



A STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WIDOWS IN KURUNJIPADI VILLAGE CUDDALORE DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU.

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Abstract

A Woman plays an important part in the family as a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister and so on. She is a manager on her family and motivating the husband, children for a teacher, a coordinator and fulfilling the basic needs of her family. Poverty, negligence and gender discrimination is the main reason that affected the lower socio-economic status of women development in India. In rural areas most of the women have less access to health care due to insufficient income. Most of the village women's are house wife and work in farm field and allied activities for their livelihood. The research is focused on socio-economic status of widow population in Kurunjipadi village and problems faced by widows in the study areas. Forty five widows of different age groups were selected with the help of random sampling method. Interview schedule and observation method were also used for the data collection. It is found that a husband die and leave or a divorce of a women faced discrimination from the family and community. It is observed from the research studies, most of the widows earning from working in agricultural field and daily workers. More than half of the respondents are illiterate and unskilled. These are the causes of widows poor in the research area. Therefore, it is necessary to provide training in traditional vocational skills like tailoring, weaving, garland making, artificial flower making and so on. These will create job opportunity and starting small and micro business skills, also developed socio-economic status of widows in the village.

Keywords: *Widows, poverty, socio-economic, problems.*

1. Introduction

In a patriarchal society like India women are one of the most disadvantaged groups who are denied the basic rights by the society. The women belonging to the marginalized communities like scheduled tribe, scheduled caste and other backwards classes are doubly disadvantage, because they belong to marginalized section of the society and they are women.

Although fundamental freedom and rights are guaranteed equally to men and women, women's lives remain untouched by these provisions. In the Indian reality, women are bound by inequitable family norms and traditions as well as community and religions rules, which completely contrivance the rights assured to them by law. Further, legal discourse is not above or uncorrupted by social beliefs and standards of normalcy and normality



In India widowhood was prevalent and strongly associated with a wide range of deprivations, including relative poverty, poor nutritional status, poor health, quality of life, depression and conflict. These findings support the particular prominence of claims made about widowhood and disadvantage in the Indian academic and policy literature. In the light of evidence that widows are often discriminated against in the household allocation of resources, the real level of association between widowhood and poverty may be greater than these household level indicate (Sherlock et.al, 2015). Widows in India are facing lot of problems and hardships in the family and society because of traditional norms, cultural practices and beliefs. In a patriarchal Hindu society in which women derive their status from their husbands, widows have always been regarded as symbols of misfortune, and their presence was thought to be inauspicious in happy occasions. They were forced to withdraw completely from the social life of the community and were made to follow a severe disciplined life which made their existence a virtual social death. Efforts were made during the early colonial period to work toward reforms to improve the condition of widows in India. Yet, considerable gender discrimination exists in India over the centuries. Women, particularly widows in India are the victims of social stigma. Discrimination of widows is a common phenomenon which is deep rooted in the traditional values and beliefs of the community. Widows are found to have abundance of problems all over the world due to the doctrine of patriarchy and social debasement. Some of the major problems they face are responsibility of child-bearing, lack of companionship, sexual violence, hindrances in remarriage, control over sexuality and psycho-social adjustment with her own family and society (Sharma and Boro 2017).

2. Objectives of the study

- i) To study the socio-economic status of the widow in the village.
- ii) To assess the economic status of widow.
- iii) To find out the socio-economic problems of widow.

3. Methodology

The study is based on exploratory as well as descriptive research design. Forty five widows were randomly selected interviewed from the Kurunjipadi villages, Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu. The data were collected with the help of semi structured interview schedule. Observation techniques also used during data collection. The study is based on both primary and secondary data; secondary data was drawn from various sources from government records, books, journals, articles, websites etc. Limitation of the study since the data collection, lack of proper financial data and information of the widows were not sufficiently available. Hence it is very difficult to make an in-depth study. The study has to rely more on primary data collected in these research studies.



4. Literature Review

(Padmanabhan 2006), made a study on the “socio-economic status of widows” of the Hindu Mudaliar community of Tamil Nadu. The findings of the study are revealing and exhilarating. The mean age of marriage of the young widows was higher compare to the middle age and old generations’ widows. More than half of the respondents were without any occupation. As a result without any source of income and their dependency ratio was very high. Only those who are literate are able to take decision. It was found from the study only half of the widows get benefit from the welfare programme of the government was the old age pension. (Nayar 2006), in his book on “Widowhood in Modern India” the problems assumes significance since 8 percent of the total women and 15 percent of married women in India are widows and this will make the content of this book especially significant to all concerned. From several points of view the book will have strong appeal to the policy maker, social reformer and scholars of women studies besides social scientists and social activists indeed all those concerned with a lot of significant segment of the population the widows, who suffer from socially instituted but invidious and avoidable sufferings. (Gangte 2004) in her study of Windows in Manipur, the study found that 4lakhs of the widows population and the numbers of widows population has increased in the last fifteen years. The reasons are Army atrocities, insurgency, Communal clashes and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS etc. the numbers of widows increased in the state, and the plight of these unfortunate women becomes worse day by day. Their rehabilitation which is the greatest urgent need is also a far cry, as the government has not enacted or enforced laws to guarantee them their right to an honorable existence. The non-government organizations also neglect focusing working for the upliftment of the widows. (Thara 2004) a study on “Widows in India” found that a widow is surrounded by the culture that seldom she can come out from this. The widows in India are one of the categories of women who are not given importance by women’s studies scientists and sociologist. The study on Widows in India fills this gap, the study was conducted in Tamil Nadu, highlight the living conditions of all age and income groups. (Malathi 2001) made a study on socio economic status of Hindu Naidu widows in Walajapet Taluk, vellore district. A three generation study. There were 340 widows in her sample frame which comprised of 100 young, 114 middle and 126 old generation widows. The study found that the old generation widows had a long married life and hence had a shorter duration of widowhood. Conversely the young and middle age widows have a short span of married life; hence they have a longer period of widowhood.

5. Findings

It is important to study the personal characteristic profile of the respondents before discussing others aspect of the respondents. The table demonstrates the personal characteristic of the widows such as age, religious and educational status is explained below.



5.1 Age composition of the widow

The age group of widows is one of the important for the independent variable which affects for their social-economic status. The composition of the age structure is very important for understanding the social and cultural context of given society at a given specific point in time. The table 1.1 clearly shows, it was found from the respondents almost half of the respondents 44.4 percent is above 61 years, which is proved that most of the problems face by from their family and government, negligence in their social and personal life of health care, also it was found that child marriages is still practiced in the villages.

Table 1.1

Age composition of the respondents			
	Age Groups	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below 45	10	22.2
2	46-60	15	33.3
3	61 Above	20	44.4
	Total	45	100.0

Source: Field survey

5.2 Religious composition of the respondents

The table 1.2 reveals that the study information is collected about the religion of the widows. It is proved that in India, Hindus constitute the majority. That is also evident in the present study, from 45 respondent 91.4 per cent is from the Hindus religions.

Table 1.2

Religious composition of the respondents			
	Religion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Hindu	41	91.4
2	Christian	2	4.4
3	Muslim	2	4.4
	Total	45	100.0

Source: Field survey

5.3 Education status of the respondents

Education is a tool for women to understand their worth and potential so clearly that they will be inspired to see it in themselves. It will facilitate the way for helping women to optimize their capacities and potential and allow them to fulfil their purpose and contribution for the



benefit of both themselves (Jaspri 2006). The table 1.3 shows that, it was found from the study only 11.1 per cent enter high school standard. Most of the respondents they cannot read or write. In rural areas education for women is seen as secondary to marriage. In the absence of child care facilities, the responsibilities of the household continue to be an obstacle to women’s aspirations for economic independence. Women access to the public sphere cannot be total if their opportunities for employment are constrained by the absents of child care. This is one of the problems of rural women’s and widows for their economic conditions in their daily life.

Table 1.3

Education status of the respondents			
1	Illiterate	23	51.1
2	Primary	10	22.2
3	Middle	8	17.7
4	High School	5	11.1
	Total	45	100.0

Source: Field survey

5.4 Status of the deceased husbands

India is a male dominated society; women’s depend on a husband or any male member in the family. When the husband divorce or decease women have face many problems in her personal life of livelihoods and in a society. So we can say that husband is the main bread winner for family income. Hence it was found from the field survey. It was proved that India economy depends on agriculture and rural people mainly depends on agriculture and allied activities. The table reveals that most of the deceased husband occupations are farmers and daily wages laborers.

Table 1.4

Occupational status of the deceased husbands			
	Ctegrory	Frequency	Percentage
1	Farmer	21	46.6
2	Daily Labour	13	28.8
3	Barber	5	11.1
4	Industry Workers	4	8.8
5	Company workers	2	4.4
	Total	45	100.0

Source: Field survey



5.5 Wage status of the respondents

Type of wages of the sample respondent's landless agricultural laborers was explained in the table. It was found from the study areas, forty six percent of the widows out of forty five respondents are daily wages laborers. This was found that mostly they are illiterate and absence of skills in modern technology. Those who have monthly wages from the respondents are almost equal with daily wages. This is because of many widows get old age pension scheme from the government. But those who have daily income are much better than weekly and monthly especially in these study areas. Because weekly and monthly is a fix salary and getting less, so the respondents of daily income have more advantages. It was found from the field study out of the forty five respondents, 16 widows have additional work. In fact those who have additional work from the respondent's age are below fifty years.

Table 1.5

Types of wage status of the respondents			
	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Daily Wage	21	46.6
2	Weekly	6	13.3
3	Monthly	18	40.0
	Total	45	100.0

Source: Field survey

5.6 Socio-economic status of the respondents

Wealth of the household is one of the components of family income. The nature and level of wealth determines socio-economic and health conditions of the people, and demographic condition to some extent. It was found that out of the 45 respondents, 46.6 percent of the respondents have livestock of cattle, poultry and cow etc. The mean value of the livestock is higher than the value of durables. Durables like television, radio, fan, motorcycle etc are having 39 respondents. Out of the 45 respondents only 17 have their own houses. The value of the house is lower comparing with the number of their having their own house, this is because of respondents house is mostly thatched and pucca house. Only 26.6 percent of the respondents have bank deposit.



Table 1.6

Average wealth of socio-economic status of the respondents			
	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Livestock	21	46.6
2	Durables	39	86.6
3	Houses	17	37.7
4	Bank deposits	12	26.6

Source: Field survey

5.7 Status of saving money of the respondents

Saving bank is one of the developments of rural poor people, economic and rural community development. It was found from the savings from the respondents, only 20.0 percent have saving money in the banks and their overall average saving is Rs 6000 only and 6.6 percent have saving money in the post office and their mean was 3200. In this finding implies that now a days the villagers also well aware to their savings money.

Table 1.6

Status of saving money of the respondents				
	Details	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
1	Saving in the bank	9	20.0	6000
2	Saving post office	3	6.6	3200
3	Total	12	26.6	9200

Source: Field survey

5.8 Annual expenditure of the respondents

The table reveals that the average annual household expenditure of the respondents in terms of food, clothing, education, medical, recreation/ festival, house rent and miscellaneous. It was found that the overall average expenditure exceeding Rs 17400 and average expenditure on food was higher Rs 4160, followed by festival expenditure were Rs 4080. Whereas the widows spend clothing and house rent were Rs 3300 and Rs 2790. It was found from the study, we can said that they spend a lot of money in clothing and festival, instead of they need to spend more medical and education it will be effective for them of the children and their healthcare. It means rural poor people need to be awareness significant of health and education for their future life.



Table 1.7

Annual expenditure of the respondents				
	Items expenditure (monthly)	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
1	Food items	45	100.0	4160
2	Cloth	45	100.0	3300
3	Education	8	17.7	1425
4	Medicine	43	95.5	1340
5	Festival	44	97.7	4080
6	House rent	28	62.2	2790
7	Miscellaneous	3	6.6	700
	Total of the mean			17400

5.9 Socio-economic status of the respondents under the village Gram Panchayats

The table 1.8 reveals that the authority of the village Gram Panchayats to look about the of the widows feedback from the sample respondents. Out of the total respondents, thirty five percent are satisfied, which means the respondents of satisfied are getting a cheap price of rice, sugar, kerosene and some items are free from the authority. Whereas, seventeen percent are fully satisfied in their village authority, because they got old age pension scheme and free ration from the government and the village authority. The large number of forty six percent of the respondents, out of forty five didn't get any benefits and development from the government and authority of the village gram panchayats.

Table 1.8

Socio-economic status of the respondents under the village Gram panchayats				
	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Benefits/Reason
1	Satisfied	16	35.5	Cheap price of rice, Sugar, kerosene etc.
2	Fully Satisfied	8	17.7	Pension salary, Free ration etc.
3	Unsatisfied	21	46.6	No scheme and development, nothing benefits from government.

Source: Field survey

6. Suggestion and Conclusion

The research study reveals that most of the sample widow's didn't have vocational skills. Only few widows have training in traditional vocational skills in tailoring, weaving, garland making,



artificial flower making and rangoli. Even such small and micro business skills will allow the widows to take up gainful employment in Kurunjipaadi village. These are the promising opportunities for illiterate widows in the village.

The major motivating factors for them to leave the family/house and live separately are their own decision to earn their livelihood on their own and to protect their children from the negligence of their in-laws. This shows their psychological strength and self determination to live a comfortable life.

Only some of the widows are able to send their children to schools and for daily wage works. This is a major threat for the future of their children. As the religious and castes of the widows don't permit the remarriage of a widow, the young widows have to suffer with longer widowhood.

The study concludes that widow's status is not good enough in Kurunjipadi village and the government should take proper steps to improve the conditions of development and her social life. The study suggested those widows are still toiling below poverty line due to unavailability of employment opportunities on the one hand and un-productive expenses on the other. Their income is not sufficient to meet ends. So the researcher suggested that there is a need to create employment opportunities particularly for the widow's population. Rural poor and widows are need to give awareness of health care, cleanliness, important of education for their child, to uplift through the government and NGOs to step forward for the development and improving for their life and social, community development.

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