

Chapter II

Emotional Rehabilitation

The first part of the book is devoted to a study of the various forms of emotional disturbance which are commonly met with in the practice of the physician. The author discusses the nature and causes of these conditions, and the methods of their treatment. He also discusses the importance of emotional rehabilitation in the treatment of these conditions, and the various methods which have been suggested for this purpose. The author is of the opinion that emotional rehabilitation is one of the most important factors in the treatment of these conditions, and that it should be given the highest priority in the treatment of these conditions. He also discusses the various methods which have been suggested for this purpose, and the importance of these methods in the treatment of these conditions.

Observing in comparative terms, it must be recorded that the houses of the jawani widows, though bereft of a refrigerator or television or even sofa sets, were equally spick and span in cleanliness and comfort of a utilitarian type. This inborn ^{feminine} instinct of women for housekeeping, was also in abundant evidence in the domesticities of the widows home in production centre at Pauri Garhwal, where the inmates had decorated the walls with calendar pictures and in some case shelf portraits of their dead heroes. Also displayed prominently in the case of some brides, were the modest transistor radios. The houses of war widows at Rohtak, however were not as impressive though I understand believe the women up there were financially better off due to comparatively better state help. Possibly, the presence of more children, belonging to the war widows of 1962 and 1965 wars in the Rohtak home, made them look a wee bit humbler. Besides Pauri home had had the added advantage of the sylvan surroundings and the magnificent one lakh rupee worth of a double storey mansion with a lot of landscaped land around for play grounds and a kitchen garden and training classes in the open, overlooking magnificent Chankhamba peaks of eternal snows. They were also cared for by some of the local army officers and non officers. One such benefactor was Brig Meji, a retired K.O. King command officer and the other was the including Mrs. M. M. Meji, herself an ex army officer and Mrs. Jyoti Parde the District magistrates and the two was Shri, Secretary Soldiers, Sectors, Arjun board. A meter and an instrument kept them, without company

Pre-war comforts

To have an idea of the impact emotional impact after the disastrous incident, let me ^{describe} give you the atmosphere in the happy hours of officers and jawans of the Indian Army, on the eve of a war, as gathered from the narration of these fortunate women. Life is fairly comfortable for them and with perks available, there is no dearth of all the good things that go are required to maintain a fairly reasonable if not high standard of living. Subsidized housing and ration facilities, of travel concessions for self and family, medical, postal coverage, canteen and mess concessions, a lot of manpower, even to attend to the domestic needs - these are some of the facilities that they enjoy, besides a good bit of bonhomie and the prestige that goes with the glamour of services. One conspicuous snag is however, a distant posting but in that case also the families get good living and lack of company. The annual leave compensates for the

Hopeful Notes

In this status-conscious community, to be deprived of all this, in the twinkling of an eye, is a catastrophe, which can best be felt than described. All the same, quite a few of the widows ¹⁹⁷¹ mentioned that the air was already getting tense and in a super-charged atmosphere, their husbands would soon be on the verge of some philosophical, sometimes stoical stance. 'What if a war breaks out, and I can't come back? Such sad surmises would however be brushed aside quickly by a dash of usual courage and eternal optimism that dwells within all of us. Some of the husbands had already gone on distant postings and the ^{the} ^{prisoners} ^{of} ^a ^{separated} ^{existence} ^{was} ^{profoundly} ^{pointed} ^{out} of a

by the widow of a jawan. My husband used to be away on
posting for such long spells that we had become used to a
separated living like this. But the difference is this. Then
we had hoped that he would come back ^{one day} - now we know
he will never return. Quite a few of the women & venturers
about the premonition their husbands had had about the end
'Maybe, I don't come back', said Lt Colonel Dewan on the
eve of his departure for the war front at Fazilka; 'But if
I don't, you will not cry for me'. He came back fatally wounded
and to this day ~~Colonel~~ Dewan has kept her immense grief
to herself and it was with rare courage and composure
that she described the scene of the pipe being lit by their
son, still in his tender teens.

Married To the sword

But then there were others, who went to
the war, with high hopes to return triumphantly
but never could. The widows of the jawans seemed
less sensitive about it. Some of them had been married
in absentia to the sword of their soldier husbands.
A very pretty and very young Garhwal girl is Ramcharan
whose husband left for the front, a day after the marriage
'Didn't see his face even', she wept without a trace of
emotion. For her life has remained a life long maiden
hood. Telegrams kept on pouring & enquiring for her in
runs, couriers, & arms from village after village, had laid down their

lives together. Grief was enormous and individual but in retrospect it seemed to have become a pattern for a common cause. In Rohitak Mahila Ashram I found one war widow narrating in all simplicity the incidents that was the collective martyrdom of their men.

Mounting Tensions Were they prepared psychologically or otherwise for the moment of truth? Well, most of them were not; though tensions were building up. For everyone of these unfortunate ladies thought the husband will come back triumphantly. Whenever a plane crashed on a ship, ^{was} or a reverse on land was reported, they took it personally in their minds. At first in quite a few cases, their husbands were reported missing and though the news made them very uneasy, they had hope and still some of them hope that the husbands will return.

Moments of Truth Reactions on the eve of the happening were described with dramatic detail and the tenacity of the situation in certain cases, is matched with the persistence of the path that followed. That fateful week had been predicted on the finest in the horoscope of Lt. Colonel Ved Ghera recalled Mrs. Parvati Ghera. That was his finest hour - the Shikharbhatta battle which brought him the Mahendra Chakra but none could imagine in the family that his finest hour will also be his last. One jawan's family had hoped that he will surely see back on leave. He

All that arrived home was a handful of his ashes. In
an other case there was a letter of love from the soldier to
his wife and shortly thereafter arrived his kit box and
some earthly belongings and his urn of ashes. In many cases
the unsophisticated village women were to rest content with
just the news and even five years after, many widows of our
Jawans only knew the barest fact - 'killed in action'. Some would
specify in a wide way Bangle Dosh or 'Chin ki Ladai' be the war
with the Chinese or in the Pakistan war. Two airforce ^{officers} war widows living
side by side even now in the sergeant's quarters at Lucknow
martyr's home, had expected their husbands, both colleagues in flight
back from a preparation sortie. Instead they brought their coffin
boxes back. As a wife, recalled Sule Dargal, 'I would have
wished to get that box opened up, but then I did not for I knew
he wasn't there - he wasn't dead'. She was not above in
believing or believing in that manner.

A very poignant and pathetic situation perhaps,
was the case of Lakshman Chedha. Her birthday was
around the corner and Tilak had never missed to wish her
well with flowers or a telegram, howsoever remote he would
be. Puja prayers were being held at the house and she was
observing a fast and eagerly awaiting his letter which he always
wrote faithfully and promptly. Why was the letter taking that long
to arrive, she wondered. Then came a tubedar from his centre
on five morning and she stood speechless with her head
bowed - 'Say it - say something'

the shouted - 'what shall I say, Kaya Kaluni, he said and
 bowed his eyes again. 'Madly I cried, recalled to his words
 for every thing seemed to go mad with life. Above all, his k
 arrived and there in his pocket next to the heart, was an envelope
 letter to his ~~body~~ his lady wife, ^{was} already a widow.

Stoical stance The agony of that moment, so enormous and
 understandable was narrated by quite a few of them, very brave
 though with an occasional sob and a fleeting tear which they were
 trying their best to keep back. To take the interviews beyond that
 point would seem to be unwise but again it was the courage
 and inspiration of these brave women, rightly called veerikas
 which helped me continue with my mission. Remarkably
 enough quite a few of them put it all very poetically. Why when
 Mrs. Sushma Kumar quoted freely from the mystical poets of B
 cult, Mrs. Raj Saffayge, a literature student with a post graduate
 degree, poured in a lot of philosophy of life. A strange quirk
 an ironic fate had brought two childhood friends to the same
 way. Sushma Kumar and Manju Misra were classmates. While
 the former was married to an African and the latter to a Jew, and
 both of them lost their husbands in the 1971 war. And I could find
 a lot of poetry in the stoical stance of Manju Misra, who was
 taking the B.A. examination when I interviewed her. Her next
 door neighbour, Parle Dayawanti was taking law examination.
 At almost the same time. Most poetic perhaps, of them all
 was one mother Dayawanti, whose son Jerry had perished in an
 air crash. He had taken to social work in the aftermath of the war
 widows and alone all, she had prepared herself for a career of learning.

What next. Bit by bit, frame by frame, they had with the help of the official version, the eyewitness accounts of the surviving soldiers, the whispering hearsay of all and sundry, rebuilt the scene of the battle. In some cases it was described so graphically and with loving detail of unique pride that it sounded like a story book tale of valour and courage presented in a slow action movie ^{style}. Here and there a philosophical feeling, a candid comment, a sceptical belief, even a cynical dig was thrown in, especially in the versions of the officers' widows. But in all accounts, a deep sense of pathos and privation under gone was very much in evidence.

One of them wondered at the aimless killing, as the ^{part} of her husband by the Pakistanis. They could have spared him. Captain Uddah was on a recess in the front lines, all by his self and he was spotted by the enemy and shot like a Fitting Duck almost. An unopened letter of his wife was found on his pocket. Pahl Kham the widow of a Havildar killed in Jansdome on 2nd December 1965 described all the details of his death with remarkable ^{richness of} description of ~~it~~. He had been exposed to the medium machine gun fire once and when every one ran for his life, he was left alone in the foremost piquets. He didn't want to desert or be captured and stood his ground till he was shattered to pieces by a second burst of machine gun fire in his chest. He had captured 18 morchas, the claimed but no award came his way. Even his dead body could not be retrieved. But then there were Shers, like the widow of a soldier, deserted with a Veichakre, who didn't know or understand anything about the valour of her dead hero. He died in war.

That was all that the land recall and only another war widow in the camp mentioned that about the award. Mrs. Krishna Kumar could reconstruct with imaginative details, the last moments of her husband. He was a very jolly type - the 'Zinda Dil' man, full of fun and adventure and earlier during the Kutch operation, in the midst of fatal firing by the enemy, we had spent our honey-moon ^{days} taking shelter beneath the beds. His first words used to be, 'you are a soldier's wife' and his last ones, while he asked his colleagues to leave the torpedoed ship and stood valiantly on the ^{fast} trucking deck were, 'Don't get panicky, control the damage'. That was on the 9th December 1947 only on the 6th he had hoped, 'I might come ashore for evening'. He never could. Ever the news of his supreme sacrifice was kept a secret for another six days. Then came the via cables that I had lived on one percent hope of his survival. It was blank and bleak thereafter.

Innocently ignorant about the impact of the incident of valor of her husband Naik Raju Singh, was his widow Chandrene Devi. A bullet killed him - Bangla Desh was all that she knew and advanced the book of bravery towards me and pointed towards the framed and garlanded photograph of a man with a valiant look of defiance on his brave face. The citation mentioned about his advance - 'In face of enemy fire and his leadership in battle, Raju smashed three ^{his small son} ~~bet~~ tanks, bragg'd with a justifiable pride ^{his small son} ~~his small son~~'

One notable fact that emerged out of these spontaneous reactions, was the lack of confidence in the official version of the death of their husbands in quite a few cases. Quite a few of them believed that their husbands were alive. I am a 'Subagan', the married one, said Shrimati Sule Dargwal, 'for he will come back from the tortie'. Even the children are told that operations that papa is gone on a field posting and he will be back home for dinner one day. Others felt that their husband or their son was somewhere in Pakistan or living on an alien shore. One such mother is a desolate Dayewanti who believes that Flight Lieutenant Jerry will return some back from Karachi. 'No body found his body or even a trace of his whereabouts, is known for certain and above all the bloody hankie that they brought back, doesn't belong to him'. With such reactions she carries her sorrow while doing social work with a missionary zeal and writes poems on Christmas cards which carry his portrait in all splendour and sends them around year after year. Manju Mine felt that though craftsman Pashupati Narain was killed ^{along with colleagues} by the first grenade that fell on the dining table on the day of attack on 2nd December 1971 at 5 pm after they had taken their food, yet ^{only} the man who survived was the Captain in command. There was no ill feeling or remorse and her information was based on hearsay obviously but it is indicative of class consciousness that certain individuals might have tried to create while extending condolences. Death knows no distinctions and I don't think this unfortunate woman meant to project any reflections on any one.

Contradiction and Controversies

It was the attitude of the irresponsible people, & others which had aggravated the impact of painful uncertainty. Rumor mongers, twisting the scanty details to suit the occasion, had had their way. And in fact they did more harm than good to the cause of the country and its brave soldiers. Strangely enough, in a few cases, they had found fault with the tactical moves and individual orders of the officers, blaming for whose mistakes, their husbands had to pay with their lives. Some of them believed that the government had given a wrong version to avoid owning up a gross mistake and they supported their theories with the eye witness accounts of the details by the surviving colleagues of the dead soldiers. It must be recorded here, in all fairness to them, that some of these details sounded quite convincing and logical. In one case they had converted a transport aircraft into a bomber one and they were experimenting with it, when it was downed by the enemy. And with it went down some precious fliers. Now, according to a couple of their widows, could have been saved by better planning of strategy. In certain other cases, one officer had taken the duty of another, by an arrangement which turned out to be an ill fated substitution for which, often times - the blame of apportioning of the blame on the dead ones, the living ones were easily blamed. The unit authorities, it was alleged, suppressed the facts or gave them a twist to avoid an important controversy. Jost Devi widow of Phlewan Bacha Singh said that the same front, when none wanted to go ahead, in a particular picket, the commanding officer asked her husband to go ahead. He went and next day, his body was found and days later his ashes arrived home.

Exploiting Astrologues

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Another exploitation of the sad situation came from another unexpected quarters. Astrologues, soothsayers and pseudo-divines gave all sorts of beseeching assurances to quite a few of these unfortunate families, even against all the odds and for a very heavy and continuous consideration. So much faith has been placed in such predictions by no less a person than a double graduate like master Le Dargival that she was contemplating a poignant moment, 'will I be of able to open the door when he comes', she asked herself, fighting back all the tears welling up in her hazy eyes. But then there was Brijinder Kaur, widow of Lance Naik Dayanand who was declared missing, presumably killed in action. ^{in absentia} They didn't find his body, but 'I believe he is dead', she remarked with rare composure. Here was one village woman in equal distress, who had taken to the tragedy in a very rational and practical manner. Equally touching and distressing was the reaction of Chhale Devi, widow of Rifleman Khir Singh Rawat of Garhwal: she had not seen the face of her husband in life or in death. Not even the ashes arrived for her; only a telegram came informing her about his death. Dead? ... well, I don't think ... she could say no more, sobbed softly for a moment and regained her quiet composure quickly thereafter. Rifleman Balbir Singh was reported missing off soon after he went on leave enjoying a leave spell of two months. The news was kept back from her by relatives.

fellows in the household because the herveeting was on
and they didn't obviously want the business prospects to be
disturbed by her distress. She was only married for one
year. God alone knows, if he will come back, was her view.
To blame or not to blame

Quite a few of these war widows were ⁱⁿ the
^{about} of the timing of the tragedy, which took place in many
after the declaration of the ceasefire. Most of them blamed
Pakistani army for this treachery. Lt Colonel Ved Ghor was
some of them died a lingering death in hospitals, long after
war was over. Sepoy Kertan Singh came home to die of
wounds while Sepoy Harve Singh died in hospital. Some of them
had died an year after the casualty, thereby adding to the
agony of the heart of kin. Soldier like Daffadar Gaje Singh
died in a mine blast a couple of months after the ceasefire.
Chhamb Sutar and his ^{widow} ^{and} ^{son} received his last
telegram followed by a packet of his earthly belongings and
Lt. Colonel KK Dwan received three mortar fire on his
body sending some hundred splinters in his body and that was on
the 17th of December 1971. Cheerful as always, he survived the
and passed ^{away} ^{on} ^{Tuesday}, later in a Delhi hospital. Prem Dwan could
be allowed to see him in agony nor could she cry for his words
or ringing in her ears; Look if something happens, I would not
go to break down. With grace about it, like quite few of her
counterparts, she had kept up the image, though I had had a feeling
that beneath a composed complexion, every nerve on her face
was quivering with immense untold sorrow, even five years
after the tragedy. She had put up the front.

But when all is said and done, most of them did not blame any one in particular for the tragedy. In a very understandable manner quite a few of the war widows of officers thought that the Pakistani army was also expected to fight and kill and as were our officers and there must be an equally miserable list of war widows across the border, who must be find fault with our war lords for the tragedy. But in suffering, they must have been equally shattered and it was gratifying to note that in all compassions, our war widows of the intellectual type, had had a lot of sympathies for the next of kin of the army personnel, across the border.

Some of them blamed the politicians for the tragedy, specially to when the areas captured by their dead heroes, at the cost of such a supreme sacrifice, had been returned to the army. Stoically in the same breath, they would in the typically traditional Indian way, blame the stars for the sudden change, converting their happy home life into days of endless desolation. Most of the war widows of other ranks were absolutely uneducated at the time of the tragedy, while the officers' wives were usually of the graduate standard but hardly any one of them was a working woman prior to the unfortunate happening. Amongst the jawans' widows Mangla Misra had appeared in BA examination, starting rearing her young ones after the sad incident in her life, while she had been a part in a law degree to equip herself fight out the injustice being meted out to her. Adversity had brought them to bear their crosses more bravely.

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Towards an Emotional Settlement

Mrs Mohini Giri observes, in an interview given ~~publicly~~ in Femina dated 11/15 April 1975; 'They're educated but they were so dependent on their husbands that they did not know how to write a cheque or change a bulb. Every woman should be trained in such a way that she should be able to look after herself - such a situation'. All that the others could do was to go for a condensed orientation course of weeks duration or - the case of other ranks learn the art of sticking, rather late in the day.

Emotional Rehabilitation was a far cry in the initial months following the tragedy. Most of them reflected retrospect how they had gone mad with grief. On 10th of Decem 1971, brother-in-law of Parvati 'Ghai' rang her up to break the sad news. 'I screamed and banged the phone', she recalled. And it was so desolate thereafter, till courage came back from within, from the supreme sacrifice, and from the nation grateful nation recognised it with a maharaja chakra and chone all from the challenge of bringing up their two little children. There was double smile on her sad face all the while when she narrated all the details about such a sensitive subject. Mrs Pushpa Kuman ~~got~~ ^{got} ~~want~~ ^{want} felt sheltered emotionally sheltered. She did not ^{get} any help right at that moment though ^{they all came to my side} ~~there was no help~~ after ^{like} ~~when~~ she found her problems mounting and she ^{was} ~~was~~ ^{begging} ~~begging~~ ^{for a proud cause and I wanted to die} ~~for a proud cause and I wanted to die~~ of all the persons, she recalled, at that time, no less a person than our prime minister Indira Gandhi came to her rescue, when she heard her tale. 'The attitude of Jawahar widows is more realistic; I was foolish, I kept on crying, never realised that I was losing my eyesight', said Pahl Kaur of Rohitak district, looking vacantly in the void, with eyes losing their lustre gradually.

It was amazing to realize the worldly wise sense of self consolation, which had come from the war widows of Jawans, coming from poor peasant stocks of hill and plain families do not break of their own, together sorrows separate them and there is no panacea for the pain of death. This is the feeling of Indebet widow of Daffadar Bhagat Singh. Kande Devi, widow of Haveladar Rampel felt sorry for herself - Naas kar liye (ruined myself), she said in a broken voice and went on to add that the tragedy had made a hell of a difference by way of desolation. Sepoy Munshi Singh's widow Gulab Devi, attributed her sorrow to the Belah Buddhi, attitude of her childhood marriage, early & childless widowhood. At one stage from the answers of the Jawans' war widows, it appeared as though, the question of personal sorrow to ever had become a stereotyped response. Quite a few of them, obviously ignorant of the impact, especially - Rajput and Garhwal families where marriages had taken place in an impersonal manner, their childhood and hardly consummated, mentioned the fact of death and the happenings thereafter as though they were describing a process and matter of factish detail from the everyday happenings of life. Agony of repetition for such women was never intimate and consequently never painful. They seemed to live in a dazed state as though something vague had happened or ordained in their ordinary lives and given rise to a lot of hullo-bello about money matters.

Most of these war widows came from the orthodox, middle and lower middle classes with a lot of faith in destiny, in providence and in human values. Observing ritual fasts, reading a lot of scriptures at home, visiting the places of worship regularly and above all, taking to husbands as incarnations of God almost are common practices amongst them in which they ^{are} quite frequent joined in by their husbands as well. Whenever we were around the corner, the tempo of temple-going would automatically go up. But to sudden and severe had been the impact of the war tragedies that quite a few of the educated war widows had lost faith in God, in human being, in fact in everything, but in most of the case a renewed candle of faith has been rekindled in their inner selves, basically for the sake of their growing children. Some of them couldn't regain that faith and confidence ever to date. The army crowd in the higher echelons are an extrovert lot but tragedies had turned almost all of these unfortunate ladies into introverts. They would like to exist or to exist from moment to moment, use to for the sake of their children or to while away the time in the case of war widows of jawans, who are no longer working as peasant women, or for some constraint or the other.

In individual cases, I found a lot of diversity of opinion. I had lost faith in God, said Mrs Sarla Danguel, but only when my son got ill, I have started keeping Santoshi Ma fasts. She thought that an unequal war between God and man continues to be there. Mrs Pushpa Arora, widow of a Bagnader leader, however felt her faith in God fortified but that in His human beings quite shaken. She found people around dishonest, and her confidence in human values was quite shaken. For two or three years after the tragedy Mrs Raj Saffaya did not go to temple but gradually, the her faith was being restored in God and she had started going not only to temples but to astrology ^{shops} also. Mrs Prem Dewan felt as though she had emerged a much stronger person after the tragedy. Both of us used to pray together, recalled Mrs Parvati Ghai but now she never has. She had little faith left in her. The fact is lost that once she had no the offered her a bit of holy water (Charamrit), she did not what to do with it. 'I used to pray through my in laws and my husband's merit', reminisced Mrs Sumati Bhattacharya widow of a wing commander, but after this betrayal by God I don't find any ^{use} in prayers, though I do pray for the ^{sake} return of my husband. Why do we worship these stones. This question was posed by the ^{late} ^{and my} deceased husband of ^{his wife} ~~an~~ widow and with a sort of premonition in her words, she had replied, 'You can ditch me but these stones won't.' For Lakshmi Chedak, the loss of faith for a couple of months, was followed by more faith, though she believed it was all God's doing.

Brought up in a home which was "mythological" strong
 from absolute faith she had gone to the feelings of faithless
 in divinity. All the same Justice Kumar said that she did
 not pray though she did close her eyes daily for a while and
 see her husband in her soul. About her faith & fellow be-
 lievers she felt that they did not have time to ask about their
 welfare or even sympathize.

Invariably all the widows of the Jains
 evinced implicit faith in God as hitherto she though
 of them felt that it was not God but his human beings who
 had started being ignorant of or even being unkind
 In the same Jain temple centre, they have a regular morning
 prayer which is compelled by their nation, but of course
 one Mrs. Kile Kaper, herself a widow

From all accounts, however, it appeared that an ^{indebted} ~~grateful~~ nation stood to man to help the next of kin of the fallen soldiers. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi feelingfully told ~~spoke~~ this - in the house of Parliament, "The lives of martyrs cannot be valued in terms of money. Their sacrifice is beyond recompense. But a grateful nation remembers its debt and its obligation to them to mitigate the sufferings of their wives and children. The Government has decided to rectify in so far as possible the deficiencies of our programmes for the war disabled and the families of those who had died fighting. The Defence Minister emphasized the special duty which the nation owed to the next of kin of those who had died or been disabled during the conflict. During the interview, quite a few of the war widows, spoke of the personal intervention of the prime minister to get them out of a tight spot prominently. Bonita unit and regimental authorities, central and state governments, voluntary organisations, charitable institutions, schools, colleges, hospitals, banks and individuals - all came forward to help the cause of war widows in a big way."

To atone for the neglect of the previous years, the cause of the war widows was taken up at a mass scale but the country's depleted resources being limited for financial constraints, all the war widows for the four wars we had fought since Independence could not be helped on a uniform basis, some indiscriminate was bound to creep in. And hence, it was felt in certain quarters that the problems of the widows of 1962 war and earlier war had been automatically solved or shelved by the passage of time. To mitigate the hardship of the families of those who laid down their lives and who were wounded in the action in 1971 operation government evolved a scheme of rehabilitation which provided for sustained and adequate attention being paid towards their well being. The most significant feature of the scheme was the liberalized pensionary benefits and made available to the war widows and those disabled which enabled them to live with honour and dignity. With this preamble, a central Rehabilitation organization set up in the Ministry of Defence for the purpose

Although it could never fill up the emotional vacuum, the impact of this immense nationwide aid, immediately after the tragedy, was abundantly evidence as brought out during the project studies of the individual cases. The first institution to come to their rescue was the unit, whose representative came with a telegram, an urn of ashes in cases where it was could be gathered or with the box of remains, the kit and other earthly belongings, the and some money from the regimental funds. The navy treated us like parents, recalled Mrs. Sushama Kumar, Chief Minister of Bombay came home to lend a hand and financial help kept on pouring there after. Even Shant Kumar the widow of the humble Topaz Amittel, who went down in the same ship was visited by the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Nanda and his wife, who gave the homeless widow ^{other gifts} a blanket, sweets, toothpaste. Other organizations gave her ^{even} a ~~hand~~ ^{pressure} cooker. When Chief Minister Khande Patil ^{came} to visit the humble woman she stayed in a sweepers colony and gave her a blanket, soap, oil, pressure cooker and a sewing machine. Mrs. Mohini Devi brought her some money and gifts. The state government gave her a ration shop to run and also a two roomed house to live in. Government granted her a pension of Rs 159 per month for life. For other ranks it was the full pay that the gawwan was getting at the time of his death, which was then given to his widow while for the war widows of officers it was three fourths of the pay their husbands were drawing when they got killed.

Deaths, war retirement gratuity, bounty, awards, eaglet
 payments by states, areas of general provident fund, the
 insurance money in case of comprehensive insurance
 etc brought a lot of financial relief to them. Besides
 the monetary help, the state governments gave them each
 either a plot of land or a built up flat & since some of the
 banks came forward to give them loans to build houses.
 The India oil gave them lucrative gas agencies to dis-
 tribute cylinders. Widows of the jawans were given retail
 shop and kerosine agencies and quite a few of the
 business houses gave the educated war widows jobs
 in their offices. ^{One} of the more fortunate ones, came to her
 a lucrative job as housekeeper, while some of them like
 Indira Chopra and. Indira Singh got jobs as successful ^{Tele-}tele-
 and radio producers. Quite a few of them became teachers
 in schools and colleges and in addition took to social
 work to better the lot of their less lucky sisters.

For the children of the war widows, quite a few
 institutions provided free education, cost of stationery
 and books and even uniforms. Modern school and the
 Yeoman service to these children. War widows Association
 provided them with a residential hostel at Ghazipur in Rohini
 district. Some ^{of the} students are housed in a comfortable
 modern hostel building where boarding and lodging is provided
 free to the children of jawans. It is a peaceful place set
 in the countryside but it has a lot of amenities, including
 a television set.

Voluntary hands of help

Voluntary organisations came to help in a big way but the help could not be enough in terms of monetary benefits. Quite a few widows were sore about such success and alleged that they were more concerned to get into lime-light than champion the cause of the unfortunate women. Basically the institutions like the War widows societies under the charismatic leadership of Mrs Mohini Devi, did procure a lot of donations from the noble charitable and philanthropic bodies mainly to finance the cause of the war widows of Javans. But for those of the officers, their help was more towards their unassisted rehabilitation ^{in at the Respite Home} at work, she would just pick up the phone, ring herself the highest dignitaries or the persons concerned and request them to help the needy ladies. He used keep on dictating letters and with a team of ladies like Mrs Veena Kishore and Mrs Sawitri Nigam and in special their old secretary Mrs Soni and just one clerk Ramakrishna, they were able to manage quite a few things for the war widows. Bibi Hummatul Islam at Rajpura and Bibi Sudea Kamal at Chandigarh and Mrs Thant Kohler at Lucknow and Mrs Ushida at Jaipur are just a few names of helpful ladies who stood by the war widows in their hour of distress.

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A classic example of individual help at a personal level is the voluntary effort of one Pratap Singh, who runs a thekud sandak school for thirty children of war widows at Nainital. The teacher does not take any salary in that school of dedication which is run on the donations of temples around the place. Even army training is imparted to the young ones. The school needs recognition.

The point at issue which needs examination about this spontaneous help which I ^{looked} ~~examined~~ ^{into} ~~examined~~ at length, was whether this help was available in the flush of the movement during the initial days of distress or was it continued. Most of the widows felt that their lot was being gradually neglected and their cause was being forgotten under a very wrong notion that they had become better off. Far from it, I found that they are just able to keep a facade and struggle hard to make a reasonably adequate living. About the neglect, Mrs. Jaisriwan Amargit, the widow of a major killed in Chhamb complained that while the old regiment did care for us, the new ones have stopped ^{even} ~~even~~ sending ^{even} ~~even~~ the invitation card for the Chhamb Jaiwar Day - but as they used to. It was only a symbolic gesture for which she could not even otherwise, in her busy schedule of work, visit the unit on that day.

The indifference of the inlaws was one issue on which I found a consensus of opinion in the case of the war widows of the Jawans and the officers. Such pathetic tales of apathy ^{appalling} apathy were narrated with feeling that one wondered as to what had such intimate human relationship, had some to. Perhaps the most poignant case on record is the one quoted by Mrs Mohan Devi, 'Aduni khe lige, roti bhi khayegi' - (You have devoured your man, you need devoured food as well?). Binola, widow of Rifleman Ame nand Beloni, killed 5 Bangle Desh had this caustic comment to hear from her inlaws - ou Ladke mar gaye, hamari tareef se tu bhi mar ja. tulaay Sharam kam, urdon of depra on prakash, was also threatened. They threatened to kill me, the said with a choking voice and now when she had come to the widows infirmity at Rohatek, they were not redirecting her letters and much worse, they were trying to break my person as she put it pathetically. Quite a few of the war widows of Jawans complained of the fraudulent thumb impressions of theirs, having been forcibly taken and most of the money that should have been belonged to them, misappropriated. With rare resignation, quite a few of them had left all their earthly belongings including the monetary dues, lock stock and barrel to the unscrupulous and diffident

relations - law and run away for all the regiments
to the haven of martyr's home.

Not only the the peasant people were
difficult with their unfortunate daughters & law, ⁱⁿ the case of opulent ones amongst the officers' relations
was equally oppressive. Mrs. Veenie Mehta, the widow
of a major killed in the Rajasthan sector, was dragged in
endless litigation by a very well to do father-in-law
who owned a paternal mansion & a ^{and office in only} parish Delhi local
and ran a prosperous business. In many cases it was in
the proverbial conflict, it was another pitched battle,
wherein, though quite a number of the people & the older
generation didn't quite succeed in depriving the
daughters of law of their deserved dues, yet they
made life a hell of a thing for them. Putting it very
candidly, Mrs. Kishori Chaudhry, widow of the war hero
major V.R. Chaudhry, who served in Malabar & then
gorkh sector said, Parents never change, in laws do, the
was living with her parents in a modest home in Delhi,
though she did not complain specifically about her
in-laws. But there is an indirectly connected ^{in some} ^{stated} ^{to}
tale about the unfortunate situation. Rattan was ^{to} ^{go} to
to go to Nagaland but he ^{opted for} ^{the} Shakerpore posting
instead, which at the instance of his doctor father, who
hated from a village called Kanjpur in that sector ^{but}
which he wanted to ^{be} very much to be captured for ^{being}
sentimental reasons and visited by his son. Some
how it had to happen like this, she consoled herself
apportioning the blame more on her
stars than ^{anybody else}

The Rai reporting in the Times weekly dated 16th January
 1972 has quoted the case of Bhogmati widow of ^{supra} Ram Singh
 killed in the Eastern sector. Her parents will not take her
 back for this is contrary to Jati custom. There is nothing to
 bind her to her in-laws: In another case, according to her,
 the mother-in-law and sisters-in-law whisper that Kal mouli
 (the unseed one) has come to their house and seduced their
 son. As a penance, she is expected to do all the heavy work
 in the house. She is not allowed to attend any functions
 while she is young and desirable. This goes to prove the hypothesis
 that there is little happiness for the war widows in her in-laws
 home. In another case quoted in the article, when the a
 war widow shifted to her parents' home, her in-laws refused
 to talk with her when children. So much so that when her father-in-
 law died she was not told of his death. A rich land lord, he
 had cut her and her children out of his will!

Individually, the widows of Jarwas had tales
 of oppression of in-laws, to tell. Dolly, widow of craftsman Mehr-
 ban Singh killed in Amritsar sector in 1965 that only her only
 daughter had been snatched away by her sister-in-law and she
 was not even permitted to see her. In a voice cracking with
 emotion she narrated how her in-laws had snatched
 her buffalo and the proceeds of the ration shop all the
 then and gave her nothing to subsist.

Manju mise, widow of craftsman Pruspet. Nara Hing
 revealed how her inlaws wanted all the money, even the
 parents don't tolerate, when we look up for something, she
 lamented. She had some other mortgaged house along with her
 little son and the attitude of the older people in the family
 thus summed up by her, they don't ask me to have back. They don't
 even know or care to know. A remembered wife
 Lakshmanee faced double resentment for the old inlaws
 and the new ones in the initial stages. Her previous in-
 law wanted a plot of land although she had had plenty
 of property already. Inlaws disturbed me emotionally
 recalled the philosopher Ishwara Kumar. They had threatened
 but not taken any of his money. They were asked her to
 with them. Inlaws gave endless trouble to Shanti Kumar
 wife widow of Topas Amittel. There was even an enquiry
 and the pension was divided.

Bifurcation in Bitterness

About the division of assets, emoluments,
 pensionary benefits and insurance money, quite a
 few war widows brought out the fact that either through
 government intervention or ^{simple} litigation, bifurcation in
 bitterness had taken place. In the case of Jaiwan's widow
 where the amounts were meagre, this had meant a
 lot of hardship.

Not all the inlaws were cruel. In few exceptional cases, some war widows, both of officers and jawans acknowledged that their inlaws were tolerable and considerate. With grace abounding Mrs. Prem Dewan emphasized the point that her inlaws haven't touched a paisa of her ~~possession~~ property and they were always out to help her though she chose to live independently along with her two sons. Similarly Gauri, widow of Rifleman Bhep Singh asserted that she had had no trouble from her inlaws though the elder brother of the deceased was a little diffident with her. Gopjiwan, widow of major Amarjot Singh said, 'I get on pretty well with my inlaws. I have only ^{elder} one law and another - law who is a father figure in the family. There was no division of assets. Even the insurance money which was in the name of the mother-in-law, was graciously given back to Gopjiwan. Gurbinder Wariach, whose husband was a major from Patiala, is reported missing presumably dead, reported to be mixed reactions. Initially her inlaws were very nice to her, hoping that the tax would come back but with the hope dying day by day, they think that he will not come back, they are giving a bit indifferent.

The Golden Goose Feeling

The rationale of indifference of inlaws was explained by social worker, ^{Shanti} Kohli, who looks after the war widows Association at Lucknow. The war widow is like a golden goose ^(sonaki مرغ) to the inlaws, specially - the son of other ranks and they do not want to lose her or her money. There is a rule that the marriage of a ^{war} widow to the brother

of the deceased, doesn't depend on of the special provision. To
 implement the rule, some of the war widows have been married
 on paper to a ~~brother-in-law~~ ^{in-law}, in teens or even less, and when
 such a marriage is reported, friction sets in. This really is their
 issue dated 16 to January 1972 has highlighted the case of
 a war widow, a captain's wife who and a girl who was
 was being forced to marry an 'uneducated, immature illegi-
 timate' of a younger brother-in-law ~~family~~ which she was
 threatened with dire consequences, including the kidnapping
 of her daughters.

A word with a partner

To have the reaction of the other party, I talked to a
 mother-in-law, Mrs. Dayasanti, whose son Sgt. Bient Jerry
 was killed - a crash. Her daughter-in-law had been
 married to a friend whom the uncle called 'Bhai' had been
 deserted by her husband, Dayasanti got nothing as a separate
 war heroes' mother. And she faced a lot of allegations, and
 charges and litigation. She lamented that - he had been, even
 when she wanted, she could not adopt her son-in-law as a son to be
The Legal Loophole

It is time that the government does something
 to do away with the faulty legislation through its intention was
 an honest effort to preserve the unity of the families. Similarly
 the system of payment to the war widows can be streamlined
 so as to avoid exploitation if any by the in-laws

Ours is still a closed society, orthodox and ancient, when it comes to the connections of marriage. 'Pati Parmeshwari' concept of husband as an incarnation of God does persist and even though the army crowd, especially in the officer's class is an enlightened lot, yet when it comes to social taboos, they are not above others in their thinking on the subject. Mrs Mohini Giri mentioning about the pitiable plight of Rajasthan war widows of Rajasthan, highlighted a sad state of affairs. Quite a few of those brave widows of jawans from that area still prefer to put dirt to their selves, would still like to perform the ghora ceremony of self immolation.

There is a

One of the vital questions, to which an answer was ^{primarily} vitally required, to gauge their social rehabilitation, was asked about the taboos and inhibitions they suffered from as a consequence of the tragedy. A majority of them were unanimous on the point that by and large these taboos did exist and they were the victims of it. There is a saying in our society that 'a widow will go through her widowhood but the people won't let her'. This is exactly what happened in many a case. The initial reaction of reticement about their good living, came from the parents-in-law. Although good all the war widows mentioned that something deep having been snugged deep within them, they would themselves

The indiscriminate attitude of society was summed up in few words by Mr. Anshu Kumar - Tarun Daye Dikhetay Bari (as though they are being charitable to us). Even allegation of immorality was attributed to a few. People forget, said Mrs. Kishori Chaudhary; they grow distant; none of those every friends send us the Christmas and New Year cards, they write to. Any way was it doesn't hurt.

A question was posed, 'when the drums at last fall silent and the flags are put away and the cheering crowds have dispersed, what sort of future lies ahead for the widow?' Mrs. Mohini Devi seemed concerned about a feeling whether the interest in the welfare of the war widows was waning. Well, my assessment is, it is, by and by. The situation is much more miserable in the case of the war widows of Jaisans who reside in the interior up-country areas. They continue to suffer from the taboos, handicaps and intimation of a antithesis village society. Age old attitudes, prejudices, biases and taboos cannot die hard. It is the course of these brave women and their will to live for their children, that is seeing the through, during the desolate days. I came across people who were convinced that the war widows were doing very well, even better than before which I consider to be fallacy and need to be corrected forthwith. With all their social handicaps, they keep a facade and a much misunderstood smile.

Most of the jawans and officers killed in the 1971 were in their early thirties and already married at least for three to six years, if not more. Wisely enough, they had, in most of the cases already planned their families. One or two issues in many cases, a son and a daughter, in some just two daughters had already arrived. In the case of slightly senior officers, that is, ~~lieut~~ lieut colonels, the children were now grown up in their later teens. In the case of jawans also most of the widows of Jats of Haryana and Punjabs and Rajputs of Rajasthan and Garhwals of UP, had had one issue or two, though in UP I came across the maximum number of children widows.

These women with encumbrances found living an uphill task and suffering was aggravated by the tenderness of their ages, sudden uprooting of the family for the famine and comfortable environments and the psychological impact that the tragedy was going to make on their impressionable minds. Some of the children were born posthumously and they would never know the love of father. Even other children, most of them too young to realize or remember anything, didn't recall anything about their fathers. Some of them had in the primary stage of education had had a vague idea about what all had happened. From the tender ones, the knowledge of the tragedy was kept back deliberately and for understandable reasons. To the grown up, some of the sensible mothers, had discreetly explained the sad situation, acting as a mother as well as

a father as they put it. At that impressionable age, children
 of war widows of Javans in the village had learnt something
 about the whole thing from hearsay and gossip. Though
 their simple worldly wise mothers to a large extent, treated
 them in the same psychological manner.

Papason's Field Posting
 Papason has gone on a field posting, this is what
 the most of the youngsters were told and sceptically some
 of them wondered as to why was he taking that long to
 come. The stock explanation, ironically poignant
 and pathetic was very naturally required for a feeling
 of reassurance, especially in the company of other children
 of their age group, whose fathers and mothers gave
 them a life of fullness and promise. All the same,
 despite the best of care and comfort, but these unfortunate
 women loved give to their children, they did suffer
 from a complex, a sort of handicap, especially the
 school going ones. Moreover, all these mothers, having
 suddenly become working women, they couldn't get
 the pampering and attention which is essential at
 that age. At places, the widows, specially of the
 Javans, who had only a daughter or two, seemed
 to feel a little more concerned and indulgent.
 Even in Garhwal regions there is girl's not
 unwelcome as is as much prized as a boy,
 the feeling of a female child as a liability
 was in evidence amongst the widows of Javans
 undergoing training at the training centre at
 Pauri.

These children are a source of great solace and courage to their mothers. My ^{sons} children, observed a solemn Mrs Prem Dawa knew everything. They performed his last ceremonies. They are 'extremely sensitive'. One day, the eldest one came and whispered, 'I want to go and do something and earn, so that you don't work anymore'. Philosophically Mrs Dharma Kuma mentioned that she was teaching 'simplicity to her children. She is doing all that for them, which two of ^{us} them would have collectively done'. Mrs Manju Mehta was sending her only son to a better school at an extra cost, to give him the best of education. And the boy managed to 'justify her confidence'. He 'loved his children', said Hanserani Joshi, the widow of a Hawaldar, 'and I am doing my best to give them the same feeling. Her younger son wants to be a pilot. One child of a Javan wanted to become a doctor.

Some of these children did not want to know that their fathers were no more alive. To get over an awkward situation and a complex consciousness, Major Ghai (posthumously awarded MVC) son keeps on telling other students, 'My father is in the army. I try to tell them, said Mrs Parvati Ghai but they do not want to know'. Others said they had to deal with their children more diplomatically. These children are the living memorials of a martyr 'Jai Borkar' who had his 'Mihari Hair' was another poignant reaction of a war widow. 'I want to be a cricketer', declares the little son of Major Mehta, who himself was a very good cricketer. They all lack the companionship of a father figure in the house and to that extent, their development suffers from childhood.

Here I would like to quote three very touching reactions of two children from Times weekly (16th January 1972) In the days after receiving the news of her husband's death, crept into bed late at night after putting the children to sleep. A little later, her son slipped into her bed, held her hand and said whispered, 'Don't worry, I'll grow up soon and look after you. Mrs Savitri Khanna's daughter ~~once~~ wrote this letter to her Daddy a year after his death when he could not come to the school play; My darling Daddy,
My darling Daddy,

How are you in heaven? Hope you like me in my play. With love - Meera.
Mrs. Usha Singh's daughter Poonam made a resolve in a letter to her father; 'you died for the country, I will try to be a good girl.' She drew on the letter ^{India} the tricolour with her father standing below it. Poonam was then seven years old. Such reactions have fortified the resolve of these brave women to live, work hard and live well for such loving children. I talked to quite a few of these cheerful children. They did not betray any emotion and their sense of reverence and discipline was remarkable. Perhaps a shade better than those who had both the parents around. In almost all of them, I noticed a remarkable sense of restraint and sublimity whether they played in the dusty grounds of Rohit's infirmary or the parish place like Masjid Moha Extension Area.

Answer to another important question regarding their future association with deferra services, indicated an instantaneous yes in the case of Jawari's widows who felt that the right place for their sons was in the army. In Garhwal there is a village called Richhaver Raand Gauri, the widows village where in the world war one, all the adult males who had joined the army had been killed. With such traditions, the child of the war widows of, interviewed at Pauri felt that they would gladly send their sons to the army. And those of their sons who understood, talked of taking a vengeance for Pakistanis. Sampatti widow of Lane Nait Rajwade Singh Bisht said her son Dinesh aged six, was keen to join the army. Jivani widow of Leproy Hans Singh had this to say, 'He is finished but the army is for us, if he lives, my son will go to the wars one day. Havelde Jothi too also wanted to fight it out with the enemy. Don't cry me, one day I will grow big and kill the Pakistanis who killed my father' these are the words of Satya Devi as recorded by Pahl Khan, widow of Havelde Omprakash. All these were typical reactions, mostly spontaneous, some times tutored but there was at least one note of dissent and for very good humane reasons. Smt. Devi widow of Rifleman Boker Singh, mother of four children, when confronted with the question,

would you like your son to join the army, turned for
a painful pause and added tearfully - Meri ek hi beta
hai - I have only one son - and he is good at studies.

for these small children
Although it is too early to predict any future
but most of the young war widows of officers had had
their reservations about their sons joining the army. They
wanted them to become engineers, doctors, chartered
Accountants and if they so wished, go in for the army
even. The widow of an air force officer, wanted her two
intelligent girls, ~~to go in for the army~~ to go in for the
I.A.S. A Jawans widow wanted her son to become a
doctor, though he wanted to be a pilot.

I met a lot of ^{them} children ^{have} studying
at Jhejjari and Sanwar school and others at the
modern school. By and large, they are being
well cared for and I have every reason to
believe that they will do very well for themselves, if
they have behind them, the beacon light traditions
of martyred fathers and self-sacrificing mothers
who have seen a lot of suffering. They appear to
be a cheerful lot and good at study but in
a number of extra-curricular activities as well.

Who will marry me?

On the sensitive question of remarriage, their reactions were varied and mixed - ranging from the stereotyped, to the bold ones, based on rational and practical ^{considerations}

Gulab Devi, ^{widow} of Sepoy Mundi Singh killed - Bangalore 1977 was hardly affected when her husband died but her views ^{five years} ^{after} the tragedy, had become very mature. She Ek hi baar keti hai (really), for once & for all ^{she} ^{said} ^{reflectively} and then added with a sigh, Bhais, who will be prepared to marry meri Sharam Kam whorish of Sepoy Om Prakash was also killed - the last one, had had offer of marriage with her by the law but she refused and was not able to go any where. she came to her parents. Givani widow of Sepoy Hansa Singh killed - Jaipur ki baat some do, others don't do. one marriage turned out to be a nightmare and she couldn't think of another. Besides she felt that she did to much for me, let me at least do this much for him. I remain a widow of his. Kamla Devi widow of Havalla keti Jaye, let this life pass away, have had goh zindgi let the children do well, what is there - marriage.

There was so much attachment with the happiness of their husbands, that quite a few of these war widows, would not like to change their widowhood for the remarriage. I have never thought of remarriage, said Mrs Indira Kumar, many for the sake of my children. I have never felt the absence of my husband, who had given me so much of love, which is enough last for centuries. Sadion ke hige Kati hai.

A very sensibly beautiful view was expressed by Mrs Prem Dewan; she never thought of remarrying; I was so frightfully happy for such a long time. But now like the younger girls to settle down, for it is a long story. Mrs Narvesh Ghai though she missed her husband physically and metaphysically she would not think of remarrying 'I could never give his place to anyone else and who would be so good to me?' she reflected. Mrs Gursunder Woraich felt that it was very difficult to get remarried, when have kids? she has two daughters.

Some of these ladies who believed that their husbands were not dead, didn't consider themselves widows and as such never thought of remarrying. Even the widows of Jawans expressed willingness to be remarried but their claims were entangled in red tape - 'I am going to recommend and forward their applications, said Mr. Wright, secretary soldier's affairs, Airman Board ^{at Peshawar}. Ladies like Kishori Chaudhary and Veene Mehta were less forthwelling and more practical in their views on this issue. Although she missed him physically every moment yet she was not averse to the idea of resettlement in life, especially at an age when her children were very young and adjustable. ^{Even} with all this when people had tried to put this idea in her mind, Mrs Veene Mehta was not prepared mentally for it. And she she quipped, 'I had had proposals, but they were in direct what is the use'. She found herself in the same boat with Kishori, seated next to her. And Mrs Chaudhary added a rejoinder; 'No one has come out with the proposal for a marriage. ^{It was difficult to live without} ~~It was difficult to live without~~ it is not seen to be so far. And

Voluntary organisations had however taken up the case project 'mass marriages' and the war widows association had done a yeoman service to rehabilitate a lot of Jawans' widows that way. There is no dearth of good boys, gallant and chivalrous who are prepared to go in for marriage with those girls, said Mrs. Puri, who has performed Kanje Dan for a large number of her daughters. Shramyug reporting the remarriage of five war widows, under one mandap on 23 March 1973, commented that dreams had blossomed once again in the dry eyes of them. Tribune of November 20, 1975, carried pictures of the mass marriage of another 42 war widows on its front page. Other papers all over the country felt jubilant about it. Each marriage cost about Rs 2000 to Rs 2500. Gifts included a bedding, two suits, a bicycle, a watch, a wrist watch, a mangle, a woolen shawl and a sewing machine. Life had begun anew for those war widows of Jawans. Lions Club had been very helpful in their marriage. A couple of Swiss had tampered the caste system, some of the officers, it was reported had come from the engineers and even IAS officers but some ^{for few Jawans' widows} had come from the South, state widows were not prepared to go that far. For the officers' widows, Mrs. G. B. Singh, the Chandigarh President of War Widows, felt, that it was difficult to get suitable matches & also they were not looking forward to get remarried since they were adequately settled.

But that I am afraid is not entirely true

I agree with those who have quoted some white
reproducing the reactions of these children of war widows
with their children cherishing fond memories of their father
the says; 'how can these widows remember,

How, it will be worth while to refer, to the case
of those war widows of Jawans, who were for time
time asked to get remarried to their brothers-in-law
As I have observed already, this is more of a business
proposition to keep back the special pension and other
benefits that the widows get, in most of the cases. And
what oppression. One of the unfortunate widows reported
that any resistance to the dictate of the in-laws in these
matters, got her a beating from her ^{in-laws} (the elder sister
in-law. And even if they were resettled, that way,
the money in many cases, had been spent on the marriage
of the ^{in-laws} in-law. I studied the case of an officer
war widow, remarried to another widower army officer
thoroughly enough; she confided; but her new husband
so I find a strange bondage in the new kinship, she
had however to do double adjustments, with the old in-law
and the new ones. She had had her child from the previous
marriage, he had had his from his previous one. And
the new wedlock had added one more member to the happy
family and almost all adjustments were possible.

I didn't get married to the brother-in-law, remarried
Mangsi Devi widow of Rifleman Bellini Singh, for one marriage
had not gone ended happily how could the second? Such
a thing was not without its rationale

None of these women, could get away from the past. They would not like to forget every moment of it, though the parting was so painful. Pictures of honeymoon days, moments of happy family life, autographed souvenirs of their comrades-in-arms, paintings and poems by some of the dead heroes, were all over in their modest homes, officers' apartments. In the Paris dormitory, a sepoy's widow had adorned a very hazy little picture of her husband. In the park drawing room of Vene wehts a poignant picture showed her dancing ecstatically with her eyes closed, with her husband. In orthodox homes the pictures were garlanded and marked with 'Tilak' on foreheads. Paintings done in oils by Commander Kumar, adorned the walls of the apartment of his widow and children.

That was the happiest time', recalled Mrs. Kishori Chaudhry and she wanted to keep all the links with the past. Mrs. Sushama Kumar felt that a morsel of bread with the life partner was worth all the delicacies without him. A part-wala lover of your heart is finished for ever; felt Mrs. Parvati Ghai. The memories of those good times were personal and precious. To forgetting wisely, I keep faithfully busy; this was the reaction of many a widow.

Mr Ray's wife said she had lost interest in life this year and pretty K. L. said that her duty to show she lived, had ^{a good bit} of board and lodging but she could not provide them with the cheeriness of a happy home, that this was, not very long ago.

At least one war widow said she had snapped all the links with the past. She was a reserve officer's widow. Any picture of your previous husband I enquired for my record purposes, Hold on she said and quietly went in and returned with a book of prayers. Inside it was kept a small picture of her dead hero fighting back a tear, she looked at it and closed the chapter. This one ^{incident} ~~fact~~ ^{was} enough to highlight the sad fact that ^{we} give the best circumstances.

It is extremely difficult to rehabilitate them completely, be it emotionally, socially, psychologically or even financially. Most of the widows of Jarman in the martyrs' homes seemed to live a dayed existence from day to day. The present day compensation could hardly be the adequate substitute for the beautiful days of a by-gone era, gone away for ever, not very long ago.

'We try to forget', said Mrs. Venevells, but the past comes back and we live in it. It was too happy a past and so less it was.

57
Same standard? Never!

The new environment could never be the same as before.

They could not at all, maintain the same standard of living. We are tired, tired and ashamed to know,

'I can't afford a servant. I am doing it all by myself

what both of us were doing leisurely once upon a time.

From palatial houses they had come to live in hutments & apartments. Many of them had to sell away their cars and go by buses. There was no social life as

much for them. From the panorama of gay army club parties, they had suddenly come to the confines of subsistence existence. We don't meet the army crowd any more.

mentioned Mrs Prem Dewar, we are terribly busy making a living and looking after children. Besides

change in the people was understandable according to the

How many of us remembered the war widows of the previous war, she asked. No one takes us to the unit now known

Kamala Devi, widow of Havildar Rampal. And the living in the one room apartments bereft of bare necessities:

The Rikhtal infirmary was really miserable, I imagined

In the good old days, help closer people and

to work in their households, equal to Mrs Jagjivan

Amrajit, now they had to do it all, all by themselves.

Though a few war widows of officers had had a television set, there was a fridges in all those houses. At least one

of those apartments was air conditioned and one lady mentioned that she was still a member of

the club.

She did not blame any one in particular for the tragedy, though individually they did find fault with us, with the tactical moves that proved fatal to their husband. What was the use of sending my husband for a recce, when the war was over. Poor thing, he was spotted and shot long after the cease fire, leaving one war widow. Another one found fault with politicians and policy makers. One felt, what was the fun in fighting for another country, which has hardly kept even the semblance of friendship. Quite a few of them were critical of the way, the territories, won with the blood of their martyred husbands were given back on a platter.

It is significant to note that they did not, in most cases, blame Pakistanis. Though most of their children ^{boop} bragged in terms of bloodshed and vengeance against the Pakistani killers of their fathers, another part of the blame largely on their state. This was ordained - was the normal attitude. Jashwan Kumar quibbled Kabir to highlight the feeling that Hindus and Muslims were alike. They were soldiers on the other side of the border, some thought, and they had had a lot of war widows over there. A very poignant comment came from the daughter of a ~~side~~ wing commander Bhattaraj who told her mother one day, Ghar main bhita jain jataki thi, he could have lost his life naturally at home as well. Such philosophical consolations ^{spoken of their inner braveries.}

in advance

All the war widows, I interviewed, believed in the
futility of wars which can never solve the human
problems. They would ask me a counter question, What
have we gained and there seemed to be a lot of truth
in what they said.

Memories and Memorials

They were so much engrossed in the working
schedules of their new environment, that they had
hardly any time to write a record about the
tragedy or perpetuate the memories of their dead
heroes in some way or the other. Some of them were
willing to donate trophies or give scholarships in
the memories of their husbands, but they found
the links with their units waning by and by. Some
regiments had raised memorials to them. But the
best memorials, pointed out one war widow of an
officer, were their children, whom they were very
keen to bring up in the best traditions of their illustrious
fathers.

They had had quite a few concrete suggestions
to improve their lot. They didn't want to be
Quoting Kabir once again *Plus tu sune kumar, plus*
is writing a thesis on the poet, expressed her feelings
Kya mangoor kuch thin na paayee
Dekhat Nahi Chala jag jaayee

(What shall they? Nothing but stars. Can't keep a watch
the worldly way, We can learn by our own they
felt a philosophical Mrs Brew Dewar. Deep
within them they desired more care, more attention
more money

Exploitation and Allegations

And they talked of exploitation - exploited
by widows, by cheeky clerks, by middle men, some
of whom had been in a needy situation and
not denied asking the wofish question, 'Are you
free this evening. They praised some of the government
and voluntary organisations but they found fault with
quite a few of them. Conflicting reports opinions, all
up to individual cases, found one particularly a sad
unhelpful. They talked of misappropriation
of funds, stealing of limelight and credit by
undeniable people at the cost of ^{their} dead heroes and
sacrifice of their sacred emblem for unworthy cause

Then there were some odd allegations and
counter allegations against each other. One lady
a fast life, alleged one officer's widow, while
speaking of her difficult partner in a gas agency,
feeling justified the case of a pilot's widow who had
turned a nymphomaniac for nearly a year and who
had had no dearth of takers. In one training centre one
Jawan's widow admitted that she had had an illegitimate
daughter; a sad gift of her unfortunale circumstances. She
had brought her untold misery, such loss were however
tray. Grand large, the war widows
life of honour and dignity in being provided
with the martyrdom of their husbands.