Chapter VII

CONCLUSION
In this chapter an attempt is made to present the summary and findings of the study. Also suggestions and recommendations are included to improve the life of elderly people. Unlike the other countries of the world, in India aged people have a significant role and importance role in the family and in the society. But due to industrialisation and shrinking of the family to nuclear types, new problems have emerged. At present there is a tendency to avoid and discard the aged in many ways and the elderly population are facing various socio- psychological problems. In Kerala also the problems that the old people are facing are numerous. So a way has to be found from our seniors, who have given their best years for their family, community and country. We should remember that one day we too will be the members of the same group. Realising this truth this study attempts to search the various socio- psychological problems of the elderly people, and also to suggest some ways to improve the quality of life of them.

The study has been conducted, for evaluating the life of the elderly people living with families and to find out the problems and
views regarding their day to day life. The analysis of the physical, psychological and social problems of the aged living in families enabled the researcher to understand, the nature and extent of the various geriatric problems faced by them. The views of the family members of the elderly people were also analysed and that helped the researcher to study the attitudes of the younger generations regarding the life of elderly people in general. Life of the elderly people living in institutions were also examined and it revealed the various aspects of the problems of the elderly living in institutions.

7.1 Summary and Findings

The analysis of the various views and problems of the elderly people living in both families and institutions have been stated in the above chapters. It is better to present a brief picture of the study through a connected review of major findings. It can provide us some insight towards framing an appropriate policy or suggestions to accommodate the needs of the aged people.

In India, old age revoked deep respect and honour in the traditional society. They are regarded, respected considered and loved by all and their advice and suggestions are useful to the society. Their presence, experience, and blessings are considered as must for the all round development of the family and the community. It was
customary to obey the direction of the eldest member of the family. Their experiences and perceptive ideas are invaluable assets for the development of the community. But with the passage of time, the position is gradually undergoing a change. The process of industrialisation, urbanisation, migration, disappearance of joint families etc. are predominant factors in transforming the traditional way of life. Under these circumstances the old people do not have the same prestige and honour as they used to enjoy earlier. The elderly people are now virtually thrown into a life of uncertainty and vulnerability. The aged people suffer in the process of growing old and become overwhelmed by the unfavourable atmosphere when they are confronted with the problems of health, economic, social and psychological etc. The problems the elderly have to face are multidimensional and through this study an attempt is made to analyze these various geriatric problems. The research design of the study including the main objectives, hypothesis, and universe and sources of data are enclosed in that introductory chapter. It can be mentioned here that the main theme of the study is to analyze the various geriatric problems, as it is now becoming a curse on the life of majority of the elderly people.

Chapter two, has been fully described about the review of literature of the present study, process of ageing, various aspects of
the ageing process and emergence of geriatrics. Review of literature presents a brief description of the studies held earlier related to the subject of this study. It has been tried to define the term 'ageing and ageing process' in the best possible manner. Some have regarded ageing as a period of physiological deterioration, others regard it as simply the advancement of years and still others have emphasized that ageing involves a restriction on cultural roles. Ageing can be studied under three types - biological, psychological and sociocultural. Biological ageing is most prominent and has figured widely in common expression and even in scientific literature. With the advancement of age, an individual passes through different stages of life cycle. It has already been mentioned that ageing has three main aspects but it is really surprising to see that biological ageing starts early, just after thirty. When socially, the individual is on the way to his prime social status. Indeed after thirty, the body loses its functional capacity at the rate of eight percent per year. But cumulative impact is at the later stage or above the age of sixty. Psychological ageing is studied in terms of changes in the nervous system and it consists of general decline in the mental abilities that accompany old age. The most outstanding psychological features of the ageing are the impairment in short-term memory and lengthening of the response time. It also includes the attitude and behavior of
others towards them. Looking into the economic aspects of old age it is clear that old age usually brings with it diminished participation in productive and economically gainful work. Many of the problems confronting the elderly can be traced to the loss of income, which accompanies total or partial withdrawal from occupation, and loss of social status enjoyed while in occupation. A vast majority of the elderly population in our society are poor and need financial support even for meeting their basic necessities. Sociologically, ageing may be said to begin when the individual completes the ideas of the young adulthood or middle age and when social attitudes and other situational factors begin to restrict his behaviour or interfere with the satisfaction of his basic needs for activity, feeling of usefulness, status, companionship, financial security, and emotional outlets. Analysis of the spiritual aspects of ageing it is found that the trend towards spiritualism arises out of the socio-religious belief that one is reborn in his next life as human being. It is in this context that as a person advances in age, he starts remembering his past. The emergence of gerontology and geriatrics are also described in this chapter. Geriatrics and Gerontology are relatively new terms. The terms denote a multi-disciplinary study of ageing and all its related aspects from various angles, biological, psychological, social, economic, and others. The term ‘Geriatrics’ was coined by Nascher in
1914 when a book bearing the title was first published by him. Since then geriatrics has gained quick momentum in most advanced countries of the world, but not here. The term gerontology—the scientific study of aging—has been derived from Greek words "Geronto-Geron" meaning old man and "logy" meaning science. The science of gerontology is concerned with situations and changes inherited with increasing of time, with particular reference to post malnutrition stages. It is also concerned with the changes that occur between the attainment of maturity and death of the individual.

The third chapter deals with the senior citizens in Kerala. It covers the details about the general ageing of the population, aged people in Kerala, position of the elderly people in our society, institutionalisation and also about the policies and provisions for the elderly people. Ageing of the population occurs when there is an increase in proportion of old persons increase in the population. According to the United Nations, a population may be defined as aged when the proportion of persons above the age of 64 in the population exceeds seven percent. The rapid decline in fertility and the lowering of the mortality rates in recent years, has led to a dramatic rise in the number and proportion of the elderly in the population of developed and developing countries. India the second most populous country in the world is foreseeing this increase. Since India has about sixteen
percent of the world population and about two percent of the global landmass, taking care of an elderly will require a lot of imaginative planning. The proportion of the aged population in India has been steadily going up in each census though at various rates. Given the trend of population ageing in India, the elderly face a number of problems which range from absence of ensured and sufficient income to support themselves and their dependents, to absence of social security, to loss of a social role and recognition. Concerning Kerala it should be noted that in no Indian State is the demographic situation as advanced as in Kerala. The number senior citizens who stood at 23 lakhs in 1990 changed to 58 lakhs in Kerala by 2001, due to the low death rate and high life span. There was a time in Kerala where the aged people enjoyed a unique position in the family, of having control over the youngsters and being the final word on every decision concerning the family. It was during the time of the joint family system that prevailed in our society years ago which had infused in the elder 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 old into a state of loneliness, insecurity, helplessness, frustration, hopelessness, and meaninglessness. The large number of the aged who are forced to leave their homes due to personal, social or economic factors has
become a serious problem. When health, economic and other conditions make it impossible for the aged to continue living in their own homes, and if there is no family member who can or will offer them a place to live, the elderly people are forced to look forward to a shelter, where they can have security, shelter, food and companionship. It is in such a context that the institutions for the care of elderly came into being. Different types of old age homes have mushroomed in our society by fulfilling the increasing demands of such homes. Kerala has the highest number of old age homes in the country. More than 5000 inmates are sheltered in 134 institutions in Kerala. Though the old age homes provide the basic amenities of living, most of the inmates were observed to be unhappy and were just leading their life. Institutions for poor, destitute, and the left out old persons are definitely relevant. But it creates a social situation conducive for children to neglect their parents or parents seeking to stay away from children and family surroundings. So institutionalization of care for old persons needs rethinking. Old persons in institutions feel neglected and isolated. Thus institutional care can not be a total substitute for family care. Thus there is a need to develop a healthy and encouraging attitude towards the aged. The government of India has made several policies and provisions from time to time to ensure the well being of the elderly people. These
policies and provisions should be assured completely to all those who deserve it so as to bring complete welfare of old people.

Chapter four describes the various geriatric problems in detail. The problems that occur with ageing appear to be a product of the modern age. In the context of the dynamic changes taking place in the Indian society, the problems of the aged have assumed great importance. Advancing age seems to bring meaningless misery, mainly because the elderly have been neglected and by-passed by modern society. The aged living in enforced retirement not only suffers from chronic diseases and frailties of the age but also from unhappiness caused by their feelings of uselessness, loneliness and despair. The changing social systems on one hand, and the artificially enhanced life span on the other triggered the multiple problems of the older persons. One of the major problems faced by most of the elderly persons are economic hardship. As one grows old, control over the finance of the family slips from him. Individuals who are required to retire and deprived of their main source of living may have to face these problems. Many old people belonging to lower and middle class groups have economic problems. The workers who had been earning their livelihood by putting their physical strength day by day grow old, cannot work fast and as efficiently as before. Consequently they cannot earn money in their old age and hence face financial crisis.
They do not have enough savings to take care of their needs. Also transfer of all property in the name of children may lead to economic problems for the old. In the absence of their own regular source of income, they have to depend on their sons and daughters who find it difficult to meet their demands because of the difficult situation created by the price rise and the fast changing life styles and also they have their own families. Financial problems are also many for the people retired from active workforce. Immediately after retirement, one of the major losses incurred by the retired persons is finance. This is due to the sudden reduction in the regular monthly income. Old age pension schemes are in operation in all the states including Kerala for the old in unorganized sectors. But these schemes are non-contributing in nature and are primarily meant for the destitute aged. Also it is a fact that a large number of the destitute elderly who are eligible to receive old age pension are not getting the pension for various reasons such as lack of knowledge of the scheme, lack of awareness about their rights to get old age pension and difficulties of running from place to place for getting pension. Thus by all means economic crisis is a major problem for the elder people in our modern society.

Of all the problems that trouble old people, health seems to be very important. Old age in itself is not a disease. However with
advancement in age many ailments comes to the surface. People become more and more susceptible to chronic diseases, physical disabilities and mental incapacities in their old age. The illness of the elderly are multiple and chronic in nature. The aged respond to habits rather than adjust habits to environment. They live by habits. This is a major cause of health problems. What has made the problem of health in old age, as a major unsolved problem is the ignorance and apathetic attitude towards the illness among the aged. The idea that old age is an age of ailments and physical infirmities is deeply rooted in the Indian mind, and the elderly accepts many of the sufferings and stresses within curable limits as natural and inevitable. On account of old age various geriatric ailments like circulatory disturbances, heart diseases, visual and hearing impairments and disorder on mental nervous conditions usually attack older persons. Apart from the geriatric ailments, diseases like colic pain, gastritis, indigestion, asthma, joint pains and general weakness are found to be frequent among the old people due to decline in their power of resistance. New diseases like dementia and Alzheimer’s disease are making their appearance in a significant way and many soon find a place among other major noncurable diseases. In reality, most of their diseases are minor in nature and curable at the initial stage itself. But most of them neglect the illness and postpone seeking medical aid.
And also it is a fact that the existing medical facilities are also inadequate to provide successful medical aid to our elderly people. Thus physical problems are also a major cause of worry for the life of our elderly persons.

In the past, the old people were to be taken care of by the individuals concerned and his immediate circle of relatives and as such old age did not constitute a social problem then. The old people were respected for their powerful position. They were invariably consulted with regard to all family matters. They were also enjoying good respect in the society because of their rich worldly experience. But in our modern society, the prestige, power, authority, status, and security enjoyed by the aged are now declining. The aged are gradually pushed to relatively insignificant social positions consequent upon loss of status, power, and authority in the family and society. Also retirement is becoming one of the major social problems in our culture. In our society the age of retirement varies between 55-65, and by this age, the people are forced to retire, even if they do not desire it. This forced retirement makes different problems for them. Feeling useless and unwanted, elderly people develop feeling of inferiority and resentment that are not conducive to good personal or social adjustments.
The psychological aspects of aging involve a wide variety of problems. Old age comes with different psychological pressure in the minds of the elderly people. The aged are worried for finance, anxiety over health, and feelings of being unwanted, loneliness and isolation. Traditionally in our society based on the joint family system, it was the duty and responsibility of the younger members of the family to care the aged people. In the modern nuclear families the younger generation tend to avoid the old generation as useless and sometimes they feel very lonely and isolated. Sometimes they have to face the problem of spending their time and they feel depressed and alienated.

The family life of the elderly people changes with their retirement or loss of job. They face problems in relationship with their spouse, with the offspring, with in laws and grandchildren. In some cases, the young ones in spite of paying respect to the aged begin to insult them. Old people often have complaints about others that they do not pay enough attention to them. So there are misunderstandings making their lives miserable. In short the old people are sufferers of many types of socio-psychological problems. Even if the extent of problems are different in all elders, they all suffer these problems in one way or another to some extend. The extent of problems that they have to face may be different as per their living conditions, but the typical problems faced by them are interdependent. In addition to health problems, they all are suffering from psychological problems of
one form or another. The solution to the sufferings of the elderly people actually needs emergent attention.

In the fifth chapter an analysis of the data of socio-demographic profile of the respondents is analysed using different tables and the results are being interpreted. Relevant familial and personal information including education, marital status, living arrangement, nature of family was assessed through the study. 300 male and 300 female respondents from the family based elderly people and 60 male and 60 female respondents from the institutions were selected for the study. The selection of equal number of respondents from the two sexes from each category will be helpful make an effective analysis of the different problems and peculiarities of elderly people belong to each category. In both the institutionalised and family based respondents, the majority of them belong to the 60-70 and 70-80 age groups. The recent census has revealed that the life expectancy of the Keralites is 67. But the rate is increasing now-a-days with the advancement of the medicine and other services for the aged. The table also shows the same trend. While comparing the two categories, it is clear that the majority of the respondents in both the institutions and non-institutions are Hindus or Christians. In the case of the non-institutionalized, majority of the respondents are either Hindus or Christians. But in the case of the institutionalized
sample majority of the respondents was from the Christian community. There was also a good representation from the Hindu community, but there was no one from the Muslim community. There was a priority of Christian management old age homes in this area and that may be one of the reasons for the higher representation of Christians in these institutions. Also it may be because of the better care provided for the aged among Muslims as none was there in institutions from where the researcher selected samples or it may be because of the speciality of the area selected. Considering the geographical area of residence of the respondents, in the case of institutionalized and non-institutionalized elderly people, majority of them are from the rural areas. It may be the result of the speciality of the area or the District which have more rural area than the urban area. Regarding the marital status of the respondents, it is found that among the institutionalized and family based elderly, there were a considerable representation from widows and widowers. Also there is some representation from married elderly whose spouses are living. Comparing the two categories of respondents it is clear that the number of the unmarried persons are higher in institutions and very low in non-institutions. The increased number of unmarried respondents in institutions may be because of the lack of the family members to care for them at this age. While considering the
educational status of the respondents, there is only a minor representation from the highly educated people among both the institutionalised and non institutionalised respondents. Most of the family based respondents have only primary level education. Majority of the respondents from the institutions, are either illiterate or have got primary level education. Many of them are not educated enough up to know the facilities of institutional services for the aged. Regarding the former occupation of the respondents, there were representation from all kinds of occupations. But many of the family based respondents have either Government, private or self employment as former occupation. There were a clear representation from coolley labourers and other types of employment. In case of institutionalised respondents, majority of them were coolley labourers and other types of such occupations. Only a very minor representation from elderly who have government or private employment before joining the institution. This shows the tendency of joining of low economic class people in institutions. The analysis of the socio-demographic profile of the respondents reveals the actual living conditions and standards of the elderly people involved in this study. But it is a revealing fact that the characteristics of the respondents needs rethinking. Though some of the family based respondents have good former employment or have a healthy financial
position, the educational level, place of residence, martial status etc. were somewhat same. In case of institutionalised respondents, majority of them are from low economic, low educated, and from poor former occupational backgrounds. The low level of income and lower living standards of the respondents before this old age may have some clear impact on the views and behaviour of the respondents as a whole.

In the sixth chapter an attempt is made to analyze the views of the family based respondents regarding the life and problems of the elderly people. It is also meant to analyze the views of the family members regarding the life and behaviour of the elderly people. An analysis of the life of the elderly people living in institutions are also enclosed in the chapter.

7.2 Suggestions and Recommendations

In order to overcome the problems suffered by the elderly people the researcher had a certain suggestions and recommendations.

Considering the economic problems, it is found that the majority of the old people have no separate source of income of their own. There were a large majority of the old people who have no pension benefits. Even though they have some source of pension or little income, that amount is not sufficient to satisfy their needs. Also
even though they are able to do some work, there are no job opportunities for the old people. So they have to depend on others for most of their needs. Majority of the elderly people have great mental difficulty in depending on others for money. So it is a very urgent need to assure the economic well being of the old people. For that, income generating activities should be created to overcome the economic problems of the aged people. Pension benefits should be made available to all the needy old people. Also the pension amounts should be raised to appropriate level so as to cater the needs of the elderly people. The procedures to approve grant of pensions should be made easier and all the needy and destitute elderly should made aware of the pension benefits. Also there should be change in the attitudes of the younger generation. There is a tendency among the younger generations that they believe that the elderly parents living with them have some kind of secret savings. They argue that besides they pay everything for the needs of the elderly people. So the younger generations should be made aware that it is their responsibility to take care of the needs of the elderly parents and it is not a thing of sympathy. Also there should be some programmes to assure financial safety for the elderly people such as life insurance etc.

In the case of health matters also a large amount of changes should be needed, so as to assure better physical conditions for the
old people. In majority of the cases, the aged people have many types of diseases and disabilities. There is a general tendency in old people that to ignore their disabilities and diseases as something that is natural in old age. This attitude should be changed and they are to be made aware the necessity of treating their diseases carefully. The elderly who are not able to do their day to day activities should given proper and special care so as to assure them mental satisfaction. The children and family members should try to care for the elderly themselves. The caring by home nurses and other servants sometimes are not like by the old people as they think that their children are avoiding them. Also special care should given to elderly people with low vision, hearing and memory. It is important that the attitudes of the younger generation should be changed and they should be made aware of the problems of elderly people and how to treat and care for them diligently.

In case of psychological problems also it is firstly the attitudes should be changed. Many of the elderly people have the feelings of loneliness and alienation and they want to get rid of that feelings. They sometimes consider themselves as useless and unwanted creatures. The family members of the elderly people should try to understand the feelings of older people and they should try to spend some time with them. Also the elderly people have the problem of
spending time and they do not know what to do with their extra time. So activities and programs should be started to help the elderly people who are capable and wish to do some job. Also meaningful leisure time activities should be encouraged in order to bring the elderly people feelings of contentment and satisfaction. Also the family members of the elderly people should try to seek the guidance and opinions of elderly people in familial matters that it would give the elderly people the feeling that they are important, valuable and not alone.

In the social participation of elderly people also the attitudes needs to be changed. Societal participation begins with family activity participation. The elderly people should participate actively in the household matters. The younger generation should seek the guidance and assure the participation of elderly people in the family matters. This would give them some confidence and satisfaction in their abilities. Also the society itself should try to assure maximum participation of elderly people in all the activities. The associations and organisations of the elderly people such as senior citizens associations should be encouraged and these associations should assure maximum participation of elderly people.

In spiritual matters also some care should given. The elderly people believe that old age is the time for praying and engaging in
spiritual activities. It is a fact that engaging in those activities would help them to avoid their problems and worries. But at the same time they should try to engage in familial, and societal activities so as to ensure their participation in all fields of life. The belief that old age is the time for praying only and waiting for death is not healthy. This attitude should be changed and they should participate in all fields of life.

Some more Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study here the researcher has some more suggestions for improving the services for the elderly people.

1. Younger generation should be made aware of the problems of the aged people and they should treat them with honour and respect instead of considering them as a burden.

2. In families and institutions, an atmosphere of love, affection, and caring should be created so that the senior citizens can feel that they are not alone.

3. Counseling service should be provided to family members of the elderly people and the younger generation in general on how to deal with the problems of the elderly people. Also counseling services
should be given to the old parents on how to cope up with the problems that they are suffering in their old age.

4. For the betterment of senior citizens, more studies and research should be undertaken by the government and other agencies working for the welfare of the elderly people.

5. The services and activities of the non-governmental organisations should be widened to make the life of the elderly people more comfortable.

6. Government should enhance the grants and provisions for the voluntary organisations working for the welfare of the elderly people.

7. Regular medical check up should be given to the elderly people through mobile health care services. Government and other voluntary organisations should take initiative in this matter.

8. Separate wards and rooms for the care and treatment of the elderly people should be provided at each hospitals in order to assure better medical care for the aged people. Geriatric departments should be started at each hospital.

9. More old age homes should be started for those who have no one to take care of them, and for those who were thrown away from their families.
10. Government should assure that the working facilities and care in old age homes are satisfactory and healthy.

11. The authorities of the institutions should encourage the relationship of the inmates with their family members. This would give the inmates more pleasure and satisfaction in their life.

12. Recreational facilities in old age homes should be enlarged so as to bring maximum mental pleasure for the inmates.

13. Employment schemes for the healthy old people could be initiated by the government.

14. Amount of pensions and other grants to the elderly people should be raised to appropriate levels to cater their needs. Also all the needy elderly should get the pensions and other grants for themselves.

15. Schemes for assuring financial security for the old persons should be made common for all old persons, such as life insurance etc.

16. Seminars, workshops and counseling camps should be organised by the voluntary organisations, political parties and spiritual organisations to aware the elderly people about how to cope up with the younger generations successfully.
17. Instruction at school level should be so designed to inculcate values of respect and regard for the elderly. Necessary incorporation into the curriculum may be done for this purpose.

18. The society should view aged as a resource and their potentials should be utilized so that they can become the valuable assets of the society.

There is no magic formula for success and happiness in old age. All of us must be clearly understood that old age is inevitable for everyone. There are several examples of the aged people contributing to the society till late in their life. Mahatma Gandhi was 79 when he was assassinated and was active till the last moment. Mother Theresa was 83 when she passed away, but was still in charge of the Sisters of Charity. Bertrand Russell was 96 when he died and had written his last book two years before his death. These were exceptional people but it does indicate that age need not be a restricting factor in being creative. It is the attitude towards old age that clearly determines happiness or otherwise at that time. Many factors can contribute to the happiness of the senior citizens like good atmosphere in the family, support from the society etc. Studies on aged people have highlighted the main problems and emphasised the need for the state to provide a number of social services for the old people, both directly and indirectly. Providing a very healthy and accepting atmosphere
will help the senior citizens to adjust with old age and live more happily and satisfactorily. Since in this period of old age, social physical and psychological problems are more in the elderly people, a soft approach can help them to get a feeling of satisfaction and happiness. Whatever steps the government and voluntary agencies may take, it would succeed only if the societal attitude towards the aged is changed. So change must come from the within of each of ourselves. The modernity in Gandhian Thought is that in his world view, all mankind constitutes one single community or family without any invidious distinctions of “high” and “low” or first, second or third world nations.

In the New Millennium i.e. in 21st century it is our duty to help the elderly people with love, kindness etc. so that the elderly people will be more happy and satisfied and they could also help the youngsters and give their advise and suggestions to the youngster’s. We should not neglect elderly people from the society due to increase of nuclear families. Elderly people are equal to god.

Astomo Sat Gamaya

Tamosomo Jothir Gamaya

Mirthiyomo Amirtham Gamaya

May the life teachings of elderly people be a beacon of hope of courage to all of us.