

# Issues of grey population

[Life](#), [Death](#)



ISSUES OF GREY POPULATION | | | Submitted by : Ranjana Laskar Research scholar (M. Phil.) Department of geography Session: 2013-14 Date — 05 May, 2013 | | | ISSUES ON AGEING Elderly or old age consists of ages nearing the average life span of human beings. The boundary of old age cannot be defined exactly. It varies according to societies. In India, the old age or the grey population accounted for 6.7% of total population in 1991. This rose to 7.4% in 2001 census and then again further increased to 8.2% in 2011. This is again projected to increase to more than 10% by the year 2021. Elderly issues are multi-dimensional in nature. They may be broadly categorised as:

1. Demographic
2. Social
3. Psychological
4. Economic
5. Health

**Demographic:** Aged population in India is second largest in the world after China. 3/4th of elderly people live in rural areas (census 2001). Population projections show that by 2050, the elderly population in India will surpass the population of children below 14 years. Widowed elderly females are greater in proportion (51%) as compared to males (15%) (census 2001). Literacy is 53% among elderly males and only 20% among elderly females. 1/3rd of this elderly population live below poverty line.

**2. Social:** The growth of individualism and materialism among the younger generation in modern life led to their alienation and isolation from family and society, contrasting to the features of traditional Indian society. At present, most of the elderly people have also lost their role as decision-makers. Hence they suffer a loss of status.

**3. Psychological:** It was also observed that these elderly people also face psychological disorders. Their capability of reasoning becomes slower, memory is impaired, enthusiasm decreases, cautiousness increases and sleep pattern changes. This results to poor adjustment and

dissatisfaction with life. 4. Economic: Nearly 90% of the total workforce is under unorganised sector which means retiring without any financial security. According to the National Policy on Older Persons (Govt. Of India, 1999), old age pension schemes covered about 2.76 million persons (until January 1997). Ultimately, this coverage was to be expanded so that the objective of including all older persons below the poverty line is achieved. 5. Health: as age increases, people become more susceptible to chronic disease, physical disabilities and mental incapability. Health problems and medical care become major concern among a majority of the elderly. Factors like age, education, economic status, marital status, perception on living, anxieties and worries, addictions, degree of idleness, type of health centre visited exert a significant influence on both the perceived and actual health status of the elderly. Apart from all these issues, all the present and past studies although focussed on certain known aspects of ageing, but still it lacks in certain important aspects. These are some of the present issues related to the grey population: i. A majority of studies views the elderly as passive receivers of care. ii. The issues related to the urban male elderly, comprising mostly retirees/ pensioners, are highlighted in the studies conducted so far. In these studies, the focus on elderly living in rural and tribal communities is inadequate. iii. The problems of vulnerable elderly like widowed females, disabled and those from the unorganised sectors are hardly covered. iv. Health problems are mostly assessed on the basis of the subjective perception of the elderly. Considering their low socio-economic status, high illiteracy and inadequate knowledge of diseases, medical care and health issues, all these aspects need a comprehensive analysis. v.

Various systems of medicine like Ayurvedic, Homeopathy, Naturopathy and Yoga are under-utilised by people in general in particular. vi. The socio-economic, psychological and health conditions of the elderly are interlinked with other dimensions of their daily lives. A holistic assessment of all these dimensions is neglected in assessing their living conditions. vii. Efforts are largely made in understanding the socio-economic, psychological and health status of the elderly. However, there are negligible efforts to know the determinants.