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The Elderly Dependents in India: A Critical Review

Swasti Vardhan Mishra

This paper aims at evaluating the situation of the elderly dependency in different states of India from the perspectives of demography, economy and the changes in the life expectancy. The situation is evaluated through a conventional measure of old age dependency ratio (OADR) and an economic measure of old age economic dependency rate (OAEDR) and a latest measure of prospective old age dependency ratio (POADR).The use of census data, 2001 and state wise life tables (2004-2008) are made to arrive at conclusions. The focus of the paper is on emphasising the point that elders are not burdens, in spite of the fact that they contribute at very low mark to the economy, they are socially an asset. Few suggestions are provided by which dependency could be disburdened and old age security can be strengthened. At the end, few of the government policies to counter the old age insecurity are provided to look at the presently functioning administrative machinery.

Keywords: Ageing, Life Expectancy, Prospective Age, Location Quotient, Dependency

Notestein has defined Ageing as a 'triumph of civilisation' and a crucial determinant of economic development (Chakraborti, 2004). Ageing, demographically speaking, is the growth in the proportion of aged population (60+) in the total population, over a period. UN defines a population above 65 years of age as *aged* and defines a country *ageing* where the proportion of people over 65 years of age reaches 7%. Aging is the result of the interplay of two forces of population dynamics-fertility and mortality. There are two processes involved in the ageing of a population— ageing due to change at the base, attributable to the decline in fertility and ageing due to change at the apex, attributable to the mortality reduction in the elderly population.

Table 1 and Fig. 1, show the trend of elderly population in different census years. The proportion aged has increased from 5.6 % in 1961 to 6.5% in 1981 and 7.4% in 2001. The data has been procured from the Census of India and asterisk (*) denotes that the data are projected.

Dependency is the propensity of a group or a section of population to depend on the other section of the same population for meeting its needs and requirements. Burden on the other hand is a derogatory term, which implies the intolerable and stress creating characteristic of a dependent population. Aged population is considered as a dependent burden from two aspects—

i. The aged do not contribute to the economy due to their unproductive nature.

Table 1: Distribution of Population by Broad Age Groups

Year	*Age-Groups*				*Percentage Change in*
	0-14	*15-59*	*60+*	*Total*	*Elderly Population*
1951	38.4	56.1	5.5	100	-
1961	41.1	53.3	5.6	100	23.9
1971	42	52	6	100	33.7
1981	39.7	53.9	6.4	100	33
1991	37.6	55.7	6.7	100	29.7
2001	35.3	56.9	7.4	100	25.2
2011*	29	62.7	8.2	100	-
2021*	25.1	64	10.7	100	-

ii. The needs of the aged are met by transferring the economic fruits of the productive population through various fiscal mechanisms.

The situation of dependency in India is typical and shows certain exclusive characteristics-

a. The familial assistance in the old age is higher in India. According to CSO, Govt. of India 2011 report around 75-85% of the aged are supported by their

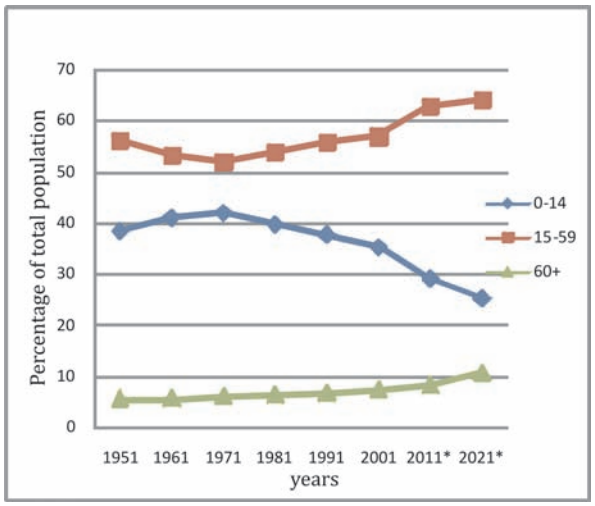

Fig 1.

families, either by spouse, children or grandchildren.

b. The proportion of elderly workers is high in India, particularly in the rural areas, where the concept of retirement is vague (James, 1994). According to NSSO 2007-08, 39% of the aged population is involved in any sort of productive work. The reason for large chunk of elderly workers could be their huge involvement in unorganised and agricultural sector.

c. The adult population of India is burdened with 'Double-Dependency'— the fertility has not dropped as desired, resulting in young dependency burden. The young dependency is coupled with reduction in old age mortality to shoot up the total dependency.

There had been numerous theories and hypothesis to proclaim aged population as dependent burden. The hypothesis which asserts that the labour productivity decreases with age, argues in terms of—

- Elderly cannot adapt well to the changing technology.
- Under controlled laboratory conditions, psychologists observed that both physical and mental reactions decline from middle ages onwards. (Chakraborti, 2004)
- The social roles attached to the adult and the old population influences their sub-conscious mind and drive them accordingly.
- The interest of the labour union decreases from the recruitment of young and dynamic workers and involvement in research and development to income and pension reservations. (Chakraborti, 2004)

Secondly, as the population ages and become frail, the cost on healthcare as well as infrastructure rises. The Asian countries face 'double burden of diseases'. The healthcare costs escalate on two fronts- expenditure is to be made for struggling against the communicable diseases and malnutrition on one hand, on the other, the non- communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, dementia, impairments, blindness have to be dealt with also. Moreover, with the 'oldest old' population (80+) increasing at a much rapid rate, there is sudden need of 'care' rather than cure. It has two implications: (a) if India has not enough resources to invest in the 'care' industry, there are chances of wastage of human resource, as the family members would have to look after the elder and in most of the cases one particular member is responsible for the same. This member might have to trade off economically gainful activity for looking after the aged, and (b) if India invests in the 'care' industry, then in the long run this investment would bore fruits in terms of employment generation.

Table 2 and Fig. 2 show the old age dependency rates of India over different census years. The rate of change in old age dependency first showed a declining rate of change from 1961 to 1991 but increased to all time high by 0.9% during 1991-2001. The sudden increase can be due to the onset of the processes of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation in the year 1992, which played its part to bring in the improvements in the health care and sanitation conditions. This affected the mortality conditions of the elderly, positively.

The other side of the coin is bit lustrous and optimistic. According to Getzen and Gerdtham et al, there is no positive correlation between age structure and health care expenditure. Zweifel et al also found that ageing had no effect on per capita health care expenditure. The views of Barro are inspiring, he holds the view that the savings are done not to spend on old ages rather for the bequest to the next generation. Moreover, Ageing is accompanied by lowering of fertility, so it can be assumed that the increase in the old age economic dependency is balanced by the decrease

Table 2: Old Age Dependency Ratio of India, 1961-2001

Year	*All*	*Male*	*Female*	*Rural*	*Urban*
1961	10.9	10.9	10.9	11.4	8.7
1971	11.5	11.4	11.6	12.2	8.9
1981	12	11.8	12.2	13	9.2
1991	12.2	12.2	12.2	13.2	9.7
2001	13.1	13.1	13.8	14.1	10.8

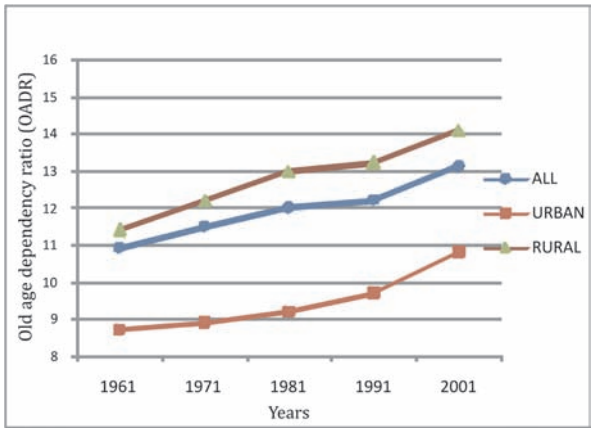

Fig 2.

in the young age economic dependency. Aaron, optimistically, points out that the saving rates of the retired people (65+) are less that of those in the age bracket 45-64 but higher than that of those in the age group 25-44.

International initiatives in the form of Madrid International plan of action on ageing(2002), United Nations proclamation on ageing, Shanghai plan of action (2002) and Macau outcome document (2007), have been working to bring out 'Graceful ageing' in the world domain. "Graceful ageing is a process of optimising opportunities for physical, social and mental well being throughout life, in order to ensure a healthy, independent, quality life in older age" (Chakraborti, 2004). The World Health Organization (WHO) has termed this process Active Ageing since the late nineties. "The approach towards ageing, by UN is based on the principles of independence, participation, dignity, care and self fulfilment. The shift has been observed from 'Needs based approach', where the aged population are held as targets to 'Rights based participatory approach' that recognises the equality of opportunity and treatment in all aspects of life of the elderly population" (Chakraborti, 2004)

Today's young are tomorrow's elders- This statement is the backdrop of my work. The elderly might be frail and weak, incapable of doing physical labour and contributing nothing to the economy- but that does not implies that that they are unproductive. Elders are the personification of expertise, experience and a force that binds emotionally and commands discipline and dignity. With prompt policies, initiatives and harnessing the typical elderly qualities ageing can be made much graceful.

Methodology

Data

The data that has been employed to show various measures of dependency and situation of elderly in India are taken from- The Census of India, Office of the Registrar General of India and the state wise Life Tables, computed for the period of 2004-2008.

Old Age Dependency Ratio (OADR)

This is a conventional measure of elderly dependency, which defines that elderly population (60+) are dependent on adult population (15-59), generally the result is multiplied by 100. The ultimate result gives the number of elders per 100 adults.

$$\text{OADR} = \frac{\text{Population above 60 years of age}}{\text{Population in the age group } 15-59} \times 100$$

But here, I have not multiplied the results by 100 which gives the number of elders per adult in the population. This measure does not take into account the increase in Life expectancy or employment situation.

$$\text{OADR} = \frac{\text{Population above 60 years of age}}{\text{Population in the age group } 15-59}$$

Old Age Economic Dependency Rate (OAEDR)

Frank Hobbs in the book *The methods and materials of demography* (2004), pointed that the conventional dependency does not points to the actual economic dependency. He suggested that instead of OADR, the economically inactive population should be

divided by economically active population to get at economically dependent ratio. Here, the old age population (60+) has been divided by the number of workers to get at economically dependent ratio. The measure has been termed as Old Age Economic Dependency Rate (OAEDR), as there is ample probability of 60+ population being involved in the working population and said earlier, the chances are fairly good in India.

$$\text{OAEDR} = \frac{\text{Population above 60 years of age}}{\text{Number of workers}}$$

Prospective Old Age Dependency Ratio

This is a measure of old-age dependency, where the dependent age is considered based on remaining years of life (prospective measure) in place of the number of years lived (retrospective measure). This measure has been introduced by Sanderson and Scherbov (2008, 2010) to accommodate the changes in Life expectancy over time and space. They considered two ages- Chronological age (used in the conventional OADR measure) and the Prospective age (used in the new POADR measure). Prospective age is the age whose assigned societal roles or duties are postponed to later ages, implicit by increase in the Life expectancy. For example in case of Delhi, the age at which life expectancy is below 15 years is 75 and the same threshold is 65 years in case of India, so it can be concluded that for a person of age 75 years in Delhi the prospective age is 65 years. POADR is obtained by dividing the population having life expectancy less than 15 years by the population above 20 years of age having Life expectancy more than 15 years. The lower age limit of the age group with Life expectancy less than 15 years has been termed as *Old-Age threshold* by Sanderson and Scherbov.

$$\text{POADR} = \frac{\text{Population older than the old age threshold}}{\text{Population ageing 20 to the old age threshold}}$$

Sanderson and Scherbov stated that the increase in life expectancy would bring in shift in the human behaviour and there would be deliberate delays in the activities by several years. The population would postpone their marriages, child bearing or extend their period of study- '40 is the new 30'.

I have adjusted the measure for the sake of easy comparability among the different measures of elderly dependency, instead of using 20 year as the lower limit of the denominator, I have used 15 year as the lower limit.

Location Quotient

Location Quotient (LQ) is a simple measure. Which compares the achievement of a sub-areal unit in a particular aspect to the achievement of the whole country in the same aspect. This measure reflects whether the sub-areal unit is performing above or below the national average. Location Quotient (LQ), in case of Old age Dependency is defined as follows,

$$\text{LQ} = \frac{\text{Old age dependency in particular state}}{\text{Old age dependency of the country}}$$

The result of the Location Quotient, if below 1 indicates that the sub-areal unit (states or union territories), are having dependency below the national average and vice-versa.

The Elderly Dependents in India

The spatial location of elderly dependency in India is viewed from the three aspects- Demographically, Economically and through change in Life expectancy. The elderly dependency in India, on average, is highest with respect to Prospective old age dependency ratio (POADR), higher in OAEDR and lowest in the case of OADR (Table no. 4), which implies that though India has highest percentage of population in the working age group (15-59), the percentage working is very low (Table no. 3). The ample opportunity to extend one's education in recent times in India has prompted the tendency to get into work at later ages than what used to be few decades back (reason for higher OAEDR than OADR). Employment in unorganised sector, disguised unemployment in the rural agricultural sector also plays its part, besides unemployment, to shoot up the dependency ratio. The high marks of POADR spell out the lack of interest and initiative to increase the life expectancy. It can be concluded, though implicitly, by looking at the range of all the three measures of dependency that, the age structure of the states are having fairly good differences (OADR range- 0.09941) but in terms of employment generation the states are wider apart

(OAEDR range-0.24713). The states are closest when the question of increasing the life expectancy crops up (POADR range- 0.08682), that means the states are more or less at same footing in prospering the health policies and infrastructure (Table 4).

The highest OADR and OAEDR values are found in Kerala (Fig. 3 & 4), obviously due to its age structure- the percent elder is 10.48% (3% above the national average) and due to lagging behind in employment generation- employment rate of 32.30% (7% below the national average) (Table 3).

Kerala is the only state to reach the final phase of the Demographic transition (Office of the Registrar general and Census commissioner, India), thus the age pyramid of the state is becoming cylindrical gradually to accommodate growing elder population and diminishing youngest young. It is called a Remittance economy – with most of its working population engaged in economic activities abroad, most specifically in the Middle East. The low employment rate, which forms the reason for high OAEDR could be due to two reasons- (i) the regular flow of high income in the form of remittance discourages the propensity to work by eligible working class. (ii) the census enumeration might suffer from the coverage error as the population which resides abroad might be left out. The elderly dependency might has been also increased due to the return of emigrant old age population as they retire from work (James, 1994).

Punjab is the closest second in case of OADR and distant second in respect of OAEDR (Fig. 3 & 4). The old age group (60+) forms 9% of the total population resulting in higher OADR. The economy of Punjab is based on agricultural sector. This is a state which has fully operationalised the Green Revolution- so there might be ample chances of disguised unemployment in the form of employment in the family farm, where the marginal productivity of the labour is too less to be considered. Moreover, Punjabis have a high tendency to invest their earnings in different sector, which implies that the return from the investments might be too high to instigate the propensity to work. Like Kerala, people from Punjab also have high tendency to work abroad and send remittances, they have generally migrated to North American countries like USA, Canada.

Himachal Pradesh comes third in case of OADR due to its ageing population (9% of the total population) but in OAEDR (Fig. 3 & 4) it has been pushed back as the employment scenario is profoundly good (Table 3), when compared to the national average (10% above the national average).

Arunachal Pradesh records the lowest OADR and OAEDR (Fig. 3 & 4), among the states, owing to the less percentage of elderly in the total population (4.55%) and comparatively fair rate of employment (around 44%) (Table 3).

Coming to the Union Territories, Puducherry has the highest Dependency burden, both OADR and OAEDR. Dadra and Nagar Haveli, has got the lowest OADR and OAEDR- its aged population is bit high than half of the India's average. The employment rate, on the other hand is second highest in case of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, which make its way to bring down the dependency.

The POADR is an interesting measure of dependency, which takes into account the changes in the Life expectancy. As said earlier, the increasing Life expectancy influences a population to be into the economically productive work for a much longer time and influences policies regarding retirement age and benefits associated with it accordingly. The POADR value for India is 0.2441 (Table 4 & Fig. 5), a bit less than double the OADR. India has not performed well in raising its Life expectancy, which is 66.72 at birth and 69.84 at first year of life (Table 3). Karnataka, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat has the lowest POADR- which means that they have performed well in bringing up their Life expectancy. When compared to the national average, where the Old Age Threshold (OAT) is 65, the OAT in Delhi is 75 years and 70 years in case of Karnataka, Gujarat and Delhi.

This implies that a person aged 75 years in Delhi and 70 years in other 3 states, has a Prospective Age of 65 years, i.e., they can perform at the same level as that of a 65 year old. This draws on a keen interest regarding retirement regulations and benefits. Retirement ages could be shifted to 70-75 years in these states and the criteria for all other schemes could be the same age group.

Tamil Nadu and West Bengal has the highest POADR, in spite of their life expectancy values above the national average (Table 3). The fairly good Life expectancy of these two states are

Table 3: Percent Elder, Percent Adult, Employment Rate, No. of Workers of Different States of India, 2001

State/ UT	Total Population	Adult Population (15-59)	Elderly Population (60+)	Percent Adult	Percent Elder	No. of Workers	Employment Rate	Life Expectancy At 1 Year Of Age
India	1028610328	585638723	76622321	56.93	7.45	402234724	39.1	69.84
Andhra Pradesh	76210007	45890354	5788078	60.22	7.59	34893859	45.79	71.07
Arunachal Pradesh	1097968	604117	49916	55.02	4.55	482902	43.98	-
Assam	26655528	15095846	1560366	56.63	5.85	9538591	35.78	65.34
Bihar	82998509	42445259	5510274	51.14	6.64	27974606	33.7	67.43
Chattisgarh	20833803	11608684	1504383	55.72	7.22	9679871	46.46	67.94
Goa	1347668	897157	112273	66.57	8.33	522855	38.8	-
Gujarat	50671017	30500549	3499063	60.19	6.91	21255521	41.95	71.35
Haryana	21144564	11899996	1584089	56.28	7.49	8377466	39.62	72.98
Himachal Pradesh	6077900	3631230	547564	59.74	9.01	2992461	49.24	65.28
Jammu And Kashmir	10143700	5805636	675324	57.23	6.66	3753815	37.01	73.5
Jharkhand	26945829	14625165	1578662	54.28	5.86	10109030	37.52	65.92
Karnataka	52850562	31891095	4062022	60.34	7.69	23534791	44.53	71.56
Kerala	31841374	20182700	3335675	63.39	10.48	10283887	32.3	75.63
Madhya Pradesh	60348023	32655160	4280924	54.11	7.09	25793519	42.74	66.8
Maharashtra	96878627	57205509	8454660	59.05	8.73	41173351	42.5	72.64
Manipur	2166788	1310080	145470	60.46	6.71	945213	43.62	-
Meghalaya	2318822	1229059	105726	53	4.56	970146	41.84	-
Mizoram	888573	525038	49023	59.09	5.52	467159	52.57	-
Nagaland	1990036	1166560	90323	58.62	4.54	847796	42.6	-

Orissa	36804660	21495626	3039100	58.4	8.26	14276488	38.79	66.92
Punjab	24358999	14455528	2191693	59.34	9	9127474	37.47	73.14
Rajasthan	56507188	29866101	3810272	52.85	6.74	23766655	42.06	71.6
Sikkim	540851	320966	29040	59.34	5.37	263043	48.64	-
Tamil Nadu	62405679	39758463	5507400	63.71	8.83	27878282	44.67	71.63
Tripura	3199203	1886297	232549	58.96	7.27	1159561	36.25	-
Uttar Pradesh	166197921	85888210	11649468	51.68	7.01	53983824	32.48	66.81
Uttarakhand	8489349	4730247	654356	55.72	7.71	3134036	36.92	-
West Bengal	80176197	47718976	5700099	59.52	7.11	29481690	36.77	71.59
A&N Island	356152	232463	17366	65.27	4.88	136254	38.26	-
Chandigarh	900635	593235	44912	65.87	4.99	340422	37.8	-
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	220490	133814	8814	60.69	4	114122	51.76	-
Daman & Diu	158204	106897	8042	67.57	5.08	72791	46.01	-
Delhi	13850507	8616742	719650	62.21	5.2	4545234	32.82	72.59
Lakshadweep	60650	36134	3729	59.58	6.15	15354	25.32	-
Puducherry	974345	629830	81016	64.64	8.31	342655	35.17	-

Source: Compiled by the author from Census of India

Table 4: Measures of Elderly Dependency of Different States of India and their Location Quotients, 2001

State/ UT	No. of Workers	Elderly Population (60+)	Adult Population (15-59)	OADR	OAEDR	POADR	LQ OADR	LQ OAEDR
India	402234724	76622321	585638723	0.131	0.191	0.244	-	-
Andhra Pradesh	34893859	5788078	45890354	0.126	0.166	0.245	0.964	0.871
Arunachal Pradesh	482902	49916	604117	0.083	0.103	-	0.632	0.543
Assam	9538591	1560366	15095846	0.103	0.164	0.190	0.790	0.859
Bihar	27974606	5501274	42445259	0.130	0.197	0.226	0.991	1.032
Chattisgarh	9679871	1504383	11608684	0.130	0.155	0.217	0.991	0.816
Goa	522855	112273	897157	0.125	0.215	-	0.957	1.127
Gujarat	21255521	3499063	30500549	0.115	0.165	0.166	0.877	0.864
Haryana	8377466	1584089	11899996	0.133	0.189	0.185	1.018	0.993
Himachal Pradesh	2992461	547564	3631230	0.151	0.183	0.182	1.153	0.961
Jammu And Kashmir	3753815	675324	5805636	0.116	0.180	0.182	0.889	0.944
Jharkhand	10109030	1578662	14625165	0.108	0.156	0.191	0.825	0.820
Karnataka	23534791	4062022	31891095	0.127	0.173	0.160	0.974	0.906
Kerala	10283887	3335675	20182700	0.165	0.324	0.184	1.264	1.703
Madhya Pradesh	25793519	4280924	32655160	0.131	0.166	0.224	1.002	0.871
Maharashtra	41173351	8454660	57205509	0.148	0.205	0.164	1.130	1.078
Manipur	945213	145470	1310080	0.111	0.154	-	0.849	0.808
Meghalaya	970146	105726	1229059	0.086	0.109	-	0.658	0.572
Mizoram	467159	49023	525038	0.093	0.105	-	0.714	0.551
Nagaland	847796	90323	1166560	0.077	0.107	-	0.592	0.559

Orissa	14276488	3039100	21495626	0.141	0.213	0.212	1.081	1.118
Punjab	9127474	2191693	14455528	0.152	0.240	0.185	1.159	1.261
Rajasthan	23766655	3810272	29866101	0.128	0.160	0.177	0.975	0.842
Sikkim	263043	29040	320966	0.091	0.110	-	0.692	0.580
Tamil Nadu	27878282	5507400	39758463	0.139	0.198	0.245	1.059	1.037
Tripura	1159561	232549	1886297	0.123	0.201	-	0.943	1.053
Uttar Pradesh	53983824	11649468	85888210	0.136	0.216	0.226	1.037	1.133
Uttarakhand	3134036	654356	4730247	0.138	0.209	-	1.058	1.096
West Bengal	29481690	5700099	47718976	0.120	0.193	0.246	0.913	1.015
A&N Island	136254	17366	232463	0.075	0.128	-	0.571	0.669
Chandigarh	340422	44912	593235	0.076	0.132	-	0.579	0.693
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	114122	8814	133814	0.066	0.077	-	0.504	0.405
Daman & Diu	72791	8042	106897	0.075	0.111	-	0.575	0.58
Delhi	4545234	719650	8616742	0.084	0.158	0.162	0.639	0.831
Lakshadweep	15354	3729	36134	0.103	0.243	-	0.789	1.275
Puducherry	342655	81016	629830	0.129	0.236	-	0.983	1.241

Source: Compiled by the author from Census of India

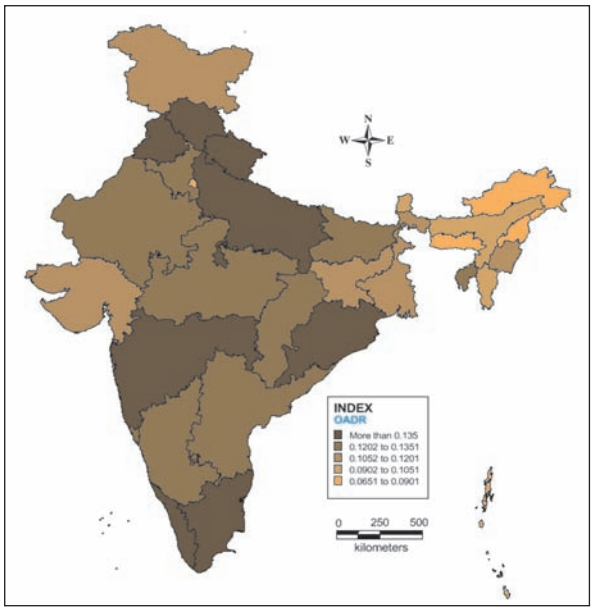

Fig 3.

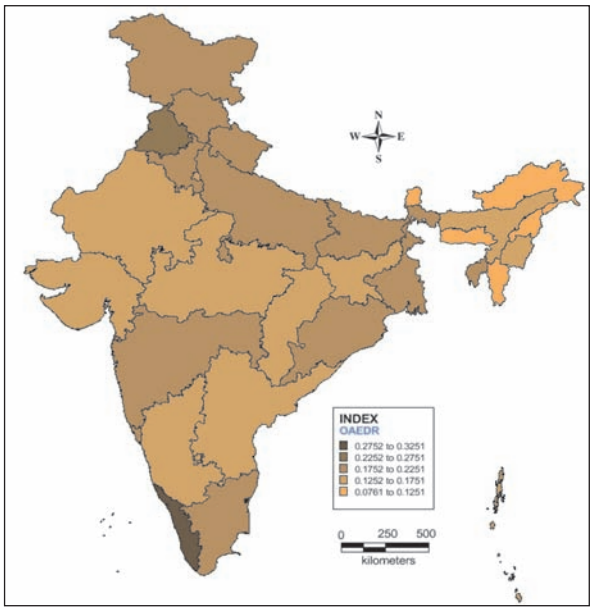

Fig 4.

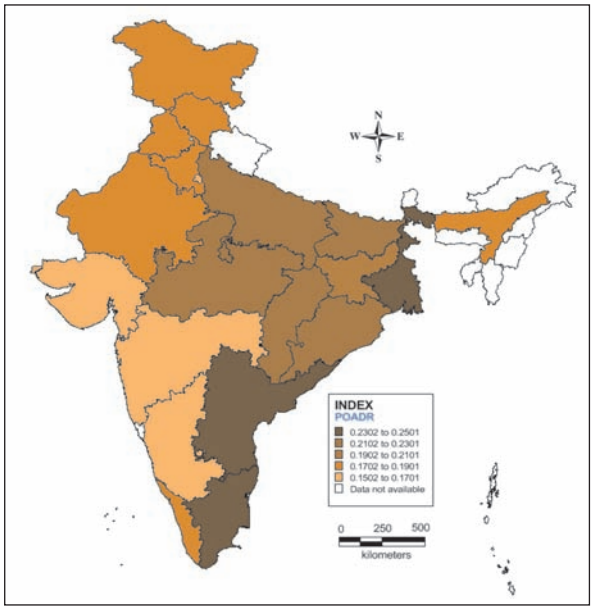

Fig 5.

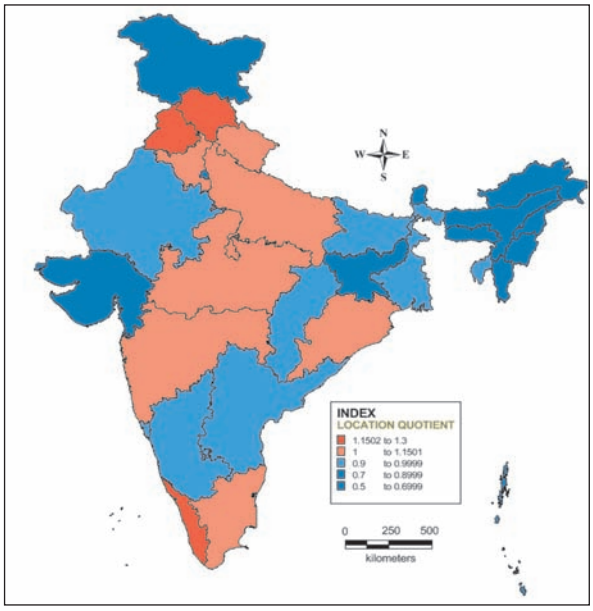

Fig 6.

masked by the enormity of the elderly population due to low Old Age Threshold (OAT) at 65 years.

Looking at the data tables it must be clear that the Indian states are covering up the stages of Demographic Transition, without any improvement in the Life expectancy and economic situations. In almost all of the states and union territories, except few, POADR holds the highest position, followed by the OAEDR, with OADR standing at the lowest mark.

Location quotient is a simple graphical measure to show the over performance or under performance of a state in Demographic transition, employment generation and increasing life expectancy, when compared to national average. The states marked as red shows their under performance in bringing down the dependency and those marked blue

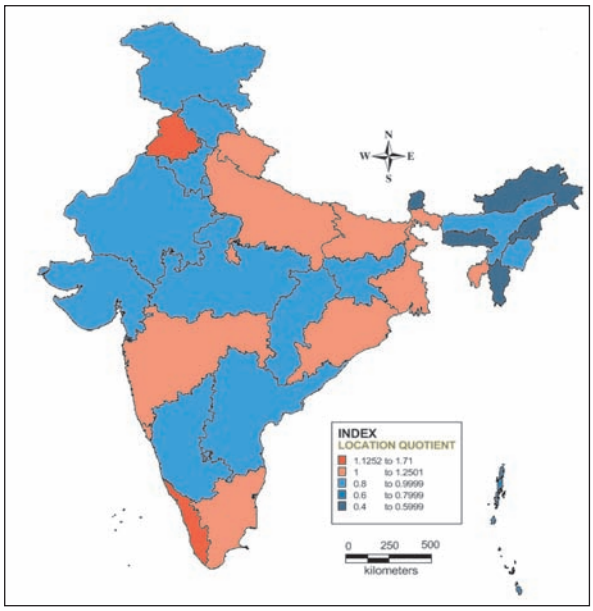

Fig 7.

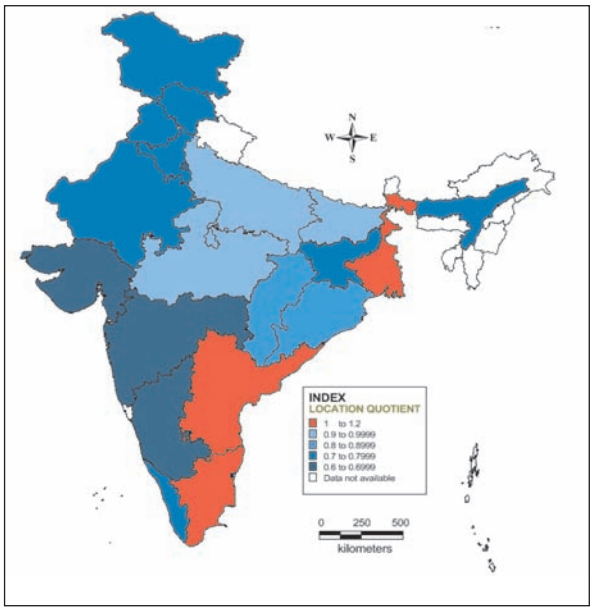

Fig 8.

shows their over performance i.e., those above 1 are marked in red (Fig 6, 7 & 8). The intensity of a colour shows the intensity of the performance compared to the national average

Disburdening the Dependency

Few suggestions can be provided to unburden the dependency in the context of India

i. The exclusivity of elderly dependency in India is the familial assistance to the elder person. The family system in India had traditionally been joint or extended, this resulted in older person being assigned the role of a guardian and they were looked after by all. Recently, the trend has become diagonally opposite- the growing economic and emotional nucleation has resulted in nuclear families. The older people are being left at the native place, while children go on a job spree with their family. If the structure of joint or extended family could be reinstalled, of course with the same economic and emotional characteristics, the old age dependency could be diluted on social and psychological fronts.

ii. Another approach towards reducing the elderly dependency could be their engagement with work, which must be of their interest. The post-retirement jobs such as guest faculty in academic institutions, experienced guidance personnel in technical fields could be the best possible option to nourish the elders with economic and psychological means. This is a good way by which the experience and expertise of the old population could be harnessed.

iii. The old age is a psychosocial construct; a person is old if he thinks himself old. The labour laws must be framed in such a way that there must not be any fixed retirement age, as such. The policy framers think that by deciding the retirement age, the scope for employment of the young generation could be sustained. But very much contrary to the view is the fact that such decisions seldom increase the employment situations (Chakraborti, 2004).

iv. The clause for voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) could be scrapped, as a means to bring down the dependency. The clause could be outlawed so that government does not have to bear the cost of the extra years of retirement. The suggestion could be substituted for a low early retirement benefit.

v. With around 94% of the working class works in an unorganized sector[1], the government should be able to enforce its retirement and insurance benefit at much rapid pace. National old age pension scheme (NOAPS) and Annapurna scheme should be strengthened so as to facilitate the maximum number of person in the target group. Rs 20, as the price for daily sustenance, defined by the Planning Commission is a

most meagre amount. Tendulkar committee and NCEUS recommendations to increase the monthly monetary requirement to get above the poverty level have not brought fruitful results. If Rs 20 is the daily requirement then Rs 200 per month (NOAPS) is nothing less than an embarrassment to the target group.

vi. The government could seek asset-based programme in place of transfer-based programme. This helps in two forms-firstly, it will lessen the pressure on government's economic resources, secondly, the monthly deposits of the target groups could be invested in the financial market for gains. The monthly deposits must be too low to enable inclusive participation or the benefits could be kept at different levels based on the level of monthly deposits, which would provide the working class with array of opportunities. At whatever low mark the monthly deposits would be, the government is sure to bear less cost than the transfer based system, recently, in 2011 government has decided asset-based programme for public, private and unorganized sector workers. The monthly deposit has been planned at Rs 500 and out of the total deposit half of the money would be invested in the financial market.

vii. For the asset-based system to gain strong hold among the masses, the inflation must be brought under control. This might bring confidence among the elders that their money would not lose value in future, besides, the taxation policy could be manoeuvred to give the elders maximum return on their investment.

viii. Post retirement employment in the form of small retail centres or training centres could be provided to the elderly population. This scheme could be channelized through micro financing institutions and credit can be provided at suitable rate.

ix. Women and destitutes are the most deprived group in the elderly population. Their anguish intensifies if they are issue less or have been abandoned by their children. Several NGOs are working to rehabilitate such elders but dearth of appropriate funding due to tight-fisted regulation of the government is creating an obstacle. The government must lighten the control and enhance the capacity of the network of NGOs. It should assign for itself the role of a guardian and inspect and scrutinise the works of the NGOs.

x. The maintenance and welfare of parents and senior citizens act, 2007 is a powerful mechanism to secure the needs of the older age population. But the act must be supplemented with certain fiscal measures favourable to children. Tax concession, subsidies, etc could be provided to children who look after their parents, which would act as an impetus as well as compensates for the 'Economic burden' of the elderly population.

xi. Government could also look for increasing employment capacity of the public enterprises and for balancing this, it can reduce the wages or the retirement benefits. If this could be realised- then two motives of reducing the dependency as well as equitable distribution of income could be accomplished.

xii. As said earlier, rural agricultural sector has never seen any formal retirement age. To curtail dependency in this field- easily available credit at lowest possible rate, appropriate technology and economically viable procurement service could be transfused to the every corner of the country. This would enable maximum return to the farmer. Regarding the landless labourers, besides, self employment and old age benefits, there could be a special provision for their economic rehabilitation at the incidence of land acquisition due to infrastructural development.

Government Policies to Strengthen the Old Age Security

The government of India and that of different states have taken initiative in the direction of strengthening old age security. Few of the policies and schemes could be outlined as follows—

1. *National Policy on Older Persons, 1999*
   The policy, by central government, is based on the principle of enabling old age security. The policy adheres to inter sectoral collaboration and cooperation between government, private and NGO sector. The policy works in the field of income, health, housing, sanitation, education, etc.
2. *National Old Age Pension Scheme, 1995*
   This is a scheme where a elder of 65 years or more is provided with a monthly pension. The

eligibility for the scheme is 65 years of age and a condition of destitute. The amount was fixed at Rs 75, which has been revised to Rs 200. Besides, different states have their own old age pension scheme, which ranges from Rs 300 in West Bengal to Rs 75 in Assam.

3. *Annapurna Scheme*
   This is a recently launched 'in kind assistance programme' by the central government. According to this scheme 10 kg of wheat or rice is provided to destitute elders who are not been covered by NOAPS and whose son are not residing with them.
4. *Insurance Schemes*
   Two important insurance schemes have been implemented through Life Insurance Corporation of India-
   i. Jeevan Dhara-This is a pension scheme for artists, cine artists, self employed, businessmen, professionals. These are the people who loose their earning after they cease to work, as they are not covered by the pension schemes offered to the central or state government employees.
   ii. Jeevan Akshay- This provides life long pension and lump sum death benefits. This scheme also provides surviving benefits after 7 years.
5. *National Policy on Senior Citizens, 2011*
   This is a draft submitted to the union Ministry for social justice and empowerment. This draft outlines the ways by which economic dependency can be minimized through-old age pension scheme, Public Distribution Scheme (PDS), tax concession, etc. It also talks of implementing Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) for the oldest old, for which in case of disability, loss of adult children and responsibility for grand children and women, they would be provided with additional pension (from Rs 200 to Rs 500). There is also a provision for increasing the pension to Rs 1000 per month per person.
6. *In a fresh endeavour to strengthen the Old Age Economic Security,* the central government has planned for an asset-based programme in July 2011. According to the scheme a person is needed to pay Rs 500 as a monthly deposit. He/she would get back the money in lump sum amount. The half of the money would be invested in the financial market under the regulation of Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA). PFRDA has appointed six fund managers to manage the funds at minimum charges. The con of the scheme is that the government would charge tax on the income.
7. *Keeping in mind the 433 million*[2] *unorganized sector workers* central government has approved Rs 1000 crore as the initial fund to look after their need. The Ministry of Labour and Employment has been made the nodal agency to look after the scheme implementation and proper functioning.

Conclusion

According to a report 19.6% of India's population would be above 60 years of age by 2050[3]. For this, we should be equipped with necessary policy interventions and social motivation strategy to cope with the issue. Endeavour should be made to regard ageing as a process and not a stage or point of culmination. Ageing is not different in any form from the stage we get matured from a teenage to an adult. The decentralisation and equal distribution of the social security should be the agenda of the coming plan periods, besides, the prospect of engaging the elders in the workforce should be looked after.

The social motivation programmes should be launched to propagate the benefits of a joint and extended family and also to make people realise that elders are not burdens. The familial set up, where the head is always the eldest person of the household should be infused in the society through proper propaganda and publicity.

Women and destitute must be rehabilitated by expanding the network of NGOs and introducing Public- Private Partnership (PPP) in the field. Government and policy makers should try to deviate a bit from the issue of population growth to issues of population structure.

Above all, aged are the person who are not only aged in physiological terms but also aged in terms of their experience of the world. The legacy of our fore fathers are passed onto through them. Our elders are more of an asset than liabilities.

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Endnote

1 Deccan Herald, 29th July, 2011
2 Deccan Herald, 29th July, 2011
3 World Social Security Report— 2010/11: Providing coverage in times of crisis and beyond, International Labour Office

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