Population ageing is one of the most distinctive demographic events in the world today. The Projections of United Nations Population Division showed a massive demographic shift being taking place both in the developed and developing nations. It was projected that by 2015, the developed countries alone will see the rise in the percentage of population aged sixty and above from an average of seven percent to over eleven percent. In the less developed regions, China and India alone accounts for over fifty percent of the elderly population.

Presently, the developing countries are not emphasizing much on ageing and related problems as compared to the developed world because the problem is not seen as serious as compared to the developed nations. But in years to come, it is surely going to become a serious policy challenge for all developing nations and especially to India, for having the largest share of younger generation at present. Moreover, population ageing would also accompany an increasing degree of population feminization as death rates for females tend to be significantly lower than the males.

In this regard major initiatives like World Assemblies on Ageing held at Vienna (1982) and Madrid (2002); International plan of Action on Ageing, and UN Declaration of the Year 1999 as the ‘International Year of Older Persons’ has all been taken to stimulate the conscience of the World towards the needs and problems of the aged. In response, the Government of India has also formulated many initiatives e.g. the formulation of National Policy of Older Persons, Provision of Old Age Pension for all States, special queues for senior citizens in hospitals and railway stations, concession in fare by Railway and other Ministries and The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act’ 2007 respectively.

Despite all these efforts, the situation of India’s elderly is still vulnerable. Vulnerability has many reasons: foremost is the involvement of handful of young scholars in qualitative research on aged; second is the involvement of limited number of NGOs in the welfare of senior citizens and finally, informal care giving is never added as a regulatory mechanism by the government in any welfare scheme or policy. Besides, the emergence of nuclear family, involvement of women in salaried jobs has
all added woes to the life of senior citizens. In a situation like this few important question emerges as; why the younger generation is incapable in fulfilling the needs of their parents and grandparents? Why they are not in a position to give love and respect to ones who served them for so long? Unfortunately, young minds are totally ignoring the elder generation and forgetting the fact that ageing is as natural as any other phase of life and one day they themselves will become old.

Hence, the present research is a minor step in the direction of locating the situation of aged in the present World. It attempts to diagnose not only the current socio-economic problems faced by the elderly; but also identify the interventions and coping practices adopted by senior citizens during the time of socio-economic and health crisis. It further attempts to identify the ways and procedures following which the senior citizens may experience successful and healthy ageing.

For this, Aligarh city of U.P. has been selected because of its manageable size, homogeneous population and researcher’s familiarity with the study area. Moreover, Aligarh is an example of Modern Township with a good mix of elderly population belonging to all socio-economic strataums. Aligarh was also been chosen because of its observation of the effects of urbanization and fast changing socio-economic conditions which are responsible for bringing changes in the life styles of elderly.

The present study comprised of 500 senior citizens of age sixty and over; of which 253 were males and 247 were females. The study adopted ‘Stratified Proportionate Random Sampling’ technique for the selection of the respondents. In order to view the socio-economic problems of senior citizens, Interview Schedule as an instrument for data collection, was selected. Further to verify the genuineness of the findings, few Case studies were conducted.

The present work has been organized into four chapters; each dealing with an independent aspect of the research work. The First chapter gives a brief introduction of the research problem. The chapter highlighted the current scenario of population ageing in India, Asia, and across the World. It also outcasts the recent trends of population ageing in India and its corresponding states. To get a clear vision of the problem, both micro and macro perspective has been covered. The main objective of this chapter is to focus on the rationale behind the study and explain the relevance of
present work. For this, an extensive literature from various sources has been covered. The chapter deals with the various problems and perspectives of ageing. It views ageing from the side of various scholars by evaluating their theories, suppositions, beliefs and findings. In a nutshell, the chapter provides a complete understanding of the ageing phenomenon along with providing familiarity with the research problem.

The second chapter examines the various social security measures meant for the welfare of senior citizens in India. The chapter first explains the concept of social security and then highlighted the social means using which the deprivation and vulnerability of senior citizens can be removed. Hence, the chapter emphasized especially on the need and importance of social welfare programmes. It begins with the growth and development of social security measures in India and ends with the various government schemes. National Policy for Older Persons and five year plans were covered to locate the position of aged in the present context. International initiatives like Madrid plan of action and Vienna Declaration were also highlighted to understand the needs of aged at International level. Thus chapter is an attempt to determine the policy implications for elderly living in India and forecast their future needs.

The third chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of data. The study highlighted some interesting findings: First, Senior citizens belonging to lower income group or are totally dependent considers their old age as a ‘curse’, whereas, those belonging to higher income group or are able to do their activities of daily living are still enjoying their old age. For them, old age is a period of freedom from responsibilities, whereas, others considered it as a period of struggle. Second; senior citizens, irrespective of their income, preferred living in their own homes rather than living in any old age home. Third, health is the most common sector which affects almost every senior citizen and hence needs special concern from policy makers and planners. Fourth, financial assets help in maintaining the quality of life of senior citizens. It changes the attitude of family members towards them. Fifth, female elderly are more vulnerable than males in terms of decision making, financial stability and social status.
The fourth chapter ends with the conclusion and suggestions. In conclusion, it was reported that senior citizens in India are having multifarious needs and requires an interdisciplinary and holistic approach. In this regard, the government should commit for having qualitative and need based research along with the provision of free services to all its senior citizens. Individual efforts of both senior citizens and younger generation should also be promoted. The senior citizens should change their mind set regarding the new values imbibed by the younger generation, focus on the limitations of old age and try to learn adjustment with new roles, whereas, the younger generation should learn the lesson of love, respect and care towards the elder generation. They should recognize their elders as heir of experience and a valuable resource rather than being a burden of responsibilities.

In a nutshell, it was concluded that joint efforts of all the stakeholders including politicians, policy makers, youth, aged and other government departments are needed in making the life of senior citizens organized. For successful research; centre for specialized training in geriatrics and gerontology, training in nursing and care giving etc. should be promoted. In addition, it could be learnt that ageing is a normal stage of life which everyone has to face. Becoming “old” is an achievement and a blessing of God rather than a curse. So everyone must think of planning his/her old age in a positive manner.