Chapter IV

SOCIAL CONCEPTION OF OLD AGE - CASE STUDY OF PATHANAMTHITTA DISTRICT

Old Age in Present Day Kerala
Policies and Programmes for the Care of the Elderly
Profile of the Study Area—Pathanamthitta
   Socio-economic Profile
   Profile of Communities
   The Nairs and the Nair Service Society (NSS)
   Ezhava and Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP)
   Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
   Syrian Christians
   Catholics
   Orthodox Syrians
   Marthomites
   Muslims, Muslim League, MES. MECA

Old Age and Pathanamthitta
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The factors that contributed changes to the social conception of old age in modern Kerala are: market oriented economy, emergence of industry, urbanization, social security and emergence of the nuclear pattern of family arrangement. The emergence of salaried class has led to the practice of retirement and freedom of occupation. The modern education, migration, upward mobility, rational thinking and reform movements are other contributing factors. These are the variables that change the perception about ageing and the aged. Cowgill and Holmes’ theory of Aging and Modernization proposes that “modernization was equated with industrialization, urbanization and westernization. Out of these, westernization had been analysed as a major factor affecting the fortunes and activities of elderly men and women,” Ellen Rhoads Holmes and Lowell D.Holmes says.1 This chapter is an empirical study of such modern conceptions in a relatively prosperous district, Pathanamthitta. The Pathanamthitta district has become a microcosm of modern Kerala. This district also has all the factors which contribute to the changing conceptions of old age. Therefore the district was selected for field study.

Pathanamthitta district was formed on first November 1982 in the interest of hastening process development\(^2\) and so the impact of modernization has affected every realm of life and society. If we consider the developmental achievements state-wise, it is Kerala that stays ahead compared to the rest of the country. Population ageing (the process by which older individuals constitute a proportionally larger share of the total population\(^3\) because of the decline of both mortality and fertility rate) is one such important by-product of these developmental achievements that affect the life of the people here. Likewise, all other developmental achievements may contribute to the changing conception of the old age today. Before we enter into the discussions of Pathanamthitta, the current discourses of elderly in modern Kerala is briefly described here.

**Old Age in Present Day Kerala**

According to the 1991 census, the number of elderly aged sixty and above was 2.6 million and is expected to reach 7.2 million by 2021. Their proportion was around nine per cent in 1991 but is expected to increase to twenty per cent in 2021. It is also projected that by the year 2025, one in every five person would be a senior citizen.\(^4\) This ‘age explosion’ causes concepts about old age. At one extreme, it diminishes the importance of the


old; at the other, it helps to bring the problems of the aged to the attention of the public. Kerala has the largest number of old age homes (over 200) and possibly ‘home nurses’ in the country, says Dinesh M. Varma. Today, the local news papers take initiative to publish the information and facilities available in old age-homes with their addresses, phone numbers and its mode of admission etc, so that the public can easily have a choice in accordance with the package available. The National policy on older persons is open ended. It promises an array of State interventions-support for financial security, health care, shelter and welfare, special focus on older women, protection against abuse and exploitation and special attention to rural areas. The policy highlights the plight of the vulnerable within the older person’s category such as widows, women in general, the poor, rural residents, the disabled and chronically (including mentally) ill and others. National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) is one of the main features and objectives of the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), that included in the Central Budget for 1995-96. The programme

5 Dinesh M. Varma, “Alone at the end” in The Hindu, Sunday, 12 May, 2002, p.16. The Indian Red Cross society has assigned more than 20,000 nurses to take care of “laid-up” patients.

6 Malayala Manorama News Paper, Sunday, 20 July, 2003 reported that the Chacko Homes of Alwaye is attracting the elder group with all the facilities, freedom and a peaceful life. They promise any facility like phone, A.C, clean and tidy environment, rich and balanced diet, secularism-the freedom of worship, recreational facilities like caroms, cards, facility to do exercises etc.

7 Malayala Manorama News Paper, “Snehathinte Thanalukal”, Sunday, July, 20, 2003. They have reported that Ernakulam is the centre of old age homes with more than one-fourth of the state total is located in the district. It ranges from one which provide free accommodation and food by the government or voluntary organization to the one with five star facility accommodations worth lakhs, run by the private parties.

is in effect from 15 August 1995. The criteria valid for NOAPS is: the applicant shall be 65 years or higher, he/she must be a destitute in the sense of having little or regular means of subsistence from his/her own sources of income or through financial support from family members or other sources. The amount of this pension will be rupees 75 per month.9 National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) is the Central Assistance available for a lump sum family benefit for households below the poverty line on the death of the primary bread winner. The death of such a bread winner should have occurred whilst he or she is in the age group of 18 to 64 years.10 The medical benefits, railway concessions, preferences in bank transactions, seat allotment in the buses, various senior citizen associations like Alzheimer’s association, organization like Help-Age India are some of the programmes of the societal interventions for the care about the elderly. Besides, some Geriatric departments are set up in a few hospitals.11 The new version of old age care, ‘pakal vītu’ (day care centres) seems to be more accepted by the elders and their relatives as a better option for the elders who sit idle at home when other family members are out with their busy schedule. In religious institutions and associations, there are organized sectors, which advise the elderly to make their ‘aged-life’ a

10 Ibid, pp. 7-8.
11 One Geriatric ward is functioning well under the leadership of Dr. P.S. Joseph, of Muttuchira Holy Ghost Hospital, Kottayam, reported by Vaikam Madhu, “Olikkan Odiyodi…..” in Malayala Manorama News paper, Kottayam edition, 1 April, 1999.
productive one by effective involvement and participation in humanitarian works. Even the media and literature of Kerala give good coverage to the topic ‘aged’, with at least one article a week. These articles emphasize age-related issues.

**Policies and Programmes for the Care of the Elderly**

The UN General Assembly in 1991 urged governments to articulate and develop relevant policies for the rights of senior citizens. The National Policy on older persons was announced by the government in 1999, declared as the International Year of older persons by the UN and the year 2000 was declared as the National Year of Older Persons by the Government of India\(^\text{12}\). The National Policy for Older Persons\(^\text{13}\) outlined a vision which requires the state to:

1. Extend support for financial security, health care, shelter, education and welfare of the elderly. (For instance, the senior citizens are exempted from the tax up to the amount of Rs 1.53 lakhs, and the Life Insurance Corporation has introduced the new scheme ‘varista bima yojana’ by providing nine per cent interest to the senior citizens).

2. Provide protection against abuse and exploitation.

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(3) Make available opportunities for developing the potential of older persons.

(4) Provide services which would lead to an improvement in the quality of their lives. For instance, the National Adhar scheme\textsuperscript{14} introduced by the Central Government will help the senior citizens to have awareness about the policies like concession in Railway and flight ticket etc.

The old age social and income security (OASIS)\textsuperscript{15} appointed by the Central Government has recommended the old age pension scheme for the old belonging to the unorganised sector in the near future.

Modern Kerala is also on the path of handling the population explosion of the aged with careful interventions. The major programmes and policies are as follows:

(1) September 21\textsuperscript{st} is celebrated as World Alzheimer’s Day. The year 2006 is the centenary year that the disease Alzheimer is found out. Dementia is what causes Alzheimer, and so extra care is needed to handle the sickness. Out of the forty lakhs of Dementia patients in India, two lakhs are from the small region of Kerala\textsuperscript{16}. Today the


\textsuperscript{15} The OASIS committee has been formed in the year 1999 by the effort of Dr.S.A. Dave, the former chairman of UTI.

Alzheimer’s Association is very common in the town areas where awareness classes, seminars, and debates are being arranged. These are considered as useful programmes for both the patients and the care takers.

(2) The new trend in the nuclear type family arrangement and the tendency to move to the town areas are leaving the elderly in a worse condition, and so a new amendment has made to the Act of 125, 127 and 128, which favours the elderly to claim from the children the money granted for their survival within sixty days of one’s complaint.

(3) The availability of the new website www.seniorindian.com is ready to provide any information regarding the statistics of aged population, the list of all the old age homes throughout India, the things to be remembered while preparing the ‘last will’ (testament) and a model for that, suitable exercises for the elders, prescribed diet, the healthy way of behaviour towards grandchildren, tips to avoid conflicts in joint family set ups, hobbies and entertainments for the elders etc.

The Central Social Welfare Minister, Meera Kumar announced in 2005 that a holistic policy would be implemented for the welfare of the

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18 B.S Warrior, “Vardhakyathinu Kootu Website” in Malayala Manorama, Kottayam, November, 2000. The website has been prepared by the Geriatric specialist Dr. V.S Natarajan and his friends.
aged which ensure shelter, cloth, food and finance to the poor class of the society. Now in 2006, the ministry is making a Bill that is bringing it a moral liability of the children to protect the aged parents. The Bill is allowing making tribunals in which neglected parents can give complaints and can find solution for their sufferings. These tribunals can take legal actions against the irresponsible children, if they fail to give necessary living arrangements to the aged parents. Old age pension will be sanctioned for all those who are below certain income and are of 60+. The Bill is planning to start at least one old age home in each district. The Central pension for the aged (senior citizens) will be raised from rupees seventy-five to two hundred per month. To give emergency help in these matters, it is planning to authorize the Department of state police. Moreover, help lines will also be started for senior citizens. The ministry is trying to ensure moral protection for the nearly eight crores of senior citizens.\textsuperscript{19} In addition to the old age homes of paid and non-paid status, many other arrangements have been made by the State and voluntary organisations. Every organization has the intention of holistic care for the isolated parents. Anyway the social scientists, medical practitioners, the writers, and planners are all aware about ‘aged’ as a social issue and are in trial stage to figure out alternate ways to handle the issue in a sensitive manner.

\textsuperscript{19} Malayala Manorama, 31 August, 2005. 
Malayala Manorama, 18 October, 2006.
In short, we mean that the present day society is much concerned with the theme ‘aged’, and because of it the present century is known as the ‘century of elders’. The present discourse of Modern Kerala gives the view that elder care is one of the main agenda of the State today. The National policy recognizes that older persons, too, are a resource. They render useful services in the family and outside. Opportunities and facilities need to be provided so that they can continue to contribute more effectively to the family, the community and society. At the same time, we are not forgetting the trend of ‘ageism’ coined by Robert Butler (1969)\(^{20}\), “a process of systematic stereotyping or discrimination against people because they are old”. With the increasing youth-oriented trend, ageism (discrimination because they are old) has become a modern discourse that brought out changes in the conception to old age. Both the ageism and the ageist attitude (attitude against the discrimination towards old or attitude against ageism), are the features of modern world. At one dimension, the modern world discriminates the old and at the other, it cares about them. Both of them have their own share to the constitution of subject and to the reflexive formation of conception of old age. This contradictory nature about the concept of old age needs detailed analysis.


*International Encyclopedia of Sociology*, volume 1, New Delhi, S. Chand and Company LTD, 2000, p. 29.
In order to analyse these modern conceptions of old age, the District of Pathanamthitta was selected for field study. Rationale for selecting this district was that Pathanamthitta is a microcosm of Modern Kerala. In this district the impact of modernization has affected every realm of life and society. The old age homes with paid status are emerging in this district. Another interesting thing to be noted is how the District is dotted with palatial houses where one can find only old parents assisted by a home nurse. The reason behind this phenomenon as revealed by the study is that political, economic, social, cultural and religious life in the district has changed and consequently the conception about old age is also rapidly changing. Education, investment in the people, from the beginning of the century has pushed the educated generation out of the district in search of better opportunities. This has led to the emergence of ‘isolated elderly’ in the society. Other factors like demographic transition and socio-economic situation have enabled the researcher to select this district for empirical study of ‘shift in the social conception of old age’. Pathanamthitta district illustrates how the present day society has brought about changes to the concepts of old age from the past. The present chapter is the empirical illustration of the shift in social conception of old age.

Profile of the Study Area- Pathanamthitta

The nature in its true spirit is seen in Pathanamthitta district with evergreen forests, rivers, hills and plains. It is a true tropical diversity
adorned with fertile agriculture land, plantations and forests. The history and the socio-economic profile of the district is as follows.

**Socio- Economic Profile**

The district Pathanamthitta now includes portions of the erstwhile Alappuzha, Idukki and Kollam districts. It is bounded by Alappuzha in the west, Tamil Nadu State in the east, Idukki and Kottayam in the north and Kollam in the south and it covers most of the regions of earlier central Travancore division. According to local account, Pathanamthitta got its name because of Patu(ten) Inam(types) of people who migrated to this Tiţţa (place)first. In another version, it is given that Pathanamthitta is a combination of two words patanam and tiţţa which mean an array of houses on the river side. The total area of the district is 2642 square kilometres, having three natural divisions namely, the low level, the mid land and the high land. A large portion of the high land comprises of Revenue forests. This region is at an altitude ranging from 500 to 1000 metres above mean sea level. In the whole District, moderate climate prevails with temperature ranging from 20 degree centigrade to 39 degree centigrade. The district gets 75 per cent of rain from the south-west monsoon. The district is land-locked district with no coast line or back waters. The district has a total population of 12,31577 as per 2001 census provisional report. The female population is 6,

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21 Information given by an old man of 95 during the interview.
43542 and male population is 5,88035. Out of the total population, rural population comes to 11,08004 and the urban 1, 23573.23

**Table 4.1 Taluk-wise population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvalla</td>
<td>234439</td>
<td>111692</td>
<td>122747</td>
<td>56828</td>
<td>177611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kozhencherry</td>
<td>348742</td>
<td>165402</td>
<td>183340</td>
<td>37802</td>
<td>340940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallappally</td>
<td>137014</td>
<td>65709</td>
<td>71305</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>137014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranni</td>
<td>207782</td>
<td>100654</td>
<td>107128</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>207782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoor</td>
<td>303600</td>
<td>13965</td>
<td>14978</td>
<td>28943</td>
<td>274657</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The density of population is 450, which is low because a large area is under forest cover.24 The district is characterized with the lowest birth rate of 0.5%25 which increases the elderly representation in the population and is also a polio free district. Zero population growth by 2001 A.D. is another aspect, which promotes the growth of the greying generation. This is the only district which was able to break the record of women to men ratio as 1094: 1000, says the census report of 2001. Again the District is in the forefront in practising family planning policies as the population growth is only 3.72% for the last ten years. The Map of the state Kerala is included as fig.4.1 and the district Pathanamthitta as fig.4.2.

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23 Ibid, p. 11.
Figure 4.1: The Map of the State Kerala
Figure 4.2: Pathanamthitta District
The district is covered under two revenue divisions: Adoor and Tiruvalla and is divided into five tāluks: Adoor, Kozhencherry, Ranni, Tiruvalla and Mallappally. The district has three municipalities: Adoor, Tiruvalla and Pathanamthitta and the total area of the district is divided into nine community development blocks. Most of them have agrarian economy. Among the nine blocks, Koipuram block is popularly known as a “Miniature of Gulf Countries” due to the migration of a large number of people to foreign countries, especially in Middle East. The only railway station of the district is at Tiruvalla. The district is famous with the pilgrim centres like Niranam church, Parumala Church, Manjanikara pilgrimage, Sri Vallabha temple, Pandalam temple, Mannady temple, Aranmula temple and the famous Sabarimala Temple etc. The Maramon convention for Christians and Cherukolpuzha convention for Hindus are conducted every year on the banks of River Pampa. Charal Mount which is a famous hill resort, Perumthen water fall, and Anakutty (the Elephant taming centre) are major attractions for the tourists who come to the district.

The district has very fertile soil rich in all plant nutrients. The three major rivers passing through the district are Pampa, Achancovil and Manimala. They promote the agricultural production and hence the economy. The major crops grown in the district are rubber, coconut, paddy, pepper,

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27 *idem.*
tapioca, banana, plantain, cashew, areca nut, ginger etc. Among them pepper is cultivated in 43211 hectares of land, while coconut in 27702, paddy in 13779 and tapioca in 10640 hectares of land. The economic and agro climatic features of the district also favour broiler poultry, piggery, rabbit rearing, goat, sheep, cattle and buffalo rearing, etc. More than 75 per cent of the population is non-vegetarian which offer good scope for these activities. The total number of veterinary institutions is 158. It shows the importance of animal husbandry in the district. Inland fishery development offers good scope in the district. There are two fish breeding centres at Punnivelichira and Polachira under the Fisheries Department\textsuperscript{28}. The people of the district are engaged in various works. Some are main workers, some are marginal workers, but the work participation rate shows that only one-third of the total population is engaged in gainful activities. The total number of male workers including both main and marginal are 276171, while the female workers are 76394, which constitutes the work participation rate as of 29.71\textsuperscript{29}. Among them 82751 are cultivators, 87015 are agricultural labours, 20481 are engaged in live stock, forestry, fishing, hunting and plantation orchards and allied activities; 1757 are in mining and quarrying workers, and 3741 are engaged in manufacturing, processing, servicing, and repairs in household industry. Even though the district is industrially backward, it has 4892 S.S.I units, which provide assistance in various industries which are agro based, forest based, animal

\textsuperscript{28} idem.

husbandry, textiles, chemical, engineering, electronics, minerals, building materials etc. The Food Research Institute in Konny and Food Park in Adoor are the latest agro processed industries of Pathanamthitta. These are meant to improve the economic situation of the District.\textsuperscript{30} About banking--there is a good network of banks and all the reputed banks have branches in the district. The district is famous for large foreign remittance and Tiruvalla, one of its tāluks is famous as the NRI pocket in Kerala.

Social and cultural institutions like public library, reading rooms, anganvādy, bālavādy, adult education centre, community halls, sports clubs, arts clubs, community radio sets, community TV sets, and cinema theatres provide opportunities for community gatherings to the people. The communication facilities like post office, telegraphic office, telephone facilities, public call booths, mobile phone services, internet cafés, computer centres, courier services etc. are booming day by day. The medical institutions like Government and private hospitals, dispensaries, primary health centres, community health centres and family welfare centres provide health care services to the people of the district.

The total literate is 1,054,837\textsuperscript{31} and literacy rate is 95 per cent, which is the second highest among all the districts of the State\textsuperscript{32}. The male

\textsuperscript{30} Malayala Manorama, Kottayam Edition, 10 September, 2005.
\textsuperscript{31} Department of Information and Public Relations, District Handbooks of ..., Op.cit., p.11.
literacy rate is 96.55 and the female’s is 93.29 per cent. The educational level of the district is commendable. There are 721 schools run by the government, and by the private (aided and unaided). The number of students recorded is 5, 94,175 as per the report of the year 1996. It is Pathanamthitta that has the highest proportion of population six years or more and of these having secondary school certificates or higher educational level (33.4%). It is more than a third of its total population and the percentage of unemployed in Pathanamthitta is not the highest in the state, a mere, 12.9 per cent. The educated unemployed category of the State works as a determining factor in the process of migration, say Zachariah et.al. Out of the total estimated 12.68 lakhs unemployed in the whole of Kerala in 1998, 8.94 lakh were among the secondary school certificates or degree holders. Thus, the unemployment problem in Kerala is mainly of the educated category. The unemployment is mainly due to the preference of ‘white collar jobs’ or for better opportunities. This type of ‘unemployment in seeking of better prospects’ is tempting the educated segment to migrate.

Hence, migration has increased largely since 1970s including emigration (external migration) and internal migration. When migration

34 Idem.
37 idem.
rate (migration per 100 household) is considered, Pathanamthitta ranks first with 98.6 per cent, which is higher than the state average (59 per cent). From the point of view of household migration rate (HMR) also, Pathanamthitta is highest with 59.4 per cent\(^{38}\). When compared to the HMR of 59 per cent with MPR (migration prevalence rate) of 99 per cent of Pathanamthitta, the major difference is because many houses have more than one migrant. This means that there are chances that both the husband and wife from the same household might have migrated. This fact is supported statistically by Zachariah *et al.* that the per cent of female emigrants (outside India) are fairly high in Pathanamthitta, 16.6, and female migrants (outside Kerala) are 41.1\(^{39}\). Accordingly, a total of 57.7 per cent of female population are outside Kerala which causes crisis (in terms of traditional role of women as ‘care taker’ to all family members) in caring of older persons.

The religion-wise and community-wise percentage distribution of population in Pathanamthitta shows that 8.6 per cent belongs to SCs/STs, 11% to Nairs, 13.5% to Ezhavas, 48.8% to Syrian Christians and 1.3% to Muslims; the Syrian Christians constitute the largest single community. According to district-wise distribution, it is Pathanamthitta which holds the

\(^{38}\) *Ibid*, p. 121.
\(^{39}\) *Ibid*, p. 93.
largest number of Syrian Christians among the State, i.e., 20.7 per cent.\textsuperscript{40} That is, one-fifth of the Syrian Christians in the State are concentrated in Pathanamthitta district.

George Mathew\textsuperscript{41} says that for almost a century Travancore witnessed a social process in which different communities competed for avenues of education and political participation. He added that the communities perceived such opportunities as modern instruments to achieve status and power. The various groups of people organised as communities to clamour for their rights and progress in the society. This type of communal efforts produces tremendous growth to the society. In Pathanamthitta, a notable variation can be seen in the community-wise distribution of its population i.e. the Syrian Christians constitute almost half of its population. Another observable fact in the district is that all of the old age homes, except one that is run by the government, are running by the Syrian Christian organizations. Most of them have recently attached the ‘paid homes’ as an annexe to the previously started ‘non-paid homes’. This factor too brings our attention to assess the role of various communities in the social responsibility in the care of the aged in the area.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p.91.
\textsuperscript{41} George Mathew, Communal Road to A Secular..., Op.cit., p.20.
Profile of Communities

The major communities of the district are Nairs, Ezhava, Syrian Christians (Catholic, Orthodox and Marthoma), SC/ST and Muslim.

*The Nairs and the Nair Service Society (NSS)*

The Nairs occupied an important position in the social life of Kerala. The status and honour of Nairs came from the fact that they belonged to militia of Travancore attached to the feudal nobles. But their dominant position was shaken when Marthanda Varma started conquering the land under feudal chieftains and led to discontent among the once-dominant community. They could not tolerate the erosion of their status and power\(^{42}\), but were helpless in such a situation. Later Nairs organised on the basis of religious-communal loyalties under the leadership of Mannathu Padmanabha Pillai\(^{43}\) on October 31, 1914. One of the aims of this organisation was their need for educational and economic renaissance of the community in order to compete with other rising community\(^{44}\). Today too, the main agenda of NSS is to strengthen the community effort in order to fight against the contextual conflicts that stand as an objection to the communal growth\(^{45}\). Now it functions as a full fledged organisation with separate wings for the welfare of women (*vanitāsamājam*) and for children.

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\(^{43}\) *Ibid*, p. 56. Before Mannam, came on the scene, Sri.Chattampi Swamikal made major impact to raise voice against the existing social order.


(bālasamājam) for the development of leadership qualities and for organising capacities in order to build strong leaders of their community. The district Pathanamthitta is covered by four unions, namely, Adoor, Ranni, Pathanamthitta and Thiruvalla with its head office at Changanacherry. There are 57 tālk unions all over Kerala and karayōgam comes under this. The Thiruvalla union started in 1940 and has 85 such karayōgams through which the activities are taking place\textsuperscript{46}. They do observe Mannam Jayanthi Aghosam, Mannam Samadhi Dinacharanam, Chattambi Swami Jayanthi Sammelanam and so on. Home loans for Rs.21, 000, the mangalyanidhi (for marriage), and aid for education for poor girls show their involvement in the social cause. They do help the aged and sick for the treatment and medicine as the only aid available to care for the old; but the financially insecure old too are included in the scheme of family relief activities\textsuperscript{47}.

The Nairs are in the process of responding to the immediate need of the society through the establishment of old age homes, for both the lower and upper class\textsuperscript{48}.

\textit{Ezhava and Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP)}

In the Travancore society, which was riddled with the purity-pollution beliefs and practices, the Ezhavas were a polluting caste,

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{idem.}


\textsuperscript{48} Interview with Sukumaran Nair, the Assistant General Secretary of NSS revealed the plan of NSS as they asked the personnel to prepare the project proposal to find out the intensity of the need. The Union have purchased ten acres of land in Pandalam for the project which may be attached with one Ayurveda College and Hospital.
although they constituted the upper layer among the lower castes. Their traditional occupations were agriculture, toddy tapping, coir making and unskilled labour. This state of economically depressed and socially disabled position has prevented them from becoming upward mobile. Dr. Palpu with the help of Sree Narayana Guru has mobilized the Ezhavas to bring about social changes by exhorting them to have access to English education and to secure jobs in the civil services and so on. SNDP was created on May 15, 1903 with the aim of securing the rights of Ezhavas by invoking their community sentiments. Kumaran Asan too encouraged them with his writings to organise themselves as a community, and so SNDP was the first association of its kind for a depressed community. The head office is known as Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam and is located at Quilon. Under the yogam, there are unions; presently 101 unions all over Kerala [only 54 were in 1985 and now Tiruvalla union itself has 56 šākhās (branches) and each union have about 60 šākhās. Pathanamthitta is covered by 4 unions mainly, Tiruvalla, Pathanamthitta, Adoor, and Ranny. Under the šākha comes pōṣaka sanghatanakal, through which the main activities are taking place. The main works are family units, self-finance schemes and the latest, micro-finance scheme. All the schemes are

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52 Interview with K.R.Sadasivan. Secretary of SNDP Union, Tiruvalla.
for the social upliftment of the community through the attainment of economic sufficiency. In the present day context of decline of traditional business such as small scale industry, cashew, coir weaving and toddy-tapping affect the community badly, and so SNDP is engaged in promoting facilities for employment and in encouraging their political participation for its fulfilment\textsuperscript{53}. They do observe the days of chatayāghōṣam, gurusamādhi etc. and enrich their community through the newspaper yōganādham. They have educational aids. However, the available aid for the aged is only for medical treatment.

\textbf{Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes}

The SC/ST categories do not belong to a single religion. Some are Hindus, some are Christians, and some are Muslims. In 1950, after the Indian constitution was adopted, and government appointed a committee to decide who should be listed among backward classes. This committee included Ezhavas, Muslims, Latin Catholics, Backward Christians, Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Castes and tribes as backward classes. But in 1957, Government decided to make some changes in the reservation.\textsuperscript{54} Today, the backward classes who follow Christianity is known as ‘\textit{dalit} Christians’ as they are less eligible for the reservations declared by the government in comparison to their Hindu counterpart. Still

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{54} George Mathew, \textit{Communal Road to...}, \textit{Op. cit.}, p.162.
\end{flushright}
an effort from the Government side (Backward Christian Development Corporation-BCDC) started functioning to secure the rights of Backward Christians. There are many other organisations namely, Akhila Kerala Cheramar Maha Sabha, Akhila Kerala Sambavar Maha Sabha etc., but they do not contribute substantially to their economic growth. The scheduled caste/tribe is aware of the fact that government is responsible to bring them up from their socially, economically and culturally deprived situation. So they relied fully on government, and government do take care of them in many ways. But the welfare of Christian counterpart is the responsibility of the respective church to which they belong.

About 56 castes are included in Scheduled Caste category in Pathanamthitta. The major ones are cēramar (pulaya), sāmbavař (paraya), pānan, vēlan, patiyān, mannān, and kuṟava(sidhanār). The major benefits reserved for SC are lump sum grants, grant for medical treatment, for house construction, for the purchase of land for landless, for inter-caste marriage (between an SC and a General), for marriage ceremony, for self-employment etc. and they are claimed through the help of promoters\(^{55}\) of each Panchayat. Hostel facilities are provided for girls and boys separately for the low income people. The widows have preference in all the schemes, but no specific schemes for the welfare of the aged as such. The

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\(^{55}\) Interview with the promoters Binu Raj and Bindu of Ranny Block Development Office. The block office is covered by 9 panchayats and each panchayat has a promoter who works on honorarium.
Vṛuddhamandiram, Vayalathala is the only Government institution (old age home) that runs to care for the old in the lower income category in Pathanamthitta. All its expenses are met by the aid from government but are insufficient to meet all the expenses of food, clothing, medicine etc with the amount of Rs.450/- per month per head; though it was raised from the rate of Rs.250/- recently. In addition, all the religious institutions do provide facilities to accommodate the lower income groups as a work of charity.

One jilla office and two extension offices are there for the welfare of tribal population of Pathanamthitta. This population is spread among 34 pancāyats of 5 tālukks and 2 municipalities. Mainly four types of tribal are residing in Pathanamthitta area. They are: mala arayan, mala vēṭan, mala pandāram and uḷḷāṭan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Total Family</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mala arayan</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>1210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mala vēṭan</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>1149</td>
<td>1072</td>
<td>2221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mala pandāram</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uḷḷāṭan</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>1304</td>
<td>1225</td>
<td>2529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kochuvēḷan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mutṭaka(from Attapady and staying in Kodumon)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1878</strong></td>
<td><strong>3507</strong></td>
<td><strong>3306</strong></td>
<td><strong>6813</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are 35 promoters who work among 28 colonies for the welfare of the tribal. The beneficiaries are being selected and distributed through the ‘ūr kūṭtams’ with the knowledge of ‘ūr mūpan’ as the leader of the community. In earlier days, the ‘mūpan’ was an elder of the community, but today; they may choose the educated as mūpans, though they may not be elders.

The 50% of the concessions from the government is distributed through the Department of Tribal Welfare and 50 % is through the three-tier Panchayat programme. The major schemes are educational grants, medical grants, pre-metric hostel facilities for boys and girls separately, tribal school, model residential school (MRS), and grants for marriage, housing scheme etc. The schemes for elderly are medical care and allotment of houses if they apply for a separate house rather than sharing with the children.

**Syrian Christians**

Syrian Christians have been viewed as part of the Hindu caste system in many anthropological studies. For Susan Viswanathan, the hierarchical relations between Syrian Christians and Brahmins (the belief as St Thomas converted several Brahmin families to Christianity) make

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them claim higher status than the Nairs, who were next only to the Brahmins. Syrian Christians were traditionally traders and landowners. As a group, they have their own preferences (mostly dictated by caste considerations) for occupation, eating habits and rituals accompanying life cycle ceremonies. This type of fusion with ritual elements of traditional Indian culture is practised more by the original Syrian Christians of Kerala than the Mar Thoma Syrians who were reformed by the Reformation in 1837 led by Abraham Malpan. The study area Pathanamthitta is dominated by the Syrian community with three major denominations, the Catholics, the Orthodox Christians, and the Marthoma Christians.

In Travancore, the Roman Catholics constitute the highest in number followed by Orthodox Christians (split into the Indian Orthodox and Syrian Jacobite) and the Marthoma Christians. Each denomination has been organised under the leadership of a religious authority. This organisational network acts as an effective infrastructure with strong binding. The parish-centred social organization aims at the welfare of its people. The church (institution) is at the centre of the community, where the priest is bestowed with ecclesiastical and social (to some extent)

57 In the Indian censuses the Syrian Christians are defined as those who follow the ‘Syrian Rite’ in their religious services. At present the Syrian Christians of Kerala consists of a number of denominations: The Romo Syrians (those who became Roman Catholics under the Portuguese influence), the Jacobite Syrians, the Orthodox Syrians (who adhere to St. Thomas lineage and the Syrian Orthodox who follow St. Peter’s lineage. The Mar Thoma Syrians and the Evangelical group (the group of Syrians who initiated reformation process under the influence of C.M.S. Missionaries), the Anglican Syrians (those belonging to the C.S.I. and C.N.I) and the Syrians who joined the Pentecostal churches do not deny their Syrian lineage.

authority. Besides worship, parishes work as social organisations with regular meetings and hold a record of its members. Every parish has to maintain registers for marriage, births and deaths, subscription list and regular observance of festivals. Its role as a network on the development of a coherent social system is advantageous to the community\textsuperscript{59}. This type of organizational set up with parishes as the base and the bishops at the apex is the peculiarity of Syrian churches. So these three communities—Catholics, Orthodox Syrians and Marthomites do possess many similarities in the style of their functioning.

\textit{Catholics}

In this study, ‘Catholics’ is meant to denote the people who belong to the Malankara Catholic Church. Christian organisations do work on the ‘calling’ to bear witness to the goodness of God and serve as His humble instruments. They stand for all men including the weak and the sick in the society. To proclaim the message of love through actions among the immediate brotherhood is the aim of Christian Organisations\textsuperscript{60}. Caring for the weaker section of the community, the disabled and the aged (recently) is considered as the duty of the church. For instance, the Catholic nuns do sincere work among the ‘less-cared’ sections of the society through the social welfare activities. The Christians’ ultimate aim is the effective

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, p.35.
witnessing and better functioning to the immediate needs of the society. For instance, the diocese of Tiruvalla of Malankara Catholic Church (St. John’s Cathedral Church⁶¹) has a social service centre (*Bodhana*) with 6 regional offices. In addition to many other facilities of treatment and care, they have two separate institutions for the aged themselves. Abhayabhawan, Tiruvalla is the institution where the poor and abandoned are taken care of. The Catholic institutions for the care of the aged in Pathanamthitta are: Snehasadan, Pallimala, Tiruvalla, Daivaparipalanabhawan, Kunnanthanam, and Snehabhawan, Pathanamthitta.

**Orthodox Syrians**

Before Abraham Malpan and the Protestant missionaries, the Syrian Christians were divided into Romo-catholic Syrians and the Jacobites. They seemed to be superstitious as seen in their prayers mediated through saints and the Virgin Mary, ostentatious feast days and prayers for the dead. Among them the Jacobites were divided in the twentieth century and renamed Orthodox Syrians and Jacobite Syrians. Both are culturally alike, but the differences are in matters relating to ecclesiastical allegiance. In this study, the Jacobites are included with the Orthodox Syrians only. For this reason, the St. Paul’s and St. Peter’s Chapal (Parumala Seminary

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⁶¹ This is the Mother Church and Model Church of the Diocese of Tiruvalla and is the Bishop’s (Issac Mar Cleemis) Official Church. Pushpagiri Medical College is under this Church.
Church\textsuperscript{62} of Orthodox denomination is selected to trace out the organisational network of the church. The data show that the church does a lot of social activities for the welfare of people; like running hospitals and schools. Their various organizations give aid for treatment, education etc. in the name of ‘sabha’ (the Church) among the people of their community. It includes institutions like old age homes for the benefit of their aged like Bethania Bhawan (A Home for Aged Women)\textsuperscript{63}, Tiruvalla, Mar Baselios Gregorios Mercy Home, Vechoochira and Priests’ homes for retired Priests.

\textit{Marthomites}

Generally the organizations have emerged as the product of certain stir among the associations, or we can say that the original form of religion was just the association which is devoid of communal goal. That means the organizations are formed as the fulfilment of common goal or public interest which came in through the process of reformation. The Marthoma, the reformed church, is formed in such a situation where the nucleus of

\textsuperscript{62} The pamphlet, Speech given by the bishop at the meeting soon after the Consecration Ceremony of the newly built Church building, October31, 2000. The church is established in the year 1872 by the Malankara Bishop, Pulikkotil Joseph Mar Divanasios. Today it is an important pilgrim place of Pathanamthitta which attracts many with no class or caste barrier to get comfort in the name of Parumala Kochuthirumeni, the Most.Rev.Geevargheses Mar Gregios. The Church is under the direct control of Seminary Council and the Bishop. The huge money accumulated as offerings by the people of various races are used for the welfare activities of the Orthodox Church at various places.

\textsuperscript{63} Annual Report and Accounts of Bethania Bhawan (A Home for Aged Women), 2003-2004. Bethania Bhawan is a solution to this fast moving world where no one has time to look after or care about the old. They say “Old age is like climbing a mountain the higher you get, the more tired and breathless you become” and so His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Geevargheses Mar Osthathiose has started this home for the lonely aged women of the society at his 80\textsuperscript{th} birthday on December9,1997. Now it is refuge to 16 women.
people longed for removal of scripture less customs and practices, which are not, founded on scripture and so the leadership by Palakunnathu Abraham Malpan of Maramon and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan of Puthupally made it possible. As the birth-place of reformation, the residents of Maramon and its surrounding areas were instilled for the social reforms. So the effort through the churches, for instance, the reformatons took place in the Mar Thoma Chuch, Maramon (established in 1440). It could make credible impacts for the social awakening through establishing institutions like schools and hospitals. The church provides aids for medical and treatment facilities for the poor and needy. It also takes active participation in the working of nearby old age home in Kumbanadu. The Mar Thoma Church actively participates in the establishment of various institutions which give special attention to the old through old age homes of paid as well as non-paid. They are Dharmagirimandiram, Kumbanadu, Carmel Mandiram, Ayroor, Vishrantibhawan, Tiruvalla, Snehabhawan, Tiruvalla, Bethseidabhawan, Mallappally, Asraya, Mallappally, and Pratheekshabhawan, Mylapra.

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64 P.M.Thomas, *Mar Thoma Sabha Directory*, Tiruvalla, The Publication Board of the Mar Thoma Church, 1999, p. 23. Abraham Malpan was a teacher in the Old Seminary and had thus opportunities to come into close personal contact with the missionaries and to share their insights regarding the Christian life and the nature and function of the church. He strove for the abolition of auricular confession, prayers for the dead, in vocation of saints, and unhealthy veneration of sacraments. He also insisted on a high moral standard of conduct for laity and clergy alike.

65 P.M.Thomas, *Mar Thoma Sabha..., Op.cit.*, p. 428. The Maramon Mar Thoma Church is established in the year 1440. There are 5 Lower primary schools, 1 Hospital, 1 High School, 1 Training School, 1 Upper Primary School working under the management of the church.
Muslims, Muslim League, Muslim Educational Society (MES), Muslim Employee’s Cultural Association (MECA)

In Roland E.Miller’s opinion, the Muslim community is a community with strong convictions and a genuine commonness in its approach to God and truth, life and conduct. They possess certain assets in their faith and theology, social pattern and character, religious and secular leadership, which were its resources for dealing with the encounter. This must be the reason that they could overcome the failure of great revolt of 1857 by the powerful involvement of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan as the first Muslim leader who worked hard to bridge the relation between the Muslim and the British and persuaded the Muslims to accept religious and educational reforms. But his view to the establishment of democratic institution in India favouring a Hindu majority prompted many Muslims to form a new political party, Muslim League. In effect, the Muslim League persuades the Muslims to have hostility of British rulers and their principles. Later, the emergence of MES (Muslim Educational Society) for the reforms in the field of education too cannot change the attitude of Muslim towards the basic principles of Islam. So the MES leaders took the stand to work for the betterment of community which is not contrary to Islam. Another

association, Muslim Employee’s Cultural Association (MECA)\textsuperscript{68} raised the voice of Muslims as minorities through their publication, but not making any agitation within the community. In some, the religious associations too cannot influence the residual stability and loyalty of Muslims to Islam. The average māppiḷa attitude is such that new solutions will not be admitted unless they are at least verbally related to Islam\textsuperscript{69}. To the question about communal effort to the handling of old age, most of them have responded that the aged should be cared within the family, with the richest son (or the son who is able to give them a better care), according to the teachings of Khuṟān. To put them in an institution is against Islam and is sin too, when the sons have facilities to provide them better care.

**Old Age and Pathanamthitta**

The number of elderly in Kerala is estimated to be about 3.4 million in 1998. It is the 11 per cent of the total population. When we look into the district-wise distribution, it is Pathanamthitta, which has the highest proportion of elderly, 15.5 per cent. The table 4.3 gives details of the aged population in Kerala.

\textsuperscript{68} A.A.Shafi, Editor, *MECA News*- The voice of the depressed minorities and Backward class communities, Kollam, Muslim Employees Cultural Association, July, 2003 It is established in the year 1989, in which they make the backward community aware of their rights and the way of its handling through the Memorandums.

Table 4.3. District-wise Distribution of the Elderly, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent males</th>
<th>Percent females</th>
<th>Percent total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thiruvananthapuram</td>
<td>161489</td>
<td>183371</td>
<td>344860</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kollam</td>
<td>131685</td>
<td>153843</td>
<td>285528</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathanamthitta</td>
<td>102108</td>
<td>85815</td>
<td>187923</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alappuzha</td>
<td>137261</td>
<td>139850</td>
<td>277111</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kottayam</td>
<td>119930</td>
<td>121711</td>
<td>241641</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idukki</td>
<td>52787</td>
<td>30337</td>
<td>83124</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>178556</td>
<td>196173</td>
<td>374729</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrissur</td>
<td>146330</td>
<td>186238</td>
<td>332568</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palakkad</td>
<td>145518</td>
<td>153455</td>
<td>298973</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malappuram</td>
<td>137339</td>
<td>147001</td>
<td>284340</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kozhikode</td>
<td>139240</td>
<td>160125</td>
<td>299365</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayanad</td>
<td>27373</td>
<td>28024</td>
<td>55397</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kannur</td>
<td>107241</td>
<td>123227</td>
<td>230468</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasargode</td>
<td>45853</td>
<td>55635</td>
<td>101488</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1632710</td>
<td>1764805</td>
<td>3397515</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Not only due to the high number of elderly population, but there are many other related issues that bring the district of Pathanamthitta to be peculiar with age-related issues. They are: it is one of the most advanced districts in the state with respect to demographic transition; and the district that has the highest migration rate in the state\(^\text{70}\). In addition, the socio-economic profile and the profile of communities of Pathanamthitta, made it clear that the district is peculiar of certain current issues of modern interventions like: high literacy rate, high educational level with more than

one-third of the population highly educated, less opportunity for better placements (in terms of job)/upward mobility and likewise the district is moderately high among unemployment status, higher migration rate, higher number of female migrants etc. When we compile all these features together, we can say that the area and its people are modernized to the certain extent that the educated generation is enticed by the process of migration in search of better opportunities. In the modern world, all are looking for better conditions in life. But a rural set up, like the present study area, is inadequate to supply all the modern facilities in the same measure as in the foreign countries. This situation prevents the young generation to return to the country side and stay with the old parents. So the elders get ‘isolated’ without the company of children or grand children. As Helpage India reported, the migration of the young causes definitely a crisis in the care of older persons with lesser chance to emotional support, health care aid and companionship⁷¹. This is a social issue in Pathanamthitta; modernization in the form of migration affects severely the care of the old unlike in the past.

Thus, the intervention of community to care about the immediate need of the isolated parents is also functioning well in the study area. The details given in the profile of communities says how much they respond for the human rights and societal needs. The old age homes, day care centres,

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pension schemes etc, are the programmes organized under the leadership of various communities and by the governmental efforts. The table 4.4 gives some details about the old age homes of Pathanamthitta.

**Table 4.4. Old Age Homes in Pathanamthitta District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of Institution</th>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
<th>Paid/Non-paid</th>
<th>No. of Inmates</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dharmagirimandiram, Kumbanadu</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Marthoma Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carmel Mandiram, Ayroor</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Marthoma Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Snehasadan, Pallimala, Tiruvalla</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Catholic Church,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Daivaparipalanabhawan, Kunnanthanam</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Snehabhawan, Pathanamthitta</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vishranthibhawan, Tiruvalla</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Retiree Home</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Marthoma Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bethel Asramam, Tiruvalla</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Paid Home</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Church of South India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Snehabhawan, Kompady, Tiruvalla</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Paid Home</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Marthoma Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Abhayabhawan, Tiruvalla</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bethanya, Tiruvalla</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Non-paid</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Orthodox Syrian church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bethseidabhawan, Mallappally</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Marthoma Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Asraya, Mallappally</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Marthoma Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Vrudamandiram, Vayalathala</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pratheekshabhawan, Mylapra</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Non Paid</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Marthoma Church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study
In addition to the above listed homes, I have been able to find out two more old age homes, namely, Mar Baselios, Ranny and Christ old age home, Ranny. But further information is not available. SNDP, NSS and Muslim community do not run any old age home yet.

Thus the old age homes in the Pathanamthitta district are functioning both for the higher income as well as for the lower income group. For some, the old age homes are the last resort when the hope is vanishing in life. As Rosow\textsuperscript{72} says, “Changes in technology, the occupational system, urbanisation, residential mobility and the family have all been harmful to old people.” The present day situation of the society affects the elderly badly. The homes to accommodate the destitute elderly have been in existence for a long time. But to accommodate the isolated parents who are the victims of migration as an impact of modernisation is of recent origin in Pathanamthitta district. The situation in Pathanamthitta can be described in the following terms.

Whether it is rural to urban migration or internal migration, the process usually begins with a single person and later by his wife and children leaving his parents behind. Thus, a crisis arises because older parents need emotional support and someone to take them to the doctor, remind them in taking medicines regularly and to listen to their nostalgic

tales. The younger generation may not be expected to come back to the native place and sit idle at home to look after the old. The old as well cannot be expected to leave their hard earned properties and home where they have spent their entire lives and go and live with the children in an alien land. It is true that the children seldom like to put their parents in old age homes, but the changed circumstances compel them to do so. Certainly, both the younger people as well as the older parents are helpless in this situation. They have to look for certain alternate arrangements as a means of crisis solution. Institutionalisation is an answer to such a situation. Thus the existing communities, mainly the religious groups recognised the critical point and came to form informal support systems, later these became formal; and now they are known as old age homes with paid status. For instance, the four homes, namely, Dharmagiri-Kumbanadu, Carmel-Ayroor, Snehasadan-Tiruvalla, and Snehabhawan-Pathanamthitta have started paid-annexes to the mother institutions (non-paid old age homes). Details of such paid-annexes are given in 4.5.

Table 4.5. Paid Annexes to the Old Age Homes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of annexe</th>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
<th>No. of inmates</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Carmel Asramam-Ayroor</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mar Thoma Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shantibhawan-Kumbanadu</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mar Thoma Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Annexe to Snehabhawan-Pathanamthitta</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Annexe to Snehasadan-Tiruvalla</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Such homes are in great demand today. They work on the principle of self-supporting scheme; the expenses are met either by the inmates themselves or by their relatives. Though they are autonomous in nature, there is less chance to lower the dignity and status of the inmates. As fear of thieves is an important worry among the isolated elderly, they prefer the security available in paid homes. Certain myths are still working against sending the elderly into institutions at the last years of their life. The study\(^73\) by Zachariah \textit{et.al.} reported that nobody really like old age homes, yet there is an element of inevitability, which pushes them into such institutions. So by avoiding all such stigmatic feelings, another arrangement has come into existence; it is the support of self-help groups consisting of people with similar backgrounds, culture, interest that would help each other in time of need. Thus, to stay as a community in flat system or in individual villas at a particular place are the latest arrangement in Pathanamthitta district.

The Muthoot mini group is undertaking a new project with the vision to care for the lonely parents of higher income groups\(^74\). All those elderly who are willing to invest ten lakh rupees may get the state of the art facilitated accommodation in the villa system planned by the group. The villa may be exclusively for the elder group where the cluster like structure


\(^{74}\) The informations has been collected through the telephonic interview with the chairperson of the group.
may help to enjoy the company of the peer group that may enrich the meaning of life and the productivity of ageing according to the organizers of the group. The food, accommodation and all such expenses may be met by the agency. The retirees and other migrant elders may find this project as a secure shelter till the end of their lives, (but its establishment may get completed within a year or two).

The Red Cross Society of Tiruvalla is planning to start an old age home which is devoid of any caste or community prejudice. Their intention is to work on the principle of ‘all are equal’; with no identity on the basis of caste, class, age or gender; and to provide the basic needs of life. The accommodation will be for fifty in the beginning. Sixteen cents of land was donated by a well-wisher and the organizers are now waiting for a grant of thirty lakhs from the central government. The major attraction of the centre will be that no inmates would be under pressure to follow the style of worship of any particular religious denominations, as other religious institution does, says the secretary of the society. The Red Cross society collects money from the well-wishers for its management and it provides lunch every day to the poor patients in a government hospital and to the government girls’ school, Tiruvalla. The friends from America support them by donating ten thousand rupees every month.

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75 The information has been collected through the telephonic interview on 26 October, 2004.
The recent development in the Kumbanadu area is notable, as the place is well known for the number of young migrants from central Travancore region. Since most of the area of Kumbanadu had come under the category of rural setting, the educated youth had to move out of the region for their job placements. These situations alienate the elderly from their children and are forced to lead an isolated life within the four walls of their households. This area can be considered as a typical example where the elderly are affected by the impacts of modern discourse. The history of the one of the oldest hospitals of the area, Kumbanadu Fellowship Mission Hospital and its new venture, Dr.Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan Memorial Community Health Centre, may help us to have an idea about the nature of the region, Kumbanadu, and the societal responses to the changes happening here. The story begins in 1946.

Under the banner of Kumbanadu Prayer Fellowship, a group of young men who experienced the love of God, translated it into the service of the community, when on 1st May 1946, they started the fellowship hospital in a rented building….. The public soon realised the great need and usefulness of a hospital in Kumbanadu, collected money, bought the land, and built the best hospital they could with coconut tree pillars, bamboo mat walls and thatched roof.²⁶

²⁶ Pamphlet of Fellowship Mission Hospital and Dr.Alexander Mar Thoma Memorial Community Health Service, Kumbanadu, Kerala, 2001.
Later, it could grow into the status of a good hospital through the committed efforts of far sighted people with the main intention to serve the community around the hospital. By the year 2001, hospital could establish a new venture of hope and aspirations, Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan Memorial Community Health Service, with the goal that no person in the area should feel he/she cannot get treatment because of financial constraints, its convenor said. So with the help of Youth League and sēvikāsangham (a women fellowship) of local parishes, a survey of about 2000 homes around the hospital was conducted. “The result revealed that 14% of our people in and around Kumbanadu-double that of national average (National 7%, Kerala state 10%) are over the age of 60 and more than 3% over the age of 80, many of them living alone requiring medical attention. But a significant number of them do not see a doctor for either due to financial constraint or lack of convenience. A good number of them have their dear ones working outside Kerala and India. Their job, children’s education and other commitments constrain them from shouldering their traditional responsibility of living with and looking after their dear aged ones. This finding was a great eye-opener to the establishment of this particular service attached to the Kumbanadu Fellowship Mission hospital.

\textit{idem.}
Its work style is oriented in such a way as to promote the care of isolated parents which is described below:\footnote{\textit{idem.}}:

1. To meet people at their point of need wherever they are with the provision of mobile clinic and are very helpful for the isolated elderly parents as this facility provide all the health check-up at their doorstep. An ambulance equipped with modern equipments and medicine for emergency management with a consultant doctor supported by trained nurses and paramedical staff visit home of registered members regularly.

2. The interests from the endowments of few Philanthropists are used for the treatment of poor patients.

3. They run one year Geriatric Nursing Course as per syllabus prescribed by the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI). Services of these nurses are available for patients who have nobody to stay with them in the hospital.

4. They have planned to provide Geriatric ward to accommodate the aged and its building is under construction

5. A ward for Hospice-terminally ill patients who need palliative care is also under consideration.

\footnote{\textit{idem.}}
(6) Request from the retirees to allow them to build quarters in the campus at their expense, so that they can spend the rest of their lives in the house they build availing health care facilities and to have a peaceful end after which the quarters become the hospital property is also being looked into seriously.

Later, a proposal for the project ‘Retirees Village-A Novel Project’ has come up. Its organizers claim that the project will be more like a solution than an alternative like the old age homes to the aged, because immediate and adequate medical facilities in serene surroundings of cottage and flats with running water, electricity with stand by-generator, telephone and cable connections, common car park, round the clock security cover etc. are the facilities to be provided as per the proposal. In addition, the above mentioned services will also be provided as it is the project under the hospital. So the ‘retiree village’ comes up as a new project when one’s own children are unable to shoulder their traditional responsibility of staying with their parents and looking after them, or when they are unable to stay with them in an atmosphere unfamiliar to them. In the ‘village’, availability of a central kitchen for those who do not wish to cook, and a club with facilities like snooker, swimming pool, tennis court are in the making; branches of all major banks with safety lockers, NRE

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79 Pamphlet of ‘Retirees Village-A Novel Project’, Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Memorial Centre, Fellowship Mission Hospital, Kumbanadu, Kerala.
accounts and Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) facility are other attractions to the retirees, after having toiled all the life and to spend the rest of the life peacefully availing adequate medical facilities\textsuperscript{80}.

Today, the Senior Citizens Forum is emerging as peer group society for the aged where they enjoy the company of their same age group who may have similarities in the experiences of past life. With the same purpose the Tiruvalla chapter was formed in the year 1991\textsuperscript{81} under the Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Society Act, under the leadership of certain well-known figures of the town. It was at first one among the eight Kerala based societies, but today the total number of Senior Citizens Society of the state is fifty two in number which include one more unit of Pathanamthitta district, with its headquarters in Kumbanadu. Today the Society has grown to become a full-fledged registered unit with the aim of acting as creative work force in the society. For instance, the Tiruvalla unit has registered another humanitarian society, Society for the Care of the Blind\textsuperscript{82} and makes use of the valuable time of the aged elites for the service of the society, especially among the poor. Now the Federation of Senior Citizens Associations, Kerala (FOSCAK)\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{idem.}
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Booklet of Senior Citizens Service Society, Thiruvalla, Reg.No.P443/1999, p. 7. The society is affiliated to the Federation of Senior Citizens Association of Kerala(FOSCAK)and The Federation of Association of Senior Citizens New Delhi( through FOSCAK)
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Booklet of Society for the care of the Blind (S.C.B), Tiruvalla, Reg. No. 656/98. The most of the elder members of the society are signed up the Contract to donate their eyes.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Malayala Manorama}, Kottayam, 1 October, Tuesday, 2002, p. 4.
has given an appeal to the Government to have a separate Directorate for the welfare of the old and to form the State council by including the representatives from the registered senior welfare organisations. One of their main appeals is to establish old age homes in each district of the state. Its State President 84 is taking effort to get the rights of older person recognized, especially of poor in their medical treatment. For this he has proposed many programmes like special counter for elderly in the hospitals, special welfare fund to be organised by the hospitals to care for the elderly, guidelines to be distributed among the families which describe the tips to care for the elderly etc.

The activities of Senior Citizen Society could create a productive mind among its members as they are engaged mainly to give company and care to the less able members of the society. The member ship fee is rupees 100 per year and at the time of birthday or other special occasions they donate a good amount willingly for the working of the society. The society meets every month and celebrates the birthdays of the members and they have special sessions of seminars, debates, health-related classes, awareness programmes etc in an enthusiastic manner. They keep a list of workers like plumbers, electricians etc who are reliable and so the aged can seek their help in need without second thoughts. The medical aid

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programmes are helpful as in alternate months the medical doctors pay visit to them and give lecturers, so that they can be free of unnecessary anxiety. The contract signed with the Mobile clinic of the Kumbanadu Fellowship hospital serves as a blessing to the isolated aged. The treatment charge is brought down from the initial deposit of Rs.7000/-. This weak elderly have priority in Consultation in the nearby hospitals. After all the society creates awareness among its members that the society is always with them as support in the constraints of life.

The recent development of Day Care Centres for the Elderly is aiming at the recreational activities to maintain ageing as a productive period. There they enjoy the fellowship among the peer group. Among the Mar Thoma Churches they honour the elderly on one particular Sunday, the first Sunday of the month of October, every year. They have formed Senior Citizen Fellowships in each Church. Clergy’s retiree homes and flat facilities exclusively for the retired personnel under construction are also the specialties of the area to accommodate the changes happening in the social systems. Agencies, which recruit home nurses and the geriatric nursing schools, are some of the special programmes organised by the Red Cross Society and other registered societies are also working as coping mechanisms to help the elderly to face the challenges. At present, there are

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85 The informations has been collected from the present President of the Senior Citizens Service Society, Tiruvalla unit.
four offices under the Red Cross Society of Pathanamthitta District; they are at Tiruvalla (started three years back), Adoor and Kozhencherry (which are recently started) and in Mallappally\(^\text{86}\). Their major objective is to make available of trained home nurses who may look after the aged or disabled ones at home. All such service centres are mushrooming task as a means of help to the isolated elderly.

By bringing all the above data into account, we can say that the study area Pathanamthitta is subjected to the modern discourse vigorously. Though old age is raised as a serious issue, the subjectivization (transformation of human beings into subjects of a particular discourse)\(^\text{87}\) by the modern discourse is creating a different concept about old age from traditional society. For Foucault, it develops gradually in local piecemeal fashion largely in what he called ‘disciplinary institutions’ beginning in the late nineteenth century. The modern discourses give ‘chances’ to its entities to the effects of power, either through domination or through subordination (forms of subjection). Here power is not given; possessed or seized rather it is exercised and exists only in action. It is a moveable substratum upon which the economy, mode of production, modes of governing and decision

\(^{86}\) The information are collected through the telephonic interview with the Secretary on 26 October, 2004.

\(^{87}\) For Michel Foucault, it is the mode of ‘Objectification’ by which human beings are transformed into subjects.

making forms of knowledge etc. is conditioned. Hence, modernity as a discourse exercise power through social practice and production and constitutes a way of social cohesion with the subject and thus to formation of certain concepts.

At the same time, the coping mechanisms like the availability of old age homes of paid and non-paid status, availability of home nurses to care about the old, senior citizen forums, making use of the living arrangements in flats or retiree’s village, considering of pensions, policies and bank balances as the economic security at old age etc. are largely accepted by the aged of Pathanamthitta. Here the role of communities for the welfare of the aged is mentionable. It is the characteristic of modern society that the responsibility for the welfare of the aged has been shifted to the community or State from the family of the traditional society. The governmental efforts are also noteworthy. Here the ‘subjectivization’ by the old themselves to the changed situation of modern discourses does produce a group of active subjects. For example, the modern parents are ready to move into the old age homes or any other convenient living arrangements, do not prefer the joint stay of many generations, while they get old. They turn themselves to the subject of modern discourses through the operations on their own bodies, thoughts and conduct. They are the active subjects to

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