CHAPTER-6

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher conceptualized Positive Aging as “the sustenance of positive subjective experiences comprising satisfaction with life in the past, happiness with the present and optimism and hope towards the future in the face of decline and loss as a result of aging”. Positive subjective experiences of happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and hope can be experienced at any age and stage in life, independent of gender.

Retirement is a period of stress for the aging individual which calls for crucial social adjustment. From this period onwards until post retirement phase, a decline in pathway thinking (way-power) is likely to occur, however, the happiness, satisfaction with life, optimism and agency (will-power) of hope is likely to remain somewhat similar. It suggests that although individuals are capable of being happy, satisfied and optimistic about themselves, they eventually face difficulty in finding an alternative route to reach personally important goals. This capacity is likely to go down as individuals age. This applies particularly to females who advance into the post retired years of their lives. During the period of employment and economically productive years, females achieve a higher level of positive subjective experiences compared to males but as years pass by, males overtake females with respect to positive subjective experiences.

Social support is a broad concept. It may include social network comprising the size of the network, number of persons and the frequency of interaction. Social support may also include functional aspects such as the perceived satisfaction from the support network groups available at disposal. The present study explores these two aspects of social support across working status and gender. The need for social support for a high level of positive subjective experiences is most pronounced immediately after retirement, less in the post retirement years and least during the pre-retired period for an aging individual. A wider and more diverse social network is required by the aging males, especially during the retirement years, for them to be
happy in the present, satisfied with the past life, optimistic and hopeful towards future. A woman’s positivity is more contingent upon the extent to which she perceives her social support system as personally satisfying. In the post retirement phase individuals are likely to encounter positive subjective experiences of past (life satisfaction), present (happiness) and future (optimism, hope and agency sub-scale of hope) irrespective of the size of social network and the level of perceived satisfaction from social support. Nevertheless, friendships with aging peers and neighbors emerge in the later years of life and become substitute of support which was earlier expected from spouse, children and family relatives for aging men. Relationship with grandchildren is valued by aging females who outlive their deceased spouse and experience life in more varied forms as they age.

An expectation that future will bring more good than bad is unrelated to the confidence aging respondents show in identifying goals and in finding alternative routes when the path towards goal is blocked, in employment, retirement and post retirement period. Changes in the nature of structural social networks with respect to the dependence on others, frequency of seeking help, availability of support, intergenerational support and emergence of personally satisfying leisure activities emerge as a result of the aging process and remain different for both men and women across time.