SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS IN INDIA

Ageing is truly a multi-disciplinary area of investigation and its understanding is facilitated through various disciplines, namely, Anthropology, Sociology, Law, Geriatrics and Social Work. In Social Work, ageing has been dealt under a specialization, namely, Geriatric Social Work. Geriatric Social Worker helps senior citizens live healthier and more productive lives. The Social Work practitioners and the scholars across the World are continuously working towards identifying the needs and problems of ageing. Their basic motive is to design various measures and interventions following which the future generations may age happily. There are many ways through which a Social Worker can help senior citizens e.g. a Social Worker may help in understanding and effectively utilizing the various social services and programs; offer direct assistance; provide family-support services, counselling services and facilitate the coordination of medical care etc.

But all this require a prior knowledge of the available welfare measures. Therefore, the present chapter has been introduced to identify the various schemes and interventions meant for the welfare of senior citizens knowing which the Social Worker and other professionals can help senior citizens in lowering their risks of ageing.

Like every other nation, India too has a well-organized social security system meant for the welfare of its citizens, including the aged. Therefore, the present chapter explains the concept of ‘social security’ system in India and thereby highlighted the welfare measures which can prevent deprivation and vulnerability of senior citizens. In a nutshell, 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. It also highlights the International initiatives for ageing like Madrid Plan of Action and Vienna Declaration. Moreover, the National Policy for Older Persons and five year plans were covered to locate the position of senior citizens in the present context and

1 http://www.ehow.com
forecast the future directions of research. Thus chapter is an attempt to determine the policy implications for elderly in India.

2.01: The Concept of Social Security:

Social security system of any nation is meant for helping the people in need and at the time of dependency including childhood, old-age, sickness, accident, unemployment, maternity, occupational risks, invalidity and retirement. The International Labour Organization defines social security services as “one which provides the citizens with benefits designed to prevent or cure a disease or to support them during their inability to earn and to restore them to gainful activity”. Thus the ultimate objective of any social security measure is to provide protection against contingency and also to the entire population of the country. Presently, the concept of social security has been extended from the notions of providing mere relief, compensation and pension to a wide range of services including social rights, standard minimum income, access to health and provision of basic services like housing, education etc.

Even though both, the developed and developing countries are providing social security system to its citizens but the developing countries are still lagging behind the developed ones. This is due to the resource constraints, low level of institutional development and relative powerlessness due to poverty of the developing nations. In addition, many key weaknesses in the direction of availability, adequacy and equity were observed in the existing welfare programmes of the developing nations like most of the administrative and implementation structures are expensive, poorly regulated and cumbersome; the requirement for trained and specialized personnel is given rare priority; there is a high level of non-compliance by both government and employers etc.

Thus, in a situation like this, along with so much heterogeneity and diversity, it would be a real challenge for developing nations, including India, to meet the needs of its

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senior citizens. Hence, there is an urgent need to analyze the problems of the aged with a different perspective\(^4\). The primary task, therefore, of any ageing policy intervention should include recognition of the importance of the aged persons in human life, understanding of the process of ageing and the enhancement of the public recognition of the authority, wisdom, productiveness and other important contributions of older persons.

Needless to say, the future cohorts of older people are likely to be better educated, more urban, have smaller families and may utilize better health facilities, hence the older concept of ageing policy should need to be revised and re-evaluated. For re-evaluation; the essential is to look into the growth and changing patterns of social security measures meant for senior citizens in India and predict their future implications. Hence, in the next section the growth and development of social security measures in India has been discussed.

2.02: The Growth of Social Security Measures for Senior Citizens In India:

The concept of Social Security in India is not a recent phenomenon. It was observed from the Vedic period and even before. Historically, social security system for the development of aged in India can be classified into the following phases:

- Pre-Colonial Phase
- The Colonial Phase
- The Post-Independence Phase (Prior to 1980)
- The Developmental Phase (From 1980 onwards)

1. **Pre-Colonial Phase:**

The basic concept of social security for aged, as assistance and insurance, is not new in India. It begins with the ancient ‘law-givers’ of India and even before. The law givers of India always provided some social norms for coping with the subject of

ageing. For example, in about 2000 B.C., Manu, the first law giver spoke about the responsibilities of society towards the older people. Similarly, in the Post-Vedic period, Kautilya spoke about government’s role in treating the elderly with respect and laid down various rules for the regulation of guilds, designed to provide collective security for life and prosperity of aged. Following the same, Shukracharya in his penetrating ‘Sukraniti’ have shown many a reference regarding sickness benefits, pension and old age benefits, family pension and maintenance allowances. In addition, a sort of “Moral Economy” existed to provide security to older destitute and other vulnerable groups in society. Even poor families without any productive assets were providing such security. Until recently, this traditional practice of supporting elderly formed the first choice for older generation. However, gradually, these traditional support systems are disappearing, and state-based social security systems have come into existence.

2. The Colonial Phase:

The Colonial Phase ranges from mid-eighteenth century to mid-twentieth century. During this phase, India was under the dictatorship of Britishers and the British government established various laws relating to security for all age groups. For old age security, they established separate funds to the formal employment sector such as Pension and Provident Funds and for destitute elderly a system of old-age homes was supported via grants. Four major pieces of legislations were also introduced, namely, The Pension Act, 1871; Worker’s Compensation Act, 1923; Shariat Act, 1937 and the Indian Succession Act. The Pension Act was set up to provide a pension plan for colonial administrators that were made available to all government employees, including Indians in government employment. It was administered by Royal Commission on Civil Establishments. Amendments were also enacted by the Britishers in 1919 and 1935 and this was retained by the new Government of India, even after independence. Worker’s Compensation Act was also enacted for government workers and was retained after independence. The act provides for the recovery of compensation amount by the elderly parents in case of death of a child during the course of employment. The other laws e.g. Shariat Act and the Indian

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Succession Act were enacted for both Hindus and Muslims and were based on the inheritance issues of the aged. The Adarker commission report was also given in 1944 to outline the foundation for an effective social security scheme based on the principles of administrative simplicity, flexibility, financial viability, expandability, and compulsory and contributory requirements. Hence, this phase was considered as the real beginner of state based initiatives or social security measures for elderly generation in India.

3. Post-Independence Phase:

After independence, the government was virtually concerned with its primary goal of maintaining law and order and was rapidly marched towards achieving the desirable goal of a ‘welfare state’. The Adarker report of 1944, however, laid the groundwork for a social security system in India. India, being a federal government, put ageing on the concurrent list, that is, the government of India, as well as the state governments, can play and develop programmes for the elderly. In addition, Articles 42 and 47 of the constitution were introduced to deal with social security issues of the aged. Provisions were also made for working conditions, Provident Funds, Worker’s Compensation, invalidity and old age pension. These provisions along with some other Constitutional safeguards were discussed as follows:

A. Constitutional safeguards for aged:

The following constitutional safeguards were accepted during this phase:

- **Article 41**: It states that “The state shall within the limits of its 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 and in other cases of underserved want”. This article is not enforceable by the court as it was only given as a direction to States under directive principles.

- **Section 125(d)** of the Criminal Procedure Code (1973) makes it incumbent for a person having sufficient means to maintain his father or mother who is unable to

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maintain him/her and on getting proof of such neglect or refusal; a first class magistrate may order such person to make a monthly allowance not exceeding Rs.500. Thus it is based on the principle that it is the family which is responsible for their care. A recent court judgment has interpreted the provision to include daughters. Few people are perhaps aware of this position and fewer still get a court order for support, due probably to the sense of shame in seeking justice for what is viewed as essentially a family or private affair.

- **Item 9 of the State list**: Seventh Schedule relates to the relief of the disabled and unemployable, the interpretation of which, as far as the subject of ageing is concerned, seems to be vague. It may mean providing relief to the physically handicapped and those who can’t be employed, obviously because of physical limitations including, perhaps, of old age.

- **In the Concurrent list** of Seventh Schedule, three items can found to have a match with the ageing issues: Item 24 has included in its preview among others, old age pensions. Item 23 mentions about social security and social insurance whereas, Item 20 is related to economic and social planning.

- **The Right to Equality** guaranteed by the constitution as a fundamental right is also applicable to the elder generation.

In addition to constitutional safeguards, the government also came up with certain legislative provisions to ensure a better quality of life for the aged. These safeguards are also discussed as follows:

**B. Legislative Safeguards for Aged:**

Legislative safeguards for aged includes the Employee’s Provident Fund (EPF) Act and Miscellaneous Provision Act, 1952 which aimed at making welfare provisions for the future of industrial workers after retirement and the benefits to their dependents, in case of early death. Further to keep the tradition of family economic solidarity, The

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Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 and The Hindu Succession Acts, 1956\(^9\) were enacted. Section 20(3) of The Hindu Maintenance Act requires a person to maintain his/her aged or infirm parents for as long as the parent is unable to maintain himself out of his property or earnings. The Succession Act, on the other hand, is entitled to benefit, along with other beneficiaries, from the property of their deceased child.

Further, to bring relief to older persons without loss of time, the civil divisional office fixes the Amount and a Commissioner Act. Legislations including Income Tax Act, 1961 and The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 were also enacted for the older persons retired from any organized sector. The Income Tax Act provides for special tax benefits to elderly above the age of 65 years and The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 provides an additional retirement benefit for industrial workers.

In addition to above initiates, various States have established a fixed amount as Old Age Pension for destitute elderly; U.P. was the first state to follow Old Age Pension scheme in 1957, followed by A.P. and Kerala. In 1971, Family Pension Programme was also started to help the families of industrial workers who die prematurely. Some States also started giving grants to voluntary organizations for the maintenance of destitute elders in Old Age Homes\(^10\).

Hence, this phase is said to be the ‘dawn’ of the era of social security for aged as the state itself had taken the responsibility for ensuring a minimum standard of material welfare to all its senior citizens. No doubt, these safeguards introduced a modern concept of social security. Till the end of this phase i.e. by 1980s, it was generally accepted by the government that improvement in the conditions of health and wellbeing of the aged population is pre-essential for the economic growth of a nation. It is also needed for the overall development of a nation. Thus in the next phase i.e. the developmental phase, more concern has been shown towards the elder generation.

4. The Developmental Phase:

Developmental phase can be considered as the ‘Golden-era’ for the welfare of aged as it comprises of concentrated and continuous efforts towards the welfare of aged. By

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late nineties, there were many factors including: population ageing, migration, urbanization, changing customs due to modernization, the changing roles of women due to employment and changes in the form of family; contributed for the development of a national policy for ageing. All these factors ripen the political situation and pressurized the political parties, to include ageing as a part of their main agenda. They also demand for a national policy. For government, this pressure became a cause for realization that not only did the destitute elderly need economic support and care, but a large portion of economically secure and fit aged also require emotional, psychological and community support. It therefore became a necessity for the government to introduce certain measures for the welfare of aged in all spheres and for all sections. Accordingly, government had initiated different measures in terms of five-year plans and other welfare schemes directed at making the lives of the elder more livable at national and international level. Few such initiatives were discussed as follows:

A. The First World Assembly on Ageing

The First World Assembly on Ageing was held in Vienna; Austria from 26th July to 6th August, 1982. As a result, India along with 123 nations adopted the United Nations First International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Plan of Action was adopted after 650 hours of discussion and concurrence from 2000 delegates from the world over. It was for the very first time in the history of the UNs, a plan of action was adopted unanimously without any hesitation from any country. The Assembly provided a forum for advocating for mainstreaming the interests of older persons in societies. It was expected that the Assembly should resulted in societies responding more fully to the socio-economic implications of the ageing of populations and the specific needs of older persons. The plan deals with both: the issues affecting the ageing as individuals and those relating to the ageing of the population. The Assembly not only solemnly reaffirmed the fundamental and inalienable rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also recognized the importance of Quality of Life and determined that the ageing, as far as possible, be enabled to enjoy in their own families and communities a life enriched with good health, economic security and contentment. The plan of action further emphasized the establishment of national
machineries to address the humanitarian and developmental needs of older people appropriate in each culture.

The primary objectives of holding this assembly were to strengthen the capacities of countries to dial effectively with the ageing of the populations and with the special needs and concerns of their elderly; and to promote an international response to the issues of ageing through action for establishment of new international co-operation, particularly among the developing countries. Accordingly, the Plan of Action set out some secondary objectives in consonance with the primary as: the promotion of national and international understanding of the humanitarian and developmental issues related to ageing, presentation of policy alternatives consistent with national goals and internationally recognized principles, development of appropriate education, training and research and the stimulation of action-oriented policies and programs for the elderly.

On recognizing the formulation and implementation of policies on ageing as a right and responsibility of State, the assembly made the following recommendations in various spheres:

i. **Health and Nutrition:**

- Health and Medical care should aim at alleviating the handicaps of ageing and also at infusing the spirit of self-confidence and self-reliance.
- The disabled and very old need to be given particular attention.
- Through proper health care and counselling, the elderly should be encouraged to lead independent lives in their own family and community, instead of getting cut-off from society.
- A proper diagnosis of nutritional requirements of the ageing should be an integral part of health care.
- Health services should include a broad range of ambulatory services, such as day care centre, out-patient clinics, day hospitals, medical and nursing care, and domestic services.
- Emphasis should be placed on lifelong health care rather than providing health care in old age only.
ii. Protection of Elderly Consumers:

- Government should ensure that food and household products, installations and equipment conform to standards of safety that take into account the vulnerability of aged.
- To encourage the safe use of medications, household chemicals and other products by requiring manufacturers to indicate necessary warnings and instructions for use.
- To facilitate the availability of medications, hearing aids, dentures, glasses and other prosthetics to the elderly so that they can prolong their activities and independence.
- To restrain the intensive promotion and other marketing techniques primarily aimed at exploiting the meager resources of the elderly.

iii. Housing and Environment:

- The availability of proper housing facilities for the aged has special psychological significance for them. National Housing Policies should pay due respect to the requirements of the ageing.
- The urban housing plans and human settlement policies should pay special attention to the specific requirements of the ageing.
- The housing should be made in an environment in which they can have the opportunity to lead a rich, normal and secure life.
- Efforts should be directed to law enforcement agencies and the elderly to increase their awareness of the extent and impact of crime against older persons.
- Whenever possible, the ageing should be involved in housing policies and programmes for the elderly population.

iv. Family:

- As the family is recognized as a fundamental unit of society, efforts should be made to support, protect and strengthen it in agreement with each society’s system of cultural values.
- The governments should promote social policies encouraging the maintenance and strengthening of family solidarity among generations.
- Public opinion should be built up in favour of a system in which families are encouraged to take care of their elderly members.
• Within a family group, particular attention should be given to the special needs of the older women.
• The aged should be included in the decision-making process in the political, social, cultural and educational areas.

v. Social Welfare:
• Social Welfare services should be community-based and provide a broad range of preventive, remedial and developmental services for the ageing, to enable them to lead as independent life as possible in their own home and in their community, remaining active and useful citizens.
• Needs of ageing should be given due importance in drawing up plans and programmes for them. Cooperative organizations can play a useful role in this.
• Young people should be encouraged to involve themselves in providing social services for the aged as it would promote intergenerational ties.
• To encourage voluntary organizations, fiscal and other incentives should be given along with some relaxation in control and regulation.

vi. Income Security and Employment:
• The government should take appropriate action to ensure to all older persons an appropriate minimum income, and should develop their economies to benefit all the population.
• To create or develop social security schemes based on the principle of universal coverage for older people.
• Measures should be taken to assist older persons to find or return to independent employment by creating new employment possibilities and facilitating training.
• The right of older workers to employment should be based on ability to perform the work rather than chronological age.
• Measures should be taken to prevent industrial and agricultural accidents and occupational diseases.

vii. Education:
• Educational programmes featuring the elderly as the teachers and transmitters of knowledge, culture and spiritual values should be developed.
• Educational policies should reflect the principle of the right to education of the ageing, through the appropriate allocation of resources and in suitable education programmes.

• A coordinated effort by the mass media should be undertaken to highlight the positive aspect of the ageing process and of the ageing themselves.

• In accordance with the concept of lifelong education; community-based and recreation oriented program for ageing should be promoted in order to help them develop a sense of self-reliance and community responsibility.

Indian officials, through their participation in the World Assembly and by the adoption of the International Plan of Action recognized that the ageing will sooner become a cause of concern not only for the present society, but also for the future generations. The recommendations of the Plan assured for the consideration of the measures meant for the optimum utilization of wisdom and expertise of elderly. The plan helps in understanding the economic, social, cultural and political implications of ageing. It further envisaged the humanitarian and developmental issues, stimulation of action-oriented policies and the role of elderly in the overall process of development. The recognition of these aspects of ageing along with their problems and needs brings attention to the fact that the elderly need special concerns. Policy on ageing is the sovereign right and responsibility of each State, and would be carried out on the basis of its specific needs and objectives. Hence, based on these recommendations, the government of India came up with a bold initiative of introducing National Policy on Ageing.

B. The National Policy for Older Persons, 1999:

The Demographic Transition from a mature society to an ageing society resulted in the formulation and adoption of the NPOP by the Government of India. In January’1999 the government came up with the National Policy on Ageing. The policy document is a comprehensive document which provides a background of the demographic trend to the ageing population with implications at the macro and micro

level. The basic goal of the policy is to strengthen the legitimate place of older persons in society and help them live their last years with purpose, dignity and peace. The policy strives to encourage families to take care of their older family members. It provides broader framework for inter-sectoral collaboration and cooperation both within the government as well as between government and non-governmental agencies. In particular, the policy has identified a number of areas of concerns for the well-being of elderly which are discussed as follows:-

i. **Financial Security:**
In NPOP, financial security is considered as one of the major areas of intervention for different income groups. It assures financial assistance to all older persons living Below Poverty Line under the Old Age Pension Scheme. It also includes revision of monthly pension at regular intervals; establishment of Pension scheme at public and private sector with provision for employers to contribute inflation effects; administrative issues of the old age pension; better returns from the Provident Fund; the expansion of pension; tax relief for co-resident families with elders etc. Promotion of income generating activities after retirement, the promotion of long term saving instruments, and the rights of elders to be supported by their children are also reported as the part of their financial security.

ii. **Health Care and Nutrition:**
The NPOP is strongly committed to prioritize the health needs of the elderly, with an emphasis on long term management of illness at home. Elders’ health care needs are on high priority, with a goal of good affordable health services, heavily subsidized for the poor and a graded system of user fees for others. A mix of public health services and insurance, combined with not-for-profit and private health care services, is envisioned. It suggested for the strengthening of the primary health units, Provision of Geriatric facilities at secondary and tertiary levels, with special counters for elders at public hospitals and specialized geriatric training for medical and paramedical personnel. NGOs were expected to come out as a major role player in providing mobile health services; special health camps; hospice care and counselling and information services to families on the care and treatment of elders with mental health problems. Besides, promotion of self-care, family care, nutritional needs, effective

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ways of healthy ageing, the strengthening of health education programmes by using mass media were found to be the other areas of intervention for the aged.

iii. Shelter:
A third major emphasis is on elder housing. It was recommended that ten percent of the allotments by major housing schemes of both rural and urban areas will be earmarked for the elderly with provision to give them preference in allotment of the ground floor. Moreover, elders will be given easy access to housing purchase and repair loans; housing developments will be expected to be responsive to their community based amenity needs, including multipurpose senior centers; and information concerning accident prevention will be provided to elders and their families. Group housing of older persons, with common service facilities, will be encouraged, but age segregated housing that prevents interaction with rest of the community is to be avoided. The policy recommended institutional care in old age homes as the last resort.

iv. Education:
Information and education material relevant to the lives of older persons was considered useful by the NPOP. It was suggested that such materials be widely disseminated; curricula at all levels will incorporate materials to strengthen intergenerational bonds; schools will develop outreach programmes to interact with seniors on a regular basis; and contributions of the elderly will be highlighted by the media.

v. Welfare:
For providing welfare services to the aged, it becomes necessary to identify the more vulnerable group among the elderly cohorts, e.g., disabled, infirm, chronically ill, widows and those who are living alone. Policy promotes those welfare programmes and institutional services which strengthen the capacities of the aged and their families. Policy also suggests the older people to form informal neighborhoods to satisfy their social and recreational needs. A welfare fund for elders will also be created, with tax-deductible funding from corporations, trusts, charities, and individuals combined with government funds. States will also establish similar funds.

vi. Protection of Life and Property:
Protective services against fraudulent dealings and physical and emotional abuse, especially of widows, will be provided, with NGOs playing major roles. Police will
keep a friendly eye on older couples and individuals living alone. Elders will also get free advice on maintaining effective relationships with the family and ways of taking precautions against the crime. The policy document pointed out the need to provide and strengthen the necessary provisions in the Indian Penal Code against elder abuse. It seeks to strengthen the section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

vii. Family and Familial support:
The NPOP regards families as the main care providers with suggestions in the policy document to sensitize the younger generation towards their role in inter-generational bonding. It envisages a change in the mindset of people with recognition to the useful role of women in the household and married daughter in coping and supporting her older parents, particularly when there is dearth of caregivers from the family. It encourages traditional co-residence via tax-relief, medical expense rebates and housing preference.

viii. Affirmative Action:
Other interventions involve affirmative actions on behalf of elders. These include concessions and facilities for travel by Indian Railways, Indian Airlines and State Transport Corporations, preferential seating and easy access to services, speedy disposal of elders’ complaints and featuring issues relevant to elders. Moreover, a list of Central and State government programmes for elders will be compiled, updated regularly and disseminated widely to associations of older persons.

ix. Voluntary Sector:
The primary mechanism described in the NPOP is the grant-in-aid scheme. Policy envisages special assistance to trusts, charities and other endowments to expand activities and services for the elderly. Moreover, the promotion of NGO networking, information exchange and training of NGO personnel are also used as a strategy.

x. Research on Ageing and its ramifications:
Emphasis was also placed on research in socio-medical gerontology and the required database. Policy promotes research and training by setting up of regional centers for Geriatric and Gerontological studies, providing research grants, creating a national institute and an interdisciplinary coordinating body on research, and strengthening professional associations in ageing. Manpower training will focus on geriatric specializations in medical colleges, training institutes for nurses, and in-service training centers. Curriculum development assistance, especially in Schools of Social Work and other University departments, and training of NGO personnel are seen as
vital approaches, as is sensitivity training for persons in the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government at all levels. Finally, the media was recognized as an important player in highlighting the changing situation of elders and in identifying issues and areas of action.\textsuperscript{13}

Thus by looking into the above areas, it could be said that NPOP is a comprehensive document covering almost all spheres of life. But to know the effectiveness of this policy document; it is required to check its implementation in terms of welfare schemes.

**Implementation of NPOP:**

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is the leading agency to co-ordinate all matters relating to the implementation of NPOP, via a new and separate Bureau of Older Persons and the participation of different national departments of the Government through an Inter-Ministerial committee. Some of the steps taken by the Ministry in the direction of the implementation of NPOP include:

- The National Planning Commission and Finance Ministry will facilitate budgetary provisions required for implementation.
- States are encouraged to set up separate Directorates/Departments of older persons for coordination and monitoring at the state level.
- At the village level, PRIs will be encouraged to participate in NPOP implementation by addressing local level issues and needs of the elderly and developing programmes for them, and by providing forums, which ensure adequate representation of older women, to discuss elders’ concerns and actions to be taken. Further the PRIs will be assisted for providing institutional and non-institutional services to older persons.
- Instructing each national Ministry to prepare Five-Year Plans and Annual Action Plans about their implementation of aspects of the NPOP that fall into their jurisdiction. Each Ministry’s annual report will indicate the progress achieved during the year.
- Constitution of an Advisory Council to provide advice to Ministry by reviewing the policy from time to time and providing expert advice to the Minister. It is an

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, pp. 162-164.
expert group that can link the government with NGO activity through discussion and networking.

- Every three years a detailed review document will be prepared on the implementation of the NPOP.
- Health care being provided to the older persons through Bhavishya Arogya Mediclaim and Rural Group Life Insurance Schemes.
- Constitution of two new autonomous entities naming NCOP and NOAP; to promote and coordinate in the concerns of older persons.
- Launch of an Old Age Social and Income Security project (OASIS), which comprehensively examined policy questions connected with the income security of the aged.\(^{14}\)

To put these initiatives in action, the Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment set up an autonomous body named as National Council for Older Persons whose functions are discussed as follows:

C. National Council for Older Persons:

NCOP was started under the chairmanship of Mrs. Maneka Gandhi. The council constitutes 39 members including representatives of relevant Central Ministries and the Planning Commission. A seven member working group has also been constituted from amongst the members of NCOP. Adequate representation will be given to non-official members representing NGOs, academic bodies, media and experts on ageing issues from different fields. Moreover, five States will be represented on the Council by rotation. The basic objectives of the NCOP are:

- To advice the government on policies and programmes for older persons.
- To identify the role of various Ministries for the implementation of NPOP.
- To provide feedback to the government on the implementation of NPOP and set an Inter-Ministerial committee for coordination.
- To facilitate setting up of a National Association of Older Persons.
- Senior Citizens Welfare Fund will be set up at the Centre.
- PRIs will be assisted for providing institutional and non-institutional services to older persons.

• To provide a nodal point at the national level for redressing the grievances of older persons which are of an individual nature.
• To provide lobby for concessions, rebates and discounts for older persons both with the government as well as with the corporate sector.
• To suggest measures to enhance the quality of intergenerational relationships.
• Training and orientation of workers and volunteers in organizations providing services to the elderly will be facilitated.
• Instruments, which provide for old age social and income security for unorganized sector workers as recommended by OASIS committee, will be developed.
• Promotion of research on ageing issues. Professional Association of Gerontologists to be encouraged to strength research activity, disseminate research findings and provide a platform for dialogue.
• Special provisions to be made for relief and rehabilitation of older persons in the existing relief code.
• Extending assistance to organizations to provide career guidance, training, placement and support services to older persons\(^\text{15}\).

In addition to establishing NCOP, government had taken the following initiatives to make the ageing policy worthwhile and task-oriented:

**D. AADHAR:**

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has commissioned AADHAR in December 1999, to make it a part of the secretariat of NCOP and to provide legal, medical and social assistance to older people across the nation. AADHAR is an initiative in the direction of empowering the elderly population of India and to find satisfactory solutions to the problems of aged. This could be achieved through the coordination of voluntary efforts and administrative initiatives. Since its inception, AADHAR has been attending to requests for intervention from all over the country, by the Ministry and various other government agencies and functionaries. Presently based in Delhi, it is being coordinated by Age well Foundation. It is also coordinating district level support for local solutions and assistance for problems being faced by elder people. It is also identifying committed individuals and organizations across the

country right up to the district level, which would assist in implementing a grass root level action program. It is aimed at developing a network of socially committed individuals in every single district to provide local level assistance to older persons. In addition to regular activities, AADHAR has initiated a process of identification for setting up voluntary action groups in all the districts of the country for better implementation of ideas and to provide for older persons effectively at the local level. Besides, volunteers are being provided with study material and training to look after the needs of older persons locally\textsuperscript{16}.

E. National Association of Older Persons (NAOPS):

Another autonomous body named as National Association of Older Persons similar to the U.S. Federal Council on Ageing was established under NPOP to mobilize senior citizens, articulate their interests, and to promote and undertake programs for their well-being. It also advises the government on all matters relating to the older persons. The Association will have National, State and District level offices and will choose its own office bearers. The government is responsible for providing financial support to establish the National and State level offices while the District level offices will be established by the Association from its own resources which may be raised through membership subscriptions, donations, and other admissible means. The government will also provide financial assistance to the National and State level offices to cover recurring as well as non-recurring administrative costs for a period of fifteen years only and thereafter the association is expected to be financially self-sufficient. District offices will be funded by the NOAPS from its resources raised from a variety of means including dues and donations\textsuperscript{17}.

F. Benefits Given to Senior Citizens by Different Ministries and Government Departments:

In consonance with the guidelines given in NPOP, various government department and Ministries have set their own guidelines and started plenty of programs for the welfare of senior citizens. These programs along with their guidelines are given as follows:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p.213.
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I. **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment:**

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is the Nodal Ministry responsible for the welfare of senior citizens.
- The Ministry has announced the National Policy on Older Persons.
- The Ministry has written to all the Ministries/State governments concerned for adopting a uniform age of 60 years for conferring the status of senior citizen to a person and for extending facilities/concessions to them.
- The Ministry requested State governments to issue a multi-purpose identity card to senior citizens.
- The Ministry is implementing various schemes for the benefit of senior citizens as: (a) The Scheme of assistance to PRIs/ Voluntary Organizations / SHGs for construction of Old Age Homes or Multi-service centers for older persons. Under this scheme, one time grant is provided. (b) An Integrated Program for older persons. Under this scheme, financial assistance up to 90 percent of the project cost is provided to NGOs.

II. **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare:**

- The Ministry has issued instructions to all State Governments to provide for separate queues for older persons in hospitals for registration and clinical examination.
- Affordable health services will be made available to older persons, heavily subsidized for the poor and a graded system of user charges for others.
- The health Insurance sector will be given relief and concessions to enlarge the base of coverage and make the schemes affordable.
- The primary health care system will be strengthening to meet effectively the health care needs of older persons.
- Trusts, Charitable societies and Voluntary agencies providing health care to older persons will be promoted, encouraged and assisted by way of grants, relief, land at subsidized rates and other concessions.
- Facilities for testing and treating visual impairment, hearing impaired, dental and locomotion problems will be expanded considerably.
• Treatment facilities for chronic, terminal and degenerative diseases will be expanded
• Public hospitals will be directed to provide separate O.P.D. counters for older persons
• Medical Social Workers in hospitals will be given the right orientation on how to care for elderly patients in hospitals.
• The setting up of Welfare Funds to provide for free treatment and medicines to the poor elderly patients will be facilitated.
• Geriatric wards will be provided in the hospitals.
• Hospices will be set up to cater to the needs of the chronically and terminally ill, aged patients.
• Mobile health services will be organized to reach out to the elderly, particularly women, the poor and the infirm in rural and urban areas.
• Medical college will be assisted to provide facilities for specialization in geriatric medicine.
• Medical and paramedical personnel will be given training and orientation on morbidity patterns of the elderly and their treatment and rehabilitation.
• The concept of healthy ageing will be vigorously promoted. The preparation and dissemination of educational material on healthy ageing will be assisted.
• The medical fraternity will be encouraged to set up geriatric care societies at the National, State and District level.
• Associations of older persons and retired medical professionals will be encouraged to organize mobile health awareness and health check-ups.

III. Ministry of Finance:
• Separate counters are marked for senior citizens at the time of filling the Income Tax Returns. Spot assessment facility is also provided.
• R.B.I. has higher rates of interest on saving schemes of senior citizens (65 and above). Accordingly, w.e.f.15th May, 2001, banks permitted 0.5 percent higher rates of interest on fixed deposits.
• For senior citizens, the deduction in respect of medical insurance premium is up to Rs.15,000 under section 80D of Finance Act.
• Section 88 of the Finance Act provides income tax rebates of up to Rs. 15000 or actual tax whichever is less to senior citizens who have attained the age of 65 years.
• Senior citizens are excluded from “one by six” scheme for filling the income tax return under section 139(1) of the Finance Act.
• Pension schemes will be devised to reach out to self-employed and other persons currently not covered by pension.
• The insurance, mutual funds and banking sector will be encouraged to play a big role in promoting long-term savings for old age.
• Taxation policies will take cognizance of heavy liabilities on older persons to meet their survival, health and other needs during old age.
• The proposed Welfare Fund for senior citizens will be provided tax relief.

IV. Ministry of Rural Development and Employment:

• Ministry has launched National Old Age Pension Scheme and Annapurna schemes for the aged.
• The non-contributory pension schemes for older persons will be progressively expanded to reach all elderly persons living BPL.
• The system of disbursement of pensions will be streamlined and a strict watch kept preventing delays and abuses.
• Providing old persons, living BPL, a fixed quantum of food grains at a heavily subsidized rate or free of cost.
• Poverty alleviation schemes of the Ministry will show sensitivity to older persons.
• Public rural housing schemes for older persons will include subsidized housing programs.

V. Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment:

• The Ministry will help remove physical barriers to mobility and provide easy and safe accessibility to public places.
• Town planners and architects will be sensitized to the needs of older persons for a comfortable and safe home, neighborhood and city.
• Guidelines will be developed for the design and construction of old age homes and day care centers to make them lively places.
• In multi-storied housing without elevators, preference will be given to older persons in the allotment of flats on the ground floor.
• Older persons will be given easy access to loans with easy repayment schedules.
• Roads, footpaths, and street crossings will be modified to ensure safe movements of older persons.
• Every housing colony will be required to have a multi-purpose centre for older persons.
• Flats for older persons with common service facilities for meals, laundry, common rooms, rest rooms and guest rooms will be encouraged.
• Norms will be laid down to check noise and other forms of pollution.
• Older persons will be given special consideration over matters relating to transfer of property, property tax and others.
• State governments will be requested to earmark and allot lands at concessional rates to trusts, charities etc. for the construction of old age homes.

VI. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting:
• Ministry will identify the issues related to elderly, developed programmes and allocated time for their broadcast.
• Ministry will promote the concept of active ageing.
• Interaction between media and persons active in the field of ageing will be facilitated.
• Programs will target older persons in order to help them enrich and update their own knowledge, and also pass on more effectively the socio-cultural heritage to their grandchildren.
• Organizations concerned about ageing issues will be requested to institute awards for the best reporting on ageing in print, radio and television in English and the regional languages.

VI. Ministry of Communications:
• Telephone connection is given priority to senior citizens of age 65 and above by the Ministry of Telecommunications.
• Immediate action will be taken in the matter of transfer of telephones and redressal of faults.

• Telephone advisory bodies will include a nominee from the NPOP.

• Telephone tariff concessions in the case of domestic use will be considered.

• Postal authorities will issue, every year, on the National Day for Older Persons a commemorative postage stamp.

• Messages relating to older persons will be printed on inland letters, aerogramme, and other items of postal stationery.

VII. Ministry of Railways:

• Indian railways provide concession in all classes and trains including Rajdhani/ Shatabdi trains for both males and females aged 60 years and above.

• The railway authorities will provide better services to senior citizens at booking counters, railway platforms and waiting rooms during the journey.

• Allotment of lower births, availability of wheel chairs and easy access to retiring rooms will be ensured for older persons.

• Senior citizens will be provided protection from harassment by coolies and anti-social elements.

• A senior officer will be nominated by the railways for speedy redressal of the grievances of older persons.

VIII. Ministry of Civil Aviation:

• The airlines will consider the facilities they can provide to senior citizens to make their travel comfortable.

• The airlines will provide wheel chairs and easy access to waiting rooms for disabled and very old.

• Indian airlines/Jet Airways is providing 50 percent discount on basic fare for all domestic flights in Economic class to senior citizens having the age of 65 years for both males and females.

IX. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways:

• State road transport authorities will consider giving fare concessions to senior citizens.
• Buses will be designed in such a way so as to provide easy entrance and exit, and safely to the elderly.

• Reservation of two seats for senior citizens in front row of the buses of the State Road Transport Undertakings.

X: Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas:

• Senior citizens will be given high priority in the allotment of gas connections for domestic use.

• Complaints of senior citizens will be attended on a priority basis.

XI: Ministry of HRD:

• The Public Distribution System will reach out to cover all older persons below the poverty line and issue ration cards promptly.

• Open Universities/ departments of continuing education of Universities will be encouraged to develop and offer continuing education packages relevant and useful for older persons.

• The curriculum at different stages of education will include course material on older persons to encourage values of caring towards the old.

• The departments of social sciences in Universities will be requested to include courses on ageing in their curriculum and encourage students to take up research on ageing at the M.Phil and Ph.D. level.

• Corporate bodies, banks, trusts and foundations will be approached to set up centers devoted to the study of ageing.

• Libraries of Universities, research institutions and others academic and cultural bodies will be requested to permit older persons to utilize their facilities.

• Interactive programmes b/w associations of older persons and schools will be promoted.

XII: Ministry of Home Affairs:

• Police departments will be directed to pay special attention to the security of life and property of older persons.
• Information will be provided to senior citizens and residents Welfare Associations on the precautions necessary to ensure the safety of the elderly in the neighbourhoods.

• More stress will be given on maintaining close contacts with friends and neighbours and sharing information on security matters.

• The National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) will compile and publish in its annual publications the data regarding the crime and abuse against the elderly.

• The Registrar General and Census Commissioner will include questions on older persons in the decennial census operations.

XIII: Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs:

• The Honorable Chief Justice of India has advised Chief Justices of all High Courts in the country to accord priority to cases involving older persons and ensures their expeditious disposal.

• Legal advice and helpline services will be provided to older persons to protect them from abuse, fraud and coercion in connection with property rights.

• Legal aid services to older persons will be expanded.

• State legislation will be modified so that older parents unable to maintain themselves do not face abandonment and acute neglect.

• Steps will be taken to simplify the adequacy of current provisions granting rights to parents with no support from their children and provide speedy relief in such cases.

XIV: Ministry of Labour:

• The National Commission on labour will be requested to give its recommendations on older workers.

• The National Labour Institute will include older workers in its programme of activities.

• Trade unions will be encouraged to promote the cause of older workers.

• Organizations will be assisted to provide career guidance, training, placement, and support services to older persons.
• Pre-retirement counseling programmes will be promoted and assisted.

• Coverage of establishments in which workers are entitled to contributory Provident Fund, Pension and other retirement benefits will be progressively increased.

XV: Ministry of Science and Technology:

• Research on ageing will be recognized as a priority area and funds will be allocated for supporting research.

• Development of aids and appliances for use by older persons will be encouraged.

XVI: Ministry of Planning:

• The planning Commission will sanction outlays for schemes on older persons.

• The National Sample Survey Organization will be generating data on older persons.

• Special Surveys on older persons will be conducted at periodic intervals\textsuperscript{18}.

G. National Schemes for the Welfare of Senior Citizens:

Based on the above guidelines the various Ministries have started the following programmes for the welfare of senior citizens:

• National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAP):

NOAP scheme was initiated by the congress government in 1995 and provides for a pension of Rs.75/- per month to the old people living in the constitutions of destitution. The scheme was started all over India and benefitted the most vulnerable sections of Indian society like women and lower caste individuals\textsuperscript{19}. Under this scheme central assistance is given only after fulfilling the following criteria:

a. The age of the applicant (male or female) should be 65 years or more.

b. The applicant must be a destitute in the sense that he/she has no regular means of subsistence from his/her own source of income or through financial support from family members or other sources\textsuperscript{20}.


\textsuperscript{19} www.india.gov.in.

\textsuperscript{20} www.karmayog.org
The scheme is a response to the deprivation and insecurities faced by our elderly. Therefore, it has certainly proved to be beneficial and worthwhile. The scheme fulfills an important commitment of government providing a social safety net for the poor and vulnerable. The scheme is implemented in the State and Union Territories through Panchayats and Municipalities. Both Panchayats and Municipalities are encouraged to involve voluntary agencies as much as possible in benefiting the destitute elderly for whom this scheme is intended. The State governments have been directed to ensure that the pensions are paid regularly i.e. before seventh day of each month. With every year the government is increasing the budgetary allocation for the scheme as it was Rs.450 crores in 1999 and was increased to Rs.465 crores in 2002. The numbers of beneficiaries were also increasing. But over a period of time, few gaps were noticed in NPOP like the amount of Pension being provided was very low. Besides it was covering only destitute. Hence, as a first step, a new scheme was launched on 19th Nov’ 2007 as the “Indira Gandhi Old Age Pension Scheme”. The scheme is a demand driven social security programme and is not restricted by budgetary allocations. Under this scheme the Central Assistance was revised from the meager Rs.75 per month to a more substantial Rs.200 per month. States have also been asked to match this raise and will provide Rs.400 per month as an individual pension. The Old Age Pension covers all senior citizens of age 65 and above in all BPL Families. The pension will be credited, wherever possible, into a post-office or bank account of the beneficiary.21

**Annapurna Scheme:**

The Central government announced in the year 1999 another social security programme called ‘Annapurna’ for the destitute elderly and has been launched with effect from 1st April’ 2000. It aims at providing food security to meet the requirement of those senior citizens who, though eligible, have remained uncovered under the National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS). The Scheme is targeted to cover, 20% (13.762 Lakh) of persons eligible to receive pension under NOAPS. It is an ‘In kind assistance scheme’ which provides all older persons, eligible for the NOAPS; a 10 Kg. of rice or wheat per month. It is provided free of cost through the existing public distribution system (PDS). In its maiden appearance, the programme supported 0.66

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21 www.newshopper.sulekha.com
million people. The Central assistance under the Annapurna Scheme is, thus, provided to the beneficiaries on fulfilling the following criteria:

✓ The age of the applicant (male or female) should be 65 years or above.

✓ The applicant must be a destitute in the sense of having little or no regular means of substance from his/her own source of income or through financial support from family members or other sources. In order to determine destitution, the criteria, if any, in force in the States/UTs may also be followed.

✓ The applicant should not be in receipt of pension under the NOAPS or State Pension Scheme.

For implementation of this scheme, funds have been released to the State Departments of Food and Civil Supplies in one installment. This Department then ties up with the Food Corporation of India (FCI), to release food grains district wise on payment of the cost of Food grains at CIP rates directly to the FCI offices. Initially, the food grains were supplied at economic cost (Rs.9.80 per Kg.). However, w.e.f. 1.11.2000, food grains are supplied at the CIP rates for BPL families (Rs.4.90 per Kg.) The beneficiaries under the scheme are selected in the Gram Sabhas and the Gram Panchayat distributes the entitlement cards to the beneficiaries.

- **Project OASIS:**

To enhance financial security of older persons in the country the government commissioned a national project called “Old Age Social and Income Security” (OASIS), devised for setting up a pension system for its citizens. The government realizes that poverty alleviation programmes directed at the aged alone cannot provide a complete solution to the problem. Faced with such large numbers, it is apparent that the problem will have to be addressed through self-help where people prepares for old age by savings. The role that the government can play in this enterprise is to create an institutional infrastructure to enable and encourage each citizen to undertake this task. Project OASIS, the first comprehensive examination of policy questions connected with old age income security, took birth in this background.

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22 www.india.gov.in
The basic mandate of the project is to make concrete recommendations for actions which the GoI can take, so that every young person can genuinely build up a stock of wealth through his/her working life, which would serve as a shield against poverty in old age. The need for this arose because of lack of adequate instrument to enable workers in the unorganized sector to provide for their future old age. It was estimated that barely 34 million of the working population is eligible to participate in formal provisions meant to provide old age income security. On the other hand, approximately 268 million workers in the unorganized sector are excluded from participating in the existing provisions. Therefore, almost 90 percent of India’s workforce remains uncovered under any social security means. The recommendations of the project are expected to benefit this target population. An eight member expert committee was mandated under the chairmanship of Dr. S. A. Dave; to examine policy questions connected with old and to make concrete recommendations for actions for enhancing social security. The final report of the project was submitted to the Prime Minister on fourteen Jan, 2001 by the Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment. The Social Defence Bureau is taking the necessary action for the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

**Recommendations under project OASIS**

The research and recommendations under project OASIS have been segregated into two phases:

The first phase will cover existing mechanisms for social security-Employee Provident Fund, Pension Schemes and Public Provident Funds, the Annuity Plans of L.I.C, U.T.I, etc. It has provisions for long life economic security during old age to their members and better realizes their full, intended potential by removing systemic distortions and discriminations. It also recommends for the formation of a National Senior Citizen’s Fund. The recommendations of the committee are being examined by the Ministry of Finance for further action.

The second phase will focus on research and recommendations for non-contributory government pensions, occupational and private pension plans; individual choice of
diverse funds and fund managers, Regulatory Authority for the Pension Fund industry, a new and fully funded contributory pension provision for the balance (uncovered) workers including casual workers, self-employed, farmers etc., consolidation and strengthening of the existing publicly funded social welfare schemes like the NSAP, the pension and gratuity schemes of the central government.\textsuperscript{25} The recommendations further show that regular savings between Rupees three to five per day through the entire working life easily suffices for survival in old age, provided the pension assets are invested widely. The project also recommends that the new system devised for pension system in the country would be based on Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA). The IRA account number of an individual is a unique number. The individual would save and accumulate assets into this account during his working period. The account would stay with the individual through a change of job, spell of unemployment, and can be accessed at any location in India. The minimum one time contribution will be Rs. 100 and total accretion will be Rs. 500 per annum. Finally, upon retirement, the individual would be able to use his pension assets to buy annuities from annuity providers and obtain a monthly pension. The government for the implementation of the above mentioned Pension Systems has envisaged a role of NGOs, which can play a key role in education and advocacy. They can assist in obtaining the transition of millions of individuals into the Pension Systems. Further, NGOs can play an important role in obtaining steady contributions to the pension fund; and imparting knowledge in connection with the various choices that individuals in the pension system face.\textsuperscript{26}

Thus the recommendations of OASIS, which form the basis of any future of policies of the government on savings, have a twin focus of further improving the existing pension provisions and to devise a fresh pension plan for excluded workers.

- **Scheme of Assistance to PRIs/VOs/SHGs for construction of Old Age Homes/ Multi-Services Centre for older persons:**

Under the auspices of the NPOP; the government has implemented a scheme of assistance to PRIs and Voluntary Organizations / SHGs, which are working as

\textsuperscript{25} www.kamayog.org

registered societies, public trusts, or charitable companies for the construction of old age homes/multi-service centers for older persons. The assistance is forthcoming from the centre facilitated for the purpose only to those who submit their applications in the prescribed Performa to the Ministry and who produce a clear title of land on which the centre is proposed to be constructed. Assistance is also granted for expansion of the existing building of multi-services centre/old age homes by grant of funds in easy installments. As part of the scheme to assist programmes for older persons, grant is also provided to eligible persons for running old age homes, day care centers, Mobile Medicare Units, and also non-institutional services. The grant is sanctioned based upon the assessment made by a prescribed agency of the Ministry. The aim of the applicant has to be to improve the quality of life of older persons and those eligible for assistance are bodies like autonomous government institutions, local bodies and cooperative societies registered under an appropriate act. The scheme was revised during 1998-1999 to enhance the one time construction grant for old age homes/multi service centres from Rupees Five lakhs to thirty lakhs to eligible organizations.

- **An Integrated Programme for Older Persons:**

This has been formulated by revising the earlier scheme of ‘assistance to voluntary organizations’ for programmes relating to the welfare of the aged during 1998-1999 with an aim to empower and improve the quality of life of older persons, the programmes hopes to: Reinforce and strengthen the ability and commitment of the family to provide care to older persons; Foster amiable multi-generational relationships; Generate greater awareness on issues pertaining to older persons and enhanced measures to address these issues; Facilitate productive ageing; Popularize the concept of lifelong preparation for old age at the individual and societal level; Strengthen capabilities on issues pertaining to older persons of local bodies / State governments/ NGOs and academic and other institutions. The scheme provides for a financial assistance up to ninety percent of the project cost is provided to NGOs for establishments and maintaining old age homes, day care centre, mobile Medicare units and for providing non institutional services to older persons.

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28 www.karmayog.org
29 Ibid.
H. Benefits to Senior Citizens Working in Organized Sector:

Welfare of senior citizens working under the organized sector was always an area of concern for the authorities. The government is providing following facilities and benefits to the retired aged:

- **Pension Benefit:**

  People who retired from service between 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1996 to 2004 are eligible for receiving pension amount at the rate of 50 percent of their basic pay. Pension for people who retired before 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1996 will be fixed based on 50 percent of the minimum of the new scale applicable in place of old scale, in which they retire. A special provision has been made for people who retire before completing 10 months of service after 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1999, i.e., before 30\textsuperscript{th} September 1996 and have opted to come over the revised scales of pay. They are eligible to weight age at 40 percent on the existing basic pay for arriving at average pay fixation of pension\textsuperscript{30}. Most of the non-industrial staff in various government departments other than the Indian Railways are providing pension to their employees under this scheme. The maximum period of service for getting full pension is 33 years. Government employees who retire after 33 years of service are entitled to monthly pension at rates ranging from 43 percent to 50 percent of their “emoluments”. Employees with less than 33 years of service are entitled to pension in the same proportion to the years of service\textsuperscript{31}.

- **Family Benefits:** following benefits have been provided to the family of the employee in case of his/her death during the service:

  - Family Pension is provided to the dependent surviving member of the family, if, the member of the scheme dies during his/her service before attaining the age of 60 years.
  - Death- cum- retirement gratuity.
  - Balance of Provident Fund.
  - Leave encashment up to 180 days.


Funeral expenses.

Children Education Allowance and Tuition Fees reimbursement.

- **Dearness Relief:**

  The grant of Dearness Relief is provided to central government pensioners/family pensioners who had drawn a lump sum payment on absorption in a PSU/autonomous body and have become entitled to restoration of one-third commuted portion of pension as well as revision of the restored amount in terms of this department’s OM No. 4/59/97-P and PW dated 14 July 1998, as applicable to serving employees on the restored amount of one-third commuted portion of pension w.e.f. 1 Jan 1999. Hence, the following categories of Contributory Provident Fund (CPF) beneficiaries who are in receipt of Dearness Relief are:

  ✓ The widows and dependent children of the deceased CPF beneficiary who had retired from service or died while in service prior to 1.01.1986 and are in receipt of ex-gratia payment of Rs. 605 per month.

  ✓ The Central Government employees who had retired on CPF benefits before 18.11.1960 and are in receipt of ex-gratia payment of Rs.654, Rs.703 and Rs.695.

  ✓ The Central Government employees who had retired on CPF benefits between 18.11.1960 to 1.12.1985 and are in receipt of ex-gratia payment of Rs.600 w.e.f. 1.11.97.

- **Gratuity:**

  The provision of gratuity was made for government employees under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 with an eligibility of having a minimum of 5 years of qualifying service. This is a one-time lump sum benefit calculated at the rate of one-fourth of the month’s basic pay plus the DA last drawn before retirement for each completed six-monthly period of qualifying service. There is no minimum limit for the amount of

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gratuity whereas the maximum retirement gratuity payable is over 16 times the basic pay limited to Rs.3.5 lakhs\textsuperscript{34}.

I. Insurance Schemes for Senior Citizens:

Health and financial security were found to be the two most important challenges of ageing. Insurance is found to be a solution to these problems and thereby the following insurance policies have been introduced by the public and the private sector:

- **Jeevan Dhara:**

  This Pension Plan is for those individuals who are self-employed, artists, technicians, in business, and professionals; as these individuals cannot have pension benefit after they cease to earn, compared to State/Central government employees who are endowed with ‘pension’ benefits. Age range at the entry to this scheme is between 18 to 65 years and the minimum annuity per month is Rs.100. Presently, the scheme has been relaunched as 'New Jeevan Dhara 1' with salient features as follows:

  ✓ It is a pure pension plan where in one pays single premium or regular premium over the deferment period to secure a pension starting at a future date.

  ✓ Policyholder can add a term assurance rider by paying additional premium. By the virtue of this rider, in the event of death of the policyholder during the deferment period, sum assured selected under term assurance rider would be paid.

  ✓ Annuity rates on the vesting date will be equal to that available under the New Jeevan Akshaya plan on the date of vesting.

  ✓ Bonus is payable under the policy. Contributions rank for IT rebate under section 88, though income benefits are taxable.

  ✓ Premium paying period is between 2 and 35 years. Policyholder has the option to pay a single premium or pay regular premium annually, half yearly, quarterly or monthly.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. p377.
On Vesting (i.e. at the start of pension): The National Cash Option together with Reversionary Bonus and Final Additional Bonus (if any) with or without 25% commutation will be compulsorily converted into annuity having following options: Annuity for life; Annuity for life with guaranteed period of 5, 10, 15 and 20 years; Joint life and last survivor annuity to the annuitant and his/her spouse under which annuity payable to the spouse on death of the purchaser will be 50% of that payable to the annuitant; Life annuity with return of purchase price; Life annuity with annuities increasing at a simple rate of 3% p.a.

- **JeevanAkshay:**

For providing lifelong pension and lump sum death benefits this pension plan was introduced. This pension plan also provides a survival benefit at the end of seven years under certain terms and conditions. The minimum age at entry is 50 years and the minimum purchase price is Rs.10,000, in multiples of Rs.100 thereafter. Dating back is not permitted in this scheme. JeevanAkshay Policies will not be issued under the Married Women’s Property Act, 1874. This annuity cannot be assigned. This scheme is apt for elderly individuals since it relieves them from the hassles of reinvestment and provides them with timely returns on their investment. As long as investors between 30 and 75 have funds at their disposal and an inclination to gain a reasonable amount at periodic intervals, they will be provided with timely payments. This policy comes with three options:

- Regular annuity for life. Here, the individual will start getting the regular income through his lifetime but after his death, his family will not get anything.

- Annuity payments increasing yearly at three per cent. In this case too, the amount invested will not be returned to the family on death.

- Annuity for life with return of capital. Under this option, the family will get the invested amount on the death of the policyholder.

- **Jeevan Suraksha:**

Premium Ceasing Age under Jeevan Suraksha plan is 70 years. An exclusive non-medical limit of Rs.2 lakhs for purchasers up to the age 40 years has been permitted
for the plan. This scheme is meant for professionals and businessmen. Jeevan Suraksha Scheme is available in three types to suit individual needs, namely, pension with life cover, pension without life cover, and pension with endowment type. Salient features of the scheme are as follows:

✓ It offers a guaranteed pension for the life of the policyholder or a pension for the last survivor in case of a Joint life policy or a pension fund that will also return the purchase price paid by the policyholder.

✓ Terminal bonus is available and there is no forfeiture in case the premiums are discontinued. In case the life cover is not opted for, the policyholder also has the option of a single or one time premium payable.

✓ The policyholder also gains the option of a tax-free commuted value that amounts to nearly 25 percent. Premiums up to Rs.10,000/- qualify for 100 percent deduction from taxable income in terms of Sections 80 (CCC) of the Income Tax Act.

✓ The terminal bonus declared by the corporation on the vesting date depends upon the actuarial surplus on the pension fund and will increase the pension benefits.

✓ If the payment of premiums is discontinued, the policy is not forfeited completely. If premiums are paid for a full 3 years, the benefits are reduced on pro-rata basis.

• Bima Nivesh:

Life Insurance Corporation has launched a new “Bima Nivesh Plan 2002”, offering an annual guaranteed return of around seven per cent per annum, after withdrawing its earlier scheme “New Bima Nivesh” which offered a guaranteed return of 8.28 per cent. The minimum age for entry is 35 years and maximum is 65 years (for a 10 years term), and 70 years (for a 5 years term) respectively. No medical examination is required. Only a simple declaration of good health needs to be submitted. This new scheme at a lower return is launched as earlier high-return scheme has become non-sustainable due to fall in interest rates. As the investment in Bima Nivesh will get tax exemption under section 88 of the Income Tax Act, the net rate of return would be even higher. Moreover, since the return is also tax free, the total effect of the tax
benefits make the return in the range of 10 to 13 per cent, depending on the tax slabs
of the investors. In the new Bima Nivesh scheme, one can get a life insurance cover
for 5 years and 10 years of Rs 1000, for Rs 985 and Rs 923 respectively. On maturity,
the sum assured along with the guaranteed additions and loyalty additions, if any, will
be paid on the expiry of the stipulated term.

Depending upon the Corporation’s experience with regard to interest and expenses
and based on terms of policy, loyalty addition maybe paid on maturity. On the Life
assured surviving the stipulated date of maturity, Loyalty Additions may be paid at
such rates and on such terms as may be declared by the Corporation. A Term
Assurance Rider benefit payable by a single premium will be available at the choice
of the proposer.

• **Senior Citizens Unit Plan:**

Under this scheme one has to make a onetime investment depending on his/her age
and have the benefit of medical treatment for self and spouse at any of the selected
hospitals on completion of 58 years of age. The Senior citizens Unit Plan has special
arrangements with New India Assurance Co. Ltd.(NIAC) under an exclusive medical
insurance cover where by the bills from the hospitals in connection with all medical
treatment by the member will be settled directly by NIAC up to the prescribed limit.
Age group of 18-54 years can join this scheme. The person may be a resident or a
non-resident Indian. The person will be entitled for a medical insurance cover of Rs.
2.5 lakh after he/she attains the age of 58 years. This insurance cover is available for
both the citizen and his/her spouse. After the age of 61 years both of them are eligible
for a cover of Rs.5 lakh after adjusting to any claims made earlier. The citizen can
avail medical treatment in any of the hospitals under this scheme. The Trust will call
for all details about recent photograph, signature and address of the member and the
spouse as soon as the member attains the age of 54 years so as to prepare an identity
card and a log book for the member and the spouse

• **Medical Insurance Scheme:**

The medical insurance also known as Mediclaim is available to persons between the
age of five years and seventy five years. Earlier, the sum insured varies from Rs.15,
000 to Rs.3 lakh and premium varies from Rs.175 to Rs.5, 770 per person per annum
depending upon the different slabs of sum insured and different age groups. The policy is now available to persons between the age of five years and eighty years. The cover provides for reimbursement of medical expenses incurred by an individual towards hospitalization/domiciliary, hospitalization for any illness, injury or disease contracted or sustained during the period of insurance.

- **Group Medical Insurance Scheme:**

  This scheme is available to any group/association/corporate body of more than 100 persons having a Central administration point. The policy covers reimbursement of hospitalization and domiciliary hospitalization expenses only for illness/diseases contracted or injury sustained by the insured person. The basic policy under this scheme is Medi-claim only. This policy is available to person’s b/w the age of five and eighty years. The sum insured varies from Rs.15,000 to Rs.5 lakh and a premium varies depending upon the different slabs of sum insured and different age groups.

- **Jan Arogya:**

  This scheme is primarily meant for a larger segment of the population who cannot afford the high cost of medical treatment. The limit of cover per person is Rs. five thousand per annum. The cover provides for reimbursement of medical expenses incurred by an individual towards hospitalization/domiciliary hospitalization for any illness, injury or disease contracted or sustained during the period of insurance. The age limit for this scheme is 70 years.

- **Varishtha Pension Bima Yogana:**

  The Old-Age Pension Scheme of the LIC, called the ‘Varishtha Pension Bima Yogana’ was launched by the Indian Prime Minister on 14th July’ 2003. It will provide a minimum pension of Rs.250 a month and a maximum of Rs.2,000 a month to people over 55 years of age who opt for the scheme. For the minimum pension, a lump sum payment of Rs.33,335 has to be made while for the Rs. 2,000 scheme Rs.266,665 has to be paid. There is no upper age limit for availing the scheme and in the case of the death of the pensioner, the purchased price will be returned to the nominee. The assured rate of return worked out by the LIC is nine percent per annum.
In case the LIC earns lower returns on the corpus of the scheme, the government would step into make up the shortfall.

- **Private Pension Plans:**

Private companies like that of ICICI Prudential Life, HDFC Standard Life, Aviva Life and ING Vysa etc. have launched their own pension plans for elderly\(^{35}\).

**J. Mention of Senior Citizens in Five Year Plans:**

Even though Five Year Plans do not show any consistency in recognizing the senior citizens as a target group but still there is some mention of the aged in the Five Year Plans. Therefore all these plans along with the participation of India in second World Assembly of Ageing have been highlighted as follows:

- **The First (1951-1956) and Second Five Year Plans (1956-1961)**

There is no mention of senior citizens in the first two plans of government. They covered only the social security measures for industrial workers. Hence, they are of no relevance to aged.

- **The Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966)**

Third plan recognized the needs of the old living without any means of livelihood and support but still the issue was left to voluntary organizations and local bodies to provide the assistance. Plan suggested for the setting up of relief and assistance funds. Another interesting consequential development was a communication from the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, to the State governments in 1963, exhorting the setting up of Social Assistance Bureau by civic bodies and the establishment of Relief and Assistance Funds which would be administered through the Social Assistance Bureau; some assistance was stipulated from the central government for such funds. However, nothing positive emerged and the outlay of Rupees twenty million made for social assistance programmes covering the old and other categories remained unutilized.

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35 Ibid.
• **The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974)**

The fourth plan document made a provision of rupees forty million especially for the social assistance schemes for old persons who are unable to work, the physically handicapped and other categories. But this fund remained unutilized in the first two years. Hence this plan also proved to be unsuccessful in fulfilling the expectations of senior citizens.

• **The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1979)**

In the fifth plan it was mentioned that the states should progressively endeavour to evolve a comprehensive social security system covering the needs of the aged, the handicapped and others in need of social assistance. No outlays were, however, provided in the central plan. It was presumably left to the state to carry out the directives through appropriate programmes in the State plans. Thus progress in this direction was very inadequate as due to financial crisis of States. Plan was also limited to running or giving grants-in-aid for Old Age Homes as the first programme which struck the mind was institutional care in Old Age Homes.

• **The Sixth Plan document (1980-1985)**

Sixth plan also had no mention of the ageing and the aged as a target group needing welfare services. The subsequent sixth plan (1980-81 to 1984-85) document which superseded this; recognized the aged as a vulnerable group of whom programmes were required to be developed to meet their needs. No outlays were separately indicated in the central sector for schemes for the aged, the assumption once again be the same that the States could in their plans provide whatever services they felt as necessary. However, the State plans continued to treat this as a low priority sector. In 1983-84, it was for the first time, as a fall out of the World assembly on ageing; the central government started giving grant-in-aid to voluntary organizations for providing services to the elderly under ‘grant-in-aid’ scheme.

• **The Seventh Plan (1985-1989)**

Like the previous plans, this document does not gaverecognition to ageing as a target group; nor has any mention been made of their needs or services to meet those needs.
However, as in the Sixth Plan, grants-in-aid scheme of the Central government would continued; in the States, too, grants were being given to voluntary organizations or Old Age Homes run by the government, but budgetary provisions were very small.  

- **Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997)**

During the Eighth five year plan, welfare measures for the elderly were found more specific and comprehensive. In November 1992, the Ministry of Welfare initiated ‘Welfare of the Aged’ scheme to encourage voluntary organizations through grant-in-aid assistance to provide old age homes, day care centers, mobile Medicare and non-institutional services for older persons above the age of sixty. The scheme marks the entry of the ageing population as a target group in national planning and recognizes the voluntary sector as constituting an important institutional mechanism in providing services complementing the endeavors of the state. By 1995, 212 Old Age Homes, thirty one Mobile Medicare Units, and a number of day care centers set up by the voluntary sector received assistance from government funds marked for the purpose. However, since the scheme did not specify the services to be provided, no proper monitoring/evaluation was carried out. Consequently, there was no worthwhile assessment of the functioning of the scheme.

**K. The Madrid International Plan of Action:**

In response to a series of comments from different countries, the Second World Assembly on Ageing was held in Madrid (Spain) in April 2002 and hence resulted in the formulation of a new international Plan of Action for aged. The plan of action calls for changes in attitudes, in national and international policies, and in community, corporate and organizational practices, so that the enormous potential of ageing in the Twenty-First century is fulfilled. It seeks to ensure that people everywhere will be enabled to age with security and dignity. They also should be able to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights.

Thus Madrid Plan was the first international agreement to recognize the potential of older people to contribute to the development of their societies and to commit


governments to include ageing in all social and economic development policies. This plan has set the tone for national initiatives to ensure active participation of older people in governance and in elimination of their neglect, abuse and violence. The Plan of Action has the following policy directions:

i. **Older Persons and Development:**

It includes active participation of elderly in society and development work; rural development; migration and urbanization; access to knowledge, education and training; intergenerational solidarity; eradication of poverty, income security and poverty prevention. The recommendations under the development priority include:

- The government must take concrete measures to protect and assist older persons in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation, including providing mental and physical rehabilitation services for those disabled in such situations.
- To give importance to alleviate poverty by stressing for ensuring sufficient minimum income for all older persons. There is recognition that where poverty is endemic, people who survive face a lifetime of poverty and it further depends in old age. Thus sustainability in the provision of adequate income security should be given great importance.
- To focus on involving older persons in decision-making, creating employment opportunities for those who wish to work, improving living conditions and infrastructure in rural areas.

ii. **Advancing health and well-being:**

It includes health promotion, well-being throughout the life course, universal and equitable access to health care services, older persons and HIV/AIDS, training of care providers, mental health needs of older persons and older persons with disabilities. The recommendations under the health priority include:

- Provision of continuum of care, ranging from health promotion and disease prevention to the provision of primary care and acute treatment for older persons.
- Putting stress on life course perspective to ageing and bringing focus on maintaining independence, prevention and delay of disease and disability.
• Improving assessment of the impact of HIV/AIDS on older person’s health and providing adequate information and training to people living with HIV/AIDS and their informal caregivers.

• To expand educational opportunities in the fields of Geriatrics and Gerontology and also programmes on health and older persons for professionals in the social service sector.

iii. Ensuring enabling and supportive environments:

It brings attention to the issues of housing, living environment, care, abuse, violence and images of ageing. The recommendations under the supportive environments include:

• Improvement in the housing and living environment of older persons.
• Promoting a positive view of ageing and enhancing public awareness of the important contributions of older persons.
• The availability of accessible and affordable transport for older persons.
• Providing a continuum of care and services for older persons, supporting the Caregiving role of older persons and creating support services to address the elder abuse are important dimensions of this priority\textsuperscript{38}.

Thus for India and other nations, the adoption of Madrid Plan of Action at the Second World Assembly is a commitment to act to meet the challenges of ageing. It gives importance to age related research, areas of education and training, empowerment of older persons, and the need to create opportunities for older persons to continue working for as long as they wish. It provides a framework to the government to take the implementation of NPOP ahead and to a wider context with greater seriousness and intentions.

Hence, the position of aged in five years plans reflected that social security of aged has been given lowest priority by the government. It was only recently i.e. after the second World Assembly on Ageing and the formulation of National Policy for Older Persons; the government decided to work for the welfare of senior citizens. The most

important initiative was the provision of special Act for the maintenance and welfare of the aged. The Act with its important features is given as follows:

I. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007:

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act shall come into force in all Indian States (except the J and K) on December’2007. The Act aimed at helping the elderly to live in dignity and peace. The major highlights of the Act are:

- The Act requires children who are not minors and relatives who are legal heirs of senior citizens are expected to maintain elderly parents or relatives. A person unable to maintain self is entitled to make an application for maintenance by children or a relative who may be in a possession of the property of such person.
- “Maintenance” includes provision for food, clothing, residence, medical attendance and treatment.
- The Act proposes to provide for appropriate mechanism to be set up to provide need-based maintenance to the parents and senior citizens.
- The Act caps the maximum monthly allowance at Rs. 10,000 per month. Punishment for not paying the required monthly allowance shall be Rs.5, 000 or up to three months imprisonment, or both.
- In case of any denial from the side of children in providing maintenance; an application may be made by a senior citizen or parent and, if such person is incapable, by any voluntary organization registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860 on behalf of the person.
- The Maintenance Tribunal constituted under the Act may order interim relief if the proceedings are found pending. The provision is also made to dispose the proceedings within 90 days from the date of service of notice of the application.
- District Social Welfare officer, having the powers of First class Judicial Magistrate will be designated as a “Maintenance Officer” and shall represent a parent or senior citizen during the proceedings of the Tribunal.
- The Act also recommends that the State governments may establish and maintain Old Age Homes at the least one in each District to accommodate a minimum of 150 senior citizens who are indigent.

• The Act also provide for institutionalization of a suitable mechanism for ‘Protection of Life and Property of Older Persons’.
• The Act also recommends the State governments to provide for medical care including the facilities of separate beds and queues in hospitals; treatment and research activities for chronic, terminal and degenerative diseases.
• The Act has made no provision to provide for emotional and psychological support and care to the senior citizens, particularly those above the age of seventy and widowed women.

The analysis of above mentioned welfare schemes and policies of senior citizens reflects that elderly constitutes a vulnerable group; even the constitution put the senior citizens into the category of weaker and marginalized section along with women and children. On recognizing their vulnerability; the government had initiated a lot of intervention packages and schemes meant especially for their welfare. Strategies have also been designed to put these policies into action. But still their position remains unaltered. The main problem lies in the implementation of these services. What has been designed is not transferred properly to them and thus their vulnerability continues to persist. Therefore, in the next chapter findings of the present study have been discussed so that we got a more clear perspective of the ageing phenomenon.