

Old age is the closing period in the life span. Age sixty is usually considered the dividing line between middle and old age. Chronological age is a poor criteria to use in marking off the beginning of old age because there are such marked differences among individuals in the age and better aging actually begins. Because of better living conditions health care, most men and women today do not show the mental and physical signs of aging until early seventies. The characteristics of old age are far more likely to lead to poor adjustment than to good and to unhappiness rather than to happiness. That is why old age is even more dreaded than middle age.

## **Ageing**

- Ageing is a continuous, irreversible, universal process, which starts from conception till the death of an individual.
- However, the age at which one's productive contribution declines and one tends to be economically dependent can probably be treated as the onset of the aged stage of life.
- National Elderly Policy defines person of 60+ age group as elderly
- According to Population Census 2011, there are nearly 104 million elderly persons in India.

## **Characteristics of old age are**

1. Old age is a period of decline - decline comes partly from physical and partly from psychological factors. There is change in body cells due to the aging process. Unfavorable attitude towards one self and life in general can lead to decline or become depressed and disorganized. Motivation plays a very important role in decline.
2. There are individual differences in the effects of aging. People age differently because they have different hereditary endowment, different socio economic and educational backgrounds and different patterns of living. The general rule is physical aging precedes mental aging.

3. Old age is judged by different criteria - age is judged in terms of physical appearance and activities. One who has white hair is labeled as old. There are many who try to cover up their aging symptoms to create illusion that they are not yet old.
4. There are many stereotypes of old people - let it be the folklore, the media, poetry, fiction, jokes or different forms of humor or scientific studies, all portray the aged as those who are worn out physically and mentally, unproductive, accident - prone, hard to live, days of usefulness are over, should be pushed aside to make way for younger people.
5. Poor adjustment is characteristic of old age - Because of the unfavorable social attitudes towards the elderly that are reflected in the way the social group treat them, it is not surprising that many elderly people develop unfavourable self-concepts. These tend to be expressed in maladjusting behavior of different degree of severity.

### **Common Changes in Appearance during Old Age**

#### **Head Region**

1. The nose elongates
2. The mouth changes its shape as a result of tooth loss or the necessity of wearing dentures.
3. The eyes seem dull and lusterless and often have a waterly look.
4. A double or triple chin develops.
5. The cheeks become pendulous, wrinkled, and baggy.

6. The skin becomes wrinkled and dry, and dark spots, moles, or warts may appear.

The hair on the head becomes thin and turns grey or white, and tough, bristly hair appears in the nose, ears, and eyebrows.

### **Trunk Region**

1. The shoulders stoop and thus seem smaller
2. The abdomen bulges and droops
3. The hips seem flabbier and broader than they did earlier.
4. The waistline broadens, giving the trunk a sack like appearance.
5. The woman's breasts become flabby and droop.

### **Limbs**

1. The upper arm becomes flabby and heavy, while the lower arm seems to shrink in diameter.
2. The legs become flabby and the veins prominent, especially around the ankles.
3. The hands become scrawny, and the veins on the back of the hand are prominent.

4. The feet become larger as a result of sagging muscles, and corns, bunions, and callouses often appear.
5. The nails of the hands and feet become thick, tough, and brittle.

***Changes in Physiological functions include*** decline in the ability to see, hear, marked changes in taste, sense of smell becomes less, and also that of sensitivity to pain. Elderly people tire quickly and require a longer time to recover from fatigue, changes in skilled movements especially handwriting, slow in learning new skills and quite often tend to become awkward and clumsy. Recall is affected. Old people tend to have poor recent memories but better remote memories.

Quite often due to lack of income or low economic status they become dependent and have to compromise on many of their hobbies, interests, activities etc.,

### **Common physical hazards**

Include disease and physical handicaps like circulatory, metabolic and mental disorders. Heart diseases, rheumatism, arthritis, visual and hearing impairment, etc., are also common. Due to psychological and physiological disorder and economic reasons, malnutrition in old age is common.

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## **Problems associated with old age**

### **▪ Social**

- Indian society is undergoing rapid transformation under the impact of industrialization, urbanization, technical & technological change, education and globalization.
- Consequently, the traditional values and institutions are in the process of erosion and adaptation, resulting in the weakening of intergenerational ties that were the hallmark of the traditional family.
- Industrialization has replaced the simple family production units by the mass production and the factory.
- Negligence by kids towards their old parents.
- Disillusionment due to retirement.
- Feeling of powerlessness, loneliness, uselessness and isolation in elderly.
- Generational gap.

### **▪ Financial**

- Retirement and dependence of elderly on their child for basic necessity.
- Sudden increase in out of pocket expenses on treatment.
- Migration of young working-age persons from rural area have negative impacts on the elderly, living alone or with only the spouse usually poverty and distress.
- Insufficient housing facility.

### **▪ Health**

- Multiple disabilities among the elders in old age.
- Health issues like blindness, locomotor disabilities and deafness are most prevalent.
- Mental illness arising from senility and neurosis.
- Absence of geriatric care facilities at hospitals in rural area.

## **Recent initiatives by government**

### **▪ Integrated Programme for Older Persons (IPOP)**

- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is a nodal agency for the welfare of elderly people. The main objective of the scheme is to improve the quality of life of older persons by providing basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care and entertainment opportunities, etc.
- **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)**
  - This scheme is run by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. This is a central sector scheme funded from the Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund. The fund was notified in the year 2016. All unclaimed amounts from small savings accounts, PPF and EPF are to be transferred to this fund.
  - Under the RVY scheme, aids and assistive living devices are provided to senior citizens belonging to BPL category who suffer from age-related disabilities such as low vision, hearing impairment, loss of teeth and locomotor disabilities. The aids and assistive devices, viz walking sticks, elbow crutches, walkers/crutches, tripods/quad pods, hearing aids, wheelchairs, artificial dentures and spectacles are provided to eligible beneficiaries.
  - The scheme is being implemented by Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), which is a public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)**
  - The Ministry of Rural Development runs the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) that extends social assistance for poor households for the aged, widows, disabled, and in cases of death where the breadwinner has passed away.
  - Under this scheme, financial assistance is provided to person of 60 years and above and belonging to family living below poverty line as per the criteria prescribed by Government of India. Central assistance of Rs 200 per month is provided to person in the age group of 60-79 years and Rs 500 per month to persons of 80 years and above.
- **Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana (VPBY)**
  - This scheme is run by the Ministry of Finance. The Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana (VPBY) was first launched in 2003 and then relaunched in 2014. Both are social security schemes for senior citizens intended to give an assured minimum pension on a guaranteed minimum return on the subscription amount.
- **The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana**
  - The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PNVVY) was launched in May 2017 to provide social security during old age. This is a simplified version of the VPBY and will be implemented by the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India.
  - Under the scheme, on payment of an initial lump sum amount ranging from Rs 1,50,000 for a minimum pension of Rs 1000 per month to a maximum of Rs 7,50,000/- for a maximum

pension of Rs 5,000 per month, subscribers will get an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8% per annum payable monthly/quarterly/half-yearly/annually.

- The Centre will bear 75 percent of the total budget and the state government will contribute 25 percent of the budget, for activities up to district level.
- **Vayoshreshtha Samman**
  - Conferred as a National award, and given to eminent senior citizens & institutions under various categories for their contributions on International day of older persons on 1st october.

## **Contributions to society**

- Elderly peoples carries immense experience of their personal and professional life, society at large need to channelise those experience for better tomorrow.
- They can provide a vital generational link for upcoming generations. It provides support and stability to families and society at large.
- Grandparents in joint families provide a crucial link for transferring values and morals to the younger generation in their initial years, thereby contributing towards upbringing of better human beings and responsible citizens.
- Acknowledging seniors' contributions would help to make ours a more age-inclusive society that does not pit one generation against the other.
- Their deep cultural impressions and social experiences provide the necessary buffer against intolerance, violence and hate crimes which provides stability in society especially in the era of hate and crime. They can play a significant role in easing out societal tensions, both within and outside families through their insight and understanding.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT**

- Intergenerational conflict is understood as the difference, gap, distance or conflict of values between the adult and adolescent generations. Such problem of unrest among the youth is not peculiar to Indian society but it also exists more or less at all times and in every society. It is a symptom of intergenerational conflict in value system.
- Intergeneration conflict is the outcome of the lag in communication and the understanding between members of different generations within a family. Rapid change in modem society tends to accentuate the conflict between parents and children within a fast changing social order. The time interval between two or more generations can create a gap between one generation and the next. While parents become odd fashioned, the youth tend to be rebellious. Clashes will then occur between the two generations.
- The term intergenerational conflict is also known by 'generation gap'. Generational differences are based on the biological facts of the human life cycle. From the sociological point of view, children inevitably grow up in a culture that is different from the one in which their parents have been raised. Many times even though the parents are

aware of the rapid social change, they are not always consider them while interacting with their children. Such parents often do not understand that times have changed and that they have to change their ideas. Most children, even girls prefer the company of their friends when they are of college going age. It is quite uncommon for college students to attend occasional parties that may carry on until late in the night. By not understanding the contemporary society in which the children are growing up or by enforcing the rules and behaviour of their own generation, unknowingly highlight the generation gap and discover its existence when the relation between them and the children undergo a strain.

- Often one may note that two generations may live in different worlds. They experience different cultures. They are born in different historical periods and grow up under influence of the then prevailing economy, government, styles, fads, media, technology, beliefs, attitudes and values. Today it is recognized that the generation gap is essentially a culture gap. Values such as commitment and family identity are seriously questioned by the young as divorces and unmarried households are becoming more common and more accepted. Computers, the Internet and other technology has made the world different in ways the older generation are unable to fully understand. The older generation is faced with the prospect of contending with their own values and viewpoints. They make their own adaptations, while they try to maintain the norms for their children while trying to encourage the youngsters to respect absolute truths and standards set by them. Sometimes this may be viewed by youth as a display of hypocrisy.