



Graceful ageing: Challenges and prospects

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ABSTRACT

The dream of the people all over the world to live long is now becoming a reality due to the advancement in health and medical facility, social and economic development, scientific and technological revolution. But what about the quality of this extended life? Are people necessarily happier because they are living longer? What do most people want? The simple answer will be “they want love, useful work, safety and security, energy and health, power, fame and wealth to varying degrees, a long life with high quality and a society that provides support in achieving these goals”. It means the people want to live long gracefully. It is basic issue that how older people think about successful aging and how he lives gracefully in society?

INTRODUCTION

Aging is a complex biological process. It is an important part of all human societies reflecting the biological changes that occur, but also reflecting cultural and societal conventions. It is a natural phenomenon that refers to changes occurring throughout the life span and result in differences in structure and function between the youthful and elder generation. In spite of that Aging is accompanied by many stereotyped beliefs, which usually, are dominantly negative in outlook, regardless of culture and country in consideration. Graceful ageing refers to good health, good life style, economic security, social security and social prestige. It means live with pleasure, live with grace, live with good mental and physical health, and live with happy, prosperous, and active life, we call ageing gracefully.

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development, scientific and technological revolution. But what about the quality of this extended life? Are people necessarily happier because they are living longer? What do most people want? The simple answer will be “they want love, useful work, safety and security, energy and health, power, fame and wealth to varying degrees, a long life with high quality and a society that provides support in achieving these goals”. It means the people want to live long gracefully.

Graceful ageing refers to Physical, Mental and Social well being in older age. It is a part of successful ageing. In ancient Indian society the older persons have honorable status, but as the society transformed into modern society, the value structure is changed, the status of older person decreased (Kahana *et al.*, 2003 and Kumar, 1999). They have become a dependent category of society and also a marginal class. The older people in Indian traditional societies enjoyed unparalleled sense of honour, legitimate authority in the family or community, had decision making responsibilities in the

economic and political activities of the family and were treated as repositories of experience and wisdom. Shifts from nuclear families may imply the loss of older person's role as head of family and loss of decision making function and financial responsibilities (Devi; Gaur and Gaur, 2001).

In these changing circumstances, it is basic issue that how older people think about successful aging and how he lives gracefully in society? Through this paper I will try to analyze the challenges and prospects of graceful ageing.

There are several studies related to ageing like active aging, successful aging, and positive aging etc. as:

- Sharma (2009) edited book "dimensions of aging", deals with the factors like quality of life, personality and adjustment, attitude towards elderly, problems of the elderly, social status, social support and successful ageing.

- Sinha and Singh (2009) have found in their study "time structure and well being among retired persons" that the utilization of time after retirement in purposeful activities leads to increased well being

- Ramamurti (1970) found in his study a decline of life satisfaction around the age of 55th year.

- Phelan and Larson (2002) conducted a literature review with regard to definitions as well as the factors that might predict success. They identified seven major elements: life satisfaction, longevity, freedom from disability, mastery/growth, active engagement with life, high/independent functioning, and positive adaptation, Etc.

- Wong (1989 and 2000) defines successful aging as a relatively high level of physical health, psychological well-being and competence in adaptation. According to him prolonging life without providing any meaning for existence is not the best answer to the challenge of ageing.

Objective of paper :

- To analyze the challenges of graceful ageing.
- To analyze the prospects of graceful ageing

Challenges of ageing gracefully :

Sociologically, ageing marks a form of transition from one set of social roles to another, and such roles are difficult. Among all role transformation in the course of ageing, the shift into the new role of the 'old' is one of the most complex and complicated. In an agriculture

based traditional society, where children followed their parent's occupation, it was natural that the expertise and knowledge of each generation were passed on to the next, thus affording older persons a useful role in society. However, this is no longer true in modern society, in which improved education, rapid technical change and new forms of organization have often rendered obsolete the knowledge, experience and wisdom of older persons. Once they retire, elderly people find that their children are not seeking advice from them anymore, and society has not much use for them. This realization often results in feeling of loss of status, worthlessness and loneliness. The growth of nuclear families has also meant a need for changes in role relations. Neither having authority in the family, nor being needed, they feel frustrated and depressed. If the older person is economically dependent on the children, the problem is likely to become even worse.

The challenges faced by the elderly generally arise from:-inequality of opportunity for employment; inadequate income; unsuitable housing; lack of social services and of provisions for sustaining physical and mental health; stress and strains produced by changing family patterns and family relation. Some challenges in the path of graceful ageing are following:

- Lack of no clear policy or strategy for development of healthcare of older people exists.

- Changing family structure and weakening of family ties (Atchley and Miller, 1980 and Chafetz, 1981).

- Some mental diseases /disorders like-less sharp memory, depression, anxiety, sensory loss etc.

- Improperly maintained age care home. Those older people who live in old age home are suffering from a lot of problem due to the insufficient facilities or proper care.

- Lack of social security, it is also a major challenge before the elder one. There are some people who plan for future social security through saving and pensions plans but there are some people who not plan are suffering different type of security problems.

- Society's negative attitude towards elderly people's behaviour.

- Decreasing level of participation of elderly in familial, community and social activities due to the lack of interest, lack of ability, poor health, absence of income etc.

- Fear of life protection.

- Retirement problem; fear of economic security.
- Intergenerational conflict
- Lack of social involvement
- Increasing tendency of generation gap
- Decreasing social status of elderly

These are some challenges which are faced by elder peoples. There are more conditions which create new challenges before them (Baltes and Baltes, 1990 and Cumming and Henry, 1961; Havighurst *et al.*, 1963 and Featherman *et al.*, 1990).

Prospects regarding graceful ageing :

- To strengthen or establish a national co-ordination mechanism on ageing for developing and promoting implementation of the national strategy on ageing composed of ministries, councils, department, committees, advisory group, representative of the elderly, political or religious groups and task forces.

- To promote and enhance joint family system and provision of respite care, remuneration for unpaid long term cares giving.

- Launching information education and communication campaigns on aging to promote positive images of ageing as a subject of general social relevance in which everyone participates.

- Provide key roles for older persons as voluntary or paid resource persons in literacy programmes, public awareness, and campaign in education programmes on culture tradition and heritage.

- Government should facilitate the participation of elderly persons in the economic life of society by providing them with suitable employment opportunities.

- For maintain healthy mental state, the elderly should stay active in family and society. It will provide emotional strength which will reduce their stress induced hormones.

- Encourage elder peoples to participate more in religious, social and recreational activities.

- For maintain a healthy life style the elderly should maintain a healthy lifestyle in form of regular exercise schedule, positive relation with family members and friends, and enjoying leisure time with satisfying hobbies.

- We should represent respect towards the elderly as their presence in the home and in the society teaches us an irreplaceable lesson of humanity.

- We should recognize the roles played by elderly

during their active life. They must be made to feel that they are not a burden on the family and society.

- It is essential for every generation to follow the Indian tradition and strengthening our solid value system.

- Old age pension should be linked with the price index besides financial empowerment of the elderly.

Conclusion :

The concept of ageing has a new meaning at this time. The elders, who were the pillars of traditional social system, were slowly removed and they now became appendix in the family. The elderly today has become a dependent category of society. Increasing cost of living and the materialistic way of life force the families of this class to be more self-centric in nature so they are avoid to taking care of people who are not productive. In these circumstances graceful ageing is a difficult phenomenon. If an elder people thought about a happy and pleasure healthy life he must have family support, active life style, financial security, and also social security. Lack of these it is impossible to live with gracefully. So it is necessary to plan for graceful ageing.

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