CHAPTER VI

THE AGED WIDOWS AND WIDOWERs

Natalin Khaitan Nazarat aged 85 years has served her husband throughout her life as housewife who has formally learnt up to 3rd standard hailing from Christian Community she has lost her husband since one year. Soon after her husband’s death she has been attacked by paralysis cause of which she has no Kasu strength to work particularly in her left hand and left leg. This is why I have been seen sleeping always on the platform says this aged woman when I asked why you don’t roam as all your other colleagues. She is left back in her house with a caretaker who is 19 years old maid servant with a child with her, she is paid rupees 200 per month and made to stay in the aged women’s house itself to care aged along with her husband. The aged women though blessed to three sons and three daughters none looks after her except who is unemployed and works as daily wage earner. All the daughters are married and gone to their conjugal families and the sons have left the village along with their wives and children and stay in different towns. The plight of the aged is not fair, she nor works nor does any household activity. She just sleeps and sits on the platform of her house and gets blanket covered as she gets cold feeling. She has trunk problem cannot sit for a long time and due to paralysis half of the body is not active.

Savantrava is married to Rajappannavar who has now lost her husband, since 14 years, lives in two roomed house with her daughter who is also a widow as her husband has passed away 6 years back because of dogs’ bit to her husband who got stitches in his stomach and passed away. This aged widow is left by her husband by his son and daughter. Thought the aged widow is utmost in need of the care by her son she is not cared by him but cared by her widow daughter. Ashok her son lives besides her house in a different house. When wife came mother was
not needed even sister is also not needed, this is how the aged widow expressed her feeling over her son. The aged widow daughter was given after marriage to Anand who was given to Sankeshwar and blessed by daughter who studies in first standard Kannada Medium. Savantravva is cared by her daughter Mahadevi alone who goes for coolie to get rupees 25 per day for her livelihood as aged women cannot see clearly because of which she does nothing except sweeping and keeping rice on the oven, rest of the time she sits quiet.

Mary Victory Lobo is one such widow who is supported by her last son John Lobo when her husband expired 6 years back. She is blessed to 5 sons and no daughters. When she was asked to name her sons she could give names of only four sons and kept quiet. When I reminded her that she gave only four names she laughs I am not remembering her natu son’s daughter reminded her.

Mallavva Ramaling Bhalakar aged 96 years is a housewife who has lost her husband 30 years back and lives with her widow daughter whom she calls as Ganga. Ganga’s husband is died 6 years back he used to drink (wine) too much. Ganga’s husband used to work in military camp, her mother, Mallavva adds her conjugal family members are not ready to give any share in property that of her husband. What to do my son she asked. I suggested Ganga to stay in her husband’s house for some more years or constantly keep on going to her conjugal family so that at the division of the family she may be given some share in the property. The aged widow says this year I am not going to work if I happen to go to work in other’s field people scold my son and daughter that is why even family members are not sending me to work since one year since I am 96 year old. My son does not care me, he is married and lives beside the house in other room, he even does not talk to me. In such a case my daughter brings fodder to buffaloes and cooks food in the evening and also goes to field to earn money of rupees 30 per day. Four years back I have gone little bit sick I did suffer from cold and fever and that
troubled me a lot, which cost a great expense. She adds all that happened because of not praying to god now I have brought goddess, Yallamma and worshipping it now because of which everything is okay. Before that one of my bigger buffaloes has also died after which my son gave milk to drink in tea, the daughter-in-law is not good, she looks at me in different manner. My son lives besides our room and used to not to talk with me, but spoke last time when I was in great mourn in respect to death of the buffaloes. When I asked I think you are in trouble with no support from your son, now what to tell you my son, all grand sons and daughters (son’s son and daughter) are also like his wife, all people discuss and comment how good the son was, what wife is she, she has not allowed to care his mother after marriage. The aged adds never has he quarreled with anybody in the community any time he has a good name.

Yallamma’s husband Jyothiba has passed away and has no issues because of which she say’s she lives in her brother’s house. Her brother cares her. I am living here itself since my childhood as I am living in the same village after marriage she adds.

Subhadra Gayakwad resident of Balagar galli says she lives separately and lives alone and there is nobody to help and care her, so sahib make arrangements for my pension so that I could eat once in a day as I am seventy year old and cannot work to earn. Ellen A. Kramarow in the article, 'the elderly who live alone in the United States: Historical perspectives on household change' have explored that the magnitude of the change in the proportion of the elderly living alone is immense. In 1920 for example only 12% of widows’ age 65 and older lived alone, compared with nearly 70% in 1990 In this paper the author examines changes in the household structure of the elderly in the United states in the twentieth century by comparing the determinants of living alone among the widowed elderly at several points in time.
Since seven year past I am living in a state as if I am alone, in spite of my son Mohan in the house. I sometimes, even today feel that my husband has gone outside and will come back in the evening but alas he has passed away and will never said Leela Jadhav. Leela is married to Parasaram but he has passed away 7 years back in itself-blessing to three children. Now this aged widow is dependent on her only son Mohan who works as a Gram Sevakh and get a sum of rupees thousand as salary for a month. Though he is left by his father few acres of land which is Khushki semi and nothing grows there. Mohan adds I have not seen my Grandfather (father's father) nor do I remember my father's face, as I was too young to recognize and retain, when he happened to pass away from this world. Anusuuya my elder sister lives with my mother Leela since seven years as she has lost her husband. She has a daughter who goes to school and studies in fifth standard.

Paravathi Gangaram Jadhav is married to Gangaram and has three children and her husband has expired thirty-one years back since than she lives in the memory of her husband and dwells with the last son as he is smallest being bachalor. Sushila is the only daughter to the aged widow who has one son and two daughters. Suresh works as a primary school teacher and also looks after mother, but she is interested in Prakash the last son since he does coolie and looks after the family. This aged widow say's I just sit quite, and eat when gets hunger and I work little for a day by serving water, making plates to serve food, fetching water in house and all.

Neelavva Shivaputra Kolli is aged eighty when I asked her how is her life at present she states, I don't have any problem but I lost strength, Kasu, my legs pain, my son is not looking at me, (not caring). My daughter has died since Dodappa was just 6 years old, Dodappa is my last and only son before him I have given birth to Kasturi, Nagavva and Shantavva. Shantavva has expired as she was
small before her marriage that she was 6 years old. Both my other two daughters are married and come to visit me and go away after stay of one or two days. They especially visit during my sickness, during marriages and festivals, they come sometimes, even I go to them, but they are too far away. Kasturi the eldest daughter is given to Bailur and has two sons one son and four daughters. The first son Chonchala is married and rest of them are to marry. I have not been given any pension, I have also given Uttara and paid fees to panchayat people but they have neither given any pension nor have responded to my papers. All widows, Randa Munddar is how she calls widows are getting pension but I am not getting it. I have given fees, photograph to Kulkarni's but they are rejecting saying that I have a male but then my son does not nor the daughter-in-law cares me, I myself cook and live separately, who looks whom these days my son, none looks after me. Both the daughter-in-law and son go to work as daily wage earners. My son goes to do coolie that is to fill in lorries and tractors the goods by which he gets rupees fifty to sixty rupees a day. The daughter-in-law goes to forest and fetches wood as fuel for food and sometimes look after me. In absence of my son and daughter-in-law I prepare food, that is I keep rice an oven for cooking, boil down water to wash hands and legs when they get back from fields late evening. I constantly sweep house, give food to the grandson who comes from school at noon and cleans the grains and grams and sits hear and there to pass the time. What I feel right now is I am cared because I am working though I am aged and I assist in some activities but what. If I get bed ridden, I will not be cared. Aged women who are bed ridden are not cared these days by my son. I pray to god to take me soon before I get into such stage.

Rudravva Patil is married to Rudrappa and stays in natal house since forty years back as her husband has died when she was twenty years old. After death of her husband the husbands younger brother, whom she calls as maidana started beating her. She adds I was beaten a lot and the reason what I think is that he has
designed that I will live the conjugal family in fear of his beating and he shall enjoy the land reserved for her on behalf of his brother. This aged women has no children and she has taken dattak her sister’s son Shivaji Patil and he looks after her.

A widow has no place in society. In older days she was a physical sati, now she is a psychological sati. Even today in modern families she is excluded from festivities. The widow returns to her husband’s house, where she was position, or to her parents house, where she is a burden and is treated as a servant. She gets some sympathy, but not much and she is often considered the cause of her husband’s death. (1953. Margaret Cormarck).

Widower Rudrani is married but his wife has expired, Bhimaraao Palakar the widower after his wife’s death felt there is loss of spousal care, even than after he can’t hear well, his ear has gone damaged due to quarrel. At night he murmurs especially during Hunnivve and Amavashi, uttering that all my house has taken, all my field has been taken so on. He has quarreled with the relatives, he has been cheated saying a government work is going on and we need thumb impression and by that half of the land and wealth is taken by relatives in the last 25 to 30 years back and by that he has little bit gone mad. At present this aged man always sits an platform and keep on chatting and murmuring and says now and than Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, thinks about his past for thirty years. Siddavva Tukaram Hunasher aged 62 years belonging to caste, which she calls as Hunasar caste whole occupation is, Hagga Kalasa. Siddavva though married to Tukaram at an early age she gave birth to Fakiramma after long years of marriage. The aged women Siddavva from Murukod has settled at Nayanagar at Bidi in the conjugal house of her daughter Fakiramma. All the two daughters and a son live under a single roof, eat the same food, since the aged women’s husband’s death in the last 17 years
back at Murukod. The daughter, Fakkiramma’s husband vital too has expired three months back who used to sell roaps made of plastics.

Basavva Basappa patil is the only daughter to her father Basappa and her mother expired when she was undergoing to give birth to second child other than Basavva. Basappa lives in Khudampur and that is why his wife was buried in Khudampur near Kittur. When Basavva was to cross at the get at marriage her father arranged for her marriage and saw that she is married to a Hindu Kuruba man at Hattihalli. Her husband left her for she says’ even I don’t know the reasons and his where abouts’. After some years Basavva got married to Shikandar and was renamed as Basira. Shikander lived with her for thirty years serving her in the capacity of her husband, at Bidi. Shikander was once again in love with Shaida who was also separated from her first husband. Just two years back he married to Kakkari village women Shaida and lived with their in Bidi at Nayanagar Basira makes her living by rinsing vessels by going door to door at Nayanagar itself. She visits her husband’s house, Shikander rarely. Shaida is under plan to go to Kakkeri to live there permanently. Shaida is blessed to a daughter by Shikander and the daughter along with her two sons blessed by her former husband lives under single roof.

Morabsappa Basalingappa Koppadar aged 75 a panchamsali, illiterate says I have lost my wife twenty-five years back and now I have made my living with my only daughter in Bidi though I have son. My son-in-law by name Ballappa Jakati looks after me he even gives some money one to two rupees when needed. I have not got my eye operated, as I have no wife who used to care me after my operation. I have remained in this village since 12 years, and been eating and earning on my own without much trouble to anybody. Kashavva Rudrappa Budihal resident of puruvantar galli lives in her natal house and brother looks after her as she has left her husband along with her son. When I happened to talk with
her she asked a women sitting near by to see or to look after for sometimes as she was doing the same all the time before my visit. She adds, now the big problem is with my son, he fought with me and made me to go out by beating as my brother is there he has caught me (cared me) otherwise what to do. My son is married and has two sons and does not look after me. He drinks wine and fights with me, his wife also fights with me. My husband (aged) left the Uddaggeri and lives in Dharwad so for that I came and settled in Bidi along with my son but after marriage he started beating me and made a house on rent for himself to reside for all these things that have brought change in life have put me into a mental problem due to which I get headache. Sometimes I remember of a situation when my brother's daughter-in-law comes, with whom should I make my living. There is no money, there is no house, there is nobody to care, how should I live.

Mallavva Basavanappa Malashi remembers her past days those she worked and often remembers those days, which she worked along with her husband. She says I have enjoyed days in the past. There was excess rain, the crops grown were good, there was no problem, but today there is full off problem. The women's husband Basvannappa has passed away eleven years back and has met a casual death with no sickness. He was blessed to Ballavva, Paravva, Kallappa, Mallappa, Mahabaleshwar and Prakash. This aged women makes her living with her son Kallappa who does Rayataki as all the sons got divided when the aged man was living, Kallappa is boon to a daughter and three sons who go to school. Kallappa's wife is the care taker of the children as well as the Mallavva. The land assigned after division to Kallappa is Padda a barren land and how he financially support the family is by his earning as a Rayat farmer. Her son Kallappa raises his head and makes eye contact with her mother and than turns his head and looks at me and says' Sir, there is no rain and so there is no agricultural crop, there is decline in the yield. To these aged women adds in the past there were sixty bags now it is 2 to 3 bags. This aged women looking at front door, thinks and says
today people are so and that rain water used to stand on back of cattle's back dubba now they are swetting due to no rain. When I asked Kallappa does the other son looks after the aged, he explains Ballavva is married and lives along with her sons and two daughters. Paravva is given in the same village and if she happens to cross from this lane she comes chat and then proceeds, Prakash has gone to military and is to come back after 3 months as his service gets completed. His wife lives in her natal house. Mahabaleshwar is married and has expired 10 years back and his wife lives in her natal house.

Peter Townsend (1957) in the book, 'the family life of old people' highlights an example of widow, widows sharing a home with married sons, although comparatively rare, suggested that the mother's authority was delegated to the younger women and her role sometimes became that of a subordinate house keeper. She tended to be divested of domestic power and her responsibilities were much more consciously and narrowly defined. When unmarried children lived with old people the situation was much simpler. The right of the old mother to have a controlling say in the home was never in doubt. Even so, the distribution of responsibilities varied according to the state of health, whether the husband was alive and whether the children were sons or daughters. An active woman in her sixties for x often did most of the housework.

Mallappa also lives in the same house but in separate room and cooks for themselves alone whom the aged widow calls malashwar the God's names. Now after briefing down the roles of men he says when we all live in the same house though separate if anybody becomes sick we have to look after, how can we send women alone to hospital. There is need to give assistance by me as I am the alone male in the family. The aged women adds previously there were no rogs and at present there are many rogs diseases due to which there are problems which have
increased at rampant and so also the medical expenditure. She said this looking at a cough bottle carried on by a boy to his mother lying inside.

Nagavva Somlinga Bhagwatkar lives with her son mallappa the third son her elder sons being Rowalpur and Maruthi, Both do Rayataki as their occupation and does not look after the aged women Mallappa has three daughters only where in the aged women stays in home. All the three daughters go to school. Mallappa's first wife has been expired and has remarried three years back. But at present there is nobody to look after the widow aged. She is left to care with grand daughter of age 3 years, to one year, in such as a situation aged women have no body to give a cup of water, as children go to school. The one year old child is in turn looked by the aged women as her daughter-in-law and her son goes to work as a cook. The children after there school look after the child till than she has to look after. Natali Antonibasta Mandos a house wife of antoni basta Takmaro Mandos. She has lost her husband on 7/10/03 begetting four sons and four daughters, when asked her age she says muryeeput Hata which means twenty twenty added three times plus ten, that is 70 years old. Is an illiterate and when asked about education, I am not educated, If I was educated I would have not been here and added my husband has passed VI std. My husband who was aged was not given proper food in time, if he could ask food the second daughter-in-law would say now you want food stay sometime now its 10 'O'clock have food after another one hour. Since my husband died I was said by one of my son that we will not give food to you as-nine days... have completed after husbands death (aged man). Another son said that he could look after me and now, I have made my stay with him he is a drunkard he often changes his decision once in a hour. My daughter-in-law pushed me and I fell down, how long should I keep all these in my stomach, I will tell all to him she said to women sitting beside her on the platform. My elder daughter Jabalin had brought koffin Patti bier which cost rupees two thousand and had also brought 2 Kg of sugar, 1 Kg of chilli powder 2 Kg of sweet, oil and five kg of rice, that is 20
Kg of rice to celebrate death anniversary of her father Antoni basta Mandos. This aged widow is left with 3 acres of land and all the daughter have appealed their brothers to not to divide the land as long as the aged widow is found alive in the house. Only the daughter looks after the aged widow now, the sons daughter-in-law, one of the elder son and In-laws wife care sometimes but at times when quarrelled with family members. She is beaten black and blue leading even pain to walk. But when there is need for financial assistance she is looked and cared far better. This women is little bit cared because of the property of three acres of land she had in her name and is done by others as it is not an irrigated land.

Bhagerathi Hanamant Bageratar has lost Hanamant 16 years back and her first daughter too has expired before the naming ceremony, now including the first daughter, she has six daughters given after marriage to different villages and only son who married and lives in other house. As the wife is not good and used to quarrel with Paravva one of the daughter who has Jaddi of yallamma on account of which she is pinster. The quarrel took place now and then on eve of food consumed by Paravva was more and work very less to earn. The quarrel made Paravva one day to react saying that lets live in different house and the daughter told mother, I will look after you and lets live together and make our living separately in aged mans house. My daughter gets rupees twenty-five per day if she gets the work. My daughter was caught by spirit (air)galli and was taken to Yallavva and removed the Jaddi but the jaddi have regrown and because of which she is pinster, Paravva has been given green card when asked about aged women’s card she says, I have given application in Khanapur and they have not given yet. To this the daughter, the Panchayat people are not fair they give cards only to rich persons and always eat money (corrupt) and we are not given card because we don’t bribe them.
Half of the people are given red cards and half of the people are not given. We are given green cards by which we get 28 Kgs of rice, 2Kgs of wheat, 2 kgs of sugar and 3, 1/2 liter spirit oil. The money to be paid to each card is Rs 180/- per card. The aged women, says all transactions, rashan and expenses are made by my daughter.

As women sitting nearby says since 2 months the rashan is not given, how to make a living now as crops are not grown properly. Usually the green card is given to poor peoples especially the widows but it has changed now they look at faces and give cards. If rupees hundred is given they give card on the spot. If we go there and request to give cards they say you sit there we will think and give. They give cards only under their pleasure not on peoples needs and necessities. The aged land of two acres is looked by my son which he has leased to somebody he takes money and eats he does not give me, even the land is not growing properly these days.

The plight of aged widows is indeed miserable for almost in every age, it carries with it, problems of ill-health, insufficiency of money, unemployment, strained social relations with ones children and ones friends for both men and women.

Christianity has accepted widowhood and remarriage as natural phenomena. Widowhood is therefore not considered a very serious problem, since both men women and widows are treated with respect.

In Islam, widowhood like divorce is a non-issue. Its acceptability in society should be free from the inhabitations and taboos.

In Jainism widowhood is not a serious problem. Though widow remarriage 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.

It is observed that 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 killed him. Widowhood, and its accompanying miserable existence, is considered as an atonement for some son committed in a previous birth.

In the village through widow remarriage is legalized it is not encouraged by community people. Widowhood is a life event that has removed not only persons, closest, support but also reduced the size of informal support network at the same time.

The death of child may be seen as a personal calamity but the death of a husband seen as a altering the several identity of women. Widow hood is almost always accompanied by a deep sense of shock due to sudden, and often unexpected, death of a husband. The loss of husband has created a deep void in her life. and she is found immediately dependant on sons or her husbands’ brother or relatives and such wound is healed only by time.

Widowhood bring sudden and unhappy changes in the life of a woman. Death of husband causes not only a loss of financial and emotional support but brings suffering. in the woman and women is left with feeling of helpless and in many cases a sense deep of depression. Widowhood marks tranjaction from a married to widowhood status which is not smooth, for it means not only a loss of status but also loss of pride, prestige, and independence within the family. For a man of the loss is only a personal grip 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 widowhood to a woman to move hazardous than to a man.

A widow has to wear simple clothes, eat simple food and keep herself away from auspicious functions. Often widow life is moved miserable by her in-laws. She becomes practically a slave, a chattel forced to do all kinds of manual and often held responsible for her husband’s death.

There has been found a direct correlation between age at marriage and age at widowhood. In village girls marry at an early age and boys marry late because of education and need for employment. The marriage age difference between the husband and wife is often the reason for high incidence of widowhood. Widowhood is a category consisting of individuals whose life partner is dead. Most couples do not think or refuse to accept that this change of a status will call them, for people who are reluctant, to face death and consequences.

Widowhood represents a role and status change when an individual loses a spouse, that individual acquires a new status, widow or widower instead of life or husband.

The degree of widowhood problem or seriousness varies with the widow’s age economic conditions, education, caste, family, structure, religion, norms and others.

The burden of widowhood is not the same for both the sexes. The widow is at a great advantage in so far as supporting of family is concerned. The poverty that follows the loss of the breadwinner can send a widow into a demobilizing economic tailspin. It often forces her to move in to a proper neighbourhood with a restricted budget and out of touch with her former friends.
Many widows who were able or unprepared to work for a thing, become more dependent upon the economic aid of the children, than widowers. The plight of the family is much worst when the children are too young to make financial contributions. In few years the family collapses and cease to cost more to pull itself together and to reorganize.

The husband has almost complete change of business affairs, a side from those of buying consumer goods for the family. The widow who knows little about real estate mortgages, contracts, stock and bonds and who know nothing of handling financial affairs, may easily be exploited by others.

In India even today a women 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 firm 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 husband dies and the wife who is unprepared for such situation, faces several problems connected with finance, property and other matters. She has depended upon him for the help received from the parents, Kinsmen, and other may not be either adequate or a constant source of dependance 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 the manager, is far worst than in a joint family.

Since women has derived most of the social position from her husband, he is in most cases, the significant other. it is said, a along everything to a weakness where as it is part of men’s life. When such a significant other dies, the role and function of widow are completely changed. The financial role played by her husband such as a sex-partners, caretaker and companion for most of the traditionally owned
women the basic self-identity is the role of a mother. both widow and married aged had association with their children. Widows however, are more close to sisters and brothers, than married women. In situation like marry, illness, depression widow relied more on children and siblings than the married. The close relationships with children based on obligators are not much affected by widowhood.

The women 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 subjected to total segregation.

Widow becomes physically weak, mentally distressed, sometimes a widow becomes so highly disturbed that she even doubt her husbands' death. She remembers her deceased husband at times. She gets illusioned of hearing his voice and has obvious memories of the dead husband. Emotional reactions may include anger, guilt, depression, anxiety, or pre occupation with the thought of the deceased.

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 become result less, irritated and frustrated and due to her distress of mud, path etc overwhelmed with the sense of emptiness of life, widow particularly young childless and aged widows, show withdrawal from friends and relatives and suffer from personal loveliness in 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 her friendship, as the further ones are 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 found in many widows they also experience disengagement from a power life style and sets of relation and express loneliness as an alternately the state of living. There is significant difference in the frequency of loneliness experienced by aged women in each martial status firmly named women feel lonely more frequently then the married and the never married women. The never married who see, their closest friend lose often feel lonely and the formally married are lonely often if they do not see their close family member.