

## **EMPOWERMENT OF WIDOW WOMEN: THE LIFE CHANGING JOURNEY OF THE VEENA FOUNDATION**

**Mrs. Pardeshi Nita Hiralal**, Research Student (Economics), Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded, Sub-Campus Latur

**Dr. Avinash V. Pawar**, Research Supervisor, Dept. of Economics, Jaikranti Arts Sr. College Latur

### **Abstract**

This study highlights the challenges faced by the veena foundation in empowering widow women. Empowerment by the Lord Raj Loomba and his wife, Lady Veena Loomba who plays a vital role in the foundation work, particularly in empowering widow globally, with a focus on India. This study examines various obstacles such as economic, social and psychological in their roadmap. She aims to empower widow women and their children. She takes efforts through education, advocacy, vocational training to change their grief life. It explores the nature of problems faced by Widow women, the foundation's contribution, and its effectiveness. The article also includes recommendations and conclusions based on the findings.

**Keywords** - Empowerment of Widow women, Veena Foundation, social inclusion, economic assistance, mental health, women empowerment, training, social stigma, mental stress, grief, trauma, inheritance.

**“A Strong Women Knows She has Strength enough for the journey but A Women of Strength Knows it is in the Journey where She Will become Strong.”**

**- C.J. Lewis.**

### **Introduction**

A woman mirrors the wealth and prosperity of the community which she belongs. Widowhood Empowerment is vital part for Nations Sustainable Development by globally. India by 2047 goals to bring changes for “women” or “India’s vision for 2047. On June 26,1997, Raj and Veena Loomba founded the Loomba foundation in the United Kingdom. The foundation is committed to advancing widow’s and their children’s human rights and fundamental freedoms globally. Raj was inspired by his late mother Shrimati Pushpa Wati Loomba. She was a widow at 37 and managed to educate her seven children on her own. Raj and his wife Veena established the Shrimati Pushpa Wati Loomba Trust. **Veena foundation** focuses on Empowerment having different dimensions economic, social and emotional etc. However, by addressing multiple dimensions. With over 258 million widows worldwide, many of whom experience extreme poverty, discrimination, and societal stigma. widow empowerment is a critical issue. The widows are ignored and the voiceless part of the society. So, there is need of empowerment of women to tackle their economic, social and emotional problems. The United Nations states that widows' needs for empowerment include: Access to inheritance, land, and productive resources, as well as social safety and pensions that are not

exclusively dependent on marital status, are all examples of economic empowerment. societal Empowerment: addressing societal stigmas that lead to exclusion and prejudice, as well as encouraging chances for education and training. Health Empowerment: Protection from exploitation and violence, as well as access to sexual and reproductive health treatments. Legal Empowerment: Ensuring access to justice and bolstering laws and regulate to safeguard widows' rights, notably those related to property and inheritance. Additionally, the UN stresses how crucial it is to include widows in decision-making, especially in post-conflict situations.

In the historical efforts laid the groundwork for empowerment of widow women which sets remarkable contribution of Pandita Ramabai (countless women's right activity,) Savitribai Phule (women's education and empowerment), Mahatma Gandhi (encourage of widow to participate in the freedom struggle), Ahilya bai Holkar (administration, reforms and legacy), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (widow remarriage) Rajaram Mohan Rai (sati) etc. The Veena Foundation's approach represents a crucial shift towards a holistic, empowering, wellbeing and creating a sustainable model.

Research paper revealed the journey of widow which can be difficult to facing economic, social, political, psychological, environmental challenges. Veena has aims to empower widow women through education, vocational training, advocacy and economic independence. Impact and their initiatives discussed in this paper also focused on policies and strategies for empowering them.

The foundation will continue to observe International Widows Day on June 23rd highlighting the plight of widows worldwide and promoting action to address their challenges. The foundations work has also been acknowledged by various governments and organisations.

#### **Objectives of the study:**

1. To find out the journey of widow women who faces economic and social challenges.
2. To examine the effectiveness and impact of Veena Foundation.
3. To propose policy recommendations and strategies for enhancing the empowerment of widow women.

#### **Methodology of study**

Focuses on Case study approach. This study is mainly based on secondary data taken from the reputed published sources like, various books and websites on internet.

#### **The journey of widow women can be difficult and challenging**

##### **1. Pre widowhood:**

- Marriage and family life:

Many women many young dedicated themselves to family and household duties. After marriage frequently women rely on their husbands for financial and social support.

## **2. Becoming a WIDOW:**

### **1. Trauma and Grief:**

A woman whose husband has died the loss of partner can be oppressed leading to emotional trauma and grief. Widowhood women may feel isolated and disconnected from others.

### **2. Social Isolation:**

Widowhood can result in low status in society or not given a place in the society isolated them.

### **3. Economic insecurity:**

Women may face economic difficulties due to not having income of life partner.

## **Nature of Problems Faced by Widow Women:**

### **1. Stigma and discrimination**

Stigma it is an act when people treat someone unfairly and negatively because of something that happened to them. Widows face stigma due to social thinking and cultural. This can lead to –

1 **social exclusion:** People ignore or avoid widows from social programme

2. **Negative labels:** Widows may be labelled as unlucky.

3. **Limited opportunities:** It's very difficult to find out job, acquiring education or getting remarried.

4. **Emotional distress:** Stigma can lead to shy, upset, uncomfortable, low self-esteem.

## **Economic and social Obstacles**

### **1. Limited access to resources:**

Widows get less credit, loans and saving. Limited access to resource is important challenge faced by widow women, exacerbating their vulnerability and marginalisation.

### **2. Limited employment opportunities**

There are some reasons or barriers to get employment. Education is the backbone but lack of education or skills, training and less opportunities making it difficult for them to compete in the job market. They are in darkness, endless tears and can't share these issues with anyone. she is not only have look after her children but also earning her own bread and butter if she doesn't want to listen torcher word from their relatives.

### **3. Poverty**

Absence of basic needs in their life not having shelter, food, clothes, education .so they suffer from isolated life in society. They lose their dignity and human rights. They always rely on family member, friends, financial support from charity.

### **4. Liability for debts**

Widow women may be held liable for joint loans and credit cards taken with deceased partner. Debt liability can reduce widow women's autonomy and decision-making power.

Some cases they are exploiting through family members due to lack of financial knowledge. Emotional distress including anxiety, depression and stress going in their tragedy life.

#### **5. Lack of support for children's education**

They feel helpless due to unemployment or may be uneducated and it's very difficult to take care of their child and provide them education.

#### **6. Social and cultural factors**

Remarriage of widow women is a complex and sensitive issue influenced by various factors social, cultural, economic, and personal factors. widow women opposition from their families and communities, making it difficult to remarry. Age and health, lack of support, social isolation create challenges and barriers for right decision making.

#### **7. Economic Insecurity**

Most Widow women lack an independent income source to support themselves and their families. The lack of education and skills makes it difficult for them to secure employment. After the death of their husbands, issues like debt, children's education, and household expenses become overwhelming.

#### **8. Social and Mental Challenges**

Due to societal norms, Widow women are often treated as "inauspicious" and are excluded from various social activities. They are subjected to social stigma and emotional stress. The pressure of remarriage or being perceived negatively in society adds to their mental stress.

### **Veena Foundation's Contribution and Work / Impact:**

#### **1. Program reach and participation**

The Veena foundation has reached thousands of women through its programs, with a important raise in contribution over the year.

#### **2. Education and Vocational training**

The foundation's education and vocational training programs have shown immense importance in the literacy rates and job availability for widow women.

#### **3. Economic Empowerment**

The foundation's economic empowerment programs, such as microfinance and livelihood support have enabled widow women's to be economically independent.

##### **➤ Improved livelihoods**

The veena foundation programs have improved the livelihoods of thousands of widow women, enabling them to access basic needs likes food, shelter and healthcare.

##### **➤ Enhanced Entrepreneurship**

The foundation programme has inspired widow women's for start their own businesses

#### **1. Social Empowerment:**

- **Reduced stigma:** The Veena Foundation's take efforts to reduce stigma in their trauma journey and promoting social inclusion.
- **Increased confidence:** Women have reported enhanced confidence and self-esteem through the programs.

- Improved social status: Widow women have experienced reforms in social status, enabling them to involve in society activities.
- Psychological Wellbeing
- Emotional support: The foundation providing emotional support, helping women cope with trauma and grief by valuable guidance.
- Reduced stress: Women have reported reduced stress and anxiety through the foundation's programs.
- Improved mental health: The Veena Foundation's work has contributed to improved mental health outcomes for widow women.

## **2. Educational Empowerment:**

- **Increased literacy:** The foundation's literacy programs have raised literacy rates among widow women.
- **Vocational skills:** Women have received vocational skills, enabling them to get better job opportunities.
- **Improved education for children:** children of widows get a better education from the foundation work. They cut the cycles of poverty.

## **3. Health and Wellbeing:**

- Improved healthcare access: The Veena Foundation has provided access to healthcare facilities involving reproductive health and mental health aids.
- Better nutrition: Women have reported improved nutrition and health outcomes through the foundation's programs.
- Reduced morbidity and mortality: The Veena work has participated to reduced morbidity and death rates among widow

## **Future policies and programs:**

Veena Foundation's future policies and programs are focused on continuing their mission to empower widows and their children globally. Here are some key areas they'll be focusing on:

- **Education and Empowerment:** The foundation will continue to provide education and vocational training to widows and their children, enabling them to become self-sufficient and economically empowered <sup>1</sup>.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** The Veena Foundation will advocate for the rights of widows and raise awareness about the issues they face, promoting policy changes and social inclusion <sup>2</sup>.
- **International Widows Day:** The foundation will continue to observe International Widows Day on June 23rd, highlighting the plight of widows worldwide and promoting action to address their challenges <sup>3</sup>.
- **Research and Reporting:** The Veena Foundation will publish reports and research studies on the situation of widows globally, providing valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders <sup>4</sup>.
- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** The foundation will strengthen partnerships with governments, NGOs, and private sector organizations to amplify its impact and reach more widows and their children.

By focusing on these areas, the Veena Foundation aims to create a brighter future for widows and their children, promoting their empowerment, inclusion, and well-being. She performs for wellbeing and immense progress in their journey

**Recommendations:**

1. More Financial Assistance for Widow Women: To assist widow women in starting their own enterprises and providing for their families, more microfinance plans and business development initiatives ought to be implemented.
2. More Funding for Organizations: In order to assist and broaden the scope of organizations like the Veena Foundation, the government ought to provide them with additional funding and resources.
3. Strict Laws to End Social Stigma: To address the social stigma widow women experience and guarantee their social inclusion, more robust legislative measures must to be implemented.
4. Growing the Network of Support Organizations: Working together with other groups and networks will help the Veena Foundation reach a wider audience and offer widow women in India more comprehensive support.

**Conclusion**

The Veena Foundation's initiatives have provided a great impact on empowering widow women in India. The study highlights the crucial of education, vocational training, and advocacy in promoting economic empowerment and social inclusion. The impact and their initiatives focused in this paper. Future research and programs should focus on addressing the challenges and opportunities identified, to further support the empowerment of widow women globally

"Empowering Widow women is the true reflection of society's progress.

**References**

1. Meenaxi Kamat (2018), in research paper "The Study of Social and Economical Empowerment of Women through Self Help Groups in Mumbai City."
2. Ku. Anita Patra (2004), in her research paper "A special study with special reference to the rural widows of Jaipur district of Orissa.
3. Niharika, A Critical study on Socio Economic development and women empowerment in India Role of NGOs in Hazaribagh district A case study since 2005.
4. World Widows Report 2015
5. <https://www.theloombafoundation.org/>