AN APPROACH TO SUCCESSFUL AGEING

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AN APPROACH TO SUCCESSFUL AGEING

VI.1. INTRODUCTION

It is generally argued that the elderly used to be integrated into the family and society in the traditional societies. And that they are now increasingly being segregated due to disintegrating effects of forces of industrialization, urbanization and modernization resulting in migrations, changing family structure and changing value systems to mention a few. There has been shrinkage not only in size but also in the function of the family. Along with this the recent phenomenon of mandatory retirement has resulted in complicating the problem, thus leading to their marginalization. This chapter looks into the meaning of retirement for the elderly and the main theories that have been proposed as interventions to help the elderly to age successfully. Finally, it talks of the concept of ‘Active Ageing’ and an approach to successful ageing.

VI.2 RETIREMENT AND AGEING

Retirement, as understood, is a complete withdrawal from employment, along with entitlement to income that is based on having been employed over a period years.¹

Before the industrial revolution, wisdom was attributed to the elderly, but with technological change the knowledge held by elderly is rapidly rendered obsolete. The development of retirement legislation was an effect of industrialization and the so-called 'industrialization of the life course', but it is also a product of generational conflicts, because increasing life-expectancy, other things being equal, necessarily constrains the availability of work for younger workers. Given this conflict of interests between young and old within the setting of an impersonal, highly differentiated society with the emphasis on young and new occupations, older people are eventually pushed out of the labour market. In the modern world this has led to the phenomenon which we know as retirement.2 Compulsory retirement provides employers with a mechanism for shedding labour for the new entrants.

The age at which retirement takes place may vary, but it is always an abrupt change from work to non-work. To accept it as a part of our daily living, for many is a traumatic experience3 a time of crisis. This fixed age for retirement serves almost as a 'rite de passage' – definitely a total change of role and status. Unfortunately, the role of 'old person' does not automatically contain any activities which would give purpose to the individuals day.4 Retirement deprives him of those responsibilities and associations which govern, by and large the daily time hours of most adults.

Work has assumed a central position in the lives of people, both with respect to time and to importance. It provides the worker with associates as few persons work in complete isolation. Once work is organized it is social. It is in a way a source of their sense of self-worth. It occupies much of the time and provides such varied rewards including income, opportunities for social interaction and a basis for self esteem.

It fulfills a number of motives such as, providing wages and all economic rewards associated with the benefits of the job. It provides an opportunity for activity and expenditure of energy and also an opportunity for social interactions, which in turn lead to intrinsic satisfaction in an individual. Work is one of the most important avenues for integrating the individual into the social system by giving him or her, his or her identity, style of life, and social-participation pattern. It places the individual, and his family in the hierarchy of the social structure. Retirement undercuts the individuals major social support by removing him or her from the work world in which these supports are rooted. He is imprisoned in a role less role with no vital function to perform. The individual has to look for a new meaning and identity for one's life.

The loss of work role is seen to create a major crisis of identity. According to Parsons.

... Retirement leaves the older men in a peculiarly functionless situation, cut off from participation in the most important interests and activities of the society. Retirement not only cuts the ties of the job itself but also greatly loosens those to the community of residence. It is far less the financial hardship of the position of the elderly people than their social isolation which makes old age a problem.

According to Donahue, Orbach and Pollak\textsuperscript{10} retirement brings a far reaching change in a person's social role as a functioning member of the society and, as such, carries with it consequential implications of change in status.

It represents more than a change in one aspect of social life. It is a new form of social life, distinct from the previous pattern of old age, a form which has not yet achieved any specific institutional integration. Earlier societies had aged people, but they did not retire. They remained integrated within their family and kinship roles. Today most persons working in the organized sector retire from work at fixed age.\textsuperscript{11}

Retirement which is associated with ageing gives the feeling of being unwanted. It results in problems of adjustment - economic and social. It is in relation to these problems in adjustments that theories have been formulated so as to help them in ageing successfully. The purpose behind these theories has been to design interventions to help individuals age successfully.


VI.3 THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Theoretical development in social gerontology have been characterized by controversies and are said to be micro-dimensional, applying to small section of the elderly population rather than an universal application. Though many theories have been formulated but the major theories that have dominated the study of ageing, can be looked into briefly before looking into strategy for an approach to successful ageing.

While talking of ageing and adjustment frequent reference is made to two diametrically opposite approaches to the adaptation old age – the Activity Theory and Disengagement theory.

VI.3.a. Activity Theory

This theory emerged through the work of researchers such as Cavan et.al.\(^1\) and Havighurst and Albrecht.\(^2\)

According to this theory satisfaction in life is linked with activity and achievement and so for successful ageing people should remain active and in the mainstream. People grow old but maintain their self-images and personalities. The basic propositions of this theory are as follows\(^3\) –

- The majority of the normally aging persons will maintain fairly constant levels of activity

\(^{12}\) Cavan, R., et.al., *Personal Adjustment in Old Age*, Chicago : Science Research Associate, 1949

\(^{13}\) Havighurst, R.J. and Albrecht, R., *Older People*, New York : Longman, Green, 1953

\(^{14}\) Dhillon P.K., opp.cit. pp.50-52.
- The amount of engagement or disengagement will be influenced by past life styles and by socio-economic considerations rather than by some intrinsic inevitable process; and

- That it is necessary to maintain or develop substantial levels of social, physical and mental activity if ageing experience has to be successful.

According to Havighurst: 15

Research has established the fact that activity in a wide variety of social roles is positively related to happiness and good social adjustment in old age and also that high degree of activity in a given social role is positively related to happiness and good social adjustment.

This theory assumes that the relationship between the social system and the personality system remains fairly stable as an individual passes from the status of middle age to that of old age. For successful ageing a person should continue being or behaving as much as possible like a middle aged person. Happiness is achieved by denying the onset of old age for as long as possible. 16

According to Cavan old age does not differ much from middle age. Most ageing people resent the role loss imposed on them by society and resist the shrinkage of their social world. Cavan states that the best way to avoid the adverse effects of ageing, is to continue to maintain the level of activities and

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15. Fennell, Phillipson and Evers, opp.cit. p.44. (quoted)
the contacts with middle age group as long as possible and to find suitable substitute when one is forced to relinquish the pre-ageing patterns. The key to optimal ageing are activity, outgoingness and involvement in social life.17

If existing roles or relationships are lost, it is important to replace them because when activity drops, there is corresponding decrease in satisfaction and contentment. Havighurst stresses on the notion of role flexibility. The term can be defined as the capacity of personal quality to change roles easily and increase or reduce activity. Palmore in a longitudinal study found that older men tended to show almost no overall reduction in their activities or life satisfaction. He pointed out that disengagement by the elderly is not an inevitable product of ageing. Activity was significantly related to high morale and life satisfaction.18

However, it has been argued that it may not be role activity that determines high morale, rather it may be that those with high morale who can form friendships and have a greater probability of staying active than those with low morale. Moreover many older individual's happiness in not obtained by staying active for many older individuals prefer what might be called a rocking chair approach to old age.19

17. Cavan, R., et.al. opp.cit. p....
VI.3.b. Disengagement Theory

This was developed by Cumming and Henry, based on their study in Kansas city (USA). Two samples of men and women – aged 50-70 years and aged above 70 years were selected. The chronically ill and certain other minority group were excluded from the study. It is directed to fix out disengagement between the individual and society. The measures adopted to achieve this end were

- 'Role Count' (number of active roles a person has),
- 'Interaction Index' (measures density of interaction in social intercourse), and
- 'Social Life Space' (which measures the number of discrete contacts of the respondents with others).

The concept of disengagement is taken as the modal process of mutual withdrawal of ageing individual and society, to produce mutual satisfaction. The central postulate of this theory has be summarized by Cumming and Henry as follows:-

Ageing is an inevitable mutual withdrawal or disengagement resulting in decreased interaction between the ageing person and others in the social system he belongs to. The process may be initiated by the individual or by others in the situation. The aged person

may withdraw more markedly from some classes of people while remaining relatively close to others. His withdrawal may be accompanied from the outset by an increased pre-occupation with himself; certain institutions in society may make the withdrawal easy for him. When the ageing process is complete the equilibrium which existed in middle life between the individual and his society has given way to a new equilibrium characterized by a greater distance and an altered type of relationship.

Retirement means that a man's central life task is finished and it is from this point that disengagement begins. It is in fact, seen as a form of permission for men to disengage from demanding social roles. For women, widowhood is considered to be the formal marker of disengagement.

According to this theory, either the individual or society may initiate the process of disengagement. When done by the individual it is the result of ego chances. When done by society it is result of organizational imperatives.

This theory states that 'egoenergy' declines with age and that as the ageing process develops, individuals, become increasingly self occupied and less responsive to the environment. The older person tends to respond to inner rather than outer stimuli, withdraw emotional investment, give up self-assertiveness, and avoid rather than embrace challenges. A shift takes place from vertical relationships, like those involved in responsibility towards children, which are more demanding in nature and involve greater amount of responsibility to horizontal relationship which are less demanding and more optional.

P.K. Dhillon\(^{24}\) sums up the basis propositions of this theory as follows:-

- A process of mutual withdrawal of ageing individuals and society from each other is a usual occurrence.
- This process of withdrawal is inevitable.
- It is necessary for successful ageing.

The theory emphatically maintains that the logical termination and completion of disengagement is death. And in order that death does not disrupt the functioning of the society the aged are expected to relinquish their active roles.\(^{25}\) This theory assumes that both the individual and society are gratified by the process. It also says that for the individual withdrawal brings a release from societal pressures for continued high level productivity and performance. For society, withdrawal of the older members presumably allows younger, more energetic, competent ones to assume the roles to be filled in the social system.\(^{26}\)

However this theory has attracted a lot of critical appraisal. The main criticism is that withdrawal from a role by the aged is not necessarily by choice but is forced on them by fixing a statutory retirement age. The concept itself was seen as legitimizing a form of social redundancy among the old. Crawford\(^{27}\) suggests that retirement is a form of imposed withdrawal from a central life role which affects both husband and wife. Voluntary disengagement was observable only in a small minority.

Shanas\textsuperscript{28} pointed out that-

There is little evidence that old people take the initiative in disengaging and there is good deal of evidence to suggest that they dislike loss of roles and relationships. Not everyone reaches a high plateau of involvement and activity in middle life from where there is a gradual fall in later life. Many individuals never reach a high plateau; they cannot be said to have become disengaged or to have reached more than the foothills of social integration. Even when disengagement appears to be gradual as when as elderly housewife gives up first the shopping, then the heavy cleaning and washing, and only last of all the cooking, there is evidence of marked unwillingness to surrender these functions. Even very old women retain important role as housewives, mothers and grandmothers.

Also Townsend\textsuperscript{29} argued that there was little evidence of old people taking the initiative to disengage or withdraw and a good deal to suggest that they are distressed by the loss of roles and relationships. He went on to suggest that extensive social interaction may be gradually replaced by intensive local interaction involving many fewer people.

Havighurst\textsuperscript{30} observes that as people pass beyond the age of 60, they seek the roles which have greater involvement for them. He finds that there is no overall decline of engagement in social role activity from age 60-75. This decline seems to be selective with ego involvement being maximised as far as possible.


\textsuperscript{29} Fennell, G., Phillipson, C. and Evers, H., opp.cit. p.47.

However, Gilbert Dooghe\textsuperscript{31} concludes that Disengagement theory and Activity theory are more complementary than opposite. Disengagement is seen as static in which sub-culture is likely to be engendered among the old people, and in which it tends to become established. The numerical increase in elderly population and the links of solidarity which form within groups may place the members in a position of strength, which will enable them to reintegrate in the society from which they now feel excluded.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Most of them while disputing the position of disengagement as a natural correlate of ageing and retirement, still admitted its reality as a consequence of given physical and social conditions. But there are doubts on the extent to which it can be regarded as an intrinsic and universal phenomenon, thus making it limited in scope and its non-applicability on large scale. It was pointed out that the universality of withdrawal either within or across cultures must be rejected as must the view that withdrawal is an intrinsic feature of ageing process as opposed to it being just one of a number of styles of ageing. Generally parallel is drawn to the theory of Ashrama Vyavastha.
\end{itemize}

\textbf{VI.3.c. Ashrama Theory}

The concept of ‘ashrama’ system is sometimes seen as parallel to the process of disengagement. The word ‘asrama’ is originally derived from the sanskrit root ‘srama’ which means ‘to exert oneself’. Literally it means a halting or resting place. The word therefore signifies a halt, a stoppage, or a stage in

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{31}] Dooghe, G., “The Theory of Disengagement and the sub culture of elderly people as a sociological basis for the study of the problems of the aged”, \textit{Sociological Abstract}, 1971, p.1619.
\end{itemize}
the journey of life just for the rest, in a sense, in order to prepare oneself for further journey. They can be regarded as resting places during one's journey on the way to final liberation which is the final aim of life.

According to the traditional Hindu view of life a man's earthly life passes through four specific stages known as Asrama, leading to a corresponding role expectations – Brahmacharya Ashrama, Grihastha Ashrama, Vanaprastha Ashrama and Sanyas Ashrama. This theory is related to the theory and practice of Purushartha s, each of the four ashramas is conceived of as a training ground and an opportunity system for an individual to prepare himself for his 'dharma' in the next successive stage of life through the performance of the specific actions and roles in the present ashrama, which are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Each invididual is expected to practise the somethings included in these 'purusharthas' during the four stages. The 'purusharthas' are referred to as psycho-moral basis of the ashrama vyavastha because, on the one hand, the individual receives a psychological training through the ashramas in terms of lessons in the use and management of the purusharthas while, on the other hand, in actual practise, he has to deal with the society in accordance with these lessons.

The first stage is of the brahmacharya ashrama. It is the phase of student life. The individual is supposed to acquire knowledge and pursue his learnings in accordance with the dharma, he has to learn dharma in all its various aspects

33. Ibid, p.79.
and ramifications. The upnayana sanskara (sacrament) introduces the child into this ashrama. The significance of all the four purushartha\text{s} and the ultimate value of 'moksha' is to be understood in this ashrama. It is conceived as the first step in life's journey and the very foundation of one's social and moral self upon which the superstructure of the rest of the three ashramas are based.

The next stage is of the 'Grihastha ashrama'. It is the stage of a householder and a person enters it through marriage. There an individual is expected to fulfil his obligations (rinas) to the members of his family, to his ancestors, the strangers and to God. This phase has great social importance, as the individual can fulfil his three debts - the debt to the God (deva-rina), the debt to the ancestors (pitra-rina) and the debt to the stages (rishi-rina) and it provides scope for the practise of three purushartha\text{s} - dharma, artha and kama, together.

The third stage is of the 'Vanasprastha ashrama'. As the name itself suggests the individual has to leave the shelter not only of the family and of the home but also of the village and go to the forest and live there. The purushartha of dharma and moksha acquire great significance, dharma being the dominant one. The individual should strive to bring under control his senses of enjoyment.\textsuperscript{34} This is the stage where a conscious effort is made by the individual to withdraw himself from active social participation and life so that he may enter the final stage of 'sany\text{"}{\textsuperscript{a}}sa ashrama'. This stage is seen as a preparatory one for the final stage of liberation.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, p.89
The final stage is that of 'Sanyasa ashrama'. It provides the fullest opportunity for the self-expression and self-expansion of the individual in terms of the final 'yajna'. This consists of a complete offering of the self wherein the self, out of a will and purpose to be perfect, surrenders all that was nearest and dearest to his lower ego in order that thereby and thereafter he may be enabled to be one with the real self, the atma.\(^{35}\) In this stage the individual is expected to give up all attachment with the world and strive for the ultimate aim of salvation or moksha.\(^{36}\)

The ashrama theory presents a systematic approach to human life in development terms. Implicit in this approach is the relationship between the individual and the society in its dynamic aspect. During the first stage of brahmacharya ashrama, the society is expected to see to the comforts and development of the individual, while in the second stage, the individual is expected to take care of and serve the society. In the third ashrama the individual begins the process of gradual withdrawal from the previous stage and starts enchanting himself with the interests of the final stage of sanyasa ashrama. In this final stage, the individual severes his connections with the society and severes, directs his energies towards his self-realization. Therefore, in the third and fourth ashramas, the function of the individual is to deal with the supernatural, with the life within, and the function of the group is thinned out slowly and in the last stage, he is completely free from any social obligations, and is required to help himself in the search of the self.\(^{37}\)

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35. Ibid, p.98
36. Ibid, p.90-91
37. Ibid, p.100.
This view recognises the withdrawal from society as an approach towards old age. However, it has one positive aspect which the disengagement theory lacks – it is a theory of social organization from the point of view of age – stratification and age based roles and social sanctions and allocation of facilities. While the latter is too limited in its scope and does not explain for the non-applicability on large scale.\textsuperscript{38} While the 'ashrama' model for ideal life cycle is one which, at least in its broad outlines, is familiar to Hindus of all social levels in contemporary India. While few may however correspond in detail to the prescriptions of the sanskrit texts, and whereas men do not plan their lives to follow precisely their directives, it is nevertheless clear, in general, Hindus use the notion of the four stage of life normatively.\textsuperscript{39}

It is important to draw attention to the heterogeneity within and between cultures of the elderly population and their problem being multidimensional. Thus indicating that no single theory can be normally universally be applied to the 'aged' together as a homogeneous section. Moreover it is important to understand ageing as a dynamic process rather than a static process.

According to Victor D'Souza\textsuperscript{40} the so called activity and disengagement theory are not logical formulations and are no more than prescriptions based on commonsense. Above all, these theories do not take into account the historical changes that have taken place in the situation of the ageing.

VI.3.d. An approach to the Study of Ageing

In these theories, age is considered as a natural condition with its own peculiar effectiveness independent of the social and historical contexts. The danger inherent is that we risk attributing to old age, an innate and original characteristics, those properties that, in fact, derives from the social system in which it is incorporated. These theories consider old age as a homogeneous entity that can be isolated and whose substance can be extracted by analysis. They tend to seek a single model for aging, whether it be isolation, disengagement, or activism. It isolates the problems of old age from the general social mechanism with which it is involved. Analyzed apart from that which governs the functioning of the social system, old age can no longer be related to any one individual factors.41 Old age should not be seen as a breakway, but as a process. Old age can no longer be regarded as the locus of specific mechanisms peculiar to a particular stage in life and endowed with a nature of their own. It is to be seen, instead, as the focal point of general social mechanisms, the cumulative effect of which is to produce concomitantly social exclusion, marginality and isolation. The approach should be to assume a life course perspective. In studying the influence of the state of social relations upon old age in a given society we need to take into account the great diversity of the social practices of old age and reconstitute each of the life courses that objectively opens, in the last stage of life, onto these different forms of typical

behavior. The position held by individuals within social relations has a profound
effect on their life trajectory because it exercises concurrently direct effect and
indirect effect through a set of factors that act as mediators and relay and
multiply the initial impact of the position. For example, the way in which the
family is made up, the manner in which family exchanges take place, and the
course followed in professional life are all largely determined by class position.
The size of the family and its manner of functioning have a predefining effect
on the forms that the maintenance of the family structure may take as the
members advance in age, just as they also determine the possibility of its
disintegration. The entry into professional life and the place held by the individual
within the process of production merely entrench more firmly the effects of
upbringing in the family. But, once produced, these factors together with their
correlatives (economic resources, leisure opportunities, degree of biological
ageing, and morbidity rate) will shape the future destiny of the agents holding
these positions. Therefore, investigation should be made in the context of entire
life course.42

The focus has to be on ageing as a part of whole life rather than as a
static group, apart from the rest of the population. The approach should be to
view ageing as a part of the life cycle rather than compartmentalization. To
focus on process of healthy age by observing cultural influences (the settings
in which individuals age play an important role in their general well-being) and
strengthening intergenerational links.43

42. Ibid, pp.226-227.
Year, No. 4, July - August 1997, p.4.
There is a need to examine the influence of events and conditions of life that dominated during the earlier stages and of the historical circumstances shaping the experience of different cohorts on old age and retirement. Also the position held by individuals within social relations has a profound effect on their life track.

So, what is required is retrospective life history studies which would see later life as an intricate pattern of life career's rather than a single event or stage. Also adequate attention needs to be given to variations both in the social context within which retirement takes place and in the personal biographies of elderly individuals.44

Any theory trying to postulate one desirable feature of ageing would be inadequate. The heterogeneity of this section of population should be taken into consideration. It has been argued that heterogeneity increases with age, as the effect of environment factors accumulate, making people more and more dissimilar, with a great variation in the nature and timing of the events of ageing.45 A fresh examination of the issues involved in old age should be taken into consideration while talking of new approaches.

VI.3.e. Concept of Active Ageing

As a new approach towards ageing, the concept of Active Ageing was put forward by the World Assembly on Ageing.

44. Fennell, G., Phillipson, C. and Evers, H., opp.cit. pp.43-55.
It implies:

• participation as opposed to passivity;
• openness as opposed to closedness;
• commitment as opposed to indifference;
• reciprocal sharing – giving and receiving;
• appropriate autonomy and solidarity – independence and dependence.46

The idea of ‘Active Ageing’ was sponsored as an important strategy for the adjustment of the ageing in modern societies.

It is based on the idea that ageing constitute an important resource which is neglected in modern societies to the detriment of these societies as well as of the ageing themselves. It recognises that the declining status of the ageing in modern society is due to a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of their situation. It deals with way in which ageing can contribute to development. Although the physical, social and psychological resources of the ageing are on a sliding scale, they are backed up with a lifetime of knowledge, experience and wisdom which are not only valuable to the society but also enable the ageing to develop continually. It stresses on the social reconstruction of the situation of the ageing in the modern society, which is conducive to the development and well-being of the ageing as well as that of the society.47

The concept of active ageing, obviously goes against the disengagement theory, while it has some similarity with the activity theory. But it is argued that this concept has a much wider connotation. Unlike the activity theory, the activities implied in 'here' are aimed at achieving certain objectives on the part of the elderly such as economic security, sense of purpose and meaning in life, and integration in the community and society. It embraces a very broad perspective including the interrelationship between humanitarian and developmental needs of the elderly and those of their society. It presupposes the fulfillment of such needs as health and nutrition, housing and environment, the family, social welfare, income security and employment, and education of the elderly. Unlike the activity theory, which emphasises the activity of the ageing, the concept of active aging focusses on the harnessing of the potential resources of the ageing for their development and of the society and the re-establishing of reciprocity between the ageing and the society.48

The ageing are made to feel as though they are useless and society looks upon them as a burden. While active ageing is based on the premise that ageing is a gradual process and that the same needs, capacities and potentialities usually prevail over the entire life-span. The ageing therefore are capable of making a productive and useful contribution to their community and society.

VI.4 AN APPROACH FOR SUCCESSFUL AGEING

- Resource utilization

The quality of life for elderly people in future will depend on a number of fundamental changes in the ways that societies perceive and respond to human ageing.

Obviously there is no 'gold standard' by which successful ageing can be defined, since the criteria will vary between people. Any theory that postulates one desirable feature of ageing - such as high levels of activity or health or life satisfaction will be in adequate.\(^4\) However, of paramount importance is the continuing mental activity in old age, since both physical and mental activity are essential ingredients of a good quality of life in later years. We need to emphasise on developing the skills of all ability levels. The activities should not be necessarily for monetary benefits. These could be in the form of social and developmental activities also. Engagement in work is one of the essential steps that is integral to any for 'Effective Ageing' – a term coined by Gen. Pannu.\(^5\) Intensive elderly participation in productive activities is important so as to reduce the impact of many problems associated with ageing. It would definitely enrich their social life.\(^5\)

What is required is resource utilization. They are vast reservoirs of knowledge, experience, wisdom and skills. This utilization would give them a

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feeling of belongingness, satisfaction and even improvement which would promote healthy ageing. Their skills and excess of free time should not be allowed to remain dormant. It should be utilized for development and well being of the society.

The elderly have many latent or dormant reserves that are not used simply because they are not activated by environmental demands. The accumulation of such reserves starts at birth and continues throughout life. Old people tend to live in an undemanding environment, with little stimulation, whereas mental, social, psychological or economic demands can have the effect of activating these latent reserves.52

It is necessary to devise ways and means to create an environment conducive for the optimal harnessing of energies and expertise of these effective elderly people and use them for the betterment of society.

One example of this is the ‘Ageing well in Europe’ project. It is an innovative pan-European health promotion programme for and with older people. It seeks to prolong active and independent life. It is running in nine European countries. It is about adding life to years and years to life. Many of the ‘Ageing Well’ projects actively involve older people as “Senior Health Mentors”. These are specifically trained individuals who can offer support and advice to their contemporaries and encourage them to adopt healthier life styles. The partners and participants believe that the best people to put this philosophy into practise

are the elderly themselves. They can convince people of the importance of following healthy lifestyles, improved self confidence and motivation, and enable participants to play a fuller social role. This type of 'peer counselling' is widely recognized as a successful way of passing on valuable information, and perhaps even more importantly of changing attitudes and enabling people to take a more positive attitude towards ageing.53

• Adaptation

As one ages, no doubt, vulnerability increases. But resource utilization and continuing mental activity does not mean making an extra effort. In fact this vulnerability needs to be acknowledged.

Ageing successfully does not imply avoiding the problems, changes and losses that come with age. On the contrary, it means continually striving, despite set-backs. Successful ageing indicates maximizing gains and minimizing losses. This might require one to change one's expectations and standards, to delegate control and to acknowledge the uncontrollability of specific events - in short to accommodate one's goals are necessary. They need to be flexible and in tune with themselves and their environment. Growing old requires self-mastery as well as environmental mastery.54 So what is required is proper utilization of these rich reservoir of knowledge and expertise but with the acceptance of the limitations due to biological ageing and the therefore adjustment of goals as well as means for attaining them.

Growing old successfully despite losses is possible by employing the processes of selection optimization and compensation. Baltes, cites the example of pianist Arthur Rubinstein, who used the interplay of these processes to maintain goal and adjust to losses. Asked in a television interview when he was 80 years old how he managed to remain a renowned pianist at such an advanced age, Rubinstein replied that he attempted to overcome some frailties of his age by performing a smaller number of pieces, so that he could practise them more often and using other tricks like slowing down the tempo before a very fast passage, to give the impression of playing the music faster. So all the three processes, mentioned above can be seen into foreplay.

- **Selection** (reduction of repertoire)

- **Optimization** (more practise of fewer pieces)

- **Compensation** (a change in style to retain the appearance of playing fast)

However, these processes should be seen only as matter of intention and rationality. Each of the three processes can be active or passive, internal or external, conscious or unconscious. For instance, they may involve moving to a better place to work or live or changing one's goals to fit the existing conditions, active pursuit of new skills or gradual acceptance of life without certain skills. By using strategies of selection, optimization and compensation, individuals can attribute to their own successful ageing. Although, the biology of ageing limits more and more the overall range of possibilities in old age, however the adaptive task of each one of us as we age is to select and
concentrate on those aspects of life and goals that are of high priority and involve a convergence of environmental demands and individual motivation, skill, preference and biological capacity.55

- **Perceived control and successful ageing**

Belief in perceived control, refers to one's belief in the ability to determine the outcomes of life events and destiny. This belief is made-up of several estimates including estimates of internal factors like abilities and external factors like luck, expected help from friends, relatives, God's intervention etc. The belief in personal control, is essential to one's sense of competence and is basic to human functioning. Actual or perceived loss of control is incapacitating. Belief in personal control is important for healthy, adaptive and optimal functioning, while lack of it is pathological, distressing and harmful.56

The importance of control in human life can not be overestimated. However, what is important in determining the quality of life is not actual control rather one's belief in perceived control. When we believe we can effect the outcomes in our life, make choices, cope with the consequences, we behave differently than when we do not hold such belief.

It has been shown that perception of effective control, even if not verifiable, can significantly decrease the effects of aversive experience. Consequences of the belief in control are primarily positive regardless of whether or not the

55. Ibid, p.11.
perception is either true or acted upon. According to Langer, believing that one has control may be more important in exercising particular responses to bring about desired outcomes.\textsuperscript{57} The concept of successful ageing in its original meaning implies life satisfaction as the most salient indicator. Neugarten et. al.\textsuperscript{58} in an analysis of life satisfaction of the elderly noted five components:

- The individual takes pleasure from whatever activities constitute his everyday life;
- The individual regards his life as meaningful and accepts responsibility for what life has been;
- The individual believes that he has succeeded in achieving his major goals of life;
- The individual holds a positive self image and regards himself as a worthwhile person, regardless of present weaknesses;
- The individual maintains optimistic attitudes and moods.

Perceived lack of control leads to a feeling of helplessness and despondency and low self esteem that lower satisfaction with life in general and makes it seem meaningless. However the ability to sustain a sense of control in old age may greatly be influenced by societal factors.


\textsuperscript{58} Parsuram, A., opp.cit. p.32.
• Stereotyping by society and self-image

Of all the extrinsic factors operating in old age, public attitudes remains the most damaging. Many stereotypes of old age exists. Their inability to change their ways of thinking being rigid, traditional, critical etc. These negative stereotypes represent a form of symbolic stigmatization, which finds its way through to practical every day action, thereby giving meaning to the experience of growing old.\[^{59}\]

The power of negative stereotypes of ageing to stigmatise is clearly grounded in the essentially symbolic nature of social life to which we have referred. The anxiety occasioned by such stereotypes is an acknowledgement of their central role in social life. We are highly dependent on stereotypes as a means of communication. According to Lipman we do not see first and then define but define first and then see. Stereotypes precede and shape our perceptions and are inescapable consequence of living in a complex world in which a bewildering profusion of messages is generated. The role of stereotypes is to make fast, firm and separate what is in reality fluid and changing. Images of ageing are stereotypes which we use to categorise and thus identify a wide diversity of individual persons in terms of socially prescribed age categories. Although general patterns of physical change can be detected, the actual ways in which people age are determined by their specific circumstances and a host of other factors. Therefore they do not do full justice to any particular individual

who is labelled as old in terms of his or her observable appearance and behaviour. 60

Stereotyping seems to affect the elderly's confidence and generally, the more old people believe in stereotypes, the lower their self esteem. Self image and stereotypes are self-reinforcing, creating a vicious circle. 61 A negative view of ageing contributes to the actual decline of many people in later life.

Infact this labelling and stigmatization of the elderly might contribute to behaviour that actually confirm prevalent stereotypes of old age leading to diminished feelings of control and self esteem. As self esteem decreases belief in ones ability to exercise control over environment also declines. Ageing individuals may therefore, over estimate the decrements in their capacities, which is far more debelitating than the change itself. 62

One way in which elderly can protect themselves from such negative ideology is to develop their own consciousness. However, this seems to be difficult as the elderly are not a homogeneous group, they reflect the diversity of class, social and political interests. 63

It is therefore difficult to envisage how such a diverse group can organise themselves politically to work in their own common interest. Further, within the group of people defined as 'elderly' there are major inequalities between different cohorts. 'Young old', perhaps those recently retired, command more resources

60. Ibid, pp.53-54.
than those people defined as 'old old' who do not have occupational pensions and whose assets have withered away with inflation. Moreover, they do not meet as a group, as do for example, industrial workers or students.\textsuperscript{64} However, with the changes of modern life, there seems to be a need among the elderly to be more conscious of themselves and see themselves in the right-light.

One way in which attitudes might be improved is through education. In developing such programmes for people involved with elderly people it will be important to examine the stereotypes of old age and to focus on the process of normal human ageing. Ageing should be seen as a normal process and old people are as much a part of society which comprises of youth, children, women etc. The means to treat them as individuals in their own rights.

Along with this is important that the elderly themselves hold a positive self-image. They need to maximise their independence, autonomy and self respect.

So it is important to promote positive attitudes. So much change could be realised if attitudes towards normal ageing and elderly peoples attitudes towards themselves were improved.\textsuperscript{65} But for this, empowerment of the elderly is very important.

However, this empowerment is a life long process and trying to achieve this in old age would not help much.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid, p.287.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. p.288.
Practices followed in retirement are directly determined by the level and the nature of the resources that the individual was able to build up during his or her past life. Resources means all the intellectual, social, biological and material assets or acquisitions available to the retired person. If, on reaching the threshold of retirement, subject have been unable to preserve a certain level of resources, social activity becomes paralyzed from the moment they cease working. In speaking of these resources, a distinction must be drawn between "assets" and "potentialities". Assets are the elements immediately available to the actor for the maintenance of his or her social position and biological situation - individual's financial resources, biological situation, and capital of social relations. While Potentialities cover all the actors skills and abilities that might be invested in order to obtain goods indirectly. They are measured by the level of education, the position held in the process of production, and the extraprofessional skills acquired by subjects during their active nonworking lives.66

Also, if social involvement and favourable self-evaluations has not been built up before retirement they are unlikely to be established after wards.

VI.5 VIEWS OF THE RESPONDENTS
An attempt was made to analyse the suggestions made by the retirees regarding the ingredients for successful ageing. The responses ranged from regular habits

to independent lifestyle to positive attitude, as can be seen in the responses below:

I guess the first criteria is health... not only physical but overall... mental health as well. However, along with this, I feel, the key to successful and healthy ageing is if you can be flexible and more receptive to the changing environment.

Another one was:

It is important to have a regular daily routine and habits.... Well also as long as one remains independent recognising one's limitations and potentials old age does not pose any problems.

Yet another:

It is important to perceive oneself in a positive way.... you know the self image has to be positive. One should be self-directed, realise the potentials and be social.

However, almost four-fifth of the respondents stressed on the need for planning and discharging one's responsibilities before retirement and keeping oneself mentally active and busy to utilise the spare time could help in successful ageing. One of the many responses were:

The retirees have to plan their future themselves. This has to be done in the pre-retirement period. Also, I think the government and society should launch schemes to make use of specific expertise gathered by the retirees. So as to ensure some financial help and also to enable them to utilise their spare time, which is quite substantial, purposefully.

Another responses was:

Generally a lack of foresight and planning on the part of the retirees leads to adjustment problems in the post-retirement period. See, one should understand ones
limitations and be flexible in attitudes towards others in this changing world. Moreover, if the children have not settled before retirement, the problem could really be serious.

Yet another one was:

Well, I think the first important step for healthy successful ageing is to discharge ones responsibilities.... you know like childrens marriage, education etc. Then, one should be adjusting in nature and keep oneself busy by utilising this potential.

- Yet another responses was:

I think one should keep oneself busy mentally by utilising the potentials developed life should have a meaning - a direction.

One of the responses stressed on the need for minimising one wants:

I think, for successful ageing one has to plan in advance for minimising their wants and for catering only to the bare minimum needs. Along with this one should not expect too much from children, relatives.... and try to understand their point of view also. Best is to use ones creatives potential and keep busy.

Therefore, it can be seen from these responses that no single criteria can serve as a 'golden rule' for successful ageing. Moreover, the preparation for successful ageing can not be a post retirement attempt; it has to be a life long process.
VI.6. CONCLUSION

Mandatory retirement is generally seen as a time of crisis in the life of the individual. It marks a total change of role and status, thus bringing in problems of adjustments. Theories have been formulated so as to help them in ageing successfully. According to the activity theory, satisfaction in life is linked with activity - one should remain active, while the disengagement theory stresses on the process of mutual withdrawal of ageing individual and society, to produce mutual satisfaction. However, it has been argued that just to remain active is not enough. In fact, the quality of that activity is important. Similarly, withdrawal is generally forced upon the individual, rather than being a mutual and positive process of disengagement. No single theory can universally be applied to the aged due to the heterogeneity within and between cultures. It is not possible to develop a uniform pattern or model for successful ageing for all old persons. Variations exist among individual aged even when they are placed in similar social conditions.

Moreover, ageing should be viewed as a lifelong process and the approach should be to assume a "life course perspective" - ageing as a part of whole life rather than compartmentalization. The idea of "Active Ageing" was put forward by the World Assembly on Ageing as an important strategy for adjustment of the ageing. It focuses on harnessing of the potential resources of the aged for their own development and of the society. Most of the respondents agreed that with ageing there will be a decline in the body's capacity to work but if one keeps himself or herself busy in old age, this rate of decline can be brought down.
There is no substitute for the experience one acquires over the years and one must capitalise on this factor. Of paramount importance is the continuance of mental activity in old age, as the mental health shows on physical health. Emphasis should be on outlining the possibilities to enable the elderly to make better choices about their lives, rather than charting decline and predicting outcomes. Issues of maintaining and finding meaning, and the appreciation of the characteristic achievements of a long life, such as wisdom needs to be emphasised.

The retirees felt that it is important that one discharges ones responsibilities towards their family before retirement. Along with this a proper planning, independent life style and positive attitude of ones own potential could help in successful ageing.

A more positive view of later life can have just as striking an effect as the negative stereotypes. Just like the negative views of ageing itself contributes to the actual decline of many people in old age, the images of continued potential can facilitate the actualization of much better potential in later life.

Ageing means enriching life, not withdrawing from it, neither does it mean to avoid the problems and losses. It means striving to maximise gains and minimize losses. There should be a continued willingness to adjust and adapt to the situation. In the words of the respondents, it means being flexible and adjusting. One should perceive that one is in control of his or her life situations and influence it accordingly to enrich their lives. What is required is to promote ones independence, and purpose with dignity to age successfully.