

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE: WIDOW REMARRIAGES AND THEIR RIGHTS**Dr. Archana Kachhaway**

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Email Id: archana.kachhaway@siddhivinayakcollege.org**Abstracts**

Maharshi Karve Stree Shikshan Samstha is committed to women empowerment through education. Bharatratna Dhondo Keshav Karve worked hard for the upliftment of women. Since that time, many social reformers have been fighting for rights of widows. 'Hindu Succession Act', 1956 protects the right of a widow in the self-acquired property of her deceased husband without a will. Her right on the property remains as it is despite her remarriage. There has been revolutionary change in the quality of life of widows over the period but widow remarriages have still not been accepted easily in our society. The government implemented schemes like 'Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme', 'Home for Widows' etc. Our study highlights the perspective of society on widow remarriages and consequently their property succession rights. The paper also throws light on probable reasons for the low percentage of widow remarriages even in the 21st century. The data was collected on the E- platform and analyzed statistically. The findings suggest the need for awareness about the government schemes for widows. Though the society encourages widow remarriages, the observations show hesitant approach towards 'Inheritance Rights' of widows.

Key Words: Widow, Widow Remarriages, Hindu Succession Act, Succession Right.

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Introduction

India is a country with fascinating history and cultural roots. It is one of the diversified countries in terms of religions, languages, ethics, cultures etc. It is considered a heritage of customs and traditions. But some of the social norms and belief systems hamper the life of an individual. Widows are one of the target groups deprived in social, psychological, cultural and economic terms. They face hazardous consequences of widowhood in our gender biased society. Remarriages and socio-economic status of widows is low in India. (Agarwala, 1962). There has been a massive spike in the number of widows in India since 2001 as per the census released in 2011. The situations of widows differ demographically but unequal treatment and benefits received by widows as against widowers has turned the attention of the researchers towards this issue. Widowhood in India brings the dreadful

phase in life of a woman highlighted by poverty, low socioeconomic status. (Dreze J. 1990; Chen MA, 1992). Remarriages of Widows are not frequent even in 21st century. Many social reformers like Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar etc. have contributed to a great extent for upliftment of widows and their remarriages. The status of women is changing over the period. Women are benefited by various government schemes. Women are becoming financially independent. Very low percentage of widows is entitled for pensions. Financial assistance becomes crucial to widows to lead a sustainable life. (Chen MA, Dreze J., 1995). Property rights of widows play an important role as far as financial security is concerned. As per the Hindu Succession law, a widow can choose to remarry and does not need to give up her right on her deceased husband's property. The succession law protects the property rights of widows. Despite globalization, financial protection, the percentage of remarriages is still low. There is a lack of awareness about the various government schemes and legislations. Education in such areas may strengthen widows in all aspects. Our papers highlight the social perspective about the widow remarriages and property rights of widows.

Material and Methods

The primary data was collected by the method of questionnaire. The data was collected from various age groups above 18 years from different areas. A questionnaire containing questions on opinion and awareness about various aspects of widow remarriages and their property rights was designed. Basic information regarding age, gender, occupation, marital status etc. was taken in the questionnaire. All of the questions were of the type, 'Multiple Choice Questions'. The information collected via questionnaire was qualitative as well as quantitative type. The sample of 481 such respondents was taken through a questionnaire prepared using Google forms. A Google form containing a questionnaire was circulated through various WhatsApp groups. All the information collected was stored in a generated Google sheet. The data collected in the sheet was checked and verified for the validity purpose.

Observations

Table 1: Table giving age wise, gender wise and area wise distribution of the sample

Age and Gender		Area		Subtotals	Total
		Urban	Rural		
18-25	Males	13	7	20	219
	Females	123	76	199	
26-40	Males	18	6	24	126
	Females	80	22	102	
41-60	Males	40	5	45	121
	Females	69	7	76	
60 and above	Males	3	0	3	15
	Females	8	4	12	
Total		354	127	481	481

Table 2 & Fig.1: Showing proportion of married, unmarried, widow/widower and divorced respondents in the sample

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	233	48.44
Unmarried	228	47.40
widow/widower	17	3.53
Divorced	3	0.62
Total	481	100.00

Figure 1:

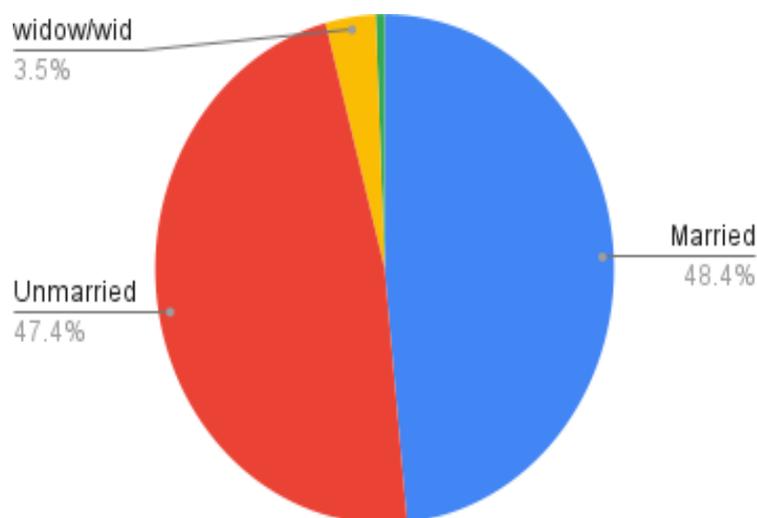


Table 3 & Fig 2 depicting the picture of various reasons behind the low percentage of widow remarriages in the sample

	do not agree	agree	strongly agree
reason 1: social acceptance	35	186	260 (max.)
reason 2: family responsibilities	21	260	200
reason 3 : denial from children/family	42	262	177
reason 4: own wish	83	267	131
reason 5 : property disputes	95	266	120 (min.)

Figure 2:

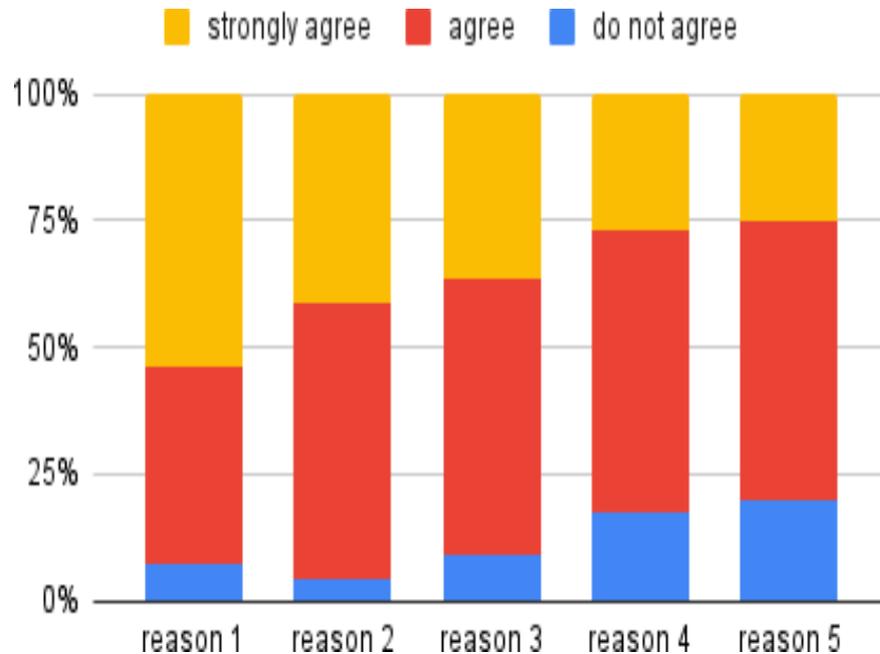


Table 4: Table giving information about current status of widows from Urban and Rural areas

Current status of widows				
Area	should get more acceptance	condition in improving	living satisfactory life	Total
Urban	160 (45.20%)	172 (48.59%)	22 (6.21%)	354
Rural	64 (50.39%)	49 (38.58%)	14 (11.02%)	127
Total				481

Table 5: Table giving the information about awareness of Hindu Succession Law in the sample

Awareness about Hindu Succession Law				
	Agree	Disagree	can't say	
Male	60 (65.22%)	6 (6.52%)	26 (28.26 5)	92
Female	255 (65.55%)	16 (4.11%)	118 (30.33%)	389
Total				481

Table 6: Table giving area wise and gender wise distribution of sample regarding encouragement of widows' remarriages

Area	Encouragement to widows' remarriage				
	Gender	Yes	No	May be	Totals
Urban	Females	266	3	12	281
	Males	69	0	4	73
	Total	335 (94.63%)	3 (0.84%)	16 (4.52%)	354
Rural	Females	83	5	21	109
	Males	15	0	3	18
	Total	98 (77.17%)	5 (3.94%)	24 (18.90)	127

Results and Discussion

The information was gathered using a structured self-administered questionnaire. Table 1 and 2 shows the complete demographic distribution of collected samples. According to the survey approximately 85% of participants were in the age group of 18-25, 26 % from 26-40, 25 % from 41-60 and 3% from senior citizens. The study further showed that 74 % participants belong to urban areas and 26% from rural areas.

Further an attempt has been made to see the most probable reasons for the low percentage of widow remarriages. The problems identified by these participants in order of priority include, Social Acceptance, Family responsibility, Denial from children or family, own wish and Property disputes. It is disturbing to note that even after the advent of modernization acceptance for widow remarriage is very low. (Table no 3& Fig 2)

The respondents were asked about the current status of widows in the society, approximately 45 % of participants from urban areas say that they should get more acceptance, 48% of participants opinion is their condition is improving and 6 % respondents are saying that they are living a satisfactory life. Approximately 50% of participants from rural areas say that they should get more acceptance, 38% respondents say that their condition is improving and as per 11% participants widows are living satisfactory lives. (Table no 4)

The respondents were asked about suggestions for widow remarriage, 94.63% of urban and 77.17% of rural respondents encourage widow remarriage, and remaining 5.37% of urban respondents and 22.83% of rural respondents are not in favor of widow remarriage. Analysis indicated that 65.49% of respondents are in favor of, 4.57 % are not in favor of and 29.94% of respondents can't say anything about Hindu Succession Act. (Table no 5 and 6)

The Government of India has launched several schemes for widows to take action and receive financial help. An estimated 40 million women in India are widows as per the 2010 census. The state and central government schemes that are being launched, from which a widow gets the benefit. The Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme has been introduced by the Government of India to help widows. The widow pension scheme has been implemented under the National Social Assistance Program, from where financial assistance is provided

to widows. (Rajal Dave, October - December, 2020 ;).

The data reveals that about 32.02 % of the respondents feel that Government schemes are beneficial for widows, 10.60% of respondents don't feel that Government schemes are beneficial whereas 57.38% of respondents are not aware about the government schemes.

Widow Remarriages seem to be the vital problem due to a number of reasons. It is necessary to initiate measures for sustainable development of widows within the country. We, as a society should focus on Empowerment of widows through generation of more prospects and opportunities.

Conclusive remarks

The society favors widow remarriages but the percentage of widow remarriages is low due to various reasons. Widow Remarriages should be encouraged from all the groups of society with the help of campaigns. There is a need for improving the thought process at individual level. Issues of the widows are to be addressed at highest priority. More awareness is to be created about the provisions as per the property rights of widows according to 'Hindu Succession Act' and various government schemes. There is vast scope for further studies to strengthen widowhood.

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