

Ageing among Muslim Community

Sheeba Khalid,

**Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University,
Kolkata**

Abstract:

Due to the improvement in health care and life condition in recent years, the average age has increased and the mortality rate among children decreased in many countries of the world. This was accompanied by relative decreases in birth rate as a result of family planning programs. The result was an increased percentage of the aged population over sixty to about 7% of the total population. Thus the need arises to consider the various needs of the aged population, specially their need of integrated care with its healthy, social economic aspects and more and more especially of their isolation problems. The results of the expected increase in the aged population such a reflection on the policies of the social and economic development, for all these reasons of social isolation in old age, the world takes care of the integrated care for the aged as being serious and chronic problems.

The main objective of the research is to describe an Islamic perspective on ageing and understand various problems and status of Muslim elderly living in Kolkata. The study has been conducted, for evaluating the life of the elderly people living within families in Muslim Community 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 Muslim Communities 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.

Introduction

The short verse from the Holy Quran which I think sums up very appropriately the Islamic position of the elderly within a family structure.

"Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and be kind to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, do not say 'uff' to them or chide them, but speak to them in terms of honour and kindness. Treat them with humility, and say, 'My Lord! Have mercy on them, for they did care for me when I was little."

(Qur'an 17:23-4)

Islam Builds its View on Two Facts: The first fact is that Allah honoured man. This honour is manifested in the power of man granted by God, and the power of justice which has to govern

his life. The second fact is that this dignity has no fixed form or standard in practical life. It takes its practical form in each age. The natural course of life is that starts from weakness, then transfers into weakness. The first weakness transforms into strength and power, while the second into death and mortality. Islam takes care of old age in a manner that maintains the man's dignity of whatever age. This dignity includes the provision of sufficient income, food, health care, accommodation and social relationship.

The first principal upon whom the Muslims have to be raised is that he must save from his productive age for his old age. The family must support his principle. The mass media and education can largely affect the minds of people to pay a role in making this choice a real success. If the aged has not been successful during his lifetime to save some of his income, then his family members must support him to secure a good standard of living for him. Today duty of taking care of the old is the responsibility of sons and daughters.

If the old man has no sons or daughters to support him, then his grandsons or granddaughters must support him. If there are no sons or grandsons, then, the relatives must support the aged person with whom they have relationship. "The support of the aged persons is a duty of his relatives.

These trends in Islamic jurisprudence indicate the obligatory support of the aged. Islam always calls for helping the old and urges people to support them.

However, such support is obligatory of the people who are well to do and who have sufficient funds, which are in excess of their daily needs of their family members.

The family is also responsible for supporting the aged member to protect himself from disease. They must stand beside him in case of disease and they have to support him morally. Housing is a serious problem. Large families are now disappearing from the social system. Each new family now has an independent house. Thus the problem for the aged becomes greater because they cannot live alone. Islam obligates Muslims to provide their parents with accommodation, which is appropriate to their solution. Volunteers must be encouraged to accept the aged among them. The alternative family must give support to the aged. This is the optimum solution. The second is to establish houses for the aged. The social societies must carry out the duty of taking care of the aged. Muslims must be kind towards the aged.

In the Islamic world, one rarely finds "old people's homes." The strain of caring for one's parents in this most difficult time of their lives is considered an honor and a blessing and an opportunity for great spiritual growth. In Islam, it is not enough that we only pray for our parents, but we should act with limitless compassion, remembering that when we were helpless children, they preferred us to themselves. Mothers are particularly honored. When Muslim parents reach old age, they are treated mercifully, with kindness and selflessness.

In Islam, serving one's parents is a duty second to prayer, and it is their right to expect it. It is considered despicable to express any irritation when, through no fault of their own, the old become difficult.

Some Geratrical problems:

Old age had never been a problem for India where a value- based joint family system is supposed to prevail. Indian culture is automatically respectful and supportive of elders.

Ageing as a natural phenomenon has all along engaged the attention of the civilized world. Provision for the aged in the society has become one of the constitutive themes of our modern welfare state. The problems of the aged vary from society to society and have many dimensions in our country.

However, the disintegration of the joint family system and the impact of economic change have brought into sharp focus the peculiar problems which the old people now face in our country.

The problems that occur with ageing appear to be a product of the modern age. The aged in the Indian society have always constituted problems at some levels but it is only recently that they have begun to represent a major social problem. What makes aging and the aged a social problem is its recognition by society as an important aspect of behavior that needs attention. The recognition is the direct outcome of changed age pyramid, value system and withdrawal of support system from the family and community. 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. If planning for retirement were not done earlier the economic crisis arising out of the reduced income would result in various socio-psychological problems.

People have limited regenerative capabilities and are more prone to disease, syndromes, and sickness than other age groups. There is often a common physical decline, and people become less active.

In the modern society people who those are living in middle class and upper-middle class family and they come from a very well educated class in the society, they don't have time for their old parents; they show their respects for them and avail all types of facility for their parents, but do not understand the actual requirement of the older people. In this age older people need more attention and care from their family, only good facilities and cloths and standard medicines cannot give them the full mental satisfaction; which they expected from their children. Besides these, people who those are living in poor family; they totally depend on their daily earning, they are labor class, illiterate people; go early in the morning for work and when they come back in the evening, spend their full time with their family, like watching television together, enjoying their dinner with lots of gossiping and listen about full day activities of the children by their old parents. This is a actual life which a person want to live in his/her old age, that keep them out from the feeling of isolation and depression.

Status of Elderly in Kolkata

Methodology and Universe of the Study:

The present study has been conducted on the basis of 2001 census of Kolkata City in West Bengal. Total three wards have been taken for the study, those were: ward no. 59 Topsia Road, Ward No. 62 Taltala Lane and Ward No. 64 Park Circus. Total populations in these wards are 140221, where total populations of Males are 79083 and 61138 of Females. Number of Households are 25198. To give an equal distribution to each ward; 50 respondents selected for interview from each ward, by Purposive sampling, in which 50% was Males 50% was Females. Total 150 respondents were interviewed.

The methods have to be followed for the collection of data was the interview method and observation method. The respondents has contacted and interviewed using the interview

schedule. This ensured the clarification of doubts. Since the study is about aged people it is difficult to give questionnaire to them. The interview schedule including a large number of fulfilling the objectives, the interview schedule was prepared on the basis of the study of existing literature on the subject, and the information gain through consultations and discussions with the experts in the field.

As an initial stage of research, a pre-test has been conducted to finalize the interview schedule. A drafted interview schedule has been tested with a sample of the respondents for ascertaining its validity and reliability.

The important findings of the study are:

The educational level of the male retirees or respondents were higher than female.

The income level of male respondents was higher than female respondents.

In case of meeting their relatives females were more active than male respondents.

In case of gossiping with their children, grand children female respondent's responses were more positive than male respondents.

Majority of the respondents had emotional involvement they thought that people show warmth to them.

The old people are responsible and had emotional attainments that's why in both male and female remained informal of the activities of their children up to responsible extent.

Women were more social and not feel isolated or alone in the presence of other person.

Again female respondents were less reluctant to most people than male respondents thinking that they may interfere in their affairs.

In the matter of family gatherings female's participation was more frequent.

With compared to males there were very few females respondents who felt uselessness in their present life. They have an alternative of their activities that is their home.

Female respondents spent more time with their grand children than males.

The large majority of the male and the entire female were in favour of the usefulness of the retired persons. They thought that their experiences and advices could give benefits to others.

A simple majority of the respondents felt responsibilities of their children who are not yet independent and married.

Majority of the respondents were found to be in favour of young generation. They accepted their wide approach towards life more intelligent but morally low than their own generation.

Conclusion:

Ultimately, it could be concluded that the general feelings of the elderly living in the families had better position than that of the elderly living alone. Better social relations were maintained by the family dwellers because they had regular interaction, expressions of feelings and support from the family. The existing condition of the elderly women living alone was that they felt lonelier, depressive and had a lower level of satisfaction with life. In

this context, the need for preserving our tradition of a joint family and the mutual cooperation and understanding between the younger and the older generations could be more pressing. The situation calls for concerted efforts of the government, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions and individuals not only to understand but also to solve or at least mitigate the whole gamut of problems resulting from a greying society so that the aged people can lead a dignified and meaningful life.

References:

Al Quran. (Al-Israa.Sura, Verses 23.

Al Quran. (Al-Israa.Sura, Verses 24.

Bali A. P., "Role of family in the Care of the Elderly Changing Care giving Situation" In V. Kumar (Ed), Aging: Indian Perspective and Global Scenario, New Delhi: All India Institute of Medical Sciences, 1996

Barron.M. L., "The Role of Religion and Religious Institutions in Creating the Milieu of Older People", In, D. Scudder (Ed), Organized Religion and the Older Person Gainesville University of Flonda Press, 1958

<http://www.islam-guide.com/ch3-16.htm>