Report on Survey of Aged in Kerala

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Is Ageing a sin? No. But it is seen from many angles that the aged suffers a lot in the fag end of life. The reason for the same may be different and many folded. Some times the reasons are self created too. Whatever be the reason for this situation it is a fact that there are aged persons who are dissatisfied with life.

The number of aged persons as a proportion of the total population has increased all over the world. The rate is more in developed countries as compared with developing countries. The socio-economic impact of this phenomenon has come for discussion at various forums in all developed countries during the past so many years, starting from 2nd half of the 20th century.

The rate of increase in the number of aged persons at a pace higher than that of the general population has been pronounced in our country as per the available statistics. But in the case of Kerala, this phenomenon has been felt far more than even in some of the developed countries.

The ageing of a population, that is increasing proportion of elderly, takes place as a consequence of demographic transition. In the developed countries measures were taken and programmes implemented for the well being of the aged persons. In Kerala, though some welfare measures have been taken for the aged persons, these measures are not fool proof or are based on any deep study on the subject, and the socio-economic impact of these measures are not fully and widely accepted. In Kerala, no detailed studies or surveys about the living conditions of old age persons in the State have been made. Considering this, the Government of Kerala as per GO (Rt) 317/02/Plg. dt. 31/10/2002 accorded sanction to conduct a survey on aged citizens in the State to the Department of Economics & Statistics.

Methodology

The survey was conducted in 20% of Panchayat/Municipality/Corporation wards which were selected from each district using stratified random sampling techniques and the entire households in the selected wards were visited by the enumerators. They listed all the households and made enquiry to locate persons aged 60 and above. In detailed enquiry, thrust was given to the following points: education, previous and present employment, present and previous source of income, health aspects, type of treatment, type of nursing, satisfaction in life, time utilization etc. of the aged persons.
Need for assessment study of the elderly in Kerala – Background

The number of aged persons, as a proportion of the total population in Kerala, has increased at a rate double than the overall growth rate of population. This is a demographic pattern the state shares with other parts of the world.

During the 1950’s, less than 6% of the population was aged 60 years or more, but it has now reached 10 percent. In the 1950’s the number of aged persons constituted about 10% of the labour force, but this has grown to 15% in the year 2000.

Kerala has set its trend in the growth profiles in a number of sectors, including demographic, economic and social. Besides the State Government, a number of NGOs and charitable and religious institutions have initiated a number of programmes and schemes aimed at the welfare of the aged persons. But, they have not been full fledged in their implementation. It has been felt that a comprehensive ground level study is required to formulate a comprehensive programme for the welfare of the senior citizens. It is in this background that the Department of Economics & Statistics was mandated to carry out a study in the year 2002.

The ageing process is a complex phenomenon and it is worthwhile to have an idea about the historical, social, economic and other background that obtains in the state. Certain relevant changes that occurred in the state over decades and other socio-economic indicators may be summarized as follows.

1. Abolition of the joint family system and a progressive shift to nuclear families.
2. Abolition of “Marumakkathayam” system that was the hallmark of some of the affluent communities in the state.
3. Impact of groundbreaking land reforms.
4. Low per capita availability of land leads to shifting from an agrarian economy to Non agrarian economy in the state. Average land available per person is about 13 cents as per study conducted in the year 2001.
5. High rate of literacy and more or less equal literacy among males and females has induced the eligible to leave their native places in search of jobs to destinations outside the state, within the country, as well as outside the country.
6. Low birth and death rates:

Historically speaking, the demographic and health conditions that have been prevailing in the State are far better than the comparable features nationally available. Relevant data show that the standards obtaining in the state as early as in 1957-58 have been on a par or even better than the all-India figures for the year 2001.
**Indicative Vital Statistics**

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<th>KERALA</th>
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<th>INDIA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth Rate</td>
<td>24.60</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>25.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death Rate</td>
<td>7.57</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate</td>
<td>49.47</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>66.0</td>
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The Expectation of life in Kerala (rural) is 72.4, with 69.3 for males and 75.8 for females.

**Migration**

Keralites are known to reside in all parts of the country and abroad. It has been estimated that 14 lakh Keralites are residing outside the country and many folds migrated to outside the state but within the country. Most of these migrants have left their old parents behind to fend for themselves, which is a worrying outcome of this trend.

Some of the issues being faced by the old age persons are.

1. Lack of acceptance by family members
2. Feeling of loneliness
3. Financial instability
4. Change of lifestyle, forced shift away from native place
5. Lack of involvement in family matters & decision making
6. Health problems
7. Feeling of insecurity
8. Aversion to depend on others
9. Lack of emotional support
10. Isolation from larger society/community
11. Targeting by robbers and anti-sociables due to perceived state of health
12. Fear of attack from domestic aides/helpers for money.
Limitations

The survey was conducted in 2600 wards in Panchayats/ Municipalities/ Corporations in the State on a complete enumeration basis of the residential households. This amounts to nearly 20% of the total wards in the state. The no of old age persons is estimated on the basis of this. Apart from this, an attempt was made to collect details about the old age persons staying in the old age homes or similar institutions run in private and public sectors. The details of such institutions surveyed and the socio-economic conditions of inmates of such institutions are given as a separate chapter. The total number of old age persons constitute the number of old age persons staying in the households and those staying in institutions. Chapter 2 of this report covers the old age persons staying in households only. A Quick Tabulation report containing the number of old age persons was published in May 2003, but it contains provisional figures only. The census figures for 2001 were since published and certain characteristics are available in that publication too.