INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction
1.2. Concept of Aging
1.3. Why is Old Age a Threat?
1.4. Importance of the Study
1.5. Care and Support for the Aged
1.6. Statement of the Problem
1.7. Objectives of the Study
1.8. Significance of the Study
1.9. Scope of the Study
1.10. Overview of the Research Study
1.11. Definition of Terms
1.12. Outline of the Study
1.13. Conclusion
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Advance in medical science, improvement in living conditions and public health facilities have prevented epidemics and brought the general diseases under control. This has increased the life span of people all over the world. The uprooting changes that have shattered the social system and human relations have made the life of elder persons pathetic and miserable. The joint family system that prevailed in our country years ago had infused in the elderly persons a sense of authority, security, belongingness, love and care. But the present day nuclear family system has obliterated all such relationships and has pushed down the elderly into a state of loneliness, insecurity, helplessness, frustration, hopelessness and meaninglessness.

But the present society does not provide opportunities to the aged members to lead a comfortable, respectful and socially useful life. They do not get proper care and protection from their children. They have become relatively an independent generation. So in this research
an attempt has been made to study the problems of the elderly. Hence the purpose of the introductory chapter is to introduce the topic and general procedures used in this dissertation.

1.2 Concept of Aging

Gerontology is the study of the old. Old age leads to physical disability, declining mental ability, the gradual giving up of role-playing in social activities, and a shift in economic status, moving from economic independence to economic dependence on there for support.¹ Aging has been viewed differently by different people. Whereas to some it means power, authority, wisdom and respect, others consider it as a forced retirement leading to a state of dependency, loss of charm and of physical strength. To most, aging implies physiological and psychological changes that are reflected in their lesser activities, reduced income and consequential loss of status both in the family and in the society. The status of the aged person at present seems to have changed perceptively. Industrialization and urbanization have given rise to migration and emergence of nuclear families with increasing stress on individuality. Rising costs of living, problems of housing, coupled with desire for and dominance of materialistic fantasies have

---

added to the problems of the families resulting in the neglect of the elderly.

In recent years, the problems of the aged have acquired new dimensions because of the ongoing changes in the demographic social and economic spheres. The contribution of science and technology, modern medicine, health care and the basic changes in the economic and social ecology have altered the demographic structure of the society. Aging population is one of the significant by-products of the demographic transition. In recent years population of the aged has been rising rapidly.

1.2.1. Who is an Elderly?

A person is elderly if he/she is 60 years of age or older. Becoming elderly is a process of change which starts to occur after physical maturity has been reached in one’s life. This process is called Senescence. It means to say that an elderly one is a person who completed physical maturity and started the process of degeneration. “Senescence affects different people of different rates. Also the rates of change in various body process affected by aging vary among people”.  

The word ‘elder’ may again refer to experience, wisdom and authority as well as specific leadership roles. As experience is considered as the best way of having knowledge and wisdom, elders are counted as the most qualified to hold places of leadership. So they are revered. In all religions and cultures, the basic meaning of the term elderly is ‘old age’. Casually and generally speaking, a grown up person is the elder one in its comparative and relative sense. They are considered as the head of the family, clan or society all over the world. Strictly speaking those who are 60 and above are considered as old, elderly or even being called as senior citizens.

Classification and division are done by all levels of studies and investigations aiming at the best result and perfection of the Endeavour and similarly for the betterment of the intendend beneficiaries of the work. The aging population and their care is a challenging and at the same time a serious responsibility of the society. “The demographers categorise the elderly into four: young old (60-69 years), old (70-79 years), oldest old (80-89 years), and the extreme old (90+years)”\(^3\) This way of divisioning help the Geriatricans, who handle the age related health problems to categorise and give better treatment and care to the

---

\(^3\) http://www.kolds, aing pop, 3 June 2008.
elderly. In the same way it is an aid to the social workers and spiritual animators of the aged. The extension of classification is being done even in an informal way on health basis as bedridden elderly, depressed elderly, dementia elderly, physically handicapped elderly and many more.\textsuperscript{4} In this thesis the researcher follows the age based classification.

1.2.2. The Demography of the Elderly

Aging which is an inescapable reality of human existence on the planet earth plays a crucial role in the global demographic transition. People of 60 years and above comprise a steadily increasing proportion of the world population. This poses a complex challenge to many of the current structures within the society. It reminds the world of the need of concern and improved support systems for the growing numbers of frail elderly people.

The steady increase in the number of the aging elderly is seen in both developed and developing countries. However, this is a myth, as “about 60% of the 580 million older people in the world live in developed countries and by 2020 this value will increase to 70% of the

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
total older population”\textsuperscript{5}. U.S based Bureau of Census brings out the data of the elderly as follows. They expect a moderate increase in the elderly population until 2010, a rapid increase for the next 20 years to 2030 and then a return to a moderate increase between 2030 and 2050. In the early period, the elderly population is expected to increase by 17\% from 33.5 million in 1995 to 39.4 million in 2010. In the next period, 2010 to 2030 the population aged 60 and over is expected to grow by 75\% to over 69 million. During the 2030 to 2050 period, the growth rate is projected to increase 14 percent, and the number of elderly is expected to increase to about 79 million.\textsuperscript{6} According to 1991 census, there were 56.88 million elderly (60+) in India representing 6.8 percent of the country’s total population. This become 72 million in 2001 and is expected to grow to 137 million by 2021. According to the census of “July 2008 the total population is 1,147,995,898”, that is about 115 million.\textsuperscript{7}

The demography of the elderly is more comprehensible if one looks into the emerging aging scenario in Kerala alone in a particular

\textsuperscript{5} http://www.creativecommons.org, 16 June 2008.
\textsuperscript{7} http://www.bet.org/India at a glance.asp, July, 2008.
way. According to the findings of the Kerala Migration Study, “Kerala’s total population was 31.4 million with an annual growth rate of 1.1 percent according to 1998 census.”\textsuperscript{8} The census of the year 2001 put Kerala’s total population at 31,841,374 which includes 15,468,614 males and 16,372,760 females. This is around 32 million people. Kerala contains 3 percent of the country’s total population.\textsuperscript{9} According to 1991 census the number of elderly aged 60 and above was just one million which increased to 2.6 million in 1991 (160\% increase). According to the latest census of the year 2001, the total population of the elderly in Kerala reached the level of 4.0 million, that is 10.8\% of the total population of the Kerala State.\textsuperscript{10} The Kerala Old Age Home and Helpage India survey conducted in 1999, projects the “number of elderly in Kerala is expected to reach 7.2 million by 2021 (a 180 percent increase) and 11.9 million in 2051 (a 65 percent increase). The change of proportion of elderly in Kerala was around 9 percent in 1991, but it is expected to increase to 20 percent in 2021 and 37 percent in 2051.”\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{8}  http://www.kolds.Agingpop, 3 June 2008.
\textsuperscript{9}  http://www.jstor.org/pss/4408564.
\textsuperscript{10}  http://www.unescap.org/ESID/psis/1993/U8nidi.htm.
\textsuperscript{11}  http://www.global aging/org/health, world,2006pp.htm
Categorically putting Kerala’s elderly population, sociologists expect the number of ‘old old’ (70+) will reach 3.2 million by 2021 and 7.4 million by 2051; based on 1991 census they were merely one million. Their proportion, which was just 2 percent in 1961, doubled in 1991 and will again double in 2021, reaching 23 percent in 2051.

The ‘Oldest old’ (80+) in Kerala was just 2,90,000 in 1991 and is expected to increase to one million in 2021 and further to 3.3 million by 2051. This proportion was just one percent in 1991, and this is expected to increase to 3 percent in 2021 and further to 10 percent in 2051.12

The enormous growth in the number of the ‘Oldest old’ is a worldwide phenomenon and is of greater public concern. By 2010, this population is expected to grow by 56 percent as compared growth of 13 percent for the population aged 60-80. This means that a larger portion of the elderly will be over age 80. In subsequent decades, especially between 2030 and 2050, the 80 and over a group will grow sharply as the baby rooms cohorts age. By 2010, it will be 5.7 million, and 8.5 million in 2030 and 18.2 million in 2050. This means that between 2030 and 2050 the growth rate will be 116 percent and the

anticipated total and cumulative expected growth running from 1995 to 2050 is 400 percent.

The Bureau of Economics and Statistics of The Government of Kerala shows the sex ratio as follows. The sex ratio of male elderly between the years 1960-65 was 56.2 where as female elderly was 60.00. During 2000-2005 the male and the female elderly ratio became 74.4 against 78.1%. The anticipated sex ratio in Kerala during 2020-2025 is 76.9 against 79.8%. The sex ratio in Kerala is unique in the country. It is the only state in India were females are more than males. The world of the very old (70+) will be the world of women in Kerala.¹³

The Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, New York, brings the following details about the elderly sex ratio of India at large. During 1960-65 the male elderly ratio was 44.5 against 43.00, whereas during 2000-05 it became 61.00 against 60.3 respectively. The anticipated account says an amazing idea that during 2020-25 male elderly will be 67.2 against 68.6 female elderly. In the Kerala context, the male ratio is invariably higher than their female counterpart, whereas in India as a whole, at present male elderly is

dominating but in the nearest future the female group will surpass the number of male elderly wing.

“More than half of the elderly population were married and among those who were widowed, 64 percent were women compared to 19 percent of men. Among the old (70 years and above) 80 percent were widowed compared to 27 percent widowers. Men are found to be economically more active than women. The data on old age dependency ratio is slowly increasing in both Rural and Urban areas. Both for men and women, this figure is higher in rural areas when compared with that of urban areas.”14

Kerala seems to be aging fast with people who have crossed sixty years forming fifteen percent of the total population. Alapuzha district has the highest old age population in the state followed by Ernakulam, Kottayam, Thirssur and Thiruvananthapuram. The lowest is in Kozhikode and Wayanad districts. According to State Economic Review, the state’s elderly population has steadily increased from 5.9% in 1961 on account of parameters like higher life expectancy and better health care facility.

Table 1.1

Showing the Old Age Dependency in Kerala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Age dependency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>13.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>15.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>18.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: State Economic Review)

Illustration 1.1

A Pie Diagram Showing the Old Age Dependency in Kerala
Table 1.2

Showing the 60+ Population in Kerala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population of Age 60+ in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>5.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>6.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>8.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>10.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>13.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illustration 1.2

A Bar Graph Showing the 60 + Population in Kerala
Why is the number of the elderly increasing steadily even in the coming decades? The high fertility and birth rate during the first half of the 20th century is the general answer to that question. It is very explicit that in the last generation there were large families with many children. The then existed joint family system supported large families. The declining fertility in the immediate past and the prospect of continuing low fertility up to 2030 or beyond are other reasons for the growing number of the elderly.

As health care facilities improve in countries, life expectancy and consequently the number of elderly in the population increases. It caused sharp decline in the mortality of the adult and old ages in the recent past and the trend of continuing low mortality will go on up to 2030. This is the trend which has been seen in both developed and developing countries.

1.3 Why is old age a threat?

Anouk Aimae, the great sociologist, remarked, “one can only perceive the real beauty in a person as they get old”15. Though the world appreciates and upholds ideologically the dignity and wisdom of

the old, people are afraid to step into the category of 'old'. People as a whole regardless of religion, nation or language practically have taken the term 'old age' negatively. There are lots of stereotyped notions about aging and elderly existing in all segments of the population. Many of the notions are myths. Then the aging are generally thought to be less intelligent, though the fact is different; they are slow to learn, more rigid, riskier as employees, burdensome and so useless. The incapability of fulfilling one's own need and hence the dependency on others as people getting aged is not something pleasing for both the dependent and the caregiver. There are lots of age related problems physical, mental, social etc., that accompany the old age. Pain and suffering, negligence and abandonment, unwantedness and loneliness etc. are seen as a common reality.

The elderlies are given low status in the society. Ageism is like sexism or racism because it involves discrimination and prejudice against all members of this particular social category. The prejudice against the elderly is shown in every day language by the use of the term that no racial or ethnic group would ever accept: "old buzzard", "old biddy", "pura vasthu", "scrap" etc. The population that has the above mentioned myths and watches the situation and the experience
of the elderly will naturally be frightened to enter into the category of ‘old age’. But the fact is that "age need not be a barrier to make major contributions. George Bernard Shaw wrote a play entitled Farfetched Fables at the age of 93. Pablo Piccaso was producing engravings and drawings at the age of 90. Micheal Angelo designed the church of Santa Maria Degli Angeli when he was 88."16

Socrates remarked that "regrets and complaints are characters and tempers of personality for he who is calm and happy nature will hardly feel the pressure of age but who has opposite disposition, youth and age are equally a burden. 17 Old age is a threat because there are many reasons:

1.3.1. Social Reasons

Man is a social being. The environment in the society makes him what he is. His attitudes are formed in the society. His relationship with fellow being is based on these attitudes. There are lots of prejudices that exist in the society about the elderly. These are mainly

based on myths which have been prevailing from time immemorial. Time won't show any partiality to anyone and it won't wait for anyone. One who now looks at the elderly through myths will be elderly tomorrow. The myths about the elderly are the base of the sociological reason that people fear the old age.

The Indian social system guaranteed safety and security to the people of all walks of life. All were cared for, revered and supported by the family and society. One of the main systems that existed was the joint family system which was 'structurally and functionally joint consisting of three or more nuclear families living together in the same household, pooling the income of all members, participating in all activities of the household and sharing the income according to the need of each. The elderlies were cared for and respected. They had a high status in the family.'

The rapid move to industrialisation and hence urbanisation crumbled the joint family system down. Neucrinal family system emerged. “Neucrinal family is a family unit consisting of parents and

---

their dependent children." Elderlies were placed out from the nuclear families. One of the main consequences of this separation is a loss of the 'elderly power' over the younger generation. Again it caused to increase insecurity and loneliness among the geriatric population. Some are thrown out to the street while others are dumped in to old age homes, still some are abandoned and left alone in the families unattended.

Migration is another social impact of industrialisation and globalization. When the nuclear families migrate to the urban areas, they take their elderly parents to the cities. Some are forced to migrate to far away towns and cities, even to foreign countries where they do not know the language, culture and people of the place. When the new generation migrates to cities in search of greener pastures, the elderly infact are leaving their comfort zones. They feel loneliness and abandonment and living among strangers they feel like fish out of water. Plucking out from the ground where they were planted and grown leaving the kin and kith back, abandoning all the emotionally attached matters is both painful and fearful to the elderly.

1.3.2 Cultural Reasons

As society and its systems changes, the culture of the family also changes. Increasing influence of mass media shapes the attitudes, values arid belief systems of the people. “Absence of clear-cut models, changes in the status, role and employment of women, loose kinship networks and decrease in family and community cohesiveness, the gap between the role of men and women both inside and outside family are the few reasons of cultural changes in the family and in the society”.20

During the pre-industrial period, the younger generation sought to get knowledge and wisdom from the elderly members of the family. As values and cultures changed, the wisdom of the elderly became irrelevant. Technological developments brought the whole world into the individual rooms of everyone, hence the person who is at the next door became a stranger. “The emphasis on quick money and shooter benefits have started to dehumanise and destabilize Indian society including family life. Consequently a decrease in moral values and increase in greediness, consumerism and a sense of false vanity have penetrated into the ethos of Indian family culture. Long term

commitment, self sacrifice attitude, service to the partner, suffering for others and other altruistic values are thrown away and people embrace values of instant pleasure and hedonistic life style.”

Forgetting the culture of mutual understanding and cooperation, unity in diversity, Matha-Pita- Guru - Daivam, Adhithi Devo Bhava, man became very much individualistic. Individualism can be defined as a “personality traits, attitude or behaviour that reflect personal independence, freedom from the attitudes and opinion of others”. This can make a person non cooperative and uncaring. This kind of growing individualism is a danger to the weaker sections of the society.

Another threat to the elderly is the growing 'disposable culture' of the society, 'use and throw' is the trade mark of the modern easy way of life. Since everyone seeks his/her own-comfort he/she makes use of the other for self satisfaction and extend the culture of ‘use and throw’ to the fellow beings too. The helpless elderly are the victims of this culture.

Changing habits are another cultural threat to the elderly. Due to the influence of western life style, almost all of the habits of the Indian

---

21. Ibid., p.64.

and the whole Asian population are changing. The Indian elderly who are very much true to their nature have to adjust and adapt the new food, dress, recreation and relaxation habits. The very much sophisticated formalities in interpersonal relationship, the so called modern style of behaviours like table manners and formalities and etiquettes are rather insignificant for the elderly and hence they cause to break up the relationship in the family. It makes the elderly feel that they are outdated and even a nuisance today. It leads them to inferiority complex and finally sick both physically and mentally.

1.3.3 Religious Reasons

As long as all religions in the world respect and uphold the dignity of the elderly, old age will never be a threat to them. Not only it is not a threat rather it serves the need of the elderly citizens. Religion, its practices and other associated activities are very much common among the old citizens. Most older persons report that religion help them to cope with or adapt to losses or difficulties. Religious beliefs and practices are the weapons for the elderly in times of loneliness; and the religious experiences they stored are the power house for them in times of pains and struggling. While other sources of well being and hope decline, religion may become more vital for the old citizens.
Certain religious beliefs engender peacefulness, religious rituals, ease anxiety and the mere belief that religion is health enhancing enhances health. Religious involvement promotes healing and reduce the negative impact of life stressors.

As people get old, they rely on others for the fulfillment of their needs. People who have been practising religion will be unable to practise them anymore. So the performance of religious obligations like fasting, abstinence and penance and participations in other religious activities will be a difficult task for them. These unaccomplished religious obligations bring guilt feeling and frustration in them.

Death is a personal issue which each person must confront in his or her life one day. “The fear of death is in reality two things: a realistic concern that someday we shall cease to be and secondly, a variety of other anxieties which parade under the panoply of the death fear” 23

In almost all religious teachings, life goes on even after death. Though death is not a religious reason, the thoughts about life after

---

death brings panic to most of the elderly. This panic is accompanied by the fear of punishment of hell. This can even heap up the mental as well as physical agonies.

Superstitious beliefs and myths are other religion related factors that make people fear old age. Though religion teaches old age is a blessing, a vast majority of the people believe that sufferings accompanied by old age is a curse or the result of their sins. These kinds of thoughts resist to accept the realities of life and can delay the healing and recovery, and make life more painful. Naturally, people do not want to be the part of this stage of life.

Another reason that related to religion is the change / conversion to another faith / religion by the relatives of the elderly. When siblings change their religious faith, they force the elderly too to join them. This is one of the many reasons why old people leave their own homes and seek shelter in old age homes. A change of any kind is a hard task for them in the evening of their life. These events or circumstances threaten the strength and stability of the spirituality of the old people.

1.4 The Importance of the Study

Elderlies are the treasures of the family and the society. In the Indian society the cultural values and the traditional practices
emphasize that the elderly members of the family be treated with honour and respect. They enjoy their life living with their children and grand children by telling them stories and by playing with them. The family system that had an extended structure and the relationship between the old and the young was more stable.

But the fast changing situation, culture, disruption of families, developments in different areas upto a certain extent are the part of global development and therefore they raised the standard of life of the people. Nevertheless it influenced the society negatively also. Blind adaptations of the western culture, values and liberalism demoralized the society and the family became the most affected unit of the society and within the family, the aged, the sick and the weak people became the victims of these influences. When the able citizens started to fly away from their nest, the dependent persons were left abandoned or left at the mercy of the paid caretakers.

The relevance of this study is very clear. The fast changes that take place in the society do not consider the old and they become a suffering group in the society. Crime and abuses, torture both physical and mental are daily events. To love and to be loved are the irresistible urges of the elderly. Ever since the culture of the death is in its
progress, today the old are afraid to tell the children about their sickness. In a disposable culture elderly parents are thrown out since they are ‘unproductive’ and ‘useless’. When the present generation is tirelessly running to be more productive and competitive, these unfortunate ones are abandoned. So in this context this kind of study is important.

The transition from the traditional or pre-industrial society to modern society has changed the social context of adjustment of the aged. The contributions of science and technology, modern medicines, health care institutions have altered the demographic structure of the society. The population of the aged have risen rapidly. The urbanization, industrialization and nuclear family system have made the conditions of the aged more miserable. Now they face lots of problems. This issue is taking a serious turn and requires serious attention. This prompted the researcher to analyse the various problems faced by the aged people, and their institutional living.

The increase in the number of the aged persons assumes importance as their needs and their problems are much different from those of the young or the adults. Their problems are much more serious
in our country due to the inadequacy of social security measures for them.

Social workers should be aware of the problems faced by these senior citizens. As a priest and social worker, the researcher felt that the need for the care of this section is to be given higher priority. The study of their problems would help to plan effective intervention strategies for the same.

1.5 Care and Support for the Aged

Aging is not a disease but a normal phase of life. It is also most gratifying and meaningful time of one's life. It is a continuous race and the most fascinating culmination of life. But it is a fact that very few succeed in it. The race in itself is often coupled with sickness, sorrow, despair and lots of adversities and multitude of problems. There are certainly a few who enjoy the love and care of their loved ones. But the majority of the aged have no one to care for. It is in this context the importance of Old Age Homes come into prominence.

In India as per the Directory of the Old Age Homes there are 728 Old Age Homes. A total of 278 Old Age Homes all over the country are available for the sick and 101 homes are exclusively for women. Kerala state has 510 Old Age Homes which is the highest of
all the states of India. Most of these homes are run by charitable societies, trusts and voluntary agencies. The following table shows district wise number of old age homes in Kerala State.

### 1.5.1 Old Age Homes in Kerala

#### Table 1.3

**Showing Number of Old Age Homes in Kerala**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thiruvananthapuram</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kollam</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alappuzha</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathanamthitta</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kottayam</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idukki</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trissur</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palackad</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malappuram</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kozhikkodu</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayanad</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kannur</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasargoddu</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>510</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Deepika, 17th July 2014, Page 6)
This illustration shows District wise number of old age homes in Kerala State in India. The highest number is in Eranakulam District which is 114 and the lowest is in Malappuram District only 6 in number.

1.5.2 Government Support for the Aged

Article 41 of the Directive Principles of state policy in the Indian Constitution specifies that the state shall, within the limits of economic capacity, provide for assistance to the elderly. The National
Policy on Older Persons, announced by the government of India mandates state support for the elderly with regard to health care, shelter and welfare. Social security has been made the concurrent responsibility of the Central and State Governments. The Policy recognizes that older persons could render useful services in the family and in the society. For solving the problem of providing housing for the elderly, Government proposes to encourage construction and maintenance of Old Age Homes. However, family is recognized as the main provider of old age support not only in the area of housing but also in other areas which are crucial to aged people.

The Government of India has started giving fare concessions to old age people in all modes of travel, concessions in entrance fees, preference in reservation of seats / berths in trains, priority in telephone and gas connections, and relief in income tax. The Government declared the year 2000 as the National Year and October 1st of every year as the ‘Day of the Aged’ to high-light the issues relating to the care and support to the elderly people.

1.5.3 Non-Governmental Efforts to Provide Care for the Aged

Government alone cannot take care of the needs of the old people. The private sector consisting of the voluntary agencies and
families must play an important role in this regard. The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) sector constitute very important affordable services to take care of the elderly persons. NGO’s run Old Age Homes and Day Care Centers where old aged persons are admitted either freely or for a specified charge. Government of India envisages to promote the NGO sector in a big way.

1.5.4 The Role of the Catholic Church

Catholic social welfare is not a new development, since it only means the carrying out of the teachings and messages of Christian charity. No one doubts that the Church has had from her early existence the duty to care not only for the spiritual but for man’s physical needs also. Before the Christian era, the Greeks, the Romans and others gave alms, indeed, but their gifts were limited and motives mostly selfish. The Jews were charitable, but their charity was, to some extent at least, nationalistic. Christ made charity a positive and outstanding command for salvation and insisted on its universality. The neighbour whom he commanded us to serve is any one in distress, as the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us, not merely friends and those whom he chooses to assist. History gives us ample proof of how earnestly the Church has always tried to carry out this command.
Church has directed her mission and pastoral care to elderly people in the most varied circumstances "Christian Carita" has embraced their needs. It has given rise to the most varied forms of apostolate for the service of elderly people, thanks to the initiative and concern of religious congregations and lay associations.

The Church's teachings far from considering the question as a mere problem of assistance are fostering the intrinsic value of persons of all ages. She must therefore re-examine her apostolate of elderly people.24

The duty of the Church is to announce to older people the Good News of Jesus, who revealed himself to them as he manifested himself to Simeon and Anna. Jesus comforts them with his presence. He causes their hearts to rejoice at the fulfillment of hopes and promises that they kept alive in their hearts (Lk. 2:25-28).

It is true that the elderly have time for prayer, meditation and growth in the interior life. Often they are not encouraged to develop their spiritual potential and their spiritual needs, and their problems are

not understood well. Proper and sound entertainment can easily become a substitute for meeting these needs.25

The Pontifical Council for the Family recommends that the spirituality of the elderly receives greater attention and that creative projects be prepared to help them grow in grace and inner peace.

The same Council invites the various ecclesial communities to encourage the systematically organized pastoral care of the "third age." This should be integrated and functionally linked with organizations for the pastoral care of the family, and working relations should be established with other pastoral areas, for example, social welfare, health care workers, etc.26

Pope John Paul II advocates: the pastoral activity of the Church must help everyone to discover and to make good use of the role of the elderly within the civil and ecclesial community, in particular, within the family. In fact, the life of the aging helps to clarify a scale of human values; it shows the continuity of generations and marvelously demonstrates the interdependence of God's people. The elderly often have the charisma to bridge generation gaps before they are made.

26. Ibid., p.931
How many children have found understanding and love in the eyes and words of the aging? And how many old people have willingly subscribe to the inspired word that the “crown of the aged is their children's children”.27

The Church is the Body of Christ. In the unity of the Body of Christ there is unconditional acceptance, love and care for all, with special attention to those who are old, sick and suffering because of various psychological, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual problems. "If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain. And if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy (1 Cor. 2:26). A dominant characteristic of Jesus’ preaching of the Kingdom of God and his ministry was his special love and concern for everyone especially the sick and the old, discriminated and stigmatized people. So it is the duty of the Church to give older people the way to experience Christ.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Old age is considered as the second childhood which demands care and affection. “It is often the rebirth or reincarnation of the child. They have the child like in nature so that they do need some type of

27. John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, No.27, Carmel International Publishing House, Trivandrum, p.1105
service” It is the last stage of life from which none can escape. Everyone has to go through this stage. It is the stage when we can't help ourselves. We need others’ help and support. We have to depend on others economically and in all other matters of life. If old people don't get such help and support, they become depressed, tense and lose their health just because of their loneliness. As youngsters it is our duty to take adequate measures to help and support the elderly people of our society.

Due to the modern phenomena like urbanisation, modernization and Westernisation the young people have no time to look after the elders. When health, status, loneliness, migration of children, strained family relations or other conditions make it impossible for the senior citizens to live in their own homes, they are forced to look forward to a shelter, where they can have security, care, food and companionship. It is in such a context that institutions for the care of senior citizens come into existence. In such a context a detailed study about the aging issues and institutional care of senior citizens is very relevant. Further, aging being an important demographic issue that has emerged recently, it is

very important and urgent need to address and to generate discussion on aging and to promote awareness of the issues at micro and macro levels.

Besides, as a parish priest, the researcher has seen and encountered very many old people who are suffering from a number of problems. Further, the parish under his charge runs an Old Age Home. There are altogether twentyseven inmates. They face many problems and sufferings. Hence, it is the need of the hour to understand and study the problems and welfare of senior citizens. So this study is intended to analyse the issues of elderly people particularly in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry and the welfare measures carried out by the Archdiocese for the aged.

1.7. Objectives of the Study

The increase in the number of aged persons assumes importance as their needs and their problems are much different from there of the young or the adult persons. Aged persons will have to adjust to the new kind of familial and social situation. This adjustment is a kind of downward shift unlike the change from childhood to adulthood. Hence this study is designed to achieve the following objectives.
a. General Objective

To study ‘The Aging Issues of Senior Citizens – The Welfare Measures taken by the Changanacherry Archdiocese Through Old Age Homes’.

The main objective of the study is, thus, to understand and analyse the aging issues of senior citizens and the contributions of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry through Old Age Homes.

b. Specific Objectives

1. To understand the concept of aging, the characteristics of the aged and the emerging problems encountered by them.

2. To study the general problems and socio-economic and demographic conditions of the aged;

3. To understand the perception of the elderly with regard to the existing old age home services and the extent of their utilization;

4. To understand the life pattern of the institution, analyse the coping mechanism of the aged in facing various problems.

5. To analyse the attitude of the aged towards family and society and vice versa;
6. To study the life satisfaction of the aged in the old age homes;

7. To ascertain the role of voluntary organizations in providing services to the aged in need;

8. To get their views on improving the health care facilities in the community and their utilization of these services;

9. To study the facilities and welfare measures carried out for the aged in the old age homes;

10. To investigate the life of those aged persons who are living in the Old Age Homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry focusing on the circumstances, in its various aspects that made the elderly to join the old age homes and to examine the present economic and health profile, friendship and familial contacts etc of the aged in the Old Age Homes;

11. To recommend practical measures and uphold modification of the existing measures.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The onset of senescence heralds a new phase in the life of an individual and is usually associated with a number of physical, physiological, economic, familial, sociological and psychological
changes. Individual instances though they may differ depending upon their state of health, by and large, their active participation diminishes in social life with advancing age. The role and status of the senior citizens within the family and their interpersonal relations with the family members also undergo certain modifications. It is, therefore, essential to understand the socio-economic profile of the aged in order to delineate the problem areas.

It is an accepted fact that in the past adoring the grey headed people was one of the most valued features of Indian culture. Now if most of the elders are not in a respectable position in their families, we have to take into account the various reasons for that. Declining of joint families and establishment of nuclear families are important factors.

In the nuclear family there will not be sufficient accommodation facility. Moreover there will be nobody to care for the old pas and mas because both the son and the daughter-in-law are employed. They have to earn for their own family and secure their life itself, so they are busily engaged. Now a days most of the parents are suffering from loneliness because of their children are working abroad. They are forced to find out a shelter. While they live in the old age homes it is
important to understand the nature and the extent of the problems faced by them in the modern society and in the old age homes. This prompted the researcher to know the various problems faced by the elderly.

The people who enter an institution voluntarily will be happier and have a strong motivation to adjust to the institutional life. Living a number of people of almost their own age helps them to overcome loneliness which is one of the most acute problems of old age. Institutional services help to protect the weak and the aged from exploitation and cruelties of the external world. The nation acknowledges that the state of the present society is the result of their sweat and hardwork. So it is our duty to provide them with adequate shelter and support.

There are various types of Old Age Homes in India. Government and private institutions are common. Some of the private establishments are charitable while the others are payable. In such a situation a study about the aging issues of the senior citizens in the old age homes in the Changanacherry Archdiocese was felt to be necessary and as members of our society, it is our duty to solve their problems and to help them. Further, it is expected that torching the problems of
the aged will help social workers to take actions to solve the problems easily and give them more security in the society.

This study leads to pay our attention to the true aspects of old age. The youngsters can take up adequate measures for solving their problems. Our presence and works can lift up their spirit when they are feeling low and everything seems hopeless, and can give courage, and inspire hope when lost. It may provide us some insight towards framing an appropriate policy or suggestions to accommodate the needs of the aged people.

1.9 The Scope of the Study

The study of gerontology has not as yet been taken up in a big way by the social scientists in India. Demographers and social scientists have started examining and economic implications of population aging and the problems faced by the elderly only from 1960's. The present study is intened to analyze the social, psychological, economic and health problems of the elderly living in the old age homes with special reference to those in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry.
Though some of the studies have touched upon the health issues of the elderly, no comprehensive study has been attempted so far in India to understand the aging issues of senior citizens who live in the old age homes in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry. Furthermore, a specific study on this topic is required to assist policy planners and service providers. Hence the scope of the study is limited to old age homes in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry to assess the problems of the aged.

As mentioned above, the present study has been undertaken to study the problems of the elderly living in the old age homes in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry and to assess the welfare measures taken by them. Hence the study is contemporary in nature and the researcher is hopeful that the study will be able to throw some light on the present status of the elderly in the old age homes in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry.

1.10 Overview of the Research Study

The data of the study were obtained from different senior citizens in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry who live in the old age homes. In order to understand their perceptions of old age in the
comparative frame work of their previous and present living arrangements the researcher used different methods and tools.

1.10.1 Study Design

Survey plays an important role in understanding the problems which the society faces. It is the way of obtaining description of human behaviour drawn from more people than direct observation allows. In survey method researchers make use of questions which are carefully formulated to get information regarding the problems under enquiry. It is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, practices that prevail, attitudes of people or friends that are developing. It gathers data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. Surveys depend on direct contact with those persons for sample of subject whose behaviour, attitudes, character etc relevant for a specific field of investigation. It is a group activity.

In order to study the problems of senior citizens, particularly in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry, the researcher conducted a survey. These data help us to understand their problems and needs and also to plan those things which could be done to improve their standard of living.
Here, the researcher employed an *ex post facto design*. It combined correlation and causal – comparative approaches. Information about old age problems were obtained using the questionnaire designed by the researcher.

### 1.10.2 Research Questions

The study of the main topics raised may questions to be answered. The primary research questions for this study are given below:

- What is aging and what are the characteristics of the elderly?
- What are the psychological and sociological issues that come with age?
- Are the senior citizens in the old age homes happy?
- What are the welfare measures taken by the Changanacherry Archdiocese through old age homes?
- What are the opinions of inmates about old age homes?
- Are the inmates in these institutions satisfied?
- What are the facilities and programmes carried out for the aged in the old age homes?
1.10.3 Sample Selection

The study was taken up in the Archdiocese Changanacherry and the old age homes run by it. For the purpose of the study, men and women who attained the age of sixty and above were considered to represent old age people.

Since the Archdiocese of Changanacherry is extended into five districts namely of Kottayam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram, it was thought necessary to have representation from each of the districts. From each district a sizeable number of respondents, including women respondents were purposively selected. Thus 20 elderly persons were selected from each districts mentioned above. And 50 elderly men and 50 women elderly were randomly selected from different parishes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry. A semi-structured interview schedule was conducted for institutionalized respondents. The schedules were administered individually through personal interview method.

1.10.4 Instrumentation

To meet the objectives specified, quantitative and qualitative techniques of data collections were used.
i. Quantitative Method

The quantitative method of data collection involved canvassing of two sets of questionnaires specifically designed to achieve the goals set by the study: one for the elderly and the second for their caregivers. This is the most commonly used tool for primary data collection. The questionnaire was pre-tested at Punnavey Old Age Home in Pathanamthitta district and a few questions had to be modified in the light of this pre-testing.

The information collected:

a) The Older Persons

- Details regarding education, marital status, children and their frequency of visit.
- Familial and friendship network.
- Expected and the actual role of the aged.
- Health status.
- Living arrangement.
- Financial support.
- Opinion about the old age homes.
b) Caregivers

- Particulars about siblings, their place of stay and the frequency of their visit.
- Views regarding their spouse support to the aged person.
- Work participation of the aged persons, their familial and friendship network, their expected and actual role, their health and financial assistance the aged receive.

The original questionnaire for the elderly was slightly modified to suit the situation of the elderly who stay in old age homes as well as for their immediate relatives. The modified questionnaire sought the following information:

- Reasons for joining old age home.
- Feelings of the aged on knowing about their having to join old age homes.
- After joining the old age homes, how do they feel about OAH situation?
- Relationship with the other members staying in the old age homes.
- Health, economic participation and financial status.
- Contact with friends and relatives.
- Views regarding return to native homes.
- Opinion about being aged.
- Attitude towards the increase in the number of Old Age Homes.
- Suggestion to improve the situation.

ii. Qualitative Method

The qualitative method used here is Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The old age related issues discussed were those that called for the general perception rather than the individual perception which can be obtained from group discussion.

1.11. The Definition of Terms

- Aging

Aging of an individual is recognized as a multi faceted process of maturation and decline, though including some growth potential over the second half of the adult life span.29

---

There is no definite criterion fixed by biologists to consider a person old. The concept of demographic Old-Age varies from person to person and from country to country. For practical purposes the age of retirement from the active service is taken as the criterion of determining old-age. The Indian Census, for example, has adopted the age of sixty considered for classifying a person as old. Completion of sixty years or "Shashtiabdi Poorthi" is an important milestone in the life of an individual. In the present study the researcher adopted sixty years as the cut off point for considering a person old because this is the age adopted by Government and other agencies.

Geriatrics

"Geriatrics is the branch of medicine that deals with the deceases of old age."\(^{30}\) It is a combination of two greek words namely *Geron* meaning Old Man and *Latrikos* meaning medical treatment. At present there is only one Medical College located in Chennai that has Geriatric Medicine Department at the post graduate level. The Medical Council

Of India is in the process of introducing Geriatric Medicine in about 150 medical Schools.

➢ **Gerontology**

It is the scientific study of all aspects of aging-health, economic, psycho-social and environmental situations. It is derived from Greek words - *Geronto - Geron* meaning old man and *logy* means science. It is related to the problems of the aged in social group.

➢ **Institution and Old Age Home**

They are a group of people united for a purpose with an organization or social system, a material culture and idea-system to carry out this purpose. In this study an institution and old age home are referred to as places, where the elderly are cared for.

➢ **Diocese and Archdiocese**

A diocese is a district under the pastoral care of the bishop with the collaboration of the clergy who gather them through the exposition of the Gospel and the celebration of the Eucharist. An Archdiocese consists of several individual dioceses.

Syro-Malabar Church

The Catholic Church is the communion of individual churches which comprises 21 churches with common liturgy and maintaining their own traditions, but all under the jurisdiction of the Pope. Syro-Malabar Church belongs to the Chaldean tradition established by St. Thomas, one of the 12 The Apostles of Christ.

Forane

A Forane church is the main church in a locality with several parishes within the same locality under its jurisdiction.

Parish

Parish is an area having its own church and clergy and the faithful.

1.12 Outline of the Study

The purpose of this research is to identify and evaluate the problems of the elderly in the Old Age Homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry and the contributions of this Archdiocese for the elderly. The results of this survey will provide useful information for future research and highly useful for the planners, administrators,
social workers etc for action oriented programmes for the care of the elderly.

The data thus collected have been analysed and presented in six chapters. Each topic defers from the other topically but logically related to each other leading to conclusion. Chapter I provides an overview of the problem, the importance of the issue, as well as research questions and purposes surrounding this research. Chapter II gives a literature review. These relevant concepts help to shape this research. Chapter III provides the conceptual framework of the study. Chapter IV highlights the methodology of the research work. Key assumptions, research hypotheses etc are explicated. The research design and development of the survey instrument are discussed. Then the sample and procedures for collecting data are described. Chapter V presents the analysis of the data collected and findings from the research questions and testing the research hypotheses. Chapter VI gives a brief summary of the work and draws conclusions and suggests certain recommendations.

1.13 Conclusion

In the past two decades the social scene, due to a number of factors, had undergone drastic changes with the joint family system
breaking down. Today, nuclear families are the norm. Migration to cities in search of better opportunisms, migrating overseas and breakdown in relationships etc also contribute to isolation of the aged. This brings to the fore the need for social security and protection for the aged who become more dependent on others for even day to day needs.

This study has been conducted for evaluating the life of the elderly people in old age homes, and to find out those factors which prompted them to join the institution. The analysis of social, physical and psychological problems of the aged people of different age groups helps us to understand, the nature and extent of various problems faced by them.

The following chapter provides a detailed discussion of the relevant literature on the subject.