

## SEEKING A DIGNIFIED PARTING DYING OF OLD AGE IN A YOUNG REPUBLIC

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### ABSTRACT

*The share and size of the elderly population are increasing in India and the number of impoverished senior citizens has been significantly noticed over time. From 5.6% in 1961 the population has increased to 8.6% in 2011. Looking into location, there are 71% of senior citizens have been residing in rural areas. In fact, 29% old people's concentration found in urban setup. In the age group of 60-64 years, 76% were married while 22% were the widow and remain 2% were found either divorced or never married. It has been observed that the existence of few factors is mainly responsible to increase the numbers at a faster rate, these are like "diminishing moral values, Globalization, nuclear family and degradation social value system".*

**KEYWORDS:** *Globalization, Elderly Experience Alienation, Standing Committee on Social Justice*

### INTRODUCTION

#### BACKGROUND OVERVIEW

In today's world, the elderly experience alienation, and lead a dull, mundane and monotonous life. Their basic needs are sometimes not fulfilled by their family members. Although there has been a rapid development of society and standards of living have increased, the generation gap has kept on widening. Meantime, at the household level, people considered them as a burden to the family as well as society. In regard to funding allocation, both central and state government has also given priority to increasing fund against social security measures for the senior citizen. For instance; old age pension, recreational facilities, concern to formulate old age association towards dignified life are also remarkable aspects. Standing committee on social justice and empowerment suggested few areas like, " i) an appropriate mechanism is to be set up to provide need-based maintenance to the parents and senior citizens, ii) provide better medical facilities to the senior citizen, iii) for institutionalization of a suitable mechanism for protection of life and property of older person and setting up of old age homes in every district". In a state of negligence and deprivation, a large number of senior citizens has been facing emotional, psychological and inadequate care and protections. In regard to this, prolonged existence derived from scientific advancement and progress in the fields of medicine and health care has been a great achievement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, the achievement, in spite of the progress in various fields has resulted in an overall deterioration in the quality of their life.

### METHODOLOGY

This paper is purely based on a secondary study of literature and census database. It aims at exploring ground reality in the rural area as well as the quality lifestyle they have been maintaining since long. To capture such, the study has

completely relied on secondary sources of policy papers, study reports by non-government organizations and corporate agencies. In addition to these articles at the national level have been referred to supplement literature for this article through which a ground level picture could have been explored. Basically, the data were collected on pension beneficiary holders and growth rate of senior citizens from 1981 to 2011 in Odisha. The data on institutionalized age was collected from Help Age India, Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disability and Census 2011. All relevant data were gathered, processed and filtered according to the relevance and requirement. To supplement the ground reality situation, telephonic interviews of 15 sample representatives from the person concerned towards implementing schemes and policy planners were also incorporated.

## INDIA HIGHLIGHTS

In respect to exploring ground reality about the status of old age people, a study has conducted among youth, which shows that 73% youth were agreed that the existence of senior citizen abuse still prevails at the family level. It was explored that son and daughter in law are the primary abusers. In fact, the pattern of abuse is also varying depending on the situation. The most common form of abuse is seen nowadays that using of “abusive language and talking rudely to an elder” is representing 72.4%, followed by 29% youth opined that beating up and physical abuse also another area which have a significant impact upon the society at a larger perspective. In addition to this property inheritance problem has also creating unhappiness among the elders which is representing 53.2% across the country. An estimated 67.5% of respondents are completely supporting to provide proper care and attention to the senior in due course of time as and when required. Interestingly, the present generation is accepting the significant contribution of the joint family system for creating happiness and abuse-free lifestyle as data reveals 86.9% in respect to this.

Looking into Odisha perspectives about the overall status of senior citizens it has been reflected in the Census-2011 data sheet that 3774446 numbers of senior citizen’s existence across the state. The highest number of senior citizen found in costal districts such as Ganjam, Cuttack, Balesore, Khurdha and Puri and in each district more than 2.5 lakh senior citizens have been representing. It clearly shows that life expectancy is significantly better than tribal and drought-prone areas. In addition to this better health care facility than other areas might be another reason for increasing large number of the senior citizen. Both central and state government have been taking up several steps to proved a better lifestyle through lunching different social security programmes. In rural areas of Odisha extreme poverty and food insecurity have been playing major hurdles since long. Considering to the situation both the government introduced social security sagem named as Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Yojana and Madhubabu Pension Yojana through which all senior citizen having below 24000 rupees income per annum or Below Poverty Line. Under this programme, all beneficiaries are entitled to get 300 rupees between the age group of 60-79 years and 500 rupees to above 80 years old. Meantime, the beneficiaries coverage status reflects that these highest numbers of senior citizens holding districts implementation status of social security are extremely poor. In fact, tribal-dominated district status is comparatively much better towards implementing social security scheme. The purpose of implementing such social security scheme is to provide some financial assistance which would help to reduce burdens on food and health basically. However, crossing all boundaries elders should be respected from all angles without compromising liberty and dignity. Unfortunately, it has been noticed in different media houses that elders have consistently been neglected, abused and tortured by their family members and closest person. Here, it can be stated that financial independency is highly essential for maintaining a healthy life. At this

stage the most important aspect is to look after health care and proper care & attention. To address better health care facilities

### **Older Persons Are In Blues**

The traditional joint family system and other norms and values of the Indian society had an in-built element of caring for seniors. Meantime, society is changing at a faster rate, for instance, the existence of a joint family is almost absent across the country. However, in recent times society is witnessing a gradual but definite withering of the joint family system, as a result of which a large number of elderly parents are facing exclusion and neglect by their family, thereby being exposed to lack of emotional, physical & financial support. As estimated, there are 4% of older person lives in the community are depressed. In fact, these can be traced out by addressing nursing facilities and other institutions can be approached. The state has taken up this role and there are some government sponsored safety net programs, however, because of the low awareness levels and also inactive implementation structures, denoted by their own drawbacks, the benefits of these programs barely reach most elderly. In a “modern” society that is marked by productivity –linked development, older people remain largely an invisible segment. Aged are viewed as unproductive, spent force, dependent, passive, irrelevant to the development process and are therefore isolated, neglected, discriminated, excluded, persecuted. Both family members and health care workers are usually involved in end of life care services. People should review their life values before they are at the end of life. Civil society & policymakers are incentive to the growing crises that are an exponential growth of grey population can create and often define these only as profit and loss account designating the aged as non-performing assets and therefore the “**burden of ageing**” in economics.

In India, we have over 10 million elderly people today and the figure is likely to cross 30 million by the year 2050. Of this 90% belong to the unorganized sector, which means no pension or gratuity or medical insurance etc. About 40% of these live below the poverty line. The official statistics reveal, “large segments of the elderly in India are illiterate, unemployed, partially or totally dependent on others and suffer from health problems or physical disabilities. In fact, there are virtually no associations/institutions working for the aged interest at local levels”. Social security for the aged is almost nonexistent in rural areas and almost unavailable to poor people. Also, the relative lack of family and community support in a largely impersonal urban milieu has often reduced the elderly to the margins and dependent on the formal institutions for support and solace, the results of which have not been very inspiring.

In Odisha, the present population of above 60 years is 9.5% of its total population. As per Census 1981 – 2011, senior citizen above 60 years and more has been consistently increasing in Odisha. At present 34.39 lakhs old age people are living in rural areas of Odisha. The higher percentage of representation is clearly explaining the process of rural—urban migration. It is happening in the case of nuclear families. However, families newly settled in the township are more prone to be victimized especially in taking care of health and social attention. In a busy work schedule it is really difficult to provide adequate attention to the senior citizen. In respect to this, either family members are forced to take help of professional nursing care service or deliberately avoid to perform their duties those are essentially required. The state govt. a report addressing that “the weakening family ties as a result of urbanization and transition to industries to industrial societies thus add another dimension to issues related to population ageing. Older persons left behind in the rural areas are like to be more adversely affected and stand in need of support through special social security programme”.

Graph-1 shows pension holders in Odisha in lakhs. It also gives numbers of disabling old person in different states. Detail data is been given in Annexure-1.

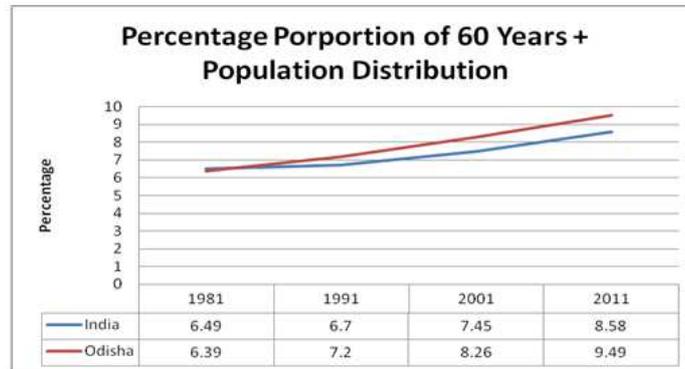


Figure 1

**Senior Citizen Pension Holder in Odisha,India**  
**Source: Annual Activity Report, Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Govt. of Odisha**

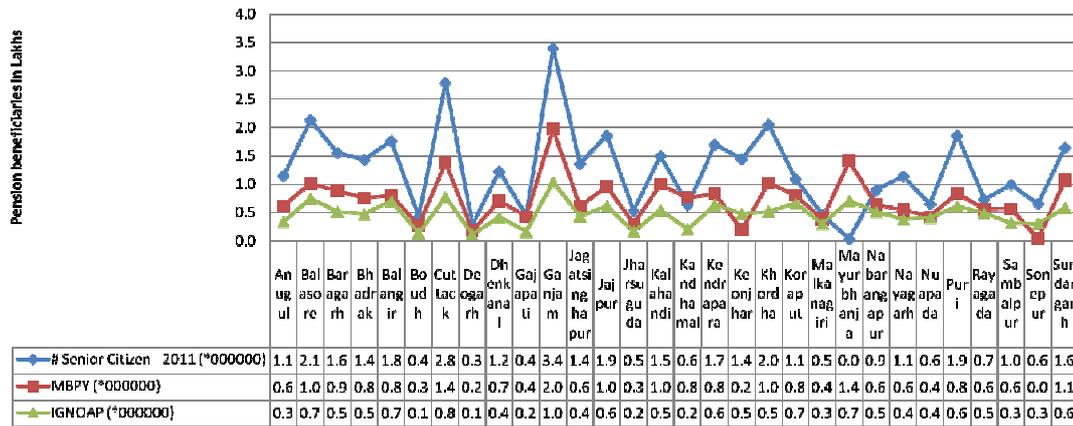


Figure 2

**Challenges and Opportunities**

Inadequate attention and care are becoming one of the major social challenges for seniors. In respect to this, there must be some alternative mechanisms which are to create a healthy society where rights and duties may be addressed voluntarily in the first hand. In this direction over the year, some NGOs have been intensively working towards sustainable social protection for poor older people with a special focus on those living in rural areas. The ageing of the workforces is one of the most significant trends in the present scenario. As estimated, nearly 3 in 4 workers will continue to work after 65 years of age. Establishing an accurate diagnosis for ageing patients is often challenging due to preexisting conditions and medications that are interfering with the diagnostic process. Government health services are generally based on Primary Health Centers (PHMs) but inaccessibility to and inadequate supply of most of these PHCs have limited their utility. Moreover the distance of the place of stay of poor elderly and compulsions the absence of someone to take the elderly to Primary Health Center or to a doctor, pose a major deterrent to the real needs of these older persons. In the absence of the state’s medical facilities, the private practitioners charge heavily from the innocent and uneducated poor elder people. In short, the basic medical services which should be their right are either not available to them or they can’t afford what is available.

The Odisha State policy for senior citizens 2016 it is clearly addressing sustainability and vulnerability issues. In addition to this, it also focuses on critical health care services as per need and priority. Looking into such critical aspect multi-sectoral supports is highly required where government, corporate agencies, and civil societies should come forward to tackle the situation through redesigning umbrella based social security programmes without neglecting a single person in any means and ends. Here, it can be suggested with respect to social security that public-private partnership exploration towards development activities would be an alternative strategy to tackle the issues more meaningfully. Contributory health insurance scheme can be the best approach to reduce major stress, anxiety, and apprehensions not to realize difficult life among the senior citizens especially those are living in rural areas. The annual premium may be 1:3 ratio basis of 1 lakh coverage. The total premium amount will be around 3000 which can be shared by both beneficiary and government. The beneficiary cost sum of rupees 750 shall be deducted from old age pension scheme i.e. Madhubabu Old Age Pension Scheme or Indira Gandhi Old Age Pension Scheme on an installment basis over the year.

### **An Alternation Settlement**

A retirement home is almost a new concept nowadays where old people can access multi nursing care and attention. The concept is just alternative methods of living style in their respective homes. It is emerged due to lack of proper attention during old age, the breakdown of joint family structure, heavy work pressure in the private sector and distance work location. All facilities relating to better lifestyle are available with proper care and attention in the respective retirement home / old age home. In the present scenario, the need and requirement of old age home is much more important. Homely facilities like food, medical facilities, and entertainment scopes are also available without paying much. At present, it has been identified in India that there are 728 old age homes are available which is fully / partially supported by the central government of India. Out of which 325 retirement homes are completely free of nature whereas 95 institutes charge nominal fees. Across the country, there are 101 old homes that are exclusively running for women only. Considering to the Government of India statistics it has been explored that highest number of homes i.e. 124 numbers are located in various place of Kerala state only. It is indicating that higher life expectancy is directly interrelated to increase the numbers of old age homes.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Retirement homes are an initiative to reach out and understand the elderly and provide them a friendly environment. Many of us who are active today will soon reach an age where we would retire from active responsibility. Our younger generation will move away seeking new opportunities and we shall become increasing lonely and vainly in charge of a lot of responsibilities on the already stooping shoulders. I think it is time to think fresh and think positively towards growing old. We fervently invest in lifeinsurance, but they assure nothing except a promise of a load of money; can they assure life; catering to my physical, mental and spiritual needs? Can there be a way where we can choose our companions, aided in our daily necessities, cared and nourished well! As we grow old, we can and should start shedding our worries on the earthly matters. If we think ahead, we can invest and create such senior friendly oasis for ourselves; and happily retire into the oasis we have invested for ourselves. However, all of these will require a paradigm shift in our thinking. Trying to think little selfishly, investing for a pleasurable future, growing indifferent to the worldly assets we had created for ourselves, mortgage our assets for the comforts of a retirement home will take years of counseling, branding and creating right infrastructure and being shown the way by some leading citizens.

## Annexure-1

Table 1

| District       | # Senior Citizen_2001 | # Senior Citizen_2011 | MBPY           | IGNOAP         | Total Pension Holders | % of Old age pension holders |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Anugul         |                       | 114459                | 62135          | 33511          | 95646                 | 83.56355                     |
| Balasore       |                       | 213188                | 101393         | 74570          | 175963                | 82.53889                     |
| Baragarh       |                       | 155163                | 87841          | 51288          | 139129                | 89.66635                     |
| Bhadrak        |                       | 143149                | 75660          | 46769          | 122429                | 85.52557                     |
| Balangir       |                       | 175962                | 79596          | 70405          | 150001                | 85.24625                     |
| Boudh          |                       | 41397                 | 27155          | 13520          | 40675                 | 98.25591                     |
| Cuttack        |                       | 278680                | 137720         | 76758          | 214478                | 76.96211                     |
| Deogarh        |                       | 28797                 | 18576          | 10882          | 29458                 | 102.2954                     |
| Dhenkanal      |                       | 122193                | 70667          | 41257          | 111924                | 91.59608                     |
| Gajapati       |                       | 44257                 | 43251          | 15611          | 58862                 | 133.0004                     |
| Ganjam         |                       | 340460                | 197066         | 103735         | 300801                | 88.35135                     |
| Jagatsinghapur |                       | 135901                | 60972          | 43543          | 104515                | 76.90525                     |
| Jajpur         |                       | 185483                | 95960          | 61182          | 157142                | 84.72043                     |
| Jharsuguda     |                       | 52223                 | 29977          | 16267          | 46244                 | 88.55102                     |
| Kalahandi      |                       | 149616                | 99485          | 54295          | 153780                | 102.7831                     |
| Kandhamal      |                       | 63443                 | 76643          | 19709          | 96352                 | 151.8718                     |
| Kendrapara     |                       | 169309                | 83409          | 63395          | 146804                | 86.70774                     |
| Keonjhar       |                       | 143972                | 20058          | 47416          | 67474                 | 46.86606                     |
| Khordha        |                       | 204843                | 102507         | 51588          | 154095                | 75.2259                      |
| Koraput        |                       | 108756                | 80707          | 65867          | 146574                | 134.7733                     |
| Malkangiri     |                       | 46495                 | 38400          | 29371          | 67771                 | 145.7598                     |
| Mayurbhanja    |                       | 2916                  | 140990         | 70160          | 211150                | 7241.084                     |
| Nabarangapur   |                       | 89672                 | 63852          | 50901          | 114753                | 127.9697                     |
| Nayagarh       |                       | 113702                | 55157          | 37431          | 92588                 | 81.43041                     |
| Nuapada        |                       | 64549                 | 43451          | 40090          | 83541                 | 129.4226                     |
| Puri           |                       | 185576                | 84385          | 60341          | 144726                | 77.98746                     |
| Rayagada       |                       | 72607                 | 56284          | 48184          | 104468                | 143.8814                     |
| Sambalpur      |                       | 98822                 | 56915          | 31610          | 88525                 | 89.58026                     |
| Sonepur        |                       | 64886                 | 3576           | 30028          | 33604                 | 51.78929                     |
| Sundargarh     |                       | 163970                | 106876         | 58580          | 165456                | 100.9063                     |
| <b>Odisha</b>  |                       | <b>3774446</b>        | <b>2200664</b> | <b>1418264</b> |                       |                              |

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