

Chapter IV

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summing up

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To sum up the situation, although the war was won five years ago, the battle of rehabilitation for our valiant war widows has just begun. At the flush of the moment, when the wounds were raw, a lot of lime-light, a lot of financial help and social welfare activities were undertaken for them and they did stand them in good stead, to enable them to stand on their own feet. It can be concluded with confidence that to a very fairly reasonable and respectable extent, they have been financially rehabilitated, within the financial constraints of the country, we had save more than enough for them, though enough may not be good enough in their dire distress. Agencies other than the Government have also done their bit and I have seen that they still continue to do something or the other for their welfare.

We had however neglected the lot of war widows prior to 1971 war and although a small beginning has been made to rehabilitate them financially, but the benefits given to them seems to be anachronically archaic and low in the present day rise in the price index and cost of living.

Even with all this, the lot of the 1948 war widows has not been attended to. To imagine or take the view, ^{as} ~~as~~ has been oftentimes done, that the problems of the pre 1971 war widows have been automatically solved, by the lack of action and the passage of time, is to take an uncharitable poor attitude. Their financial and emotional problems, do need looking into.

Another disparaging impression, which should like to be corrected is the feeling in many quarters that the war widows are financially ~~not~~ better off than they would have been, had their husbands been living. Far from it, they are in fact keeping their chin up and living at a very modest standard which in comparison to the home of the living emeralds - ~~in~~ - ~~of~~ ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ their husbands, is rather poor.

I have also had a feeling that gradually, their lot is being ignored. Even the unit and regimental centres to whom they still looked so fondly and

nostalgically, tend to overlook them, even in some cases, even on the memorial days celebration to mark the anniversaries of their martyrdom. It is the case with the ^{attitude of the} common people in general.

It is not totally fair to equate them with young widows, whose husbands were not battle casualties. Most of them were very young and pretty, when suddenly in a matter of fifteen days, the whole of a dream world, went to grey tony and bleak. They had to suddenly start from a match and in many cases tend to infant children and live in constant conflict with the in-laws.

And in-laws — what a world of difference the death of their ^{warring} husband made for these young war widows in their husbands' homes. There were in most of the cases, quarrels over assets, division of pension and custody of children. I had occasion to talk to the other side and my impression is that the older people were unfair to the younger ones.

Bottlenecks, delays, harassments and exploitation by the middle men

has to some extent aggravated the agony of these women and depleted their financial resources and in some cases nullified the good intentions help given by the government and the other voluntary agencies.

They have yet a long way to go single handed. They are really working very hard to justify the confidence and cooperation extended to them by the helpful ones around. And some all they are not ungrateful.

Financial Rehabilitation? Yes!

When all is said and done, this then, is my belief and finding that they have been financially rehabilitated to a fair considerable extent.

But as far as their emotional rehabilitation is concerned, it has not been achieved. True, they say, is a great healer but even in the case of 1865 and 1962 widows, leave alone the 1971 ones, I discovered that they had still a lot of tearful tales to tell. All of them lived in the past. Some thing was snapped deep within them for all times to come. Their children, they felt, were not getting the atmosphere of normal lives. In school, they felt handicapped by the inevitable complex of fatherlessness. Most of them said that their fathers ^{were} still out on a field posting, while others had adopted grandfathers or other father figures: the families, or fathers, letters, decoration, pictures and other souvenirs of their loved ones, were all over in these little houses. Sometimes, I open up his box, laid over Mrs. Parvati Shai, and read his letters, see his uniform, remember all the moments with him and close it all quietly.

A majority of them were subjected to the social taboos of society. They have been discriminated against.

and they were very bitter about it. And most of them, whether in the Javanese temple or beautiful masjid with ⁱⁿ homes, possibly ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ defiance to the uncharitable attitude of society, wore very colorful clothes and ^{are} living with dignity a dignified bearing, in keeping with the traditions of their husbands.

They have a feeling of insecurity and
ostracization. Most of them have no social
life, ^{the type} of which they were so used to. This has
made their ~~emotional~~ ^{social} rehabilitation, all the
more, an uphill task. They are still an
orthodox lot and many of them preserve the
Bhartiya Nari or Indian womanhood image. Any
impression of the merry-widow type, any
generalization of it from stray cases, the prototype
of which can as well occur ^{on} in society as a whole,
would be doing them injustice.

They have renewed their faith in
fellow beings, in divinity and some call
themselves and that helps them to fight
the battle I surmised.

They are not a disillusion and an injury of them refrained from blaming any one but their own stars for the tragedy. They bear it well to no one, not even Pakistan or China or for that matter those at the helm of affairs. Most of them spontaneously praised the prime minister as India's father for the personal interest he had taken in their welfare. Mr. Mohan Giri was also considered to be another a friend, philosopher and guide by a lot of them. Exception was there, but they don't make the rule.

Most of the children ^{however} talked of vengeance against Pakistan, though the educated class of war widows, did counsel them against such ideas of theirs. Specially amongst the jawans' children, this feeling of avenging their father's death, by joining the army was very prevalent. Their mothers were keen that they also join the forces. Defense Services, though I would not say the same about the war widows of officers who wanted to give a free hand to their children in the selection of a career. In fact, it will take quite some time before these women and children can be emotionally settled.

A lot has been done and a lot of work needs to be done as yet to bring about the all round rehabilitation of war widows. According to my observations we can still ^{continue} doing something for them and make them happier.

It will not be wise to close the chapter and treat the problem of war widows as settled. It will be better to revive the special cell opened for them. And as one social worker put it, 'Can we rule out further wars and more war widows? Contrary to this, most of the unfortunate ladies hoped that this was the last war and there would be no more war widows. A liaison is thus essential to keep up their morale.

The attitude of society ^{towards them} has changed. ~~bad~~ Taboos and inhibitions die hard but all the same, if we can show them more than a casual consideration, it will go a long way to emotionally rehabilitate them. ~~Have~~ ^{Have} been ~~made~~ ^{made} ~~any~~ ^{made} visits to them,

They felt gratified, that some one was giving some attention to their cause.

Contrary to the belief and impression they give, I feel, that a large number of them, especially those who are young or without encumbrances or with little children, if talked more sympathetically, will not be averse to marriage. And as Mrs. Robin E. has said, there is no dearth of suitable matches. Emotional settlement will certainly come in a big way, if they are remarried. Even the Jaramas' widows, are eager to be settled with ~~appropriately~~ appropriate matches. A beginning has been made and some trip more could be done by social organizations, even by the government.

A law for increase in their pensionary emolument does exist. And when the government finds it feasible, they ought to be helped with a little more money, in keeping with the index of living.

And above all, their interests are to be

segregated against the unscrupulous exploit-
ation that goes on openly in our villages. We
not only guard, but we invent a law to
keep back these golden hairs as the war widows are
called, goes on. In name ^{only} some of them are ^{re-}ferred
to their husbands' brother and the special person is
thus kept back and axis appointed by the elders.
The handicrafts work

The handicrafts made in the ~~last~~ having
some production centres can be marketed to
our cottage emporium and even supplied
to our export agencies which cater to the large
size demands of other countries for such artistic
handicrafts & embroidery and hosiery.
Those in need of
taken out

Those inmates of infirmities can be
taken out on picnics, even Blower's daughter
lives. Special fets can be arranged where
they may have their stalls and their products
can be sold on donation basis, for a charitable
cause.
Our publicity media, the
and the radio, the
item goes on the

our publicity media, the cinema, the television
and the radio and the press can make films or their-
mitations, broadcast don't ~~their~~ cause
and keep their cause alive. Their husbands died fo-
us, let us, the living ones, do something keep on doing
something for their ones, who belong to them. Stay up to
New Delhi May, 1976

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