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I. INTRODUCTION

Ageing is a process of life. It starts from birth and covers the whole life span of a person. It is generally associated with fatigue and decline in the functional capacity of the organs of the body due to physiological degeneration.

Old age is the last stage in the life span of human beings. Usually people above sixty are considered to be aged. Now-a-days they are known as senior citizens. Because of better living conditions and better health care facilities, people do not show the mental and physical signs of ageing until mid-sixties or even seventies. Advances in medical sciences, better nourishment, improved standards of public health etc help a lot in extending the life span.

The traditional norms and values of Indian society lay stress on showing respect to and providing care for the aged and elderly persons. As a consequence, the aged members of the family are normally taken care of by the family itself. Those who are without children were looked after by the community or caste organizations and institutions.
Today, modernization and industrialization has led to the breakup of joint families and the growth of nuclear family. Children tend to take charge of the families, and old people have lost their earlier position as the heads of the families. Certain moral values like respect, tolerance, acceptance, dignity, love etc. are disappearing from the families and the societies. Quite often, the children consider the aged as burdens and wish to get rid of them. Their abuse is no more a rare phenomena.

1.1 Characteristics of Old Age

Like other stages in the life span, old age is characterized by certain physical, mental and psychological changes.

It is a fact that old age leads to maladjustments rather than better adjustments in life; and most often they lead to unhappiness, isolation and depression in life. Because of the unfavourable social attitude towards the elderly they develop unfavourable self concept.

In old age physical strength deteriorates, sight suffers a setback, mental stability diminishes and financial situation becomes shaky. It is only for a few, old age proves to be a stage of contentment and satisfaction.
1.2 The Factors Responsible for the Increasing Number of Senior Citizens

There are many factors leading to the rapid increase in the ratio of senior citizens in the general population. Decline in death rates, increase in the average life span of men etc are the different causes.

Due to the advancement in science and technologies and the use of modern medicines, the mortality rate has decreased to a great extent. The rapid development of scientific technologies has also raised the quality of life and attitudes towards reproduction. Since the factors leading to the birth and mortality in human population remain unchanged and the rates continue to decline, the average life span in most countries will continue to grow.

1.3 Problems of the Aged

Old age constitutes one of the major social problems. This is because the number of the old is increasing and social welfare measures for the support care and treatment are inadequate. In the past also aging posed serious problems, but the traditional joint family was able to provide support and protection to the aged within the family frame work. But the impact of the breakup of joint family system and emphasis on nuclear
family have weakened the capacity of the family to provide economic and social security to the elders. Moreover, the limiting of the number of children to one or two by the younger generation and the large scale foeticide substantially decreases the number of young people. As a result, for a large number of old people old age is a period of disappointment, dejection, disease, depression and loneliness. Old age, thus has its physical, mental, psychological, social and economic problems.

1.4 Role of Old Age Homes

When health, economic status, loneliness, migration of children, strained family relations or other situations make it impossible for the senior citizens to live in their own homes, they are forced to look forward to a place, where they can have security, shelter, food and companionship. It is in such a context that institutions for the care of senior citizens came to existence.

1.5 The Contributions of the Changanacherry Archdiocese to the Problem of the Aged Through Old Age Homes

Foreseeing the increasing demands for old age homes in future, different types of the same have mushroomed all over the country. Some
of them are paid homes, some others unpaid. Some are run by government and others by private agencies.

The Syro-Malabar Church, one of the branches of the Catholic Church, is very much concerned with the welfare of senior citizens. In the Syro-Malabar Church, there are 26 Syrian Catholic dioceses under Pope’s jurisdiction. The Changanacherry Archdiocese is one of the oldest and eminent dioceses and it was constituted of by Pope Leo XIII by his Bull ‘Quod Jam Pridem’ dated May 20, 1887. Originally it was known as Vicariate of Kottayam and later it was renamed as vicariate of Changanacherry.

The Changanacherry Archdiocese runs numerous old age homes in various districts such as Alappuzha, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam and Thiruvananthapuram. Through these old age homes the diocese serves and supports the aged, the destitutes, the sick, the poor, the widows and the widowers and thus propagates the Kingdom of God on earth. They are run on a no-profit, no loss basis. Each home has its own distinguishing features.
II. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The increase in number of aged people causes concern as their needs and their problems are much different from those of the young or the adult persons. The ancient period in the history of Kerala is reckoned as the golden age of the family life where the older people were considered a blessing rather than a curse. But now the situation is reversed. In such a situation a detailed study of the institutional service for the aged is necessary.

The main objective of the study is to understand the Aging Issues of Senior Citizens – The Welfare Measures taken by Changanacherry Archdiocese through Old Age Homes.

The Specific Objectives are:

1. To understand the concept of aging, the characteristics of the aged and the emerging problems encountered by them.
2. To study the general problems and socio-economic and demographic conditions of the aged;
3. To understand the perception of the elderly with regard to the existing old age home services and the extent of their utilization;
4. To understand the life pattern of the institution, analyse the coping mechanism of the aged in facing various problems.

5. To analyse the attitude of the aged towards family and society and vice versa;

6. To understand the life satisfaction of the aged in the old age homes;

7. To ascertain the role of voluntary organizations in providing services to the aged in need;

8. To get their views on improving the health care facilities in the community and their utilization of these services;

9. To study the facilities and welfare measures carried out for the aged in the old age homes;

10. To investigate the life of those aged persons who are living in the old age homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry.

11. To recommend practical measures and uphold modification of the existing measures.

III. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. The Archdiocese of Changanacherry is rendering valuable services to the welfare of senior citizens through Old Age Homes.

2. The psycho – socio problems affect the life pattern of the senior citizens.
3. The inmates of the institutions are almost satisfied with the welfare measures provided by the old age homes of the Archdiocese.

4. The relationship with the care giver affect positively the life of inmates of the Old Age Homes.

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

A. Method

The method adopted in this study is normative survey method. It is used for the technique of investigation by a direct observation of a phenomenon of systematic gathering of data from population by personal contact, and interviews when adequate information about certain aspects is not available in records, files and other sources.

There are many 30 Old Age Homes run by the priests and sisters, and laypeople of the Archdiocese in the district of Alappuzha, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Thiruvananthapuram of the 30 Old Age Homes the researcher selected 20 homes as sample. It includes the old age homes of men, women and for both category. The investigator conducted the survey random sampling.
B. Tools Used

For the present work the researcher has used almost all the field techniques used for anthropological field work. Normative survey method (Interview, Observation, Personal Contact etc.) has been used for the survey conducted in the old age homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry. Also percentage analysis, graphs and diagrams and chi-square test are the statistical techniques used in this study.

V. CHAPTERISATION

The present study has been mainly devoted to the study of “The Ageing Issues of Senior Citizens – The Welfare Measures taken by Changanacherry Archdiocese Through Old Age Homes”. The data thus collected have been analysed and presented into six chapters including introduction and concluding chapter. Each chapter contains specific topics dealing with particular aspect of the main theme. Each topic differs from other topically, but logically related to each other leading to conclusion.
Chapter I  -  Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the problem, the importance of the issue, as well as research questions and purposes surrounding this research.

Chapter II  -  Survey of Related Literature

It provides a detailed discussion of the relevant literature on the subject. Such a review will enable us to understand the concerned issues thoroughly.

Chapter III  -  Conceptual Framework of the Study

In this chapter conceptual frame work of the research is revealed. And the researcher exposed the Dignity and Grace of Old Age, Dimensions of Aging, characteristics of Old Age, problems of Old Age, institutional care etc.

Chapter IV  -  Methodology of the Study

This chapter describes the methodology employed inorder to achieve the different objectives and to verify hypothesis of the study. Data for this research was obtained from both the primary and the secondary sources.

Chapter V  -  Analysis and Interpretation of Data

It analyses and Interprets of data systematically. For empirical data 100 informants of 60 years and above with equal representation of sex,
were selected from 20 Old Age Homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry. The data was collected through structured and unstructured interviews. The researcher analysed the data with the help of statistical tools and made use of various tabular as well as graphical representations.

Chapter VI - Conclusion: Findings, Suggestions and Recommendations

This chapter gives a brief summary of the work and draws conclusions, and suggests certain recommendations.

Thus this study is intended to analyse the issues of the institutionalized elderly people particularly the Archdiocese of Changanacherry and the welfare measures carried out by the Archdiocese for the aged.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Geriatric problems of the aged, is a multi-dimensional topic. So an exhaustive study of all the aspects could not be attempted.

2. It was sometimes difficult to get proper response from the aged because many of the suffer from memory loss and other weaknesses. So the investigator has to repeatedly visit the inmates to get proper answers.