

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE ELDERLY PEOPLE IN GARAIMARI VILLAGE OF DHEMAJI DISTRICT OF ASSAM**

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**Abstract:** *Ageing is a natural and universal process and it is also a socio-cultural and socially constructed idea in the society. Because of the particular norms, roles, behaviors and attitudes associated with a particular age group. Elderly abuse is become a serious issue in the global world and it also takes a serious position in the rural society of Assam. The discrimination and elder abuse against aged persons and the socio-economic problems and insecurity are increasing day by day. Mistreatment, misbehavior, lack of appropriate action and avoidance of aged person are known as elderly abuse. In the traditional joint family system the aged parents were greatly respected and honored by their family members and given a highly position in the society. But due to the changes of time and] impact of modern culture and tradition and also because of the destruction of joint family system and decline of norms and values, the elder people are deprived of their honor and respect and their needs. Therefore, nowadays in some families the emotional attachment between the younger children and aged parents are declined and neglected and abuse of the elderly persons are increasing in both the rural and urban settings. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to find out the socio-economic conditions, various problems and challenges of aged person of the present Garaimari village of Dhemajji district of Assam.*

**Keywords:** Ageing, Elderly Abuse, Joint Family, Norms, Culture.

## I. Introduction

Elderly abuse and discrimination against the aged persons is a serious issue in the global world. Generally, age and ageing is a biological process and it is an integral part of human life. But sociologically age and ageing is considered as socially and culturally constructed idea. This is just because of the particular norms, roles and duties which are associated with a particular age group. Therefore, it is socially defined. Elderly persons suffer a lot of socio-economic and health related problems in the rural society and even they are not free from the abuse also. Elder abuse may be physical, mental or psychological and economical, and elderly abuse is closely connected with the socio-economic condition of the aged persons and their family. According to Hess (1976) "Age is an inevitable and irreversible biological process of life".<sup>1</sup> The World health organization (2004) defines elder abuse as a "Single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expected of trust which causes harm or distress to and older person."<sup>2</sup> There is lot of communication problem between the old and the young that interdependence between the generations is becoming an undesired, purposeful relationship. The young and old do not conceive the idea that they belong to the same system. The intergenerational bond is missing in almost all the communities which necessary for the continuity of life. The interrelationship between the generations is necessary for a balanced society.<sup>3</sup> Globally, the number of elderly persons is increasing very faster in compare to the number of all younger age groups. In 1980, children aged 0-9 years substantially outnumbered persons aged 60 years or over (1.1 billion versus 0.4 billion), but by 2030 the global population of old persons is expected to have surpassed that of children under age 10 (1.41 billion versus 1.35 billion). The projections also indicate that in 2050 there will be older persons aged 65 or over than adolescents and youth at ages 10-24 years (2.1 billion versus 2.0 billion). The number of people at very advanced ages is increasing from 137 million to 425 million. In most countries, the growth in the absolute number of older persons will occur in a context of low or declining fertility, leading to increasing shares of older persons in the population. In 2050, older persons are projected to account for one in five people globally. In 2050, older persons are expected to account for 35% of population in Europe, 28 % in Northern America and Caribbean , 24% in

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<sup>1</sup> Sebastian, D. (2013). Ageing and Elder Abuse. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p68

<sup>3</sup> Bhai, L. T.(2002). AGEING INDIAN PERSPECTIVE . New Delhi: Decent Books.

Asia ,23% in Oceania and 9% in Africa. (World Population Ageing, United Nations, 2017) Approximately 1 in 10 Americans aged 60+ have experienced some form of elder abuse. Some estimates range as high as 5 million who have been abused have a 300% higher risk of death when compared to those who have not been mistreated.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1980s scientific research and government actions were reported from Australia, Canada, China, Norway, Sweden and the United States. Although elder abuse was first identified in developed countries, where most of the existing research has been conducted, anecdotal evidence and other reports from some developing countries have shown that it is a universal phenomenon. That elder abuse is being taken for more seriously now reflects the growing worldwide concern about human rights and gender equality, as well as about domestic violence and population.<sup>5</sup> After the China, India is the most populous country in the world. Its elderly constitute the faster growing segment of the population and is expected to cross 200 million by 2050. Demographic scenario in India shows a steep rise in the number and proportion of the elderly in the next few decades. The size of the elderly population has risen from 12.1 million in 1901 to approximately 77 million in census 2001. By 2013, the number of elderly 100 million and by 2025 the number would be about 177 million. Added to this, majority (three-fourth) of the elderly people are in rural areas by census, 2001.<sup>6</sup>

In the contemporary rural society of Assam, most of the aged persons have been ignored, faced misbehave and disrespect from their family members and society because of being aged and poor health condition. There are also increased intergenerational and adjustment gap between the old and younger generation and therefore, the conflict arises among them. It is also a silent and under reported issues in the present society. As an aged persons their socio-economic status and health conditions is very poor due to the avoidance by their own children. It is seen that traditional values, institutional importance and elder care are lost due to the introduction of western value, increasing materialistic and consumption life. Similarly, increasing employment opportunities of women in the both private and public sections, sometimes negatively affect on aged parents. They intentionally avoid the responsibility of the aged and sick parents. Therefore,

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<sup>4</sup> Elder Abuse Statistics & Fact, <https://www.nco.a.org>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.who.int>vioplence>

<sup>6</sup> Khan, M.Z., Yusuf, M.& Kaushik, A.(2013). Elderly Women- Vulnerability and Support Structures. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

now days in the rural societies also the tendency of avoidance, disrespect and negligence of elderly people are increasing in our family system. Therefore, it needs a serious study about the various problem faced by the elderly people in contemporary rural society.

## **II. Statement of the problem**

In the contemporary rural society of Assam elder abuse has been becoming a very sensitive and burning issue. It is also a silent and unreported problem in the society. Due to the changing life style i.e. introduction of modern way of life, enhancement materialistic interpretation of society, increasing employment opportunities in both private and government sector ,etc. the elder abuse is becoming serious problem. Because, in modern mechanize world all are busy only their own self and they try to avoid to take the responsibly of their parents and grandparents. In case of Assam, the rural areas also, the tendency of avoidance and disrespect of aged parents have been increasing day by day and in charge they lost the emotional support towards elders in the family.

## **III. Significance of the Study**

Increasing elderly abuse and socio-economic insecurity and problems of the aged persons is a recent phenomenon in the rural society of Assam. In the rural society of Dhemaji district of Assam, specially some areas, the aged parents are ignored and abused from the family members as well as the society. Most of the cases it has been noticed that the aged persons are avoided and mistreated by their own children. Till date there is no any research works has been done on elderly people and their socio-economic problems in Garaimari village of Dhemaji District of Assam. Therefore, focus on the serious concern of the aged people of Dhemaji district; it needs an in-depth study regarding various issues such as problems and challenges being faced by the elderly people in Garaimari village of Dhemaji district of Assam.

## **IV. Objectives of the Study**

- i. To study about the socio- economic background of the elderly people in Garaimari village.
- ii. To examine the problems and challenges faced by the elderly person in Garaimari village.

## **V. Field and Methodology**

The present study is conducted on Garaimari village of Dhemaji district of Assam which is located in 10 km distance from Dhemaji town under the Chamarajan Panchyat. The inhabitants of this village are from different clan and sub-clan of Sonowal Kachari tribes. The occupation is mainly agriculture; it is the sources of their livelihood among them.

This paper is based on descriptive type of research design. The data have been collected from both the primary and secondary sources, where Primary data have been collected from the elder people of Garaimari village of Dhemaji district with the help of interview and observation method. To find out the different important subject concerning about the mention topic of research an interview schedule has been prepared by the researcher as a research tool. Total 30 respondents has been selected as the sample from 30 households with the help of purposive random sampling, where in this village the number of household are 290. Both male and female respondent have been collected for find out different issues relation to elderly abuse. Secondary data have been collected from reviewing some relevant books, journals, as well as reviewed the reports of World health organization, Age well Foundation valid sources of internet.

## **VI. Result and Discussion**

From the study of the elderly people of mentioned village it has been found that, the inhabitants of this region, all belongs to the tribal community of Sonowal Kachari, which is the indigenous tribe of Assam. They are from the Mongoloid race of people. This village is the homeland for the several clan and sub-clan of Sonowal Kachari tribes such as Hagraal, Formal, Dangral, Dingiyal, Borhajuwal, etc. There are also different kinds of Hons (poriyal/family) such as Pedari, Tepari, Demari, Kachori, Hazari, Keotari, etc. Baitho is the main traditional religion (Worship) among the people of this village; although they follow the Hinduism. They also worship their ancestors for the welfare, relief from dangers, peace and security of the society. Although it has been mentioned that agriculture is the main sources of livelihood, in present time new generation involve themselves in daily labor, business and private and government job. From the interaction and conversation of the aged persons of this village it has been found that out of 30 respondents, 27 respondents are engaged in agricultural activity, where only 1 respondent engaged in teaching job. On the other hand only 2 respondents engaged in small scale

industry. Out of 30 respondents 11 respondents are male and 19 are female. 25 respondents out of 30 are from nuclear family and 5 respondents are from joint family.

**Table No.1: Age Groups of the Respondents**

Sl. No	Age Groups	Numbers of Respondents	Percentage %
1.	60-64	6	20%
2.	65-69	10	33%
3.	70-74	8	26%
4.	75-79	3	10%
5.	80-84	3	10%
<b>Total</b>		30	100%

The above mentioned Table No.1 has shown the different numbers of age groups of the elderly persons. The out of 30 respondents, there are 20% of elderly persons are from 60 to 64 age group, 33 % elderly persons are from the age group of 65-69, 26% respondents are from 70 to 74 age group, 10% elderly persons are from the age group of 75 to 79 and other 10% elderly persons are from the age group of 80-84. From the table it has been seen that highest numbers of respondents are from 65 to 69 age groups.

**Table No.2: Educational Background of the Respondents**

Sl. No	Educational Qualification of the respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
1.	Illiteracy	20	66%
2.	L.P.	5	16%
3.	High School	2	6%
4.	Matriculation	2	6%
5.	H.S.	1	3%
<b>Total</b>		30	100%

From the above mentioned Table No. 2 has shown the educational background of the respondents (aged people). Out of 30 respondents 66% elderly persons are illiterate; 16% respondents are studies up to L.P. school; 6% respondents studied high school, other 6% elderly persons passed matriculation and only 3% elderly person is H.S. passed.

Sl No	Problems and challenges of the respondents	Numbers of respondents	Percentage%
1.	<b>Social-economic problems-</b> (lower status, disrespect, loss of property, scarcity of food, etc.)	7	23%
2.	<b>Health problems</b> (poor health conditions, increasing disease, etc.)	8	26%
3.	<b>Psychological/Mental Problems</b> (depression, Alzheimer, dementia, insomnia, etc.)	2	6%
4.	<b>Adjustment problems</b> ( adjustment with younger generation, modern way of life and technology, etc)	4	13%
5.	<b>Abuse/ ill treatment</b> (physical, mental, financial, verbal abuse, etc.)	2	6%
6.	Family violence for ageing/ Age discrimination	3	10%
7.	Living separately from family members	4	13%
<b>Total</b>		30	100%

**Table No.3: Problems and Challenges faced by the Elderly Persons**

From the Table No.3, it has been shown that various problems and challenges and ill treatment faced by the elderly persons in Garaimari village. From the study it has been seen that out of 30 respondents 23% respondents suffered from different kinds of socio-economic problems. Social problems such as lower status in the family, disregard from society, disrespect, isolation and ignorance from the family members. Respondents viewed that due to their growing

of age and inactiveness, and weak health conditions they gradually keep away from raise the voice against family members and society as well. Similarly, different kinds of economic problems have found such as financial insecurity, scarcity of food, clothing, shelter, water and loss of resources, etc. From the table it has been also shown that from the total respondents 26% respondents suffered threatening health related problems such as poor health conditions ,increasing diseases like back pain, ear problems, blood pressure, diabetes, headache, stroke and lame, etc. The table has also shown that 6% of elderly are victim of psychological/ mental problems such as depressions, Alzheimer, dementia, insomnia, etc. It has been also shown that from the total respondents 13% of elderly people suffered adjustment problems and they are unable to adjust with younger children's and their way of life. They unable to adjust with the thinking and decision making process of the new generations which have been manifesting due to the impact of modern technology in the contemporary world. Similarly, 6%of respondents are victim of physical, mental and verbal abuse; 10%respondents suffered family conflict and age discrimination and 13% of the elderly persons are living separately from the family members.

From the above mentioned findings and results it has been found that majority of the elderly persons are illiterate of this village, because of the lack of awareness, insufficiency of educational institution and infrastructure, poverty, unsuitable communication facilities, confined traditional customs, religions, etc. Even in present time most of the people are engaged in agriculture activities on the basis of traditional equipment. Therefore, production is very less in compared to consumption and hard work as well. So, they have not able to acquire sufficient economic security for their family. Indeed, when a person becomes older he is unable to engage in agricultural production due to his poor health conditions and therefore, importance and respect from the family are being ignored. He suffers more and more economic insecurity. Some of elderly persons also think that they become a burden for their children, and they feel to be distress due to their lame, pressure stroke, etc. In the present time only a few numbers of younger children engage in business, private and government jobs whereas it is seen that, they basically avoid the responsibility of their aged parents. On the other hand, due to the adjustment with the modern and western way of life of the elder generation the conflict between old and younger generation is increasing in present time.



Apart from that, it has been noticed that, most of the aged parents are not honored and respected in compared to earlier time; as a consequence the socio-economic dependency and poor health condition is increased. Even some of aged persons are being abused and beaten up with weapons; forced to involve household and agricultural tasks. Even someone forced to live separately from the family members. They are also deprived from adequate nutrition and water facility and majority of elderly among them are become alcohol addicted which are negatively affected on elders health. It has been also found that, majority of elderly persons are not aware and concern about governmental facilities, policies and maintenances of parents and about seniors citizen act due to lack of information and communication and therefore, the majority of older parents deprived from facilities provided by the government i.e. old pensions and free health facilities ,etc. Under the Assam government 'The Health & Family Welfare' (2015) department established a Geriatric Ward in the Guwahati Medical College for the welfare of Senior Citizens, but is not to the knowledge of people of this village. Therefore, it must be needed to provide information among the elder persons through communication and awareness persons of the society.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Age and old age is an integral and biological part of human life, so it is a universal truth that each and every person will become an old age or elderly, indigent, weak and dependent persons. Elderly person is an unavoidable section of the society and they are more experienced able and knowledgeable persons of the society. Therefore, in the smooth and effective continuity and functioning of the society, it must be needed to give a better position, respect and honored to the aged parents; and it must be needed to concern about the various problems and challenges faced by the elderly persons in the contemporary rural society. Apart from that it will become more and more challenging, vulnerable and explosive for the each and every individuals of the society. There is a need to provide yoga training and free health checkup camp for the improvement of the health conditions of elderly in this village. It is also needed to provide economic supports, special mental satisfaction program, improve recreational facilities and adjustment training for aged persons in the society. Awareness program should be provided to know how the traditional beliefs and customs negatively affect on human being; and how it creates barriers for the welfare and development of the society. Similarly, it is also needed to provide adequate socialization to

children and grand children to improve their morality and increase harmony between the old and younger generation. There is also a need to take strict regulations for those children, who have ignored, neglect and abused their parents.

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