CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Though tribal socio-economic life proceeded on the ‘happy-go-lucky’ basis once-upon-a-time but now-a-days it is subjected to multi-faceted and multi-dimensional hurdles. Their problems are manifold. In every walk of their life, they face numerous catastrophes. For a proper understanding of tribal problems it is necessary to study their socio-economic problems. Their economic problems are mainly related to ‘occupational injustice’ and ‘non-supportive tribal programmes and policies’. On the other hand, their social problems are related to mainly the degradation of ‘emotional energy’ and sense of identity.

These days the knowledge and experience of the old people lose significance and the younger generation replaces the aged people from their powerful positions leaving them in a weakened and functionless situation.

Ageing becomes more disturbing in a society whose culture provokes irreverence toward the aged and where the economic competition works to their disadvantage.

Owing to the rapid advance in industrial technology for the expansion of productivity through high energy system, in the twentieth century the American Society restricted the participation of older employees in the labour market.

It is only since the last few decades that retired people were regarded as a new category of persons in society.
In the present society the aged people are ascribed to the terminal sick role and low status. They do not get higher status even in their family.

With the emergence of the nuclear family system in the present society the role played by them in the joint family system of the pre-industrial society has been transferred to various institutions. They do not get proper care and protection from their children. They have become relatively an independent generation.

Ageing process has many associated problems. The respect, which aged persons get from other members of the society, depends on the image of aged persons and the people’s attitudes towards ageing. Compared to the other communities, elderly persons enjoy a better status in tribal communities. The elderly people are taken care of very well in the tribal culture that is primitive. The present study has made an attempt to find out the position of aged persons among the tribal community with reference to social, economic, political, cultural and psychological aspects.

One of the most influential factors in all our life is the environment in which we live. For older people, this may be particularly so, since they spend more time in their own home than many other groups in society.

It is often observed that families do not care for the older relatives as they used to. Throughout the post war period, the size of the family has changed markedly. In addition to a decline in the size of the family, the actual structure of the family has influenced the availability of family support for older persons.
In traditional societies, elderly people take on new roles as emeritus parents, thus echoing Erickson's developmental task of 'generativity', while women become more assertive and powerful within the realm of the extended family. Their detachment from ordinary affairs frees them to make this advance so that they represent the abstract but vital elements underlying their culture. They do this by engaging closely in the moral values and religious practices which underlie their cultures. In doing so they gain new meaning in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

The present study is based on the descriptive-cum-diagnostic design. Descriptive-cum-diagnostic studies are those, which describe the characteristics or attributes of the population under investigation and go on to find out associations among key variables.

Certain objectives were framed in order to study the socio-economic characteristics of the aged persons among the tribal communities as below:

1) To study the social, economic and other aspects of the tribal aged.

2) To study the role and status enjoyed by the aged persons in a tribal community.

3) To study the tribal older persons' participation in the overall community life.

4) To study the health aspects of the tribal aged persons.

5) To consider the aged tribal persons as a burden to the family or not.
6) To study the tribal older persons' perception about their image in the community and the respect enjoyed by them, and

7) To suggest specific interventions by the Government and NGOs to improve the quality of life of the tribal older persons.

Using simple random sampling procedure (lottery method), the researcher drew a sample of 150 older persons (persons aged 60 or above) for the purpose of the study after stratification.

The researcher made use of a self-prepared interview schedule which contained a total of 43 items covering personal data, economic aspects, social aspects, participation in community life, health aspects, cultural aspects, political aspects and general aspects.

The present study deals with the conditions of aged persons in one specific tribal community, the Malayalies in the Pachamalai Hills.

The researcher finds out from the study that 60% of the respondents are agricultural labourers and the remaining are agriculturists cultivating their own land holdings and majority of the tribal older persons live with their children. They are not considered as a burden by the family and they get proper care from their families. They are given due respect and they do not face any relationship problems with their children. Only 22 per cent of them are living alone and 32.7 per cent of the tribal aged persons are not respected by their family members.
Most of the respondents report that they enjoy a good social status and they participate in social and community events and also they take part in village panchayat. They do not hold any leadership position in their community and they are not consulted by other members in matters concerning community life.

It is pitiful to note that many of them have health problems and their general health is not so good. They are not able to manage their daily routines. They are not aware of the constitutional and legal provisions relating to the rights and welfare of the tribal people and they do not get any benefit from government schemes as well as from NGOs.

There is no significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the nature of employment, between the age of the respondents and relationship problems with their children, between the age of the respondents and the respect they receive from their families, as well as community members, between the age of the respondents and the living arrangements, between the age of the respondents and the presence of disabilities, between the age of the respondents and the leadership position they hold in their community, between the age of the respondents and the participation in community events, between the age of the respondents and the awareness of Government schemes and NGO role for the tribal development.

There is a significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the occupation they are engaged in, between the age of the respondents and consideration as a burden by their family members, between the age of the respondents and the
general health rating of the respondents, between the gender of the respondents and
fulfilment of daily routines by themselves, between the gender of the respondents and
their participation in village panchayat and between the gender of the respondents and
the consultation by other members of the community.

In view of the issues studied, the following suggestions are made:

● There is a need for a comprehensive survey of the tribal aged in India. A
representative national sample of the 60 plus age group should be studied. The
study should highlight the financial, health and socio-psychological problems of
the aged. Problems of different sub-groups within the larger group should also be
emphasized. The sub-groups should be on the basis of age, sex, marital status,
urban-rural background, occupational status, health condition, literary level etc.

● Since majority of the older persons covered by the present study are suffering
from health problems the government as well as an NGO working in the area can
establish a health centre which can cater to the health care needs of the people.

● However, the nature and extent of specific health problems among the tribal older
persons need to be scientifically and systematically assessed through research
using conventional questionnaire method and participatory methodology.

● Majority of the aged tribal persons reported that they have some physical
disability. However, the type and extent of disability need to be assessed in order
to plan and implement specific rehabilitation measures. A systematic investigation needs to be undertaken in this regard.

- Majority of tribal older persons are not aware of constitutional and statutory provisions related to their welfare and they are also not aware of NGO services and government schemes for their welfare. So, the government and NGOs should conduct awareness campaigns covering the legal and constitutional provisions, NGO and government schemes and services.

- The NGO sector may be encouraged to formulate and implement a system of preventive and curative health care that responds to seasonal variations in the availability of work, income and food for tribal and hill area communities and migrant and displaced populations. To begin with, mobile clinics may provide some degree of regular coverage and outreach.

- It is suggested that NGOs may sensitize, train and equip rural and urban-health centres and hospitals.

- NGOs and voluntary organizations should be encouraged to formulate and strengthen a series of formal and informal avenues that make the elderly economically self-reliant.

- It is heartening to note from the findings of the present study that majority of the tribal older persons are living with their family members and also the family members do not consider them as a burden. However, the families need support
services to maintain their elderly relatives. Major NGOs like HelpAge International can think of providing grants to NGOs working in tribal areas to undertake projects which would offer support services to families caring for older persons.

- It is strongly recommended that gerontology / geriatrics as a specialisation should be included in the medical education as well as in para-medical professional training.

- It is also suggested that schools of social work should introduce a course on gerontology / geriatrics in their curricula.

- In order to minimize the problems experienced by the tribal aged who seek treatment in general hospitals there should be
  
  ★ special counters for the aged
  
  ★ an ambulance service to take them to and from the hospitals
  
  ★ special geriatric wards for indoor patients and
  
  ★ medicines at subsidized rates

- Special facilities should also be extended to the aged in public transport.

- Welfare programmes for the tribal aged be integrated with minimum needs programme for the tribal people.
6) To study the tribal older persons' perception about their image in the community and the respect enjoyed by them, and

7) To suggest specific interventions by the Government and NGOs to improve the quality of life of the tribal older persons.

Using simple random sampling procedure (lottery method), the researcher drew a sample of 150 older persons (persons aged 60 or above) for the purpose of the study after stratification.

The researcher made use of a self-prepared interview schedule which contained a total of 43 items covering personal data, economic aspects, social aspects, participation in community life, health aspects, cultural aspects, political aspects and general aspects.

The present study deals with the conditions of aged persons in one specific tribal community, the Malayalies in the Pacharamalai Hills.

The researcher finds out from the study that 60% of the respondents are agricultural labourers and the remaining are agriculturists cultivating their own land holdings and majority of the tribal older persons live with their children. They are not considered as a burden by the family and they get proper care from their families. They are given due respect and they do not face any relationship problems with their children. Only 22 per cent of them are living alone and 32.7 per cent of the tribal aged persons are not respected by their family members.
Most of the respondents report that they enjoy a good social status and they participate in social and community events and also they take part in village panchayat. They do not hold any leadership position in their community and they are not consulted by other members in matters concerning community life.

It is pitiful to note that many of them have health problems and their general health is not so good. They are not able to manage their daily routines. They are not aware of the constitutional and legal provisions relating to the rights and welfare of the tribal people and they do not get any benefit from government schemes as well as from NGOs.

There is no significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the nature of employment, between the age of the respondents and relationship problems with their children, between the age of the respondents and the respect they receive from their families, as well as community members, between the age of the respondents and the living arrangements, between the age of the respondents and the presence of disabilities, between the age of the respondents and the leadership position they hold in their community, between the age of the respondents and the participation in community events, between the age of the respondents and the awareness of Government schemes and NGO role for the tribal development.

There is a significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the occupation they are engaged in, between the age of the respondents and consideration as a burden by their family members, between the age of the respondents and the
general health rating of the respondents, between the gender of the respondents and fulfilment of daily routines by themselves, between the gender of the respondents and their participation in village panchayat and between the gender of the respondents and the consultation by other members of the community.

In view of the issues studied, the following suggestions are made:

- There is a need for a comprehensive survey of the tribal aged in India. A representative national sample of the 60 plus age group should be studied. The study should highlight the financial, health and socio-psychological problems of the aged. Problems of different sub-groups within the larger group should also be emphasized. The sub-groups should be on the basis of age, sex, marital status, urban-rural background, occupational status, health condition, literary level etc.

- Since majority of the older persons covered by the present study are suffering from health problems the government as well as an NGO working in the area can establish a health centre which can cater to the health care needs of the people.

- However, the nature and extent of specific health problems among the tribal older persons need to be scientifically and systematically assessed through research using conventional questionnaire method and participatory methodology.

- Majority of the aged tribal persons reported that they have some physical disability. However, the type and extent of disability need to be assessed in order
to plan and implement specific rehabilitation measures. A systematic investigation needs to be undertaken in this regard.

- Majority of tribal older persons are not aware of constitutional and statutory provisions related to their welfare and they are also not aware of NGO services and government schemes for their welfare. So, the government and NGOs should conduct awareness campaigns covering the legal and constitutional provisions, NGO and government schemes and services.

- The NGO sector may be encouraged to formulate and implement a system of preventive and curative health care that responds to seasonal variations in the availability of work, income and food for tribal and hill area communities and migrant and displaced populations. To begin with, mobile clinics may provide some degree of regular coverage and outreach.

- It is suggested that NGOs may sensitize, train and equip rural and urban-health centres and hospitals.

- NGOs and voluntary organizations should be encouraged to formulate and strengthen a series of formal and informal avenues that make the elderly economically self-reliant.

- It is heartening to note from the findings of the present study that majority of the tribal older persons are living with their family members and also the family members do not consider them as a burden. However, the families need support.
services to maintain their elderly relatives. Major NGOs like HelpAge International can think of providing grants to NGOs working in tribal areas to undertake projects which would offer support services to families caring for older persons.

- It is strongly recommended that gerontology / geriatrics as a specialisation should be included in the medical education as well as in para-medical professional training.

- It is also suggested that schools of social work should introduce a course on gerontology / geriatrics in their curricula.

- In order to minimize the problems experienced by the tribal aged who seek treatment in general hospitals there should be
  - special counters for the aged
  - an ambulance service to take them to and from the hospitals
  - special geriatric wards for indoor patients and
  - medicines at subsidized rates

- Special facilities should also be extended to the aged in public transport.

- Welfare programmes for the tribal aged be integrated with minimum needs programme for the tribal people.
Research institutions and universities may be encouraged to take up research problems on biological aspects of ageing with particular reference to nutrition in different parts of the country.

NGOs and government can take specific measures to increase the level of participation of older persons in community life. Day care centres can be established where the tribal older persons can have opportunities for recreation, continuous and lifelong learning and for working together for the common good.