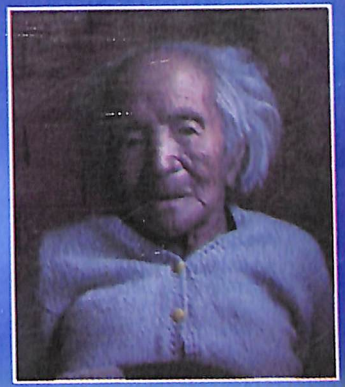




ICSSR NERC



VOLUME 2

AGEING IN NORTH EAST INDIA

NAGALAND PERSPECTIVES

Edited by

A. LANUNUNGSANG AO

FOREWORD

Ageing or becoming old is a global phenomenon in the sense that it is experienced by all the societies in all generations and all countries but its magnitude and manifestations are not the same everywhere. It has been observed that science and technology, industrialization, modernization and globalization like improved health care, improved nutrition and improved standards of living make people live much longer than expected and thereby there has been an increase in the growth of elderly population in all societies. The United Nations Principles for Older Persons in 1991 emphasized that *in all countries, individuals are reaching an advanced age in greater numbers and in better health than ever before*. The rise in the population of the elderly was thought to be a concern only of the developed countries but now it has become an equally important issue even in the developing countries as well. The population aged 60+ is increasing rapidly in our country that it is expected to be 177 million by 2025. This growth in the population of the elderly will certainly change the aspect of life for individual and societies.

It is a known fact that the old people in the past especially in our country commanded respect because they controlled the sources of power, wealth, land, political office, and the fate of other family members. However, it has been observed that there have been some changes in the society as new generations perceive a different outlook in life which are due to the pressures of urbanization, increasing migration from

rural to urban areas, change in occupation patterns and perhaps a change in life styles too. Old age is also generally accompanied by a number of problems that the elderly have to face and adjust with in varying degrees. The problems of elderly are generally rooted in physical debility, loneliness and depression. Thus, their physical resources vary according to their age, lifestyle, genetic build and destiny. The important variables for the elderly are health and income. Therefore, the loss of economic independence and physical vigour and the emergence of various types of degenerative diseases, such as, hypertension, diabetes, rheumatism, gout, prostate, cardiac problems, spondylitis, lumbago, cancer, etc., often change an elderly from an independent self-supporting individual to one who needs help from his children, members of the family and the society in general. Absence of common interests and lack of extensive and regular interaction with the younger members in the family may result in social isolation and loneliness of the elderly.

There has been a time when the elders were kept in high esteem and phrases such as *old is gold; the older the wiser; country needs older people; you held our hands when we learnt to walk; now, as you enter the autumn of your lives, society is prepared to hold your hands;* etc., were appreciated much. While in some societies, the elders were neglected, left alone uncared when the children got married and separated. Whereas in other societies there were joint families where parents and married children lived together sharing everything together. However, this culture has now slowly broken in many conservative societies. Time and life has changed so fast due to science and technology and even the Gandhian philosophy of simple living and high thinking have become redundant in many families. With no income and incapable of working, many aged people become a burden on their children. Even if they are

well looked-after, they suffer from a guilt complex. As a result, elders are neglected for some generations and suffer physically and mentally at the fag end of their life. In a befitting manner the former U.N Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid emphatically declared:

“We have neglected the elders for many years. From now on, all the countries of the world should think to give proper to the senior citizens, in the last phase of their life, while making national development plans - social, political and economic.”

It is heartening to note that, the UPA government is preparing a bill to improve the condition of the elderly persons in India. The bill that is on the anvil should certainly address the problems of the old people.

In the recent years, much literature on Northeast India has been published by the scholars of this region on various issues related to the people and the region as a whole. However, the issues related to ageing and the elderly persons of this region are not properly addressed so far. Although every 1st October is being observed as the International Day for the Elderly, yet the magnitude of the elderly persons in Northeast is not properly addressed neither in myriad seminars organised by various academic bodies and the NGOs nor their problems and aspirations are documented. Considering the lacunae in this field, the Indian Council of Social Science Research, North Eastern Regional Centre (ICSSR-NERC) took the initiative to bridge the gap by organizing a day long seminar on the Magnitude of the Problems of the Elderly persons in various States during the year 2006. This book has its origin in one of the seminars organized at the Department of Sociology, Nagaland University on 17th August 2006. Professor Lanu and his colleagues in the department took the keen interest in the seminar not only in organizing it but also compiling and revising

the papers presented in the seminar in the present book format.

This book deals with a number of issues pertaining to the aged from a multi-disciplinary approach emphasizing on the status, welfare and problems of the elderly persons particularly in Nagaland and it will be a useful source of information and reference to academicians, scholars and social workers and government agencies alike.

Country Needs More Elderly Persons.

C JOSHUA THOMAS

Acting Director

ICSSR-NERC

Shillong

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	v
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xi
<i>List of Tables</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
— <i>A. Lanunungsang</i>	
Keynote Address	7
— <i>Dr. Takatemjen Ao</i>	
1. Problem of Old-Age People and Social Remedy	15
— <i>Chandrika Singh</i>	
2. Constitutional Provisions, Privileges and Benefits to Old Aged Peoples	33
— <i>S.K. Gupta</i>	
3. Ageing in Nagaland: A Sociological Study	41
— <i>Visielie</i>	
4. Problems of Old Aged and the Need for Care: A Case Study of Mokokchung Town	67
— <i>A.Lanunungsang</i>	
5. Socio-Economic Status of the Aged among the Angami Nagas	79
— <i>Ketshukietuo Dzüvichü</i>	

6. The Need for Establishment of Old Aged Home People Support and Prospect and Scope in Naga Society — <i>I.Tongdangba Jamir</i>	109
7. The Aged People in Dimapur: Problems and Prospects — <i>Mar Atsongchanger</i>	114
8. Diabetes Mellitus: Problems and Remedies — <i>Pardeshi Lal</i>	128
9. Active Aging — <i>Dr. P. Medem</i>	141
10. Valedictory Speech — <i>D. Baruah [Retd. OSD (Edu.)]</i>	150
11. Recommendations — <i>Prof. A. L. Ao</i>	153
<i>Index</i>	155

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LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 3

1. Age-Sex Composition and Marital Status	47
2. Educational Levels of the Respondents' Parents	48
3. Educational Levels of the Respondents	49
4. Purpose of Migration	52
5. Sources of Monthly Income	54
6. Earners and Non-Earners	54
7. Beneficiaries of Old Age Pension in Nagaland and the Study Area (Kohima Town)	57
8. Assistance from the Church	60
9. Systems of Medical Treatment	62

CHAPTER 4

1. Distribution of Age Structure	69
2. Ward-wise Distribution of the Respondents	70
3. Level of Income	71
4. Marital Status of the Respondents	72
5. Status of Old-aged Pension	72
6. Status of Husband and Wife who are still Alive or Expired	73
7. Status of Physical Health Problems of Old Aged People in Mokokckhung	74
8. Status of Socio-psychological Problems	75

CHAPTER 5

1. Age and Marital Status of the Aged	83
2. Educational Level of the Aged	84
3. Status of the Aged in Family According to Sex	87
4. Living Arrangement of the Aged According to Age and Sex	90
5. Occupation of the Aged	92
6. Income of the Aged	94
7. Sources of Income of the Aged According to Income Group (Earners Only)	96
8. Earning Capacity According to Age Groups	97
9. Beneficiaries of Old Age Assistance	98
10. Income of the Families of the Aged	99
11. Average Size of the Family by Economic Status	100
12. Assets of the Aged	102
13. Liabilities of the Aged	104

INTRODUCTION

—A. *Lanunungang*

As a biological factor, aging is a universal phenomenon. This is one of the most neglected areas in the society that needs due attention. It is a natural occurrence that may be experienced by one and all if not by every family. As a matter of fact, elderly people suffer from various problems such as health-care, shelter, nutrition, psychological problems, loneliness, family separation, non-availability of opportunities such as doctors, nurses, hospitals and nursing homes and negligence by the society etc. All these need proper understanding, due care and counselling. An aged person needs special care to overcome these problems; which can be attended not only by the government but also by non-governmental organizations, civil societies and individuals. In the past, this problem was not discussed in many forums though it is considered as one of the challenging areas of concern.

Many people may think that medical doctors and nurses are the only persons who can take care of the problems of the old aged persons but that is not enough. Today, medical practitioners and researchers are playing the most pivotal role; but apart from physical care, there are many concerns of the old aged persons in society. Therefore, in addition to medical practitioners, social workers, academic and religious organizations can also play a major role in caring for them in different ways. They should not be allowed to

remain as the victims or unwanted creatures in the society. They need due recognition and understanding in the society beginning from the family circles, institution, governmental organization and voluntary organizations. They can provide constructive suggestions for the interest of such groups of people in the society. Their suggestions would be of great help for the policy and decision makers including the guardians of old aged persons in contemporary society.

One should not forget that elderly persons are the best advisors and consultants in every society and therefore, society needs them. They should not be treated as a liability in the family and society but considered as a social asset, dignity and the pride of a family and society at large.

Considering all these aspects, we have chosen a common theme as ***Understanding the Problems of Old and Aged People and the Need for Care.***

Under this theme, many areas of interest were deliberated in a day long seminar held on 17 August 2006 at the Department of Sociology, Nagaland University covering wide areas such as biological aspects, health, psychological, socio-economic concerns; management and organizational aspects, institutions and policy matters, administration welfare schemes and social planning aspects etc. To be more specific, following sub-themes were discussed:

- ❖ Identification of various problems faced by old aged persons such as basic needs of life, (shelter, health, food, physiological etc.), extent of negligence by the society and family.
- ❖ Management aspects of old aged persons and role of family, relatives, institutions, churches, NGOs, civil societies, governmental organizations, hospitals and nursing homes etc.

- ❖ Old age and pensioners syndrome, retired life and their limitations and social response,
- ❖ Potentialities and capacity, leadership, status and roles, vision and their contributions in the society,
- ❖ Social concerns for old aged persons, victims of the society and the need for proper understanding and care,
- ❖ Assessment of their contributions in society and peoples' and governments response, failures and success,
- ❖ Customary relations to old aged persons, cultural practices. family norms and the extent of care for old aged persons,
- ❖ Gender role, gender bias, sexual dichotomy of gender role towards old aged persons in Naga society,
- ❖ Anthro-biological aspects of old aged persons, aging problems and trend, assessment or grave-yards, longevity, climatic and environmental effect and joy of rejuvenation and challenges of old aged persons,
- ❖ The need for establishment of Old Aged Home, people support and prospects and scope in Naga society,
- ❖ The Naga Pensioners' Association, their roles performance, difficulties of drawing pension, difficulties faced in Accountant General Office, Treasury, Bank and governmental departments and remedial measures for change.
- ❖ Rural-urban dichotomy of old aged persons, status, push and pull factors of migration, issues for burial, customary relation and its implication in Naga society,

- ❖ Socio-economic status of old aged persons and the need for proper care, acceptance and rejection of the ideas/voices of the elderly people and generation gap,
- ❖ Parental, social, governmental, institutional, NGOs and religious institutional care for elderly people in Naga society,
- ❖ Christian concerns and the role of church in caring and counseling, social and spiritual backup, entertainment programs and preparation of their last journey for happy life ending.
- ❖ Social laws, payment of old age pension; its awareness and welfare schemes for old age persons, difficulties and solutions,
- ❖ Suggestive measures for proper management and care for those section of people and the need for total salvation (body, mind and soul), the need for physical care.

This book is an outcome of the above-mentioned seminar jointly sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research, North Eastern Regional Centre (ICSSR-NERC), Shillong and Centre for Gandhian Studies and Research, Nagaland University. It contains nine papers presented during the seminar. The authors of these articles are mostly teachers of the Nagaland University and its affiliated colleges. Few of them are activists working among the elderly people of Nagaland. We are pleased to present the revised papers presented in the seminar for wider deliberation.

We acknowledge with thanks for the financial assistance and the motivating force which the ICSSR-NERC extended towards this seminar. We also thankfully acknowledge the Centre for Gandhian Studies and Research, Nagaland University for granting additional fund for the success of this seminar. We

particularly put on record our thanks and appreciation to Dr. C. Joshua Thomas, Director, ICSSR-NERC for the driving force behind this seminar. But for his constant reminders and encouragement this volume would not have seen its light.

How can Society Neglect the Elderly People?

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

—*Dr. Takatemjen Ao*

All over the world there is an increase in the population of old people. This revolution of longevity has made many communities to gear up for meeting the challenge, as it will be the first time in the history of the world that the number of sixty plus (60+) people will outnumber the under 15 category.

The National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) acknowledges the fact that in the coming decades a growing number of persons 60+ will belong to the middle and upper middle-income groups. It is highly probable that they will reside in urban areas. The social and economic factors that impact the lives of present day senior citizens in urban areas are:

Better health care and advances in the field of medicine, people live healthy into their old age. Even the elderly with ailments live better lives;

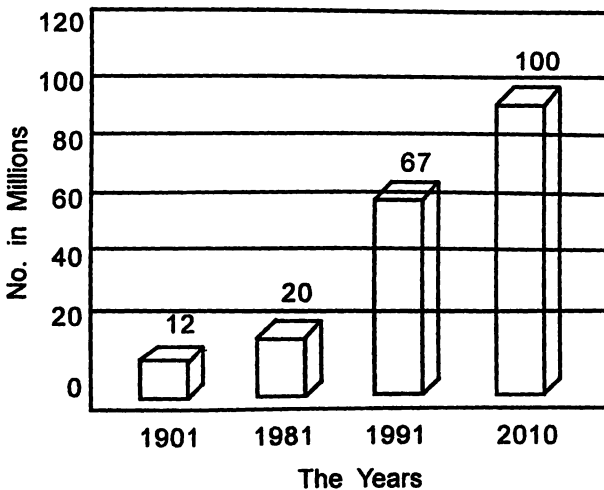
Many people lead active lives into their 60's and even 70's, but retirement continues to be at 58 or 60;

More and more youngsters seeks their fortunes in other countries and as a result many elderly couples live on their own;

"Small family" norm sees just one or two children having to share the responsibility of their parents.

When we talk about the Old people we need to be sensitive not to classify all the elderly under one category of 'old'. After all, with people living well into their mid eighties, the elderly cover a whole generation of people! The National Policy for Old People refers to them as 'young old' (between 60-69 years) middle old (70-79) and the 'Older Old' (80 and above). Hence the community of senior citizens should not be looked upon only as 'demanding attention' but be seen as a resource base too. Also, the services for older people can be very varied, from health care to recreation.

Growth Trend in Population of Elderly in India (>60 Years)



In 1991, there were about 67 million older people in India and is expected to go up to 100 million by 2016. This is a grim picture, which every state or the Government of India is going to face. In 1999, to commemorate the year of older persons, the Government of India had announced a National Policy on Older

Persons and constituted a National Council on Ageing. The outcome of these initiatives is awaited. No doubt, the government has many other issues of concern and the action plan is eagerly awaited.

We have a long way to go before the issue gains visibility it warrants. There is no escape from age, and no escape from the issue that face the society, a country and a people. Unfortunately, both the Constitution and laws so far as India is concerned, have made noble and progressive commitments that sound very good on paper but in practice there is very little done. The policy on older persons has indications of progress, it has good things, but in the magnitude of the problem it is miserably inadequate, because it does not address either the magnitude of the challenge or the quality of the challenge.

Some issues which a seminar like today can take up for deliberation are:

1. Problems faced by elderly people and their needs and the response of societies.
2. The role of the Government, NGO's and the church in taking care of elderly people.
3. Traditional societies and elderly people.
4. The need for the establishment of old aged homes in our societies.
5. Management of old aged persons.
6. The pensioners' association, the pensioners' problems, etc.
7. Pastoral care and counselling of the elderly persons from a Christian perspective.
8. Rural-urban dichotomy of elderly people and its implications.

9. Utilising the services of the elderly people: Their potentialities and roles in society.
10. Successful Aging.

As a theological educator, here I would like to present a few important thoughts regarding the problem of the elderly people of our land from a theological perspective.

Understanding the Problems and the Process of Aging: A Theological Perspective

Human development is the process of change and growth—psychologically, biologically, socially and spiritually. The most common identified life stages are infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age and old age. Studies on human growth and development provide a good understanding of the nature and the needs of individuals at all developmental levels. Old age denotes the gradual decay of human physical system which becomes more remarkable towards the end of life, ending in the breaking of the system and so death. Elderly people have their own peculiar characteristics, problems and needs where successful aging becomes one of its issues.

Some needs of Elderly People are:

1. Adapting to a revised physical self-image.
2. The need for the integration of various losses (loss of health, loss of identity, loss of power, loss of independence, loss of spouse, loss in the level of incomes).
3. The feeling of continuing usefulness.
4. The need for love, care, involvement and companionship.
5. The need for meeting spiritual needs. They need spiritual support. The need for finding meaning in life and affirmation of onself.

Successful Aging

One cannot stop growing old, but one can grow old gracefully. There are two criteria for judging successful aging. The first is the satisfaction the elderly people have in them and the other is the social role and interpersonal obligations and responsibility. Implied in the concept of successful aging is the value judgement to the effect that some adjustments are better (successful) than some (unsuccessful). If one were to age successfully, it would mean successfully coping with disengagement. The age successfully the individual should avoid shrinkage of life space and find substitute when necessary. In terms of personality, people are said to have aged successfully if they maintain a matured and integrated personality while going through the aging process. The life satisfaction approach holds that people have aged successfully if they feel happy and satisfied with their present and past lives. Successful aging is defined both as autonomous and persistent. If the overall relation of the individual to the society system is both autonomous and persistent, the person is aging successfully.

Hochschild identified six general themes that constitute a basis for successful aging: (1) sufficient independence to allow continued feelings of integrity; (2) pleasant, satisfying relationships with other people, some of whom are willing to provide assistance when needed, without in the process showing a disrespect for older persons; (3) a reasonable degree of emotional and physical satisfaction and a comfortable physical environment; (4) stimulation of the mind in ways that are not too strenuous; (5) sufficient mobility to be able to experience varied environments; and (6) some type of intense life interest or involvement, at least partly to avoid preoccupation with thoughts of death.

Care for the Elderly: A Holistic Approach

Respect and care is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition. The Old Testament talks about "honouring father and mother" (Exo 20:12; Lev 19:32). Honouring implies caring for them in their old age (Gen 45:9-11, Ecc 3:12). In particular, care is to be given to those whose parents are feebleminded.

Help and care towards the elderly persons demands a wholistic approach that will provide them the opportunity to enjoy life to its fullest. From the point of view of care and counselling bringing wholeness to an older person involves six dimensions, namely, enlivening one's mind, revitalizing one's body, renewing and enriching one's intimate relationships, deepening one's relationship with nature and biosphere, growth in relation to the significant institutions in one's life, deepening and revitalizing one's relationship with God.

Growth in humans takes place in relationships, six of which are listed above. Growth towards wholeness in one dimension stimulates and support in the other dimension. Holistic care and counselling aim at enabling process to increase and balance growth in all aspects of their lives. Mental-spiritual health is the continuing movement towards living more fully, joyfully and productively. Therefore, facilitating the six dimensions of holistic care and counselling of the elderly should be emphasized to let the elderly experience wholeness of life.

The U.N. principles for older persons also reflect this approach:

1. *Principle of Independence* - Older persons have access to food, water, shelter, clothing, healthcare and income-generating opportunities, education, and training.

2. *Principle of Care* - Older persons should have access to social and legal service and to healthcare so that they can maintain an optimum level of physical, mental, emotional well-being. These should include full respect for dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy.
3. *Principle of Self-fulfilment* - Older persons should have access to educational, cultural, educational and recreational resources and be able to develop their full potentiality.
4. *Principle of Participation* - Older persons should remain integrated into community life and participate actively in the formation of policies affecting their well-being.
5. *Principle of Dignity* - Older persons should be able to live in dignity and security, be free from exploitation and physical and mental abuse and be treated fairly regardless of age, gender, racial and ethnic background.

Theological Response to Successful Aging

1. Aging is a process of growth and fulfilment. From a developmental point of view and from theological understanding, aging should be seen as "growing", "coming of age", "getting on in years". Though aging is a time of decline, there is growth in the process. The body is wasting away, but the inner person is renewed everyday. And therefore, there is fulfilment in aging.
2. Aging is a process of finding meaning in life. People need sound values and meaning to be healthy. Finding meaning in life is also an important concern for the aged, through life review and reminiscence, a sense of wholeness can be achieved. Life review may bring repentance, forgiveness and acceptance which

are the key theological components of integrity. It may also give new and significant meanings to one's life and also prepare one for death.

3. Aging is an affirmation of one's life's worth. The aging process involves the questions of living, dying and suffering, which is based on an important theological or spiritual issue. Is life worth living? In other words, the main developmental or spiritual task, which the aging process demands is that of developing a sense of life's worth. The deciding factor of whether or not the experience of loss in old age can be used meaningfully for his or her benefit is the attitude of the individual's faith and one's perception of life.

Old is Gold

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1

PROBLEM OF OLD-AGE PEOPLE AND SOCIAL REMEDY

—Chandrika Singh

Aging is a natural as well as incessant process, which begins with birth and ends with death. In this modern world no one can escape the flow of birth and death. One, who comes into existence or is born, is bound to die one day. The life is a constant journey, which passes through various mile stones. The destiny of each living being is to grow older and older and one day disappears from the existence. Oldness is the last stage of journey of the life where one has to face various kinds of troubles. Hence, no one likes to be old and suffer, but there is no way to escape, from it. It is bound to come. Hence, one must be mentally ready to meet it and physically fit to face it. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that *death is our best friend which gives us permanent rest*. We should meet death as a friend because it permanently relieves us from bondage of the world. Death comes without any hint or information while oldness reaches knocking the door. Death relieves one from the responsibilities of the life forever while oldness releases one from botheration of active life. Since it is impossible to escape old age and death, it is wise to be ever ready to embrace both death and oldness when they come to us. Death and oldness both are reality of

the life. Hence, it is better to be ready to welcome the reality with big strength and large heart.

No doubt, the stage of oldness has numerous problems, but there are remedies too to meet the challenges of old age. There are ways to help the aged people to live comfortably and satisfactorily. The responsibility of the family and society to look after its old people is greater. The old people have to live in the society and society may evolve certain measures to assist them. Old people cannot be taken as liabilities. Though they cannot work hard and earn, but their long experience of the life is great asset not only for the family members but for the society as a whole. The responsibility of the old people does not end with growing old. An old adage says, old is gold. Old people cannot be treated useless or worthless heap. Even during old age they may play many roles in the interest of the society.

This paper discusses about meaning of the old age and its problems. It talks about the responsibility of society towards old people and suggests some remedial measures to help the old people. It also analyses and evaluates the role of the government towards old people.

Man and Society

Man and society has perpetual and reciprocal relationship. It is universal and undisputable fact that man is a social animal by nature. Man is born in society, lives and prospers in society and ultimately he takes his last breathe in society. Society is in the nature and blood of the man. Both depend upon each other. Society helps man in each and every walk of life by creating favourable circumstances to live without fear and prosper according to the choice while man contributes a lot to society by working hard, generating new ideas, creating new science, technology, arts, literature etc.

Neither man can live without society nor can society prosper without man's contributions. Aristotle, the great ancient Greek philosopher, has rightly said that those who live without a society is either a beast or a god.

Human society is an organised and civilized way of living. A society is comprised of different types of people who differ in their way of living, but they are bound to live together supporting each other. Every one has assigned role to perform responsibilities in the greater interest of society as a whole. When we talk of civil society, it means, a society which is civilized and where there is no room for barbarism and arbitrary behaviour. It is society, which teaches man how to live and how to behave. A society cannot be called civilized where its members are not permitted to live freely and follow the course of life which is beneficial not only to him but to the society at large.

Society comprises of families, clans, castes, various social groups, such as religious, economic, cultural, and ethical. Numerous non-governmental groups or institutions are allowed to emerge in a society and act in the interest their members. Society does not permit to grow evils and anti-social elements. If such evils or elements are there, the society takes up the steps to curb them or to eradicate them for ever. Hence society has certain norms to punish the people who do not abide by the social norms or who harm the social interests.

Again, society is prior to state and government both. The state and government came into existence with the marked objectives to protect people, create favourable circumstance for better life and pave the way for further growth of healthy society. They also play the role to help those who need social security and assistance. Society has numerous social norms, customs, usages, traditions, cultures, behaviours,

practices, bindings, etc., which evolved from the time immemorial with the objectives to keep the society intact and maintain the social relations without harming anyone. Social bindings are there, but for correction, not for destruction. Society has place and provision for every one right from his birth to death. Society is so big and great that it has norms and rituals for its members who are no more in the world.

Every one is the member of society. Society has to take care of all its members whether they are young or old, weak or strong, educated or 'uneducated and rich or poor. In a civilized society there are different layers of the groups of the people according to their origin, faith, religion, economic status, and social up gradation. The beauty of a good society is that, everyone occupies honourable place according to his/her understanding. Each group is allowed to prosper without harming each other. Family is the basic unit of the society. It is the family that takes care of and supports its members right from the birth to death. It is the family, which is the base of development of its members. The family is the tie based on blood relationship having mutual affection and love for each other. The family has to share both the liabilities and assets of its members. The second grade of society is the clan, tribe and caste. According to Hegel, the western social and political philosopher, what we talk of tribe or caste is the developed form of the family only. That is why it is based on racial as well as blood relationship. Hence, it is the bounded duty of the family to take care of its old members and solve the problems of old-aged persons.

Meaning of Old Age

Old age cannot be defined exactly because it does not have the same meaning in all societies. In many parts of the world, people are considered old because of certain changes in their activities and physical appearance. Old people have limited regenerative

abilities and more prone to disease, syndromes and sickness than other adults. Again, people may be considered old when they become grandparents or when they begin to do less or different work. Moreover, the old people belong to an unproductive minority, and their fate depends upon the interests of the active majority.

Hence, it is difficult to give a precise definition of old-age and determine the exact period or time from where one lands into the arena of old-age. The citizens above the age of sixty five years are generally designated as the senior citizen. The age of superannuation, may also be called as the old-age. However, the age of superannuation differs from the range of 57 to even 70 years. The perception behind superannuation is that the incumbent's physical strength is not able to sustain the labour, which is required. Generally the sensual as well as physical organs of the old people are not as effective as they were during the period of youth.

In the United States, people are often considered old if they have lived a certain number of years. Many Americans think 65 is the beginning of old age because United States workers become eligible to return with full social security benefits at the age of 65. People in the 65-over age group are often called "senior citizens".

Worldwide, the number of people 65-year old or above is increasing faster than ever before in the developing countries because of better facilities of medication. In the US the percentage of people 65 or older increased from 4% in 1990 to about 13% in the last 1990s. In 1990, only about 3 million of the nation's population had reached 65. By 1998, the number of senior citizens had increased to about 34 million. The number of elderly people is growing around the world chiefly because more children reach adulthood. In most parts of the world, women live, on average, longer than men. In the U.S. in the late 1990s, life expectancy at

birth was 80 years for women and 73 years for men. American women who were aged 65 in the late 1990s could expect to live about 19 additional years. Men who were 65 could expect to live about 19 additional years.

India, like many other developing countries in the world, is presently witnessing rapid ageing of its population. Almost eight out of ten older people in India live in rural areas. Urbanization, modernization and globalization have led to changes in economic structure, erosion of societal values and the weakening of social institutions such as the joint family. In this changing economic and social milieu, the younger generation is too much busy in searching new identities where they can enjoy economic independence and adjust with the fast changing society. The changing economic structure has reduced the dependence of rural families on land, which had provided strength to bonds between generations. The traditional sense of duty and obligation of the younger generation towards their older generation is being eroded. The older generation is caught between the decline in traditional values on the one hand and the absence of an adequate social security system on the other.

Any way, the problem of the old-aged people is their well-being. Old people have to depend upon other for their well-being and survival because they are physically weak and their vital organs like eyes, ears, hands, legs, lungs, heart etc. are not in position to work effectively. Old people, in fact, have to depend on others in many ways. They may fall victims to various kinds of diseases frequently, where they need physical service as well as immediate and proper care and treatment. The body of the old person becomes the home of diseases because it can hardly sustain the bacterial and viral attacks. Some one has rightly said that oldness is a disease in itself. Or old-age body is the home of diseases. They have to depend upon others for proper

care and nursing. If they are not looked after properly, they may have to face numerous troubles and inconveniences.

Problem of the Old People and Certain Remedies

The memory power of the old people goes down and it becomes difficult for them to remember the past events or even to recognize the people whom they were well acquainted. At this situation they feel embarrassment. The vision of the eyes weakens due to cataract or other kind of eye diseases. If proper attention is not paid in time, they may be blind, which may add further troubles to them. In absence of timely and proper care they may be the victim of paralysis or other neurological problems, which add more troubles to the family. Constant period of depression may result in madness also. Thus, old age is such a stage of mankind where the old people need special care, assistance, well behaviour, hospitability, medical treatment and social attachment.

One of the greatest universal problems of the old people is lacking family as well as social attachment. The body becomes old, no doubt, but feelings, sentiments, emotions, wishes and desires of the old people never die. Hence, they need family as well as social attachments. It has generally been observed that old people are deprived of social attachments because hardly one has time to share emotional and sentimental feeling with the old people. It is all because, today, when life has become so busy, tough and hard, everyone is busy for self development and economic prosperity. Even the family members have no much time to spare for their retired elders. As a result, the old person feels himself/herself partially or totally neglected that ultimately results in the state of melancholy and depression. Hence, an old person needs psychological attachment from the family members and honours as well as regard from the society. He/she requires companionship to get rid of melancholy and loneliness.

He/she wants to get rid of perpetual monotony, dullness, boredom etc. Work keeps man busy and it is easy for him to pass the time, but old people without work become bore and it is much difficult for them to pass time. They feel lonely.

It should not be forgotten that when the old people were young and strong, they commanded respect and honour in both the family and society. In fact, the old man/woman is the root of the family tree and pioneer of the society. Before coming to the period of old-age, each guardian of the family concerned happened to be the leader of the house. It is he/she who used to take care of the children, arrange their better education, earn wealth for the support and survival of the family members and take trouble to provide them comforts. No family could prosper unless the guardian would have sacrificed for the prosperity of the family. At the same time, the old people had the opportunities to contribute a lot for the growth of society. When they were young, they played various roles to lead the society towards betterment by working hard in the fields, offices, factories, industries and serving border areas as a soldier. Their contributions to upgrade society by fighting with anti-social elements, helping the social organizations and contributing valuable suggestions cannot be overlooked. While working as brave soldiers, good public leaders, committed bureaucrats, village leaders, members of various social organizations, farmers, workers, poets, authors, dramatists, novelists etc, the old people did a lot to increase the name and fame of the society as well as the nation. Such old persons expect at least respect and regard from the members of the family, society and the government of the nation.

Hence, the family, the society and the nation have to acknowledge contributions of the old people and pay back them prices for their good services what they did to the family, the society and the nation at the stage

when they are old. No society, which claims to be good, may turn deaf ears or blind eyes to the needs of the old people. No grown up members of the family should be blind to the requirements of their old and retired members. They have to pay back their debt to their elders. No nation, which is well advanced, may boycott the old people. The old people are not liabilities of the family, society or the nation only because they are too old to work. They must be taken as assets. Hence, it is the responsibility of the civilized society to ensure that the old people are not neglected and abandoned.

Majority of the old people in developing or under-developed countries are uninsured by formal social security programmes. The most traditional system is the family support, which still has a supplementary role to play. Some countries like Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Canada, New Zealand and Australia do not have problems of 'uninsured old' because they have universal flat (uniform) or very broad means-tested old-age security benefits. In these countries the old-age benefits is typically financed out of general revenues and all residents are eligible to receive the benefits at old age. Once the people reach the specified age, the care is taken either by the government or by the non-governmental institutions (NGOs). Here, the problem is to manage the proper finance. System is that, the advanced people are kind enough to pay taxes to meet the expenditure on the needs of the old-age people. Another way to solve the problem of finance is volunteer contribution to extend pension insurance to those who do not have covered pensionable jobs. In Japan, men are encouraged to make contributions for their wives. In China, workers are pressurized to contribute to their individual accounts on a volunteer basis. But here, problem is the low payment of the workers. In India, field workers' payment is too low to save even a little amount for their future security.

Moreover, the majority of the workers who are illiterate hardly understand the significance of savings.

Old-Age People whether Assets or Liabilities of the Family?

Each old person has his/her home and family. Each family has moral as well legal responsibility to see and look after its old members. A general survey of the conditions of old people in India either in the rural or urban areas envisages the truth that the majority of the old people are not happy and satisfied. So long as the old members of the family are in a position to earn, the family takes care of them, but when they are unable or physically unfit to work and earn, the family generally takes such members as liabilities. There are few families, which have proper care and give respect and honour to their old people. Specially among the poor families the conditions of the old people are very much deplorable. Poverty of such families are main hurdles before them to have proper care for their old people. They can provide them neither nutritious food nor proper medical treatment. As a result, several of the old persons not only face the hardships of the life but also die before time. The behaviours of members of such poor families towards the old people have been found rough and tough perhaps due to economic frustration or lack of good family culture. There are numerous old people in India who are half-fed and half-clothed. There is no medical treatment for them. That is why several of them die before time in absence of better care and treatment. They are the victims of economic crisis. There is no old age home where they can pass their time. There is no one who can share their problems and shed tears for them. They are left on their own fate that is the fate of sufferings.

The problem of the retired or old age persons of the middle class and rich family is not economic crisis, but lack of concern to their elders. Every adult member

is too busy to spare time and share their problems. No doubt, the old persons of such family are lucky enough to get their economic problems solved, but what they lack is proper company of the family members. Even after they return back from the service, they are found busy with certain affairs. They are found participating in night clubs, picture halls and, visiting friends' houses till late night. Moreover, they watch various programmes on television, while the old people are left alone or at the mercy of the servants who can hardly give them emotional family touch.

It does not mean that Indian families or society do not take care of the retired family members. Relationship of family members in India is based on religious base. India is virtually a religious country. It may be Hinduism, Christianity, Islamism or Sikhism, all religions teach the followers to respect elders and serve them more when they become old. India believes in blessing of elders. Each society in India has honourable place for elders. It is the bounded duty of the sons and daughters to take care of their old and retired parents and meet the cost of their requirements. That is why the conditions of the Indian old people in comparison to that of the other nations of the world, is far better. They are not allowed to suffer and die without care. Even after death the family members of the diseased perform certain rituals with the marked objective to provide peace and salvation to the departed souls. However, problem is that in an advanced and industrialized society where consumerism has come on forefront, no one has time to look after their old people. In absence of proper jobs and professions many families are frustrated today. In such a situation, the religious sermons hardly help them to be true to their duties.

Thus, the problems before most of the Indian families for looking after their old people are mass poverty, economic crisis, uncertainty of future etc. They have no money to give proper medical treatment to their

members. They have no sufficient facilities to share with their people. They have to work hard living behind their old people because it is the compulsion. Most of the families in India are hand to mouth. Even survival is a big problem for these poor and deprived sections of people. Hence, they can neither think of taking proper care nor give better treatment to their old or retired people.

Government's Efforts to Assist Old People

General observation of the government's steps taken towards providing relief to the old people in India reveals the fact that nothing effectively has been done so far in this regard. Welfarism and altruism, which has become the basic base of governance of the modern government, have brought into force various programmes for the well-being of people under the caption social security. Social security is a general term, which has various devices to help the needy people. But most of the schemes under social security are related to the government servants. Under such provisions the government servants are provided with the facilities such as quarters or house rent, benefit of GPF, medical treatment, allowance for children education, increased dearness and pension facility. Thus, the benefits under the social securities mostly go to the government servants. The pension and retirement benefits which they get after retirement are enough to maintain their life peacefully. They have no worry to suffer economically.

So far the case of the general old people is concerned, nothing notable step has been taken so far. It is true that the government has launched certain schemes to give economic relief to the senior citizens. There is provision to give them more interest on their money invested or deposited in the banks and some rebate in income tax, too. They are also given more

interest benefits on various money deposit schemes in the banks and post offices etc. These all help the retired government servants to lead self-dependent life. So far the case of the unemployed old people is concerned, there is no provision at all to provide them economic relief except the old-age pension to some selected people belonging to the sections of the poor, suppressed, neglected and downtrodden. Major shortcoming of such scheme is that the amount, which is given in the name of old age pension, is too little to meet even daily minimum requirement of the life. Moreover, the scheme does not cover even 10% of the people who are old and in dire need of economic assistance. As a result, major portion of the old people of India specially in the rural areas are unlooked and uncared for. They have to solely rely upon the care of the family members. No doubt, the government of India has recently opened certain schemes of welfare for the old people such as concession in traveling, postal saving scheme, etc., but it may hardly help the poor old people to get relief. Until the Government opens major scheme for the welfare of the old people, their problems are not going to be over.

Except in few metropolitan cities in India there is no Old-Age Care Home. There is no public place where the old people can get together and pass their time while playing some sorts of game or reading news papers and magazines. In Kerala and Madras, there are few Old-Age Care Homes where the old people are admitted and properly looked after. Though the people living in these Homes are deprived of family love and affection, they have been found happy only because they have sufficient means to pass time and share feeling with their fellow friends. Moreover, their needs are properly met and they avail timely medical treatment also. They have the freedom to go home and meet their family members. The family members, too, attend the Care

Home from time to time to see whether their people are well or not. Such practice should be extended to other parts of the country. But it is notable that such facilities can be availed by the family which is rich enough to afford the required expenditure. Here, the government may play vital role to set up and maintain such Homes. The old members of the poor family may be given some sort of stipend or monetary assistance to meet the expenditure.

Role of the Family and Society towards the Old People

To help and assist the old people there is an immediate need to change attitude towards the old people. We cannot take them as burden. There are many families where the old people are badly treated and cursed upon. We must not forget that the old people are the gems of the society. They are the vast treasury of experience and knowledge. They are the root of the family and the society. They are fathers, mothers, grand-fathers and grand-mothers. They are the well-wishers of the family and society. They expect good behaviour and favourable response from the family and society. They have the maturity to guide young towards the way of prosperity and happiness. They know what is good and what is bad. They carry with themselves experienced and tested knowledge of life. They have seen many ups in their life and come crossed them successfully. They know how to live happily and how to behave properly. They have the wisdom to guide their family members especially during the period of crisis.

Thus, keeping in view the facts mentioned above the society must take the benefits of old people's experience and knowledge. The society must accord respect and honour for the old because they deserve that. The attitude of the society towards the old people should be sympathetic and cooperative. It may be social or family functions, the old people should be invited generously. They should be given hounarable place in

such functions and they should be invited to share their views and opinions on such occasions. If possible they should be publicly awarded for the deeds what they had done for the society and the nation. During the time of crisis the society must come ahead to assist and help the old people even through money contributions. The young people should behave respectfully with the old persons. Their problems should be duly considered and satisfactorily taken into account.

In India, blessing of the old has high place in the society. It is believed that their blessing brings prosperity and happiness in the life of the blessed one. Hence, all the efforts should be applied to win over them and obtain their good blessings. Even a word of love and sympathy may win over the heart of the old people because they are mild and simple. It is the bounden responsibility of the family members to have constant care for their old people and serve them as per their needs. They can help them by cleaning their cloth, washing their body, giving them timely food, nursing them during sickness and keeping them happy. They should be provided with certain kinds of amusements. If the old people are educated, they should be provided with newspapers, journals, magazines etc. to pass time and be update about happenings of the world.

Responsibility of the Old People towards Themselves

It has generally been observed that many old people are the victim of psychological thinking. They view oldness as burden upon themselves and even upon the family. This is negative attitude, which brings them near disappointment, frustration and worries. The oldness is the common problem for every one. Oldness is not a curse, but a boon. Those who die before being old are unlucky and unfortunate. God has given life to live with determination and hope. Strong and positive mental attitude helps every one either young or old to live happily. The old people must not think that they are

neglected lot and worthless fellows. Rather, they should be proud of their contributions which they had done for the rise and growth of their families and development of the society. They should not take themselves as the burden on the family or society. Rather, they should think that they are experienced people and society needs their valuable suggestions because old is gold.

There are many ways, which can help them in maintaining their health and live happily. The old people must be aware of their daily routine and control their diets. They must keep themselves away from injurious habits such as drinking, smoking, chewing *pans* or *tamuls* and tobacco etc. They must adopt certain good habits, which give strength and protect one from diseases. It is said that the walking is the best exercise. Since the old people cannot do heavy exercise, they must develop the habit to do morning and evening exercise daily. If possible, they must do Yoga according to their capacity. By doing regular Yoga they can get rid of various diseases such as asthma (breathing problem), frequent attack of cough and cold, indigestion, gastric, constipation, problem of nervous system, heart and lungs trouble, insomnia etc. Concentration of the mind is a must to get mental peace. Hence, the old people should develop the habit of concentration of mind through Yoga.

Since the old people have enough time, they must attend prayer assembly everyday. Unbreakable faith in Almighty and His compassion and grace gives one mental peace and physical strength to live happily. The old people must devote their time to worship and pray to God. So far their attitude towards the family members and the society is concerned; the old people must not curse them. The family has numerous problems to be solved. The old members of the family should not add trouble to these problems. They must be cooperative, accommodative and helpful. They must have patience

and endurance to tolerate inconveniences during the time of emergency. Their love and sympathy towards their family members should not be lessened. Their tune of talk with the people must be lovely and attractive. They should not be critics unnecessarily. Rather, they should have positive attitude for their people and appreciate their performances. Each generation has its own way of living and thinking. Hence, they should learn adjustment with new generation. They should be ready to make compromise with the ideas and feeling of new generation provided these are helpful and meaningful. The old people must not be disappointed. They must be hopeful about future. Thinking that nothing is permanent in this universe, they should live with hope and patience. They must have courage and be brave to face the challenges before them. They must not forget the "power of living" through "will power".

Conclusion

Thus, it is very much obvious that the problem of old-age in India is acute. In a fast changing industrial society where money power is playing vital role to adjust in society, the problems of the old people are multiplying day by day. With increasing number of workers the employees are asked to retire as early as possible so that the unemployed youths can avail the opportunity of employment. No doubt, the strength of the life of old people has increased, but the support of their life has decreased. Ernest Burgees, in *Aging in Western Societies* (1960) came to the conclusion that urbanization and the mass production of commodities are the chief which have undermined the economic basis of the extended family number of self-employed. This loss of extended family the aged and with their loss of decision-making power in the work arises pressures for their retirement.

Andurs Gerontology Centre, University of California, made a study on more traditional 'Free Homes' for the

aged poor: who have no family to care for them and the more recent for 'Pay Homes' for the middle-class. They also investigated a small number of 'Day-Care Centres'. According to the study, the most homes house which has small numbers of residents, have common spaces for dining, TV and prayer. The residents have access to medical care and transportation. They are provided meals and some assistance with activities of daily living. These centers are open to all castes. All are run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), only one-third with government assistance. Free homes tend to be bigger and older, serve non-aged clients, have less privacy and emphasize occupational therapy and income-generating activities, and are more like board-and-care homes. For pay homes have more privacy and western-style amenities, focus on local community outreach and provide fewer meals.

The gradual increase of all old-age homes has given rise to debates about their appropriate roles in Indian society and about their quality. Government grants to NGOs for homes and day-care centers (often considered more appropriate support for elders) are limited. With the National Policy on Older Persons looking to NGOs and village councils to be the primary sources of non-familial aged care, several ways to build their capacity are suggested. Such practices must be increased in the Indian society to solve the problem, related to the old-age people. The government and NGOs' must come ahead with generosity to facilitate such day-care centers, Old Age Care Home etc. and increase their number so that good number of old-age people may be well accommodated.

We Respect Every Elderly Person