Introduction
Due to the improvement in health care and life condition in recent years, the average age has increased and the mortality rate among children decreased in many countries of the world. This was accompanied by relative decreases in the birth rate as a result of family planning programs. The result was an increased percentage of the aged population over sixty to about 7% of the total population.

The demographic composition of the world is undergoing transformation, which change the face of the world.

The world is graying and this process is accelerated and intensified by the decreasing birth rate and mortality rate, and increasing longevity of life. This change is going to affect the social and economics lives of human beings to a great extent.

The demographic transition values from one region to another and from one country to another in the same region. Further, the impact of the aging process on the social and economic level of people too is going to be different for different countries depending on the social fabric, cultural values and the economic structure of the society.

Some of us will have long lives, and some of us will have short lives, with ferocity, environment and luck, all playing important roles. We are all ageing, not only individually, but also a whole population. Ageing, irreversible biological changes that occur in all living things with the passage of time eventually result in death, although all organisms age, rates of ageing considerably, among humans the effects of ageing vary from one individual to another.

Throughout his life, man passes through various stages such as babyhood, childhood, adulthood, middle age and old age. This is the natural course of life created by nature. Ageing
is natural biological change and course of human life. It is a physiological development like the other stages of biological life.

In Islam, according to Quran, God recommended kind care of the parents and instructed human being to respect them and take care of them when they become old.

The following verses of the Holy Quran reflect these values:

“And your lord has decreased that you worship none but him. And that you are dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, or shout at them but address them in term of honor”.¹

Longevity is an achievement of the present century derived from the tremendous advancement of science and medicine. Industrialization, Urbanization, and Modernization are taking place in our country in a rapid pace. The increase in life expectancy, decreased birth rate and death rate has resulted in the increased proportion of the aged people. In the modern society where efficiency, strength, speed and physical attractiveness are highly valued, senior citizens are often regarded as useless. Changes in the structure of the society leave many elderly people with no meaningful social role within the family and the community; it is also evident that due to socioeconomic changes in the wake of urbanization, the problem of the

¹ Al Quran, chapter 15, Surah 17, Al-Israa.Sura, Verses 23

² Al Quran, chapter 15, Surah 17, Al-Israa.Sura, Verses 24
aged has become formidable. The human and spiritual values of mutual love, respect, kindness, sympathy, passion, understanding, humility, non-violence, and considering each person in each phase of his life is equal, a worthy human being and a divine soul are mostly declining. The tendency of self-center lines, individualism, and being concerned for one’s own good and philosophy of ‘my’ rather than ‘We’ or the feeling that everything should be done for me and not for others is a dangerous trend which is prevalent in today’s family.

People are more materialistic and consumerist, over ambitious and money minded. In the rush of urban migration, the senior citizens are left behind to fend for themselves. Youngsters often leave home for education and employment which further break the family ties. The disintegration of the joint family system further aggravated the problems of the aged. These factors jointly resulted in the problems faced by the senior citizens and they had to find out supporting institutions. Ubiquitous in nature this problem encompasses one and all including the rich and the poor. The rural and urban, the sick and disabled as well as the healthier, with an increasing proportion of our population living for ever long years, we are now confronted with the problem of not knowing what to do with our elderly population. Simultaneously, our senior citizens too are challenged by how to creatively and usefully occupy themselves in a society which displays little patience for the old.

International migration usually does not play a major role in the ageing process, but it can be important in small nations. Certain Caribbean nations, for example, have experienced a combination of working – age – adult emigration, immigration of elderly retirees from other countries, and return migration of former immigrants who are above the average population age; all three factors contribute to population ageing.³

The picture in developed countries has been quite different. In 1950, there was relatively little variation in the size of 5-year groups between the ages of 5 and 24. The beginnings of the

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post–World War II Baby Boom can be seen in the 0– to – 4– year age group. By 1990, the Baby Boom cohorts were 25 were becoming successively smaller (If fertility rates continue as projected through 2025, the aggregate pyramid will start to invert, with more weight on the top than on the bottom. The size of the oldest (especially women) population will increase, and persons aged 80 and over will outnumber any younger 5– year age group.

Although the effect of fertility decline is usually the driving force in changing population age structures, current and future changes in mortality could assume much greater weight in countries with high proportions of elderly citizens. Caselli et al. (1987) have demonstrated the growing impact of mortality change in population projections of France and Italy. Even if Italian fertility is held to a very low level of 1.4 children per women through the year 2040, they find that more than half the increase in the proportion of the population aged 60 and over is due to mortality change, and less than half to fertility change.\(^4\)

Though there is not always a link between chronological age and human behavior.

Chronological age exceptions become apparent again are about age 65, which is frequently the age arbitrarily chosen for retirement it should be noted however that patterns of retirement and labor-force participation are changing.\(^5\)

In common usage the terms “aged and the ageing” refer to a particular section of the population and the process. According to Bhatiya (1983) the term ‘ageing’ is a broad one can be studied under 3 types- Biological, Psychological, and Socio-cultural.\(^6\) But most of the definitions deal with either these three aspects, generally the biological one Biological ageing is the most prominent and has figured widely in common expression and even in scientific literature. The biological aspects of ageing inquiries into the basic biological factors that underlie ageing and general health status i.e. the changes that make

\(^4\) Kevin Kinsella, No. 3
\(^5\) Bengtson Vern.L & David Haber, social perspectives on ageing, Brook/Cole series in social gerontology, 1983, P.3-4
\(^6\) SahuChathurbhuj, Problems of Ageing among Indian Tribes, New Delhi: Saroop and Sons, 1998, PP.13
person vulnerable to diseases with the advancement of the age, in its simplest terms, biological ageing is characterized by gradual structural changes and showing down of physiological process resulting in deterioration of some capacities and depletion of energy reserve. With advancement in chronological age, an individual passes through different stages of life cycle. Everyone attains old age at a particular age, which varies from society to society and even from country to country. One may live a happy youthful life even in advanced chronological age by developing appropriate attitudes and style of life. According to Soudan (1975) “the beginning of old age in an individual is associated with different conditions or changes occurring in one’s life, viz. the onset of graying of the hair, the advent of bifocals, a serious impairment of vital physical components, failure of the individual to function independently, ceasing to be productive and imposition of an arbitrary retirement age by the society.” The physical basis of ageing is thus either the cumulative loss or disorganization of important large molecules (protein and nucleic acids) of the body. Psychological ageing is studied in terms of changes in the nervous system and it consists of general decline in the mental abilities that accompany old age. The most outstanding psychological features of ageing are the impairment in short term memory and lengthening of the response time. It also includes the attitude and behavior of others towards them. The older persons face change in their previous roles or positions due to change in their cognitive, conative and other abilities. He or she has to pass through a series of status passages such as retirement, widowhood and adjustment to death. It is important to understand whether there occurs any change in an individual’s set of ideas, their ways of looking at life in general, owing to change of their status, roles and abilities in their phases of life. As older people become aware of their in competencies, they begin to revise their ideas about themselves. They also have start coping with reduced income, change of status, loss of friends and spouse

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and lastly their waning physical health. Psychological changes accompany the passing of years, slowness of thinking, impairment of memory, and decrease in the enthusiasm increase in cautiousness and the alternation of sleep pattern. Social pressure and inadequate resources create many dysfunctional features of old age. Reduced health, reduced income and sudden break with a particular kind of professional life results in psychological problems for the retired, attitude towards old age, degradation of status in the community, problems of isolation, loneliness and generation gap are the prominent trustee areas resulting in psychological frustration among the aged.

Old age usually brings with it diminished participation in productive and economically gainful work. Many of the problems confronting the elderly can be traced to the loss of income, which accompanies total or partial withdrawal of occupation. Vast majorities of the elderly population in our society are poor and need financial support even for meeting their basic necessities. A majority of them are compelled to remain in occupations because they are required to maintain their families. Most of the elderly have found that a majority of the elderly was leading a poor economic life. Retirement is a crucial accompaniment of ageing. Retirement can be a time of fulfillment when one is released from toil and free to enjoy other aspects in life to which he has not been able to devote much time. This is partial truth and only a few can prove it to be reality. For most of the retired persons, one of the major losses incurred by them is the financial one. Many of them exhausts all their savings within a few years of their retirement and thereafter they are dependent on the charity of their children. Except for people in the Government or semi-Government employment no other person is eligible for pension. The major financial crisis is for the workers in the unorganized sectors. Throughout their lives they earn just to make two ends meet and after retirement, with little or no savings, their lives become miserable.

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Unfortunately Old Age has now become a prevalent social problem in our society. It is strange no one wants to grow old but everyone wants to live long. In our modern society, where money is the scale of everything, the old age people are measured as an economic liability and a social burden. Old age is observed as an ineluctable, undesirable, problem-ridden stage of life that we all are compelled to live, marking time until our final exit from life itself. Many people get extremely fearful when they become old. Distinguishing old age with fear is in fact a rather recent phenomenon. It seems to intensify as each day passes and the world become more difficult and less comprehensible.

Old age is a stage of life, where one needs to learn certain things afresh and get hold of new skills, mind-sets and socialization norms. In this lens, we present some useful information that would be of use to our senior citizens and also for the one who care for them.

Old age may bring on a need of mental sharpness. This can take place because of physical weakness. If the mind has been deserted, especially if the Word of God the almighty has been abandoned, there will be a breakdown of the mentality. In the said old age, there can be an embarrassment to life from the viewpoint of success standards. Someone looks back and observes life as a breakdown. Maybe he set ambitions, and now he is old and never understood the goals. There is an enormous danger of disenchantment. There is a propensity for great augment in mental attitude signs in old age, with stress on criticism and judgment. These things are over and over again overlooked in youth; but they are terrible in the elderly.

There is habitually a lack of self-confidence in old age, particularly if the old people can't take care of themselves monetarily. Their children are in the chief of their lives and repeatedly the children's plans do not include them. Old age may bring a lack of ability to concentrate, forgetfulness, inability to speak, to hear, to see etc. So the old individual gets used to sitting in a chair as pensiveness, vegetating, saying nothing.
There are occasionally lacks of reason to live, too much redundant time, and too much time for belligerent. There may be a craving to travel but no means to do so. There is a lack of important things to do. Old age brings about future shock. Senior citizen finds himself out of phase with the younger generations of children and grandchildren. Therefore a hazardous trend can get started toward hypercriticism.

The older believer may have stepped up growing religions, or worse, may for no reason have got started. There is, therefore, no learning, no pursuit with God, no longing for the Word life. There is a propensity to vegetate, to become tired, and to rely on the learning done years before. There is a trend in the midst of older believers to drink a lot when they don't have something else going for them. There is the inclination to imagine that getting older means that a person has some wisdom. So there is the talkative senior citizen who never stops talking and impose continuous boredom on his listeners with his tired expression and homely chatter.

Old age has become, for the first time in the history of the human species, a regular stage in life. Human culture has produced old age and now it is essential that we create a new culture to support it. There is nothing you can do to prevent the aging process. But old age can be an interesting and emotionally pleasing stage of life if social structural obstructions are lifted and we create a culture of old age.10

The aged cannot be treated as forming a homogeneous category. The problem of affluent old would be completely different from the poor old persons. As the present study is confined to the problems of the aged among Muslim Community, it would highlight some of the major problems they are likely to face.

10Http://www.squidoo.com/old-age-problems
Economic needs are the most crucial problems of the poor aged. In discussing the economic aspect of aging the subjects of economic roles, economic status and policy issues can be separated for convenience. The economic roles of the elderly are important in a variety of ways. They determine possible income flows, they establish the individual in the society and they involve the meaningful use of time. The poor old persons due to their poor health and lack of economic resources they have to withdraw from the labor force and face consequences thereof. In discussing the economic status we have to keep in mind the health status because chronic ailments along with malnutrition are important threats to the economic status of the individual. The interaction of health status and economic status is especially noteworthy in old age and particularly among those whose livelihood depends upon their physical labor.

The problem of the old persons engaged in the unorganized sector, particularly those with low and irregular wage/income is more acute because they were not able to allocate finances for old age. When they were physically fit were working they lived hand to mouth as such the question of saving did not arise.

In spite of adverse economic and health conditions they continue to work till their physical strength allows them. When they fail to earn their livelihood, older persons perceive the informal network of kin (particularly children) as the most appropriate source of social support. It is to this network that older persons turn first. Only when assistance from the informal system is unavailable or kin can no longer absorb the burden of support (because they themselves are almost below the poverty line) and the older persons cannot do any work, the older persons turn to the formal organizations, like government old age pension scheme, for support.
The aged in the Indian society have always constituted problems at some levels but it is only recently that they have begun to represent a major social problem. What makes aging and the aged a social problem is its recognition by society as an important aspect of behavior that needs attention. The recognition is the direct outcome of changes age pyramid, value system and withdrawal of support system from the family and community. The constitution of India recognizes the duty of the state towards the elderly persons. Article 41 provides: “The state shall within the limits of economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement”. Keeping in view the constitutional provision the state has shown concern for the care of older persons, particularly those who have no means of support and no kin to look after them, in the shape of working out an old age pension scheme. Old age and death are unavoidable and irreversible life processes. William Shakespeare aptly described the last phase of seven stages of man:

“Last do all, that end this strange eventful history?

Is second childishness and mere oblivion?

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything”

About one fourth of a man’s life is spent in growing up and preparing for active participation in society similarly, about one half is engaged in a variety of activities in an attempt to gain happiness and the final quarter of life is spent in a progressive process of reduced activity leading to physical decline followed by inevitable death. The process of decline during the last part of life becomes a problem not only for the person concerned, but also for the close relatives and the society as a whole. Most of the people are enthusiastic to have old furniture, old pictures, old cars, everything old but not old people, presuming that old people are

12Bhattacharya S.K., Social Problems in India, New Delhi: Manak Publications, 1999, PP.147
outwear, liability, and dogmatic, but not recognizing them as omniscient, experienced and learned. This negative perception is the result of the changes that are taking place in the society and in the value system. Today the older generations remember their past and dreaming of a better future. In today’s society this might be a silent crisis, but for tomorrow’s society it will be a mammoth social problem. Ageing is a problem of almost every family, involving strains of caring and the stresses of intergenerational interactions. It is every body’s problem as everyone is bound to age and experience the impact. Plans to support the elderly are generally inadequate. Many thousands of them are still rejected by the society, their final years grim and cheerless. Therefore, the present and expected are increasing in the ratio of senior citizens in the future, calls for greater attention to the financial, sociological, and psychological adjustment problems that is specific to the elderly.\textsuperscript{13} This makes it necessary to look into the various aspects of their problems- social, economic, psychological and other related aspects.

Ageing by virtue of itself indicates multiple problems and one of the major problems faced by most of the elderly persons are economic hardship. In the pre-industrial Indian society, most of the old people, used to remain financially independent till they lived. They retained ownership of land holdings and other occupational establishment and participated in productive activities according to their physical fitness. In process of ageing, individuals grow older and their physical and mental strength gradually decreases. Consequently they may not be able to perform certain roles and work, which they were previously performing. Such an inability decreases their earning capacity and eventually they are forced to depend upon others.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13}HasanSaiyedZafar, Aged in India, Calcutta: Minerva Associates Ltd., 1975, PP.108.
\textsuperscript{14}HelpageIndia Research and Development Journal, Vol.2, No. 1, October, 1995, PP.1
As one grows old, control over the finance of the family slips from him, individuals who are required to retire and deprived of their main source of living may have to face these problems. Individuals who are dependent on others may face these problems if these persons die or become infirm, or the individuals may face these problems because of their increased need of medical assistance in old age.\(^\text{15}\)

Having spent all their earned money on children’s education and marriage, they are shocked when their offspring refuses to take care of their needs. The problem of economic insecurity is far more acute in the elderly women compared to their male counterparts. This is mainly because even in the normal course, women have limited control over the household resources and they constitute a small proportion of the workforce in the organized sector, and therefore only limited numbers have the benefit of an independent pension. Also old people who live alone are highly subject to attack by anti-social activists on account of thefts of jewelry or the meager amount of cash.\(^\text{16}\)

Financial problems are also many of the people retired from active workforce. Immediately after retirement, one of the major losses incurred by the retired persons is finance. This is due to the sudden reduction in the regular monthly income. If planning for retirement were not done earlier the economic crisis arising out of the reduced income would result in various socio-psychological problems. It is said that good income ensures good mental and physical health.\(^\text{17}\)

A person with good health and adequate income can overcome various psychosocial problems and adjust himself effectively to a retired life.

It is said that on retirement, the financial condition of a person deteriorates. Sometimes, economic crisis forces the retired persons to take up part-time jobs in spite of their failing health and against their will. Getting a suitable job after retirement is a difficult task. It is because in our country, there are not sufficient avenues open for the retired people even if they are physically fit and capable. Also even those who are the recipient of retirement benefits find it difficult to meet their basic requirements with the decrease in their income and increase in the cost of living.

In the case of other aged people, the situation is still worse. Old age pension schemes are in operation in all the states including Kolkata for the old in unorganized sectors. But these schemes are non-contributing in nature and are primarily meant for the destitute aged. Also it is a fact that a large number of the destitute elderly who are eligible to receive an old age pension are not getting the pension for various reasons such as lack of knowledge of the scheme, lack of awareness about their rights to get an old age pension and difficulties of running from place to place for getting a pension. The registering process for pension is a complicated process and it takes a minimum of six months thereafter for the payment to materialize. Consequently, not more than 10% of the aged population is able to avail of it. If the government were to involve voluntary agencies working in the aged in screening the applications for old age pensions, the process would be faster.\footnote{Gayathri Pagadi, \textit{The Times of India}, 29/09/1991} The amount is neither linked with the actual needs of the beneficiary nor with the rising cost of living. Thus by all means economic crisis is a major problem caused by the elder people in our modern society. There is often a common physical decline, and people become less active. Old age can reason, along with other things:

- Hair loss
- Change of hair color to gray or white

\footnote{Gayathri Pagadi, \textit{The Times of India}, 29/09/1991}
- Wrinkles and Liver spots on the skin.
- Agility and Slower reaction times
- Reduced ability to clear thinking.
- Lessened hearing
- Diminished eyesight
- Difficulty recalling memories
- Lessening or termination of sex, sometimes because of physical symptoms such as erectile dysfunction in men, but often simply a decline in libido.
- The greatest weakness to bone diseases such as osteoarthritis

It is widely known that old people suffer from multiple pathologies. The illness pattern of the old is quite different from that of the young and so the basic philosophy of the approach and mode of treatment of old also need to be different. It is clearly obvious that people become more and more susceptible to chronic diseases, physical disabilities and mental incapacities in their old age. The illness of the elderly is multiple and chronic nature. The National policy for Older Persons recognizes that with advancing age, old persons have to cope up with health and associated problems, some of which may be chronic, of a multiple nature, requiring constant attention and carry the risk of disability and consequent loss of autonomy. Any illness may occur at any age but certain disorders, while not limited to senescence, are nevertheless characteristically geriatric.

What has made the problem of health in old age, as a major unsolved problem is the ignorance and the apathetic attitude towards the illness among the aged. The idea that old age is an age of ailments and physical infirmities is deeply rooted in the Indian mind, and the elderly accepts many of the sufferings and stresses within curable limits as natural and

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19 http://www.squidoo.com/old-age-problems
20 Helpage India Research and Development Journal, Volume 8, Jan, 2002, No.1, P.12
21 Desai K. N., Ageing in India, Bombay, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 1982, PP.86
inevitable. On account of old age various geriatric ailments like circulatory disturbances, heart diseases, visual and hearing impairments and disorder on mental nervous conditions usually attack older persons.

Apart from the geriatric ailments, diseases like colic pain, gastritis, indigestion, asthma, joint pains and general weakness are found to be frequent among older people due to decline in their power of resistance. New diseases like dementia and Alzheimer’s disease are making their appearance in a significant way and many soon find a place among other major non-curable diseases.

Nowadays, the traditional joint family structure where both young and old lived in mutual harmony is undergoing the process of disintegration. Even where the joint family exists for name sake, the elderly people are gradually being left behind and their grown up children are migrating to other places in search of employment and settling down there in nuclear units.

Apart from economic difficulties like high cost of living, expensive medical care, fall in income; many elderly people face the grim prospect of being unloved and becoming unwanted. The aged are gradually pushed to relatively insignificant social positions consequent upon loss of status, power, and authority in the family and society.

The year 1999 was designated as ‘The Year of the Older Person’ by the United Nations, thereby recognizing and reaffirming that the global population is aging at an unprecedented rate. Aged People’s Day (October 1st) is celebrated every year, but very little is actually done to alleviate the conditions of the aged.

Even Vienna International Plan of Action on ageing which is the first international instrument on ageing, guiding thinking and the formulation of policies and programs on ageing is unable to avoid the problems of aged.
In fine, it can be said that care of the elderly is a mushrooming social problem which needs to be addressed urgently and to do so extensive research work is necessary.

The present research focuses on the issues of the social, economical, psychological and physical status of the elderly people living in the Muslim Community through extensive investigation.