1971</td>
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<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
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<td>1971-1981</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Figure up to 1951 include divorced, also Figures up to 1951 refer to old Mysore.

Source: Data up to 1951 census of India 1951 Mysore Vol, XV, 1954 Bangalore.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>20.1</td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>(33.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
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<td>17.7</td>
<td>(12.6)</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>(29.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
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<td>16.3</td>
<td>(11.2)</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>(26.1)</td>
</tr>
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<td>(11.1)</td>
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<td>37.0</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1961</td>
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<td>12.4</td>
<td>(9.2)</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>15+</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>(16.2)</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>(15.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25+</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>(22.7)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
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<td>(22.5)</td>
</tr>
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<td>10.4</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>(34.3)</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>45.2</td>
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<td>61.3</td>
<td>(46.0)</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>(46.4)</td>
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<td>(9.4)</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>(15.1)</td>
</tr>
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<td>(8.5)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>(14.9)</td>
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<td>10.4</td>
<td>(8.1)</td>
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<td>19.9</td>
<td>(14.3)</td>
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<td>18.2</td>
<td>(14.3)</td>
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<td>20.3</td>
<td>(14.7)</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

* Figures up to 1961 include divorced also.

Source: Data up to 1961: Census of India 1951, Mysore, Vol XIV, 1954, Bangalore.


The recent trends and differentials in the incidence of widowhood in Karnataka State, could be seen in Table 10. It is observed that this incidence among both the sexes in all the age-groups and in both rural and urban areas has declined. During 1921-81 the prevalence of widowerhood among total male population declined from 6 percent to 2 percent and from 16 percent to 5 percent among ever married males. While, during the same period, the prevalence of widowhood declined from 20 percent to 10 percent among the total female population and from 49 percent to 18 percent among the ever married females. Though the gap between the prevalence of widowhood and widowerhood has
narrowed over the years, it is as high as 8 percent among the total female population and 14 percent among ever married females in 1981.

Table 10.a provides the percentage distribution of widowe females for the country and Karnataka at three points of time, 1961, 1971 and 1981. Similar distribution by residence has been given in Table 10.b. It is observed from the Table 10.a. that there has been a decline in widows in Karnataka, as observed earlier for the country. In Karnataka during 1961 the percentage of widows was 12.36 which declined to 9.59 percent by 1981.

The rural/urban situation as depicted in Table 10.b suggest that the percentage of widowhood is slightly more in rural areas than in urban area. This incidence among both males and females is relatively higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Though, there is a decline in the incidence in both the areas, the gap between the urban and rural rates still exists, since the health facilities are concentrated in the latter.

It is observed from Table 11 that district-wise, incidence of widowhood was not relatively same for males and females in 1961, 1971 and 1981. In some districts like Mandya, Mysore and South Karnataka, the incidence widowhood is relatively high, while the incidence of widowhood is low. In some other districts like Chitradurga, Hassan and Kolar the incidence is low, the corresponding incidence of widowerhood is high. In Bangalore, Coorg and Dharwad the prevalence of widowhood among males and females is the same. There is no significant change in the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent to total pop.</td>
<td>Percent to married pop.</td>
<td>Percent to total pop.</td>
<td>Percent to married pop.</td>
<td>Percent to total pop.</td>
<td>Percent to married pop.</td>
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<td>4.6(15)</td>
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<td>9.1(16)</td>
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<td>19.3(8)</td>
<td>18.0(9)</td>
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<td>Kolar</td>
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<td>9.4(8)</td>
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<td>Shrirangapur</td>
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<td>7.5(10)</td>
<td>20.9(4)</td>
<td>5.8(10)</td>
<td>17.7(4)</td>
<td>17.3(7)</td>
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<td>South-Kanara</td>
<td>8.5(13)</td>
<td>23.5(13)</td>
<td>1.6(2)</td>
<td>10.4(10)</td>
<td>22.4(17)</td>
<td>9.4(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumkur</td>
<td>3.7(16)</td>
<td>9.1(16)</td>
<td>22.2(8)</td>
<td>6.6(15)</td>
<td>19.2(7)</td>
<td>17.5(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Total</td>
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<td>7.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>8.3(11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in parentheses indicate their ranks; Source: as in Table 10.
| Age  | Rural Urban | I   | II  | VII | VIII | IX   | Rural Urban | I   | II  | VII | VIII | IX   |
|------|-------------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-------------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|
| 10-14 M | 18.5 | 12.8 | 14.3 | 70.1 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 3.3 | 28.0 | 15.3 | 16.0 | 72.0 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 1.0 |
|      W | 32.0       | 46.7 | 2.4 | 74.2 | -   | 1.2 | 2.4 | 29.8 | 7.9  | 14.4 | 74.5 | -   | 0.9 | -   |
| 15-19 M | 21.5 | 9.3  | 22.2 | 58.3 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 3.7 | 34.0 | 11.7 | 22.5 | 60.7 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 1.6 |
|      W | 33.0       | 20.7 | 18.8 | 53.5 | -   | 1.8 | 4.5 | 33.3 | 26.7 | 18.7 | 63.0 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 3.8 |
| 20-24 M | 22.8 | 10.0 | 22.7 | 52.3 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 5.5 | 34.2 | 11.7 | 24.5 | 52.8 | 1.4 | 0.3 | 3.1 |
|      W | 38.7       | 30.0 | 16.8 | 53.0 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 6.4 | 45.4 | 33.2 | 15.9 | 58.7 | 2.7 | 0.5 | 6.3 |
| 25-29 M | 24.7 | 13.0 | 22.4 | 50.5 | 1.9 | 1.2 | 7.2 | 36.2 | 15.4 | 24.6 | 50.0 | 2.2 | 0.4 | 5.6 |
|      W | 46.6       | 40.6 | 21.3 | 48.7 | 4.1 | 2.4 | 8.6 | 52.3 | 42.8 | 21.4 | 50.0 | 2.9 | 0.7 | 7.0 |
| 30-39 M | 26.1 | 15.1 | 23.4 | 50.5 | 2.5 | 1.3 | 7.5 | 38.1 | 19.0 | 30.9 | 59.7 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 5.9 |
|      W | 48.4       | 44.9 | 26.3 | 46.4 | 3.7 | 2.0 | 8.2 | 58.1 | 44.9 | 22.6 | 49.0 | 4.1 | 0.7 | 6.3 |
| 40-49 M | 25.9 | 15.5 | 26.8 | 49.6 | 2.9 | 1.7 | 6.6 | 36.2 | 17.9 | 29.8 | 49.6 | 2.7 | 0.2 | 5.4 |
|      W | 42.8       | 34.3 | 28.0 | 47.0 | 4.4 | 1.7 | 7.6 | 48.7 | 34.2 | 25.8 | 49.2 | 4.7 | 0.6 | 6.2 |
| 50-59 M | 21.5 | 12.9 | 28.9 | 48.7 | 3.5 | 1.1 | 6.1 | 28.4 | 12.6 | 33.8 | 46.8 | 3.8 | 0.3 | 4.3 |
|      W | 29.3       | 21.5 | 29.9 | 46.6 | 4.9 | 1.4 | 6.9 | 32.9 | 39.6 | 26.9 | 50.0 | 5.2 | 0.4 | 6.3 |
| 60 + M | 13.0 | 8.1  | 31.3 | 45.6 | 4.3 | 1.2 | 5.3 | 16.0 | 6.8  | 34.8 | 47.8 | 3.9 | 0.3 | 3.3 |
|      W | 12.0       | 8.7  | 34.3 | 41.5 | 6.3 | 1.2 | 6.5 | 12.6 | 6.7  | 31.2 | 46.2 | 6.9 | 0.3 | 4.5 |
| Total M | 23.8 | 12.9 | 23.9 | 51.5 | 2.2 | 1.2 | 6.4 | 34.5 | 16.4 | 26.5 | 51.2 | 2.3 | 0.3 | 4.8 |
|      W | 26.0       | 20.6 | 29.0 | 46.0 | 4.7 | 1.6 | 7.3 | 27.2 | 17.9 | 27.1 | 49.2 | 5.1 | 0.5 | 5.7 |

Note: I Cultivators, II Agricultural Labourers, VII Trade and Commerce, VIII Transport, Storage and Communication, IX other services.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF CURRENTLY MARRIED AND WIDOWED WOMEN IN DIFFERENT INDUSTRIAL DIVISIONS

A CURRENTLY MARRIED WOMEN
B WIDOWS
I CULTIVATORS
II AGRI LABOURS
VII TRADE AND COMMERCE
VIII TRANSPORT, STORAGE AND COMMUNICATION
IX OTHERS
The relative position of the districts in 1961, 1971 and 1981. The changes observed in different districts may be due to the differences in the practice of re-marriage of widowed persons.

TABLE - 13: WORK PARTICIPATION RATES FOR CURRENTLY MARRIED AND WIDOWED WOMEN IN 1971 AND 1981, BY AGE RESIDENCE, KARNATAKA STATE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
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<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>18.11</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>28.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31.97</td>
<td>46.67</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-29</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>21.47</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>33.04</td>
<td>20.68</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>22.04</td>
<td>9.28</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>38.74</td>
<td>30.02</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<td>25-29</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>46.55</td>
<td>12.98</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>40.56</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>42.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>48.40</td>
<td>15.05</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>44.87</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>42.78</td>
<td>15.45</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>34.30</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>19.98</td>
<td>12.90</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>21.50</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 +</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>11.96</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>26.01</td>
<td>20.55</td>
<td>27.2</td>
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</table>

Widows face increased economic problems after the death of the bread-winner. They are forced to work in order to earn a living. The work participation rate is higher among widows, particularly among elderly widows than ever married women as
AGE SPECIFIC WORK PARTICIPATION RATES FOR CURRENTLY MARRIED AND WIDOWED WOMEN IN INDIA 1987
shown in the National sample survey 1961. At the same time the data also indicates that unemployment and poverty are higher among the widowed.

Table 12 shows the dominance of widows in informal sector activities like agriculture, trade, commerce and other services. It is observed from the table that the majority are absorbed in agriculture, where they get work easily, since that category does not require much skill or education. The work participation rates for widows in rural and urban areas are 26 and 21 in 1971 and 27 and 18 in 1981 respectively, whereas for married women the corresponding areas in 1981 are 24 and 13. The same tendency is noticed both in rural and urban areas, in all the age groups. The gross years of active life for widows in rural and urban are 17.0 and 14.6 respectively whereas for evermarried women the corresponding figures are 10.8 and 6.0 years.

Widows work for a longer period than their currently married counterparts. Usually, rural women spend a longer period at work than the urban women, be it widows or currently married.

In Table 13, the work participation rates of widowed women in different divisions for 1971 and 1981 show their dominance when compared to their married counterparts. This shows that women enter into informal sector activities, where entrance is easy.

Figure 1 shows that except rural 60+ age group all the rates are high for widows when compared to that of currently
married women. In both rural and urban areas there is more or
less the same rate of participation at the central adjacent age
groups. For widows the 30-39 age-group has the highest rate.

Figure 2. gives the distribution of workers by industrial
divisions. When India as a whole is considered, the industrial
division "trade and commerce" has only shown a definitely higher
proportion of widows. The same was true also in rural India for
"other services". This gives the impression that "Trade and
commerce" and, to a certain extent, "other services" are the
industrial divisions that absorb the late entrants to the labour
market.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Rural</th>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>10.80</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>15.95</td>
<td>8.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>17.03</td>
<td>14.63</td>
<td>23.31</td>
<td>15.31</td>
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TABLE - 13.b.: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION CURRENTLY MARRIED WOMEN BY INDUSTRY DIVISIONS, 1971 AND 1981 KARNATAKA STATE.

1971

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<th></th>
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<th>II</th>
<th>VII</th>
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<th>IX</th>
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<td>M</td>
<td>23.90</td>
<td>51.52</td>
<td>2.17</td>
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<td>W</td>
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<td>45.99</td>
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1981

<table>
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<th>VII</th>
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<th>IX</th>
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<td>M</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
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<td>49.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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Table 13.a gives the age and residential-wise distribution of widows and currently-married by work participation in Karnataka. Work participation rate for widows in rural and urban areas in all the age groups is higher than their counterpart. The work participation rate is lesser for widows only in the age group of 60+. The gross years of active life for widows in rural and urban areas during 1971 and 1981 are 17.03 and 14.63, 23.31 and 15.31 respectively.

Table 13.b. shows the industrial division, "Trade and Commerce" has a definitely higher proportion of widows, because this is the only industrial division that absorbs the late entrants (widows) to the labour market. But in general, the distributional pattern of the workers among widows and currently-married women between different industrial divisions does not vary much. Between urban and rural areas this difference is more in urban areas than in rural areas.

Future Trend.

It is noticed from the illustrations in the literature, that India, at present, is undergoing a significant demographic transition. The improvement in the health status and decline in mortality rates in late adulthood have proved to be favourable to females. In course of time, due to this the proportion of aged females will increase, among whom a significant proportion will be widows, since widows marry infrequently.
In India by 2000 A.D. the proportion of males and females who fall in the age group of 65 and above will be 3.66 and 3.98 percent respectively. That means in the proportion of males there would be an increase of 7.3 percent and 17.4 percent in the proportion of females. In our country by 2001 A.D. the females aged 50+ would be 83.5 million and widows expected to be 45 million.
PART II

1.1 About the Study

The present study deals mainly with the various problems faced by widows in traditional Hindu Society, as well as the socio-economic and demographic implications of widowhood. From a sociological point of view, widowhood may be perceived as a change in the status of women caused by the dissolution of marriage and which necessitates the establishment of new ties within the family, with the kin group and the community.

The importance of the study of widowhood lies in the fact that the death of one’s spouse precipitates a period of crisis. It is also a traumatic experience for almost everyone within the family unit. It brings about a number of economic and social consequences both for the members of the immediate family and the community. The consequences are apt to be more serious in case of death among middle-aged spouses, who leave a wife and young children as dependents. The most affected persons in our traditional society are young widows. The death of the husband has a serious consequence on the widow. Apart from the severe emotional stress of coping with the loss of a husband, it often means the widow has to undertake the

problems of looking after the socio-economic needs of the family. The problem becomes more acute in the case of young illiterate widows. In such cases a woman who is herself dependent is suddenly faced with the task of mustering resources to look after her children who now look to her for everything.

Women generally occupy a secondary position in most societies and do not enjoy socio-religious or political life. Even today inspite of changes as those granted to married women. They are deprived of the necessities which every human being has a right to enjoy. Consequently, social norms and taboos consign the unfortunate widows to an even more disadvantaged position. They are considered a bad omen and inauspicious and thereby restricted in their socio-religious functions. Widows who are young, poor and uneducated face even more problems. Thus, when the position of widows is deplorable, the condition of Hindu widows who are governed by the age old oppressive and rigid customs is indeed lamentable. The position of a Hindu widow is miserable and her lot is unenviable. The present study is concerned with Hindu widows, living in the urban and rural areas of Dharwad district.

The main focus of the study deals with the problems faced by widows, the factors responsible for her predicament and the manner in which they attempt to overcome them. The major interest of the present study is to investigate the circumstances under which widows face deprivation. This study also tries to find out the consequences caused by the various kinds of deprivation to the widow herself, her family and to society in
This study of widowhood provides us not only with the adequate understanding of the magnitude of the problem and its prospects in future, but also deals with the various ramifications and implications of widowhood and the state of deprivation faced by them. So far most of the studies undertaken have examined only the socio-economic aspect of the problem. Hence, this study makes an attempt to understand the sociological implications of widowhood, particularly the deprivation faced by a widow in the economic, social, psychological and cultural spheres.

1.2 The Problem.

The position of a widow in society is a crucial topic which sociologists have to discuss and elucidate. The treatment which she receives is often an index to the attitudes of society towards women as a class.

What is the general lot of widows? What are the problems faced by them? What are the changes in their life styles? Does she marry again if she so desires? Did her husband leave any property so that she could lead an honourable and independent life after his death? These are the main questions which we have to explore in connection with the position of widows. The tragic alienation of a widow today, is causally related to continued loss of her status and dignity in the remote past.

From available literature on widowhood one finds that several factors are responsible for the deprived position of
widows. There is no uniform pattern of widowhood either in terms of conditions leading to such a phenomenon or in terms of the consequences pattern. There is also no uniform life-style for widows. The life-styles vary not only according to the location in the social system be it an upper class area or a middle class area, or the slum, Urban or Rural areas, but by their own combination of characteristics. Patterns emerge when such factors as educational level of the women are compared to their social life and space. (So it emerges that the more educated and trained widows are able to enter into and maintain more social roles and social relations. On the other hand poor, uneducated, ignorant and illiterate widows face difficulties in entering and maintaining social roles and social relations)

The present study is entitled, "Hindu Widows - A study in Deprivation". Deprivation of certain necessities and privileges, certainly affects physical development, and acute deprivation may affect the development of personality too. The state of deprivation of widows constitute the main focus of the study rather than the variety of problems faced by them. The present study is an attempt to understand the various kinds of deprivation faced by widows, the effects of deprivation on them and how they manage to overcome them. An attempt is also made to understand the Hindu value system which has created the institution of widowhood.

Some of the questions which the researcher has tried to take up for investigation are as follows: Are there any changes in the socio-economic conditions of women, after widowhood? What
are the problems faced by them? what are the factors that may be considered as responsible for their low social status? The type of treatment they received before and after widowhood? Are there any differences in the life-style of widows of both rural and urban areas? What are their reactions towards death, widowhood and position of widows in Hindu Society? The views of widows on various aspects of their life, re-marriage of widows, future plans, for themselves and their children. Suggestions for the welfare of the widow were also sought.

The sample widows are drawn from diverse social backgrounds. Hence, the views of widows about their status and roles differ. Socio-economic background, size of the family, value system of every caste, are important factors that decide the nature of the problems, which widows have to face in their life, which also may explain the diverse ways of life of widows. The present investigation considers the differences in the background characteristics of widows of both rural and urban areas as well as the differences in the nature of socio-emotional support and caste value systems, in order to understand how far such differences contribute to the state of deprivation and the problems of adjustment of widows.

1.3. Scope and Objectives

The problem of widowhood has elicited considerable interest in the minds of researchers in recent times. Widowhood is a complex transition, with various possible consequences, both subjective and objective. In the Indian context the problem assumes considerable importance, as the age difference between
husband and wife is higher, widow re-marriage is highly restricted, the influence of widowhood on fertility is higher than in modern societies. An increasing trend towards the small family norm, nuclearisation of families and continuous erosion of family, kinship ties even in rural areas of our society, seems to have a bearing on the problems of widowhood. It has been rightly said that widowhood is a combination of the problems of the woman and the widow. Hence, in order to understand the complex phenomenon of widowhood a systematic study of the various problems faced by widows, the causes, the consequences and the effects on the personality of widows, the difficulties in adopting to widowhood and how they manage to overcome the problems, becomes essential.

There is a growing research literature on widowhood. Most of it is concerned with the explanation of psychological and emotional adaptations to bereavement and the socio-economic conditions of widows.

Hence, the present study, which is an attempt to find out the causes and consequences of economic, social, psychological and cultural deprivation, assumes importance.

The present work is confined to the study of 300 widows belonging to Dharwad city and surrounding villages in Dharwad Taluk. The field of investigation was restricted to the above mentioned areas, because of the limited resources and time available to an individual researcher.

For the selection of samples among Hindus, a systematic procedure was used to obtain a representative sample, belonging to
various castes, which are classified broadly into three groups, Viz. Hindu low caste, Hindu intermediate caste and Hindu Upper caste.

Aims of the Study

The present study takes into account the various problems faced by widows, causes and consequences and efforts made by them to overcome the problems. This study also takes into cognizance the opinions, attitudes of widows toward status of Hindus widows, factors that improve their status and re-marriage of widows. The present study, hence, pertains to the analysis of relationships between background factors and the problems and the differences between the rural and Urban area & between the upper, the intermediate and the lower castes.

The following are some of the major aims of the present study.

1. To study the changes brought about by widowhood in the socio-economic conditions of widows.

2. To ascertain the socio-economic background of the deceased husbands of the widows.

3. To ascertain the difficulties faced by widows in the upbringing of their children and the reasons responsible for the same.

4. To assess the extent of deprivation faced by them in fields like economic, social psychological and cultural and the manner in which they manage to overcome them.
5. To elicit, their opinions towards widow re-marriage, their future plans regarding themselves and their children and their suggestions for the welfare of widows.

4.4. Methods and Procedures

As mentioned earlier the present study is an attempt to explain the state of deprivation faced by widows in the fields like, economic, social, psychological and cultural, the problems of adjustment of widows and the factors which have an impact on the life of widows. The requisite data is obtained through the interview method with the help of a structured interview schedule. The interview method is considered as the basic field technique through which the widows were approached and the responses received from them were recorded in the field itself.

Selection of the Field

Since the present study is a rural-urban comparative study, Dharwad city and the surrounding villages from the rural part of Dharwad Taluk were selected. For Urban sample, ward Nos. 4 & 5, that is Malmaddi and ward Nos 16 & 17 ie Mrutunjayanagar from Dharwad city, where Hindus are substantial in number were selected for the study. Malmaddi comprises of a predominantly Brahmín population, where a Rayara Math (a Brahmín monastry) is situated. Mrutunjayanagar comprises of a predominantly Lingayat population with a fair sprinkling of some of the predominant lower castes and where the Murugha Math (a Lingait monastry) is situated. In the selection of areas, for purposes of geographical stratification the Dharwad Taluk was subdivided into
VILLAGES SELECTED FOR THE STUDY IN DHARMAD TALUKA.

1. DASANKOP
2. NARENDRA
3. DADDIKAMALAPUR
4. MANDHALL
5. YERIKOP
6. NUGGIKERI
7. GOVANKOPPA
8. GHONGADIKOP
9. DHARWADCITY

KILOMETRES

6 MILES

I. DASANKOP
2 NARENDRA
3 DADDIKAMALAPUR
4 MANDHALL
5 YERIKOP
6 NUGGIKERI
7 GOVANKOPPA
8 GHONGADIKOP
9 DHARWADCITY
four zones by drawing a vertical and horizontal line intersecting approximately at the centre of the Dharwad Taluk as shown in the (Map-I). Two villages each were selected from the North, South, East, and West to ensure proper representation. The villages selected for study were Daddikamalapur and Mandihal from East Zone, Ghongadikop & Govankop, from West Zone Lakamapur and Dasankop from North Zone, Nuggikeri and Yerikop from south Zone, The list of villages was taken from the District statistical office, Dharwad. The villages in Dharwad taluk were chosen by the random sampling method. Altogether eight villages spread over Dharwad Taluk were selected for the study.

The Interview:

In the sociological investigations the interview is accepted as a reliable field technique for the collection of data. The present investigation is based on the primary data, consisting of the responses received from the respondents to the schedule, collected through the personal interview method. A prior appointment with the respondents was taken. The interviews were conducted at their residence. The normal duration of an interview was about 80 to 90 minutes. Questions were asked by the researcher in the regional language (Kannada) and the relevant responses were recorded by her in the schedule. The researcher followed the free conversation in the regional language in order to elicit answers to the questions. Information regarding the various aspects of widow's life was also collected through discussion and observation, because a majority of them were illiterates. Most of the respondents willingly agreed to
spend some of their time to answer the questions and participate in the discussions. Most of them were fully cooperative. A good rapport with the respondents was established without any difficulties. The researcher used to listen patiently to every kind of experience, either happy or unhappy, which the widows narrated while the interview was conducted. A rapport was first established with the respondents so that they could believe that the researcher was there not only to ask questions but also to share some of their personal experiences. By and large, this procedure was effective and useful both in rural and urban areas. However, it was noticed that rural widows were more free and open minded in providing information than urban widows.

The Instrument

A pre-coded structured schedule was used as the principal instrument for the collection of data. A tentatively prepared schedule was presented in a non-sample area as a pilot study to locate the ambiguity and redundancy of questions included therein. The final schedule was drawn after making necessary corrections. With the help of which each of the respondents was interviewed in the absence of other members of their family. The interview schedule is prepared in such a way as to obtain the relevant information broadly under the following sections.

1. Background Characteristics of the Widows.

Information is obtained regarding the socio-economic
characteristics of the widow, both before and after widowhood, their caste and community affiliations, type of family to which they belonged and the size of the family, number of members in the family, income enjoyed, reactions toward marital life etc.

2. Particulars of Deceased Husbands and Children.

Under this head, relevant information is obtained as regards the age of the deceased husbands, their educational level, occupation, income, cause of death, nature of treatment received, reasons for not receiving treatment if valid, property left by them. In the case of children, information is obtained regarding their age, educational level, occupation, income, reasons for the discontinuation of their education if valid, persons whom they consult for advice, problems faced by the widows in bringing them up.

3. Deprivation Faced by the Widows.

Under this head, relevant questions are included that try to ascertain from the respondents, the amount of deprivation faced by widows in social, psychological and cultural fields, the problems of adjustment of widows and the manner in which they manage to overcome them. Questions are also included to ascertain whether there are any changes in the visits of kinsmen of both sides, friends of the widows and vice versa and leisure time activities.

4. Attitudes and Orientations.

Under this head, relevant questions are included to
ascertain the respondents orientations and attitudes toward death and widowhood, the status of widows in Hindu society, the re-marriage of widows.

The questions also included certain number of brief statements, the responses to which could be either in the affirmative or negative. These items mainly included either favourable or unfavourable attitudes toward marriage, and status of widows.

5. Future Plans and Suggestions.

Under this head questions are included to ascertain information from the respondents about their future plans regarding themselves and their children and suggestions for the State and others to work for the welfare of the widows.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted before the main interview schedule was finalized in order ensure the suitability of the questions and the sample. This study included the interview of fifty widows, 25 each from the rural and urban area who belonged to different castes in Hindu religion like upper castes lower Hindu castes, intermediate and dominant Hindu castes. This study was carried out in Hubli city and surrounding villages. The sample of widows selected from both the areas varied in caste, age, and income.

A draft of interview schedule comprised of structured answers was used for the purpose of the pilot study. The pilot
study helped the researcher to add a few more direct questions and responses so as to meet the objectives of the study. The responses were given codes and scores so as to make the analysis easy.

The Sample
Sampling Procedure: The present study is confined to the study of 300 widows who are the inhabitants of Dharwad and surrounding villages, with 150 from the rural and 150 from the urban area. The 1988 house tax list of the Dharwad-Hubli corporation was used to determine which wards were to be sampled and which streets constituted a given block. Next, a list of households in which widows lived was made by using the snow-ball technique, which served as the source of the sample. Two-way stratified simple random sampling method was used for the selection of widows. Since the name and addresses of widows are not maintained either by the corporation or Village Panchayats as the case may be. The researcher found it difficult to trace the widows for the purpose of the study. However, with the given objectives of the study namely; the impact of deprivation, it was decided to select a sample in such a way as to ensure adequate representation of various variables like caste, age, income, area and education. The respondents were selected based on the following criteria.

1. Respondent should be a Hindu.
2. Respondent who had been widowed for not less than five years.
3. Five Sc/St/Backward classes respondents in each locality/Village.
To identify the widows in the respective localities the help of leaders of different agencies/associations like Mahila Mandal, Mandal Panchayati and other prominent local persons was sought. The purpose of the study was thoroughly explained to them and cooperation from their end was sought. Personal visits were made to every household to collect the basic information, and recorded on a separate paper. Only those families where widows were present, a further detailed information was collected on the pre-coded structured schedules by interview method. The same sampling procedure was used even in the rural areas.

Sample Characteristics and Distribution

The sample was designed to have a total of 325 respondents. But due to non-availability of respondents belonging to particular category only 300 respondents were taken into consideration.

The number of respondents selected for the study from Dharwad city and different villages is given in the Table below.

Table showing the ward-wise and village-wise distribution of respondents selected for the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ward No. 4 and 5</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ward No. 16 and 17</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (villages)</td>
<td>Number of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Daddikamalapur</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mandihal</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ghongadikop</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Govankop</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lakamapur</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Dasankop</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Nuggikeri</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Yerikop</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interview Procedure**

Of the 325 accessible households with eligible respondents 25 (10-Rural: 15-Urban) potential respondents declined to be interviewed. This represented (7.69%) percent of the eligible respondents. Among those who did not wish to be interviewed a majority of the cases refused to participate claiming to have no time or were unwilling to meet the researcher on personal grounds or were unwilling to narrate their personal problems to an outsider. Some were unwilling to recall the sali events. Eight (2-R: 6-U) of those were unable to participate because of poor health or physical disability or were out of station.

Three hundred widows (92.31%) of the eligible widows were interviewed in their homes between January 1988 and March 1988. The youngest respondent was 18 and the oldest was 102.
1.5. Framework of Analysis

Variables for the Study:

The major variables used in the present study are as follows:

a. Independent Variables - caste, age, Income, education, area.

b. Infrastructure variable - Property Left by the Husband.

c. Dependent variable - Deprivation.

1. Caste - Depending on the religion, widows are broadly classified as:
   1) Hindu Lower caste
   2) Hindu Intermediate caste
   3) Hindu Upper caste.

2. Age - Based on the age, the widows are classified into three groups such as:
   1) Young widows 0-30 years
   2) Middle aged 30-60 years
   3) Aged widows 60 above.

3. Locality - Widows are classified on the basis of locality to which they belonged -
   1) Rural
   2) Urban.

4. Income - Depending on the level of income, widows are classified into:
   1) High income group.
   2) Middle Income group.
   3) Low income group.

5. Background variable - This includes husband's occupation, his income and property left by him as important factors. Husband's occupation is divided into:
   1) High
   2) Medium
   3) Low.

   i. High occupation - comprises the professionals and managers, who have secured University degrees and training.
   ii. Medium occupation - includes, principally, white-collar
workers, such as clerks where completion of secondary Education is mandatory to secure jobs.

111. Low occupation—comprises mainly manual occupations ie. semi-skilled and skilled workers, whose educational level is low, including illiterates.

6. Attitudinal Variable—This variable concerns the subjective aspects of a widow's life. The findings regarding the attitudes toward the status of widows in Hindu society and the marriage of widows etc are brought under this variable. The attitudes are measured in terms of favourable or unfavourable responses to the questions. The above mentioned variables are considered for analysing and interpreting the data. These variables are taken into consideration because they are expected to influence the deprivation level and adjustment of the widows.

It is presumed that caste, age, income and locality are some of the social characteristics which have influence over the deprivation faced. Besides, background variables like occupation, income and property left by the deceased husbands also affect the deprivation level/process. It is also considered that attitudes of the respondents are also possible variables affecting deprivation level and adjustment process.

Methods used for qualifying the variables.

The following methods are used for qualifying the data regarding the dependent variables.
Deprivation Level

The deprivation level of respondents is measured with reference to the problems faced by the widows in economic, social, emotional, and cultural fields. For this purpose, a deprivation index was developed as suggested by Anastasi. 1961.

\[
\text{Deprivation Index} = \frac{\text{Number of correct positive responses}}{\text{Total number of deprivation items}} \times 100
\]

There are four types of Deprivation. They are (1) Economic Deprivation (2) Social Deprivation (3) Emotional Deprivation (4) Cultural Deprivation

And each deprivation item is credited with one and two scores and each wrong/negative answer with zero score. The details regarding the individual items included in the deprivation test and their scoring pattern are furnished in chapter 4. The raw deprivation score of each individual is converted into the above deprivation Index.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are framed in order to test them in the light of the findings of the present study.

1. The income of the husbands has an influence on the widow's level of economic Deprivation.


3. Caste has influence on the level of cultural Deprivation, of widows.

4. There is a significant difference in the social deprivation level of rural and Urban widows.

5. Husband's age at death has influence on the economic deprivation of widows.

6. There is no significant difference in the emotional deprivation of rural and urban widows.

**Statistical Methods and Tools used**

The data thus collected is analysed into two stages. Initially two dimensional contingency table was constructed taking one independent variable and a dependent variable. The findings are analysed with the help of relative frequencies in regard to the variables that are identified. Other relevant statistical technique used is chi-square value which indicate the degree of association/difference between variables. Statistical tests are applied where ever the findings are not obvious when the results of analysis reveal findings that are obvious in nature, percentages calculated are considered for interpretation of data and explaining the difference between one or more variables. The chisquare test of independence and student t' test are carried out to find out the significant difference between the independent and the dependent variables. The formula used for chisquare.

\[ \chi^2 = \frac{\sum (O_i - E_i)^2}{E} \]

where \( O_i \) = observed frequency, \( E_i \) = expected frequency.
The formula used for 't' test test is

\[
 t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{s_1^2 + s_2^2} - \frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{2}{n_2}
\]

Where

- $\bar{x}_1$ Sample mean of I group
- $\bar{x}_2$ Sample mean of II group
- $s_1$ Standard Deviation of I group
- $s_2$ Standard Deviation of II group
- $n_1$ Sample size of I group
- $n_2$ Sample size of II group
1.6. Theoretical Support

Etymologically the word deprivation is derived from the verb "to deprive" which means to dispossess or strip (a person or an object) and it implies a "felt loss". The word deprivation literally refers to dispossession or loss of privileges, opportunities, material good and the like. It usually means a taking away of what one owns, or has a right to. As C.D. Lewis explains its meaning by quoting an example as "the feeling that the system under which we live deprives the majority of the chances of a decent life".

The term deprivation is sometimes used by researchers in different ways. Rubin Richard et al express that there are two distinct meanings for the term: (1) is the taking or withholding - usually deliberately - of something from another to which he is used or otherwise entitled, (2) according to behavioural scientists the technical meaning of the term refers to the absence of a variable from the environment of an organism. They further say that the popular use generally regards deprivation as negative, worst, not worthy of approval and a means of last resort. The technical use of the term is free of value judgements. It merely describes an existing condition which may or may not be desirable.

Sinha in his study on "Towards an Ecological Framework of Deprivation" says that the term deprivation refers to certain deficiencies in the environment. The deficiencies are not only there but are also experienced by the individual. It in turn causes an impact on the functioning of the individual. When one refers to deprivation the emphasis is on that aspects of environment which are deficient or wanted in some respects. In the conceptualization of deprivation importance should be given to the environment or the setting in which the individual operates.

Hunt says that the deprivation has been equated with "failure to provide opportunity to have experience". Adams asserts that the deprivation refers to deficiencies in experiences and conditions of learning. Gordon has stated that deprivation in his study concerns with deficiencies in the stimulus conditions of the childhood. The identification of deprivation has been attempted through the living area and membership of specific social groups.


Davis and others in their study on "Social deprivation and cognitive functioning in Lower-class children" have devised some independent indices of deprivation but they cover a narrow and partial range of deprivational variables. That is they have covered only the social variables.

Ojha is of the opinion that the concept of deprivation is used in various ways. High powered international bodies while describing life styles in different countries of the world refer to some countries which fall short of their conception of good living as "deprived".

He further says that the discrimination suffered by the disadvantaged among the scheduled castes and tribes is not less severe than the what the low among the high castes have suffered at the instance of their own men. Even among the high castes people belonging to lower category of high caste are socially discriminated by other high castes. The less well-to-do among both the high and low castes remain underprivileged in more than one ways. In the same way the cogenitally or otherwise deformed ones among the rich feel deprived in comparison to the poor having no such deformities incapacitating them, whichever caste they belonged.


The physically or the mentally handicapped are perhaps the real "deprived ones" than the normal ones.

In medical and psychological studies the term "deprivation" has been used in diverse ways. But a number of recent studies in natural life settings have led to crystallization of various empirical referents in this term. In psychological studies it has often been employed to denote "social disadvantage" or "cultural alienation". Monks describes deprivation as "insufficient satisfaction of basic psychological needs, and deficiencies in individual family settings".

Tripathi and Misra considered deprivation as a prolonged process relative to a defined social setting. They further say that a critical scrutiny of the various ways in which the term deprivation has been used has led to a belief that in spite of its diverse definitions there underlies unity in its implications.

The above are some of the ways in which the term deprivation has been used by some of the social scientists to describe various situations. However, one may narrow down the definition of deprivation as relevant to this research work.


Nurcombe has stated, "deprivation refers strictly to a dispossession or loss of privileges, opportunities, material goods and the like. It may occur with reference to three interrelated sets of basic needs - physical, psychological and socio-cultural.

Langmeir has viewed deprivation as a general phenomenon and defined the same as insufficient satisfaction of basic needs for a longer period." According to him it is a phenomenon which includes sensory, cognitive, emotional and social deprivation. These aspects overlap one another. They can be studied separately in specific conditions or in experimental situation.

Misra and Tripathi have developed the concept of prolonged deprivation with the intention of including all aspects of life in which deprivation has been recognised as a phenomenon. They have defined prolonged deprivation as, "a multidimensional psychological construct embracing a wide range of environmental and organismic variables and refers to a dispossession or loss of privileges, opportunities, material goods and the like relatively for a longer period"


In the above mentioned definition it can be said that the term deprivation has been used to denote deficient environmental conditions and impoverished experiences along different dimensions of deprivation.

Misra in his study on "motivational structure and prolonged deprivation" has analysed the motivational structure as related to different degrees of experimental deprivation. The experiential deprivation significantly influences the strength of achievement and approved motives and anxiety. It is also found that the different motives, interpersonal and task-related are positively related to anxiety which disrupts the effort towards goal attainment.

Again, Misra and Tripathi in their study on "Prolonged deprivation and status perception" report that the status perception varies as a function of deprivation level. The "low deprived group" showed a very high level of status striving. The past and present statuses of "high deprived group" was very low compared to middle and low deprived groups.

Deprivation is a phenomenon which brings about a systematic exploitation. Widows are perhaps those who belong to the deprived section of society. They are deprived of the privileges, and necessities. Widows are discriminated in Hindu Society.


The plight of Hindu widows is perhaps more glaring given the traditional social structure in India. Deprivation or disadvantages in the nature of discrimination leads to several problems. These problems in turn narrows down a widow's behavioural alternatives or makes her physically, socially, economically and psychologically handicapped to fulfil their bio-social needs or to achieve their self-fulfilment.

Types of Deprivation

The "Psychological Abstracts" index lists over two dozen types of deprivations, such as stimulus, cultural, egoistical, economic, social, political, educational, material and environmental. To this one can add various types of need deprivation such as food, water, sexual activity and the like. These are some of the prevailing concepts of the term "deprivation" observed in current researches. Any of these concepts could be with various degrees of precision used to denote deprivation.

Economic Deprivation

Economic deprivation can be understood in terms of the levels of poverty in every country. There are other factors along with economic factor that causes economic deprivation.

The nature and composition of these factors vary from one country to another.

When a family does not get adequate food even when all the members spend their resources of time, energy and money on earning their livelihood, the family experiences deprivation caused by the non-fulfilment of basic needs due to poverty. For such families, energy levels and time for leisure activities are limited. Almost every member has to contribute to the family income in order to survive. In a majority of such cases, even the children are involved in procuring cash or kind for their wherewithal for survival. Their economic pressures force them to join the labour force early and the children of the poor are even deprived of a childhood.

Valentine asserts that the distinctive feature of life of the poor can be determined primarily by the structure of society as a whole and by forces beyond the control of the poor.

Pealtie holds that the poor develop such value systems that suit their poverty conditions. They adjust their values and aspirations to suit their social and economic deprived


22. *Ibid* pp.38

conditions.

In this sense, perhaps, one of the most important problems following widowhood is economic deprivation. Most widows face deprivation due to an economic catastrophe brought about by the death of the breadwinner. The life in a deprived economic condition is difficult. Widows face several problems connected with money, property, employment and other related economic matters. The loss of a bread winner can send them into a demoralising life of dependency. Due to this widows develop low self-esteem, a sense of inefficacy and passivity in their social life.

Social Deprivation

Being deprived of opportunities for social contacts, like being deprived of affection and love can play havoc with the personality pattern. As Mussen et al have said a child's lack of peer group contacts, because of social isolation, family restrictions unfavourable social attitudes on the part of the child's condition, may result not only in immediate unhappiness but also subsequent difficulties in interpersonal relationships.


Gordon has stated that terms such as "socio-economic deprivation", socially disadvantages" and "culturally alienated" reflect deficiencies in social conditions.

Whiteman and Deutsch have considered social deprivation as a relative term referring exclusively to specific types of environmental factors. According to them any environmental factor may be considered deprivational: (1) if that factor is associated with certain social grouping such as socio-economic status and race and (2) when the environmental variable is associated with impaired performance.

Tannenbaum has concluded that social deprivation may be characterised as a condition in which particular external and internal factors merge to narrow a person's behavioural alternatives for achieving self-fulfilment.

David Beres has viewed social deprivation as "experiences wherein an individual is deprived of the opportunity to develop his capacities to work, to provide for his needs and to enjoy the...

Recent research studies have shown the importance of social interaction for normal human development. As Hurlock observes the lack of social contacts brings about socio-psycho problems. This in turn causes social deprivation.

She further says that social deprivation leads to social isolation. Social isolation is specially damaging to the personality development. It is so in a culture which places high values or moral codes or restrictions on behaviours or social relations. The damage comes in part from lack of opportunities to participate in social activities and in part from the feelings of inadequacy which the deprived person feels in comparison with others.

Social deprivation is most damaging to the certain age groups such as the very young and the old. During the period the individual is neither self-sufficient nor occupied with duties and responsibilities.

How damaging social deprivation is to the personality pattern depends on many factors and conditions, the most important of which are the age at which the deprivation occurs, how long it lasts, what causes it how extensive it also depends.


Many elderly people suffer as severely from social deprivation as from emotional deprivation because the two go hand in hand. While social isolation leads to poor morale and mental disorganisation at any age, it is particularly harmful among the elderly. The problem is all the more acute among elderly widows.

The causes of a person's social deprivation may be external or internal. Some causes can be better controlled than others. Geographic isolation is easier to control than isolation due to social rejection. As a general rule social deprivation among the younger age level is primarily due to obstacles within themselves, and among the older age levels, due to environmental obstacles.

Deprivation is far more damaging to persons who desire social contacts than to those who are self-sufficient or who voluntarily withdraw. Thus an extravert person feels the impact of deprivation more than an intravert.

Geschwender opines that social deprivation always has an adverse effect on personality. Loneliness, feeling of being rejected and being forced to become socially isolated makes the person frustrated. All these are damaging to the self-concept.

32. Ibid pp.236.
33. Ibid pp.235.
34. Ibid pp.236.
The more value the social group puts on social participation the more damaged the person is psychologically by social deprivation. If deprivation is extensive and prolonged it inevitably leads to unhealthy social attitudes and mental illness.

In India widows have been prohibited from participating in socio-religious functions because they are considered inauspicious or bad omen. Hence, widows often feel left out of social interaction after widowhood. The feeling of being deprived on social occasions or feeling of an unwillingness on the part of married friends to include, makes them socially segregated. For a woman widowhood means a plunge in social status.

A reduction in the social contacts and supportive relationships of the widows leads to social isolation, insecurity feeling, loneliness. This is more so in case of elderly widows.

Social deprivation is thus damaging to the self-concept. One may conclude that the more opportunities the person has for social activities, the better adjusted and happier the person will be.

**Emotional Deprivation**

Emotional deprivation refers to the denied stimulus objects which arose emotional reactions. In its broadest sense it refers to any kind of emotional reactions. The psychologists and

sociologists refer to "love" reactions.

Hurlock further says that just as some children can grow up in an environment which protects them from unpleasant emotions, there are many children who can have plenty of opportunities to experience unpleasant emotions and who are deprived of opportunities to experience the pleasant ones. It is to this second group that the term "emotional deprivation is ordinarily applied".

She further argues that studies of emotional deprivation have increased our understanding of the role emotions play in personality development. A deficiency of emotional experiences, pleasant ones especially during early years of life leads to poor personal and social adjustments.

Goode opines, "deprivation of any emotion is harmful to the personality, but deprivation of love is especially damaging". As Jersild says "there is something emotionally satisfying about being loved and there also is something very practical about it". Thus he emphasises the need for care and emotional satisfaction. Hurlow speaks of love as a wondrous state, deep,

37. Ibid pp. 209.
tender and rewarding. Many adults experience deprivation of love, especially in old age and after the death or divorce of a spouse. Deprivation can be almost as damaging to the self-concept in adulthood as in childhood.

Recent studies have shown that lack of opportunities to experience other pleasant emotions result in psychological damage. Here widows of all ages are deprived of opportunities to experience curiosity, happiness, joy or elation. The loss of a spouse brings about the deprivation of love and affection for women especially during young age while for men during old age. Thereby they become apathetic and frustrated.

Hurlock observes that deprivation of opportunities to love and be loved delays the normal patterns of physical and mental development. This in turn affects the personality development. Some of the specific effects of emotional deprivation have been reported to be:

Physical, as seen in listlessness, emaciation, loss of appetite, quietness, general apathy and psychosomatic illness.

Social, as revealed in handicaps in learning, how to get along with people, lack of responsiveness to the advances of others, lack of co-operation and hostility.


42. Ibid pp.211.

43. Hurlock, op cit., pp.212.
Emotional, as shown in lack of emotional responsiveness and interchange (the empathic complex) feelings of insecurity, resentments as expressed in social behaviour, restlessness, anxiety, temper, tantrums and many other forms of mal-adjustive behaviour.

The effects of deprivation of love on the personalities of widows will depend on how much rejected they feel. A feeling of rejection leads to self-pity, anxiety, irritability and negativism at an early age.

The severity and persistence of effects of deprivation of love depends on the extent of deprivation, when it occurs, how long it lasts and whether the satisfaction of love can be substituted from a normal and available source. Deprivation of love is especially damaging to the self and results in emotional starvation and self-destruction at any age.

The death of a loved one can be alarming experience while that of a husband is especially traumatic, which often causes self-damage and psychosomatic problems like shock of loss, depression, despair, loneliness, fears, feelings of abandonment, loss of weight and sleeplessness etc. The widows take a long time to overcome the psychological deprivations and grief caused by the spousal loss. Some of the important effects

of emotional deprivation are unhappiness, emotional insecurity, anomie, mental disorders or sometimes even suicide.

Cultural Deprivation

Chaubey et al observe that cultural deprivation is, "a state resulting from removal or withdrawal of the given culture". A study of cultural deprivation would therefore mean either taking away the individual from the culture to which he belongs or placing him in an environment devoid of that culture. In operational terms it would mean preventing individual's access to the material life and blocking his access to the living styles social norms, customs, values, ethos etc. of his groups.

Das defines cultural deprivation as, "a complex set of conditions which favour intellectual sub-normality in a child" and that is how the term "cultural deprivation" is being used in contemporary psychology. The ill-effects of cultural deprivation not only affects intelligence but also verbal ability of children who have normal intelligence. Wight et al observe that cultural deprivation must account for deficiencies both in experience and the conditions of learning. Deutsch says, "a different emphasis in approach to the problem of cultural deprivation is represented in terms such as "motivational"


inadequacy", cultural maladaptations" and "learning deficit".

Himes in his study on "Some work-related cultural deprivations of lower-class Negro youths" says, "in the present study cultural deprivation is understood to refer to residual personality characteristics that issue from socialization under specific institutionalized preconditions".

According to Hunt cultural deprivation is, "failure to provide an opportunity to have the experiences required for adequate development of the semi-autonomous central process demanded for acquiring skill in cognitive process.

Samant finds four objectively measurable factors such as economic status, caste, parental education and place of residence, together provide a reliable index of the level of socio-cultural deprivation.

In short, cultural deprivation is failure to provide the experiences required for adequate development of human personality.


In India, woman have to re-start an altogether difficult life after widowhood. In Hindu society the norms of widowhood are the 'norms of asceticism. There are restrictions on food habits, dress and remarriage of the widows. They are forbidden to attend socio-religious functions. They are also prohibited from wearing "Saubhagya" insignia under any circumstances. They are culturally isolated and are made to spend their life in constant devotion to Gods. They are also separated from worldly affairs and pleasures.

The state of deprivation is often coupled with stigma. Many women see widowhood as a social stigma. They are discriminated as inauspicious. Exclusion of widows from full social acceptance brings about social isolation and reduces life chances. Their wants and needs are considered less valid than the married women. As a result they are treated as less than their married counterparts.