

AGEING IN TODAY'S WORLD: A STUDY OF ELDERLY MIDDLE CLASS IN THE CITY OF KOLKATA

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (ARTS)**

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

AGEING IN TODAY'S WORLD: A STUDY OF ELDERLY MIDDLE CLASS IN THE CITY OF KOLKATA submitted by me for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of Dr. Amites Mukhopadhyay and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/ elsewhere.

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I Arina Bardhan registered on 15.07.2014 do hereby declare that this thesis entitled **“AGEING IN TODAY’S WORLD: A STUDY OF ELDERLY MIDDLE CLASS IN THE CITY OF KOLKATA”** contains literature survey and original research work done by the undersigned candidate as part of Doctoral studies.

All information in this thesis have been obtained and presented in accordance with existing academic rules and ethical conduct. I declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referred all materials and results that are not original to this work. I also declare that I have checked this thesis as per the “Policy on Anti Plagiarism, Jadavpur University, 2019”, and the level of similarity as checked by iThenticate software is **4%**.

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Throughout these six years of in-depth research, I have made lovely relations with all my elderly friends and their families. Interviews felt more like casual conversations with the elderly individuals; often followed up with several get-togethers, meet ups, celebrations and invitations. Without them and their continuous cooperation, my research would have been incomplete.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

“All through my sixties I felt I was still within hailing distance of middle age not safe on its shores, perhaps but navigating its coastal waters. My seventieth birthday failed to change this because I managed scarcely to notice it, but my seventy-first did change it being ‘over seventy’ is being old; suddenly I was around on that fact and saw that the time had come to size it up. I have lived long enough to have witnessed great changes in being old as far as women are concerned. The most obvious thing about moving into my seventies was the disappearance of what used to be the most important thing in life: I might not look or even feel all that old, but I had ceased to be a sexual being”.

- Diana Athill at age 89 in her autobiography *“Somewhere towards the End”* in the year 2008.

‘Ageing’ is a feeling of growing old, which is often shared by a group of people hailing from similar socio-cultural, economic and political backgrounds. In her biography, author Dianna Athill shared her personal experiences as an older woman, how her experiences are unique and different from other women of the same age but from a different time period, context and situation. She reflected her thoughts as an elderly woman who felt ‘old’ for the first time at the age of seventy-one and not at the age of seventy. This brings us to question how an individual’s feeling of growing old change from time to time and how incidental changes give way to the changing dimensions of feeling old in a particular society. Thus, to reemphasise the author’s conjecture, the thesis aims to explore more on the feeling of ‘ageing’ which keeps on changing depending on the particular situation, circumstances, cultural context and most importantly based on individual accounts of ‘self’. The unique and personal experiences of ‘becoming old’ are often effortless, sometimes forceful and many a time it is manipulative, making the study of ageing socially and contextually relevant. Individual’s perceptions of ‘growing old’ and experiences of living after reaching the age of 60 (official retirement age) are based on one’s societal and historical context. Dianna Athill, in her book *“Somewhere Towards the End”* shares her experiences and feelings of

growing old, based on the continuous changes happening in her life, aligned to her particular social and cultural context. Her personal accounts in the book are to some extent reflections of the dominant discourse of ageing and also to some extent questions the same discourses. These personal accounts are often shared by a certain group of individuals. In this context, the thesis aims to position the study of understanding individual and collective perceptions of ageing within the late capitalist, consumerist and information society.

Keeping in mind the changing dimensions of growing old, the research study wishes to explore ‘ageing’ by studying the social changes that govern and shape individual perceptions about ageing. In doing so the work aspires to propose an argument on the dominant discourse of ageing and getting old within the larger rubric of late capitalism and consumerism among Indian middle-class elderly. The dominant views of ageing are itself a construction of the state and the operating power structure which can be problematized by questioning the naturalness of the entire argument. The study entails exploration into the dominant discourses of ageing and old age from sociological and gerontological view-points that focus on the construction of age which is an outcome of the decay in socio-economic and physical aspects associated with an individual. The ageing body is regarded to be the “bottom line,” subjecting us to continuous “betrayals” through physical deterioration (Turner, 1995) and parallel processes of maintenance of the body. This presupposition with the body falls within the biomedical perspectives of ageing; considered to be the dominant understandings of the process of ageing. What comes naturally to the understanding of the processes of ageing is the chronological variety of ageing where growing old is equated with the increasing number of years; establishing the importance of temporality in the study of ageing which is associated with the Industrial Age¹. In the social Gerontological perspectives of ageing, old age is often theorised with respect to the changing roles one takes up after reaching the formal period of retirement. This is typical of an advanced capitalist and consumerist society where old age and population ageing is taken to be a problem; leading to the emergence of retirement policies formulated by the state.

¹ **Industrial Age** is considered to be beginning in the 16th century with Great Britain; followed by rest of the countries in different periods of time. This Age is characterised by the introduction of machines as a replacement to hand-driven tools; leading to establishment and concentration of industries in Great Britain.

The thesis critically understands the formation of each perspective of ageing in an advanced capitalist society and questions the formulation of retirement policies for older people that is based on the governing power structure of the state. Moreover, the dominant perspectives of ageing and old age can be problematized by evaluating the mechanism of governing individual minds through exercise of power by the state. The thesis has taken the Indian Middle classes as the subject for study. The reason for taking Indian Middle class as a subject of study has been explained later on in this chapter. In this context, the research wishes to pose arguments on the role of the state², its power structure in governing citizens and the mechanism of emphasizing one thought of understanding ageing by subverting some other.

The purpose of this thesis is therefore to explore various perspectives of the process of growing old from both sociological and gerontological points of view in the backdrop of the changing nature of social structures and then pose questions regarding the construction of such perspectives.

DEFINING AGEING AND OLD AGE

Demographic ageing is understood as the phenomenon when a large section of the population comprising of the young and adults move towards old age. Causes of demographic ageing are declining in mortality or death rates, natality and fertility rates and increased life expectancy (UNESCO, 1963). Accepting the inevitability of temporality hidden in issues of ageing, countries all around the world have formulated in their state policies particular age to be the age of retirement or the age when you call yourself an ‘old person’ or an ‘elderly’. Most countries accepted 60 years to be the retirement age. But from the mid-20th century, many developing and developed nations tend to consider 65 years as the official age to mark the beginning of old age. Existing research on ageing is characteristically about retirement and about ‘being old’ at particular chronological ages at specific times (Johnson, 2005).

² **State:** From the Marxist point of view, state is viewed as a repressive apparatus where state becomes a machine of repression, enabling the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working class. The thesis too views state as a force of repressive execution and intervention in the hands of the ruling classes against the working class or the proletariat.

In the literature of ageing and gerontology (disciplinary study of ageing), process of ageing can be understood from four different but inter-disciplinary standpoints, such as biological, psychological, sociological and social gerontological strands of thought. Among these four disciplinary standpoints, the chapter will elaboratively explore the sociological and social gerontological perspective of ageing giving precedence to circumstances, situations and experiences while understanding the process of individual and collective ageing in 'today's world'. From the point of view of biological sciences, ageing is considered to be a normal process when our body cells, tissues, the function of muscles, organs keep on declining (Shock, 1951). From the psychological point of view, ageing is viewed as the process that denotes changes caused in memories, one's creativity, the performance of work and other modifications in intellectual performances. Psychologists associate ageing with the influence of cultural expectations and environmental factors on individual mental performances. Each individual capacity may extend into middle adulthood and decline with old age. But these intellectual capacities differ with each individual (Birren, 1959)

As already mentioned, sociological aspect of individual ageing is concerned with changes in the circumstances or situations each individual goes through after taking on various roles as a member of the family, community, and society throughout life. This particular perspective focuses on age-grading, differential attitude and behavioural changes of individuals regarding age in each distinct society. The literatures suggest that an aged person is the one who has completed the role as a parent, as a worker and is now left with reduced income, restricted activity and mobility, loss of spouse and associates and umpteen time for oneself. Changes occur gradually in an individual's life characterised by restriction of activity which is a consequence of retirement and from official work force (UNESCO, 1963). Literature suggests increasing number of research on retirement processes, negative or defensive attitudes, behaviour and mechanism of adjustment among the elderly individuals and their family members. Sociological perspective entails "socially accepted" definitions of ageing that orients individuals to feel, behave and respond in certain manner after reaching the state defined age of retirement or growing old.

Social gerontology as a division of gerontology focuses on role of environment, culture, and social change as determinants of ageing. This discipline is understood as the study of ageing and old age in society dealing with changes in social characteristics,

circumstances, status, and roles of individuals as they age. Social Gerontologists study ageing as a process of adjustment, personality development which has an impact on their psychological wellbeing in old age. The biological and psychological processes are considered the primary indicators of ageing that influences social capacity and performance in later life.

Elongated periods of life expectancy and low mortality rates have led to increasing number of elderly population in both developed and developing nations; resulting in long processes of demographic transition and population explosion from the latter half of the 20th century (Khan, 2013; Powell and Khan, 2014). Pollak (1948) says that the demographic transition and increasing number of elderly in society along with the rising problems associated with them has led to the need for a greater visibility of the aged or elderly in Social Science Research. The problems associated with the elderly may include factors such as changing social roles, displacement, changing nature of the household, work force dynamics and most importantly scarcity of resources for the elderly. Researcher claim ageing to be related to time-related changes in individual organisms and in their personality.

Despite prevalence of these perspectives of understanding ageing and growing old, what becomes important to note is that ageing is after all a very personal experience which changes with each society and culture. On the global level, the main force behind these changes relating to old age has been the process of modernization—encompassing industrialization; economic growth; urbanization. Throughout a lifespan an individual being exposed to varied social and cultural conditions; takes on multiple roles through participation and thus gather varied range of experiences. Ageing as a study thus focuses on the temporal, situational and circumstantial changes occurring in the lives of an individual, making the process of ageing personal and ever changing. To explore the changing dimensions in the definitions of ageing, the chapter will now flesh out the historical perspective of ageing and how dialectics³ of ageing emerge.

³ **Dialectics:** Dialectics is a philosophical argument that describes processes that contradicts to another. “Hegel’s dialectics” refers to the particular dialectical method of argument employed by the 19th Century German philosopher, G.W.F. Hegel that discusses “dialectical” methods which relies on a contradictory process between opposing sides.

History of Ageing and Dualisms of Ageing

The study of ageing can be traced back to 3000 BCE. in Babylonia when Aristotle associated ‘old age’ with ‘cold’ and ‘dry’ whereas ‘youth’ to be ‘hot and moist’. During the same time period ageing was associated with physical decline and spiritual upliftment by communities who followed Islam as their religion. In his notable work of ‘A History of Ideas About the Prolongation of Life’, Gerald Gruman (2003) posits that the earliest record on theories of ageing denote the process to be associated with death and various unsuccessful pursuits for immortality. Later on towards the middle of the 20th Century, with Canadian American Biologist Edmund Vincent Cowdry the study on the science of ageing which is Gerontology emerged in the United States. The chapter further takes on the claims of social gerontological studies and tries to contextualise process of ageing in the modern society. Varied perceptions of ageing give rise to several dichotomies or dualisms within the area of ageing.

Ageing as a Disease v/s Ageing as a Naturalised Process:

This dualism exists in the field of gerontology making the study of ageing complex. The origins of this dualism can be traced back to 4th century Rome where one group of philosophers headed by Seneca⁴ claimed that quality of life is more essential than the length of one’s life. The philosopher subscribed to “old age as a disease” indicating his fear of living a long life. In contrast, Cicero claimed in his works that old age liberates people from their mistakes made in young age. In Seneca’s construct, old age was not entirely a disease-ridden stage devoid of compensations. Cicero in his works acknowledges physical decline as well as losses of pleasures and esteem. Similarly in the early 20th century, this dualism of ascribing ageing to be a disease or a normal process has been portrayed between Metchnikoff and Naschers from the fields of Geriatrics. In the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, Nobel laureate Elie Metchnikoff emphasized the pathological features of old age saying that “old age is an infectious chronic disease which is manifested by degeneration”. In Geriatrics, Nascher (1914) described old age as a normal, distinct physiological stage of life beset by a “pathological process in a normally degenerating body” .

⁴ **Seneca** was a Roman Stoic philosopher, statesman, dramatist and satirist of the Silver Age of Latin literature.

Prolongevity/Natural Limits to Ageing:

In the prehistoric era, search for achieving immortality was initiated by saints or philosophers which has now proved to be a futile activity. Countering the belief that one can achieve immortality, as written in the Hebrew Scriptures (one of the ancient texts) there is a natural limit to the duration of life which is one hundred twenty years. Some other scriptures point out maximum numbers of days one can live to be seventy or eighty years. In the current age, with improvement in scientific technology and medical advancements, there has been exponential rise in life expectancy rate. This dualism in calculating a human being's mortality too exists among the biologists.

Disengagement Theory/Activity Theory:

The most notable theories of social gerontology are Disengagement and Activity Theories of ageing. Disengagement theory of ageing as propounded by Elaine Cumming and William Henry (1961), pointed out the process of ageing to be inevitable and characterised by withdrawal and disengagement of elderly from society. They universalised this perspective of ageing across race, ethnicity, gender, or social class. The duality here can be mentioned on account of positing Activity theory as opposed to the disengagement theory of ageing. Activity theory as propounded by Bernice Neugarten (1964) is about life satisfaction in later life which depended on the active maintenance of one's relationships and continuing involvement in meaningful pursuits. Activity theory gives rise to productive and successful ageing which again has been challenged by believers of disengagement theories of ageing.

The Marginalized/ The Self-Dependent:

This form of duality is between the marginalised elderly and the empowered or self-dependent elderly. This duality is more associated with the role and status of people in old age. Identity of actors keep changing based on social context and societal factors such as gender, race etc. There is a group of elderly after retirement who stays at home and become financial dependent either on the state or on their offsprings. As per Retirement policies, elderly needs to be supported both financially and emotionally. Issues such as elderly abuse, violence against elderly or even negative attitudes/portrayals of elderly create a sense of marginalisation among a group of elderly. Poor or rural elderly face the most marginalisation both by society and by the people.

The dualism exists here when we mention an alternate strand of thought where a group of elderly become empowered citizens of the nation despite their financial or emotional insecurity. This is a group that claims for self-independence in their late years of life. Recent cohorts of older people enjoy on average better health and have more resources, both financial and political, at their disposal, enabling them to assert their rights to better treatment or to choose to cut back on priorities. But this phenomenon is much more recent, especially after the digital intervention and also limited to only the urban based elderly.

Stereotypes/Varieties of Age:

The most alarming dualism existing in the understanding of ageing is that of negative and positive attitudes towards elderly. “Ageism” as coined by Robert Butler (1975) implies “a systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old. On the other hand a group of academicians in gerontology headed by Robert K Butler believed in the productive capacities of elderly after reaching the official age of retirement; called the phenomenon of productive or active or successful ageing.

These dichotomies and variations in the perceptions of ageing, makes the study complicated and open for arguments and debates. These strands of thought gives way to numerous theoretical perspectives within the discipline of gerontology which needs to be explored in order to understand the dominant perspectives of ageing.

Perspectives of Ageing in Social Gerontology

Social gerontology has focused on varied perspectives about ageing and growing old in different contexts. Most gerontological literature based out of European and North American perspectives looks at the process of ageing from the following perspectives:

1. During late 1940s to 1960s ageing was taken to be an individual and social problem.
2. From 1970s till 1980s, the literature on ageing mentioned the process of ageing to be associated with economic and employment issue.
3. 1990s onwards ageing was constructed as a global issue and concern.

Despite the presence of Oriental perspectives, the Western or occidental perspective of looking at processes of ageing is considered to be the most acceptable one throughout the world. This is primarily because of the demographic explosions happening in the first world countries; the western world. Thus, for a long time the western societies were dealing with the imminent problems of demographic transitions making the process of ageing a problem in society. To address this problem, several retirement policies were introduced to safeguard the rights of elderly in the Western world, so that they can live a life of autonomy after retiring from work force. The problems faced after retirement by the older adults are loss of employment, low income, health and social services which were seen to stigmatise older people (Philipson and Barrs, 2007) Apart from looking at ageing as a social problem, we would now elaborate on the several other perspectives of ageing from social gerontological viewpoints:

Chronological age: Age and ageing as a continuous process of change is primarily associated with ‘time’, phenomenon of temporality. Age when defined chronologically becomes the basis for universalistic (in contrast to particularistic) norms in regulating a large population. In a capitalist society, ageing is defined as adulthood and is associated with labour force participation. Indeed, most research on ageing in biology, psychology, and the social sciences have focused on what happens in time. Bodies are transformed and societies respond to individuals who are very young and those who have been here a long time. Age becomes a variable as it is culturally conceptualized and incorporated into social life. Age also becomes a variable when a society becomes aware of its own demographics and begins to worry. Concepts such as “age-groups,” “age norms,” and “age grading” are associated with chronological age. “Chronological age is one of the most useful single item of information about an individual if not the most useful one. From this knowledge alone an amazingly large number of general statements or predictions can be made about his anatomy, physiology, psychology and social behaviour” (Birren, 1959, p. 8).

Biodemography is a perspective in social gerontology which is a combination of demography and biology; incorporating both demographic theories and biological theories together. This perspective looks at how the increasing population of the aged individuals looks at variations of health and mortality in midst of current societal

scenario. Biodemography as a new branch of demographic study⁵ does not limit its purview by just describing population ageing, rather in understanding process of ageing and the rationale behind age related changes in an individual's life.

Activity theory of Ageing: As one of the dominant perspectives in gerontology, ageing is taken to be a social and physical problem; generating two theoretical models of perceiving the process of ageing: one where individuals continue to be active agents in society even after reaching the age of retirement. The other perspective focus on old age to be a time of 'withdrawal' when individuals no longer play important roles in society (Biggs, 2006). These two theoretical models of ageing are steeped deeply into structural functionalism and Role Theory. Both these theories though contrasting to one another represented a significant degree of discontinuity from prior life events and experiences. During the mid-20th century when the world was undergoing huge population increase, especially with the rise of the baby boomers in the West, the social values of the elderly in society kept on declining. This limitation of older people's contribution to the social system was viewed by Townsend as a form of 'acquiescent functionalism'⁶ which was part of Cowgill and Holmes' Modernisation Theory⁷. This was a period in the West when the older people in the society were gradually losing their mental and physical stability. In this context, Marshall (1986) endorsed studies in the 1950s and 1960s on 'adjustment of the individual to the society'. Marshall further suggested that one's psychological make up, life satisfaction and degree of social integration has immense influence on an individual's sense of adjustment in society after retirement.

Keeping in mind this perspective of ageing as a social problem, we will first discuss the Activity Theory of Ageing as propounded by Havighurst and Albrecht in 1980. This particular strand of thought in ageing studies gives much importance to work, continuation of exploration of one's creativity after reaching old age. Proponents of this theory regard retirement to be a period of continuation, proposing ageing to be a lively and creative experience, full of activities and taking in different roles as one age. If the roles and activities in old age are lost then new roles and activities are to be developed in

⁵ **Demographic study:** it is the study of human population, composition and characteristics of population.

⁶ **Acquiescent functionalism:** body of thought that studies problems of old age to be physical decline, mental inflexibility, lack of adjustments to retirement

⁷ **Modernisation Theory by Cowgill and Holmes:** In 1972, Donald Cowgill and Lowell Holmes proposed that as society keeps changing and get urbanised, status of older adults keep on diminishing. With modernisation, status of older adults get undermined owing to the presence of four key aspects: health technology, economic and industrial technology, urbanisation and education.

order to replace the old ones. Capitalist or consumerist structure of post-industrialised or programmed society (Touraine, 1971) establishes the relation of work or activities with changing roles of individuals in different age-groups. Activity is considered to be crucial criteria for measuring one's position in a capitalist society.

Disengagement theory of ageing: The disengagement theory of ageing as propounded by Cumming and Henry in 1961, put forward an argument of inevitability and natural withdrawal from all previous work roles and social relationships and get prepared to face the final disengagement from the world which is 'death'. The naturalised argument of the disengagement theory suggesting old age to be a period when the ageing individual and society engage in a process of mutual separation. An example of such a separation can be the period of retirement and disengagement from the workforce. As an individual grows old, his/her 'ego energy' declines and individuals become increasingly self-absorbed and less responsive to normative controls. On the other-hand the individual also focuses on maintaining higher morale in old age. The scholars and believers of this strand of thought views disengagement to be both a desirable and natural outcome, resulting in strong sense of psychological well-being.

A disengagement perspective of ageing in old age that devalues the role of elderly in society brings in the concept of 'ageism', a term coined by Robert N Butler. He referred to ageism as the discrimination against individuals based on age, stereotypes that are deeply embedded within human perceptions. These stereotypes often are so deeply embedded within the social psyche that they become naturalised unexamined assumptions, losing its basis for rationality. 'Ageism' is often equated with racism, sexism and various other forms of bigotry. Thus, ageism is a process of organised stereotyping and discrimination against individuals who are getting older from a chronological point of view. Thornton (2002) too proposed an argument on 'ageism' where false images, beliefs and myths around elderly individuals are nurtured and further explored. These ideas of false images and myths develop from the inevitable physical or psychological decline, social isolation, asexual behaviour, societal or familial dependencies in old age. The research study in this context explores the background of this dependency and the relation of age and economy in society that gives rise to the formulation of old age policies by the state. Disengagement as an inevitable process restricts older people from scope of employment and other opportunities leading to their image as consumers in society.

Hochschild (1975) critiqued disengagement theory of ageing to be a narrow one and not realistic in its approach as there are a significant proportion of older people who have not withdrawn from society. She also gives importance to the social, psychological and physical processes of change in society that contributes in making individual and collective experiences of growing old.

The **biomedical view of ageing** is another dominant perspective where the ageing bodies and minds are considered to be declining. Estes and Binny (1989) talk of Biomedicalisation of ageing where the old body is a product of social control through medical advancement, management and treatment. Over the last few decades, important advances have been made in understanding the biological basis of human ageing. Various theories on role of body in society bring us to the sociological theories of body. Body as the bearer of social values has growing importance in the late twentieth century. Bourdieu places bodies in modern consumer culture, arguing that the body marks the sign of a social class which is based on habitus⁸, context, social location and taste.

Ageing in Anthropological Theories: The process of ageing is contextual, situational and its definition changes with each culture. This leads to understanding the process of ageing from the lens of anthropology. In this section we would examine how the distinctive disciplinary perspective of anthropology has contributed to our theorization of age and ageing. In “*The Role of the Aged in Primitive Society*”, Simmons (1945) conducted a study of examining the status and treatment of elderly in 71 non-industrialized societies from records of 19th-century ethnographers. As a part of his findings, he found out that the older people residing in these small-scale societies performed subsistence activities, contributing to the civil and religious lives of their closed community. Various anthropologists have theorized age from evolutionary, social, and cultural perspectives by carrying out investigations into the lives of older adults living in different contexts and different geographical spaces be it in urban and rural. Within this strand of theorization of ageing, let us discuss two of its sub concepts such as: *Context specificity and cultural understanding*. The thesis focuses largely on context specificity where one’s living, process of ageing and growing old is experienced in specific contexts and situations that are not transferrable across cultures. The other sub concept or theme of ‘culture and understanding’ takes in the process of ageing as

⁸ **Habitus:** It is a concept propounded by Pierre Bourdieu, referring to the physical embodiment of cultural capital, skills, habits, dispositions that one possess during her/his lifetime.

something which is based on interpretations of individuals or groups across time. Thus, in the anthropological theories of ageing, it becomes important to first understand how humans have culturally incorporated temporal phenomena in understanding age and ageing and how one's life chances and consequences of ageing are culturally constructed.

Experiential Theory of Ageing: In congruence with the objective of the thesis, it is important to explore individual and collective experiences of ageing and to do that we need to study experiential theories of ageing. Leo Simmons was among the first to document the experiences of ageing in simpler societies. Donald Cowgill and Lowell Holmes made the first systematic theory of change in the lives of elderly in society. In each of their works, these philosophers had mentioned that urbanization, education, health technology, and economic factors have contributed in the process of elderly marginalisation in society. Viewing culture as a collective set of knowledge and value, the crucial question is to what extent does the knowledge of older people dominate the cultural pool. In cultures without writing (Goody, 1987), knowledge is retrieved differently than in those with writing. The experience of older people is sometimes essential in dealing with circumstances that look like novelty to a novice. Some have argued that it is old people who are the creators of a culture (Amoss, 1981). Older people are disadvantaged in economies where it is impossible to accumulate wealth. Individuals become old through a combination of health issues, withdrawal from the labour force, entitlements, self-identification, or none of these. The ages at which these happen are so variable that it is difficult to chronologically pinpoint when a person becomes old. In addition, with chronological age as well as heterogeneity in other characteristics, researchers began to classify old age into the “young-old,” the “old-old,” and the “oldest-old” with equally vague boundaries. The process of ageing is so gradual that it is almost imperceptible, and as a life stage, what happens in earlier life stages shapes the experiences in later stages.

Culture and Age Structuring: Concept of age structuring is an amalgamation of the notions of age norms, age stratification and age cohorts. The life course of an individual as she/he passes from birth to death is structured depending on how a society organises the interdependency between people of the same and different ages. This individual life course depends heavily on allocation of resources, privileges, power, accesses, goods, services and social support. Thus, age structuring involves the way a society uses age to

manage its members; implying the existence of centrality of power in controlling the people and their lives.

An individual's life course is outlined as the following: (a) age-ambiguous life courses, (b) age-aware life courses, (c) age-explicit life courses, and (d) age forced contexts. In the 20th century, in a small-scale-societies, the life course of an individual or collective was experienced based on the relative time. as recently as the 20th century, life courses were experienced in relative time. The people belonging to this community were not aware of their age and it was not even important to know one's age. In similar context, Lorna Marshall (1976) notes that in the Kung society in the Kalahari Desert of South Africa, there was no prevalence of calendars, they did not know how to use one or how to count years. They were only able to trace time in context to any event that had happened in the past. Often they point to someone and say, "I was the age of that person." They reckon the recent past by the seasons; they may remember two or three dry or rainy seasons back and can place the birth of a child, for instance, within that range, but after that they lose track. Placing events in measured time is not significant to them. Maturational differences, on the other hand, are important and are structured into social life and productive activities.

In these cultures, lives are understood in terms of maturational differences. Others are seen as senior or junior to a specific ego. Because these lives are defined largely through kinship, this type of life course has been called a generational life course. Age-aware life courses: These cultures have calendars that enable the calculation of chronological age, but it is often not used to organize social life. Only a few will know their ages since the date of birth has to be recorded. Formal knowledge of age (compulsory) Age-forced contexts: A colonizing society imports ideas of chronological age and requires age estimates of local populations. Age-explicit life courses: Age is explicitly used to organize life stages and to regulate access to markets, especially the labour market.

Life courses based on relative time can be classified as "generational life courses." This is very tempting because the age gap between parents and children and birth orders between siblings are convenient markers of relative age.

With large families and a long interval of reproduction (20 years or more), the boundaries of a generation become confused. A mother may have a child after her oldest child has begun her reproductive career. Depending on perspective, a grandchild may be

older than a child, or an aunt may be younger than her niece. These life courses are better described as “age ambiguous.” Age does not appear to be a central feature to organize people. Instead, it is maturity, skills, ability, and a host of personal qualities, including kinship, that are important. Maturity, of course, implies physical growth as well as social adulthood as evidenced in marriage, parenthood, and operating a household. Relative age operates adequately under these circumstances. There is no reason to be able to answer the question, “How old are you? A notable exception to this is a phenomenon known as “age classes.”

Constructionist approach to ageing: This perspective of understanding the process of ageing and old age questions the identity of an elderly individual. Self-identities are formed either within a particular situation or context. Within the symbolic interactionist point of view the category of old is equated with stigma, senility, infirmity and worthlessness. As Mike Featherstone and Mike Hepworth (1990) argued that old people are subject to "masks of ageing," questioning their true identity. Experiences are not just lived but are continually being shaped by how it is conveyed (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). To understand individual experiences and to strike out the commonality or differences of experiences among individuals in their old age, narrative analysis in forms of personal story-telling becomes most effective. Experiential narratives from perspective of individuals encompasses one's past, present and future together, bringing in the factor of temporality into consideration. In this context the thesis focuses on bringing out the dynamics of the social world where an individual's identity is nothing but reflection of others' images. Estes (1979) perceives that the experience of old age is dependent on how others react to the aged. Social context and cultural meanings play important role in understanding the process of ageing. Each social context brings with it structural constraints that limits possible interactions among individuals after retirement.

Political Economy theory of ageing: This perspective of ageing looks at old age as a social problems and thus questions the unequal distribution of resources to individuals after their retirement, resulting in inequality in old age. The focus is to analyse the structural conditions that create inequality in old age and the relevance of these struggles for understanding how the aged are defined and treated (Estes, Linkins, & Binney, 1996). As Estes (1991) explains, *"The political economy of ageing offers a theoretical and empirical perspective on the socioeconomic determinants of the experience of aging and*

old age and on the policy interventions that emerge in the context of capitalist society". In this context, from this perspective, the thesis aims at relating the individual old age problems to that of the collective, emphasizing on the social problem of ageing and old age.

Ageing In Modernism And Post-Modernism: Let us begin by saying that post modernism symbolises difference and specificity in society. In Post-modernism, Featherstone and Hepworth explain age to be a fluid component where body and self-image is ever-changing. This argument can be elaborated on studying the theory of post-modernism. The postmodern mind seems to condemn everything and propose nothing. Bauman in his work on Liquid Modernity pointed out that postmodern theorists see Postmodernity to be restoring and re-enchanting the world that has been disenchanted by modernity which finds its seed in the Seventeenth century Europe before spreading all across the world (Giddens, 1991). Therefore, one needs to first understand modernity before delving into postmodernity. Modernization theory emerges with changing stages of social development, namely the emergence of industrialisation. Industrialisation is equated with the expansion and advancement in science and technology and the development of modern nation state, capitalist world market and urbanization. In this changing backdrop, features of modernisation can be summarized as: reflexivity, rejection of narrative structure and the continuous need to become self-conscious entities. Modernisation abides by the rules of simultaneity, montage and keeps on exploring the paradoxical, ambiguous and uncertain reality which is open-ended. This theoretical stand-point does not focus on structures and thus it has a tendency to reject structuration and support a dehumanizing subject. The understanding and perception of ageing as constantly changing is a product of these ideas of Modernization and then post modernization.

Gerontological theories of modernization, studies ageing as a process that is defined by role of each age in society. The modernization theory of ageing argues that the social process of modernization leads to a progressive decline in the status and social integration of old people. This decline in social status is an outcome of a transformative society that transits from a society characterized by animate, rural, undifferentiated, parochial and traditional way of life to a society which is characterised by high end technology, efficiency and progress (Cowgill, 1974). These changes resulting into modern health technology, modern economic technology, and urbanization and rising

levels of education have led to depressing effect on the status of the older adults in society.

Twenty-first century is an era that transports individuals beyond modernisation giving way to the formation of the “information society”, “consumer society” or a “postmodern world”. Zukin sees post-modernization to be taking place within the nexus of capitalism. A postmodern approach to the understanding of ageing helps to debunk fixed and limited perceptions of ageing by advocating an alternative expression where the conceptual and theoretical focus on ageing identity illuminates the self is fluid, changeable and dynamic (Powell and Gilbert, 2009). These functionings of post-modernisation brings us towards critically understanding the factors that work behind the formation of the policies by the government. The national policies for older persons in India focus on financial security, health care and nutrition, shelter and protection of life and property of the senior citizens of our country. The demography of ageing, the need to secure finances of older people reconfirms the logic of capitalism and the post-industrial society. The question of identity in these policies too, reflects the financial necessity, activities, and older people as care-givers.

Most of these theoretical positions emerged during the 1970s and 1980s in Europe and USA focusing on the complex changes in the position of elderly in society, resulting in old age as a social problem. Some of the problems include that of loneliness following forced retirement. Retirement from formal work force became the key issue in 1970s and 1980s. One section of people expressed their dissent towards retirement and other section of the population hankered on ways to acquire early retirement. As a counter argument to the disengagement theory of ageing, we can point out the fact that there is not necessarily a decrease in social activity or engagement with retirement. With the emergence of newer perspectives of retirement in the United States (Atchley, 1976), more studies started to crop up on exploring the active lifestyles associated with retirement (especially for middle-class retirees in possession of occupational pensions). Parallely during the same time period in the early 1970s European countries faced enormous employment crisis; most ill affected were those above 65 years of age. Individuals above the age of 65 years soon got evicted from the formal workforce. Workers (men especially) aged 60 and above (55 in countries such as Holland and France) found themselves targeted for special schemes of ‘job release’ (e.g. in the UK) or pre-retirement benefits (as in Denmark and Germany).

AGEING IN TODAY'S WORLD BY EXPLORING LATE CAPITALISM, CONSUMERISM AND INFORMATION

Among the gerontological perspectives, the thesis focuses on the experiential perspectives of ageing giving precedence to the contextual and situational aspect of understanding the process of ageing. In order to capture individual perceptions of ageing based on one's experience in one's social world, the thesis has focused on studying the Bengali middle-class elderly community residing in Kolkata in the present age. The study is deeply embedded within the late capitalist and consumerist society.

Ageing in capitalist and late capitalist society

Late capitalism is applied to conditions that has changed or when things are different and when the life world undergoes transformation (Jameson, 1991). Individual life courses are patterned by the normative sequences of the life cycle giving precedence to formation and change of roles in an individual's life. With its emergence in the west towards late 20th century, late capitalism breeds individuals who are not programmed individuals, rather are capable of making own choices. In context to understanding perspectives of ageing, capitalism and late capitalism looks at the process to be a social problem; especially with regards to health, opportunities, social security, social belonging and finances. Being characterised by class distinctions and exploitation of the ruling class, capitalist society successfully creates the distinction between an aged worker and an aged non-worker through initiation and implementation of retirement policies. Within the capitalist rubric, the process of ageing is understood from the materialistic value of production and consumption.

Ageing in Consumerist society

Exploration of perceptions of ageing in contemporary world is not restricted to late capitalist and capitalist strands of thought alone. It takes into consideration perceptions of ageing and process of growing old in a consumerist society. A Consumer society was seen as a culturally saturated society, in which production depends on consumption; exchange value of a commodity is important. Consumerism or consumer capitalism is a complex system of commodity production, centred around the relation between private ownership of capital and property-less wage labour. Most literature based on consumer capitalism defines population ageing as the consequence of the demographic transition

which is characterized by the decline of fertility and mortality over a period of time. The changing social structures is characterised with changing social attitudes, behaviour of society towards an aged individual and most importantly the changing roles of individuals in his/her old age. This a time when an individual has completed his/her parental and work roles, has reduced income and also has restricted mobility and activities to certain extent. These elderly individuals also witness change after loss of spouse, associates and retirement from formal work force, leading to periods of free time (Reddy and Devi, 2006). These factors of change that ultimately shapes our understanding of social ageing are all impacts of consumerism which is based on the increasing production of capitalist commodities, rising demands of consumer goods and as a result of increasing sites for purchase and consumption. This gives rise to a material culture in the form of consumer goods in the present society.

Ageing in Information Age

Late 20th century according to Daniel Bell beckoned the rise of a post-industrial society characterised by the rise of new banking system and accumulation of capital, technology use and creation of capitalist enterprise (Bell, 1973). The late 20th century harnessed on excessive yearning towards achieving individuality. Post-Industrial societies or Programmed societies can be defined according to the nature of processes of production and the complexity of economic organizations. Post-industrial society according to Daniel Bell deals with the changes in the social structure, the way in which the economy is being transformed and the occupational system reworked. One aspect of post-industrial society is the ever increasing dominance in the field of science and the increasing specialisation of intellectual work into minute parts. Political order or authority is crucial in these societies where the relationship between social structure and political order becomes a problem. Daniel Bell (1973) summarises, post-industrial society epitomising the changing nature of values, norms leading to social-structural and economic changes. A post-industrial society is characterised by rationality, efficiency and inequality in terms of the economy.

FORMATION OF AGE IDENTITIES IN A LATE CAPITALIST SOCIETY

Catering to the growth and development of an information society which replaced the manual labour worker with the introduction of technology, society gradually moved towards “reflexive modernity” as pointed out by Giddens and Beck. Reflexive modernity

questions the development of self where the notion of ‘we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves’ confirms that the reflexivity of the self is continuous, as well as all pervasive.

Here we mention two kinds of identities; social and individual where the former is an aggregate of similarities and differences recognised in the social world and where our self is constructed based on perceptions of people and the operating power structure. On the other hand, individual identities are self-consciousness formed within an individual; which further can be argued as an outcome of manipulation exerted by the state. In context to a late capitalist society, an individual’s identity is shaped by one’s conscious self and the public persona which is perceived and responded to by others. In context to the formation of identity, exterior and interior qualities play an important role where the exterior quality is the outside world that forces an individual to follow a certain role and status in society and the interior quality is the inner consciousness. For the aged population, it is the social norms and values that govern them in behaving in a certain way. Self-consciousness that creates interior quality of identity, believes in the philosophy of who we think and feel we are the same as, or similar to, and who we feel we differ from. This interior self is different from the social aspect of identity; leading to our exploration of old age identities in context to middle class in India. Nevertheless, both internal and external identities both are formulated through various contexts giving precedence to situations, contexts.

In this context, the thesis continuously elaborates on the process of formation of one’s own identity through experiences of series of life events or by simply leading a long life. For an elderly individual, the changing identities can be those of being a grand-parent and great-grand-parent symbolised by physical changes such as that of the possession of grey hair or wrinkles. Old age identity can be understood from Giddens’s (1991) perception of self in society which is not a stable entity and keeps on changing with time as a result of an individual’s reflexive activities. Despite the dominance of several gerontological theories that chart out the homogeneity in the process of ageing, the thesis keeps on focusing on carving out the heterogeneity by putting a microscopic lens in exploring distinctive biographies of the elderly within the backdrop of a late capitalist and consumerist society. As Charles Taylor puts it, ‘in order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going’. C.H. Cooley’s concept of the looking glass self can be taken into consideration in order to

understand the formation of self in modern society. This conceptual argument puts the passive and conformist lens on, emphasizing on how others look or perceive an individual and thus construct self-concepts.

Preoccupation with the aged body and societal control

Post-Modern theorists look at history of ageing as a history of control, supervision, and self-regulation of the ageing body. The body as a concept implies an objectified and natural entity and the process of disembodiment on the other hand is related to the images that deifies ageing. On the other hand, failure of bodily control is related to loss of self-image in society (Powell and Owen, 2007). Indispensability and interiorization of power in a post-modern world take us to the argument of how to construct individual self and identity in the current age. Identities and formation of self is a product of capitalism which has undergone structural changes with bourgeoisie taking the social hegemony. Having said that the state or the authority who is in control, gets to define ourselves, our bodies, our perceptions about oneself, there inevitably comes the question of creating the concept of 'self'.

In this context, let us discuss the work of Foucault, a post-modern theorist who has explained that phenomenon of social body is the effect of the materiality of power exercised by the state operating on the bodies of individuals. Foucauldian body is governed by various forms of power and is manufactured through discourse. The theorist studies power and social body historically from a quasi-medical point of view. Power imposed by state on individuals creates awareness of one's own body which gives rise to construction of perception of ageing bodies by different individuals. Power in bourgeois, capitalist societies has denied the reality of the body in favour of the soul, consciousness and ideality. In studying the nature of power that operates on individuals and the perception of old age; it is crucial to explore power historically. Foucault traces power from the 18th to 20th century as heavy, ponderous, meticulous and constant. He refers to power in post industrialised society as disciplinary power that can be observed in military barracks, factories, cities, lodgings and families. From 1960s it was believed that power was no longer indispensable and in industrial society, power is established in much loser form over the body. Foucault's theories of power heavily state the prevalence of institutionalisation and interiorisation of power that governs the body. The aged body is taken to be declining and withdrawn as perceived by the dominant theories of ageing

especially in bio-medicalisation theory. These operationalizations of power on an old body by a centralised authority designs the understanding of one's own body as a site of surveillance (Foucault, 1980).

Foucault's concept of indispensability of power puts forth concept of 'modern' power within the context of democracy where power becomes manipulative and persuasive. Power ceases to become forceful or coercive here. These discussions of the manipulation and control of body by the state and operating state power leads us to the shaping of perceptions about old age and old bodies in capitalism.

Concept of self and identity in Gerontological theories

In Gerontological Theories of Ageing, self in later part of one's life is studied from the perspective of self-actualisation theory. Gerontological research points out that old age is a period when individuals get the space and time to indulge themselves into deep introspections and are able to review themselves, their lives and also are able to reconcile the inevitable gap existing in their lives (Krauss, 2009) . This means that as people grow older, they try to weave the stories of their lives into a more coherent whole and in doing so permeate life with a deeper sense of meaning and significance. Tornstam's (2005) theory of gerotranscendence specifies a major shift in people's view of the world as they grow old. This shift can be characterized by a move away from a materialistic and pragmatic view of the world to more transcendent and cosmic concerns. This transcendence may imply having extra personal interests such as contributing to the community and being more concerned about the welfare of others. The process of gerotranscendence also involves a desire for maintaining fewer but more meaningful social relationships and preference or appreciation of solitude.

Sociologist Peter Berger argued that there is a craving for meaning that has the force of instinct. Although deriving a sense of meaning may be important for people of all ages, the meaning in life is more important as people grow older. In similar lines with Tornstam (2005), Carstensen and her colleagues proposed that individuals after entering the formal age of retirement choose to seek close emotional relationships with close friends, family members. An elderly moves away from a more rational and pragmatic knowledge of developing one's skill in old age and gets more aware of the 'short' life and their need to derive sense of meaning into their remaining days of life. Literature shows a positive relationship existing between those who have positive sense of meaning

in life after he/ she reaches old age and that of their emotional wellbeing. Individuals tend to experience lesser degrees of depression when they are able to find sense of meaning in their lives. In addition, there is some evidence that people with a stronger sense of meaning also tend to be happier and report higher levels of satisfaction with their lives (Krause, 2009).

Question of self and identity along with self-actualisation in old age pushes the research to study Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon that comprises of a social group that is more strictly differentiated, segregated and hierarchic. The architecture of Panopticon which is a metaphor for an orderly, reason-led society comprises of an overseer who supervises the prisoners or inmates. This supervision by the overseer which in case of the current society can be the state or the central power/ authority governs its citizens in such a manner that the 'supervision' or 'control' does not look like one. The 'control' becomes so manipulative that the 'inmates' or 'citizens' fail to understand the 'control' and thus ends up enjoying the same. The citizens continue to be happy because they live in a carefully controlled environment, and thus know exactly what to do. This post-modern understanding of power governs people of all age by privatising fear and normalising the expected actions which further gives rise to the ideas of gerotranscendence and self-actualisation.

Formation of self and identity among the old in India

Apart from these gerontological theories, there are other perspectives especially in context to India that aspires to understand meaning of self, change in perception of self as one age and the formation of identity or restructuring of old identity in later part of life. Construction of self and formation of identities in India is closely related to our history of colonialization (to be explained in detail in chapter 5). Therefore, Ashis Nandy (2009), in his book "The Intimate Enemy", while discussing the formation of self, mentioned the processes of colonialization where he argued that colonialism is a state of mind in the colonisers and the colonised leading to colonial consciousness that still has an impact in today's world. In studying the perception of growing old among elderly often brings this argument of 'colonised mind'.

To understand the dominant perspectives and formation of identity in old age, one needs to study the family as the vital agent of change. In that light, Nandy again presents a powerful narrative of Indian joint or extended families where self is inferiorised as the

enduring legacy of colonialism. He further ascribed family to be the site of loss and recovery, anxiety and conflict in the construction of personhood and community within the space of an urban Indian modernity. But this entire discourse of Joint family in India narrative is extended to only middle or upper class and not in the lower strata of society. On the other hand, Peter Townsend argues that society itself creates the framework of institutions and rules within which the general problems of the elderly emerge and are manufactured.

ROLE OF STATE IN CREATION OF OLD AGE IDENTITIES

In order to explore the process of forming age identities, the thesis has briefly explained the role of power and control. Now, we will discuss more about the process of control and manipulation that is exerted by the state on individual lives; leading to creation of identities. Power which is all pervasive operates the minds of every citizen irrespective of age to comply with the central authority. Now, the question is how does that happen. This is what Foucault called as the disciplinary power. In this regard, we would mention Sigmund Freud and Herbert Marcuse's concept of "Repressed Civilisation" which investigates the rationale and mechanism behind acceptance of dominant perspectives in society. In that context, Norbert Elias defines Civilisation in terms of rise of self-control which is further explained by the rise of a monopoly of force leading to social stability and psychological stability by the state. For him, the crucial development was the 'social constraint towards self-restraint', the internalisation of authority. He asserts that civilization has in fact always been organized on the basis of domination (Marcuse, 1972). This view reasserts the idea that each member of a society performs according to the dictates of an already stated function. As already mentioned in consumer capitalism, a worker is subjugated and on him power in all forms is exercised in such a manner that he readily accepts and obliges it. In such a repressed civilisation, the worker must be manipulated in such a way so that these restrictions seem to function as rational and the external objective laws are then internalized by the individual. A repressed civilisation observes that the desires of the individual must conform to the desires of the apparatus which is the state apparatus. As Marcuse puts it, "he desires what he is supposed to desire" (Marcuse, 1972). The focus of each enquiry varies, but one of the fundamental issues lies in man's nature as an individual and how such a man adapts to a civilised society where he ceases to be an individual to become part of a collectivity. One of the views is that for civilisation to thrive, man needs to be repressed.

The research study on exploring and exploiting the dominant perspectives of ageing is incomplete without situating the various perspectives and understandings of ageing and social forces with a particular social group/class. The different social classes and age group of the Indian community have different meaning for the concept of “old age”. Perception of old age is effected significantly by ones social class and age. The thesis aims at studying Bengali Middle class in 21st century and their perceptions of growing old in a consumerist society.

POSITION OF THE THESIS

This is an exploratory study where the various dominant perspectives of ageing and old age have been studied in context to the existing sociological processes by exploiting the dominant perspectives of ageing and growing old among middle class elderly in Kolkata, India. With this aim in mind, the thesis takes help from existing literature by questioning the same and then uses primary data to understand the meaning and process of ageing in today’s world. The thesis focuses on two studies: one, a subjective wellbeing study on older adults to explore the relationship existing between various dimensions of living and one’s sense of subjective or emotional wellbeing in old age. The second study focuses on, explorations into perceptions of ageing and old age by studying the discourse of ageing through individuals narratives that are based on one’s experiences throughout life. The research studies use both quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis to understand perceptions of ageing, process of ageing among older adults from primary data. The sampling frame entails the three subcategories of old age such as young- olds (60 to 70 yrs), middle-olds (70 to 75 yrs) and old- olds (75years and above). The sampling area would be the southern part of the city of Kolkata and the respondents are to be studied based on snow-ball sampling method.

The research study focusing on understanding perceptions of ageing among elderly middle class in Kolkata has been conducted by using both quantitative and qualitative tools of analysis. First, the thesis has used a survey method where 98 older adults from southern parts of Kolkata were interviewed using closed and open-ended questionnaires. This is a study on subjective wellbeing of older adults in their later life which has been analysed using the quantitative tools of analysis. Later on the thesis has also taken in-depth narratives of ten older adults from the Bengali middle class background staying in the southern parts of Kolkata to explore the relationship existing between the narratives

and discourses of ageing. The purpose of presenting individual narratives in the thesis is to explore how narratives subscribe to the existing discourses of ageing on one hand and also questions certain dimensions of the dominant discourses of ageing. These narratives have been taken throughout a span of three years and have been finally presented in this thesis using qualitative tool of analysis such as the Critical Discourse Analysis method. Both the studies aim at understanding perceptions of ageing among older adults in their later life and this would help the researcher to question the dominant perspectives of ageing and propose other perspectives of understanding the process.

In the quantitative approach to the study on understanding perception of ageing among middle class elderly, the index of elderly wellbeing is to be taken into account. Wellbeing as a multidimensional concept is understood from two dimensions: objective and subjective. In the objective dimension, wellbeing of individuals is understood from the perspective of economy and material progress. In the objective dimension, wellbeing is measured cardinally by taking into note the economic, social and environmental statistics. Wellbeing from its subjective dimension assesses an individual's feeling of happiness, satisfaction and takes into consideration his/her life experiences (McGillivray and Clarke, 2006; Conceição and Bandura, 2008).

Studying Bengali middle class elderly of more than 60 years puts us to explore the history of Bengali middle class at a period when India was under the British rule. Narrative research entails exploration into the experiences and situations of the subject in order to write a report on shaping up of an individual's perception. The Bengali middle class at the time of colonisation were termed as the "Bhadraloks" meaning the educated middle class gentlemen. The formation of this middle class was based on colonial set of ideas, yet this class was not fully able to assimilate with the colonial scheme of affairs (especially with the concept of 'chakri' or service) (Howaldar, 2015).

The second study on perceptions of ageing is a narrative inquiry using Critical Discourse method of analysis. Stories and human actions in research is described using narrative enquiry and a subset of qualitative research designs. Qualitative researchers have associated a variety of meanings to narratives. In the context of narrative inquiry, 'story' or 'plot' becomes important where events and happenings that are bound by context and temporality, creates a kind of discourse. It is then the role of Narrative inquiry to accumulate the unorganised data and then analyse using narrative analytic procedures

and finally create explanatory stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). The thesis takes account of ten elderly by understanding their life-course, their perspectives on the ageing process, various societal changes they have witnessed and how their narratives subscribes to and questions particular discourses.

Thus, to summarise, the thesis does not delve into the problems of old age or ageing, rather it aspires to inquire the rationality behind formation of each perspectives of ageing, the role of state, mass media in it and how dominant discourses of ageing are formed as a result of that. Through consumerism, late capitalism and post-modernism, ageing has been explored and experienced from perspectives of older adults. In this context it can be pointed out that experiential studies have been given importance in this study. Thus one can say both macro-sociological and micro-sociological concepts have been used to explore and problematize dominant perspective of ageing in today's world.

CHAPTERISATION OF THE THESIS

This introduction chapter has aimed at contextualising and proposing the 'logic' behind choosing the topic and presenting the Inquiry in the form of the thesis. The thesis attempts to explores the dominant perspectives of the concept and process of ageing by looking at Gerontological theories, Modernisation and post modernisation theories and situating within consumerist, late capitalist and post-industrial society. The perspectives of ageing have been further problematized by emphasizing on the operationalization of power by the state to achieve its objective of repressing the mass. Rest of the thesis aims at continuing these arguments to further complicate the perceptions of ageing and growing old by elderly middle class in the city of Kolkata.

The thesis can be divided into the following chapters such as the following:

Chapter 2: Methodology

This is an exploratory study aiming towards exploring and questioning the dominant perspectives of ageing in today's world. Supported by literature, a study on subjective wellbeing of older adults has been conducted. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis have been used to understand the perceptions of Bengali middle class elderly regarding their later life and about the definition and perspectives of ageing in later life. A quantitative study has been conducted where 98 older adults have been interviewed regarding their perceptions of ageing and wellbeing in later life. This

particular study has been analysed using statistical tools of analysis. A qualitative study on perceptions of ageing has again been conducted focusing only on five older adults. Using Biographical Narrative Technique and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), detailed accounts of the ten older adults have been conducted. These narratives reflect their perceptions of growing old in today's world. This chapter thus focuses on the design of the research study, techniques of data analysis, sampling techniques of the study and operationalisation of each theoretical concepts.

Chapter 3: Ageing in a Consumerist and Late capitalist society

In this chapter, the thesis introduces Late Capitalism, Consumerism and Post modernity while explaining "Today's world". Through this chapter the thesis would explore dimensions of a consumerist society, consumerism and its impact on life, especially on older adults in their old age. This chapter aims at understanding mechanisms of formation of old age identity, role of older adults in consumer capitalism, construction of age in the late capitalist society and the idea of retirement. Through the theories of Hyper-reality, simulacra, the chapter seeks to understand depiction of old age in media, market and state.

Chapter 4: Perceptions of Ageing

This chapter further explores the consumerist society, but from perspectives of older adults themselves. Concepts such as 'ageism', 'subjective wellbeing' have been introduced. By way of questioning the dominant perspectives of ageing, this chapter focuses on a quantitative study of subjective wellbeing in old age. The study seeks to understand individual perceptions of wellbeing in old age.

Chapter 5: Growing old in a Bengali Middle class society

This chapter focuses on a qualitative study where ten biographical narratives have been taken to understand the varied perspectives of ageing in late life. This chapter begins by explaining Bengali middle classes, formation of the class and individual perceptions of ageing in old age. Through the individual narratives, the chapter aims to understand both formation of each discourse and mechanisms by which the discourses can be questioned. Each of these narratives have been presented in the backdrop of a Consumerist and Late Capitalist Society.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The final chapter seeks to understand the process of ageing in an Information Age where technology plays a crucial role. In explaining impact of digital technologies on lives, the conclusion chapter focuses on a social experiment that was conducted by the Social Informatics Research Group, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. Fifteen educated older adults from the Bengali middle class was involved in this experiment who used to interact with underserved children using digital technologies. This experiment tried to understand the need to be productively active in the new age of Information society. This chapter summarises the thesis by focusing on the need to question the formation of each perspective of ageing in the backdrop of the changing nature of society.

CHAPTER 2:

METHODOLOGY

The research study explores formation of individual and collective perceptions and identities in old age based on one's experience. The thesis will not limit itself to the exploration of perceptions about ageing in old age alone, rather it will also focus on the 'why' of the perceptions that each individual has developed, how the perceptions and experiences of ageing has changed with time and changing social structures. The entire thesis is deeply embedded within the envelope of late capitalist, consumerist and post-industrial society. This particular chapter on Methodology will explain the process of conducting the research study on a small sample of elderly population belonging from Bengali middle-class community. As mentioned earlier perceptions of ageing in the current society is specific to each individual. To study their perceptions of change in old age and their notion of ageing, I have conducted two studies: subjective wellbeing study of 98 Bengali middle-class elderly using quantitative method of analysis and narrative experiential study of 5 Bengali middle-class elderly using qualitative methods such as Discourse analysis.

The methodology adopted in this thesis has two levels:

1. Positivist
2. Representations/portrayal of ageing through various mass media technologies of consumerist society highlighting different categories of consumables

This is an Exploratory Research Study that aims to investigate and understand the phenomenon of ageing among the social group of Bengali middle-class elderly in South Kolkata. Exploratory research being mostly conducted in new areas of inquiry aims at generating initial ideas about a particular phenomenon and also bring out the intensity and magnitude of a problem or phenomenon. An exploratory study tests the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study regarding the phenomenon.

Philosophers sometimes use the phrase 'naïve realism'⁹ to describe the way most of us operate in our daily lives. However, the nature of reality is more complex than we tend to

⁹ **Naïve realism:** it is also called common-sensical realism or perceptual realism where senses are used to perceive and get aware of any object, situation etc.

assume. Thus, keeping in mind the complexity in viewing the world, this research study tends to inquire the reality from a postmodernist lens which is embedded with disjunctions, differences and disequilibrium. A Post-modern view of Inquiry implies putting on a particular lens of research inquiry which is characterised by breaks. There is no one truth, rather varied images of number of truths making the position of inquiry dynamic and not straight forward. In this context, a researcher's task becomes to observe and understand what the 'reality' is and how the reality is perceived, represented and constructed in context to late capitalism. This reality is presented in forms of ones lived experiences and perceptions towards 'changes' in one's life. Thus, what becomes important here is the projection and reflection of number of 'truths' and several subjective views (Ormston, et.al. 2013).

In social science research different approaches can be used in the path of exploring a singular inquiry. There are particularly two types of reasoning: Inductive and deductive. Each of these approaches or directions of reasoning towards any inquiry are avenues for science. In Inductive reasoning, a research study initiates by setting up some assumptions based on some observations and as the research develops, it focuses on discovering a pattern and developing general principles based on the initial assumptions. Deductive reasoning, on the other hand, starts by establishing a pattern based on theoretical assumptions; focusing on the question of 'why' with regard to occurrence of the pattern. Each of these approaches have the ability to garner research process prompting the researcher to take in specific questions and framing the manner in which they are addressed. This research study of exploring perceptions and identities of individuals in old age based on experiential understanding in the backdrop of late capitalism and consumerism takes in the inductive approach of reasoning wherein certain assumptions and observations are put forward to perceive a pattern at the end of the research.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND METHODS OF STUDY

The research study aims at understanding and exploring individual and collective identities in old age and perceptions of ageing or growing old in a late capitalist society among Bengali middle-class elderly in the city of Kolkata. In exploring the perceptions of ageing, the thesis will aim at either conforming to already existing popular discourses of ageing or will establish alternative discourses of ageing. Keeping these objectives in mind the thesis has presented two studies:

1. Subjective Wellbeing Study of 98 Bengali Middle-class elderly using quantitative survey method. The purpose of this study was to observe the life of individuals in old age and understand their emotional and subjective wellbeing in relation to their material wellbeing (possessions, companionship, activities, income etc.).
2. Inquiry into the individual and collective identities and perceptions of self in old age is based on one's experiences in life within the backdrop of late capitalism and consumerism. Taking the lens of post modernism, this study has been conducted by taking in-depth interviews of ten Bengali middle-class elderly. The study has been qualitatively analysed using critical discourse analysis method; critically understanding the power structure operating on individuals by the state and the media.

The methods which were adopted to conduct these two studies were both quantitative and qualitative. To study the subjective wellbeing of 98 elderly, I used survey research method using open ended and close-ended questionnaire. Surveys are very old research technique used for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes. In this method some individual persons must serve as respondents/ informants. Survey method of inquiry has been chosen in this study to measure attitudes, orientations and choices among the elderly sample population. Surveys include the use of a questionnaire which is a document comprising of questions and items that are designed in such a way that information can be rendered properly for further analysis in social science research. Researchers administer questionnaire primarily for the purpose of conducting different kinds of research such as field, survey and experiments (Babbie, 2013).

After creating a codified subjective wellbeing questionnaire based on standard wellbeing questionnaires (see measurement section), I have prepared a detailed questionnaire keeping the socio-economic context in mind. After initial levels of pilot testing with the questionnaire and revising based on the responses, I administered a subjective wellbeing questionnaire on a sample size of 98 middle class Bengali elderly. I have used in-depth interviews and survey techniques while conducting the research study.

In the second study of exploring perceptions of ageing through experiences of growing old among ten elderly, the research study has used critical narrative discourse method of analysis; amalgamating biographical or life history approach in critical discourse analysis. Biographical approach to research elicits an individual's life world, her/his life

experiences, biographical details in forms of both verbal and written accounts from the narrator or the individual concern. William Labov's Personal Experience Narrative Method has been used exclusively while interviewing the ten elderly; the focus was to bring out the dichotomy or congruences between internal individual states and external social situations.

Unit of Analysis

In social science research, the most typical units of analysis are individual people. Units of analysis can be individuals, groups, organisations, social intersections or social artefacts. Unit of analysis or the sample taken is the middle-class elderly residing in the southern regions of Kolkata. The elderly population taken for this study belong to the three categories of old age: young-old (60-70 years), middle-old (70-80) and old-olds (80 and above). The unit of analysis is the individual as the study traces individual perceptions of ageing in today's world. Through these three age categories, the study explores whether there is a singular definition of ageing or multiple definitions shared by these varied elderly age groups.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design being the most integral part in any research study creates a framework of visualising the concerned study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013). As Janesick (1998) metaphorically describes it, design is the choreography that establishes the research dance. It becomes imperative to plan the sequence of various components of the study and the movement between data gathering and data analysis which Morse and Richards (2002) calls the pacing of the research study. A social science research been conducted on human subjects primarily is based on the design stage when the researcher must consider whether ethical standards and safeguards for subject protection are adequate. This research study is based on two categories of research designs such as the positivist and interpretive; depending on the objective of the study. Positivist designs which are meant for theory testing and interpretive designs meant for theory building have been used to focus on both the generalized patterns of the phenomenon. These patterns though are based on an objective view of reality, they also seek subjective interpretations with regard to understanding specific social phenomenon. Positivist research designs are used in laboratory experiments, field experiments, field surveys, secondary data analysis, and

case research studies. In contrast, the Interpretive research designs are used in include case research studies, phenomenology, and ethnography.

A Research Process involve some key elements such as the following:

Conceptualisation and Operationalisation

In the research design stage what becomes important is to bring out the major concepts or phenomenon that are to be used in the research study and how these concepts are made operationalised for the study. The foremost part of planning and implementation of any research study being the proper conceptualisation of the inquiry, this research study fleshes out some major concepts, process of exact meaning involving describing indicators we will be using to measure our concept and the different aspects of the concept called dimensions (Babbie, 2013). This thesis focuses on the following concepts and their pattern of operationalisation:

- 1. Ageing:** The thesis looks at ageing as a social problem within the larger rubric of late capitalist society which is experiencing an important demographic transformation: an unprecedented increase in the ageing population in almost all developed and developing nations. The increased ageing population has not only put pressure on social care and health care systems but also raised issues of social isolation and disengagement among elderly in society. Population ageing being experienced in developed and developing nations is having adverse effect on finances, labour force, family structure, housing, intergenerational ties. United Nations Report on Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) indicates that ageing will be the dominant and most visible aspect of world population dynamics in the 21st century (UN, 2002). Since Independence, India has recognised older persons as a priority target group for social welfare interventions who are the subjects for receiving welfare handouts and institutionalised services. State has never viewed senior citizens after reaching the age of retirement to be active participants in socio-economic advancement of the nation. Moreover, the state governments have realised that social welfare schemes or retirement policy schemes have put them in severe financial constraints (Sujaya, 2001). National Policy on Older Persons in India (1999) has pointed out that the phenomenal rise of elderly population have extended the

period of dependency upon adult children and enhanced health costs among other needs of older parents leading to immense pressure on the part of the former who are now in a position to sustain both their older parents and children at the same time. In this age of demographic transition, individuals are spending longer post-retirement period during which they are unable to work resulting in lack of financial stability.

2. ***Wellbeing and dimensions:*** The thesis presents a wellbeing study where 98 middle class older adults from the city of Kolkata has been interviewed using a structured questionnaire and interview schedule. The purpose of the study is to explore perceptions, personal experiences of ageing among older adults in old age. Wellbeing is generally viewed as a description of the state of people's life situations. Taking the concept and dimensions of wellbeing, the thesis focuses on understanding the perceptions of those who are ageing in relation to their particular context and situation. The concept of wellbeing is multidimensional encompassing all aspects of human life; material or objective dimensions of wellbeing and emotional or subjective dimensions. Wellbeing measures can be classified into two broad categories: objective and subjective measures. The first category of objective dimension measures wellbeing cardinally through certain observable facts such as economic, social and environmental factors. On the other hand, subjective measures of wellbeing explores people's feelings or real experience in a direct way, assessing wellbeing through ordinal measures ((McGillivray & Clarke, 2006). Psychological wellbeing (PWB) being part of subjective wellbeing is defined as the presence of positive emotions such as happiness, content, joy, and peace of mind and the absence of negative emotion such as fear, anxiety and depression.

The objective dimension in the study has been divided into health, material possessions and housing. The subjective wellbeing in this study has been divided into few categories such as positive and negative affect which determines positive and negative emotional states of elderly respondents and life-satisfaction which determines how satisfied elderly are with various aspects in life. In this study on wellbeing of 100 elderly therefore both objective and subjective aspects of wellbeing has been used.

Based on the dimensions of wellbeing as proposed by Stanford Centre of longevity (Kaneda, Lee, & Pollard, 2011), the research study as presented in this thesis measures overall wellbeing of each of the 98 elderly by taking into consideration the following dimensions:

- Objective or material well-being comprising of economic background, housing, shelter and basic needs.
 - Physical and cognitive well-being includes health conditions of the elderly, ability of the elderly to perform daily activities.
 - Social engagement involves relationship and interaction with family members, peers and community members. This parameter measures social participation and the availability of social support to the elderly.
 - Subjective wellbeing is a larger dimension of wellbeing comprising of one's sense of satisfaction in life, morale and positive or negative affects. This dimension focuses on feelings of elderly in their present situation and how they perceive their life after reaching the stage of retirement.
3. ***Experiential Ageing:*** In an attempt to question the biomedical and disengagement perspectives of ageing, the study aims to explore ageing as an ever changing and unique process of growing old which heavily depends on individual's experiences. Experiences being considered in this thesis can be both collective or individual, implying the importance of shared experiences in a particular social context. An individual or collective of individuals experiences life based on an individual's or collective memory along with an anticipation for the future.
4. ***Narrative Discourse:*** Apart from the wellbeing study, the thesis also presents narratives of ten elderly who shares their experiences in life following the experiential aspect of ageing and further evaluates one's life as an elderly in the backdrop of the late capitalist and consumerist society. Keeping in mind this objective, the research study uses the lens of narrative discourse analysis to explore individual biographical narratives in context to the consumerist and late capitalist society. Narratives being one of the most popular themes humanistic and social scientific thought since the mid-twentieth century; this lens of inquiry tends to make sense of the world by telling stories (Fina and Johnston, 2015).The

narrative discourse been used in this research study is based on William Labov's work on personal experience narrative (PEN) which focuses on people telling stories about themselves which may also involve stories about dangerous or embarrassing experiences. Rosen (1988) suggests that the tendency to narrate one's story is nothing but an "autobiographical impulse", forcing individuals to present a life which is coherent, universal and yet personal. As Linde (1993) puts it, "In order to exist in the social world with a comfortable sense of being a good, socially proper, and stable person, an individual need to have a coherent, acceptable, and constantly revised life story."

What this thesis attempts to look is as to how two narrators or storytellers (in this case elderly) create their individual identities by situating oneself within one's family and in the society at large through the chosen paths in their personal narratives. Taking cue from Labov's PEN, the study carefully brings out different contexts in connection to the narratives or stories.

In Narrative Research, a researcher looks into one's speech, writing, such as scraps of letters, lists, extensive multi volume diaries, visual materials like photo albums and video diaries. These sources of data present the true 'narrative' (Bruner, 1991) despite production of diverse stories from single individual. The thesis in this context focuses on the social production of narratives by the research and how stories are formed through conversations. The thesis thus focuses on how social identities of elderly are formed through manifestations of social or cultural patterns in each narrative. It further takes in Foucault's discourse analysis by weaving existing power relations operating in a state with the historical and cultural conditions and the practices through each individual narrative.

5. Critical Discourse Analysis: The biographies or narratives including orals and texts from the elderly has been analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA). In a late capitalist society, discourses have taken crucial role in sociocultural reproduction and change. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) being a branch of discourse analysis presents a 'three-dimensional' framework:

1. analysis of both spoken or written language texts,
2. analysis of discourse practice such as the processes of text production, distribution and consumption

3. analysis of discursive events such as that of sociocultural practice. Through the lens of CDA a research looks at how power relations constrain and control productivity and creativity among individuals or collectives and how this leads to the creation and development of a discourse. This development of discourse practices eventually breeds in hegemony. (Norman Fairclough, 1995)

POPULATION AND SAMPLING:

An important aspect in research design is to decide the site of conducting research; called 'study-site'. The study site or setting is located where a researcher is able to accumulate the target population and where her/his inquiry into research gets fulfilled.

Sampling is the statistical process of selecting a subset (called a "sample") of a population of interest for purposes of making observations and statistical inferences about that population. Social science research is generally about inferring patterns of behaviours within specific populations. The sampling frame used in this study is the southern parts of the city of Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

The research study used the Non-Probability Sampling technique where nonprobability sampling implies the sampling technique where units of the population have zero chance of selection or where the probability of selection cannot be accurately determined. In this technique of sampling, the sampling units are non-randomly selected, resulting in minimisation of sampling errors and increase in sampling bias. As a result of the possibility of sampling bias in this technique, the chances of population generalisation become impossible. The current nature of wellbeing of middle-class elderly from parts of Kolkata has been studied using snow ball sampling technique.

Snowball sampling as a Non-Probability Sampling has been used as sampling technique for the study on elderly wellbeing. In snowball sampling, a researcher initiates a study by identifying few respondents who matches the criterion of inclusion into the research study. These few respondents then would recommend many others from their known circle who also meets the research criterion. In this particular research, the social researcher first has identified five individuals from the locality of Jodhpur Park which is in the sampling area of Southern part of Kolkata. This identification is based on the criteria of being more than 60 years of age, knowing Bengali and having the Bengali lineage, having economic security and educated. Based on these criteria, the researcher

identified ten elderly from the said location and through these ten elderly 88 other elderly were approached from nearby locales for the study of wellbeing and perceptions of ageing in old age. The other locales include Lake Gardens, Golpark, Southern Avenue, Deshapriya Park, Garia, Highland Park and Behala from the southern areas of Kolkata, West Bengal.

CONCEPTS, CONSTRUCTS AND VARIABLES

This research study is based on some theoretical standpoints, based on which certain social phenomenon has been observed and further analysed. What becomes important in any social research is the need to explain and understand crucial concepts that are heavily ingrained within the theoretical standpoints to be used in the research. These concepts are generalisable properties or characteristics that are associated with objects, events, or people. Many concepts are developed through our conversations over time and keeps on changing its meaning with the influence of shared languages. Concepts having levels of abstraction are called as a construct which explains a given phenomenon. Construct can be a person's weight, can also comprise of a person's vocabularies, syntax and smelling. An indicator is an overview of a specific concept. At the time of formulating or strategizing a research study, a social researcher must pronounce several attributes and variables.

A variable in a social research is any entity that can take on different values and where these values must be varying or ever changing. For instance in this research study, health is taken to be a variable because the value of health which can be high, medium or low actually varies with each individual; someone having good health, some others having not so good health and many others having poor health. Whereas, attributes are specific values of the variables such as in the variable of sex or gender, there can be three attributes, male, female or transgenders.

Variable is understood as a measurable quantity which can change from low to high and also from negative to positive. Variables are categorised as independent and dependent variables. Constants on the other hand do not change or vary like variables, they remain the same. In a scientific research study, variables are measurable representation of an abstract construct that are not directly measurable.

In this particular Research Study on middle class elderly, independent and dependent variables have been specified:

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DEPENDENT VARIABLE
Physical health Family and Social Support ✓ Companionship at home ✓ Support of offspring ✓ Loneliness ✓ Intergenerational solidarity Engagement in activities ✓ Current Participation in mainstream activities ✓ Involvement in regular activities ✓ Continuation of previous activities	Subjective wellbeing ✓ Life-satisfaction ✓ Morale Scale ✓ Psychological wellbeing (positive affect and negative affect)

Independent variables can be organised in the following manner to study their effects on the subjective wellbeing

1. Physical health X Social Engagement and Involvement in Activities X Individual Morale
2. Physical health X Individual Morale
3. Productive Activities X Individual Morale
4. Physical health X Companionship at home X Individual Morale
5. Support of offspring X Current Engagement in mainstream activities X Subjective Wellbeing (Life-satisfaction, Psychological wellbeing, positive affect and negative affect, Morale Scale respectively)
6. Intergenerational Solidarity X Subjective Wellbeing (Life-satisfaction, Psychological wellbeing, positive affect and negative affect, Morale Scale respectively)
7. Intergenerational Solidarity X Current Engagement in mainstream activities X Subjective Wellbeing (Life-satisfaction, Psychological wellbeing, positive affect and negative affect, Morale Scale respectively)

To also see the relationship between:

1. Physical health X Social Engagement and Engagement in activities (it becomes dependent variable here)

2. Family and social support X Social Engagement and Engagement in Activities (it becomes dependent variable here).
3. Loneliness X Social Engagement and Activities (it becomes dependent variable here).

OPERATIONALISATION AND LEVELS OF MEASUREMENT

After having presented the design and planning of the research study, it becomes integral to point out the process of measuring each constructs and variables. Each theoretical construct must be operationalised to give meaning to any social research. An example can be cited to socio economic status being the theoretical construct which can be operationalised by questioning an individual's annual income. Owing to the subjectivity of social science research, it becomes important to measure most of the constructs using several indicators or variables. This process of measurement aims to find out the exact relationship between each indicator and this assessment process is termed as reliability which is an important aspect of any social science research. Thus, indicators are used by social science researchers from an empirical stand-point, while constructs are understood from a theoretical view point. In any Research Analysis, thus, values, variables and attributes are being measured using various techniques.

Levels of Measurement

Each variable based on their theoretical constructs needs to be measured based on certain scales of measurement. Stanley Smith Stevens (1946) defines four generic types of scales measurement for scientific measurements: nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio scales. In this particular research study on exploring individual wellbeing of elderly, ordinal level of measurement has been used. Ordinal scales can use attribute labels (anchors) such as "bad", "medium", and "good", or "strongly dissatisfied", "somewhat dissatisfied", "neutral", or "somewhat satisfied", and "strongly satisfied". The quantitative study of wellbeing among elderly in old age has attributed each independent variable into three levels of measurements: high, medium and low. In this study the socio-economic factor has been defined by variables such as education, occupation, economic status, physical assets, social position etc. The study has used the Kuppuswamy scale of measurement while measuring the socio-economic status. The material wellbeing has been measured

using the components of belonging, companionship, physical wellbeing, activities, social relationships, housing etc.

With regard to the dependent variable such as the subjective wellbeing indices, the levels of measurement vary from becoming not at all satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not at all satisfied. Here “somewhat satisfied” level of measurement implies lesser value of satisfaction from those individuals who have strong feelings of satisfaction. In subjective wellbeing, these levels of measurement become ambiguous. In the study of wellbeing, statistical parameters have been used in analysis.

Measuring Subjective Wellbeing

By way of explaining the levels of measurement, the thesis will now explicitly present three measurement indices of subjective wellbeing. The composite measures of subjective wellbeing include Life Satisfaction Index, Morale Scale and Psychological wellbeing or Affect Balance Scale. As mentioned above, the independent variables such as physical activity, socio-economic status, health conditions, social relationships, companionships and belonging find their correlates with the three indices of subjective wellbeing. These three measurement indices of subjective wellbeing are derived from the following scales of measurements:

The Life Satisfaction Index (LSI) covers general feelings of well-being among older people to explore own sense of identity from perspectives of satisfaction with regard to one's morale, adjustment, social security etc. An individual's satisfaction with life can be determined from five components as pointed out by Neugarten et al.(1961). The thesis has used the Ed Diener Scale of Life satisfaction in the elderly wellbeing study.

The measurement of life satisfaction is the reflection of individual's experience of satisfaction throughout one's life. According to Ed Diener, the measurement indices of life satisfaction can be relationship with offsprings, companionships, sense of social and financial securities, religious beliefs etc. (Ed Diener, 2006)

The morale factor of subjective wellbeing has been measured using the Philadelphia Geriatric Centre (PGC) Morale Scale. Seventeen items make up the PGC Morale Scale which has been derived from a larger set of questions (Lawton, 1975). The three factors which emerge from the morale scale are described below:

1. Agitation: This set of items characterizes the anxiety experienced by the older person. Lawton (1975) suggests, in addition, that “there is a driving, restless, agitated quality to the dysphoric mood” This group of items may serve as a manifest anxiety scale for older people (Lawton, 1975).
2. Attitude Toward Own Ageing: The items in this factor present attitudes of elderly persons towards their process of ageing and their experiences of ageing. These items note an individual’s changing perceptions through-out his/her life and also in a way tries to evaluate such changes.
3. Lonely Dissatisfaction: This factor deals with acceptance and dissatisfaction on part of the elderly individuals with respect to social interactions experienced by them. The purpose of this item is to assess individuals’ reaction to the relationships he/she maintains.

The factor of Psychological wellbeing which is the third component of subjective wellbeing has been measured using the Bradburn Scale of Psychological Wellbeing also known as Affect Balance Scale. This Affect Balance Scale is measured in terms of two components: the positive affect and the negative affect. As recommended by the Affect Balance Scales, the questionnaire comprises of five items inquiring on the feelings of certain emotions among the elderly individuals (Bradburn, 1969 and Ryff, 1989).

ANALYSIS OF DATA

As mentioned already, the thesis presents two studies: wellbeing in old age and narrative experiences of growing old. The first study of wellbeing in old age is analysed using quantitative tools of analysis while the second study of narrative discourse of ageing in old age is analysed using qualitative discourse tools of research.

Quantitative Method:

The study on wellbeing of 98 middle class elderly was conducted using codified close ended questionnaire. The objective of the study was to understand perceptions of subjective wellbeing in relation to the material or objective wellbeing. The data collected in this study has been analysed using statistical tools of analysis.

Thus, the method of analysis used in the study of wellbeing is quantitative method where numeric data collected in a research study can be analysed quantitatively using statistical tools. The statistical tools of analysis are presented in two forms: descriptive and inferential. Descriptive tool of analysis aims at describing, aggregating, and presenting statistical and numerical data. Inferential tool of analysis goes beyond describing the statistical data by analysing the statistical data keeping in mind the ultimate goal of testing of the hypotheses (theory testing). In this research study on measuring subjective wellbeing of 98 older adults, quantitative analysis has been done using Microsoft Excel Statistical tools. Since the questionnaire was coded, I could score each answer given by the respondents and directly put in on excel. Based on the study design (explained earlier), I categorised each question within the variables (independent and dependent) and tried to find out the relations existing between a set of independent variable on the dependent variable which is subjective wellbeing of elderly in old age. While analysing the quantitative data, I used correlation to determine each relationship.

Qualitative Approach to the study:

The second study of narrative experiences of elderly has been analysed using qualitative tools of analysis. The Qualitative Research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Qualitative research involves the studies use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study, personal experiences, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical interactional, and visual texts-that describes routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives. The qualitative approach in the thesis takes in the inductive methodological approach, focusing on describing multiple realities, creating deep understanding and exploring human perspectives. The research focuses on examining the interactions between the elderly individuals and the researcher from a qualitative research lens. The thesis thus aims to analyse the interactions through descriptive and interpretive tools of analysis.

The research has used Critical Discourse Analysis while analysing the narratives of the ten elderly. This method of analysis has been used to interpret the detailed and distinguished narratives of five elderly who have described their old age by narrating various incidents in life. These narratives have played important role in building the perceptions of ageing in old age among the elderly. In a late capitalist and consumerist

society, human beings continually and rigorously build and rebuild own life worlds with help from the discourse of language which is an active building process which is thoroughly interpreted and reinterpreted in discourse analysis. As a qualitative methodological tool, Discourses can be used in following ways: situated identities, social languages, different identities or social positions we enact and recognize in different settings and conversations that look at texts from varied perspectives or view-points. Discourses are embedded in a medley of social institutions, and often involve various objects, places and most importantly contexts. There are different types of discourse analysis. As mentioned, I have used critical discourse analysis as a tool to analyse the qualitative narrative data.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) accounts for the relationship between discourse and social power. It explains power abuse which is enacted, reproduced or legitimised by the text and talk of the dominant groups or institutions. CDA presupposes the following assumptions:

1. Considering social power alone
2. Social power is understood as the control exercised by one group over another; thus restricting one's freedom to act or influence one's knowledge, attitude or ideologies.
3. Power of a specific group must be distributed and restricted to certain domain or scope, resulting in the creation of differing centres of power and elite groups that ultimately dominates the central power.
4. Dominance is a kind of social abuse which is illegitimate control over a group; creating social inequalities.
5. Power is based on privileged access to valued social resources. Social power is institutionalised so that control is more organised.
6. Dominance is gradual and is met by resistance.

CDA thus propagates access and control over public discourse and communication where dominant groups or institutions have the ability to influence a certain kind of talk or text that gives rise to the creation of common knowledge, attitudes, norms, values and ideologies. This implies that discourse originates from a certain group of people, generally those belonging from an upper or elite social class. Thus, discourse is formed in the interests of the dominant groups. The 'modem' power as propagated by Foucault, is persuasive and manipulative rather than coercive (using of force) in a democratic social

set up. This 'modern power' which is representative of the current power structure refutes to the kind of power which is forceful, coercive or commanding. The research explores the play of discourses in such a social structure where power is manipulative and not forceful. The thesis has used CDA as an analytical tool to interpret the detailed conversations with the elderly narrators. For that I had to look minutely into the utterances, placement of each words while explaining any phenomenon or incident. Through discursive methods, I further broke each utterance into several factors and analysed the same in terms of the controls exhibited by the societal structures and institutions. The purpose of this analysis using CDA was to first explore the existing discourse within late capitalist society and then propose an alternative discourse after having a detailed conversation with the elderly narrators.

CHAPTER 3:

GROWING OLD IN A LATE CAPITALIST

AND CONSUMERIST SOCIETY

To understand the perceptions of ageing and growing old among elderly in the Bengali middle-class society, it becomes imperative to first describe the current social phenomenon and social context in which the elderly lives. In this context, this chapter focuses on understanding the changing social structures in context to a capitalist, late capitalist and consumerist society and then explore social construction of old age in midst of these societal changes. These changing social structures are understood from the perspectives of several theoretical stand-points such as the Frankfurt school theories, post Frankfurt school theories and consumerist theories. In doing so the thesis attempts to question the formation of perspectives of ageing against the operating power structure prevailing in a late capitalist and consumerist society.

LATE CAPITALIST SOCIETY: CONCEPTS AND FEATURES

This chapter will explore the experiences of growing old and formation of old age identity in a late capitalist or consumerist society. In order to do so, the chapter will first explore features of late capitalist society from the points of view of Frankfurt or Critical School theorists and then will go on to understand the emergence of a consumerist society through works of Post Frankfurt school theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, Frederik Jameson and Mike Featherstone. Exploration into current society will not be complete if we do not delve into Daniel Bell's study of the Post-Industrial Society. The question this thesis wants to raise is how old age identities are formed, changed and reconstructed in midst of a consumerist or late capitalist society. Having originated from the writings of theoreticians Adorno and Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School, Late Capitalism has derived its roots from an administered society as propounded by Max Weber; leading to state capitalism.

Understanding Late Capitalism from Critical or Frankfurt School Theories

Late capitalism from a Marxist point of view was explored and discussed in detail by the Frankfurt school theorists in the early to mid-20th century in the backdrop of Bolshevik Revolution, Russia. Frankfurt school theories poses strong critique of capitalism which is characterised by substantial communities that disintegrate into market, competition and large-scale industrial division of labour, forcing subordination of newly freed individuals. The dependence of individuals is marked by exchange of things i.e. commodities.

Founded in 1920s, the ideologies of the School were based on the philosophy of “Western Marxism”¹⁰ in context to advanced capitalist societies. History of Frankfurt school has been divided into four phases: phase one from 1923 to 1933 where the research carried out in the Institute was varying; focusing not on one particular strand of Marxist thought but many. These varied thoughts gave rise to critical theory. First Director, Carl Grunberg was of the view that Marxist thought aimed at a process of change and development which was followed by the researchers of the Institute till 1933. During these initial phases, Frankfurt School explored current social conditions by using Weber’s methodology by focusing on legitimate domination, centralisation and rationalisation in all spheres of life. Under the leadership of Max Horkheimer and inclusion of Herbert Marcuse and Adorno as members in 1932 and 1938 respectively, the Institute stepped into the second phase in North America from 1933 to 1950. During this phase in exile, the institute focused on philosophy and not history and economics following Neo Hegelian critical theory. This was a time when the Institute took to psychoanalysis and focused on executing ideas in a more systematic manner. The third phase from 1950s was marked by the researchers’ coming back to Frankfurt, Germany. After coming back the scholars saw rapid growth of student’s movement where Herbert Marcuse became the leading reproducer of new form of Marxist critical thought. Critical theory is an amalgamation of historical critical philosophy and Marxian critique of ideology. The fourth phase from 1970s saw decline of Frankfurt school with the death of Adorno and Horkheimer. During this time the ideology of the School had shifted very much from Marxism (Aarato and Gebhardt, 1982).

¹⁰ **Western Marxism:** This is a branch of Marxist Theory originating from the Western and Central Europe after October Revolution in 1917. Western Marxism is a combination of many theories that emerged from Marxism and further advanced an interpretation of Marxism.

Frankfurt School of thought often considered as a critical theory is derived from Kantian critical philosophy¹¹ and Marxian critique of ideology. Critical theory is the second phase of critical Marxism having flexibility in political sociology and theory of culture. This particular theoretical standpoint is a systematically elaborated account of social reality focusing on the three themes: rise of authoritarian state, massification of culture and decline of the individual. The objective of critical theory is economic determinism and political economy. This section of the chapter will explore the various dimensions and key focal points of notable theorists of Frankfurt school and through their eyes the thesis would like to establish a picture of the late capitalist society.

Towards the initial days of Frankfurt school in 1923, society was subject to ‘ideological crisis’ of the proletariat according to Georg Lukacs or was undergoing a political hegemony of the bourgeoisie according to Antonio Gramsci. Georg Lukacs in his writings set in the backdrop of Russian Revolution, described capitalist society as the one where community has ceased to exist, individual as a subject has declined and individuals have become thingified (reified); resulting in crisis of all aesthetics based on communication. In the same context, Marxism considers a decline of culture during this time period. Being influenced by Weber’s ‘Rationalisation’¹² and Marx’s ‘socialised, civil society’¹³ Lukacs explored the emergence and crisis of individuality in the western world before the advent of World War II.

In a developed capitalist society (late capitalism) commodity fetishism¹⁴ penetrates into all spheres of social life; taking commodity fetishism beyond economics. Lukacs talks of decline of art and culture because of presence of a contrast between harmonious, organic communities and the dynamic civil society where civil society reduces. Lukacs in his arguments of late capitalism, claimed that human labour can be abstracted in terms of

¹¹ **Kantian Critical Philosophy:** Immanuel Kant studied philosophy as criticism and not as a justification of knowledge. For him Criticism is meant evaluating all possibilities of knowledge before advancing to the knowledge itself.

¹² Max Weber’s concept of “**Rationalization**” is an ideal type which is related to the development of rational forms of development of the Western Society and capitalism. rationality consists of a set of social actions governed by reason or reasoning, calculation, plus rational pursuit of one's interests. Rationality as understood by Weber is characterised by calculability, efficiency, predictability, non-human technology, control over uncertainties. (Ritzer, pp. 124-125). In contrast to Rationality, Weber too studied irrationality or non-ratioanl actions such as religion, magic, or the supernatural ways of explaining the social world.

¹³ **Marx explanation of socialised civil society** is the existing contradiction between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’; meaning those who control production processes and those who produces the goods and services.

¹⁴ **Commodity Fetishism** as termed by Karl Marx analyses the properties of a commodity from its use value,

exchange and in terms of magicisation; termed as objective side of culture. Subjective side of culture is when human labour is seen in terms of demagicisation which later on led to Taylorism¹⁵; characterised by atomisation and fragmentation. Here one can derive the understanding that man is nothing but a fragment; reduced to spectatorship in a late capitalist society in European nations during mid-20th century. To summarise, Lukcs noted that late capitalism ideologies collapses and gives way to antinomic alternatives of critical thought, illusion less but impotent in presence of a world which is engulfed with administered content.

Max Horkheimer as the leader of Frankfurt school in the second phase (from 1931) opposed positivism on account of focusing too much on objects, facts and mechanical determinism. Critical theory thus opposed Positivism¹⁶ for putting no distinction between fact and values, essence and appearance. In Positivism individual facts reflect reality in its totality, whereas dialectics integrates empirical constituents into structures of experience; resulting in need to differentiate between positivism and dialectics. In this context, one can say that that critical theory is based on dialectics and opposed to determination of objective facts. Keeping in mind the importance of dialectics by opposing positivism (connected to natural laws) in understanding social changes, theorists such as Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer in their works such as “Reason and Revolution” and “End of Reason” respectively set out the context for the late capitalist society which gives rise to new individuality characterised by repression, self-preservation, more complex and mechanical networks of relations on one hand. On the other hand, this new individuality of late capitalist society embodies values of freedom, reason and happiness before the advent of authoritarian state; giving way to the dynamic view of looking at late capitalist society.

Theorists of the Critical School such as Eric Fromm, Adorno and Walter Benjamin studied different aspects of society and human life such as culture, aesthetics, social psychology in exploring the late capitalist society using Marxist paradigm of thought. Using Sigmund Freud’s social psychology theory, Fromm developed his ‘sane society’

¹⁵ **Taylorism** is related to the practice of scientific management and work efficiency as practiced in a system.

¹⁶ **Positivism** is the scientific study of the social world where the goal is to formulate abstract and universal laws on the operative dynamics of the social universe. In positivism laws are tested against collected data systematically (Turner, 2001)

where social processes are enriched by reciprocal knowledge, instincts and shaping of human being based on their needs.

T.W. Adorno and Horkheimer's work on "Mass Culture" was a critique to the authoritarian personality; focusing on the theorist's interest in the culture, more specifically music, psychoanalysis and the theories of aesthetics. Setting against the backdrop of an administered society towards the mid and end 20th century in the Western world, Adorno places his theory of aesthetics where the reality is portrayed in false totality, lacking a happy ending and dismisses all hopes for 'social emancipation' which was previously projected in Marxism. Like Horkheimer, Adorno too opposed positivism and presented his study of the Mass Culture in a late capitalist society; giving rise to accidental and anomic crowd or masses. Presenting current society as a fascist unit, Adorno lay "culture industry" as completely without hope. As presented by both Adorno and Horkheimer, culture industry is a result of degeneration of high culture which in turn is a manipulative product of state capitalism representing a closed and increasingly totalitarian system (one-dimensional). Max Horkheimer in 1941 located the emergence of the individual to be crisis driven and declining in the authoritarian period in midst of the social units such as family, and manipulated collectives that are under the influence of mass culture and fascism.

Both Horkheimer and Adorno presented a late capitalist society as a temporal period when the state controls each individual leading to a pessimistic and brutal world for each individuals. In "Minima Moralia" T.W. Adorno observes "the relationship of children with parents is undergoing a sad, shadowy change. Parents have lost their awe through their economic powerlessness" Here Adorno describes society to be antagonistic where generations are at loggerheads, up for competition, where people have lost their consciousness. Adorno has observed various micro groups, institutions in explaining the society. One must note that this particular book was written at the time of World War II where the Nazis were at a killing spree; murdering the older generations. He describes the society to be hierarchical, depending on opaque relationships where there is a hint of freedom; giving birth to group of people who are overtly ambitious. He describes a world full of horror, where an individual penetrates into an undiminished consciousness of negativity. In his various works with Horkheimer and also independently, Adorno talks of 'reason' which is a self-destruction of the enlightenment; conceived as negative,

critical treatment of the facts or ‘false clarity’. He mentions that the source of cultural decline is a result of barbarism.

In late 1950s, critical theory focused on the paradigm of one-dimensionality as explored by Herbert Marcuse. In this context, the subject disappears and as a result society becomes all powerful. One dimensionality as the characteristic of 20th century features increasing collective capital. The culture industry and consumerism in early 20th century is combined with the production system based on automobile and military expenditures; giving precedence to penetration of capitalism in everyday life. Marcuse abandoned all hope in democratic reform and gave structural stability to late capitalism.

Second phase of Frankfurt School focuses on Aesthetic Theory and Culture Industry where culture is taken to be the superstructure of economy which is the base; giving precedence to the ruling class. In Frankfurt school, human was at the centre of thought and action giving focus to individual psychology.

The discourse of late capitalism can be best understood through the debates between Adorno and Walter Benjamin where Benjamin’s concern was mass art and modern reproductive technology in realm of mass entertainment; art becoming available to the mass. When art becomes available to the mass, two kinds of viewing becomes accepted: one where only a selected few views and one where the mass views. Original art available to a selected group of people creates a kind of cult value and is unapproachable. Reproducibility and authenticity create an art work which is ‘aura’¹⁷ and is unfortunately declining in this age of late capitalism; ultimately leading to death of ‘art’. When we say aura has died or art has died, we mean that the uniqueness and mystery has evaporated, leading to destruction of genuine experience.

In this context, we will talk about Walter Benjamin’s work on Mechanical Reproduction of Art where no trace of humaneness and experience can be found in works of art. Benjamin speaks of masses; bringing things closer to individuals where mechanical reproduction of art changes. In his mechanical reproduction of art, Benjamin spoke of reproducibility that replaces authenticity where art works like ‘aura’. He gives examples

¹⁷ The term “**aura**” was used by Theorist Walter Benjamin in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in 1936. Benjamin believed that even the most perfectly produced work of art is devoid of one element which is the absence of time and space. He said that the unique existence of the art in the place and time of its originality is termed as ‘aura’ which is continuously declining in today’s world.

of films where art is reduced to aura giving way to intellectual domination. In this case masses are brought closer towards the work of art. This leads to progressive reaction which implies fusion of visual and emotional reaction with orientation of experts. According to Benjamin, films are more democratic which is attracted to montage, shock effects (anti-auratic) which are distracting and critiques the individual and eventually becomes expertise of the mass. Shock is distracting, it alienates. The viewer must make sense of what is happening and therefore he/she becomes a critique instead of becoming a worshipper. The critique is the expertise of the mass and also the viewer; providing the viewer with the agency. Thus, mass becomes the examiner, but an absent minded one. As a result films becomes a popular form in the hands of the masses. Benjamin's points of view have been severely criticised by Adorno. Benjamin identifies magical aura as high art and proforma as counter revolutionary. Adorno agrees that magical aura persists in bourgeoisie art work. This art work is not only magical and auratic but dialectical. It compounds magical elements with the sign of freedom.

Adorno on the other hand believed in autonomous art, primacy of technology and the process of music. Instead of mass form of art, Adorno focused on promoting avant-garde of art. Dialectic technique must be applied to high art. Cinema possesses aura to high degree. Reification of work of art is not a loss.

Benjamin in a hopeful light as opposed to the previous Frankfurt school theorists claimed that presentation of a world as ruin or as fragments defines modern art as experimental and open to participation and intervention from receivers. Here, he restored belief in power of the proletariat which was later on critiqued by Adorno.

Understanding Late Capitalist society in post Frankfurt school period

The late capitalist society can be understood through the writings of Post Frankfurt school theorists where the 'subject' is dead. They were not too critical about capitalism; looking at the different aspects of a capitalist society. Through writings of Daniel Bell, Frederik Jameson, Mike Featherstone and finally Jean Baudrillard, we would now explore a late capitalist society which is not only rooted in economy but also takes into consideration the cultural aspects. Perceptions of post Frankfurt school theorists stands in sharp contrast to the rigid and pessimistic view of the Frankfurt school theorists who look at late capitalism as a period of state control, manipulation.

In the post Frankfurt school period (most likely after 1970s), Frederick Jameson in his work on postmodernity and late capitalism said that post modernism is all about breaks, distractions and is a phase where nature ceases to exist and where culture is taken to be the symbol or metaphor where commodities play the most crucial role. Post modernity is characterised by aesthetic populism, high culture, mass or commercial culture and emergence of new kinds of texts. Features of post modernity is depth lessness, superficiality in contemporary theory and in a new culture of images or simulacrum. Post modernity has merged into post-industrial societies, consumer societies, media societies, information societies and electronic societies. Walter Benjamin as the most flexible Critical School theorists have looked at postmodernity as aestheticization of reality giving importance to representation of things. Culture becomes a product in Lyotard's version of a post-modernist culture where master narratives keep on disappearing. Characterised by anti-foundationalism and non-essentialism, a post-modernist 21st century gives rise to new social system where signs play the most crucial role. In this context Jameson mentioned the features of Late Capitalism to be: new international divisions of labour, new international banking and the stock exchanges, new forms of media interrelationship, computers, automation and crisis of traditional labour (Jameson,1991). Late capitalism plays important role where aesthetic production today has become integrated with commodity production.

From Jean Baudrillard's studies, one can get the picture of a late capitalist society which is a new era that is beyond the modern, and constitutes a break from an earlier era which is similar to the break between the premodern and modern era. Late Capitalism according to Baudrillard is a "a new era of simulation in which computerization, information processing, media, cybernetic control systems, and the organization of society according to simulation codes and models replace production as the organizing principle of society". Signs, codes, models become the new tools of maintaining social order and thus characterises the current late capitalist society. Gradually, these signs and symbols become such an inherent part of the social world, that it becomes almost impossible to distinguish them from the social reality. Baudrillard in this context, presents simulacra and simulation where representations become crucial. Simulations are processes where any situation or event can be replaces or represented with signs, images that can be visible through digital, electronic or virtual medium. This statement can be understood by citing an example of theatre where in the 'theatre' becomes representation

of a segment of one's life or the social life. It represents some part of the social world, institutions, relationships, and interactions that characterize aspects of the social world.

Taking the lens of post modernity which is characterised by breaks and heterogeneity, the thesis presents perceptions of Bengali middle-class elderly and formation of their identities as often conflicting, conforming and continuously changing. Declining the positivist lens of understanding, the thesis inquires the dialectics existing in a late capitalist society where individuals are on one hand preys of domination by the state and on the other hand are agents claiming for freedom and change from the administered society. Focusing on theoretical frameworks as presented by Baudrillard and Frederik Jameson, the thesis explores perceptions of ageing in a late capitalist society which is characterised by representations, signs and symbols.

CONSUMERIST SOCIETY: CONCEPTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The current society been characterised by a consumerist society is one in which people devote time, energy, resources and thought to “consuming”. The thesis looks at the current world shrouded in late capitalist and consumerist ideals. Consumerist society being unstable and representing a ‘depthless culture’ focuses on consumerism and consumption culture of individuals. In this section, the thesis explores consumerist society and hyper civilisation as propounded by Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) who studied consumerist society as the society that has paved way to a new system of mass consumption where consumer goods and services are at abundance (Baudrillard, 1998). This particular kind of society is characterised by mass commodification and expansion of exchange values, been represented as signs, signifier and signified.

As propounded by Ferdinand de Saussure, signs, signifier and signified are concepts of structuralism school of thought where the central theme is that through language or media, signs are created, obtaining meanings by way of comparing its meaning with other signs. Through Semiology (Science of signs), signs are taken to be images, gestures, musical sounds or objects. The complex association of signs with images, gestures etc. create societal rituals or conventions. In consumerist society where each commodity is represented in terms of signs, exchange value becomes important along with the preoccupation with manipulation.

United States being considered to be a hyper-consumerist society which is understood as a kind of society, dictated by the mass media and advertisements which in turn has the potential to obstruct the minds of its citizens by coercing them to consume products from the market. Market creating a consumerist bias shapes the choices of its consumers; manipulating individual choices in a consumerist society. The most fundamental process that generates consumerism is the nature of profit maximizing competition in a capitalist economy. With the continuous expansion of markets, focus is more on consumption rather than on leisure where an individual's happiness is actually equated with his/her consumption capabilities. The most important part of a consumerist and late capitalist society is advertising which is now everywhere: on television, on billboards, in newspapers and magazines. The dynamics of consumer Society has been presented in this thesis from the perspectives of various theoretical standpoints:

Importance of signs, images and control of the state

Taking in Jean Baudrillard's concept of Consumer Society, the thesis explores the concept of simulacra where reality ceases to exist and where mass media becomes all important. Simulacra implies the copy of a copy which ceases to have any association with the real anymore and most of the times, reality is reproduced. As mentioned in the previous section about late capitalist society, consumerist society too is an age of reproduction where consumption and exchange of products are given the most importance. As mentioned by Baudrillard, our experiences are formed and shaped as a result of the various representations of the media. For example, through picturization of war and terrorism on television, individuals tend to experience prepared realities. Jean Baudrillard thus talks of a hyper real world which is entirely in simulation where the real incident or event or objects are no longer 'real', rather are representations of the real. The society which is being inquired in this thesis represents a 'hyper real world which blurs the distinctions between the real and the unreal and also the disappearance of real into unreal. Moreover, the real dissolves making the model or code or sign to be the perceived 'real'. Some instances can be cited to understand how signs dominate the reality and many a times replaces the real; giving way to 'hyperreality' by Baudrillard where images or simulation merges into reality and becomes the same. This is a process of 'social entropy' resulting in the breakdown of boundaries where information and knowledge on entertainment, advertising, and politics keeps on getting produced-

reproduced or constructed-destructed. Thus, Baudrillaire in an attempt to explain the consumerist society describes the future society as one with despair, sadness, and nostalgia. Baudrillard thus looks at the society called late capitalist and consumerist society as an illusion and hubris of subjectivity.

Mass media being the key feature in a consumerist or late capitalist society is dominated by electronic medium such as television, music player etc. Baudrillard argues that television and music system are not real, rather representations; questioning the relationship between reality and image in contemporary culture. The thesis in this context, continuously explores a consumerist society as pointed out by Baudrillard presenting the conflicts between reality and culture as shown by media which is mostly consumed by the mass. The sample of study, the Bengali middle-class elderly living in the 21st century India is witness to the indirect domination or manipulation exerted by the mass media. In presence of this dialectics, the elderly often fails to differentiate the real from the representation; resulting in conflicting images in old age. This brings the thesis to the three conflicting situations in a consumerist society as theorised by Baudrillard (Baudrillard, 1988):

The first order is one where the image is the reflection of reality: Traditional societies being characterised by collective representations, collective conscience and repressive laws, images represented originality in an authentic form. There was no gap between reality and image.

The second order: The image disguises or conceals reality: transcending to industrial society, Baudrillard marks the second phase of simulation characterised by reproduction of identical objects. Reproduction in an industrial society is the repetition of the same object.

The third order: There is total absence of reality: With the emergence of postmodernity towards the end of 20th century, the late capitalist and consumerist society is controlled by simulations. To summarise, in this order, the reality is structured according to codes.

In a consumerist society, we tend to choose products that suit our image; giving way to classes of commodities of consumption. For instance, when an individual goes for food

shopping, she/he tends to choose between designer foods, health foods, traditional food and exotic foods. Many a times we choose products that are endorsed by celebrities such as actors or model or cricketer; making media an integral part in consumerist society where images are the most important component. In this context, Baudrillard's thesis focuses on how each class of commodities create a sense of stratification; giving rise to a stratified society which is based on consumption. Baudrillard argues that individuals are characterised on account of what they consume or on the basis of consumed objects. Thus, one can say that in a late capitalist and hyper consumerist society, an individual tends to consume signs, images in the process of consuming any object. Each class or category of consumables create categories of persons in a consumerist society. In contrast to the industrial society where production was the key component, in the late capitalist society reproduction controls the society. These features of a consumerist society represents the third order of situation where reality is absent.

Baudrillard furthers his point of view and writes about the fourth order of simulation in 'today's world' where there is no relation to any reality, creating a perfect hyperreality. Thus, the hyper consumerist or late capitalist society through this fourth order makes an attempt to blur the differences between images and reality. One can cite examples such as taking one's private life to the public by appearing in talk shows, digital special effects, songs, ads and self-help manuals. These instances or evidences of hyperreality are mechanisms of expressing oneself to the outside world. In this context, Baudrillard says that in this consumerist society where people tend to lose oneself and gets flowed within the images and signs, the quest of yearning and longing takes centre stage among individuals. This happens when commodities lose its real self, gets replaced with signs and when individuals go for products having brand or sign value.

From these theoretical standpoints, the thesis focuses on the importance of consumption and the act of manipulation exerted by the state through mass media tools (such as TV etc) in the current world. These acts of manipulations are done by signs, codes. In a late capitalist society, sign and commodity have come together to produce the 'commodity-sign'. "The autonomy of the signifier, for example, the manipulation of signs in the media and advertising, means that signs are able to float free from objects and are available for use in a multiplicity of associative relations".

Understanding the consumer culture

Mike Featherstone (2007) in *Consumer Culture and Post Modernism* studied cultural change in current society by focusing on the consuming patterns of individuals. In his theories of culture industry, Featherstone gave importance to consumption rather than production of commodities after getting influenced by the Frankfurt school of thought. The consumer society was seen as a culturally saturated society where in which production depended on consumption of goods that are defined by signs and images. As a result, the consumer culture which is formed in the late capitalist and consumerist society is determined by possession of labour-saving commodities and continuous supply of goods that play important role in enhancing individual living and lifestyle. Consumer culture is thus based on capitalist commodity production which gives rise to material culture dominated by consumer goods and consumption from the macro level. The consumer culture which gives importance to consumable goods that enhances ones living and categorises individuals to specific social classes, gives rise to formation of newer personalities and presentation of self in society. A consumerist society breeds in mass culture where distinction between high and mass culture keeps on decreasing in midst of the endless reduplication of signs, images and simulations through the media. Consumer culture is based on how mass media first creates different versions of reality, then distorts them and finally creates a situation when there is no real left in reality.

With regard to the thesis, the middle-class consumer culture is limited to certain spaces such as amusement parks, museums, shopping mall, fairs. What remain of these spaces is the remnant in form of signs, images and spectacles. This gives rise to an aestheticized commodity world comprised of department stores, arcades, trams, trains, streets and fabric of buildings and the goods on display. Thus, a consumerist society is inhabited by the images and signs representing commodities and individuals associated with the signs. Consumer culture gives rise to production of new aestheticized urban landscape (Buck-Morss, 1983) after the shift of opportunities to advertising, marketing and industrial design. A consumerist society in late 20th century was characterised by signifiers that were continuously flowing. These give way to a postmodern ‘depthless’ consumer culture characterised by art and reality that have swapped places in an ‘aesthetic hallucination of the real’.

The urban aestheticized space is comprised of urban flâneurs, or strollers who tend to celebrate artificiality, randomness and superficiality of fiction and popular cultures (Chambers, 1987; Calefato, 1988). Signs and images dominating consumerist society coerces individuals to maintain discipline and control when it comes to choosing any commodity from the market. What becomes important is the constant gaze each consumer possesses on consumables.

To summarise, Jameson (1981), writes that culture is ‘the very element of consumer society; no society has ever been saturated with signs and images like this one’(Benjamin, 1982b; R.H.Williams, 1982). In the same lines, Baudrillard has focused on the role of electronic mass media where television produces images and information that may often threaten our sense of reality within the rubric of late-capitalist society. This again presupposes the importance of signifying culture that leads to a “simulational” world in which signs and images proliferate. Signs, images and representations in different form aims to blur the wall between reality and imagery which Baudrillard refers to “aesthetic” hallucination of reality’ where everyone lives everywhere. This late capitalist society thus gives way to the ‘death of the social, loss of the real’, leading to a nostalgia for the real. In this context, individuals such as those who are in their later years often are fascinated with and are in complete desperation of searching for real people, values etc. (Kroker, 1985: 80). This brings us to reiterate the presence of consumer culture which is synonymous to postmodern culture that reflects a depthless culture where art triumphs over reality.

Spectacle in a Consumer Society

As mentioned already, late capitalist society is the kind of society where the subject is dead and the individual subjects are getting more and more disappeared. It signifies a culture of the simulacrum in society where exchange value is the key. Such a society can also be called as the society of the spectacle as propounded by Guy Debord where image becomes the final form of commodity reification (Debord, 1967)

Such a spectacle society is dominated by the mass media which has undergone lot of changes in the last fifty years, starting with the mass culture in 1950s characterised by elitist condemnation. The birth of new media characterised by visual and electronic media (TV) in the 1960s by Marshall McLuhan and Hanz Magnus Enzenberger was

further replaced by the mass media during 1970s, focusing on public forum where people are free, rational, individualistic; celebrating democracy depending on rational, informed, independent public. Describing this current nature of the mass media, Phelan (1977) writes:

“American assumptions of instrumentalism, the mechanisms of mass marketing, the economic necessities of the news and information business, the multi-cultural awareness of internationalism, the vast complexities of high technology have created the transitional forum. Free individuals are being replaced by predictable types, publics are becoming audiences, issues are assigned topics for harmless comment. The will of the people is now the mood of the mass; methods of communications are subverted to techniques of propaganda.”

In this context, the thesis aims to take up Phelan’s standpoint of how the state (controlled by the corporates) using the tools of media influences the mass, manipulates individual minds by making them predictable and not really ‘individualistic’. These influences are mostly indirect manipulations veiled in democracy and in doing so the thesis questions the aims of Capitalism which is headed by these managerial elites. Manipulations and control by the state or the elite managerial class creates the public (in this thesis as the elderly individuals) as the passive receptor of the change; termed as the behavioural conditioning.

Critiquing Phelan’s standpoint, Stuart Ewen in “Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture” explores advertising in the 20th century which premised upon capitalist ambitions and the changing pattern of market; creating modern consumer. A modern consumer is one whose needs and desires are shaped by the mass production. The thesis in an attempt to understand perceptions of ageing among the elderly in society, looks at how an individual’s choice is shaped by demands and supplies available in the market and how the state or the capitalist/elite class shapes individual consciousness.

This consciousness and demand is catered through various modern methods of advertising which is capable of transforming one’s leisure pattern, family structures and ultimately the society. For example, soap becomes more than an aid to cleans the dirt from one’s body, rather it is a sign for the individual who is competing successfully for own career. Anxiety over success in business was associated by right purchase of a

commodity. Newspapers, magazines, radio-broadcasts, TV, acted as the medium to transport these signs to the mass in an advanced industrial society.

Taking cue from these standpoints where society becomes a spectacle, the thesis explores elderly individuals whose choices gets manipulated by the complex system of consumer culture.

Advertising as the most inseparable part of the consumer culture tend to reflect our lives. As said by McLuhan (1964) “the ads of our time are the richest and the most faithful daily reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities”, advertisements in any time period is a reflection of the society or vice-versa. It represents the psyche of individuals inhabiting in the particular society. Similarly, Unwin (1974) calls advertisements “the folklore of the Twentieth Century.” The objective of advertising is to make a product desirable for the purpose of appealing to the mass who is also the viewer; creating a value of culture in which the particular product is sold. In this context, the thesis looks at how an elderly individual gets attracted towards certain kind of advertising and how he/she perceives or categorises personal needs through advertising of consumer products or goods.

AN INFORMATION AGE OR POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY: CONCEPTS

Often equated with a late capitalist and consumerist society, post-industrial society according to Daniel Bell is the changed society which has developed as a result of the changing social and economic structures and the transforming occupational systems during the late 20th century. The change affects socio-technical dimensions of society. One aspect of post-industrial society is the increasing bureaucratisation of science and the increasing specialisation of intellectual work.

Post Industrial society is an information society characterised by information exchange in terms of data processing, record keeping, market research. What is most crucial in a post-industrial society is its search for theoretical knowledge. Just as capital and labour were the problems addressed in the industrial societies, knowledge and information frame problems in the post-industrial society. This new society is based on knowledge theory of value where value is increased by knowledge. To explain the design of a post-industrial society one can say that here conflicts occur not with regard to or against nature, rather happens between persons, between teachers and students, doctor and

patient etc. Here, nature ceases to exist and therefore the experience each person has is between oneself or with other persons. This particular kind of society has seen increase in communication between people more than the increasing pace of technology. There is a tremendous change in the number of persons one knows of. The change that post-industrial has brought in is not with regard to the acceleration of change, but the enlargement of the individuals' world that accompanies the advance of technology.

A post-industrial society also called as the Information Society is increasingly conscious of its fate and seeks to control its own fortunes, the political order or authority of the state becomes crucial. The relationship between the social structure and the political order thus becomes one of the chief problems of power in a post-industrial society. The concept of the post-industrial society is a large generalisation and its meaning can be more easily understood through five of its components that plays important role in shaping a new or revived social structure:

1. Economic sector: From an economic point of view there has been a shift from manufacturing to service economy where focus has changed from good production to service production.
2. Occupational distribution: An Information Age symbolises presence of the professional and technical class.
3. Axial principle: What becomes important in this changing social structure is the over-emphasis on theoretical knowledge which is now considered to be the source of innovation and policy formulation for the society.
4. Future orientation: This is an age for advancement in technology and control of technology on the society.
5. Decision making: the final component of the post-industrial society is the emergence of a new intellectual technology.

Colin Clarke argued that as nations became industrialised, the different occupational sectors got divided based on their productivity in a particular society. A larger proportion of labour force would pass in manufacturing and as national incomes rose, there would be a greater demand for services. The first characteristic of a post industrialist society is that the majority of the labour force is no longer engaged in agriculture or manufacturing but in services such as trade, finance, transport, health, recreation, research, education and government. Today, a large number of countries in the world are still dependent on

the primary sector: agriculture, mining, fishing, forestry. These economies are based entirely on natural resources. In Africa and Asia, agrarian economies account for more than 70 percent of the labour force. Many agrarian societies such as India have a high proportion of persons engaged in services because labour is cheap and usually underemployed. In industrial society different kinds of services tend to increase because of the demand in production. But in post-industrial society the emphasis is on a different kind of services such as business, transportation, communication and utilities, health, education, research and government.

The second category of understanding a post- industrial society is through the change in occupational distributions where people work and the kind of work they do. In a large measure, occupation is the most important determinant of class and stratification in the society. Industrial societies have given rise to a huge population of the semi-skilled labourers. Expansion of service economy gave rise to a huge emphasis on office work, education and government has therefore shifted occupational emphasis to that of the white-collar occupation. Therefore, one can conclude saying that an industrial society is the coordination of machines and men for the production of goods while post-industrial society is organised around knowledge, for the purpose of social control and the directing of innovation and change which gives rise to new social relationships and new structures which have to be managed politically. Social control is done only through proper planning and forecasting in society. Rise of modern industrial economies is dependent on the creation of new institutional mechanism, to build up savings through banks etc and use this money for investment and the emergence of technology. The new intellectual technology is its effort to define rational action and to identify the means of achieving it. (Bell, 1974)

OLD AGE AS A PROBLEM IN A CAPITALIST AND LATE CAPITALIST SOCIETY

Having described the characteristics and features of a late capitalist and consumerist society, the chapter will now explore how ‘old age’ as an identity is formed in this backdrop. In a capitalist society, process of ageing is looked as a ‘problem’, characterised by inequalities in the distribution of power, income and property. With the rise of elderly population (implying increasing life expectancy) in recent years, problems in old age gets maximum focus in most literature on ageing and gerontology. It was only

towards the end of the 19th century that old age as a separate group came to the forefront; before this period, they were considered to be sick and feeble and therefore not important to be considered in any discussion. From 19th century onwards elderly got the social status resulting in formation of pension schemes that consider 65 years to be the retirement age. Ageing researchers started to look at old age as a problem that requires implementation of new kinds of retirement policies. (Phillipson, 1978).

With the population ageing in western countries and followed by the second world and third world nations, average life expectancy of an individual has increased from 55 (in 1920) to over 80 today. This demographic change poses significant challenges to society and economy. As fertility rates are also declining, the ratio between people at work and remaining population will change from 4-1 today to 2-1 by 2050 in average. China being the nation with the maximum aged population boasts of having advanced medical facilities, opportunity structures and availability of resources particularly for the aged population. Nations such as Australia, USA, and United Kingdom have highly advanced health care facilities, better opportunity structures and policies for the older population, leading to increase in the life expectancy rate of the population. In context to India, the proportion of older persons with respect to the entire population has increased to 8.6%. Due to economic well-being, better health care system, good medicines, etc. available in the country, there has been a substantial reduction in the rate of mortality. Population ageing has profound social, economic and political implications for a nation. Despite the availability of resources, the increasing number of older persons put a strain on health care and social care systems of a country. In most studies, old age is viewed from the purview of problems related to health, economic and social constraints faced by elderly after reaching formal or informal stage of retirement.

One of the most important discussion which is associated with that of old age and ageing is that of retirement. With regard to retirement policies, each country has adopted specific retirement policies based on a particular retirement age. Retirement age implies the beginning of the period of 'no-work' where people are no longer part of the labour force which means they are no longer contributing to the socio-economic advancement of the nation. The older population are deprived of work opportunities after they reach the formal age of 60-65 years. Younger population is always preferred in jobs despite the number of years of experiences these elderlies have acquired. In order to secure retirement period, most retirement policies are based on guaranteeing the economic and

social security of the elderly in society; implying years of inactivity in society after retirement.

The government retirement policies cater to retired workers from organised work sector. In context to the developed nations, small-scale labourers or workers from unorganised sector often feared old age to be the time when they would be evicted from their workplace (Gaudie, 1974). This sudden economic instability creates a sense of withdrawal among the elderly in their community. Eventually, the struggle each individual has to go through after formal retirement leaves them with one option is to go back to the workplace. These small-scale or unorganised sector labourers are not guaranteed with any retirement pension leading to economic uncertainty in old age, where they have to mostly depend on their families for financial support. But, for the industrial worker or worker in organised sector, pensions are guaranteed on account of taking care of the family in old age.

Within the capitalist rubric, the elderly worker in an organised workspace is often considered to be a reserve of labour which means their work potentials are often re-utilised in the workspace after retirement. The dialectics of the argument here is that many individuals fail to comprehend their life retirement, whether to be happy or comfortable in new life where they are not forced to work or get worried because of financial instability. There is a large proportion of elderly population for whom retirement age is not fixed to 60-65 years. Many of them continue to have longer working years even after reaching the age of 65 years. Anderson and Cowan, in their research found out that men who were involved in formal workforce showed higher levels of subjective wellbeing. High birth rates during early 1960s was resulted in the rise in demands for young workers. This depicted a clear replacement of the old with the young. Thus, during the 1970s, there was an accelerated withdrawal of older workers from the labour market.

In a capitalist society, quality of life in retirement is dependent on one's social class and wage-earning capacity. Despite provisions of pension after retirement there are discriminations regarding access of the pension schemes to the marginalised sections of the population. The grant of a pension or superannuation excludes non-workers or workers who are not affiliated to any institution. Poverty being the most dominant characteristic of the imbalance created during the period of retirement among the

marginalised sections of the elderly population, mass unemployment and early retirement creates a feeling of financial insecurity among many elderly. The conflict existing in society is basically the difference between young and old pension holders where the younger retiree is much more likely to have occupational pensions and to have income from work. State benefits with regard to pension schemes are mostly availed by the old-olds where they are more dependent on other sources of income (Philipson, 1982).

Apart from economic point of view of retirement policies, there are humanitarian aspects too in the pension schemes. From the social perspective, family and kinship ties persist but they are no longer central and vital, resulting in declining role of elderly in the family. The older members in the family do not role of a patriarch, not being venerated and respected. To summarise in a capitalist society, an elderly seen as a problem do not possess any role of domination (Burgess, 1960). They become economic burden in the society, susceptible to pension benefit schemes or retirement policies. Let us study the different phases of transition from work to retirement:

1. Stable withdrawal: as an individual grows old, she/he tends to retire from formal or informal work force. This withdrawal from full time work shapes an individual's lifestyle and retirement is taken to be a welcome alternative.
2. Unstable withdrawal: Withdrawal from formal workforce is often a result of ill health of individuals; leading to no provision of retirement policies. Retirement policies are an outcome of the social acceptance when people are considered to be 'burden' when they reach the formal age of retirement.
3. Refocusing on elderly being the problem in society, several pension schemes portray old age to be a stage of inactivity. Old age, in fact, is described as a burden for the economy in society; considered to be 'passengers' threatening to pull down the standard of living enjoyed by society as a whole. In a society where work and productivity plays the centre stage, elderly individuals experience tension for being 'non-productive' in society.
4. In context to India, from the time of Independence, older persons were always considered to be the priority target group for social welfare interventions in their old age policies. The old age welfare intervention in 1950s and 60s focused on protecting pension schemes and shelter for the elderly by the government; reducing the role of elderly to be dependents and inactive citizens by the state. Unfortunately, state has failed to view the elderly or senior citizens to be

resources and active participants for the development of the nation. This is because, federal governments believe that the state runs huge financial losses for taking care of its elderly. The National Old Age Policy in 1999 pointed out various welfare schemes for widows, invalid elderly, elderly women; focusing on health, abuse against elderly, financial protection for the elderly. The main issues pointed out by the 1999 Old Age Policy was social assistance for the older population and issues relating to older women.

To address the huge population ageing all throughout the world and each nation's pressure to protect its elderly citizens, a new approach was thought of in 2001 in the form of "The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing". The Plan of Action called for a new approach to ageing policies and programmes that would promote a "society for all ages". This framework provides information and suggestions about how to go about creating those policies and programmes. The MIPAA aims "to ensure that persons everywhere are able to age with security and dignity and to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights" (MIPA,2002)

The Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing abides by the following approaches:

- Developmental approach to population ageing where focus is on putting the elderly back to work force; and
- The life-course intergenerational approach to policy focuses on equity, reciprocity and inclusiveness of all age groups through implementation of several policies.

The shift of each old age policies globally shows our changing perspectives of looking at an older person in a late capitalist society. Earlier policies taken in 1982 or 1999, elderly was looked as a vulnerable group who were towards the edge of any developmental agenda. Global rise in elderly population and strain on state economy thus has coerced the policy makers to look at elderly population as a less vulnerable and more independent group.

IMAGES OF ELDERLY IN A LATE CAPITALIST AND CONSUMERIST SOCIETY: EMERGENCE OF MASS MEDIA

“Elderly as a problem” in the capitalist society was posed because of its representations in the mass media. A consumerist society which is characterised by consumption and exchange, looks at elderly as mere objects. Elderly identities are thus formed based on the amount of time and money they spend on goods and services that are produced and displayed in the market.

Identity in old age is inextricably related to their experience of longevity where temporality gives old age an authentic identity. Relationship between old age and identity starts with a discussion about ‘postmodernity’. Some of the features that have been associated with postmodernism are: instability, insecurity, flexibility, rapid change, breakdown of old certainties and social conditions without overarching values or fundamental principles. Institutional arrangements that reflect these features include consumerism, fluid family structure, and temporary short-term contracts of employment, volatile global markets and identity politics. The question is to what extent should this view of postmodern culture and society change our view of life in old age. Old people are often introduced to strangers or introduce themselves in ways which refer to their age. Further, our reputation as far as it is known is a key social characteristic derived in part from our past, which determines how we are treated by others. The longer the history of interaction, the greater the chances that social reputations are institutionalised. This can have profound effect on identity.

“Baby Boomers” (those born in 1950s), now the old population are witness to the phase of late capitalism and postmodernity where commodity production and consumption marks every aspect of social life. Emergence of multinational corporations, banking systems and commodification of products allures old age to be mere consumers and not producers. Consumerist society represents old age as an age of hyper-consumerism. Older adults are victims of advertisements, products and often misrepresented by the mass media. In this context, the thesis seeks to understand the representation and meanings of old age in a consumerist society from the concepts of ‘hyperreality’ and ‘simulation’ as presented by Jean Baudrillard. These terms refer to the virtual or unreal nature of contemporary culture in an age of mass communication and mass consumption. The thesis is based on experiences and perceptions of ageing from the perspectives of

older adults who are part of the era of late capitalism and consumerism. Therefore, it becomes imperative to understand consumerist society and consumerism in order to understand the representation of ageing in society.

Consumerist society stereotypes 'old age' by categorising it as a social problem. State has played an important role in delineating positions of elderly by patronising the belief that elderly people are socio-economic burden of the nation. In this age of late capitalism and consumerist society, individuals no longer create their own identities, rather their identities are created or recreated through representations of societal agencies such as media. Taking reference from Baudrillard's understanding of the hyper-reality and simulacra where nothing is real and that objects are mere copy of some other copy; this segment of the chapter aims to understand how the symbol of old age has been constructed in a consumerist society. Post modernity patronizisses mass media which comprises of new influential products cartoon(print, internet, television, film) and a new means for the capitalist take-over of our lives. Through the mediatisation of culture, we become increasingly reliant on the media's version of our reality, a version of reality that is filled predominantly with capitalist values. Older population being victims of consumer culture has been misrepresented by the mass media.

During the second half of the 20th century an important transition took place in the conditions that structure later life. Consumption became more salient in how people lived and defined their lives. This transition to mass affluence has led to a shift in how people construe their life and their social identity, from one based on participation in the productive processes of society to one dominated by consumerist lifestyles (Ransome, 2005). This change in market structure from being production oriented to a consumption one has also impacted on the lifestyles of the older adults too. The patterns of consumption and experiences of older adults are a result of their uneven nature of retirement and their economic status after retirement. Thus the social identities in later life are formed around processes of consumption rather than those of production and reproduction (Reese, Jones, Victor et.al. 2008). Gerontological researchers have often presumed that older people are outside the cultural dynamics of consumption or implicitly assumed that such dynamics play little part in the day to day lives of older people (Gilleard and Higgs, 2000). The capability and needs of older consumers can differ from younger adults. Devices for supporting healthcare may require some adaptations for older people. Technological advances are being made to assist older

adults to remain functional and independent as long as possible . The beauty industry is developing and introducing a multitude of anti-aging hair products. (Coleman, Daniel, Kelkar, Dennis, 2017) (Serviss 2013). This particular market values convenience and is willing to pay for it (Serviss 2013). In 2012 the Boomers bought almost half of the bedding and furniture and almost half of the dollars spent in that industry. Many are in their peak years of earning and were less touched by unemployment and the housing roller coaster than others.

In such a media run society, TV shows, advertisements and movies take the centre stage in perceiving the world that surround us. Perceptions of ageing too is shaped in midst of such a representative, image based society. In the same lines, gerontologist Laurie Hatch (2005) said “Immersed in a world surrounded by the media, people in our society absorb impressions, ideas, images, and sounds that reflect society’s attitudes toward ageing. Media reflect dominant values in a society by often misrepresenting older adults and giving rise to ageism in society”(Vickers, 2007).

In a Bengali middle-class society, in the urban section of the city of Kolkata an older adult’s household composes of commercial materials such as washing machine, television, car and a micro-oven. With the advent of the media culture, older adults are now purchasing such products that promise to reduce or slow up the process of ageing or getting old in society. These products include anti-ageing creams, anti-ageing medicines, exercise related machines such as trade-mills, yoga mats etc. All these products and many more such are especially designed for the comforts of the elderly.

Discussion on consumerist society brings us to the impact of media on society and the formation of identities in society. In a consumerist society where people are continuously bombarded with images, identities in old age gets constructed by the media. Advertisements of anti-ageing creams, beauty products etc. attract maximum elderly who are now one of the largest users of modern forms of technologies. Companies are now focusing on producing commodities that are ideally used by the elderly; one such example being Seniority.in (www.seniority.in) that sells products that are especially designed keeping in mind the needs of older adults. They have very recently launched a music player named SAREGAMA CARVAAN that has more than 5000 songs from the yester-years. Number of older adults from the metropolitan cities have purchased this item primarily because this system provides a look back to the by gone years. The

question that can be raised here is that through these products and the deliverables of such products, an implicit creation and conformation of elderly image is established. These images are such that older adults are nostalgic, roots backs to their past and immobile. Through television, older adults watches the distorted images of themselves and subsequently subscribes by them (Delloff, 1987, p. 12). Media reinforces the idea that the best years of life are reserved for our youth. Nevertheless, media in 21st century is changing its ways by ascertaining newer roles in the advertisements; changing the trend of elderly-portrayal. Older men and women are now getting chances to be part of talk shows, interviews, documentaries and news programming in this changed Media environment. The demographic transition and huge increase in the number of people above the age of 65 has forced media to change its outlook, wherein the older adults feel inclusive in the current society. In this consumerist society, commodities or products and services are becoming more and more available for the older adults (Vickers, 2007).

Late Twentieth and Twenty-first century is witnessing increasing dependency of older adults on signs, representations and especially the media. Many elderly, especially the Bengali middle class elderly after reaching formal period of retirement depends on Television for the purpose of gathering information and knowledge about current affairs and about necessary products. Through several interactions with the elderly individuals from Bengali middle class society, the research study has seen over-dependence of this group of individuals on electronic and print media. Further explanations on this has been mentioned and described in detail in Chapter 5. From literature on Media Representations and its role in shaping minds and perceptions of elderly individuals, one can find the mention of elderly watching television especially news programmes, as according to this group, news on current affairs on television fetches a “special window to the world” (Davis and Davis, 1985). Television thus plays a key role in garnering informative and entertaining content to this group of elderly who on one hand is educated and on the other hand have the socio-economic backing to enjoy a life of comfort in “retirement period”. Elderly individuals with physical ailment often finds television to be a natural choice for the sake of keeping oneself engaged through-out the day. The audio-visual components of Television often supersedes the need to understand the content of TV, making TV a source of entertainment and means to keep oneself engaged (Schramm, 1969). Nevertheless, electronic and print media such as TV, radio, newspaper and now a days social media such as the different social media platforms such

as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter plays vital medium to keep elderly included within the society. The option of interaction through social media in the 21st century creates a sense of inclusion within the minds of middle class educated elderly; harbouring a sense of importance and self-worth among them.

Thus, one can say that popular culture creates images of elderly through film portrayals, print or other forms of electronic media. Films often sketch varying images of elderly based on gender related differences. Markson and Taylor (2000) elaborates the differing portrayal of elderly men and elderly women on mass media; portraying the elderly men as 'still-employed' individuals, enjoying life with same-gender friendship portrayals and going out for adventures in later years of one's life. This portrayal is true to almost all developing nations. But, one must keep in mind that this kind of portrayal is only restricted to certain social classes such as those of the middle or upper segments in society. In contrast to such portrayal of the elderly men in films or television, older women are shown as rich dowagers, wives, mothers or as lonely spinsters; immersed in depression and isolation. Though present media representations through electronic medium are trying hard to bridge this gap, the difference in portrayal exists, giving rise to categorisation of imagery within the minds of individuals from all age groups. Nevertheless, it is true to both genders that elderly representation in advertisements are comparatively less in comparison to individuals from a different age group. Though several products are made for elderly use, representations of those products in advertisements (in print, electronic or in social media) are mostly by a younger version of self; denying elderly representations (Carrigan and Szmigin 2000). Several advertisements meant for the elderly audience finds representations from elderly accompanied by a younger individual, in a way complementing the elderly individual.

Questionable effectiveness of older spokespersons can be cited as a reason behind the 'stereotyping of elderly' in advertisements (Balazs, 1995; French & Fox, 1985). Despite the increasing numbers of elderly in the current society backed by consumerist culture, marketers or advertisers tend to keep focusing on their younger counterparts and less on the elderly population. It becomes crucial for marketers to focus more on "consumers age 65 and over" who are "becoming more numerous, more affluent, and younger in mind and body" (Gelb, 1982, p. 42). In the words of Davis and Davis (1985), the elderly market is a "growing one and, contrary to popular opinion, it is one that is economically significant". By way of questioning the constant disappearance of the elderly from mass

media, it becomes important to take the population of elderly, their problems, demands and representations more seriously. In this context, very recently few of the advertising companies are showing images of elderly in several Life Insurance and Health Insurance Policies; showing the importance of having an extended family in this post-modern world where everything is fluid and at a loose. We are slowly getting to see elderly women being shown in advertisements of mobile phones, internet service providers; focusing on the elderly using technology in the current world.

Images of ageing and formation of old age identities are often derived from public discourse analysis which includes media representations of old age. Several studies on News-paper Analysis finds categorical naming and referencing of older individuals, revealing distinctive and discernible constructions of old age and ageing. Discursive practices through textual analysis finds specific usage of grammar in any language, especially use of nouns and phrases with respect to naming and referencing an elderly individual. This separate usage of words and phrases categorises elderly as a separate demographic group which is different from other age-graded groups. Textual use of terms such as 'grannies', 'grand-dads' and 'little old ladies' etc. tend to stereotype older people as victims, frail, invalid, vulnerable and radicalised citizens in a society that is based on signs, images, representations. Stereotypical categorisation of elderly through media representations give way to 'ageism' as coined by Robert Butler. Thus, one can say that stereotyping of old age or 'Ageism' initiates from text-book representations. In this regard one can question the trend of elderly representations that predominantly base from textual or electronic media. The subject of 'ageing' or analysing 'elderly' roles and positions in society is continuously changing with changing demographic and societal characteristics; giving way to newer, updated and refined understanding of ageing in old age. In this context, the thesis emphasizes on the component of 'dialectics' and the presence of multiple versions in the study of ageing within the larger rubric of 'late capitalism' and 'consumerism'.

As mentioned in the theoretical standpoints of consumerist society, each and every image are symbolic representations of reality. Example can be cited of an elderly individual represented by his physical appearance such as his/her wrinkled skin and grey hair. Such are culture or context specific representations. The visual imagery or representation of elderly in media is not a mechanical 'copy' of the reality, rather is a product of human imagination and technical skill (Blaikie and Hepworth 1997: 102). These representations

are never mechanical copies of reality as they comprise of the specific context, time, space and culture, which is dynamic and keeps on changing.

Thus, one can summarise by saying that elderly representations in a consumerist society is generalised, but specific to particular context, situation, time and space. As mentioned, these representations subscribe to the various stereotypes associated with ageing such as elderly being ‘burden’, ‘inactive’, ‘non-productive’, ‘boring’ etc. In this context, the thesis aims to question whether stereotypes are a result of media representations or the other way round.

GROWING OLD IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

It becomes a natural progression into the discussion of ‘ageing in midst of digital technology’ immediately after discussing and questioning its representation in Media. The phenomenal growth of the Internet is a major component of the information revolution where computers are not the only defining component. Rather the use of smart-phones, personalised digital assistants etc. makes the post-industrial or information age entirely depend on digital technologies. As pointed out by Alvin Toffler, this technology enabled society also termed as the super-industrial society of the 21st century is characterised by ‘change’. Alvin Toffler compares the societal changes with disease of progeria meaning advanced ageing. Early in March, 1967, in eastern Canada, an eleven-year-old child died of old age. The symptoms of progeria are senility, hardened arteries, baldness, slack, and wrinkled skin. The author was referring to an 11-year-old boy who had progeria and as a result died as an old man at the age of 11 years. Metaphorically positing, within the space of Information Age, society undergoes a peculiar ailment of experiencing super-normal kind of changes. In this technology infested age and society, change is the most common term with continuous change and development happening all the time. There are millions of people who in midst of this unsettling time of continuous change do not resort to change and keeps on to the past. They seem to withdraw from living in the present and seek a "separate peace," a diplomatic immunity from change. In context to this research study, older adults are the ones who have resigned to living out their years, attempting to avoid, at any cost, the intrusions of the new.

Thus, in context of discussing change in the post-industrial societies, Toffler mentions advent of Technology as the grandest element of change in the current society. Meaning of technology starts from factories, machines and eventually during the end of the 20th

century, it is the computer that changes the post-industrial society completely. Older adults, primarily the baby boomers are now at a phase where technology governs the society. In this age of heightened aged population all through developing nations where limited resources for the elderly are putting them in a precarious situation where they have to depend on state based amenities, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and assistive technologies play indispensable role in ensuring their sustenance for a longer time. (Siegel, 2017). Example can be cited in this regard where older adults cease to depend on others for procurement of necessary things as they now are able to use smart-phones for ordering food or booking vacation or ordering medicines.

By way of explaining the importance of ICT or digital technology in the lives of older adult, the thesis attempts to understand and explore the need and importance of 'networks' in the current late-capitalist or consumerist society. As studies by Manuel Castells, a society is born based on the need for networks and connections among individuals; such a society he calls as the "Network Society". Castells mentions the formation and existence of the 'new society' in form of his "Network Society" in the following ways:

1. Network Society brings in a new technological paradigm which is based on new information technologies. Technology, according to Claude Fischer (1992) is the material culture which is socially embedded, whereas new information technologies give rise to the formation of new forms of social organization and social interactions. These newer forms of social organisation and interactions exist along with the electronically based information networks. This information technology revolution is a powerful component of multidimensional social change where new information technologies based on Internet becomes indispensable. This indispensability gives rise new forms of production and management, new communication media and ultimately the possibility of globalization of economy and culture.
2. The second dimension of a network society is globalization.
3. The third dimension is the importance of electronic hypertext where textual messages are symbolically represented with help from Internet. The new culture which is formed from Network Society, is based on 'hyper-textuality' where 'virtual reality' becomes the 'reality', where experiences are based on virtuality.

4. The fourth dimension is a result or outcome of the global networks of the economy, communication, knowledge and information where importance of sovereignty, nation state loses its position of 'power'. It is not that nation-states disappear, but it is such that the power structure of the nation-state to some extent gets altered owing to the presence of 'globality' in the 'local'. This become possible only because of the inevitability of digital technology.

This "New Society" or the "Network Society" has been formed in the late Twentieth or early Twenty-first century as a result of the appearance of the following process of changes: the revolution in information technology; the socioeconomic restructuring of both capitalism and statism (with different fates for these antagonistic modes of production); and the cultural social movements. These changes were initiated in the 1960s in the United States and Western Europe. The new society which is made up of networks brings in global financial markets to each and every region which is bound by Internet connectivity. Though, the term 'Networks' is not new, the association of digital technology to the term 'network' makes the current society understand the importance of network more closely and effectively. Characterised by flexibility and adaptability, networks in the current Information Age puts forth the importance of solidarity and reciprocity among individuals (Castells, 2000).

The older adults in this Information Age tends to use the components of digital technology for their advantage, focusing on solutions to their problems of social isolation and neglect posed by family and society at large (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Reflecting on the dynamics of a consumerist society, it is now the responsibility of the thesis to question the old age images created in a late capitalist and consumerist society. These images are too much enveloped in consumption leading to eventual shadowing of more psychological aspects of 'old age' such as memories, nostalgia etc. Pierre Nora, a notable French Philosopher studied the importance and constituents of memory, its relation with history within the larger rubrics of consumerism. Nora explains that in today's world when everything and anything is changing, the equilibrium in society gets extremely affected leading to rupture in the social systems. As a result, in the last twenty-twenty five years we are witnessing profound changes in the family and other groups in society.

There has been fundamental collapse in the collective memory and extreme reliance on the mass culture on a global scale. This has resulted in disappearance of memories in many societies. With the end of colonisation in many nations, the process of interior decolonisation has affected many ethnic minority and family groups who possess the reservoir of memory. These colonised groups have long secured the collective memories of the past in forms of values through various institutes such as church, school, family or state. Memories are divided into real memories and dictatorial memories where real memories are result of primitive and archaic societies and histories, which has been forgotten by our modern societies. Dictatorial memory on the other hand does not have any self-consciousness, commanding, all-powerful, without a past that keeps on reinventing the past. These dictatorial memories have been presented in consumer society by associating it with the representations of media. Citizens are too reliant on these dictatorial memories which are representations of the mass media.

Memory, borne by living societies comprises of dialectics of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriations. Memory acts as the bond that ties citizens to the present. Memories nourishes testimonial, recollections, instils remembrance, but, blends to only own group. There are as many memories as the number of groups. Memory is multiple, but specific, collective, plural, yet individual.

In this consumerist age, where dictatorial memory plays umpteen role, there comes the need to deliberately create archives, maintain, anniversaries, organise celebrations, pronounce eulogies. This is an act of artificially maintaining memories in a world shrouded in consumption and mass media. Thus, modern memory is archival which relies on trace, immediacy of recording and visibility of image. This mechanical process of collecting memory has urged large number of individuals to actually go in search of its own origins and identity. There is hardly a family today that does not have any documentation of the past.

Nora says memory is “constantly on our lips” because of the non-existence of memory. Nora in this context of maintaining and securing memories, mentions the role of the retired elderly in society. The intergenerational connect between a grandparent and a grandchild epitomises maintenance and security of memories of age past. This human

form of archiving memories can actually replace modern day museums. True collective memories can be the stories narrated by grand-parents, making it important to focus more on our traditional families comprising elderly members (Realms of memory, Nora).

CHAPTER 4:

AGEING AND ITS PERCEPTIONS

“Old age is not a status we choose to become; it is a status that we inherit simply by the virtue of living, not dying”.

– Holstein, 2006

The process of ageing though majorly studied as a biological or temporal process of change in social gerontological studies, the thesis aims to focus more on the influence of specific cultural context on the development of individual and collective perceptions of ageing. In the backdrop of a late capitalist and consumerist society where individuals are controlled by the mass media as represented by the state and the elites of the society, the thesis inquires as to how individuals' feel with regard to age-graded changes as she/he grows old. This chapter aims at understanding individual and collective perceptions of ageing and growing old in today's world based on their subjective experiences in the late capitalist or consumerist world. Taking the post-modernist lens of inquiry, the chapter further explores the differences and heterogeneity existing in the perceptions of ageing and growing old among the sample of 98 Bengali middle class elderly. Though the detail of a Bengali middle-class society will be explained in the subsequent chapters, this chapter will majorly reflect certain themes that have emerged from the interviews of the 98 middle class elderly from southern parts of Kolkata. Their perceptions of ageing in form of experiences has been discussed in this chapter through a subjective wellbeing study. Thus, to summarise, this chapter aims to explore how subjective perceptions of ageing and growing old are formed among the elderly and the role of mass media and state in the formation of such perceptions.

The study of exploring individual and collective perceptions of ageing in old age falls within the anthropological studies of ageing and growing old where the cultural context of ageing is taken into consideration. The process of growing old can be understood as the phase of life which is “part of the human condition” and subsequently constructed or reconstructed based on our ‘local understanding” (Gubrium and Holstein 2005: 7) of the society, community and culture we live in. In the same lines, the thesis too

acknowledges the process of ageing to be a multidirectional or multidimensional process which can be codified by taking into consideration varied and specific experiences of individuals from diverse cultural groups across the world. These experiences are always susceptible to various kinds of interpretations or distortions; but are always studied from an individualistic or collective point of view, depending on various social units such as family, health, and personal development (Westerhof s. a.: 13). Despite putting on the lens of cultural anthropology of ageing, one can never disconcert the preoccupation of biological, psychological or temporal factors in the process of individual or collective ageing.

To understand one's perceptions of ageing, it is imperative to explore the meaning of changes that result from the unique processes of ageing. These meanings are very much associated with what and how an individual think, act, question or interpret changes occurring in one's life. Eventually these meanings will help in understanding or evaluating one's sense of subjective wellbeing. Depending on the unique experiences of the past and the related adjustments and adaptations one undergoes, changes in old age often seems to be transformational. These adjustments are nothing but attempts to survive and exist in the social world where many elderly citizens seem to be receptive to new experiences, often realizing that old age is a broader and deeper phase in one's life. As opposed to this view, some other groups of elderly are non-receptive to the changes and are therefore rigid in accepting the newer meanings in life. These newer meanings that are attached to the process of individual ageing are reflections of the values that each culture nurtures; resulting in elderly 'falling into the trap' of societal structures. This is the key characteristic of a consumer society where individuals willingly are caught inside the cage of 'reality' and 'construction of reality'. The values that are ingrained within a social structure are a combination of 'ageism' and 'productivity' where ageism comprises of mistreatment and rejection of the elderly in society and productivity implies society's deliberation in promoting meaningful activities of elderly in society.

By way of questioning the dominant perspectives of ageing and understanding the power structure that operates behind formation of these dominant points of view, this chapter and the subsequent chapter focuses on different experiences and perceptions of old age in Bengali middle-class society. Varied perceptions of ageing among elderly can be studied by understanding conditions and experiences of their wellbeing in old age. Using survey method, a subjective wellbeing study has been conducted where 98 older adults (both

men and women) have shared their health-related wellbeing, psychological and emotional states of wellbeing, their perceptions about satisfaction of life, morale and nature of activities in old age. Through quantitative technique of analysis, impact of material possessions, health wellbeing and activities on the subjective wellbeing of each older adult has been studied. Thus, to summarise, this chapter attempts to explore how some older adults perceive ageing as a process and old age as a stage of human life, in light of their beliefs, life experiences and attitudes.

In studying individual perceptions of ageing in old age among 98 older adults, quantitative analysis of subjective or emotional wellbeing has been presented where the study focuses on innumerable factors that influence an individual's psychological and emotional wellbeing in later years. It also explores people's perceptions of their self-perceived and desired ages. In this context, the main objectives of this research study are:

- a) to provide insights into the meaning of ageing and old age from perspectives of older adults who belong from the middle class strata of society and are located in southern parts of Kolkata
- b) to understand the relationship of material possession, health wellbeing and activities with the emotional and subjective wellbeing of older adults in their later life and finally
- c) through the findings of the quantitative study and the experiential analysis, dominant perspectives of ageing can be further questioned.

To summarise, this chapter explores and understands various contexts, arguments and factors that shape and construct an individual's sense of identity and perception about oneself in old age and in doing that, both literature and real-life accounts have been taken. The chapter will now explore construction and distortion of individual and collective perceptions of ageing in old age and in doing so cultivate several common themes emanating from the understanding of the process of ageing in old age.

FORMATION OF OLD AGE IDENTITIES THROUGH AGEISM AND AGELESS SELF

When a person grows old, what becomes important in the process of shaping an individual identity is acknowledgement of the changes happening and being aware of each valuable experience in life. In this context, this chapter will explore personal

experiences of ageing and how perceptions are formed based on such experience (Steverink. et.al, 2001). Individual and societal perception of ageing is based on the capitalist notion of old age to be a ‘problem’ and its overt association with ‘body’, health and illness. This is primarily because of society’s preoccupation with health, illness and mortality which intervenes our common sensical knowledge with regard to body, leading to increasing focus on the biomedicalization. Even Gilleard and Higgs (2000) in their polemic “Cultures of Ageing” confirms to this perspective where ageing body is placed at the forefront and where biomedicalisation perspective becomes the main theoretical framework in the discussion of the process of ageing (Gilleard and Higgs 2000: 130). However, for some people these biological changes are so gradual that they often tend to adjust to them over their lifespan and those who are capable of accepting these changes, are more satisfied with one’s life. This brings us to the need of taking into account the individual experiences of ageing, scientific, public and media transmitted communications about old age and ageing.

Most gerontological literature delegates the perceptions of collective ageing in old age with that of health- related changes, (Levy et al., 2002) behavioural changes (Sarkisian et al., 2005), reformulation of self and identities (Sneed and Whitbourne, 2005), reliance on the accepted norms of the society and their interplay (Steverink et al., 2001) in old age and representations by the mass media. These representations give rise to ‘ageism’ as pointed out by Robert N Butler.

Ageism and Age-related stereotypes

Robert N Butler called the late 20th and 21st century to be the temporal period that witnessed ‘longevity revolution’ where people were living longer. However, the status of people who were ageing in society were declining in comparison to their status in a primitive society where they were frequently valued owing to their acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. The older people in pre-industrial societies were in a position to transmit knowledge in forms of acquired experiences, wisdom, memories to societies. Despite the often abandonment by the nomadic societies at times when society’s security was at stake, the older people were mostly venerated. However, demographic transition in the Industrial/capitalist age (mainly in the West) redefined the roles of the older persons in each developed and developing nations; reducing their identities to that of

frail and demented. Thus, collective perceptions grew where elderly were taken to be burdens to their families and society. Thus, historically speaking in agrarian societies where the older men owned land, had respect in society. But, as society shifted to industrialised economies, the roles of elderly got reduced to those who were unable to work in the factory after reaching the official bracket of retirement and as a result lost their authority in the society.

Emanating from declining socio-economic positions in society, a large section of the elderly population inculcated within themselves increased sense of fear, vulnerability, neglect and insecurity. This was true mainly in the Western countries or the developed nations. These negative feelings are a result of the adverse effects of wars, expansions, histories of coloniality (in developing and under developed nations) and several natural calamities that swept nations through out the 20th and 21st centuries. When explaining Ageism in America, Robert N Butler said the elderly women faced ageism more and as a result had more adverse effects in their lives; with declining memory and increasing heart problems during the mid-20th century.

‘Ageism’ is thus a coinage for the age related stereotypes which influences older people’s conceptions of ageing and old age (Levy, 2003). ‘Old age as a social problem’ has been primarily advocated by the mass media through portrayal of distorted images of ageing (Arber and Ginn, according to Hurd Clarke 2011: 29). The stereotypes portray “youth is good, desirable, and beautiful; old age is bad, repulsive, and ugly” (Healey, according to Hurd Clarke 2011: 29). A consumerist society characterised by mass media propagates ‘ageism’ through various media portrayals of elderly. Messages that are ageist are passed on through the media via newspapers and magazines, billboards, television, greeting cards, early bird specials, senior discounts indicate a culture that is biased. (Nelson, 2011). This influences the attitudes and behaviour of policy makers, business leaders, and government officials. Certain attitudes and beliefs that surround aging become ageism. Some examples of these are that older people are not well, are in bad moods and that being young is preferable. These can evolve into actions of discrimination. Younger people comprise a large group that are discriminating towards elders (Yilmaz, 2012)

Despite these portrayals of elderly on media, many older Americans expressed their desire to continue work after retirement till age 80; leading to the 'active' portrayal of old age as opposed to 'frail' portrayal in mass media. (Touryalai 2011). The capability and needs of older consumers can differ from younger adults. Devices for supporting healthcare may require some adaptations for older people. Technological advances are being made to assist older adults to remain functional and independent as long as possible (Matthews 2006). The beauty industry is developing and introducing a multitude of anti-ageing hair products. (Serviss 2013). In 2012 it was found out that the Baby Boomers (explain in footnote) were the ones who were responsible towards consuming maximum consumable products. The baby boomers who make up 29% of the population in America, occupy what is called PCG or Psychological Center of Gravity who have a great influence on society. When millions of boomers hit mid-life in the 1990's and began thinking more in depth about life's meaning, the United States experienced a spiritual awakening (Wolfe 2004). Boomers are more affluent financially and more educated than their parents resulting in many more ways to meet their needs and view the world as more realistic and ironic. The experience they have as a consumer has become more significant to them as customers than the product itself (Coleman & Daniell, 2017).

Keeping in mind the 'problematic' or 'ageist' dimension of ageing perceptions in a consumerist society, the thesis would like to ask the following questions with regard to the process of individual and collective ageing in society:

1. The temporality attached to an individual's feeling of 'oldness'
2. Is ageing related to physical and financial decline in old age
3. Is ageing only associated with 'consumption' or consumables in a society
4. The process of ageing is only understood with respect to an elderly person's relation with others (people) or materials.

In an advent to explore the perceptions of ageing in old age, the Australian study (2002) on Elderly Wellbeing asked people aged between 65 and 89 years their take on the process of growing old and the unique characteristics of personal ageing in the Australian society. The respondents answered that the process of ageing is associated with the negative portrayals of individuals in society making oldness as a period of isolation and withdrawal. In their interviews, the elderly men and women said that 'old age' according to them is premised upon the textual discourse of ageing. Terms such as

“not trying”, ‘withdrawn’, ‘irritating’, ‘living outside the mainstream’, ‘unattractive’, ‘uninteresting, frail, senile, silly, ‘over the hill’, narrow-minded, a burden, lonely, vulnerable, dowdy, and unproductive” represent older adults in the late capitalist society which is dependent on representations. The Australian study (2002) also reports presence of certain myths about ageing that shapes self-perceptions in old age. Some of these myths are as the following:

1. Elderly males carry age better than their female counterparts
2. In some Australian societies, the old age period initiates much before the chronological categorisation of old age. This brings into notice the possibility of ageing even before entering the numerical period of old age.
3. Perceptions of ageing among individuals are culture specific and keeps on changing with respect to the huge linguistic diversities. In conflict to the chronological variety of ageing, individuals in certain society plagued with unique social and personal circumstances, often lower age brackets such as the age of forty is often perceived by some to be old age. This variation depends on individual person, where some people think themselves to be old at 40 while other may think him/herself to be young at the age of 80. These perceptions in tandem with the Activity theory of ageing, prescribes the importance of feeling and perception more than the strict categorisation of age-grading based on increasing number of years.

Nevertheless, the thesis does not restrict itself to categorising old age with problems alone, it rather explores the need to take in varied experiences of individuals as she/he ages. Most experiential account of elderly comprises of the thought regarding the duration of life; related to the available choices in society such as availability of medicine, financial backup etc. The social experiences of ageing keep changing based on individual and collective experiences of health, economic uncertainty, family, history and other life situations. The experiences which are accumulated or momentary, remembered or sensed, collective or individual, materializes in creating specific forms of life. As mentioned in the previous chapter, old age is taken to be a social or individual problem in the consumerist society characterised by materialistic exchange values.

The preoccupation with prejudices, misrepresentation in mass media has led to ignorance with regards to the subjective experiences of elderly (Kerner Furman 1997: 2). In order

to understand the experiences of ageing by the elderly in a particular cultural context, it is necessary to focus on an individual's lived experiences; supporting subjective perception of ageing. These lived experiences of aging is mostly expressed through words, speech, stories, and writings of older people (Cole and Ray 2010: 9, 10). It is important to keep a note of "the voices of individual old people" (Kaufman 1986: 6). These voices are reflections of experiences of being old in each society; creating formal and informal definition of ageing and old age.

In line with the discourse of social and anthropological gerontology, that does not ignore the voices of older persons but, on the contrary, insists on the "interpretation and self-actualization" (Moody, according to Cruikshank 2009: 196), the chapter will focus on highlighting real experience, feelings and reflections of older persons in a particular cultural context. This adherence to specific cultural context is dominant because of the absence of a unanimous or dominant understanding of old age. The experiences of 98 elderly has been presented in this chapter based on personal biographic material, observations and critical evaluation of other people's life's and destinies. These experiences have been interpreted from four research positions: fatalistic, affirmative, stoical and relativistic.

Based on the popular culture, one can bring out some examples of notable elderly who has contested the 'problem' definition of old age as portrayed in the capitalist and consumerist society. Such examples can be cited as: Ruth Bader Ginsberg got a seat on the Supreme Court at age 60, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden, Jr. is 69 years old, Mother Teresa was 61 when she travelled to New York City to open her first American-based house of charity and 75 when she opened Gift of Love, a home to care for those infected with HIV/AIDS, Grandma Moses became famous when she was 79 as a result of her one woman show in New York City. In her paintings showed power, not despair, ageing or unhappiness. Leslie Stahl of the 40-year running television show "60 Minutes" is 74 years old and Morley Safer, her fellow longest serving correspondent retired at age 84. Older adults continue to blaze trails in all aspects of life. At the same time, there are a number of challenges and opportunities that are becoming apparent throughout society (Siren 2013). These varied experiences based on each cultural context brings us to the question on maintaining or restoring wellbeing in old age.

Ageless Self, Subjective Age

As the previous section of the chapter has focused on the individual experiences of the process of ageing, it is now time to question the chronological perspective of ageing where 'number' only defines one's potential to be categorised as an 'elderly' in society. Accounts of chronological age defines old age as loss, decline and changes which can be both positive or negative. To counter these arguments the thesis questions the formation of the retirement age and urges readers to think of old age as a continuum; continuity of self. This understanding is based on Margaret Clark and Anderson's (1967) expression of 'continuity of self' by society that makes rigid and contradictory demands for profound change among its elderly. In this context, as stated above, it becomes important to focus on the 'voices of elderly' in society, talking about past and concerns for the future. From Kauffman's ethnographic study, certain observations regarding the experiences of elderly in society can be taken into consideration: "They do not speak of being old as meaningful in itself, that is, they do not relate to ageing or a chronological age as a category of experience or meaning. To the contrary when elderly talk about themselves, they express a sense of self that is ageless- an identity that maintains continuity despite physical/social changes that comes with old age". As mentioned already, ageism is a concept where elderly is constantly reminded of her/his 'old age' and based on 'ageism' an individual gets exposed to the negative attitudes prevailing in society. Contrary to it, elderly can develop own sense of identities where she/he may not feel the burden of own age. For some individuals their 'sense of identity' over lifetime has remained the same and is constant; what is not constant is the physical or biological changes of an individual. By way of challenging the bio-medicalisation theory of ageing, one can very well say that an aged person may not necessarily feel 'old' even after experiencing physical deterioration. This gives rise to creation of subjective age identities where feelings of becoming old has no relation to being chronologically old in the society. This mechanism of subjective age perception among elderly is a result of defensive denial on part of elderly individuals with regard to accepting their own age. Many adults over age 60 maintain subjective age identities (e.g., how old one feels) that are younger than their actual age (Montepaire and Lachman, 1989). This defensive denial disassociate elderly individuals from any kind of stigma attached to old age. As a result these elderly tend to not accept the stage of 'withdrawal' as propagated in Disengagement Theory of Ageing (Peters, 1971; Ward, 1977).

From a young age, individuals tend to strive towards becoming independent, autonomous, and self-reliant from their young age (Erikson, 1963; Keniston, 1977). It may be argued that subjective age and denial of ageing are closely related to attitudes or fears associated with one's own ageing. (Kafer, Rakowski, Lachman, & Hickey, 1980). In the present study, fears about one's own ageing were examined in relation to subjective age identification to test whether feeling younger is associated with greater fears of getting older. Another variable that has been linked to the process of aging is life satisfaction (Palmore, 1981).

These two strands of ageing perceptions among individuals with regard to elderly and old age are linear understandings of ageing. To understand individual and collective perceptions of ageing, it is important to study relations of elderly wellbeing with several factors in life. This has been presented in this chapter through a wellbeing study conducted on 98 elderly who belong from the Bengali middle class category. The next section will discuss the concept of wellbeing in old age.

WELLBEING IN OLD AGE: CONCEPT AND DIMENSIONS

The concept of wellbeing being ambiguous and multidimensional, can be understood in terms of measuring one's quality of life, level of living, social satisfaction, social welfare, standards of living etc. Wellbeing also understood in terms of quality of life is associated with the degree of fulfilment of individual and collective needs and wants. Rising fulfilment in the degree of needs and wants have positive correlation with quality of life. According to Knox "well-being is the satisfaction of the needs and wants of the population". These needs and wants can be understood from Maslow's Hierarchical arrangement of needs in 1954 where five categories of needs were proposed, such as need for survival, security, belongingness, esteem, recognition and self-actualisation. In the same context wellbeing can be understood in terms of fulfilling these different categories of needs and wants in society.

From various Empirical Research Studies on examining quality of life, it can be observed that quality of life is measured in terms of public-private distribution of goods, health care services, access to quality of education, intensity of welfare services, protection against crime etc. Quality of life has been defined in a UNESCO report (1977) as "the satisfaction of an inclusive set of human need." Quality of life is an inclusive concept, comprising several aspects of one's life, living, satisfaction with regard to

materialistic possessions and also satisfaction with regard to the transcendental aspects of one's life. Indices of Quality of life depends on one's personal development, self-realization and the co-existence of a healthy eco-system (Dube, 1983). To summarise, wellbeing of a collective of individuals within the backdrop of the late capitalist society, depend much on the equitable and balanced efficient functioning of the social structure. The collective of individuals having heightened degrees of wellbeing witness to experiences that are characterised by peace, prosperity and progress. Thus, social wellbeing is a function of socio-economic and political structure of a particular society. A society is termed as a 'just' society with heightened feelings of wellbeing among its citizens observe inclusiveness on account of religion, polity and economy and that no group is exploited from these aspects.

In this thesis, we have used the components of human wellbeing in evaluating conditions of wellbeing among elderly. Wellbeing has been understood by means of five major components such as materials for a good life, security, health, good social relations, and freedom of choice and action.

Human wellbeing can be understood by questioning the differences between subjective-objective dimensions of wellbeing and hedonic-eudomonic wellbeing.

Objective Dimensions of wellbeing

The objective dimension includes health, personal satisfaction and basic needs of individuals, while subjective wellbeing includes dimensions such as life satisfaction, morale, happiness. Following Gasper (2005) the elderly wellbeing study has been measured in terms feelings (subjective wellbeing) and conditions (objective wellbeing).

Objective measures of wellbeing refers to the material and social circumstances of individuals that are believed to foster - or detract from – an individual's or community's sense of wellbeing. The objective dimensions include material and social circumstances, such as income, personal and social relationships; employment factors, mental and physical health, housing and education. The Subjective measures of wellbeing on the other hand are usually based on survey questions asking respondents to rate their own happiness or life satisfaction. In the research study, objective wellbeing is comprised of belonging, material possession, housing, activities and health status.

Subjective Dimensions of wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing as opposed to the objective dimension inquires emotional, psychological aspect of one's life and mental state of individuals which includes positive and negative affects. Subjective dimension measures wellbeing by analysing experiences of individuals. Often measurement of subjective wellbeing is confused with measuring 'happiness' (OECD, 2013).

Subjective or psychological or emotional wellbeing as opposed to objective criteria of wellbeing determines existence of various emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, accomplishments, satisfaction in life. These feelings depend on various factors starting from socio-economic-cultural background, health status, educational qualifications etc. In the lives of an elderly, subjective measure of wellbeing can be understood from the components of life satisfaction, happiness.

This research study incorporates the following indices for measuring Subjective wellbeing of older individuals from the Bengali middle class society: (OECD, 2013)

1. Life evaluation – This index assesses different aspects of an individual's life.
2. Affect – It becomes important to evaluate an individual's positive and negative feelings of emotion to understand conditions of wellbeing in old age.
3. Eudaimonia – through subjective wellbeing study, the thesis wishes to question sense of meaning and purpose in life among the elderly individuals.

Thus, a social science researcher can evaluate subjective wellbeing of elderly individuals by measuring using indices of life evaluation, affect or eudaimonia. To evaluate one's life, the thesis has used Life Satisfaction indices, while affect (positive and negative) scales have been used to evaluate a person's affectual feeling. To explore the meaning and purpose of an individual's life in old age, it becomes imperative to use the Morale Scale (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

FACTORS INFLUENCING SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

The thesis will now briefly explore the factors that influence feelings of subjective wellbeing in old age.

Influence of Social Factors on Life Satisfaction in Old Age

Social gerontological researches have pointed out that there is an apparent absence of relationship between the relationship of elderly with their adult children and their emotional feeling of wellbeing (Edwards and Klemmack, 1973; Spreitzer and Snyder, 1974). While on the other hand, there exists a positive correlation between satisfaction with family life (Medley, 1976; Markides, Costley and Rodriguez, 1981) and marriage among the older adults. Despite limitations in theoretical positions, several empirical studies have shown that elderly who have positive emotional wellbeing, are more or less satisfied in their own lives (Campbell, Converse and Rodgers, 1976).

Empirical studies have shown that intergenerational solidarity or positive relationship between elderly grand-parents with their grandchildren have positive impact on their sense of wellbeing in late life. Elderly tend to be at peace with the alternate generations despite increasing generation gap owing to differences in life-styles, values, attitudes and interests. Moreover Lee and Ihinger Tallman (1980) have shown, that interaction with siblings is unrelated to the morale of the elderly; resulting in the rise of the inference that kinship based relationships have no direct impact on the subjective feelings of wellbeing among older adults in the late capitalist society. On the other hand, friendship plays important role in the lives of the elderly. Adams (1968) and Hess (1972) studied that in friendship, there is no place for obligation or compulsion, resulting in absence of fear. While on the otherhand, kins often develop mutual obligations towards one another resulting in an often strenuous relationship. Friendship relations are based on mutual choice leading to better impact on individual's emotional or subjective wellbeing in old age. This argument is based on the assumption that interaction with friends does positively affect the emotional wellbeing of the elderly.

Lowenthal and Haven (1968) in their studies have discussed the positive correlation existing between spouses or live-in partner. As a result, when one of them dies, the other one becomes lonely and experiences depression for the rest of their lives. Thus, one can derive the finding where emotional wellbeing of older adults tend to decline with respect to retirement and widowhood. Strain and Chappell (1982) also in their research on finding causes behind wellbeing of elderly, found positive correlation ship between having a confidant with that of feelings of satisfaction and happiness. Moreover, the Researcher found negligible relationship between positive feelings of emotions and

interactions. One of the factors of decline in emotional wellbeing in old age is feelings of loneliness. Loneliness is felt by an individual under various circumstances; such as when he/she feels not being valued by others, when he/she fails to interact with others or when they do not have a company to interact with. Many a times loneliness is also felt in midst of people, which means the exact cause of the feeling is difficult to decipher. But, researcher say that loneliness is a negative emotion often harboured in the minds and hearts of older persons who lead a life of a recluse after retirement or who strive for a company in his/her retired life (Lee, 1979).

Influence of Religion and health on emotional or psychological wellbeing of older adults

Some empirical studies have shown inverse association between physical health, activities and socio-economic status with emotional wellbeing in old age (Diener, 1984). Categories such as worldview, personality, values, morales etc. have influenced the wellbeing in old age.

Religious involvement, variously assessed, has positive associations or in epidemiologic terms, protective effects, with respect to a wide range of wellbeing related outcomes. These include life satisfaction, depressive symptoms, happiness, chronic anxiety and emotional adjustment.

Role of Nostalgia in identity formation

Reminiscence or nostalgia also plays crucial role in determining subjective wellbeing of older adults. Reminiscence has been defined as “the vocal or silent recall of events in a person’s life, either alone or with another person or group of people” (Woods, Portnoy, Head, & Jones, 1992). Role of reminiscence in the study of ageing can be explained through four processes such as that of “identity-forming and self-continuing; enhancing meaning in life and coherence; preserving a sense of mastery; and promoting acceptance and reconciliation”. Identity-forming can be seen as an important function of reminiscence (Atchley, 1998). As mentioned earlier, personal identity is formed during adolescence (McAdams, 1993). It is based on awareness of how a person has changed over time. Reminiscence enhances meaning in life by focusing on past worthwhile experiences, acquired values, past and future plans (Wong, 1995). Butler (1963) observed an increase of reminiscence at old age and hypothesized that this was due to naturally occurring processes of life-review. Part of this process is the ability to let go and the acceptance of death itself (Garland & Garland, 2001). Reviewing and repentance

in life are part of reminiscence. Positive reminiscence gives rise to positive psychological feelings of wellbeing (Bohlmeijer, 2007).

Social age and perception of ageing

Several studies on ageing and old age have confirmed that the elderly belonging from a lower socio economic status (SES) in comparison with individuals from upper socio economic status have low feelings of psychological and emotional wellbeing. In this context, Neugarten and Peterson (1957) observed that elderly from the working class consider sixty to be the beginning of old age, while elderly from an upper socio-economic background consider seventy to be the starting age of retirement and old age. This argument is context and time specific and therefore, the truth behind this observation can be questioned. Social age is understood as the perceived age which is defined by an individual's specific position and roles in society after he/she reaches the formal age of retirement. Research on Ageing has been primarily on Age based Activism where more than understanding the question of age and perceptions of ageing in a changing society, focus has always been on discussing the problems faced by the elderly in society and finding out the solutions behind such problems. Movements for the purpose of fighting for the rights of older people in society, focus has been on the problem of declining health, facilities or resources and how these situations creates the perception of self (Cain, 1964). This perception of self (Atchley, 1972) is shaped by one's poor health, low income, institutional care, retirement, loss of independence, and loss of spouse as one grows old. Neugarten et al. (1961) said that self- perceptions about ageing is shaped by one's immediate environment, one's experiences of loss, gain or achievements through-out life.

Other influences of wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing in old age within the larger rubric of late capitalism also depends on the following criterion of change in an individual's life once he/she reaches the formal age of retirement:

1. Self-acceptance: as mentioned while discussing the characteristics of self-actualisation in old age, acceptance and adjustment are the key terms in the lives of older individuals. In this component of self-acceptance, a social science researcher observes that one's feeling of subjective wellbeing enhances when

he/she in old age accepts his/her life as it is and agrees to adjust to changes in life (Ryff, 1989).

2. Positive relations with others: positive and healthy relationship with friends, family, colleagues, neighbours etc. enhances wellbeing in old age. As mentioned previously, elderly who practice self-actualisation, believes in feelings of empathy and affection; where positive relationship is maintained within one-self.
3. Autonomy: Late capitalist and consumerist society focuses on the 'individual' rather than on the 'collective'. Individuation helps a person face his/ her fears and subscribe to his/her personal needs. This feeling of individualisation or autonomy in old age too garners enhanced feelings of wellbeing.
4. Purpose in life: specific purpose in life, goals or ambitions makes a person focused. As a result when one feels the need to achieve goals in life, wellbeing becomes enhanced.

Apart from these influences on individual's sense of subjective wellbeing in old age, the thesis focuses on presenting the experiences of each elderly in society; how each of them perceives their old age and changes they have gone through their lives. The above-mentioned factors and the magnitude of relationships existing between objective and subjective dimensions of wellbeing are ever changing. These relationships vary with each individual based on their perceptions in life.

EMPIRICAL STUDY OF WELLBEING ON ELDERLY

Based on the above assumptions and various studies on relation between subjective wellbeing and various factors, this thesis presents a quantitative study on perceptions of ageing by taking in-depth interviews and quantifying results from 98 older adults settled in southern parts of Kolkata. This chapter thus presents first a quantitative analysis of the data that was collected regarding objective wellbeing of the elderly.

Descriptive Statistics

First, the thesis explores and describes the data that has been collected using in-depth interviews and questionnaires.

Socio-Economic Status

The wellbeing study has used the Kuppuswamy SES scale to know the socio-economic and political condition of elderly kin society. From a National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) the socio-economic status of individuals is understood from the points view of annual disposable income between Rs 200,000 and Rs 1 million. In some other definition of determing one’s demographic quotient, where measurement in terms of possession of car or scooter, colour television, or telephone. It estimated that the middle class was approximately 20% of the population or slightly over 200 million people. Using this criteria of measurement the research study has defined the sample to be belonging to upper-middle class or middle class strata of society. When asked the question, whether the respondent has think of finances often more than 80% of the sample confirmed that there is rarely financial trouble. Although in this age of consumerism, there is never satisfaction with earning or wealth. Therefore to define one’s economic status based upon one’s perception towards economic viability is not correct. This research study on subjective wellbeing of older adults, economic condition is not taken to be a variable.

Gender Distribution

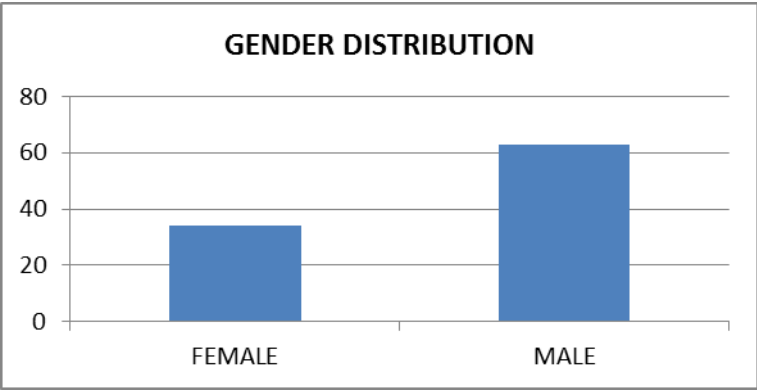


Fig 4.1: Representing Gender Distribution in the wellbeing study

This particular study on subjective wellbeing of older adults belonging from Bengali middle class society is not gender specific. Both male and female genders are not equally distributed in this study. The chart above shows, that only 34 out of the 98 sample of older adults are women and 63 of the older adults are male. This implies that the sample is not evenly distributed on the basis of gender in this study. Gender distribution among

respondents is not equally proportionate. 34 among the 98 sample are women while rest of the 64 are male respondents.

Age Distribution

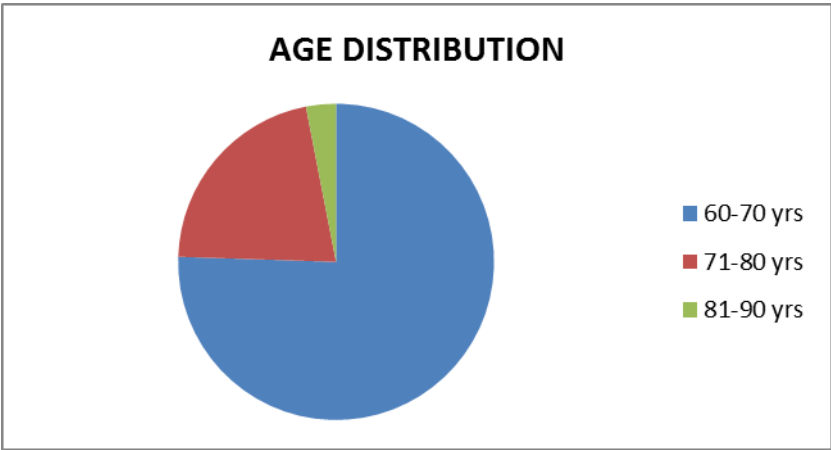


Fig 4.2: Representing Age Distribution in the wellbeing study

Age of older adults has been categorised into: young olds (from 60-70 years), middle olds (from 71-80 years) and old olds (from 81-90 years). The sample of this study primarily composes of the young-olds. 74 people belong to the category of young olds, 21 people belong to the category of middle olds and only 3 respondents are old-olds. The young-olds are the baby-boomers born during the 1940s and 1950s, during Post Independence and post-world wars. The old-olds are the ones who were born during the 1920s and are witness to social restructuring and structuration much more than the other categories of old.

The **educational background** of the respondents vary from Graduates to PhD and M.D. Profession of the respondents are namely home-makers, doctors, engineers, governmental and non-governmental service workers, performing artistes, entrepreneurs and actors.

Distribution of Physical Health Condition Among The Respondents

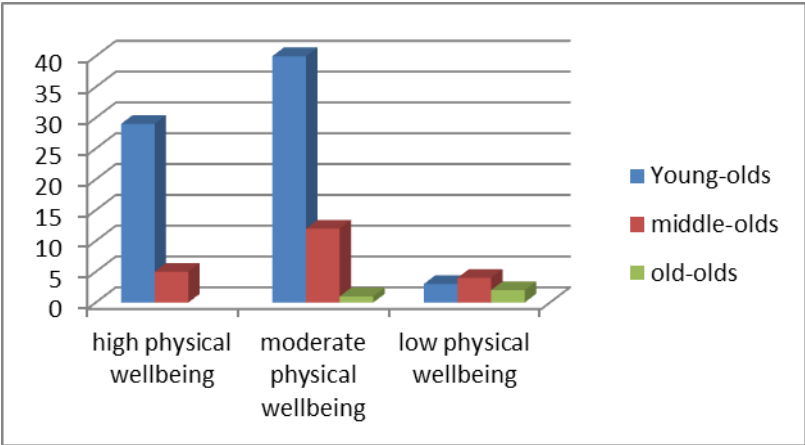


Fig 4.3: Representing Physical wellbeing of older adults in the wellbeing study

As mentioned above, older adults for this research study has been categorised into young-olds, middle-olds and old-olds with the maximum number of respondents among the young-olds and the least among the old-olds. One of the independent variables is physical wellbeing which has be categorised into high, moderate and low measuring intensity of wellbeing among the older adults. The figure above shows that maximum number of older adults from all categorises has moderate physical wellbeing. High physical wellbeing implies that least physical problems and moderate physical wellbeing implies the presence of common diseases and these diseases do not make much changes in the lives of the older adults.

Wellbeing study on perceptions of ageing among older adults is categorised into two wellbeing parameters, one is objective and the other is subjective wellbeing. Health and physical wellbeing is an important variable determining emotional and overall wellbeing of older adults. In this study few questions indicate assessment of an individual’s status of physical health. 10 respondents have extreme physical problem, 54 elderly have moderate physical problems and 34 elderly said they do not have any such physical problem or they consider themselves fit. The most common ailment that affects overall wellbeing with age are cardiac, foot related problems, memory and more. Only one respondent said that despite extreme physical problems, she manages to do household and other daily chores all by herself. 6 of the elderly takes little help from others and tries to do certain activities despite physical problems. Respondents mentioned that willpower makes them work and involve in regular activities. One such respondent is Ms

Alpona Ghosh, suffers from severe health issues. Every month at least for seven days she is admitted to the hospital. She comes back to her house, takes a couple of day’s rest and again resumes her regular activities. Her physical problems are not a barrier to her performing regular activities. Perceptions of ageing among older adults depends much on their physically stability.

Distribution of Number of People Living

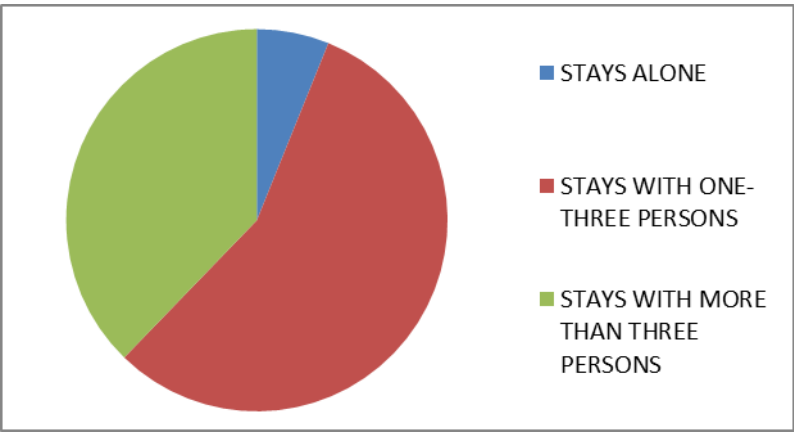


Fig 4.4: Representing proportion of older adults who stay alone

As depicted in the figure above, maximum older adults stay in households with less than three persons. Only six people of the sample stay alone. This implies that maximum number of older adults stay in a nuclear family set-up. Wellbeing in later life depends on material possession, health and on companionship. In order to understand importance of companionship in old age, it is pertinent to know with whom the elderly are staying and whether they stay alone. In this small sample of 98 older adults, most of them stays with more two people.

Distribution on the Persons with Whom the Older Adults Stay

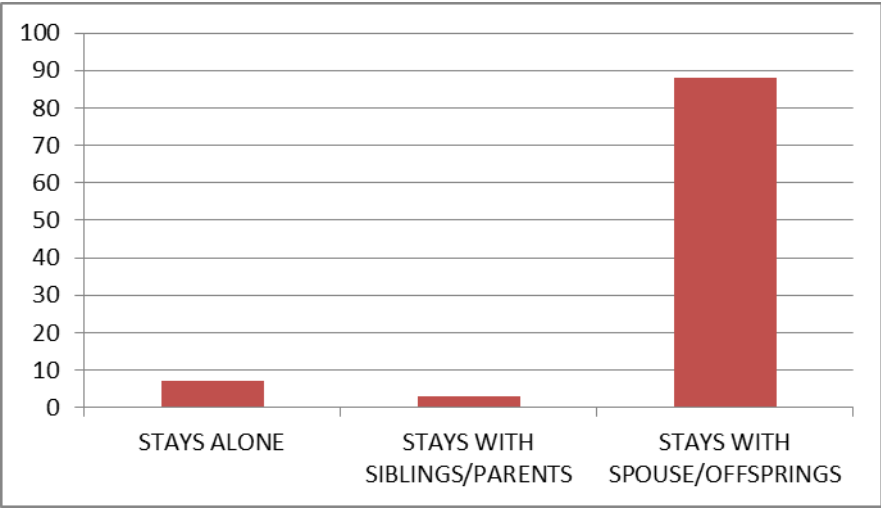


Fig 4.5: Representing the number of members older adults live with

Maximum number of older adults with 88 stays with either with their spouses or with their children or with both. As mentioned in the above chart, most of the older adults stay with more than two people. but the question is with whom do they stay. Most of them stay either with their spouse or with their adult offsprings. Based on the Retirement policies in old age, most of the retired people are dependent on their adult offsprings. This may result in them settling with their offsprings.

Marital Status of the Older Adults

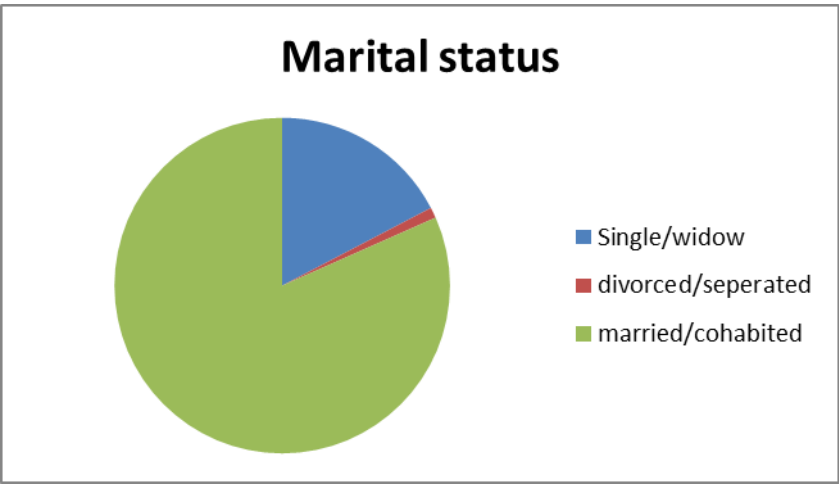


Fig 4.6: Representing marital status of older adults in the wellbeing study

Among 98 older adults, 80 are still married or cohabited. Only one person is separated/divorced and 17 older adults are either single or widowed. With a large number of married elderly, it points out the fact that life-expectancy has grown to a large extent.

Distribution on the Number of Older Adults Who Have Children And How Often They Meet

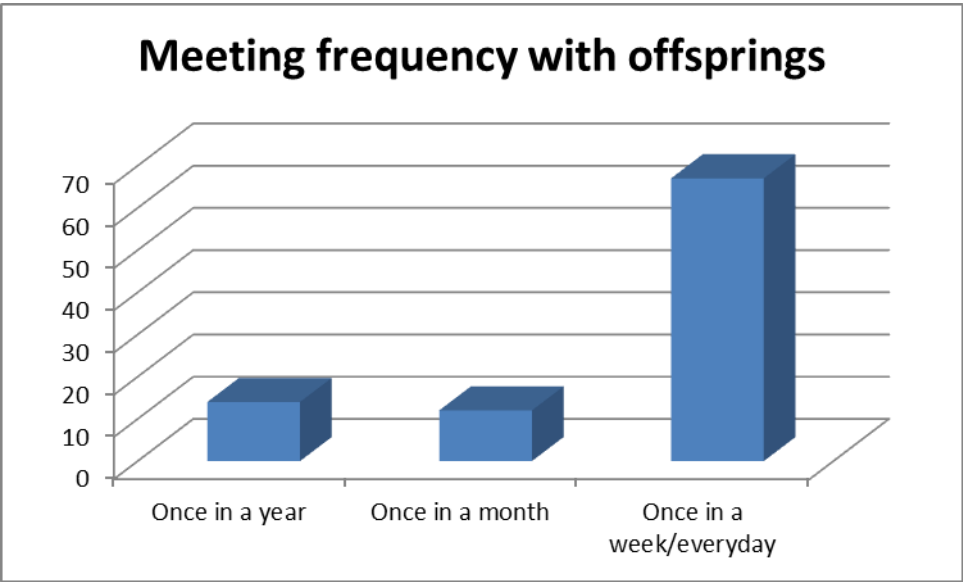


Fig 4.7: Representing meeting frequencies with off-springs among older adults

From the sample of 98 older adults, 85 have their own children. 67 of them get to meet them once in a week or most days. Many among them stay with their parents. A section of the Bengali middle class society still endorses living with parents. In this age of consumerist culture and post-modernism where relationships are losing meaning and essence, this small sample of older adults portray close relationship with children even in old age. The closeness of relationship depends on duration of meeting and interacting with them.

Kind of Relationship with Offsprings

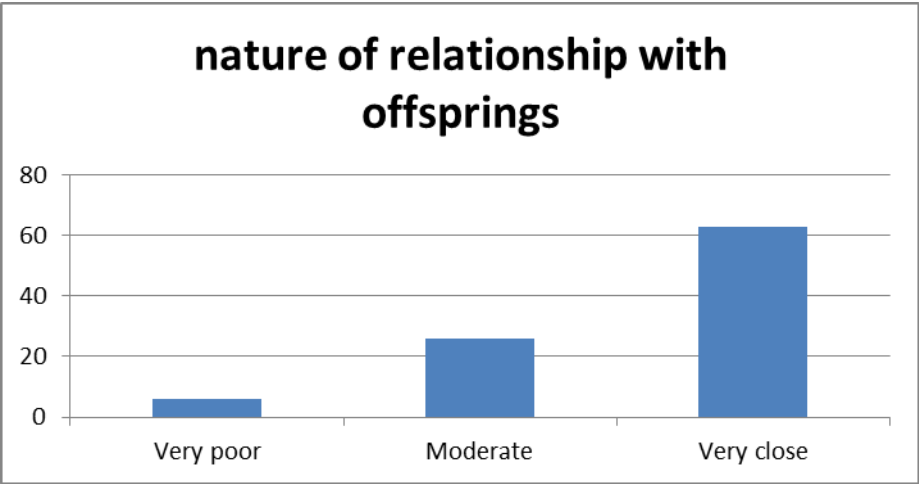


Fig 4.8: Nature of Relationship with offsprings among older adults

Out of 85 older adults who have an offspring of their own, 63 of them share close relationship with their offsprings. Social support and social engagement are two indices that often influence an individual’s subjective wellbeing. In this study the category of social engagement is defined as a person’s intensity of interaction with family and friends, engagement in activities both full time and part-time and interaction with grandchildren. The parameter of social and family support has been subcategorised into companionship, support from offsprings, intergenerational interaction and communication with friends in old age. The parameter of social engagement is further categorised into respondents’ desire to participate in activities both full time and part time, nature of engagement in activities and involvement in voluntary activities.

94 of the 98 respondents have offsprings. 67 of the total respondents interact with their children on a regular basis while 14 of the respondents get to interact with their children once or twice a year. Among these respondents only six have shared their dissatisfaction towards their offsprings. 49 respondents have grandchildren and 30 out of them share close bond with them.

Engagement in Part Time/Full Time Work

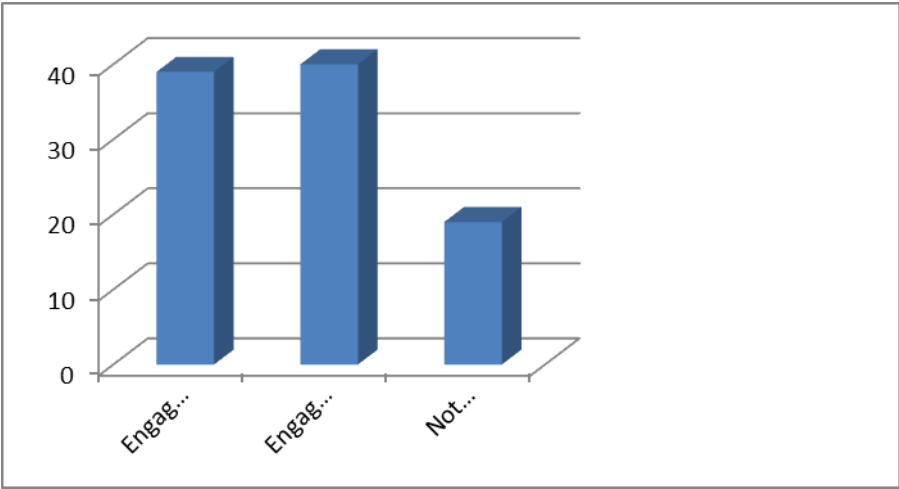


Fig 4.9: Older adults’ involvement in part-time/full-time activities

19 of the 98 sample of older adults are engaged in a full time activity. 40 older adults are involved in part time activities such as teaching children at home or ding charitable work. Rest of the sample i.e. 39 older adults are not engaged in any significant activity. Engagement with full time or part time activity includes involvement in social activities, continuing service even after retirement or engaged in some other full time activity such as teaching students, doing freelancing and continuing professional practice. 40 respondents are engaged in part-time activities such as doing voluntary services and 38 older adults are not involved in any kind of activity except doing daily chores.

Participation in Voluntary Organizations:

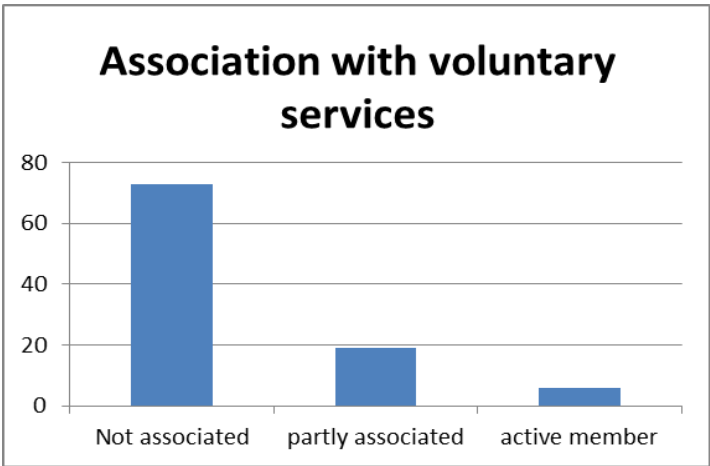


Fig 4.10: Representing older adults’ association with voluntary services

As already mentioned, older adults often associate themselves with voluntary services. But these associations are often temporary. The data from the current sample of 98 older adults shows that a considerable proportion of older adults are not associated with any voluntary activities. When interviewed, most of the older adults have mentioned that since they are already involved in some activities primarily doing house-hold work or engagement with formal services, they do not get much time to engage in voluntary or charitable services. Engagement in voluntary services too has lost its meaning and people are no longer interested in spending time to social work. Argument can be drawn from the consumerist societal structure where individuals are more interested in purchasing and managing consumer products.

Subjective Wellbeing of Older Adults

Subjective wellbeing also termed as psychological wellbeing depends on material possession, health, belonging, housing, social engagements and companionship. The questionnaire on the study of wellbeing of older adults comprises of an extensive section on the subjective wellbeing of older adults in their later life where components of life satisfaction, affect and morale has been taken into consideration. In this context, this section will now discuss the results of the component of life satisfaction. This section on subjective wellbeing is based on perceptions of older adults or their opinions.

As mentioned earlier, to study wellbeing of older adults, it is imperative to study their emotional and psychological dimensions. Emotional wellbeing as a component of subjective wellbeing has been categorised into several other aspects such as: Morale, Life satisfaction and Affect.

Literature on subjective wellbeing of elderly focus on basic emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger etc. The morale study of subjective wellbeing of older adults explores changes in lives of individuals from childhood to old age (Sauer & Warland, 1982). As already mentioned in the chapter on Methodology, subjective wellbeing can be measured using several scales of measurement such as the life satisfaction index or LSI, the Affect Balance Scale, and the Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale (Lawton, 1975).

The factors and explanations given in the study on Psychological or emotional or subjective wellbeing in old age is a derivation from four theoretical standpoints: one,

Maslow's conception of self-actualization theory¹⁸ which was propounded in 1968, Rogers's theoretical study on the 'fully functioning person'¹⁹ in 1961, Jung's formulation of individuation²⁰ in the year 1931 and Allport's conception of maturity²¹ in the year 1961. Each of these theoretical standpoints together helps in developing the several factors and indices of subjective wellbeing in old age. The indices of positive and negative affect has been derived from Bradburn's (1969) classic work on "the structure of psychological well-being". Within the larger bracket of subjective wellbeing analysis, the dimensions of positive and negative affect creates a balance between wellbeing and indices of happiness.

A. Life Satisfaction of Older Adults

Measurements made in the global life satisfaction scales ranges from very satisfaction to very dissatisfaction. Questions that were constructed in this section of life satisfaction is based on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) which was developed to assess satisfaction with the respondent's life as a whole (Diener, 1984). Other questions within this category of life satisfaction includes inquiry into one's satisfaction with his/her personal life, life in general and satisfaction with regard to one's professional relationships.

¹⁸ **Maslow's Self Actualisation Theory:** through this theoretical stand-point Psychologist Abraham Maslow contended that individuals are motivated to fulfil their potentials in life and that this feeling of self-actualisation is considered to be at the top of the hierarchy of needs in individuals' life.

¹⁹ **Roger's Fully functioning Person:** Psychology C Rogers defined a fully functioning person to be the one who is in direct contact or connect with his/her feelings, emotions.

²⁰ **Individuation:** In Jungian psychology, also called analytical psychology, individuation is the process where the individual self develops out of an undifferentiated unconscious – seen as a developmental psychic process during which innate elements of personality, the components of the immature psyche, and the experiences of the person's life become, if the process is more or less successful, integrated over time into a well-functioning whole.

²¹ Gordon Allport, one of the psychologists who studied personality had suggested that a person who is mature and healthy should be directed by the present and their motives toward the future while be able to leave the childhood traumas and conflicts behind (Continuing Psychology Education, 2006).

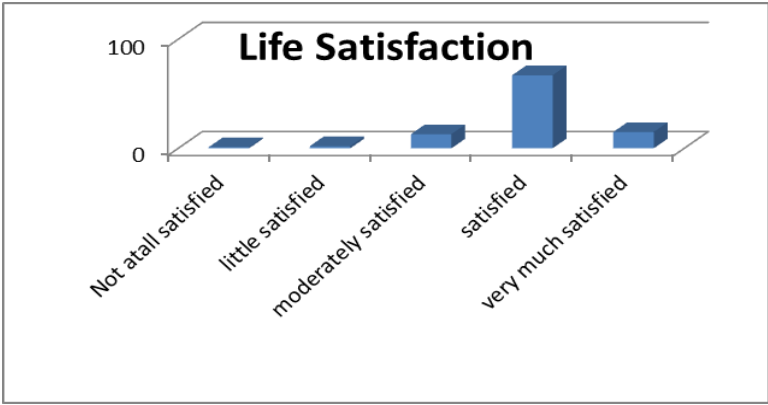


Fig 4.11: Satisfaction of life among older-adults which determines subjective wellbeing in old age

Life satisfaction of older adults can be measured by assigning several scores such as 1=not at all satisfied, 2= little satisfied, 3= moderately satisfied, 4= satisfied and 5= very much satisfied. As shown in this chart, the sample of older adults has shared their feelings of satisfaction with life, the various components of life. Through their interviews, older adults have shared that they are more or less satisfied with their life choices, about their personal and social relationships.

A. Morale scale

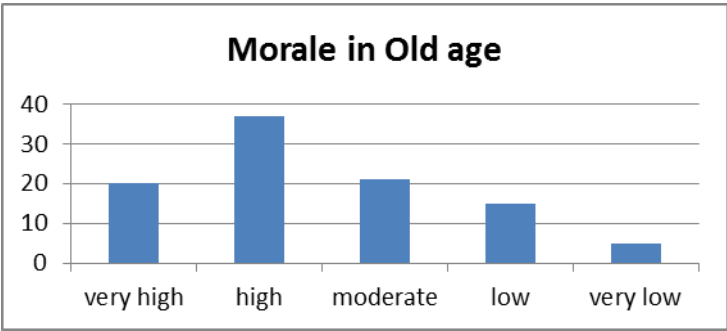


Fig 4.12: Morale in old age among older adults

The second component of subjective wellbeing is morale scale. The Philadelphia Geriatric Center (PGC) Morale Scale provides a multidimensional approach to assessing the psychological state of older people. Based on this scale a 17-item questionnaire was formed comprising of the following macro-categories: Agitation, Attitude Toward Own Aging and Lonely Dissatisfaction. This component of Subjective or psychological wellbeing comprises of questions that compare an individual’s life from young age to old

age keeping in mind the three macro-categories. The chart above shows that the sample of older adults has high levels of morale which means their emotional wellbeing is high.

B. Positive and Negative Affect in Old Age

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) is a 20 point scale and it has been used to design the questionnaire on the wellbeing of older adults in later age. PANAS has been shown to be effective at differentiating between depression and anxiety. Though Positive and Negative are a composite part of the Schedule, they are often conducted separately for the ease of the researcher. It is true in this present study too.

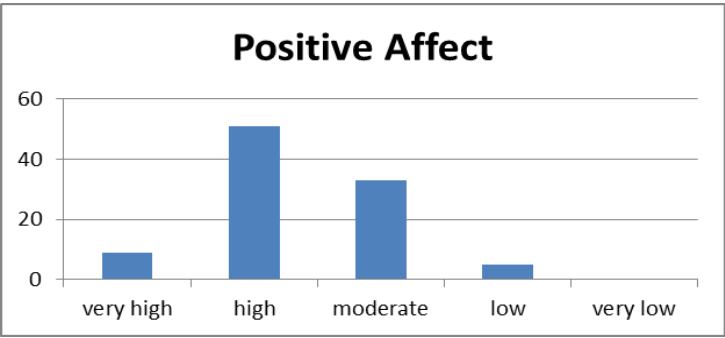


Fig 4.13: Older adults’ positive Affect in old age

Based on fig.4.13, one can easily find out that the sample of older adults in this research study have high positive affect which implies happiness, joy, curiosity, enthusiasm etc. The findings are based on what the interviewee thinks about certain emotions. The finding reveals the fact that older adults have a tendency express moderate emotions.

D. Negative Affect

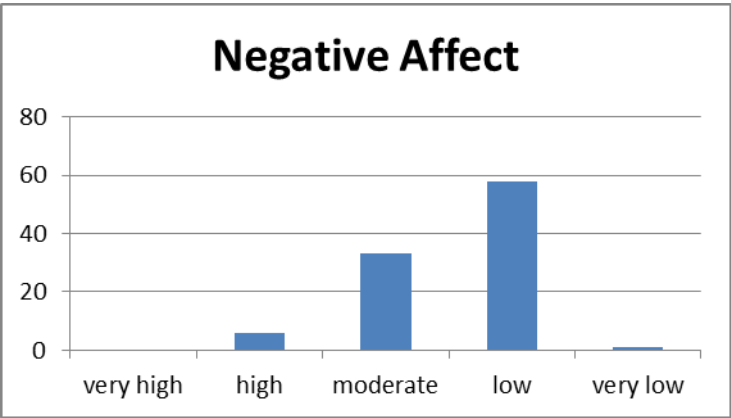


Fig 4.14: Older adults’ Negative Affect in old age

Conforming to the feelings of positive affect, older adults have shown low negative affect. The items of negative affect comprises of anxiety, sadness, depression, anger, disgust etc.

Inferential Statistical Analysis of the subjective wellbeing study

In this particular research study on wellbeing of older adults in their later life, various parameters have been taken into consideration. Through relationship of the parameters with the subjective wellbeing in old age, individual perceptions of ageing can be understood. As mentioned in previous chapters, to study individual perceptions about wellbeing in old age, subjective wellbeing study has been conducted using quantitative tools of analysis. Physical health, social and family engagement, activities, family ties are taken as independent variables and subjective wellbeing comprising of individual morale, life satisfaction, affects are considered to be the dependent variable. In many cases subjective wellbeing has been taken as a mean of life satisfaction, affect and morale in old age.

Based on literature and the objectives of the research certain relationships between a set of independent and a set of dependent variables have been taken into consideration. Through statistical tools of Correlation and Standard Deviation, the relationship between various categories of independent variables and certain categories of dependent variables have been taken into consideration.

Elderly Subjective Wellbeing Analysis

The Wellbeing study of 98 older adults has been analysed based on some relationships between independent variables and dependent variable. Material wellbeing, physical and cognitive wellbeing and social engagements are taken to be independent variables in the study whereas components of subjective wellbeing are taken to be dependent variables. The independent variables taken in this study are scored as high, medium and low such as 3, 2, 1 respectively.

Subjective wellbeing measures are taken to be dependent variables in the study. The Life satisfaction measurements have been conducted using the Diener Scale, the Morale scale has been conducted using Philadelphia Geriatric Morale Scale (PGC Morale Scale) and the Affect scale measurements are conducted using The PANAS-X: Manual for the

positive and negative affect schedule (Watson & Clark, 1999). The dependent variables are scored in a 1-5 scale.

The wellbeing study thus focuses on the various relationships between the objective aspects of wellbeing and subjective aspects of the same in lives of older adults.

- 1. Relationship between physical wellbeing and subjective wellbeing among the older adults.

The independent variable of Physical wellbeing has been categorised into high (1), medium (2) and low (3) where high means no physical problems, medium implies having some physical problems which does not interrupt in performing daily activities and low means where older adults are terminally ill or bedridden with almost no capability to work without support.

Physical Wellbeing Degree	Average Subjective Wellbeing
1 (High)	3.46
2 (Medium)	3.40
3 (Low)	3.13

Table 4.1: Mean scores of relationship between physical wellbeing and subjective wellbeing

Correlation	-0.94		
Standard Deviation	Between 1 to 3	Between 1 and 2	Between 2 and 3
SD:	0.15	0.03	0.14

Table 4.2: Correlation and Standard Deviation between physical wellbeing and subjective wellbeing

In the Table 1, Correlation of Physical Wellbeing and Subjective Wellbeing are -0.94. This indicates that physical wellbeing and subjective wellbeing is strongly correlated

showing a perfectly negative relationship. The observation here is that increasing degree of physical problem reduces subjective wellbeing.

In the Table 2, the Standard Deviation of 1 and 2 is 0.03 and the Standard Deviation of 2 and 3 is 0.14. This indicates that deviation in Subjective wellbeing is high among medium physical wellbeing and low physical wellbeing. On the other hand the deviation in subjective wellbeing is low among high physical wellbeing and medium physical wellbeing.

Observation: People tend to have a high subjective wellbeing with high physical wellbeing and medium physical wellbeing. In context to the study one can say that subjective wellbeing is low only among those older adults who are terminally ill and cannot perform any activity. Subjective wellbeing is high among both the groups of older adults: one who has no physical problems and second, those who despite having physical problems are active in their daily lives.

2. Relationship between Companionship and Subjective wellbeing among elderly.

Companionship as an important component of objective wellbeing is the independent variable which has been categorised into three levels such as high, medium and low. High degree of companionship scored as 3 has been defined as those elderly who stay with their spouse and children/grandchildren. Medium degree of companionship scored as 2 has been defined as those elderly who stay with their parents or siblings. Low degree of companionship scored as 1 has been defined as those elderly who either stay alone or stay with paid personnel.

Companionship Degree	Average Subjective Wellbeing
1 (Low)	3.04
2 (medium)	3.17
3 (High)	3.43

Table 4.3: Mean scores of relationship between Companionship and Subjective wellbeing among elderly.

Correlation	0.84		
Standard Deviation	Between 1 to 3	Between 1 and 3	Between 2 and 3
SD:	0.16	0.20	0.13

Table 4.4: Standard Deviation and Correlation between Companionship and Subjective wellbeing among elderly.

Companionship has a strong positive correlation with subjective wellbeing at 0.84. This implies that there is a positive relationship between degrees of companionship and the feelings of subjective wellbeing among the 98 older adults. Older adults who stay with their spouse or children have higher feelings of subjective wellbeing than those who stay alone or with paid personnel.

In Table 4, standard deviation between score 1 and 3 is 0.20 and between score 2 and 3 is 0.13. This indicates that deviation in subjective wellbeing is high among score 1 and score 3. The deviation I subjective wellbeing is lower among score 2 and 3.

Observation: People tend to have higher subjective wellbeing when they stay with their spouse or offsprings.

3. Relationship between Involvement in Paid Services and Subjective Wellbeing:

In this relationship, involvement in paid services is taken to be the independent variable. Paid services are defined as continuation of work after retirement or working as a paid worker. The degrees of involvement in paid services too has been scored as 1, 2 and 3 where 1 means not at all involved in any paid services, 2 means engaged in a part time paid service and 3 means engaged in a full time paid service.

Degree of Involvement in Paid Services	Average Subjective Wellbeing
1	3.35
2	3.36
3	3.57

Table 4.5: Mean scores of subjective wellbeing in relation to involvement in paid services.

Correlation	0.89			
Standard Deviation	Between 1 to 3	Between 1 and 3	Between 2 and 3	Between 1 and 2
SD	0.10	0.22	0.11	0.005

Table 4.6: Correlation and Standard Deviation of the Relationship between Involvement in Paid Services and Subjective Wellbeing

There is a positive and strong correlationship at 0.89 between involvement in paid services and subjective wellbeing among older adults.

From the Table above it can be deciphered that the deviation of subjective wellbeing between score 1 (not involved in any paid services) and 3 (involved in a paid service) is the highest at 0.22. But the deviation of subjective wellbeing between score 1 and 2 where 1 is not involved in any paid service and 2 is involved in part time paid services is very low at 0.005.

There are two observations in this relationship. First, increased involvement in paid services increases feelings of subjective wellbeing among the older adults. Second, deviation in subjective wellbeing is highest among those who are not involved in paid services and those who are involved in paid services. Whereas there is least deviation in subjective wellbeing between those who are involved in part time paid services and those who are not involved in any paid services. This implies that one needs to be fully engaged in any paid service in order to have higher feelings of subjective wellbeing.

4. Relationship between engagement in voluntary services after retirement and subjective wellbeing.

The independent variable of involvement in voluntary services is defined as engagement in NGO related works or doing social services. The degrees of voluntary services is again scored into 1, 2 and 3 where 1 implies those elderly who are not involved in any

voluntary services, 2 implies those who are members of certain social organisations but are not currently not actively engaged in any regular activity of social activities and 3 implies those elderly who are actively involved in social activities.

Voluntary services degree	Average Subjective wellbeing
1	3.38
2	3.37
3	3.63

Table 4.7: Mean scores of subjective wellbeing in relation to involvement in voluntary services

Correlation	0.84			
Standard Deviation	Between 1 to 3	Between 1 and 3	Between 2 and 3	Between 1 and 2
SD:	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.01

Table 4.8: Correlation and standard deviation between engagement in voluntary services after retirement and subjective wellbeing.

Table 8 shows that there is a positive and strong correlation at 0.84 between involvement in voluntary services and subjective wellbeing.

Table shows that the deviation in subjective wellbeing among score 2 and 3 or score 1 and 3 is higher at 0.13. On the other hand there is absolutely no deviation in subjective wellbeing between score 1 and 2 with standard deviation at 0.01.

The two observations that can be concluded from this relationship are: one, with increasing involvement in voluntary service based activities, the subjective wellbeing among older adults keeps increasing. Two, there is absolutely no difference in feelings of subjective wellbeing among older adults if they are partially engaged in a voluntary service or are not at all involved in a voluntary services. The analysis implies that older adults needs to be actively involved in a voluntary service inorder to have higher feelings of subjective wellbeing.

5. Relationship between older adults’ relationship with their offsprings and subjective wellbeing.

Relationship with offsprings is an important component in measuring subjective wellbeing of older adults in their late life. Here the relationship with offsprings as an independent variable is categorised into three scores such as high (3), medium (2), low (1). High implies elderly shares a close bond with their offsprings at this age. Medium implies the older adults are only financially dependent on their offsprings and low implies the older adults donot have any emotional or financial dependency on their children.

Degree of relationship with offsprings	Average Subjective Wellbeing
1	3.21
2	3.21
3	3.48

Table 4.9: Mean scores of subjective wellbeing with relationship with their offsprings and subjective wellbeing

Correlation	0.87	
Standard Deviation	Between 1 to 3	Between 1 and 3
SD:	0.13	0.13

Table 4.10: Correlation and standard deviation between relationship with their offsprings and subjective wellbeing

In Table 10, the correlation of relationship with offsrpings with subjective wellbeing in old age is positive at 0.87. The table shows that the standard deviation between score 1 and 3 is 0.13 and there is no deviation between score 1 and 2.

Thus one can observe the following: 1. Subjective wellbeing increases with higher degrees of relationship with offsprings among the older adults. 2. Older adults who share poor relationship with their offsprings and the older adults who are only financially dependent on their olffsprings do not have any deviations in their subjective wellbeing. This implies that only when an elderly share an emotionally strong relationship with their

offsprings and interacts with them on a regular basis, only then they has an increased feeling of subjective wellbeing.

INTERPRETATIONS OF OLD AGE FROM AN OLDER PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

The quantitative analysis has been supplemented and supported by qualitative experiential narratives to contextualise and understand the statistical findings of each relationships. Through the supplementary experiential narratives, researchers have come across a series of episodes that are mere recollections made by elderly individuals. The various narratives and stories bring out the emotions and feelings of ageing, old age and their changing dimensions of living after reaching the formal period of retirement. These life-accounts of elderly individuals have been interpreted and understood from the perspective of one's life-world. These life-accounts or narratives are personal and specific interpretations made by each elderly individual and these accounts can be further interpreted by social science researchers from four different perspectives, such as: fatalistic, affirmative, stoical and relativistic:

1. Interpretations from a fatalistic standpoint supports the narrative where old age is equated with loss, decline, illness, pain, decay and disengagement. This fatalistic view point subscribes to the Disengagement Theory of Ageing. Some narratives of elderly have been thus interpreted from a fatalistic interpretive standpoint where many elderly individuals consider their retired life to be a life of recluse where they are just waiting for 'death'. Fatalistic standpoint thus deals with narratives of loss, decline, loss of strength and beauty, loss of independency and stories about death. Elderly who narrate stories based on this Interpretive standpoint, functions as a frail protagonist who is operated by the manipulative power structure where he/she continuously face physical and mental decline through-out old age.
2. Affirmative standpoint looks at old age as having new life opportunities. This perspective focuses on active living comprising of new qualities that enriches individual personalities and attitude towards external world – accumulated experience, wisdom, maturity, peace of mind/calmness and objectivity.
3. The stoical perspective of interpreting old age by elderly is synonymous with finding inner peace, accepting life circumstances. This perspective says that old age is an unavoidable phase in life and is a natural phase (Branimira).

4. According to relativism nothing exists neither in absolute, nor in necessary terms. The quality of life in old age actually depends how a person relates to his life period.

The finding of the research study entails three dimensions of ageing experiences: physical decline, continuous growth and social loss. The data collected from the in-depth interviews are personal experiences of ageing of the elderly. All these experiences reflect subjective age identification among the elderly. *Subjective age identification* refers to how old a person feels or the age group with which the individual identifies him- or herself. The personal experiences coming out of the interviews, I have categorised both positive and negative experiences of ageing by the elderly individuals into the following categories:

- (a) ageing as a natural process which comes gradually with changing time and physical and mental changes within the lives of individuals after they reach the formal period of retirement.
- (b) ageing as a period when one evaluates his/her life, choices and activities along with evaluating one's wisdom and maturity in life
- (c) old age is a period when an aged individual enjoys maximum freedom, is able to enjoy new interests and cater to fewer demands
- (d) The aged individuals have viewed old age as the period which is associated with declining physical health conditions when they have to depend more on doctors
- (e) For some old age is viewed as a period of losses which is related to both losing companions and also in terms of losing jobs (Keller et al., 1989).

In this context the research study explores and investigates various perceptions of ageing among older adults in the city of Kolkata. To support, the quantitative analysis, we will now present some experiential records of the 98 elderly in form of first order and second order conceptualisation:

First order themes	Second order conceptualisation
“I get tensed and wound up when my daughter fails to call me and banking related works.” “I am neutral to everything happening around me. I do not enjoy small things or the humorous sides to specific things” “I generally feel relaxed, but often restless when it comes to going out. I occasionally enjoys reading a book and sometimes feel the necessity of a companion”.	Insecurity
“I love watching TV, listening to music, worshipping and reading philosophical books”. “I used to knit, but owing to age and inability to see detailed things she does not anymore indulge myself in such activities”.	Involvement in passive activities
“I generally feel lonely and depressed. After my daughter’s marriage and my husband’s death, I have lost all interest in life”. “After the recent death of my beloved husband there’s been a setback in my life. I no longer feel confident to go out on my own”.	Loneliness
“I love to see the brighter and funny side to things. I does not feel that age has slowed me and I feel charged up most of the time”.	Feelings of positivity
“The only regret that remains with me is that I did not get the opportunity to contribute more to the society. I would like to contribute to the country’s industrial growth”.	Lifelong regrets over life choices
“I take piano lessons and also write on travels. I love to travels a lot. I often take trips outside India”. “I believe in the fact that lack of activity ages a person	Engagement in creative endeavours

faster”.	
‘I was very unwell once. The ayaa from the centre almost killed me. She was a crook who drugged me with a sleeping pill and tried to rob me. When I woke up and realized what was going on she tried to strangle me. I somehow locked her in and got out and called the police immediately.’	Care givers
“Religious activities such as reading the Geeta and praying in the Mandir is a regular affair for me”	Spirituality
“I generally don’t feel that lonely or depressed as I am bound in a routine all day long.	Engagement in activities reduces loneliness
Previously he used to act on stage especially in theatres. But with age owing to health-related problem he had to give up acting and he still regrets that to a great extent.	Regrets in life
I depend on my pension money and my husband’s savings for meeting her daily requirements.	Dependence on state pensions
By spending time with them as well as her students she is able to overcome the feelings of loneliness which plight her when she remains on her own.	Interactions reduces feelings of loneliness
“From the very beginning I urged to go out and work rather than just remain within the confines of the household. I wanted to earn my own livelihood and be self-sufficient in life”.	Self independence

Some of these themes can be explored as follows:

Insecurity: Feelings of insecurity are often resulting of inactivity, disrespect, loneliness and isolation in one’s life. The elderly narrators who stay alone or those who do not have any companion or those who share bad relationship with their children reflect maximum insecurity. Sense of insecurity gets reflected in certain situations; one such is that of performing any banking related activities in old age. Some of the elderly respondents have said that with age, they are losing confidence to do important activities. One such is performing banking related activities online.

Involvement in passive activities: passive activities are taken to be those kinds of activities that do not yield productivity or meaning, rather representative of leisure. In this wellbeing study, passive activities have been defined by worshipping, reading, cleaning, cooking etc.

Loneliness: Loneliness can be defined in twelve different ways as studied by Paplau and Perlman, having three common components in all the definitions: first, as a result of deficiencies in a person's social relations, second, it is a subjective feeling which is not equated with isolation and third, it is a feeling which is negative and unpleasant. Loneliness as a subjective feeling which can be felt by individuals when they are alone or even in midst of people. Among the twelve definitions, the thesis has used the definition of loneliness being subjective and a negative feeling related to the person's own experience of deficient social relations. Through external and internal factors, loneliness can be determined where one is lack of social relations and the other is imbalance with regard to one's psychology and personality. Several studies have revealed that causes of loneliness can be decline of health, low vision, reduction in hearing, low education and loss of spouse. An extensive study in Stockholm of 1725 individuals over 80 years old revealed that loneliness is related to age, sex, marital status, social contacts, friends, health and cognitive function (Kaasa, 1998). In the same lines, this particular research study on understanding perceptions of ageing among 98 elderly has shown that for most of the elderly belonging from a Bengali middle class society living in Kolkata feel lonely because of their feelings of dissatisfaction with their social contacts, companionship, declining health, increasing distance from their offsprings and disengagement from activities.

Feelings of positivity: Positive feelings among elderly are a result of confidence, restoration of respect and dignity in society after entering the stage of retirement. As per the findings of the wellbeing study, these optimistic feelings are a result of one's involvement in meaningful activities such as performing voluntary services or continuing with work. For some others, positivity is a result of relentless practice of meditation and spirituality in old age.

Lifelong regrets over life choices: Women have mostly shared their regrets with regard to not pursuing their career and not being able to prioritise career. Regrets are the most important cause behind declining feelings of subjective wellbeing. For many women,

restrictions from home, duties to take care of children have ignited feelings of regret within the elderly respondents.

Engagement in creative endeavours: Most of the middleclass Bengali elderly respondents have mentioned in their interviews that feelings of loneliness, isolation disappears when they engross themselves in maximum activities. These activities include engagement in creative endeavours such as practicing music, dance, art, cooking, writing etc after entering formal age of retirement. Many of the respondents have said that because of work (both household and official) they have been unable to nurture their hidden desires and interests. They were then unable to take out time to fulfil their desires. So, after completion of household duties and office, they are now able to devote some time in practicing what they like. Some of the respondents started learning sitar, violin and training in vocals after reaching the age of 60. Spending time in practicing what they like has increased their level of subjective wellbeing.

Care-giver: Caregiving is one of the most common activity taken up by most elderly all across the world. It often comes natural for a grand-parent to take care of his/her grandchildren; leading to withdrawal of own independent life and believing in the fact that taking care of grandchildren is the goal of one's life. Most of the respondents have said that they feel positive when they interact with their grand-children. But taking responsibility of grand-children often becomes a monotonous duty on their part.

Spirituality: Ramkrishna Paramhansadev, Swami Vivekananda, Ma Sarada, Sri Aurobindo, Mother etc. are some God-humans who have been passionately followed by the educated Bengali middle class for years. Apart from the Hindu Gods and Goddesses such as Shiva, Durga, Krishna, Kali, Bengalis from time immemorial have adorned the pictures of these Spiritual 'Gurus' in their houses. Spirituality has taken such a centre stage in their lives that often the elderly feel content and at ease with their life by just devoting themselves to spirituality and not engaging in any other meaningful activity. This is very similar to gerotranscendence theory of ageing.

Dependence on state pensions: Elderly women respondents have said in their interviews that for them retirement is just mere continuation of life. These women are home-makers who depend on their husbands and sons/daughters for financial support. Pension schemes such as Swabalamban Yojna claims to protect those senior citizens of the country who are not white collar employees and who belong to the unorganised sector.

Interaction reduces loneliness: As mentioned already, loneliness is the most common phenomenon in the lives of the elderly, primarily those elderly who happen to be disengaged from society. Most of the retired elderly have said interacting with family members, friends and associates make them happy and feel contempt.

To summarise, based on the wellbeing study we have tried to sketch some of the factors and dimensions in lives of older adults that influence their emotional and subjective wellbeing. Following the positivist mood, in this study we have used questionnaires to know the state of elderly wellbeing and also analysed using statistical tools. But the question I want to raise here is that ‘what is the unique experience each elderly carry with him or her in their specific life world?’ These experiences shape their individual perceptions about ageing and growing which may or may not subscribe to the dominant perspectives of ageing. Here I again pose the following questions:

1. How individual perceptions are formed in midst of changing social situations and circumstances?
2. How are experiences of a Bengali middle class elderly different from the elderly residing in the Western nations?
3. What is the specific history of the elderly that sets their experiences apart from others?
4. What role does state play in creating images of elderly in society?

Keeping in mind these questions, in the next chapter the thesis has delved deep into the individual life stories through the lens of critical discourse, questioning the governing power structure that shapes individual perceptions.

CHAPTER 5:

EXPERIENCES OF GROWING OLD IN A BENGALI MIDDLE CLASS SOCIETY

The objective of this chapter is to explore the experiential perspectives of ageing or growing old among elderly individuals who belong to Bengali middle class. Using the narrative and critical discourse method of analysis, the chapter presents how state and the capitalist class exert power to control and sustain a particular discursive practice among individuals. This has been done by fleshing out dominant themes from the narratives presented by each elderly individual. Discourse as a method of inquiry has been used in this thesis to present a systematic collection of meaningful texts. The term ‘text’ is not restricted to any written words, rather refers to any kind of symbolic expression which can be conveyed through physical medium like written documents, spoken words, verbal reports, symbols, pictures, and other artefacts (Fairclough, 1995). Discourses facilitate a certain way of communication, or conduction of oneself by construing acceptable and comprehensible way of doing it and also constrict other ways of communications or knowledge constructions about specific topics. Fairclough (1995) argued that discourses construct their own conventions, fabricating sense of reality by enabling or constricting certain ways of thinking and doing. Phillips et al. (2004) highlighted the relationship between discourse and social actions by developing a discursive model of institutionalization. The discourse and social actions are interrelated through the production, consumption and distribution of texts.

Thus, the chapter presents a discourse-based approach to understand how individuals perceive old age based on their lifelong experiences and the changes taking place in their lives in context to the changing social forces. To understand the experiences of each individual and the formation of popular and alternate discourse of studies, the chapter first explores the growth and history of the social class, the Indian middle classes with special mention to the Bengali middle classes. The thesis looks at the Indian middle class as a socio-economic category, adhering to certain value system and aspiring to a distinctive style of life. The thesis has taken the Indian middle class as the social category who is urban, educated with a salaried job, qualified and independent

professional. The contention of the Indian middle classes came into scene in the early 1990s after the introduction of economic reforms and neo-liberal politics. But the category of the middle class has been in use since the days of the colonial rule and freedom struggle in India (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016).

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN MIDDLE CLASS: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC CATEGORY

Traversing for centuries, this category of the Indian middle class has acquired a generic character, been reflected as the *aam aadmi*, the common man who has been witnessed to change from being a defenceless, worried individual to an aspirational proud and acquisitive citizen (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016). During British rule in India for almost two centuries, the social class called the Indian middle class was carefully implanted into India's socio-economic and cultural sentiment as a class of imitators and not originators of new values and methods by the British colonisers. The middle class comprising of the educated professionals, such as government servants, lawyers, college teachers and doctors aimed at advancement of education and technology during the colonial rule in India.

From colonial times, the middle class was understood as a social group that can be divided into smaller sub-groups based on economic resources or status (such as the lower middle class, upper middle class and so on) referred to people who belonged to the upper strata of society, without being at the very top. This was a social class who despite having financial security, needed to work to earn a living; distinguishing them from the upper strata or capitalist strata such as the large hereditary landlords or the remnants of an indigenous aristocracy of the society. Middle classes can be isolated from the lower classes too owing to their economic, social and cultural distance from the lower classes. Nevertheless, in today's world, individuals from both lower and upper economic categories often subscribe themselves to the category of the middle class making the social class a slippery and flexible category.

Rise of Indian middle class as a product of British Colonialism

During colonial rule in India, middle class comprised of people who belonged from the upper economic strata, possessing sufficient western style of educational training to shape and participate in public debates (Joshi, 2010). B.B. Mishra, in tracking the growth of middle classes in India pointed out that the commercial middle classes were the first kind of middle classes in India. Predecessors of commercial middle classes in second half of 18th century were the agents to mercantile and banking houses, known as banyans, munibs, vaishyas. (Misra, 1979). During the early decades of 19th century when Indian middle classes evolved out of the educational systems as introduced by the British, a class of local Babus (literally clerks) were formed who were responsible towards expanding British territories in colonial India. Thomas B Macaulay with his colonial bureaucratic associates initiated a new education system in India towards the mid 19th century which would be responsible towards creating a class who can be interpreters between the British rulers and the Indians whom the rulers governed. This class would be Indians by blood, but English in tastes, opinions, morales and intellect; resulting in formation of the Indian middle class. As mentioned already, British rulers produced middle classes not to make them innovate creatively, rather to train them in such a manner so as to fulfil the needs of the British administration and generate cultural hegemony. This new class of the Babus developed an agency that effectively mediated between the colonial rulers and local masses and became the most important vehicle to spread the superior Western culture, modernity and ideas of democracy as propagated by the British rulers. As studied by Jodhka and Prakash (2016), the Indian middle class did not just emerge as a modernising agent, rather it also championed traditional norms and values. Examples can be cited here where the middle class played crucial role in reproducing patriarchal authority and a notion of the Indian family that reproduced the notion of women as home makers through their active roles as mothers, nurturers and guardians of traditions. The educated natives who went abroad to study during colonial times brought with them british cultural values, modern ideas of freedom, equality and democracy. Another group who got educated in local colleges in colonised India were absorbed by the British in administrative positions. Both the above stated groups acquiring high social status through their work represented the middle classes during the colonial period. Apart from these groups of middle class individuals working in administrative positions under the British, another group of middle classes emerged

towards the end of the 19th century who independently practiced law, medicine, worked as a teacher and journalists. Being a complex category, middle classes in India not only comprised of these categories of individuals who were defined by their educational qualifications, but also by the traditional and older group of petty traders, shopkeepers and artisans who were huge in number during the 19th century. These groups were called as the old middle classes who migrated to newer cities after the change in economy and emergence of industrialisation. This 'old middle class' group of people became independent merchant and traders after coming to newer cities and towns. Thus, during the colonial rule in India, the individuals who were part of the middle class category occupied white collar positions, administrative jobs and worked as independent traders and merchants. Thus, one can say that this social category that culminated during the British colonial period though were dominated by the British, found their independent footing through education and occupational opportunities and as a result created a position for themselves in the society where they called themselves to be 'the superior class' (Sarkar, 1983). Keeping in mind the dialectics, the thesis would like to explore involvement of the western educated Indians (representing Indian middle class) in several reform movements during 19th and 20th century colonial India. Despite their loyalty with the British, this was a group who realised the importance of maintaining own culture and traditions because of their exposure to modern education. These western educated Indians were on one hand enchanted by western modernity, and on the other hand also felt threatened by it. Realising the influence of Christianity and Western ideals, this was a group who focused on strengthening own traditions; focusing on participating in several reform and freedom movements. The Indian middle class was therefore a social class who on onehand were mediators of the British rulers and on the other hand were representatives of the native Indians.

Rise and Formation of The Bhadraloks of Bengal

British colonialism in India in guise of Modernity brought with it major innovations such as the clock time, print culture and inflow of modern western ideas through English education. One of the most influenced community during British rule with regard to imbibing these innovations were the Bengali Bhadraloks or Bengali middle class. 'Bhadraloks' are considered as the status group which finds its roots in Calcutta during 19th century with the prompt classifications of abhijat bhadralok and grihanstha

bhadraloks. The former comprised of big zamindars, merchants, administrators who were subservient to the British. 'Grihastha Bhadraloks' or 'maddhyabito sreni' as referred by Bangadoot in 1829 comprised of shopkeepers, small zamindars and white collar workers. Affiliation to these two kinds of Bhadraloks were never restricted to any particular caste category (Mukherjee, 1992). Educated in anglicized school at various levels of competence and office-holder under the British East India Company individuals affiliated to this status group were disciplined and industrious, progressive, conservative and parochial, anglicised to certain extent, footloose and spendthrift, some responsible social reformers and political activities and patriots while some compradors (Sil, 2017).

Bhadraloks of Bengal were never involved in manual work, rather was engaged in zamindar's office, government service, teaching and legal activities. The bhadraloks of Bengal though invested in elaborate lifestyles were interested in the new education. As pointed by Ghosh (2016), the image of the Bhadralok was constructed. This image comprised of a man of culture, social reformer, litterateur and those who were interested in rescuing the nation from foreign rule. Parallel to Bhadraloks, 'Chhotoloks' rose to prominence in Bengali towards the end of the 20th century. The greatest desire of the chhotoloks were their desire to be affiliated to the Bhadraloks. This upward mobility is similar to sanskritisation as theorised by M.N. Srinivas. Apart from chhotoloks, a lot of other categories expressed their desire to be part of Bhadraloks. Evidence can be presented here with regard to the change of the type of audience of Bengali films during 1980s. Anjan Choudhry's Bengali films had rural audiences who pulled rikshaws, painted houses and worked as maids. Thus, this became the new audience of Bengali films during the 1980s. These were the non-Bhadraloks. Later on, these non-bhadraloks comprised of the new middle classes in Bengal. Further legitimisation to Bhadralok group was made with regard to subscription of specific values and sentiments. Symbols of Netaji, Rabindranath Tagore, Ramkrishna, Vivekananda etc represent affiliations to Bhadraloks of Bengal. From the mid 20th century, the Bhadraloks have long practiced the Left politics, endorsement of the Bengali theatre, passion for football (the sport), addiction to detective stories and the longing for aaddas (group chats); giving rise to Bhadralok cultural repertory and signs of affiliation to this status group in Bengal (Ghosh, 2016).

As studied by Partha Chatterjee, this was a status group, which was never associated with trade, commerce, mercantile unlike the Punjabis or Gujarati communities. Until 19th

century, trading or banking communities hailed from the western part of the Indian subcontinent. However, expansion of European trade and commerce pushed a class of artisans from Bengal; achieving massive prosperity. This was a community from the otherwise non-trading community of Bengal to flourish during the first half of the 19th century. Unfortunately, the second decade of the 19th century saw massive deindustrialisation leading to the downfall of trade and commerce in Bengal. As a result, this community lost its potential to be called a trading or mercantile community in the later part of the 19th century. At the same time, a class of the landed gentry with a unique characteristic of unproductive orientation emerged who assisted the British in collecting revenues from the agrarian labourers or land owners. This was the core of an expanding class of the Bengali Bhadrak, characterised by quarrelsome, cunning, pettiness and other sundry vices. 19th and beginning of 20th century Bengal witnessed huge rise in the landowning rentier class or the zamindars who owned maximum of the lands and rented out these lands to small landholders, while they themselves became rent receivers. With rise in agricultural products, during this time, especially in jute, there occurred a gap between the fixed revenue payable by the zamindar to the treasury and the value of the rent which could be extracted from the actual cultivator. This gap served as the asset into which flowed the savings of the Bengali 'middle class' who are defined as people with small amount of capital acquired through inheritance, dowry, profits from petty traders, or savings from professional incomes. Last decade of the 19th century Bengal politics was inhabited by this class of people. This class also comprised of the intermediary proprietors such as successful professionals in law, journalism, teaching and civil services which emerged from 20th century. In the role as professionals, these middle class people from Bengal found similarity with professionals from other parts of the country. This leading class in Bengal survived on revenue, not concerned with creation.

In Sumit Sarkar's work of "Kaliyuga, Chakri and Bhakti", he describes 'book reading' becoming the culture in 19th century among the Bhadraks of Bengal after the advent of print-culture and western education. As mentioned earlier, this chapter traces the growth and development of Indian middle classes to explore the Bengali middle-class community in the city of Kolkata. To understand Bengali community and perceptions of elderly middle class, it is crucial to first understand the history of the growth of Bengali middle class. The constant crisis of identity during British colonialism, the Bhadraks kept on searching for a balance between their professional and personal lives through

spirituality. According to Sumit Sarkar (1992), Ramkrishna Paramhansadeva, the spiritual leader of Bengal provides this particular set of professionals a particular space of 'bhakti' or devotion where they could retreat even while following rules and regulations at office. The "Bengali Bhadrak" from its inception acquired a hegemonic character which was later on strengthened.

Coming back to the bases of middle classes and primarily Bengali middle classes, education and the concept of respectability is crucial. At the beginning of the 20th century, the notion of education as a capital was the defining factor in the formation of the upper caste Hindu Bhadrak society. In explaining the ideals and formation of Bengali middle-class consciousness, it becomes important to explain the existence of two Bengal: East and West. This study will not go into the geographical and historical details on the creation and existence of the two Bengals. But the presence of the conflicting consciousness of East Bengali (now, Bangladesh) and West Bengali (now West Bengal in India) still prevails in minds and hearts of most Bengalis. It becomes imperative to draw this conflicting images while discussing narratives of middle class Bengali on their personal experiences of ageing. The East Bengali Hindu middle classes saw themselves as emancipators of the new Indian state. The aspiration towards becoming part of Calcutta's urbane, genteel or bhadrak culture has much to do with regaining dignity and self-respect among the East Bengali refugees. All the others are cast as subalterns who can only be spoken for through the voices of the Babus (bureaucrats). It became important for them to set aside their refugee identity to get a foothold in the city. The East Pakistan refugees who are now the Bhadraks have been part of the political parties. Partha Chatterjee points out that the upper caste intelligentsia were found in leading roles in every contending or opposition parties. Thus, this Bhadrak class to gather their hegemony made sure to assume their class position by political game.

The Indian middleclass with special mention to the 'Bhadraks of Bengal' has come into much prominence and light owing to their increasing numerical strength in the society and their increasing consumable prowess; making the social class to be the Consumerist Class in the current society which is shrouded within Late Capitalism. Their prominence as a consuming class, has led to the emergence of the "New India" where according Varna (1998) Indian middle classes are the target groups of the state and the elites who hold the consumerist market. Thus, Indian middle classes are considered to be the markers of increasing consumerism in the country.

Contemporary writings on the “Bhadraloks of Bengal” reflect the deep rooted moral codes and obsessions with regard to education and culture among the Bengali individuals who called themselves “Bengali Bhadraloks”. Enormous literature on this social and cultural class that emerged from Bengal defines “Bhadralok” to be those who acquires the unique taste in art, culture, takes special interest in disseminating social and cultural values in society and most importantly are interested in Education, especially western education. Most literature, especially in Kalikata Kamalaya, categorises “Bengali Bhadraloks” into three kinds:

The first kind were those who worked in offices under the control of the British officers; they were the “baniansw” or “dewans”. This kind of Bhadralok were subservient to the British ‘high officers’ having no ownership or opinions of their own.

The second kind were the “Madhyabitta”, the middle classes, who were “not rich, but comfortable” in their own lives.

The third kind of Bhadraloks were those who had poor economic backup, nevertheless were educated. These individuals worked as Accountants or Sarkars under the ‘Dewans’; receiving humiliating treatment.

Moreover, education during the colonial time period were understood as the means to improve one’s sense of morality, sensitivity and scientific thinking. Education did not mean learning the language of English, rather education implied the ability to understand and know any language, be it verbal or intellectual. Education was understood as “the art of speaking, understanding and analysing (spoken or otherwise) any language correctly’. (Bhattacharya, 2001)

To summarise, the growth and development of Bengali middle class consciousness can be understood from the writings of Pavan K Varma’s (1998) book “The Great Indian Middle Class”. Since India’s Independence in 1947, the country has gone through massive changes, from socio-economic, political and intellectual view-points. In this context, the Indian Middle class emerged as an outcome of the existing patriotic feelings among the citizens of the country. This is the “Great Indian Middle Class” in the Post - Colonial Period, entailing the great intellectual and ethical legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. Under their influence, the “modern nation” of India was built, symbolising the importance of science, technology and industrialization.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS

Colonial India is also home to the new middle-class category which according to the public discourses comprised of individuals active in social reform legislations, theatre, literature and political rhetorics. After end of colonialism in India, the middle class continued to be strongly dependent on the state; establishing a relationship with the developmental state. The Nehruvian socialist rhetoric addressed the developmental practices and policies to have a modernist outlook that took into its purview the urban middle class visions for rapid technological and industrial growth. This social class in the post independence period continued to carry the characteristic of the educated class through their increasing enrolment in universities and colleges in the country. The state-led development immediately after India's independence gave rise to the formation of a relationship between the state and the middle class. This relationship was defined in terms of employability of the middle classes. This social class also had the power to question the state at times of any conflict of interest. These factors have led to the rise of the new middle class identity in liberalising India.

1990s marking India's feat towards economic liberalisation gave rise to changing patterns in economic policies, national political culture, consumption practices, lifestyles and aspirations. These changes centre around the introduction of commodities such as cell phones, washing machines, colour televisions, brand new car, watches, refrigerators etc. The emerging opportunities for the consumption of newly available commodities have led to the formation of the urban new middle class; as a result creating newer market and opportunities. Three central characteristics of new middle class are access to English education and modern form of professional employment, political assertiveness. These economic policies in 1990s have given rise to an excellent match in political entrepreneurship and modern technology.

India's growth achievements since the 1990s have put the living standards of many Indians under the global eye. These achievements are a result of globalisation and liberalisation. The new middle class is defined through occupational based definitions corresponding to white collar, professional-managerial workers. As explained by Michael Pinches (1999), the new middle class is a social category which comprises of individuals working in large multinational corporations or agencies. These individuals are educated and salaried professionals who may be technical specialists, managers,

administrators, government officials etc, holding powerful positions in those large corporate or state run offices. Michael Pinches calls this occupational group the “New Middle Class”. This is also the social class which falls prey to the consumerist culture and are the prime subjects in the wave of consumerism.

Economic condition had improved during the late Twentieth Century with increasing income in most household in urban India. This decent growth in urban economy sustained till date. However, this has not much improved the conditions of rural economy. In this kind of economic backdrop, the New Indian Middle class emerged as the group of ‘white collar workers’ working in large multi-national companies. This was the group that joined private educational institutes for the sake of getting better quality education, went to private Hospitals for better treatment and spent Crores of Rupees on Investments in Real Estate. In this process, this New Indian Middle Class soon became prey to the Consumerist society characterised by consumption, exchange and consumer goods. Unfortunately, this social class witnessed severe economic uncertainties with continuous changes in the Global Political and Economic Scenarios. This impact of economic uncertainty on the New Middle class ascertained their difference with the upper class. New Middle Class is not only understood from an economic point of view. Rather, this social class is defined and understood from a cultural perspective wherein the middle class is represented in advertisements through images and signs.

Formation of The New Middle-Class Culture in Consumerist Society

The middle class position is determined less directly by its relations to the means of production than by its relations to the market which is by its ability to consume. Leela Fernandes (2000) in her essay, “Restructuring the New Middle Class in Liberalizing India,” studied that the economic policies taken during the period of economic liberalisation during the 1990s focused on the role of the urban middle class as the new urban consumer of the “New India”. The members of the middle class mainly in tertiary labour comprising of professionals, , bureaucrats, teachers, retail entrepreneurs, artisans earn asalaries, a term that implies certain moral distance from ‘mere’ labouring and ‘mere’ wealth. As studied by Liechty (2003) Middle class Identities are formed as a result of their achievements and moral discourses that are based on their consumption of leisurely goods and services. Thus, in a consumerist society, the image of the “New Indian Middle Class” is an outcome of advertisements propagated by the mass media.

The image of the “new” is a sign of embracing the new consumerist and globalising society where dependency on state has come to an end. This newness of the image of the Indian middle class during the 21st century is an outcome of commodity consumption and resulting cultural standard. These are all effects of the Liberalising India where Indian market has opened to the global economy (Fernandes 2006).

Countering these arguments of defining middle classes with income alone, this chapter takes into account the nature of middle class consciousness and especially Bengali elderly middle class consciousness. This narrowly defined income categories needs to be supplemented by “sociological” considerations of aspirations and attitudes. Here the chapter questions the indicators and manifestations of the middle class with the neighbourhoods, clubs, and associations, kinds of houses, gadgets and vehicles. Middle class consciousness can be understood from its nature of the celebration of life cycle events, kinship relations, life in the neighbourhood, intercaste/interfaith relations, speech and language, and behaviour of individuals belonging to the social class category. But the question remains as to how to recognize the middle class from its external behaviour, aspirations, and consciousness.

By way of understanding middle class consciousness from a consumerist perspective, Mary Douglas, distinguished anthropologist in her book “The World of Goods” explained the categories of consumables, consumerist products or goods and the relationship between consumables and the consumer. She classified consumer goods with each social class and the use of the same during different time periods. An example can be cited here, where individuals from lower socio economic backgrounds spend money more on eatables, while the middle classes during the Colonia Period spent much of their money on Telephones, renting rooms etc. She analysed that by consuming those goods that ensures communication, upward mobility among individuals can be observed; resulting in the presupposition that consumerism is specific to each social class.

Middle class consciousness can be further studied through the phenomenon of embourgeoisement as pointed out by M.N. Panini. M. N Panini (2015) studies middle class not as the middle layer in a verticle hierarchy but as the ‘middle’ in an architectural sense. To further the definitions of the concept of middle classes, the scholar says that this social class contribute to social cohesion and stability. In order to understand the role of middle classes in society, one needs to study the phenomenon of embourgeoisement

as a structural and cultural feature of middle classes. Structural dimension of embourgeoisment is the creation of spaces that needs to be filled by knowledge based on skills and expertises that middle classes possess. Cultural dimension entails middle class values, producing revolutionary leaders.

Various scholars have provided varied dimensions to the understanding of middle classes. According to the Gramscian perspective the ability of middle class as per the idea of embourgeoisment is to use mass media in creating cultural hegemony that legitimizes authoritarian trends and undermines working class consciousness (Gramsci, 1971). Partha Chatterjee relegates middle class into civil society that enjoys formal rights. He says middle class is playing a conservative if not reactionary role in supporting the ruling class. On the other hand middle classes have shaped the moral economy of the state dominated socialist regime of the pre-liberalisation days in India. As Partha Chatterjee (2008) says the political class has always depended on the middle class for its legitimacy. Middle class sensibility is now influencing the political class. The vital role of middle classes is in construction, legitimation and maintenance of hegemonies or in subverting them. Middle class cultures are supportive of knowledge based occupations and professions. A typical middle class existence can be explained in valorization of education and training, professional education and training, stress on material success, acquisition of consumer goods and technological gadgets, planning for the future, family centric instrumentality, insularity and a status quo orientation. It is difficult to reduce middle class into the rigours of class analysis.

Middle class is often appropriated as the state apparatus within a bureaucratic set up. Thus, with economic development, introduction of electoral policies and the implementation of affirmative action (reservations) based policies for the Backward sections of the country, India assumes development. This overt benefits given to the backwards classes such as those of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, enhances the social position of the middle classes that represents certain values and produces hegemonic discourses. In appropriation of politics too, middle classes play important role in assuring a globally mobile and modern space for all individuals; thus participating in Identity Politics. Unfortunately, the Indian Middle class continues to strive under the patronage of other social classes such as the upper class even after the end of the Colonial Era.

EXPLORING ELDERLY NARRATIVES USING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Keeping in mind the historical and theoretical perspectives of the growth and formation of Indian middle classes with special mention to the Bhadrals of Bengal in midst of changing social structures, this chapter will elaborate lifelong and age graded experiences of ten Bengali middle-class elderly using critical discourse method of analysis. There are variations with regard to how discourse is studied; in terms of oral histories and texts. This study is located within the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA), a branch of discourse analysis that not only describes a particular discourse, but also questions and explains the processes that contributes to the production and legitimation of specific discourses (Teo, 2001, p.11). Aiming at exploring the rationale behind choosing a certain type of discourse over another and presenting alternative discourses, the thesis will now focus on each utterances made by the elderly with respect to the prevailing societal structures, institutions and processes. CDA proposes that analyses of texts should not be “artificially isolated from analysis of institutional and discourse practices within which texts are embedded,” (Fairclough, 1995, p.9). Drawing from Foucault’s work, CDA assumes that language in any form helps transmit and reproduce ideological power (Teo,2000). As a result, one needs to analyse language (both text and verbal) to understand a particular discourse by associating language with power, ideologies.

Exploring the tone of the narratives

Each narration exhibits play of power whose degree may vary with each individual. Power is understood in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed in a particular socio-cultural context; creating either a new discourse or subscribing to already existing discourse. Use of vocabulary, metaphors, grammar in both verbal and nonverbal texts are looked into deeply while analysing using critical discourse analysis. A researcher tends to understand all these with respect to the operating power structure sustaining particular discursive practices and also investing in dominance over other alternative practices. The role of discourse within the society and culture is seen as historically variable. Moreover, in a late capitalist society, discourse has taken on a major role in sociocultural reproduction and change. CDA is consolidated here as a “three-dimensional” framework where a social science researcher maps three forms of analysis together. First, the Researcher analyses the spoken or written language

texts, then she/he focuses on the processes of text (verbal or textual) production, distribution and consumption and then tries to analyse the discursive practices that are deeply embedded within the processes of production, consumption and distribution of the texts. These discursive practices are reflections of the socio-cultural practices and the heterogeneity of the texts (both verbal and non-verbal) are in fact indicators behind contradictory or conflicting socio-cultural conditions.

Exploring middle-classness in the narratives

The research study explores the personal experiential narratives (PEN) of ten Bengali middle-class elderly who are geographically located in Southern parts of Kolkata. Based on CDA, each of the elderly narratives reflect various characteristics of being a middle-class Bengali; carrying with themselves the burden of the history of the social class. Each narrative reflects the late capitalist societal structure, various forms of control society exerts on.

Ageing is a continuous process that needs to be explored and understood right from the beginning of life. To understand an individual's perception of old age, ageing and changes in life, it becomes imperative to trace his/her life by delving into one's memory. In this context, the chapter would discuss in brief some narratives shared by ten individuals who by their socio-economic-political background belong to the category of middle class. Using historical narrative or biographical method of analysis, the study would first delve deep into the detailed accounts of one's life, his/her experiences at different stages and ultimately understand the formation of individual or collective perception of ageing in old age within a late capitalist and consumerist framework.

These narratives of ten elderly reflects perspectives that are formed as a result of their experiences both individual and social. The stories or narratives portray a dialogical relationship existing between the narrated stories and the dominant gerontological perspectives. On evaluating the relationship existing between them, the thesis either questions or conforms to the individual life stories and the dominant perspectives of ageing. The question that the thesis raises is the capacity of the individual and collective stories to shape and question the dominant perspectives of ageing. The reason behind opting for a dialogic narrative in this research study is to make individual stories from

the margin of public narratives available to the mass and to reduce narrative silences, preventing the reproduction of established “truths”.

The chapter aspires to explore how middle-class elderly are working their identities in the stories they tell about their lives and how their individual life stories are framed and shaped by broader historical and social contexts. The primary focus is the relationship between individual life stories and public narratives, “narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual, to intersubjective networks or institutions” (Somers, 1994). The narratives are not perceived as “a transparent window into people's lives as they age, but rather as an on-going and constitutive part of reality”. Identity is always in transition, “always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong”, and we argue that this is indeed a lifelong process. Hence, this chapter is situated within the domain of narrative gerontology and critical discourse analysis (Blix, Hamran, & Normann, 2013).

Exploring narrative identities

Scholars studying Narrative Research in Social Sciences, works with the concept of “Narrative Identity” which is a perspective that has evolved from dialogue and stories that are narrated by various individuals (Smith and Sparkes, 2008). Dialogical perspectives are inspired by the works of the Russian literary critic and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, according to whom existence of human beings within any social structure is a result of their relationships that are characterized by “unfinalisedness, openendedness and indeterminacy”. In this context, the research study explores “narrative identities” of elderly individuals which implies the continuation of a story and the humanisation of that story in a person’s life after being followed or heard from birth till old age. One’s identity then surrounds that narrative which can again be shared by a collective. Such narratives can comprise of overlapping of number of other narratives too. But each individual must have his or her own personal narrative which may agree with others’ narrative. To know individual or personal narrative, it becomes imperative to decipher, understand and question that individual’s socio-economic-cultural and political background, to know the causes and rationality existing behind such stories. Such narrative stories often gets immersed within our conscious help in such a manner that we most of the time fail to recognise those personalised narratives. We fail to acknowledge our individual narratives and therefore we often get lost within the

narrative of others (Freeman, 2010). Thus, what has been focused in this thesis is finding out or identifying the individual narratives and then finding out how individual identities have been formed as a result of such “Identification of Narratives”. From Research, the thesis has witnessed various kinds of narrators: some spoke almost continuously without any break on his/her childhood, adulthood, experiences etc, whereas other narrators felt the need to be prompted by the Researcher. For the later kind of narrators, the Researcher had to give prompting, including more or less specific probes to help them continue with their stories. However, most narratives of the elderly individuals belonging from the Bengali Middle Class Society moved thematically between stories about their specific past, their reflections and impact on the present, and their thoughts about the own future.

The Research has focused on Narrative Discourses because through this method, the varied experiences of elderly within their life time can be understood deeply. The personal narratives of the elderly reflect the specific socio-cultural background he/she inhabits in which can on the same hand be identified by many other individuals too. The narrative technique is such that the cultural values that comes out of the narrations and stories of the past can often be followed in the current age by accommodating the same in different ways. The narrated stories of the ten elderly are influenced by freedom movement, various social movements, immigration, economic depression, globalisation, development, interpersonal relationships, and several life events.

Exploring storytelling in narratives

This particular research study too uses the storytelling method to understand experiences and perceptions of ageing among ten elderly in the city of Kolkata. These ten middle class elderly have shared with the interviewer their experiences of life beginning from their childhood till present age where they are experiencing old age. The intention of the qualitative study is to explore how middle-class elderly are working their identities in the stories they tell about their lives and how their individual life stories are framed and shaped by broader historical and social contexts. Public narratives of Indian middle classes especially Bengali middle classes echo in the individual narratives of the ten elderly presented below.

Before beginning with the discussion on the findings of the Elderly Narratives, the thesis would explore the meaning and need to have public narratives for the purpose of

understanding perceptions of ageing among elderly in their respective lives. (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Public Narratives with respect to this Research study comprise of life stories of elderly, their interesting insights to each narratives and the associated interplay of such stories with the discursive practices. These narratives keep on changing with time by the narrator throughout his/her lengthy lifespan. In context to understanding individual narratives and their stories, Frank (2012) points out the importance of stories by saying that

“Stories provide an imaginative space in which people can claim identities, reject identities, and experiment with identities”.

The life stories and narratives of each of the ten elderly demonstrate what has been referred to as the “poetics of ageing” (Randall & McKim, 2004, 2008) which implies the process of becoming rather than growing.

Narrative Imagination which means the process of transforming (Randall and McKim, 2004) is found within each narrative, where the elderly finds way to retrospectively look towards the past and prospectively toward the future. These narratives make sense of our past in light of our expectations for the future, and our anticipations for the future influence our reflections on past experiences. This “curious backward-forward process” (Randall & McKim, 2004: 242) is vivid in the ten stories discussed in the thesis. “Stories revise people's sense of self, and they situate people in groups” (Frank, 2012: 33). In this context, the thesis explores stories that situates the elderly individuals within a dialogic relationship between individual life stories and public narratives in the backdrop of the Late Capitalist Society.

LIFE STORIES OF THE BENGALI MIDDLE CLASS ELDERLY: DESCRIPTION

All the ten subjects of study belong from the slippery social class of the middle-classes and all of them are Bengali speaking, belonging originally from East Bengal (now Bangladesh). These are individual biographical stories that revolve around their lives, their experiences and changing perspectives through each phase of their lives. Each story begins introducing the person, then goes on documenting individual accounts both verbal and textual. Following the techniques of narrative discourse methodology and critical

discourse methodology, the accounts of each subject is detailed reflecting a person's childhood, adulthood and finally old age.

Anant Mukherjee's Nostalgic Narrative:

Anant was born in 1950 as the youngest of the four siblings growing up in South Kolkata area. After taking voluntary retirement at the age of 50 from formal work-force as a Sales Executive, Mr Mukherjee started to lead a semi-retired life; teaching children and nurturing eight-year-old grand-daughter at his three storeyed residence. He lives in a nuclear family with wife, elder daughter and grand-daughter with elder brother and his family as neighbours. With a sense of relief in voice, Mr Mukherjee reminisces his days as a sales worker in one of the leading oil companies of the country. He calls himself 'inappropriate for corporate sector' where he was required to work round the clock and had to bend his principles when needed. Moreover, he never liked to work under some one and expressed his deepest desire to have taught college students.

Mr Mukherjee being a high-spirited person, showed great interest in conversing with a stranger in the form of the interviewer or listener for more than fifteen days spread across a span of two months. His voice was clear, louder and showed clarity in each of his utterances. When asked to talk about his life, experiences of growing up to be an elderly person today, Mr Mukherjee was unflinching in narrating his childhood days in minute detail. It is interesting to observe that the 68year old was most fond of and comfortable in speaking about his childhood days, his school days, about his parents, three older siblings and his extreme knack towards reading books. He also showed unparalleled strength of memory while narrating several incidents as a child; importance of nostalgia among elderly.

The narrative will now summarise the elderly's account from his childhood to adulthood and finally to his present older self; focusing on his lived experiences as a middle-class Bengali. The narrative didn't follow a singular path, the narrator kept on coming back to the present age after lamenting stories about his childhood and adulthood days.

Mr Mukherjee effortlessly gave all information with regard to his family lineage hailing from Kumiliya in undivided East Bengal, now Bangladesh, that his parents had spent most their childhood and adulthood days there. Being compelled to leave the neighbouring country because of better opportunities, the narrator's father came and

eventually settled in Kolkata at a time when many people were migrating to Kolkata on account of Partition. After completing Chartered Accountancy, the narrator's father took a reputed job in the West Bengal Government services, Sales Tax Department. Having started with few money in his pocket, the father was able to not only secure a respectable job for himself but also build a house for his wife and children in the most sought after locality of south Kolkata.

Mr Mukherjee's face was all lighted up after he completed this story about his struggling father and their lineage as a "Bangal" (Bengalis who have migrated from Bangladesh and settled in India fondly call themselves). He went on to talk about the struggled life of his father for more than two hours in midst of having tea and biscuits. Though he has never been to Bangladesh, he always felt 'East Bengal' to be his original motherland carrying within himself immense pride of being a Bangal. He went on to talk about the excellent culinary skills a Bengali from 'East Bengal' acquires which is at a higher position to that of a 'Ghoti' (Bengalis who were always settled in India part of Bengal). His voice showed sudden rise of enthusiasm and his body seemed to respond to the excitement.

Continuing with his narrative, Mr Mukherjee said that he feels proud to have born into such an educated family with all his family members holding respectable positions in society. Despite his own resentment towards the new middle-class corporate structure, he showed a sense of honour when he declared that most of his relatives and friends hold respectable white-collar jobs in society. This kind of showed a duality in his perception where on one hand he himself does not want to be a part of the corporate work structure, but again showed respect to those who can survive such a work structure.

Education, spiritual inclination and cultural integration are three characteristics Mr Mukherjee feels are the key components to develop a person's true character. Having followed Swami Vivekananda's and Ramakrishna's ideals like many educated middle class Bengalis for centuries now, Mr Mukherjee talks at length about the importance of building 'character' from a young age. As mentioned by Sumit Sarkar in his works on Kaliyuga and Ramakrishna, he observes prevalence of ideals of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and his disciple Swami Vivekananda in the lives of most Bengalis. Though impacted from the late 19th century, the ideals of the two spiritual Gurus were most followed at the time post Indian Independence and the gruesome partition of Bengal when the community of Bengalis needed a respite and the respite came in form of their

spiritual teachings. These teachings were disseminated through the followers of Sri Ramkrishna and Swami Vivekananda and through the latter's Institution "Ramakrishna Mission".

As a voluntary retired person before the official age of 60, Mr Mukherjee turn into a self-employed person; teaching children all day long. Despite an unstable income, the narrator said he was never bothered about money; he depended on his father, wife and brothers in times of need. His demeanour changed into a person with immense gratitude while talking about his family helping him in times of need. His utterances showed fondness, pride and respect towards his family. He considers having a house of his own makes things easier as he didn't have to worry about shelter and food despite undulating career. Talking about his present day, Mr Mukherjee accepts that financial instability still persists. But, does not worry too much about it as he now depends on his two daughters for financial assistances.

Being nostalgic, Mr Mukherjee again went back to his childhood days, sharing travelling stories with his parents and elder sister, how he used to get spoiled by his elder brothers and sister. He went on "I loved to accompany my parents to Darjeeling on account of father's transferrable job...I loved the green, the beautiful hills...these beautiful memories help me now when I try to write something...these travel experiences have helped me enhance my creativity". In the same tone without a second's pause, the narrator spoke about his favour cousin who had come from Bangladesh at the age of 16 and stayed with their till he got married. The narrator being interested in stories used to listen to the stories of Bangladesh; creating a world within his mind. These stories mad him who his is today; a passionate writer.

With tears in his eyes, Mr Mukherjee shared several 'death callings' he used to have as a child. He reminisces his bed ridden days where he found solace only in books and in the view of the picturesque mountains.

At this age of 68, the narrator shares his memories of being close to the nature and spending most of his time reading and writing. His memories of first day at school are vivid and picturesque. He narrates his desire to write and that led him to publish magazines from childhood.

“You know what, I love to read books and magazines on films and music from a very young age and I got this trait from uncle”. While saying this he goes on narrating his theatre experiences in school and with great pride he said “I even got a prize for acting in the school drama”. These life stories play important role in Mr Mukherjee’s life and has actually influenced who he is today. He is still fond of cinema, he keeps on watching good cinema at this age of 68; making himself occupied.

Talking about his influences in life, Mr Bardhan said that he was most influenced by some female characters such as his mother, grandmother and aunt as he used to spend a lot of time reading and talking to them. Another influence in his life is his father. Like most East Bengal (present Bangladesh) refugees before Independence, his father too had to struggle to find a solid footing of his own in a city that was not known to him then. His father’s inclination towards the art of spirituality had shaped Mr Mukherjee. From an early age, he used to listen to various stories about spiritual Gurus, their ways of life and philosophies from his father. Mr Mukherjee’s biggest influence in life was a spiritual teacher of his father. Through him, the respondent got exposed to various spiritual writings. Visits to Kumbhamela, reading epics had made him spiritually inclined from a very young age. One of the main topics of narration in Mr Mukherjee’s interview was his ideas of spirituality. Spirituality or beliefs of religion is something that he had from a very young age. It is not something that he incorporated in old age. His ideas of religion and dharma are based on his biggest influencer, his father and his father’s spiritual teacher. He believes in reading and interpreting religious texts and arguing and criticising the same.

Further, Mr Mukherjee goes back and forth to childhood memories that he feels has structured his present state of mind. He further recalls:

“A memory that still haunts is that of my mother having a conversation with father where I heard her saying that she thinks that I will not be able to become a famous/great man. My parents were always paranoid regarding my health, as I had suffered a lot.”

His eyes were wet again. His otherwise strong voice became weak. He quickly said that this idea of failure has shaped his career and that is why he has in reality failed to achieve anything much in life.

In his narration, Mr Mukherjee mentioned his lifelong dream of becoming an author and a teacher. He went on to talk about his college days, the political upheaval of the time and his career. It was 1970s Kolkata, he was in college when the entire city was clouded with the upsurge of Naxalite Movement. Kolkata streets were infested with police who were busy looking and searching for Naxals. At that time a large number of students (mostly his age) joined the movement. A number of his close friends too were victims of the atrocities. 1970s political turmoil in Kolkata has an impact on Mr Mukherjee's life as some of his career decisions were shaped because of the inevitable situation. He had lost a year of college and was almost forced to take a job as a Sales Representative in an established MNC. Soon after he married and now after more than thirty years of marriage, Mr Mukherjee feels his life is more a reflection of a number of situations and unavoidable phenomenon that had clouded the then Kolkata. His narrative takes the turn of political flavour now.

After reminiscing his childhood days, his influences, his ideas of spirituality and political concerns, Mr Mukherjee goes on sharing his experiences as an elderly. He feels his life is just a continuation and a reflection of all the previous experiences he had from childhood to adulthood. In an effort to recall his life events to make sense of his present circumstances, Mr Mukherjee now laments his journey as an old man. Coming to this final section of his narrative Mr Mukherjee reviews his life, relooks decisions taken at different stages of life. Declining physical health and frequent visit to hospitals makes him think of 'death' more often. But he never expresses his desire to stop living his life. In an attempt to review his decision of leaving his professional life, he mentions he is someone who gets easily bored from a monotonous work, he loves change, loves excitement which he finds in his current work of teaching little children, writing and reading new books.

In his middle age and old age, Mr Mukherjee's life circled around teaching and mentoring young minds. At this age of 68, his everyday life is defined by reading, writing, painting and teaching children. From his narratives, one can say that his middle-aged life and old aged life has actually overlapped. The reason for Mr Mukherjee is the early retirement and continuation of work as a self employed individual. For him old age "It is just an addition to numbers, I feel my life is a continuation. But whenever I visit the hospital I feel old", saying this Mr Mukherjee gave a loud laugh and continued with the rest of his narrative.

He narrates, *“I am teaching for more than twenty years at my place. I have kept contact with most of them. I feel warm when my students call me and wish me. I have never stopped fighting and surrendering. I never thought that I am growing old. Now that I am 67, I think that now I have aged.”*

He feels that if he is around young minds, he feels young and if he is surrounded by older people, he feels old invariably.

“Age was just an addition of numbers till 2016 when he got severely ill and had a strenuous brain surgery. Again in recent past he got admitted to the hospital. Physical deteriorations are reminders of age”.

Decreasing number of students have left Mr Mukherjee with increased leisure time. He equates defeat, with ‘old age’. Reduction of activity is in fact a reminder of decreasing number of days left. This has also left him in feeling that he can no longer remember things. In most of his conversations he refers to the point that he has aged and is not useful any more. His only way of keep going is reading, writing and mentoring children. He still writes stories, but now the subject matter is more based on what an ideal school would be like, how can a child build his/her character or the impact of spirituality in one’s growing up years. He has written more than 200 stories and poems throughout my life. He believes in educating minds and not people.

While talking about his present life as an elderly, Mr Mukherjee says “I spend a lot of time on the Internet. My daughter has taught me how to connect with people through Facebook, Whatsapp (social media sites) and since then I have been using these mediums”.

When talking about his fears in life, he said without any hesitation “If my wife dies before me”. Loss of spouse is another fear that has engulfed Mr Mukherjee.

When asked to summarise his life, he says that he has enjoyed the last fifteen years of tutoring students and interacting with them more as a friend. He again says that for him his life has two phases one is childhood and the other one is an amalgamation of middle age and old age. His life as a self employed man is an enjoyable one despite its unsurity. He feels contempt as his daughters are now grown up and has lived upto his expectations. At this age, when his body is growing old, he often thinks of death. He often reads Rabindranth Tagore’s ideas of Death.

Mr Mukherjee's experiences as an older adult is a reflection of his experiences throughout his life. He views age as a symbol of death, weakness and all things negative.

Story of Manasi Ray: A Care-giver to her grand-children

Manasi a 65year old, plays the role of a grand-mother, a wife, mentor and mother to his family and students. She says "I am assigned with these roles by the society in different paths of my life. Among them I have always enjoyed being a teacher or mentor to my students who are now grown-ups, doing well in their lives". Having a four-room apartment in South Kolkata with her husband, Mrs Ray is leading a life of a settler by staying with her two daughters in USA for the half of a year and the rest half with her husband in Kolkata. She says "I get bored sitting in my flat all day, I at least enjoy helping my grand-daughters with their home works when I am visiting them in the US".

This narrative unlike the previous one does not delve into childhood memories much, rather it is more focused on her experiences as a teacher and her sense of self-repentance for leaving her job as a school teacher and taking up the job of a 'care-giver' to her grand-daughters. After completing her Graduation in Science, she got married; eventually joined as a Montessari trained teacher at a reputed school in Kolkata.

Beginning to narrate her journey, Mrs Ray sitting in an arm chair goes on describing her family to be an "Educated Bengali Middle-class". She is the eldest of the three sisters and one brother. Though her parents were from Mymensingh, East Bengal (now, Bangladesh), she has never been to the country. As a listener I had to prompt her in talking about her parents, her sisters, her childhood.

She recalls her father to be a highly educated person working in an Insurance company till the day he retired from work. Mrs Ray raised her eyebrows when she described her mother to be *"a very strict and educated person without having any formal education. She was the one who taught us. Both our parents were very strict with regard to what values need to be imparted and instilled within the daughters. At the same time, they also encouraged us to learn music and pursue higher studies"*. She described her father to be a hard-working man giving lot of attention to her daughters' education and well-being. The narrator with great pride in her voice said that she has seen her father work all day

and read at night. At this age of 65, the narrator considers her father to be one of her influences in life.

“There was strict differentiation of household work and outside work in my family with my mother taking care of the household and father working outside”. She recalls herself to be the most restless of all the other siblings. She said she was always interested in studies, participating in cultural activities.

In midst of talking about her parents, Mrs Ray went on to talk about the influence of spirituality in her life through her father who at a very tender age once left the house to become a saint. For the narrator, understanding of spirituality is from the view point of her father.

Having described both her parents, her childhood days quickly, Mrs Ray went on to talk about her teaching days as a Montessori teacher in a reputed school for a long time. She claimed that her interest towards educating young minds is primarily because of her parents. “I have seen my father teaching children after coming back from office”. The sisters have grown up seeing their father teaching students at home. Her mother was responsible towards the education of the sisters. In the process of lamenting these stories about her childhood, Mrs Ray got nostalgic in explaining how her mother used to multi-task two jobs at a time: one is cooking food and the other is teaching them. Talking about her mother, Mrs Ray mentioned that her daughters used to take help from her mother regarding English Literature. She expresses her surprise with regard to how her mother who is not much educated has been self-schooled.

Narrating her life as a college graduate, Mrs Ray remembers herself to be very good in studies. “I loved and still is curious about solving various mathematical problems. Even at this age, I love to solve mathematical problems”.

As a narrator, Mrs Ray is very much to the point. Unlike the previous narrator, Mrs Ray likes to explain and narrate everything in brief. She has the innate capability to express herself, her thoughts nicely. Her voice is clear.

Soon after completing college, in 1972 she got married to a business family. Eventually she had two daughters and her life got defined by raising children and looking after house-hold nuances. In her detailed narration, Mrs Chhanda Ray accepted the fact that

she didn't realise the importance of working after marriage until her sister-in law made her realise that she should move out and work for herself.

"Household duties soon became monotonous, I got bored and decided to work". At this stage of the narrative, Mrs Ray's voice suddenly rose up and she showed sign of extreme happiness. She was then talking about the biggest influence in life: Maria Montessori and her teachings. She started to get interested in the teachings of Maria Montessori, her various unique techniques of educating a young mind. For more than an hour, Mrs Ray explained in minute details how she got enrolled into the Montessori training programmes; who helped her to strive for a career after the birth of her two daughters. She showed sense of pride while saying "I managed both household duties and the Trainings perfectly, though my sister in law helped me a lot in this". Mrs Ray's passion and belief towards Montessori method of teaching and imparting knowledge among children is so explicit that she got too enthusiastic and started explaining the basics of the methodology.

She said: "I believe, teaching children is something that is genetically ingrained in me. I have seen my parents teaching and imparting learning from a very young age. But that teaching is not something that one will get by reading academic texts. Both my parents believed in expanding one's horizon and explore the world and then imbibe learning within oneself. I too was always interested in learning and imparting learning to young children."

After completing more than a year's course work, she started to teach in the same school where her daughters studied. Mrs Ray recalls a great detail as to how she convinced her mother-in-law into her joining the school as a teacher.

Being a middle-class woman in the 1970s, Mrs Ray had to confront the strict division of gender roles that were heavily prevalent at the time. Despite her interest and capability to learn, she had to opt for marriage and subsequently taking care of the household.

Mrs Ray throughout her interview talks of the feeling of belonging in the society. She says, though an educated family, her parents took their daughters to be burden and therefore her mother wanted to marry them off. Despite being good students, none of the daughters could pursue further studies or join work before getting married. She got upset talking about her sister who was pursuing her PhD when she got married and

unfortunately had to leave because of pressure from in-laws. At this age she often rethinks her parents' decision of getting them married so early.

She says: *"At that point of time we were not that aware of the necessity of earning and standing up on our own. We never counter argued with our parents and rather accepted their decision of getting us married."* She further says *"Ami ekhon bhabhi, koi amra toh awaj tulte parini"* - *"I think now, why haven't we raised our voices against all these oppositions?"*

Despite having a modern outlook (reading, practicing spirituality and discussing philosophy) towards life, the family was always very scared of the society. This duality confuses her now. Now, that she too has daughters of her own, she questions her parents' decisions of choosing marriage before career.

Mrs Ray talks of the only opposition with the daughters which is terms of the intake of various kinds of food especially that of beef and pork. Though she considers herself a liberated woman, she accepts the fact that her sense of religion awakens when it comes to the intake of beef or pork. Her daughters disapprove of the fact that one's intake of food is absolutely one's choice, but to instruct someone not to have a particular kind of food is not desirable. Children should be free to decide and choose for themselves. Mrs Ray discusses the change in meaning of certain objects from her time to her grandchildren's time. She says that certain taboos such as not worshipping while menstruating used to be followed during her's and her daughter's time. Now, when her grand-daughters question against these taboos, there is hardly a proper reason to explain. Certain questions that were left unanswered and unsaid finds its place in today's world. Mrs Ray says, that earlier she never questioned these taboos, but now she raises them and tries to find answers. In that way, she finds herself at par with her grand-daughters. For my respondent, this is women's empowerment. She even notices change in her daughters' outlook. They too have started questioning lot of things now. Her daughters are heavily influenced by Rabindranath Tagore's writings especially *Achalayatan* where the author explains the meaning of education which is freedom of mind.

Coming to the present age as an old lady, she expressed her deepest regret of leaving her job to take care of her grand-children and support her daughters. She went on saying, how much she enjoyed sharing knowledge with children, interacting and communicating with them. Eventually she realised there is an anti group is forming in the school that is

against the use of the Montessori methods of teaching. She is an idealist when it comes to Montessori teaching methods. She started to realise that as teachers we are not performing well.

Recapitulating her teaching days, Mrs Ray mentions that these 27 years of professional teaching career, she has realised that there is rarely a school that follows the Montessori method of teaching. From 2000 onwards it became difficult for her to continue teaching as her daughter had encountered an accident in USA. She had to immediately move to USA with her younger daughter. Eventually, in the year 2005, she had to leave the job to take care of her daughter. She was not willing to leave her job, but for the sake of her daughter she had to leave. She mentions that this was the most difficult decision of her life as she had to take a call to leave her work.

Gradually, Mrs Ray became a constant care-giver to her grand-children as her daughters and their husbands had to go out to work. Mrs Ray mentioned “I love to spend time helping my grand daughters study, I often read out stories to them. But I miss teaching and impact hundreds of children at a time. There was a time when children used to stay at my place the whole day and learn from me. This is what I miss the most”.

When asked to recapitulate her whole life and comment on her experiences of ageing in later life, Mrs Ray mentions that **her best days in life still are the teaching days in the school**. Many children used to come to her house and stayed for hours. She used to play, read and take them to places. Their parents felt free and safe to keep their children at my place. Post 2000s her life’s focus has shifted from school teaching and tutoring to taking care of grand-children.

She says: *“I love taking care of them, interacting with them. I still miss teaching and tutoring children. Educating minds and sharing knowledge is the best activity I can do. I often think of those days when children used to come and stay with me at my place and study. They used tell me I am their best friend.”*

Mrs Ray now talks of her old age and what is the meaning of age to her. She is very prompt in her response. She said that for her old age is equated with inactivity. She doesn’t have much physical problem. For her, old age is a time when she can repent on things she has done or not done in her childhood or middle age. She says that when she is not doing anything, loneliness creeps in. She has started losing interest in a lot of things

and kept regretting those days when she had to leave her teaching job. For her it is very frustrating to sit idle. Now that her grandchildren are big enough to do their own work, she finds herself to be jobless which leads to depression many a times.

She keeps thinking on the misinterpretation and misimplementation of Montesari technique of teaching. At this age of 67 years, she wants to start her own school where she would be able to implement the correct methods of Montessari teaching. She has even bought a house where she wants to start the school.

For Mrs Ray, ageing is boredome. She often shares her feelings to her sister regarding what will she do next. When she is in Kolkata, her days start and ends with almost no activity. To spend some time, she solves sums or do sudaku from newspaper. Whenever she is at her daughters' place, she helps her grandchildren with their home-works. She feels it is important to update herself with newer kinds of sums, grammar and literature. She even thinks of taking tutions for herself. She says, the most disturbing thing of old age is that she has to constantly look for or think for a proper work and ask people for a work because otherwise, without work she will be deep into depression. She says a number of times in her interview: 'kichhu ekta korte hobe' (I have to do something).

She has also mentioned her influences in life. She says: *"My parents were very spiritually inclined. They believed in humanity and imparting love to all. I have grown up in an environment where luxury is not desirable. My parents have always told us to go for necessities in life and not to crave for excesses in life."*

Mrs Ray in her narrations points out the difference in bringing up children. Her daughters say that if their grandmother was alive, it would have been difficult for her to disapprove certain customs and norms. Mrs Ray too finds a difference in her methods of teaching. She used to continuously nag her daughters to study, whereas her daughters rarely pester their daughters to study, they believe in giving everyone their own space. In that context, Mrs Ray mentions that this change of outlook and behaviour is only possible because they donot stay in India.

In a way of reflecting on her life, Mrs Ray feels that she has received a lot from life in terms of family, daughters, education and teaching experiences. She now wants to spend the rest of her time doing something valuable such as teaching underserved children.

She says, “ *Now that I am 65 years old, I am very bored, very tired. I get up in the morning, worship, I cook and then there is no other work to do. To keep my brain working, I start solving sums, play sudaku*”.

Satyaki Mitra: A descriptive Narrator

67-year-old Satyaki’s narrative is focused on his lifelong struggles for survival and how his personal struggles have shaped the person that he is today. As a narrator, Mr Mitra is extremely descriptive about each and every essential moment in his life. Here it would be appropriate to mention the archival memories which he uses often while lamenting his life stories. Born in Bangladesh, the respondent is the third born child of his parents. He has a faint memory of Bangladesh as he resided there for the first 4-5 years of his life. Like many Bengalis in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) before the Partition in 1947, the narrator’s father too had to come to Kolkata, India in search for work and shelter. Mr Mitra along with his siblings and parents settled in the southern part of Kolkata. At present he stays with his second wife, son and daughter-in-law in a flat in South Kolkata. He is a retired Government Official and is no longer involved in the organised work force.

With occasional tea sips, Satyaki narrated his childhood days, about his parents, his relationship with his siblings and with his first wife in great detail. The narrator’s father worked in the Department of shipping transport in Bangladesh. Throughout his childhood, he was not quite aware of the presence of his siblings as all of his brothers and sisters were staying with different relatives at different places. After changing residence several times, the family settled in a cramped-up house in South Kolkata and eventually all the siblings came together and started to live together. Recollecting some memories of childhood, Satyaki talks about one life threatening incident of falling into the Ganges at the age of five. Even at this age, he can vividly remember this incident as that was the first time when he realised what is death.

As a narrator Satyaki is very descriptive and picturesque. Most of his stories are in the past especially his adulthood. He spoke at length about his struggles as a youth in his 20s.

Says, “I can vividly remember those days when I had to search for jobs the whole days and when I had to starve many a day due to shortage of money”

Owing to financial troubles and constant change of residences, Satyaki didn't have the opportunity to continue education after graduation. He expressed his lack of confidence even in this age due to lower educational level. He said all his decisions including his work opportunities thus got affected owing to less education. Father being strict by nature, the narrator never had the courage to raise his voice against his father. Reminiscing his childhood days, Satyaki said that his mother was a very soft-spoken person whose life circulated around her children, kitchen and taking care of the household. Mr Mitra shares fond memories of his father who was an Indian classical musician before having a problem with the vocal cord, get up early in the morning and play the Tanpura. Owing to father's early demise, Mr Mitra was forced to drop from college and do odd jobs to earn money for the family.

While talking about his struggling days as a fresher in the backdrop of 1970s Kolkata when the job market was at a crisis, Mr Satyaki Mitra cheered himself up by seeing a football match in the TV. Till now his tone was frail and was feeling sad when he was remembering those days of 'struggle'. He said *'As a Bangal (East Bengal) I am an ardent supporter of the team East Bengal in Football. Sports keeps me going amidst anxieties at this age of 67'*.

The respondent says that in early 1970s, there wasn't much TV or radio. They had to go to the fields to see football matches. Mr Mitra continues to watch and follows the game regularly. While giving the interview he was watching the Under 17 Football WorldCup Final.

Oscillating between present and past, Mr Mitra spoke at length about his financial and family related troubles after his father died. "The sudden death of my father, put the entire family into a very precarious situation". As a result the siblings had to sacrifice their adulthood days and start working round the clock. He could remember his younger brother joined the Naxalite Movement towards the beginning of 1970s and had to escape from the police. Mr Mitra went on with disgust that his father was ashamed of his two brothers. At this point Satyaki, talks softly when he was mentioning the grief his father had to bear at the time of death.

He says about his struggle : *"Financial troubles soon got into my head and I got frustrated to find a job after leaving college. "Bekarotter jwala"- I started to feel hopeless and irritated as I was unable to find a job and contribute. I started to do small*

jobs to earn some money. I started working extremely hard. I wanted to study at that time, but didn't have the money to do so."

In this narrative, childhood memories and adulthood memories have overlapped resulting in a narrative without a vivid picture of the childhood. While talking about his childhood, the respondent had mentioned his affection towards a neighbourhood girl which later got percolated into their marriage in his midlife. During his struggling phase, Mr Mitra took respite in his future wife who had supported him at that time. The narrative of Mr Mitra took a turn from family to his future wife. He described in great detail the moment when they had lost their first child. The narrator's grief is still evident in each utterance. When talking about his wife, he says that she has inspired him and been there with him during the most difficult phases of life.

Mr Mitra says: *"She used to say day in day out, that it is possible to stand up and see the light after so much of hardship. Now that she is not with me anymore, I feel the vacuum, I realise what and how much she has done for me."*

While narrating his struggling life story, he was continuously mentioning the support garnered by his future wife. He has a habit of explaining everything in great detail. For him, his ideals and closest confidant in life are his sister and his wife. He shared various incidents where his wife showed lot of vigour and intelligence. When his son was sixteen years of age, his wife died of Cancer. Losing his wife was a never-ending grief for Mr Mitra. He says that he feels her absence mostly after his retirement. He says that his wife was there during his struggling phases and now that he has settled, his son is married and there is no such financial troubles, she is not there to share the happiness.

His entire narrative is filled with repentance, guilt and grief and that is what his old age about; remembering the long-lost days of sadness and struggle. Old Age for Mr Mitra is not equated with inactivity as he mostly engages himself with exhibiting daily chores, looking after her widow sister and looking after her financial matters. A strong interest of Mr Mitra is in medicines and market through out his life which has got aggravated after formal retirement. He regularly goes to the market, spends more than three hours in the market, buying things, taking 'chai' and talking to people in the market. He said 'I do not like to sit in the house because whenever I am alone with myself, I cannot help but think of the past. Therefore, I no longer stay at home much, rather go out and spend maximum time outside in the local 'chai shop' chatting with people. Another activity in his old age

is that of worshipping and going to the nearby Ashram. Spirituality like other narrators have played a key role in Mr Satyaki's life. The teachings of Sri Ramkrishna and Swami Vivekananda plays a crucial role in his life.

Mr Mitra says, though he has earned a lot of money now, he does not have his wife by his side who could have been there sharing the happiness. Loss of a companionship is an important factor in Mr Mitra's story. Throughout his life, he was busy working and earning money. After retirement when most of his formal work has come to an end, he spends most of his time worshipping and reading religious texts. For him spirituality is a medium through which he finds solace and respite. Though he is very close to his son, he feels the emptiness.

A 'Matter of the Fact' Account of Rita Sen:

At the age of 63, Ms Sen is a widow, mother of two grown up children and a care-giver to her grand-daughter who stays in USA. She now spends six months in USA with her daughter and three months with her son in Dubai. Hailing from a humble Bengali Middle class family, she is currently staying at her deceased husband's house at South Kolkata. She used to teach children in a Montessori school for many years. Ms Sen's narrative revolves around her life after marriage, her children and her life as a care-giver.

As a narrator, Ms Sen is not very open about her lived experiences. The interviewee had to give hints in the form of points at the time of narration. Her voice too was weak making it difficult to follow and understand.

She too like other respondents began her story by briefing about her childhood days. She was the youngest of her four brothers and sisters. "I lost my mother when I was just 8 years old. My older sister took good care of me and nurtured me". As a child, Ms Sen was very good in studies and loved the company of her sisters. She was very attached to her sister. The family originally belongs from East Bengal (now Bangladesh). They still have families there. Ms Rita has never been to Bangladesh, but has heard lot of stories of Bangladesh. Her father had come to Kolakata in search for work and settled here permanently.

What is gathered from her narrations, Ms Sen was always a very quiet individual and her ambitions are very limited to basic needs. Like all her siblings, she too started attending

school, then college. She had very limited friends and had immense interest in being a teacher when she grows up. The economic condition of the family was always quite decent and there was not much troubles with regard to the financial situations.

She eventually got married and lived in their house in South Kolkata. After marriage she did a teacher training course and started teaching in a montessari school. There was a time when she used to manage household works, her two children and her teaching profession. She enjoyed the company of the children. She always passionate about art and craft. Ms Majumdar immersed herself in training and mentoring children. When her daughter was 16 years and son 14 years, Ms Majumdar's husband expired out of a heart attack. Remembering the gone away days, Ms Krishna says the sudden death of her husband came as a big blow to her and the family. Her mother-in law was still alive then. She narrates her days of coping up with the loss. But she continued with her work as a teacher. Her children and mother-in law too had to cope up with the loss. There was financial trouble at home which compelled her to work harder and continue with her work. When asked about isolation and depression, she promptly said she had her school and teaching to engage most of her time. Her mother-in law was the one who felt lonely after the loss of her son. She also added since she was young then and had lot of other activities, she didn't have the temporal opportunity to get depressed.

Towards old age: With years, her son and daughter got settled in their respective career and moved out of the house. Her daughter stays in USA and son stays at Rajarhat (30 kms away from Ms Majumdar's place of residence). She is now a lonely woman when she is alone at her residence. Until the age of 60, she continued teaching children in the Montessari school. Presently, she acts a care-giver to her only grand-daughter who stays at USA. She now stays six months at USA and takes care of her grand-daughter who is just three years old. She takes care of her while her daughter and her husband continues to work. When asked about her exerperiences in old age and her ideas about ageing, Ms Majumdar said old age is not a phase for her, it is a continuation of her previous phases in life. Owing to negligible physical problems, Ms Majumdar rarely feels that she has grown old. What bothers her is her loneliness which gets aggravated when she is in Kolkata and not serving her grand-daughter at USA. Coming back from USA, she spends few months in Kolkata and again goes back to Banckok with her son.

While narrating about her loneliness, Ms Majumdar emphatically mentions the importance of friends in her life. She says, all through out her life, she had friends, but didn't quite have contacts with him. Recently with the advent of social media such as Facebook and Whatsapp, Ms Majumdar has reconnected with many of her childhood, school and college friends. After retirement and after her children had settled in different places, she started to have short trips with her friends. When she comes back from USA and Bankock, she along with her friends visits various places, goes to the cinema or eats outside. To summarise, Ms Majumdar's social life plays key role in keeping her alive and making her engaged.

When asked to summarise her life and comment on her old age, Ms Sen spontaneously says activity is important. When she is without any work and is in Kolkata and not meeting friends, she feels alone. For Ms Sen loneliness and lack of companionship ignites within her the thought of death.

Life Story of Swagata Ghosh: 'Witness to many changes'

Swagata Ghosh is the oldest among the five respondents. She is a 90 year old widow and currently lives with her two sons and daughter-in law in her own house at South Kolkata. She was always a home-maker and now lives out of the monthly widow pension under the Central Government scheme. The family originally belongs from East Bengal (now Bangladesh). Being the oldest of all the narrators, Ms Ghosh has been a witness to the varied changes in the city of Kolkata and on a macro level the socio-politico-economic structure of India and the state of West Bengal. Most of her narrative focuses on her long journey of survival, social structural changes throughout these ninety years of time, changing patterns of relationship and her experiences as an old woman for thirty years.

She was born in the year 1928 in the southern part of Kolkata to a middle class RoyChowdhury family. Before her birth, Ms Ghosh's parents had taken refuge to Kolkata in search for work opportunities. She is the oldest of her four siblings. Throughout her childhood, the family didn't have a permanent place of stay owing to her father's transferrable job. Her father was a doctor and was continuously transferred from one hospital to another. All throughout her childhood, Ms Ghosh stayed temporarily in places such as Darjeeling, Assam, Kanpur and various districts of West Bengal. This resulted in change of schools throughout her childhood. Swagata soon lost interest in

studies unlike her younger sister who pursued studies till college even after her marriage. The men in the family are well educated with her father being a medical practitioner. Swgata was more interested in sewing, tailoring and cooking from a very young age. She has seen her mother being confined to the kitchen and occasionally writing poems in spare time. It was a time when girls were married off early. Swagata too got married when she was 17 years of age. She got married to Mr Ghosh who was almost 12 years older to her and was then working in the Defence section of the Central Government of India. Ms Ghosh's in-laws family too belonged from the East Bengal.

During her interview, Ms Ghosh shared her thoughts at that time of her marriage. At that time, she was not quite aware of the concept of marriage. Soon after marriage she got introduced to a huge set of people who stayed together in a single house at Bankura, West Bengal. She became a part of the new extended family where at least fifty people stayed together. She along with other daughters-in-law was responsible towards taking care of the household, cooking and cleaning. In her spare time, she took to sewing and started making clothes for the children of the family.

At this age of 90, Ms Ghosh expressed her feelings of astonishment when she first came to this big family that was composed of various small families. Her maternal family was extremely small in terms of the new family. She could vividly remember days when she had to struggle to find her own space in the new family full of people. Other daughters in law gave her company and support most of the time. Like her father, Ms Ghosh's husband too had a transferrable job that resulted in frequent change of residences for Mr and Mrs Ghosh. For more than twenty years after her marriage, the couple moved like a vagabond all throughout the state and even outside. She was not even twenty when her first son took birth in Kolkata. She then stayed with her parents in Kolkata.

Ms Ghosh's narrative shows her excellent strength of memory; explaining each event in her life just like it had happened yesterday. Her interview shows that she was always a conformist, conforming to every norms and happenings in her life. She has four daughters and two sons. Her older sons and eldest daughter used to stay at their aunt's place in Kolkata while the remaining three daughters moved with the couple and kept on changing schools throughout their childhood. Only after the children grew up, the family permanently settled in their residence at Southern part of Kolkata. This house too was a place of residence for more than fifty people.

Narrating the changes she had witnessed in the city of Kolkata, Ms Ghosh mentioned the impact of World War II and The Great Bengal Famine on Kolkata during 1940s. She remembered days when they had to escape to their relatives places in Bangladesh. They kept on moving all across Bangladesh. During the time of World War II, the streets of Kolkata was filled with police and army. There was curfew all across the country. It was a period of inactivity. At the time of interview, when the interviewer raised the question of her perspective on societal structure during that time, she took some time in explaining the strikingly different societal set up during 1940s Kolkata. She said owing to the continuous economic and political upsurge all across the city, life of ordinary people too was very unsettling. Work opportunities were less, women rarely raised their voices. She could talk about those women who she knows. The wives were confined to the houses and couldn't even think of working outside. Her sister was an exception who continued her studies even after the birth of her first son. She also formed a social organisation in late 1970s with her friends. Having said, that Ms Swagata Ghosh said that she was not like her and she knew a whole lot of women who were not like her. 1940s was a time when Bengal was hit by acute poverty, middle men crowded the city resulting in increase in price rise of essential commodities and ultimately leading to Blackmarket. Even during these situations, the respondent's family could escape poverty and raised their children. Though feeding for eight members was difficult at that time, the family kept on surviving at minimum cost. Owing to the huge the expenses, Ms Ghosh was forced to sell handmade blouses, shirts and frocks to shops. Even though Ms Ghosh had started selling products, she was not allowed to step outside the house. As mentioned above, she too accepted this situation as she was a conformist.

Her offsprings soon grew up, took decent jobs and eventually got married. Most of them stayed in Kolkata. Eventually, her husband died because of a massive heart attack. It is now more than twenty-five years without her husband. Ms Ghosh's daughters and granddaughter said that they have rarely seen their mother or grandmother to be depressed about the loss of her husband. Ms Ghosh too has never expressed her sadness because of her husband. She has accepted the loss.

At this age of 90, Ms Sunanda lives a comfortable life with her two sons, daughter in law and seldom visits to daughters' places. Even at this age of 90, she makes occasional visits to her daughter's place in Pune and even makes annual visits to other places of India for the purpose for sight-seeing. She dislikes to stay at home and is always

interested in exploring newer places. She spends her days by reading, watching television, worshipping and gardening. She is passionate about her plants and takes good care of her small terrace garden. She keeps herself updated with the current affairs by reading newspapers. Her grand-sons and grand-daughters claim that their grandmother makes an effort to understand them and the newer perspectives of leading life. There were moments in their lives, when their grandmother Ms Ghosh had stood up for them and against her own daughters. Although she herself was confined to the house and has seen women being confined to the house, she now stands up for the liberation of her grand-daughters. The marital structure too has changed within these 70 years of time. She too has accepted this change by never questioning her grand-daughters' life decisions. Even in her own narrative, Ms Ghosh mentions that she has always accepted changes in her life. She has never questioned them and has always kept on adjusting to these changes. She believes that this spirit has never let her take her own age too seriously.

Her regular activities of reading, watching, gardening and worshipping keeps Ms Ghosh alive. She rarely thinks of death as she keeps herself busy with these activities. For her the meaning of productive activity is to keep oneself busy in activities that one loves doing.

Sashanka Chatterjee: A passionate citizen of his country

A sixty-two-year-old, retired railway officer from Indian Railways, Mr Shashanka is a high spirited and energetic man who is constantly at a denial of his age. He at present lives in a three bed room apartment in Kolkata with his only daughter of 27 years of age. A six-foot-tall Shashanka has a powerful voice and restless demeanour. He was watching an animated Bengali TV series just before he started narrating his story. He was very clear about the end time of the conversation as he had to go for an NGO meeting afterwards. Mr Chatterjee's narrative started with him introducing his family as refugees from the then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, settling in the northern part of Kolkata. His father had come and settled in Kolkata during the early 20th century.

Describing his father as a highly educated man, Mr Chatterjee spent some time in elaborating his father's influence on him. His father was the chief-editor of the then revolutionary Bengali newspapers. These newspapers were the mouth-pieces of the

Communist Part of India. Being an active member of the Communist Party and a staunch believer in Marxism, the narrator's father was then a huge threat to the Indian government who at the time was trying to build a politically strong and controlled nation-state.

Growing up amidst the changing political environment in India and the surrounding political beliefs at home, Mr Shashanka adopted within him a strong sense of political awareness. Emanating a sense of pride in his voice, the narrator described how his father participated in several protests against the brutality of the nation-state and how he was rigid towards his own principles and ideologies. This influence soon led the narrator and his brother to join the Naxalite Party during 1970s and later on the Youth Choir Club. However, he was never an active member of the Naxalite party, whereas his younger brother continued to participate actively in the Movement. While narrating his 'absent-presence' role in the Naxalite Movement and with the activities of the CPIM(L), Mr Chatterjee mentioned the influence of his mother on him. He said that though he was very attracted to the political ideologies, beliefs and activities, he could never devote himself entirely and that was because of his mother. After completing schooling and graduation in the 1970s, the narrator joined the Indian Railways and towards the end of 1980s got married.

He described his childhood to be shrouded with financial problems and lack of stability at home and that was because of his father's continuous involvement in Political Party related activities. His father's instability led the narrator to choose a life which will guarantee him some security and stability. Mr Sahshanka said he felt the stability underneath his feet for the first time after he got a permanent job in the Indian Railways.

After describing in brief his life as a child and as a youth, Mr Shashanka reflected on his old age. he refused vehemently to call himself an 'old man'. He regularly colours his hair to not look his age. He absolutely disregards being called an 'old man' or a 'senior citizen' and he denies getting the extra benefits he gets in daily life. In this context, he lamented an instance where he was traveling by a metro and was offered the senior citizen seat by a younger person. He was furious and immediately got down from the train, got hold of a hair colour from a near by shop and got his hair coloured from grey to black. Talking about his daily life as a retired person, Mr Chatterjee said he is busy the

whole day, working with an NGO, going to the market in the morning, socialising with his 'para' friends and watching TV. He loves to give 'adda' (chatting with friends) with his friends, ex-colleagues, daughter's friends and the local boys who actively participate in the local politics. He now tries to influence the budding political activists of his neighbourhood with several political ideologies which will make the world a better place to live in. Considering himself to be a believer in the Marxist ideology, Mr Shashanka spends days criticizing the political happenings in the country. He along with his retired friends tend to compare the current political scenario with the past; focusing on the presence of much more active and learned political activists and leaders in the past. Mr Shashanka feels sad while saying that the country is developing and growing passively despite having witness to number of revolts, protests and movements. This pessimistic feeling towards the nation has coerced Mr Chatterjee to indirectly motivate his neighbourhood boys to become better political activists by looking at the bigger issues of poverty, hunger, poor quality education etc. In this pretext, the narrator said that he now spends most of his time collecting funds for an NGO that works for the benefits of underprivileged children in a village in Birbhum, West Bengal. He said "I don't regret the fact that I am a retired person now with no formal job to fall back on. But when I think of these kids in rural Birbhum, I feel the need to contribute and then I regret of not having a job any more. If I had a job today, I wouldn't have had to ask for money from others." His demeanour suddenly changed into a sad person the moment he said these words.

Apart from his interests and passion towards social work and politics, Mr Chatterjee showed lot of interest in medicine. Although he is not a professional medical practitioner, he exuberates tremendous confidence while suggesting medicines for others. He keeps a medicine bag with him all the time and keeps on searching for much better medicines. He loves to talk about medicines and newer ways of treatment. This interest is because of his sad experience of losing his wife out of Cancer almost fifteen years ago. His interest in medicine is more of a paranoid towards declining health.

Apart from medicine, Mr Shashanka also showed great interest in travelling with his friends. He loves to travel with his friends in every three months. His declining physical health has never obstructed him from choosing a 'tricky' place. He loves to travel to the mountains and explore newer places with his friends.

To conclude, the narratives of Mr Chatterjee suggests his life as an elderly person to revolve around politics, 'adda', volunteer services, health and travel. All these interests are synonymous with the Bengali Middle class.

Account of the retired Banker, Sayan Kumar Ghosh:

Sayan Kumar Ghosh is a 70-year-old retired Bank manager who lives with his wife, younger brother and mother in their four-storeyed house in South Kolkata. After serving for more than thirty years in the banking sector and touring almost all the states of India, the narrator describes himself to be a 'lonely' man. He finds it difficult to spend his time without going to office and just sitting at home. He has a son and daughter-in-law who stays abroad and rarely do they visit their parents in Kolkata. Mr Ghosh and his wife though were frequent travellers, dislikes to visit their son in United Kingdom. Mr Sayan is the oldest of six siblings and therefore feels the responsibility of taking care of his mother who is more than ninety years. Throughout his childhood, Mr Ghosh spent lot of time growing up in different places with his aunts and uncles. Unlike other narratives, Mr Ghosh's narrative is focused towards his feelings as an elderly, changes he feels after retirement. Soon after his retirement Mr Ghosh joined Bharat Seva Ashram, a voluntary religious organisation as an Accountant. He worked there thrice a week for more than four years. During that time (immediately after formal retirement) he felt positive owing to associations with work (though part-time). He also spent lot of time traveling with his wife to countries such as Europe, USA, Africa and cities in India. They used to go with Travel Agents in groups. He said in his narrations that he likes to spend time with people, interacting with them. Unfortunately, when he was 67years, he had a terrible spinal cord injury followed by an intricate surgery which left him bed rest for many days. This surgery garnered fear within him and made him an 'aged' person, a recluse tied to his home. This shows that the narrator himself subscribes by the typification of old means frail, weak and disengaged.

He narrated "I have always been an active person throughout my life. I never stayed home. Now a days, I feel lonely and sad staying indoors". This shows that according to Mr Ghosh, ageing is a process where a person moves towards disengagement and negativity in life. He also aptly pointed out that 'age' is synonymous to one's declining health. At the time of narration, he complained about his retired life as he now spends

most of his time watching television, cooking and connecting with his friends and relatives through whatsapp communications.

Life-long struggle of Supriya Majumdar

A sixty-year-old retired school teacher, Mrs Supriya Majumdar lives with her ailing mother and bed-ridden husband in a three bed room posh apartment in South Kolkata. Being the only daughter to her parents, she expressed her sole responsibility in taking care of her mother. She exuberated enthusiasm and extreme happiness to share her thoughts, desires and her life experiences while narrating her life story. She uttered each word with great precision, making herself a slow narrator or speaker. Mrs Majumdar's body language reflected that of a teacher who considers everyone to be one of her students. Her only daughter stays in New Delhi with husband and daughter, making it difficult to meet her. Mrs Majumdar's narrative primarily focused on her struggle to keep both her mother of 92 years and her husband of 70years alive. Though she shared her story of struggle against all odds to keep them alive, Supriya never showed any glimpse of sadness. Her voice tone and intonation reflected her sense of positivity in her path of struggle.

She was a Geography teacher in an ICSC Board school for more than thirty years. She retired as the school principle. She described her work life to be one full of excitement and adventure with her students. Being a mother, Mrs Majumdar shared her experiences of balancing both work and homely duties simultaneously. She narrated some of the stories as a teacher, how she managed her classes. Her tone of voice reflected sense of happiness. Towards the end of her career as a school teacher, she thought of leading a retired life of disengagement from the society and immerse herself completely into spirituality especially Buddhism. However, immediately after her husband met with a terrible car accident which left him bed-ridden, Mrs Majumdar decided of resuming work. She said "I hated to sit all day looking at my ailing mother and bed-ridden mother. As I couldn't resume my teaching job in the school. I joined some coaching centres nearby where I teach students Social Studies. Now my only aim for the remaining of my life is to keep myself engaged so that I can think something beyond sickness".

Her desperation to be active got emanated when she at the time of her narrative expressed her desire to teach online to children. She also mentioned the importance of

earning after formal retirement. Apart from the monthly pension, Supriya felt the need to earn to sustain in the current social world where cost of living is increasing with changing time. With the only daughter staying away and both husband and mother bed-ridden she felt the need to control her life again and that control could only be achieved by imparting knowledge to children.

She took some time to narrate her inclination towards Buddhism. She said “I feel the stability and peace within myself when I chant the Mantras”. She occasionally holds meetings on spirituality where her compatriots join and they discuss the meaning of the chants. She has included Buddhism within her daily chores and feels incomplete when she is unable to chant the Mantra.

Apart from keeping herself busy through spiritual engagement and work-related engagements, Mrs Supriya explores the social media. She said “I can use the whatsapp to connect with my friends and relatives”. While talking about her experiences as a retired woman, she said she feels lot of void in her daily routine. Mrs Majumdar equated age or growing old with one’s involvement in formal work force. Inactivity according to her is a symptom of ‘oldness’. She does not consider herself to be a senior citizen in comparison to her mother who is an Alzheimer’s patient, suffering from chronic memory loss. She expressed tremendous fear of losing herself with age.

The Lone Story of Gitashri Dasgupta

Ms Gitashri Dasgupta is an eighty-year-old widow staying in an apartment in South Kolkata. She is overlooked by her sister-in-law and brother-in-laws who stays next to her apartment. Being a house-wife throughout her life and an occasional social worker, Ms Dasgupta was mostly confined to her house for more than sixty years of her life. Bringing up two daughters and taking care of the joint household were the primary responsibilities and activities she performed throughout her life. She said in her narrative “unlike other women friends of mine, I was never much fond of cooking. Rather I liked to decorate and clean my house. I loved to collect exquisite items from across the world; wherever I travelled and decorated the house with them”. Unlike, other narrators, Ms Dasgupta said she never liked taking care of her grand-children (who are now well grown-ups), she is fonder of socialising with her friends. It has been more than twenty years that she stays alone in her apartment, occasionally visiting her daughters’ places

outside Kolkata. She being extremely fond of talking, kept on sharing her experiences as a wife, mother and a social worker. With a height of less than five foot and a more or less slender appearance, Ms Dasgupta reflected restlessness in her whole demeanour.

Belonging from a humble middle-class family and growing up with siblings and cousins, Ms Dasgupta from a very young age had developed the ability to live and spend time with others. Being academically very strong, the narrator was keen on pursuing a career of a school teacher. Soon after she got married, she joined a school, continuing it only for few years because of her responsibility of taking care of her children who then were just toddlers. Despite the added responsibility at home, the narrator said she longed to go out and work like her other working women friends. Unfortunately, her husband's frequent travel and increasing work load in office forced her to be confined to her home throughout her life. Her intonation reflected sense of regret, dissatisfaction while narrating the story of her adult hood.

Showing series of black and white photographs of her childhood, Ms Dasgupta kept on talking about her relatives, her parents and her siblings. Calling herself a people's person, the narrator quickly mended by saying that she was never 'childrens' person'. Soon after her daughters got settled through marriage or work, Ms Dasgupta started to immerse herself in various kinds of social activities. She started to visit the near by ladies club where she interacted with the older women of her locality, participating in several cultural programmes and events. These women collectively organised several relief camps for the downtrodden, organised exhibitions where women from a lower socio-economic background, could display products made by them and create selling channels. Ms Dasgupta along with five other women in the Club had arranged for a make shift tailoring and stitching centre where experts used to come and train these women in making products that have a market value. While describing these activities and sharing her visions as a social worker, the narrator mentioned it was only after the age of 60 that she started indulging herself more deeply with these activities.

Her narrative shifted to her husband's death as a turning point in her life, when she for the first time in her entire life felt the absence of a roof above her head and it was then that she immersed herself completely into social work. She further said, "in comparison to other women social workers, I was not an active one. But for me getting exposed to this kind of environment was more than satisfying". Narrating her experiences and

feelings as an old lady of 80 she said that ‘sixty’ which is an official age of retirement felt like adulthood to her as it was the age when she first felt an independent footing. The entire span of fifteen years till the age of 75, she felt like a middle-aged woman trying to quench her thirst of working and serving people. Soon after crossing the border of 75, that her health began to decline and the slow poisoning of diabetes soon caught her legs, resulting in her inability to move; making her again confined to her home. She mentioned with a sad face that she again felt depressed just like her entire adulthood life as a wife and mother in this current age of 80. However, her desire to meet people has not stopped, she continued to meet people by accessing the Uber or taking yellow taxi. She now spends most of her time trying to get out from bed and trying to walk in her rooms. This sudden decline in health has made her think of ‘death’ more often; leading her to call all her relatives and friends at her place thinking that her ‘time’ has come and she now needs to meet them for the last time. Thus, for Ms Dasgupta, old age is synonymous with her inability to move, being inactive and being depressed.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Each of the narratives of the ten-elderly fall within William Labov’s work on Personal Experience Narrative (PEN) where people have told stories about themselves, stories about embarrassing and cherished experiences in life. All of their speeches are in vernacular which is Bengali. Each of the narratives have followed the structure of: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, results and coda. Each of these elements serve double purpose, keeping a note on events, feelings, characters, ongoing interactions. Each narrative explores experiences of growing up into an elderly person and formation of one’s perceptions of ageing. As mentioned earlier this study is located within the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis; exploring the question of power. The discourse of the narrative brings out positive and negative perceptions of ageing, looking either at ageing as an active process or focusing on the old body to be frail and weak. Each of the narratives have taken the course of non-linearity where thoughts and experiences have juxtaposed with each other; sometimes creating a contradictory set of understanding with regard to the perceptions of ageing in old age. Following a non-positivistic approach of perceiving the process of growing old among each individual, this thesis has given precedence to how a social reality is looked, viewed or interpreted by different individuals from different contexts. However, in this thesis,

having on focused on the Bengali middle class in South Kolkata, the context or background from which the individuals are perceiving their lives is similar. As a result, each story sketched in the previous section does not create a distinguished imagery despite the effort to heterogeneity.

In this study, the thesis has focused on questions of identity in old age, formation or conformation of social norms, values and practices in old age. Utterance, language and communication abilities of elderly play important role in a critical discourse analysis. Through the distinguished yet some what similar narratives of the ten elderly in the backdrop of late capitalist and consumerist society convey certain common themes which will be discussed:

Going back to the past: In this age of late capitalism or post modernity, equilibrium gets ruptured because of the possibility of anything and everything getting disappeared. Pierre Nora (1989) says that there has been collapse in individual and social memory with increasing industrial growth; our ancient identities have been broken. In the last twenty-five years we have been witnessing profound changes in our family structures, groups and institutions. Memories are torn now having no real environment for it to be fostered. With the end of colonisation in many nations, the process of interior decolonisation has affected many ethnic minority and family groups. These groups have always possessed reserves of memories. Many societies have conserved collective memories of the past in terms of values through various institutions such as church, schools, family and state. But there has been end of these societies leading to an end in ideologies which had prepared a transition from past to the future. Memories being life borne by living societies can be both real (unviolated) and dictatorial. The real memories are a result of primitive, archaic societies and histories which has been forgotten by the post-modern societies. On the other hand, the dictatorial memories being representations of the media have no self-conscious appeal and is all powerful. Memories in a late capitalist society is vulnerable to manipulation and appropriateness.

At the time of narrating individual stories, the narrators effortlessly went back to the past after getting some clues from the listener or the interviewer. The stories that they narrated are both true memories and archival memories. True memories have now taken refuge in gestures, habits and skills that have been passed down by unspoken traditions. Whereas modern memories are archival, relying on trace, immediacy of recording and

visibility of image. These elderly too showed obsession with regard to conservation of the present and preservation of the past in the form of archives. These memories are archived in terms of testimonials, photographs, letters etc. which the elderly readily produced at the time of the narrations. In a late capitalist society, memory is no longer nourished. In the common discourses of ageing, memory keeps on decreasing where elderly no longer is able to remember most of the stuffs. “One of the most striking aspects of ageing is that memory processes show decline” (Park & Festini, 2016). The biological discourses of ageing present three deficiencies among the elderly. They are lack of cognitive abilities, attention and memory.

On the contrary, the elderly narrators showed strong cognitive abilities, fondness towards sharing memories (archival memories) and getting nostalgic while narrating own life stories. Within the understanding of ageing, memory can be categorised into explicit-implicit memory and retrospective- prospective memory. Explicit memory requires conscious recollection of a particular event in the past, while implicit memory implies a particular work in the present which is the result of an encounter that has happened in the past. Retrospective memory is the type of memory which is more of the recollection of the past, whereas prospective memory implies remembrance to perform an action which will take place in the future. As we shall see, at least some of these distinctions have revealed striking dissociations in terms of the effects of normal ageing (Maylor, 1990).

All of the narratives reflect the prevalence of long-term memories among the five subjects which has allowed them to narrate their stories that has occurred at least fifty years ago. To be more specific these older adults have remembered several autobiographical events that have occurred within a span of their life time. Each of them has remembered certain episodes of their lives that makes them nostalgic. Mr Mukherjee narrated his childhood stories, his stories on his poor health, his parents and their contribution in his life. Similarly, Mr Mitra remembers his struggling middle-aged life and the minute details associated with the memory of his deceased wife. Ms Ray remembers her work life as a teacher in a way of repentance of quitting the work by choosing the life of a care-giver to her grand-children. Ms Ghosh remembers her days as a home-maker, ‘the house full of people’ and wonders how time has changed within these ninety years. Ms Rita Sen among these respondents doesn’t quite live on memories. She rarely shows nostalgia.

Despite the dominant discourse of ageing saying that the elderly does not have proper cognitive abilities and they are not able to remember anything, the narratives in this study showed enough evidence of strong memory among elderly making us reject the biological discourse of ageing. But, then again what we see in all the narratives is the predominance of archival memories where the narrators have remembered only those memories or incidents that according to them is important and worth remembering; presenting one's life as she/he wants to be. Focusing on the heterogeneity in the stories narrated by the elderly, it becomes important to also mention the deliberate act of forgetting one's past.

Changing Roles in old age: In midst of a late capitalist society characterised by mass commodification where the real and imagination is juxtaposed and intertwined to one another, the thesis explores how age identities are structured and restructured through individual narratives. There is no singular identity with which the elderly individuals have attached with. In a post-modern, late capitalist and post-industrial social set up where disruption, disappearance and disequilibrium are the key features, individuals tend to oscillate between one role to another. Many of the roles in middle age gets continued even in old age such as that of a father, husband, brother etc. Few of the newer roles one takes up as an elderly are that of a grand-father or grand-mother. In all the narratives, the elderly in a strong voice said that since some of the previous roles get continued with age, they do not feel any significant change in their lives. But again, the newer roles such as that of a 'grand-parent' create a sense of 'newness' within them. These roles are all socially accepted ones. Through various representations in forms of media, advertisements, these roles become accepted by individuals in old age. This process of acceptance is not a forced one: making media to be manipulative.

Age identity refers to the inner experience of a person's age and ageing process which belongs to the domain of the subjective experience of ageing. Age identities are subject to misinterpretations owing to its nature of being subjective. However, most age identities are representations and visions of the elderly. In each narrative, as a listener I have come across series of identities. While talking about their current life as an elderly, Mr Anant Mukherjee, Ms Manasi Roy and Ms Rita Sen confirms that they have two most important responsibilities out of many; they are as a grandparent taking care for

their grand-daughter, as a father/mother looking after the wellbeing of their offsprings. Their voice intonation didn't show any glimpse of force or compulsion in taking up these responsibilities as parent and grand-parents. They willingly have taken up these roles in their old age.

Such utterances by the elderly have been analysed using discursive and socio-cultural practices. Here, I would like to draw in representations of the media as most identities are indirect impositions by the media and the mass culture. Media controlling post-modern conditions continuously create a false sense of freedom in the mind of individuals/citizens by controlling their everyday desires and needs through representation of desired objects in a familiar manner. These representations are done in terms of signs, creating false needs in the minds of individuals; impossible to strike a difference between social and individual needs. The dominant signs imposed by the state through mass media aims at creating repressive individuals failing to recognise the control. This failing to recognition is because mass media cleverly oscillates between being an instrument of information and entertainment and that of being agents of manipulation and indoctrination (Marcuse). The acceptance of elderly roles in old age are in fact result of the false consciousness created within the minds through advertisements and media.

In this current late capitalist society, images are reflections of reality, image disguises or conceals reality and often deletes reality; resulting in collapse of memory. To understand the reason behind the acceptance of certain role in old age and formation of an identity as a result of that has led me to study advertisements, banners depicting an elderly in the backdrop of a consumerist society. Advertisements taken in this study such as the LIC policies portrays the picture of a 'happy family' where in an elderly person carries a child on his lap with a smiling face. Several advertisements in electronic media shows elderly bonding well with the children as their mentors and friends. In the Matrimonial Ads, it is shown that the elderly parents go around searching for an eligible husband for his daughter. These portray responsibilities or roles an elderly takes or are supposed to take in the current society. This production and over production of signs by the media creates a world where individuals perform several roles according to the needs and desires of the media without recognising the control and manipulation.

Most of the elderly narratives emanates a sense of concept of ‘age less self’ where the verbal expression of ‘you’re only as old as you feel,’ becomes key. The narrations reflect a strong desire to not feel old despite physical, social and mental decline with increasing age. Many of the elderly individuals from the Bengali middle class society said that they have kept on experiencing continuity in life. Therefore, whenever they felt a drastic change in their lives, they took that age to be the “old age” which symbolises ‘change’ in one’s life. This perception of reaching “old age” may not be in alignment with that of the “chronological age” which defines age by numbers. Those who have not faced any break in the “continuity”, have declined to call themselves ‘old person’ because they consider themselves at par with the youth in terms of mobility and access to resources.

‘Going to the hospital each time reminds me of my old age....otherwise I generally do not feel I have entered another phase in my life which is old age’. This utterance by the elderly narrator indicates that old age is an idea, phenomenon which is associated with certain situations. From each story, one can decipher the fact that age or ageing is not something that initiates only after an individual reaches the age of 60 years. Ageing is an on-going process and the three phases of life such as childhood, adulthood and old age are mere conceptual demarcations. In reality, these distinctions are not strictly defined by the chronology of age. Social contexts and social structure provide meaning to these phases and experiences in these phases are always specific to individual. Unlike the other four subjects, Ms Ghosh had a brief childhood as she was exposed to the adult life challenges much earlier in her life. The socio-economic and political environment during her time was unsettling and this resulted in brief periods of childhood among most of the middle-class women of that time. It was a period when women were married off early (even before reaching the age of 18years) resulting in the early beginning of adulthood in their lives. On the other-hand, the other four subjects being baby-boomers (born after 1940s) had comparatively a longer and more memorable childhood. These subjects were born after India’s Independence which means they were born when the state has gained sovereign status and in the process of structuring its own governance. An individual develops multiple identities as she/he grows up. Each story narrated by five elderly focuses on how socio-cultural and political factors in a particular context or situation shapes a person’s identity or multiple identities. Most of the elderly born during the mid-

20th century have been victim to several historical events starting from the world war II, partition of India, Naxalite Movement and finally Globalisation.

As theorised by Critical School Theorists, an 'individual' ceases to exist along with decline in 'reason' in a late capitalist society. Individuals identified themselves to a group or community which in this case is subscribing to the community of 'Bangal' (refugees in India from East Bengal or Bangaldesh after the Partition of India. Hailing from East Bengal, all narrators strongly believe in their identity as a 'Bangal' or refugee in India. They carry with them immense pride and call themselves the 'empowered race'. This adherence to a particular community is also a result of representation by the media through food and sports primarily. Through sports such as football, 'Bengalis' tend to demarcate and mark their communal belonging to 'Bangal'. This representation of 'Bangal' to a particular sport can be found in the narrative of Mr Satyaki Mitra. In his old age he carries with himself his identity of being a 'Bangal' and an enthusiast of football. He said in frail voice "Watching football keeps me alive".

To continue with the argument of decline of the 'individual' in a late capitalist society, I would like to point out Ms Swagata Ghosh's narrative where she said "I was married at the age of 16. Instead of playing with a doll, I took over the kitchen and since then I have taken up different roles as a mother, daughter, daughter-in-law and grand-mother". Through Ms Swagata Ghosh's narrative one will get a glimpse of the then Kolkata, the arranged families where large numbers of people stayed and lived together. She then played the role of a daughter in law who was responsible in taking care of the household and nurturing the children. This role as a home-maker was nurtured within her from a very early age and after she got married, she was compelled to follow the role of a home-maker, a nurturer, a wife, daughter-in-law. From the backdrop of a consumerist society, the roles assigned to Ms Ghosh were never forced upon. The imagery created was not that of direct control by the state rather indirect power exerted upon the narrator who had to comply by the norms. Women at that time had to conform to the societal norms and practices. Being married at the age of 16, Ms Ghosh had to take up the roles of being a housewife at the same age. From that age till 90, she has performed her primary role of being a house wife, mother, grand-mother, mother in law, great gran-mother, care giver. At this age of 90, she identifies herself with these above roles in life.

Mr Anant Mukherjee's narrative is a result of detailed interviews and an analysis of his writings that span almost fifty years of his life. His narrative highlights childhood, spirituality, nostalgia, knowledge, repentance and activities in old age. Most literature on old age and ageing hints, spirituality is a possession of the elderly. Spirituality is the inner consciousness that enables us to appreciate, search and discover the various aspects of the truth, goodness, beauty, love and inner freedom. Literature says that it is the blessings of the older years that allow this spirit-self to flourish. Through Mr Mukherjee's narrative one can decipher that spirituality or the association of spiritual Gurus has come much earlier in his life. Through his parents' spiritual associations, Mr Mukherjee has been spiritually inclined from a very young age and his desire to meet spiritual Gurus and read spiritual books still prevails at this age of 67 years. His narrative focuses on his inclination towards spirituality that according to him has shaped his thoughts and desires in old age. He says that since he is spiritually inclined, he is able to find meaning in every small activity he does. Mr Mukherjee is nostalgic while lamenting his experiences in childhood.

Mr Satyaki Mitra too gets nostalgic while narrating stories of his childhood and adulthood. Nostalgia provides a link between our past and present selves. Ageing baby boomers, which in this study are the four subjects except Ms Ghosh, are becoming increasingly nostalgic (Ungeretal,1991). The cognitive side focuses on memories of the past, while the affective side centers on emotions evoked by these memories. Nostalgia elicits both positive and negative emotions by remembering the past. Old people feel happiness (HolakandHavlena,1998), but at the same time, there is a feeling of sadness and loss because the past cannot be recreated. Nostalgia can be distinguished from reminiscence where reminiscence is understood as the process of remembering the 'by gone days' and nostalgia is the value attached to that remembrance or reminiscence. Therefore, Batcho (1998) concludes that "one can remember without being nostalgic but one cannot be nostalgic without remembering".

Loneliness reflects from Mr Mitra's narrations. His unending grief after the death of his wife shapes his mid life and older life to be lonesome. 'Loneliness' is not associated with old age alone. For Mr Mitra the phase of old age started right after his wife's death (when narrator was 50 years old). Mr Mitra escribes himself to be an active person, involved in a number of activities. Still he feels lonely at the end of the day and that is primarily because of the absence of his wife. Fewer social contacts or living alone is not

the determinant of loneliness (Mullins, Johnson, & Anderson, 1987). Mr Mitra stays with his son and daughter-in law and spends most of his time socialising with people.

Loneliness being a complex concept, is applicable even in the presence of people. Literature of loneliness says that older people often feel lonely in presence of their family, while they feel less lonely in presence of someone from the same age group. Researchers in this context point out the reason behind such change in feeling of loneliness; obligatory relationships such as that with one's family often does not garner increased sense of subjective or emotional wellbeing in one's life. This is true in the case of Ms Sen and Mr Mukherjee whose subjective wellbeing enhances on meeting their friends. For her meeting and spending time with relatives is obligation. But for Ms Ghosh spending time with relatives especially with her daughters and grandchildren plays an important role in her wellbeing.

Mr Mukherjee's primary old age activity is teaching and reading. Reading is in fact a solitary, but active, pastime that allows the individual to stay in contact with the larger world, and it can diminish loneliness through a sense of connection. Ms Ghosh spends her mornings in taking care of her plants. She is passionate towards gardening. Gardening can provide a function and purpose, and there can be long-term satisfaction in watching seeds grow.

Loneliness is felt by an individual in any circumstance and situation, mostly in situations when the individual feels certain kind of gap or lacking with respect to affection, closeness and social interactions. Though the causes of feeling lonely may be social, the emotion is personalised and subjective; resulting in difficulty to comprehend the emotion. Nevertheless, loneliness is different from social isolation which implies breakage in contact with one's family, society and community. One who faces social isolation may feel lonely, but a person who feels lonely may not be socially excluded. This clear distinction in the understanding of both the terms has been found in all the narrative stories of elderly.

Belonging from a middle class social and economic background, none of the elderly narrator faced any economic or social exclusion; resulting in absence of 'social exclusion' among this group. Nevertheless, all of them feel lonely at different time periods, in different situation or occasion after they have reached the formal age of retirement. (*Ref: Evidence Review: Loneliness in Later Life*)

The identity as a grandparent urges them to spend maximum time with their grandchildren, fulfilling the role of a 'care-giver'. Mr Mukherjee said "My wife and I have to look after our grand-daughter who is eight years old, assist in her studies". He is responsible towards her education, her values and morals. Mr Mukherjee chooses meticulously the books or stories or poems that can be shared with his grand-daughter. Mr Mukherjee's daughter has an almost 12 hour's work life. Mr Mukherjee spends days playing with his grand-daughter and this particular activity plays crucial role in alleviating sense of loneliness and social isolation in old age. Mrs Chhanda Ray and Ms Krishna Majumdar spends six months each year taking care of their grand-children by staying at their daughters place in USA and England respectively. Both of their daughters were working from the very beginning. Therefore both the grand-parents took this full time job of bringing up their grand-daughters as their own children right from their birth. Ms Chhanda Ray during her interviews mentions in detail the complications that had occurred at the time of the birth of her eldest grand-daughter. Unlike these three respondents, Ms Sunanda Ghosh was never a care-giver to her grand-children. She has been a close confidant of her six grand-children. Raising grand-children is an extremely common phenomenon in today's world. In-fact, grand-parents have always raised their grand-children, but the nature of care-giving has certainly changed now. Earlier raising grand-children was not the responsibility of the grand-parent alone. It was the extended family that raised the children and the grand-parents were one among them. But now with the break-down of extended families and both the parents working, it is only the grand-parents (after their retirement) who can take care of the grandchildren.

"Every time a child is born, a grandparent is born too". Through this statement and in their further studies, Kornhaber & Woodward (1981) explored the role of an elderly after she/he becomes a grand-parent, how life changes after taking up the newer roles as grand-parents in the later years of one's life.

Records on roles and contribution of grandparents in family during the early Twentieth Century are found mostly in literature; stories on grandparents were passed down from one generation to the next.

Gonski (1994) in her study on "Grandparents in Australia", interviewed a host of individuals asking about their grand-parents, their experiences with their respective grand-parents. Most of them referred their grand-parents to be "authoritarian figures –

patriarchs and matriarchs” who were being looked up in “awe and respect, who ruled the family”. Gonski, herself, recalls a photograph of her own grandfather “*dressed in his best suit and hat, sitting very tentatively on an antique chair placed in the garden while we sat at his feet*”. This narrative presented by the Researcher reflects a traditional figure of grand-parents in the Western Society, where the role of grand-parents were to maintain the integrity and solidarity of the family. Cox (2000) associated ‘grandparenthood’ traditionally wherein the role of grand-parents were that of assisting parents and also not taking direct responsibility of rearing a child. Thus, the traditional role of grand-parents were that of obtaining “pleasure without responsibility” as mentioned by Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) in their study on the changing roles of the American grandparents. Wearing and Wearing (1996) too observed the same scenario among Australian grand-parents where grand-mothers enjoyed the ‘fun’ part of rearing a child; making the entire process of grandparenting enjoyable and satisfying.

In contrast to their roles as mere ‘assistants’ to the real parents and enjoying the grandparenthood, the current social structure in the backdrop of Consumerism assigns much more significant role to the grand-parents. Many elderly grand-parents (also explained in the narratives) play significant role of providing emotional, financial and moral assistances to children; often becoming ‘First Parents’ to the children. Examples can be cited of grand-parents staying in Australia who said that they are now “contributing to society more than they ever have before”, and most grandparents were investing “time, money, love, attention and care in their grandchildren”. Another example from a recent Bengali movie named “Posto” can be cited wherein, the grand-parents play the role of the sole nurturer and guardian to their only grand-son even at the presence of his parents. This kind of set up is becoming more and more common in “today’s world” owing to the changing dimensions of the society.

Gender based differentiations: Out of the ten elderly narrators, five of them were women presenting their life-stories, experiences, perceptions and interpretations of ageing and growing old. After interacting with 98 elderly for the purpose of the wellbeing study and ten other elderly for the experiential narratives, unclear distinction between male and female narratives among these elderlies can be observed. The women above age 60 years shared their life-stories primarily comprising stories of nurturing their children, taking care of the household and multiple evidences of managing both

household duties and professional work space. Unlike the male narrators, the elderly women showed positive attitude towards life after reaching the official age of 60 years. The oldest of the narrators being a woman shared her experiences of becoming a mother of six at a tender age, then her struggle as a home-maker. For her, retirement from household work happened in form of transferring the role to her daughter-in laws. Since then, she led a life of a recluse; reading books, engaging in spirituality and travelling with family and friends. Among five narrations of the women, three narratives resonated feeling of repentance with regard to their inability to pursue work or continuing with work along with performing household duties. Another common discourse among the women narrators was that of becoming a care giver to their grandchildren, creating a sense of compulsion to care for others. One of the woman narrator said that she never enjoyed taking care of her grand-children; despite of that she was compelled to wear the shoe of a care-giver.

Concept of retirement is different for a male and a female as per the findings of these experiential narratives. The elderly women shared a common discourse of absence of feelings of retirement after the beginning of formal period of retirement. When interacted, these women said they have overlooked the year 60 which is the formal age for retirement and do not quite remember how life has strikingly changed after entering the age of sixty. It is only when they access railway concessions, that they realise they have neared the age of retirement which according to the 'disengagement theory of ageing' represents a period of withdrawal. On the other hand, all of the male elderly narrators said that their life has witnessed sudden change after reaching the formal age of retirement. As a result of these changes, the male counterparts have developed differential feelings. The elderly women have said that all throughout their lives, they had to manage both work in the office and household work at the same time. So, when the time came for some of them to retire from the formal work force, they felt the void of leaving job outside home, but never enjoyed free time as they had to continue doing household work. As a result, when they started to age, their work never reduced; rather continued to go on. Despite the availability of house-maids to assist in doing household works, these middle-class women had to continue be the front runner in managing the house. In fact, by way of observing their daily lives, one can observe that after retirement from formal workforce, the elderly women took the role of a full time home-maker. An elderly male on the other hand, had to look for newer engagements, had to explore other

opportunities and if they fail to find one outside home, they had to withdraw from life and become a recluse.

The narratives of male elderly were more of lamenting and sharing memories of childhood, struggles as an adult and conflicting attitude towards the changing roles in old age. On the other hand, women were more interested in talking about their need to work, struggle to survive and their ignorance with regard to the increasing number of years. Women have shown their strength of adaptability with changing time and socio-economic changes. Most of them have experienced transformative social changes throughout their life starting from the Nationalist Movement to Naxalite Movement, Emergency and Technology revolution. The women narrators have shown their ability to change their attitude and perception along with these changes. Comparatively the male elderly narrators have shown their inability to adjust with time and therefore a lingering tendency towards grabbing on to memories.

Political Ideologies: The culture of ‘aadda’ in the local tea stall in the ‘para’ is a common trend among the Bengali middle-class. These ‘adda’ generally go on for hours without any time binding and the participants in these adda are the older adults who have time to spare. This is a common scene in Kolkata, where elderly create groups over cups of tea in their locality. These ‘adda’ comprise of discussions on several common topics such as ‘football’, ‘politics’, rising prices in the market place and current issues where many a times discussions convert into arguments. But these arguments attract the elderly to continue having the ‘addas’ in the local tea shops as for many elderlies these discussions are the only ways of engagement. The most common discussion topic in these addas are election and political turmoil happening in the current world. Most narrative of the elderly men reflected their extreme interest in sharing political thoughts and possessing unique political ideologies. Once a hard-core Communist, one of the elderly narrators find it hard to accept the change in political scenario. The oldest individual in the study finds it difficult to trace the socio-political change in the country starting from impact of world war II in India, India’s independence leading to partition of the country, Emergency, Naxalite movement and then globalisation and technology revolution in the 21st century. In very recent times, one can observe the burning issue of NRC where the government of India have given a mandate of individuals showing identification proof of being the resident of the country in these tea-stall addas. Through the narratives, the elderly too has expressed their fear of leaving the country, a sense of

loss of identity has crept in the recent times where they are doubting whether central authority of the state will allow them to continue stay in the country. They fear of losing their 'home' and are apprehensive with regard to starting a new life afresh if they have to leave the nation. These changing political situations in today's world have laid maximum impact on the minds of the elderly who are mostly confused as to what to follow, their age old political ideologies or changing political ideas. Bengali middle class culture is signified with political interests and possessing political ideologies and these elderly narrators too have reflected their political interests by commenting on several issues. But these kinds of political interests are limited among the elderly men who find companions in other men who share similar or sometimes dissimilar views about the changing world scenario. The discourse of ageing among the elderly narrators have questioned the changing socio-economic and political scenario in today's world characterised by hyper consumerism.

Travel and socialisation: Travelling to newer places both within the country and outside has been a common activity among many elderly. These narratives have reflected their desire to travel after retirement. Consumer culture in the 21st century has propagated this desire through advertisements and varied retirement policies. Individuals are motivated to earn their own living for the sake of leading a comfortable life after retirement from formal work force. The elderly narrators narrated their unique travel stories, describing in details. The most engaging section for an elderly is their effort in planning for the travel. These plans generally culminate from various travel magazines, books and travel videos. Thus, the narratives on the elderly's desire to travel clearly counter the biomedical and disengagement dimension of ageing where activities take a seat back when an individual grows old.

Medicine and Health: Apart from discussions on political and cultural changes in the current world, 'medicine' is another topic that has occupied a large space in most of the narratives. Two of the elderly said that they spend lot of time experimenting different kinds of medicines and often giving advices to relatives or friends with regard to choosing any medicine. Health related concerns are one of the most common concerns among the Bengali middle class elderly who keep on learning more about health related problems and solutions to the same. Digital technology in the Information Age plays a major role in updating the elderly individuals with regard to medicines and care. The narrators said that they search for different kinds of medicines on Google and eventually

tests the same on themselves. Through personal observation, the researcher has noted that most of the time the elderly individuals are busy discussing about one's health, physical wellbeing and the importance of trying different kinds of medicines. This subscribes to the dominant discourse of ageing where physical health has a positive relationship with activities.

Use of Social Media: Technology in forms of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook has become an inseparable part in the lives of the elderly who uses these media to connect with people and also collect information. "Facebook keeps me busy these days", "Initially I was afraid of using the Internet, but now I am a pro". While saying these words, Mr Mukherjee laughs. His laugh sounded like comfort. Most narrators have mentioned extensive use of social media in their daily life. In this Information Age with the increasing reach of digital technologies, elderly are using social media; resulting in increasing participation in social networks.

There has been a 70% increase in the use of Internet by older adults aged between 50 to 64 years, 38% increase of elderly above the age of 65 years and above. The last decade has seen a 26% increase in the number of elderly using Social media. Many of the older adults finds respite in Internet enabled smart phones to mitigate their loneliness in old age. Social technology plays important role in connecting the elderly individuals with their families, friends, associates; often alleviating loneliness and isolation in society. Whatsapp as the instant messaging system is the most common way to connect with people, share day to day information and is mostly used by elderly. For many usage of social media is a means to stay engaged, involved and often feel important in one's life. Through the elderly narratives, certain stories came to the fore front where elderly individuals are using Facebook as the social media platform to make their voices heard; making oneself feel important and useful in one's life. The elderly population have often shown great enthusiasm and interest in adopting the new tools of communication wherein they share photos, posts, news etc.

At the time of interaction with the elderly individuals, certain observations have been made. Apart from the immediate positive effect of social media and Internet on the elderly individuals, many of them have fallen prey to the same. They seem to be addicted to their smart-phones, continuously sharing and updating personal information through different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. These retired

individuals often fail to recognise the power of social media in forms of manipulation in their lives. They often seem to rely too much on the information available on the Internet. Being ‘Digital Immigrants’, the older adults of the 21st century have learned to use the Internet and Social technology within the last decade. The sudden introduction of social technology in their lives makes it a tool of awe for the middle class elderly; resulting in a new found love and interest with the medium. This emanates into a bond between the elderly individuals and social technologies which is irreplaceable and inseparable. Thus, in this sense, the elderly now becomes the ‘consumer’ in this world of ‘virtual reality’ where social and digital technologies play the most vital role.

Societal Control Through Representations in Form of Signs: From a discursive point of view, the narratives of the elderly show how signs are represented by the media in a consumerist society and how these signs control the minds of individuals. Perceptions and experiences of ageing is a result of social control through representations in form of signs. These representations are mostly done by the mass media. Representations of everyday life in terms of objects of desire and need got shaped through global transformations that altered the capitalist society in the 20th century. The shift has been from decentralised units to international corporations. The change in society has led to destruction of local popular culture. From the point of view of Frankfurt School Theorist, Herbert Marcuse, the changed society called as the advanced industrial society categorises individuals as the one-dimensional man who conforms to all pre-existing structures, norms and behaviour; resulting in losing own individuality in society. Individuality has kept on declining from the time of the bourgeois revolutions to the rise of modern technological society; resulting in submission of individuals to increasing domination and administration of the state which here is characterised by the advanced capitalist society (we also call late capitalist society). Becoming an object of administration and conformity, an individual is controlled by the media; continuously creating a false sense of freedom in the mind of individuals/citizens. The control is done by way of controlling everyday desires and needs through representation of desired objects in a familiar manner. These representations are done in terms of signs, creating false needs in the minds of individuals; impossible to point out the difference between social and individual needs. Thus the dominant signs imposed by the state through mass media aims towards creating repressive individuals failing to recognise the control. This failing to recognition is because mass media cleverly oscillates between being an

instrument of information and entertainment and that of being agents of manipulation and indoctrination. This creates the premise of a one-dimensional man being one of comfortable, reasonable, democratic unfreedom in advanced industrial civilisation characterised by technical progress. As mentioned in chapter three, consumerism as part of a capitalist society urges individuals to recognise oneself as commodities, to associate one's reason of existence with one's desire to obtain consumables. This results in integrating individuals into its world of thought and behaviour in a consumer capitalism.

In a late capitalist society, art, politics, religion and philosophy have a commodity form; representing both affirmative art and literature of the bourgeois, religious, spiritual and also moral heroes on one hand. On the other hand, it also represents individuals who represent characteristics that are disruptive, questionable and negative. Examples can be cited in the form of a deviant or criminal, prostitute, outcast, failed artist, warrior, protestor or rebel, devil, adulteress etc. These are nothing but representations that are no longer confined to their imagery representations, but has found their place as a proper category. These representations become signs and codes which becomes part of an individual's 'experienced reality'.

These representations often create alienation of art which is integrated into the current society; creating rupture between art and societal reality, alienation from the public. This artistic alienation is called 'sublimation' by Marcuse. The images that are created makes it conflicting with established reality principles, nevertheless creates cultural images which becomes ultimately acceptable by individuals in society. These revised images in form of signs enter various spaces such as the kitchen, offices, shops, businesses. This is called 'desublimation' which is a result of individual acceptance of various cultural constructs and resulting into immediate gratification. The dominations or controls exercised by the state through mass media creates 'transparency' where many a time despite of realising the false depiction, individuals go on believing in the imagery representations of the media and let those signs guide them.

Keeping in mind the hidden form of control exerted by media, I would now attempt to break each narrative and understand how perceptions of ageing among these elderlies have been formed as a result of the media representations in today's world (defined as consumerist or late-capitalist one). I have chosen some standard advertisements, banners, financial plans and retirement policies catering to the elderly community in general.

Few such advertisements by a LIC Company says “Plan For Pension, Plan for Lifelong celebrations”, “Start Saving today for a better tomorrow”, “Shanti Guaranteed”, “Har pal aap ke saath” and “Zindagi ke saath bhi, zindagi ke baad bhi”. All these advertisements show a man in mid-40s wearing office attire, along with him is elderly with a smiling face. These life insurance policies play essential roles in the lives of people as they guarantee financial security after retirement. From a discursive practice, these advertisements are reflections of the indirect societal control. The requisite to save in the middle age shows that after 60-65 years one will have to lead a life of economic insecurity and even if one disagrees with accepting his/her increased age, these representations through advertisements will indirectly coerce one to accept his old age. Here old age is equated with years of financial instability after reaching the official age of retirement. These retirement policies by the private life insurance companies have played a crucial role in supporting those elderly who are not part of the National Organised sector Pension Schemes. The media thus on the one hand presents a problem which in this case is the financial instability in old age and on the other hand, it also provides a solution to the target group, which is the elderly. The objective of the market in a consumerist society is to create demands for all kinds of products. The images of children, parents, wives in the advertisement banners by relating individuals with familiar and emotional quotients and then creating a need or desire.

Observing other advertisements for Life Insurance policies, I have come up with some more tag lines such as “Kuch cheezein sath karne se aur bhi behetar ho jaati hain” (doing certain things together makes things better). These advertisement captions along with picture of a happy joint family creates the need to have a family which would secure the happiness (subjective wellbeing) in one’s old age. Media thus creates an image of the ‘future’ which creates an automatic sense of desire among individuals while growing up. “Happy Retirement With LIC Pension Plan” showing an elderly couple laughing and taking a stroll on a sea beach. “Khushiyan ka rakshak” : banking upon the ultimate motive of happiness.

Other advertisement captions I have used to understand the representations of elderly by media are the following:

“Plan your retirement today by locking your lifelong guaranteed income”: HDFC LIFE : represented by known actors, “Aaj ki tayiari...kal ka sukoon” : showing a young couple and an elderly couple, both smiling, “Regular contribution for pension without tension: enjoy guaranteed pension in retired life---Atal pension yojana”

The dominant discourse of ageing includes chronological ageing and biological ageing. The biological ageing implying the decline of the body as one ages is the most accepted discourse of ageing among most people. The image associated with a physical reduction and an elderly is the most common representation by the media in today's world (consumerist society). In this context, I have taken some hospital advertisements. One such advertisement shows an aged person helping grandson ride a bike and the caption given by the particular hospital is “Lifelong cardiac care”. Some other ad showed a grand-daughter sitting on grandfather's shoulder, and the caption says “Don't let hernia surgery disrupt your peace of mind”. Hospitals, as part of a consumerist society, create an image of a happy elderly by showing intergenerational connect, which is related to one's physical wellbeing in old age. These advertisements equate one's wellbeing in old age with health and physical fitness.

Banking services have introduced special schemes for its senior citizen customers, introduced doorstep banking services where in assuming that an individual, after reaching the age of 60-65 becomes senile, physically weak and immobile. According to the Reserve Bank of India's November-2017 circular, senior citizens or those above 70 years of age and differently-abled persons have been provided with basic banking services like pick up or delivery of cash, demand draft work, submission of know your customer (KYC) documents, etc., at their residence. The initiative aims to facilitate those who can't stand in long ATM queues or are not in a position to perform bank-related tasks themselves. Cases related to the elderly becoming victims of theft, snatching, robbery, etc, while they do bank-related work, are on the rise. For the benefit of the elderly the Banking sector has taken the following steps: (a) Dedicated Counters/Preference to Senior Citizens, Differently abled persons and (b) Ease of submitting Life Certificate. Reserve Bank said it has observed that often the life certificate is not updated promptly by the receiving branch in the core banking solution (CBS) system of the Bank, resulting in avoidable hardship to the pensioners. Various retirement policies by the government and private sector organisations have focused on

income security, health security, safety and security, housing, productive ageing, welfare, multigenerational bonding, media, protection during natural disasters for the elderly citizens.

Apart from these themes that have come out from the narratives of the elderly belonging from the Bengali Middle class background, the prevalence of 'adda' (friendly discussions), habit of drinking tea, occasional dives into cigarette smoking, having 'beguni-telebhaja' (fried brinjals), gorging over food especially 'maach-bhaat' (fish and rice), actively participating in family events etc. are some other common activities and habits undertaken by most elderly narrators. These activities and habits define the social class to some extent. Historical accounts of 'Bhadraloks of Bengal' in different literary pieces reflect such habits. Narratives being momentary flights from discourses, continuously questions the definitions of ageing and growing old in midst of a changing society which celebrates consumer culture. Each narrator carries within oneself the 'pride of being a Bengali Bhadrak' or a Bengali middle class as this was the social class that epitomised education, values, morales and created a path which strictly differentiates between the rich-upper class and the poor-lower class.

To summarise, the life stories of each of the elderly individuals reflect nostalgia, loss, pain, new found productivity, care-giving, struggle, childhood memories, repentance, physical illness and patriotism. When analysed using Critical discourse method of analysis, one can observe that it is the state, media and the elites who are in positions of power, manipulate minds of individuals (here elderly individuals); thus creating perceptions of 'self' which often aligns and contradicts to the 'Images of Self' as portrayed by the society shrouded in Consumerism. Thus, in a late capitalist society where signs, images, signifiers dominate one's existence, where structure is no more the 'call of the day', perceptions of ageing in old age can longer be properly defined or characterised.

The thesis further delves into the scenario of ageing in midst of Information and Communication Technology and Social media; wherein newer perceptions towards the elderly are formed.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION

We live in an era where legitimate ‘meta-narratives’ are in crisis and in decline. Meta narratives as implied in Kantianism, Hegelianism and Marxism, proposed history to be progressive and the potential of knowledge liberating us. Contradictory to this belief is the post-modernist philosophy of rejecting the basis of meta narratives, as propounded by Jean-Francois Lyotard. Rejecting the progressive emancipation of humanity, the thesis has followed a post-modernist lens by posing a kind of skepticism about the claims of an overall and totalizing explanation. An example of rejecting grand narrative can be cited from Edward Said’s work of Orientalism where projection of Western grand narrative of imperialism upon Oriental societies were questioned. The western imperialists saw themselves as representatives of rational, ordered, peaceful and law-abiding framework whereas Orient were the ‘others’ and represented by ‘them’. Said notes that political grand-narratives mystifies certain social groups in the hierarchy and puts them in a superior power, while others out of it. From the points of view of a western idealist man, an oriental woman is ‘no more than a machine’; creating an influential model of the oriental woman. Within this narrative, the oriental woman has never displayed her emotion or perspective. In this context, the thesis takes precedence of Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction philosophy where relativism is central; giving way to multiple truths which itself is relative to different standpoints.

Thus, focusing on exploring multiple truths, the thesis throughout these five chapters have presented dominant and alternative discourses of ageing in midst of a consumerist and late capitalist society. This has been done by exploring lives of almost 100 middle class Bengali elderly who resides in the southern part of the city of Kolkata. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques have been used to analyse perceptions of ageing among the elderly after they reach the age of retirement which is 60 years. To understand individual perceptions and to question the dominant perspectives of ageing, a subjective wellbeing study has been conducted. The accepted concept and definition of wellbeing has been given by the governing state which is blindly followed and believed by individuals. To question the findings of the wellbeing study (positivist), the thesis has

taken the lens of critical discourse to analyse individual's perceptions of ageing in old age within the larger rubric of late capitalism and consumerism. Thus, to get a micro view point of the process of ageing, ten detailed narratives have been taken. These narratives are based on lived experiences which has some influence of others' attitudes on the individual concerned.

This research study has been supported by gerontological and sociological literature. Within the purview of Gerontology, theories of ageing such as disengagement theory of ageing, activity theory, gerotranscendence or biomedical theories of ageing has been taken into consideration in order to understand the already existing perspectives on ageing and old age. Using the lens of post-modernism and the theoretical standpoints of consumerism, capitalism and late-capitalism, the thesis has tried to sketch a picture of the "today's world" where these elderlies live, survive and experience change.

Through the writings of Baudrillard on a consumerist or late capitalist society, the thesis has tried to portray a hyper-real world which is infested with signs, images, codes; blurring the lines between real and unreal. In same lines, mass media through advertisements has been successful in creating renewed identities in individuals who are now accustomed to live in a hyper-real world where nothing is original and everything is a copy of another copy. In this context, the thesis has explored the lived experiences of a group of older adults who are in a constant process of change and adaptation with continuous changes in social structures. The changes in their lives are characterised by changing relationships with offsprings, loss of companions, death of spouse, presence of grand-children, loss of job, reduction of activities and most importantly health related changes.

"Today's world" is also characterised by the Information Age where Technology plays an indispensable role. One of the findings of the study shows the importance of digital technology in lives of the elderly. This conclusion chapter will present an evidence of use of digital technology by retired individuals and its impact in their lives.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

Apart from the several themes been discussed in the previous chapter from the narratives of Bengali middle class elderly, four broad findings can be further discussed in this chapter keeping in mind the changing nature of family structures and the influence of Information Technologies in one's life.

Sense of Meaning in Later Life

The relationship between changing dimensions in one's life and enhancement of wellbeing in later life has been explored through individual life stories. As an observation from each of the life stories of elderly, what we found out is that old age is a time of deep introspection when people review their lives and try to reconcile the inevitable gap between what they set out to do and what they were actually able to accomplish (Krause, 2009). This means that as people grow older, they try to weave the stories of their lives into a more coherent whole and in doing so permeate life with a deeper sense of meaning and significance. Sociologist Peter Berger argued that there is a craving for meaning that has the force of instinct. Although deriving a sense of meaning may be important for people of all ages, the meaning in life is more important as people grow older. One of the most important finding from the study of wellbeing is that people who have found a sense of meaning in life tend to enjoy better physical health and they tend to experience lower levels of depression than individuals who have not been able to derive a sense that their lives have meaning. In addition, there is some evidence that people with a stronger sense of meaning also tend to be happier and report higher levels of satisfaction with their lives (Krause, 2009). But each individual has varied definitions to the sense of 'meaning' in life. For some, working in a social organisation or doing volunteering activities is equated with finding meaning in one's old age, for few others it is the devotion to the almighty which is synonymous to meaning in life and for many it is social interaction and engagement with grand-children where meaning is attached to. Developing sense of meaning in old age is also an outcome of the indirect control exerted by the mass media. Mass media through advertisements show several images of old age portraying the need to spend time with grand-children, relaxing, leading a quiet life and becoming productive members of society.

Intergenerational Solidarity as an Important Component of Increased Sense of Wellbeing in Old Age

As the findings of the studies suggest intergenerational solidarity and family support is an important component of ageing gracefully in later life. Society has witnessed severe intergenerational conflict which is the impact of separation of households between older adults and younger adults after disintegration of extended family system. Grand-parenting or care-giving is a common activity performed by older adults, but its relationship with enhancement of life-satisfaction or morale in later life varies with individual experiences. Grandparents play various symbolic roles such as pointed out by Bengston as 'being there', 'national guard', and 'active participants in the family's social construction of its history'. Grandparents may also serve as mentors, historians, wizard or nurturer (Kornhaber and Woodward,1981). Troll, another scholar on Intergenerational solidarity pointed out that grandparenthood is a derived status only weakly regulated by social norms. As such, grandparent roles are ambiguous and vary both in form and functions. But the study clearly shows Grand-parenting or intergenerational solidarity as an indicator of productive or successful ageing which has the potential of enhancing wellbeing in later life. The thesis in this context, has questioned the normative acceptance of the role of 'grandparenting' and 'care-giving'. 'Grand-parent' is an image given by the consumerist society that heavily relies on commodifying each relationship and association between individuals.

Active or Successful Ageing

The thesis through its chapters explores various perspectives and definitions of ageing in the current world, especially from the points of view of Bengali middle-class elderly. The elderly narratives have cleared questioned the disengagement perspective of ageing and supported the Activity theory of ageing; promoting active or successful ageing in society. The study of age and ageing has primarily looked at the problems of old age and ageing. Gerontologists have always perceived old age to be a problem and a financial and social burden to the nation. There are fewer studies on questioning this perspective of ageing as a problem to the society. With Robert Butler during the late 20th Century, the study of Ageing has seen a change in perspective where concepts such as Productive Ageing, Successful ageing or active ageing have taken precedence.

The thesis focuses on a subjective wellbeing study where positive correlation was drawn between meaningful activities and affection or morale of older adults. In this context, this thesis concludes by exploring the possibility of engagement in meaningful activities in old age.

Urban India has given rise to a growing class of older persons who live on their own, or with their spouse resulting in slow erosion of the joint family system. Some are able and willing to participate in activities that contribute to the development of society, albeit in a voluntary capacity, in order to keep themselves occupied. The concept of productive ageing is often equated with increasing income in old age. But in India, old age is seldom evaluated in monetary terms. Many elderly in India find it spontaneous to perform care-giving functions which are unpaid. Here an older woman rarely retires from household chores, duties or responsibilities, but carries on performing or discharging them until she dies, or is no longer physically able to do so. This practice holds true in both rural and urban areas. By contrast, older men often have time on their hands, and few means of keeping themselves occupied or engaged. The concept of productive ageing is thus not restricted to earning a living in old age (Raje, 2012). As Robert N Butler says “The principal concept of productive ageing is to remain constructive in relationship to the larger society and immediate environment as long as possible. I think the downside to productive ageing is if it is only seen as work” (Butler & Gleason, 1985). Dr. S.D. Gokhale, Founder and President of International Longevity Centre– India, has extended Butler’s concept by calling it “participatory and productive ageing.” Gokhale explains: “Productive ageing implies the participation in action- oriented policies and programmes aimed at guaranteeing social and economic security for the elderly as well as providing opportunities for them to contribute to and share in the benefits of development”. Successful aging is the maximization and attainment of positive outcomes and the minimization or avoidance of negative outcomes.

Productive Ageing and Wellbeing

To elaborate more on productive ageing in an Information and Late capitalist society, the thesis looks at varying definitions of productivity from the eyes of elderly narrators. Observers have long argued that the more social positions or roles that a person occupies, the better is their mental and physical health. The roles that a person occupies effect

her/his self-perception and behaviour in part by providing a wider and denser social network, increasing the possibility of receiving social support in times of need. Thus, improved wellbeing in old age can be a result of disengagement or participation in various activities in later life. Herzog and colleagues extended the scope of the concept of productive ageing in 1989 by suggesting that “any activity that produces goods or services, whether paid or not, including activities such as housework, childcare, volunteer work, and help to family and friends” should be considered productive. Four years later, Scott Bass and Francis Caro offered a definition that explicitly labelled capacity-building a productive behaviour. Rowe and Kahn’s (1987, 1997) framework defines successful aging as occurring at the intersection of good health, high physical and cognitive functioning, and active involvement in social activities (Hinterlong, et.al, 2001) Age is not a determinant factor for the capability of engaging productively in society. The perspective of productive aging accentuates the importance of the individual-societal interaction. Critics of productive ageing assert that older adults may find themselves obliged to be productive for two reasons. First, they may have significant economic needs that require them to work, or social commitments that demand their time be spent in a particular form of productive behaviour (i.e., caregiving). Second, added attention to the capacity of older adults to be productive could cause society to conclude that their participation in the labour market or volunteer roles is necessary, leading to changes in social policy that eliminate the choice of leisure as an acceptable form of late-life activity (Hinterlong,et.al,2001).

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF AGEING IN AN INFORMATION AGE

As mentioned in chapter Three of the thesis, elderly in “today’s world” are ageing in midst of hyper-consumerism where images and signs play the most pivotal role. This is a time when one’s virtual presence is more important than one’s reality; subscribing to Budrillard’s characterisation of current consumerist society where images fully replace reality making reality disappear. Information age in the 21st century is a continuation of the late capitalist and consumerist society where information and communication technologies (ICT) play an irreplaceable role.

Ageing with digital technologies

With respect to the wellbeing of elderly in an information age, ICTs play important role as assistive technologies, providing assistive care to the elderly helping them to stay healthy and live independently at home for a long time (Siegel & Dorner, 2017). However, in this context, the focus shifts from assistive means of technology to the wider scope of the cyber-world that provides productive opportunities for enhancing the social connectivity of older adults through various social technology tools and platforms. ICTs play an important role in helping older adults to stay independent as long as possible and stay socially included by way of interacting with others. Digital technology has the potential to bridge barriers as online social networks and online discussion forums can be used to engage in social contact regardless of geographical or temporal location. Senior citizens' participation in social media ranges from passive engagements such as reading posts and online discussions to active engagements of writing blogs, creating content, connecting online with family and friends, etc (Sims, Reed, & Carr, 2016), which has positive impact on the physical and mental well-being of older adults.

Intergenerational solidarity and family support is an important component of ageing gracefully in later life and social networking platforms can play a significant role in this regard. Grandparents can also serve as mentors, historians, wizard or nurturer (Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981). Different initiatives have used the virtual spaces in building online communities among old and young. NGOs, gerontological societies and individuals all across the world, believing in the positive impact of connecting younger generations with elderly, have taken number of initiatives in connecting them using social media. FCB Brazil, an advertising agency based out of Brazil has initiated "Speaking Exchange" project for CNA language schools where young Brazilians learn English from American elderly using video conferencing meeting room. A group of retired elderly in old age homes and own homes in America help the youth in Brazil with speaking and communicating in English (Nudd, 2014). "Cyber Seniors" initiative centred on senior citizens based out of San Francisco, USA focuses on connecting generations using Internet. This initiative focuses on a group of senior citizens getting trained in using Internet through computers or smart phones by young volunteers for three months. The seniors eventually start using Facebook, youtube, Gmail etc. and connect with loved ones using video conferencing software. These seniors engage themselves by uploading

their videos, watching others' videos through youtube. All these initiatives through digital technologies aims at making the elderly actively engaged after retirement and intend to alleviate loneliness and social isolation in old age.

In attempt to understand the relationship between digital technology, social engagement and elderly wellbeing, I have very briefly presented an initiative where knowledgeable and retired elderly teachers connect with underprivileged students through a digital platform. Thus, observations and insights from interventions have been presented where an attempt has been made to create an opportunity for knowledgeable senior citizens to get involved in productive engagements and social interactions using Internet and web 2.0 technologies. 15 retired senior citizens were trained to get engaged in an online e-learning platform to impart quality education from their home to rural underprivileged school students for three years. The e-learning platform was developed by the research group to conduct the action research. The objective is to demonstrate that use of Internet and Web 2.0 Technologies by senior citizens not only helps them to get involved in a main-stream productive activity but also improves the well-being and learning outcomes of underprivileged school children in rural India.

As indicated in the last section, productive and meaningful social engagements play an important role in improving subjective wellbeing among retired senior citizens. I would now present some insights from interventions where the primary objective is to exploit the potential of Internet-based digital technologies in providing productive and meaningful social engagement opportunities to elderly through enhancement of virtual social connectivity.

Use of an online learning platform by retired teachers and its Impact

As mentioned earlier, productive ageing, active ageing or successful ageing are concepts that subscribe the importance of performing meaningful activities in old age. In this context, Social Informatics Research Group at Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (SIRG, IIMC) had initiated a project on “Social Inclusion through Digital Inclusion” where knowledgeable older adults play important role in disseminating quality education to children using digital technologies. Fifteen older adults from the sample of 98 elderly expressed their desire to interact with children and share knowledge in the form of

experiences using an online teaching learning platform. The Research Group has developed a unique online teaching learning platform that creates a virtual community of knowledgeable elderly and the children. The Research Objective laid out by the Research Group was to find out any change in the subjective wellbeing of the 15 elderly after their involvement in the teaching activity using digital technologies.

The elderly who participated in this experiment are knowledgeable, educated and most of them are retired teachers. These elderly teachers have been teaching underserved children through the online learning platform for almost three years now. These elderly were not previously involved in any productive activities. With increase in retirement period these elderly felt the need to be active or productive agents of change. Narratives of these elderly and their experiences of involving in a productive activity such as this have been taken into account. The assumption is that the dormant knowledge capital of older adults can be disseminated to young minds for mutual benefits. Dormant knowledge of the older adults in the form of experiences, values can be disseminated to the younger generation. Most of the elderly teach students English, Mathematics and story-telling.

Using the Internet is a common phenomenon for the youth. At the initiation of this project, it was found out that most of the older adults are incapable to use the computer and Internet. A short training programme was conducted where volunteers of the project visited their places and trained them with the use of computer and the Internet. Using a detailed hands-on content on how to use computer and Internet, volunteers had trained more than 25 elderly with the uses of computer and Internet. The training took more than two months' time where the volunteer trainer trained on how to switch on the computer, how to open files, how to connect to the Internet and finally how to connect with closed one using the social media such as Facebook, Skype etc. Thus the purpose was not only to make the older adults interact and disseminate knowledge with the children online, but also to expose them to the world of Internet and social media where they could connect with anyone effortlessly and through the comforts of their home. As discussed earlier, social interaction is an important component of enhancing subjective and emotional wellbeing among the older adults.

Before the online intervention, twenty five elderly were interviewed regarding their activities in old age. Twenty elderly out of the twenty-five elderly were not involved in any fulltime activity. 10 elderly were professional teachers and now retired from their work. Though five of them still teach children at home, they do not have full time commitment towards work. Rest of the elderly are retired businessmen, home-makers, financial advisers, Bankers or service-men. Twenty of the twenty-five elderly are officially retired from their full-time work and are not involved in any compulsory mainstream activities. After reaching the official retirement age of 60years, the women (both retired home-makers and service-persons) are engaged in household activities, reading, worshipping and primarily taking care of their grand-children. Men on other-hand after formal retirement from office tends to engage in activities such as worshipping, reading newspaper, exercising, marketing and doing voluntary services. Many elderly after their retirement engage in voluntary services such as providing clothes and books to the needy or teaching poor children.

During their interviews, the elderly had mentioned that despite regular activities, they feel jobless. They believe in engaging in activities that yields meaning in later life. These elderly had expressed their desire to learn Internet and use the social media to connect with closed one, both family and friends. Within a span of three years the number of elderly using Internet and connecting using Skype or other social media has increased surprisingly. But connecting online or using Digital technologies is not a productive activity. This is considered to be a passive activity as opposed to active activity. As a part of the training 25 elderly has been rigorously trained with the use of computer and Internet and after two months of training they are now able to use Internet not only through smart-phones but also through Computers.

Out of the twenty five elderly, fifteen elderly were involved in the subsequent online teaching programme where they regularly interacted with underserved children using an online teaching learning platform which was developed by Researchers from Social Informatics Research Group at Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. Though the interaction was never continuous for all the elderly participants, nevertheless a change in their wellbeing after the intervention has been qualitatively accounted. Among these elderly, only seven were professional teachers and the rest were retired home-makers and service-persons. These home-makers and service-persons have experiences of helping

their own children and now grand-children with their school work. These fifteen elderly were associated with the online teaching programme at different points of time. All of them were involved in teaching underserved children located in distant villages in Krishnanagar in Nadia, Palla Road in Burdwan, Chandanpiri in Namkhana in South 24 Parganas, Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas, Daronda in Birbhum and Kandi in Murshidabad. They have disseminated academic and non-academic training to the underserved children.

All of the 15 elderly were within the age group of 65 to 80 years and were not involved in any meaningful activity after formal/informal retirement from work. Five out of the 15 elderly teachers are retired professors, three of them are retired Montessori trained teachers, three of them are retired secondary school teachers and rest of the four elderly have retired from corporate offices. The four elderly who were into formal services have prior experience of teaching students privately at home or in tuition centres. Out of these fifteen elderly, eight were male and seven were female. Three out of seven elderly women were predominantly home-makers but no longer involved in nurturing own children and were now spending less time to take care of the households. They felt lonely with the sudden reduction of activities. The men too after retiring from formal employment felt the need to be engaged in an activity that will give meaning to their life.

Describing the e-learning platform

The online e-learning platform has an in-built video conferencing system that also has a provision to share digital content on the computer screen or to use in-built digital white board for diagrammatic explanations. These elderly teachers teach from their homes, where they have an ICT setup (laptop/desktop, speakers, camera, and headphones) along with high speed internet connectivity.

During the initial stage of the intervention none of these elderly knew the use of computer/laptop and Internet. 10 young volunteers started training the interested elderly teachers at their residence and it took them more than a month to complete the training. The objective of the training was to connect them with the cyber-world. After the training, the teachers could operate Youtube, Facebook, Gmail, Whatsapp and the online teaching learning platform.

The rural underprivileged students are located in remote classrooms, which are also equipped with an ICT setup (desktop/laptop, large monitor/screen or projector, camera, speakers and microphone) and high speed internet connectivity. The classes are conducted at scheduled times, using the above platform. Individual student can also get connected with on-line teacher on a one-to-one basis, using his/her smart-phone or tablet. An on-site teaching assistant/ class coordinator appointed at this rural classroom would schedule classes, coordinate the teaching process via this platform, manage the classroom and mediate the interactions with students and the online teachers during classroom sessions.

The effectiveness of these classes conducted by elderly teachers can be briefly described highlighting the following aspects:

- Bridging the barrier: The underserved students from the rural communities were not exposed to the world outside. The elderly teachers used to talk about their urban environment, urban experiences to the students located in distant villages of West Bengal, India. One of the teachers, who went to her daughter's place in Boston, USA for a vacation, conducted online classes from USA. She showed, for example, the snow-fall and streets & buildings of Boston from the window of her room, while interacting with those rural children online. Through the online e-learning platform, a teacher showed short films of Charlie Chaplin and Disney, making students familiar with the world outside. Thus, the senior teachers focused on holistic development of each student by introducing a world that was earlier unknown to them.
- Explanation of concepts: The underserved students had difficulty in understanding basic concepts in Mathematics and Science. They were weak in English grammar and pronunciations. The online classes focused on clarification of the concepts where the elderly teachers used colourful e-whiteboard, audio-visuals as well as real life examples while explaining those concepts. While teaching English, the elderly teachers focused on pronunciation.
- Engagement in cultural activities: Unlike the existing rural school teachers, the elderly teachers encouraged students to read story books, poems, sing and dance in class to make the classroom environment learner-centric yet devoid of the monotonousness of a regular classroom. One of the elderly teachers had asked the

students to organise a cultural function where all of the students rehearsed online and staged a play scripted by the teacher himself.

- Encouraging participation: Existing rural school teachers, having low interest level in teaching a class, never encourage students to participate. On the other hand, the elderly teachers, having the interest and desire to impact the lives of the underserved students, payed much attention on communication, reciprocation and peer- to peer learning using the online learning platform.

Assessing the Impact on Elderly Teachers

The impact of the interventions on elderly teachers engaged in online teaching can be illustrated using certain themes derived from first-hand accounts of the teachers:

1. Intergenerational solidarity: While teaching students, one of the elderly teachers shared his childhood memories with the students online. He used to show videos of Laurel Hardy, Indian Epics and various cartoons to make learning fun. Students too shared their fears and happiness with the elderly teacher, resulting in the usage of the term “Dadu” or grandfather for the elderly teachers. These moments have impacted deeply in the minds of the elderly teachers who too consider the students as their own grand-children, contributing in their holistic development. The elderly teachers have said in interviews that they feel closer to these students than their own grand-children who do not stay with them.
2. Socio-economic contribution: Teaching the underserved rural children was the primary motivation of majority of teachers to become a part of the social experiment. One of the elderly teachers is a retired school teacher and had 40 years of experience in teaching students from decent socio-economic backgrounds. After retirement she was looking for opportunities where her expertise in teaching can be used to impact those who are in need of good teachers. She was in need of an activity that will satisfy her as a human being. As a result, teaching the underserved rural children with low learning achievement levels was the driving force for her to be a part of the social experiment. After teaching for three years, she expresses her extreme satisfaction in contributing to the problem of education in India. She constantly looks for better study materials for the students to make them at par with the urban students. Apart from contributing in mitigating a social problem, financial reward, although

insignificant, was another factor that attracted the elderly teachers to this initiative where they can also earn from the comfort of their home. All the teachers have expressed extreme satisfaction in contributing to the problem of education in India.

3. Reduction of physical problems: One of the elderly teachers has said that the lively and engaging interactions with students help her forget her health problems. Two hours of engagement everyday through the online learning platform energises the elderly teachers to such an extent that they feel more positive and socially included. One of the teachers had a brain surgery and he couldn't teach students for two months and was in a state of depression. He regained his spirit after joining back the classes after two months.

Assessing the Impact on Underserved Children

79 students from three rural schools in districts of Nadia, Burdwan and South 24 Parganas in West Bengal took part in the online learning interventions. Most of the students from underserved rural communities are first generation learners. They receive little or no help at home. The elderly teachers have tried to bridge the rural-urban education divide by catering to each students, addressing individual problems and clarifying basic concepts using relevant examples. The students receiving less attention at home and schools feel included when the elderly teachers force them to talk about themselves. The impact on the students can be illustrated as follows:

1. Academic Impact: Students are now enjoying their studies and want to learn more. They started interacting and communicating more with the online teachers.
2. Holistic Development: The underserved students were now more enlightened because of the constant knowledge sharing by the elderly teachers. The students enjoy listening to the stories narrated by the elderly teachers. These stories, poems and real life experiences of the elderly teachers help students go beyond their microcosmic locale.

SUMMING UP

Productive ageing is a relative concept wherein its importance and validation changes with each individual. As discussed in the previous section, for a particular group of educated Bengali middle class elderly, involvement in activities such as teaching, doing voluntary social services or participating in cultural events garner sense of accomplishment. For few others delving oneself into spiritual activities, investing time and one's monetary savings in travelling or in consuming essential or luxurious items after retirement ignites a sense of satisfaction within oneself in old age. There is again another set of Bengali middle class elderly who does not feel the need to be active or productive at all in old age. As mentioned in Chapter 4 of the thesis, individual perceptions characterise the meaning of 'old age' and process of ageing. These individual perceptions are often shared by a group of like-minded individuals belonging from the Bengali middle class category who are considered to be the primary consumers in the age of consumerist society. These perceptions are often related to one's feeling of subjective wellbeing in old age; resulting in varied meanings and understanding of 'ageing' in old age among the elderly individuals. Following Critical Discourse Method of Analysis (CDA), the thesis has throughout explored the question of 'power' and 'agency' among elderly individuals after they reach the period of retirement, after they confront changes in their lives. The thesis, thus through critical discourse analysis continuously propose the absence of structure, continuum in the lives of today's Bengali middle class elderly in the backdrop of late capitalist or consumerist society.

Narratives are moments of subscription to dominant discourse, wherein discourses are often altered, making sure that the discourses are not ossified. The thesis has presented multiple discourses, alternate discourse which often informs narratives on one hand, and also poses a counter argument to the present discourses.

The central argument of the entire thesis is the question of 'ageing', what posits our understanding of ageing, how our individual and collective perceptions are shaped as a result of the changing social structure, within the framework of the consumerist and late capitalist society characterised by possession of consumer goods, signs, signifiers, exchange and control.

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Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE USED WHILE CONDUCTING THE WELLBEING STUDY

This questionnaire seeks to find out perceptions of ageing and old age among older adults in the city of Kolkata through wellbeing studies.

I. IDENTIFICATION

Identification number of respondent_____

1. Name:
2. Address:
3. Age: _____ (indicates the respondent falls under which bracket of young old (60-75) or old-old (more than 75))

01	Male
02	Female

4. Sex:
5. Language spoken: _____
6. Contact Number:

II. Socio-Economic Background¹

Note : Please circle the appropriate codes as per requirement of each questions.

2.1. What is your **educational qualification**? *(Please circle the highest alternative)*

01	Cannot read nor write
02	Less than primary school
03	Secondary Education
04	Higher secondary education
05	Graduate
06	Post-graduation
07	PhD

¹ http://www.abuel.org/docs/pub02_questionnaire.pdf

2.2. What is/was your main **Occupation**?

01	Managers (e.g. chief executives, administrative managers)
02	Professionals (e.g. science and engineering professionals, health professionals, teaching professionals)
03h	Clerical support workers (e.g. general and keyboard clerks, customer service clerks)
04a t	Service and sales workers (e.g. service and sales workers, personal care workers, sales workers)
05 i	Elementary occupations (e.g. cleaners and helpers, labourers in mining) Housewife/househusband
06s	Armed forces occupation (e.g. commissioned armed forces officers)
07	Self-financed/Business man/woman
08y o u r	Others, please specify

2.3 Present main source of financial support? *(Please select only one option)*

01	Work
02	Pension
03	Financial transfer by children/others
04	Savings
05	Others

2.4. Where do you stay?

01	Own house
02	Own Apartment
03	Rental
04	Sheltered house
05	Other (please specify)

2.5. How often are you worried about the daily expenses? *(e.g. for buying food)*

01	Never
02	Sometimes
03	Often
04	Always

2.6. A list of possessions are given below in a table, please circle the appropriate codes.
(You can opt for more than one possession)

01	Fridge
02	Television
03	Micro-oven
04	Air Conditioner
05	Car

III. **Physical wellbeing (1-3 score)**

3.1. Do you have any physical problems? Rate your state of physical wellbeing in a **1-3 scale (1-have physical problem, 3-no physical problem)**

3.2. Rate to what extent are you comfortable in doing daily chores in your daily life despite physical instability. **Rate in a 1-3 scale (1-not atall comfortable, 3-totally comfortable)**

3.3. Below there is a list of activities that you may have needed help within the last year.

Activities	
a) Shopping groceries, clothes or other things	
b) Preparing meals	
c) Travel or transport	
d) Any other day-to-day activity, please specify_____	

IV. **Family and Social Support:**

- **Companionship within family: 1-3 score**

4.1. Marital Status: **(Companionship within family)**

01	Single
03	Married/cohabited
02	Divorced/Separated
01	Widowed

4.2. With whom do you live? *(Respondents must choose only one option)*
(companionship within family)

01	Alone
01	Paid Personnel
02	Siblings
03	Spouse/Offspring
	Others, Please specify_____

4.3. Total number of persons staying with you, including paid personnel and yourself.
(companionship within family)

01	One (himself/herself)
02	One to three
03	More than three persons

4.4. Do you have any offspring of your own? *(If yes, go to question A12 or go to A13)*

01	Yes
02	No

4.5. Please fill the following table:

Offspring	Occupation	Place of stay

- **support from offspring: Score 1-3 (1-low, 2-medium, 3-high)**

4.6. How often do you see your offspring? **(support from offspring)**

Once in a year – 1
Once in a month- 2
Once in a week/ daily- 3

4.7. What is the kind of relationship you share with him/her? (support from offspring)

- 1. I share everything with my children such as daily affairs, important things and my future plans and vice-versa- 3
- 2. I only ask for help from my children- 2
- 3. My life and my child’s life is separate from each other- 1

4.8. Are you dependent on him/her? If yes, then in what way? (support from offspring)

- 1. I am both financially and emotionally dependent on my children - 3
- 2. I am financially dependent but not emotionally dependent on my children -2
- 3. I am neither financially nor emotionally dependent on my children -1

4.9. Please rate your feelings of loneliness in a 1-5 point scale. (1 being “often feel this way” and 5 being “I never feel this way”) ²

SCORING PATTERN: 1-20=1, 21-40=2, 41-60=3

- 1. I have nobody to talk to
- 2. I feel completely alone/ lack companionship
- 3. I feel as if nobody really understands me
- 4. I am no longer close to anyone
- 5. I am unable to reach out and communicate with those around me (specifying age)
- 6. My social relationships are superficial (specifying age)
- 7. No one really knows me well
- 8. I feel isolated from others
- 9. I am unhappy being so withdrawn
- 10. It is difficult for me to make friends (specify now)
- 11. I feel shut out and excluded by others
- 12. People are around me but not with me

4.10. Do you have any grandchildren of your own? (If ‘Yes’ then go to 11, or go to)

01	Yes
02	No

- Intergenerational solidarity : Scores: 1-3 (1-weak ties, 2-medium ties, 3- strong ties)

² Russell, D , Peplau, L. A.. & Ferguson, M. L. (1978). Developing a measure of loneliness. Journal of Personality Assessment, 42, 290-294.

4.11. On an average, how often do you see at least one of your own grandchildren?
Would you say... (Read list) **(Intergenerational solidarity)**

01	Once in two years
01	About once a year
02	Once every few months
02	Once or less a month
03	At least once a week
03	Only have grandchildren who live in household

4.12. How do you communicate with at least one of your grandchildren? Please
specify the medium of communication. **(Intergenerational solidarity)**

01	Internet
02	Phone
03	Face to face
	Other option, please specify

4.13. Do you think interaction with children solves many of the elderly problems, such
as social isolation? If yes, then how? *(Please reflect on the answer)*
(Intergenerational solidarity)

- 1-

I don't think interaction with children can solve any of our problems
- 2-

It is necessary, but not applicable in my life.
- 3-

I am positive about it and it is also applicable in my life.

4.14. Do you feel the necessity of disseminating informal knowledge to children by
elderly? Why do you feel the need of it and how would you as an elderly will fit into
that role? **(Intergenerational solidarity)**

- 1-

I am not positive about it.
- 2-

I feel the emportance of sharing knowledge, but it is not applicable in my life.
- 3-

I am positive about it and it is also applicable in my life.

C4) Would you like to grandparent children other than your own?

01	Yes
02	No

V. SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIVITIES

Involvement in social activities or any kind of activity is one of the crucial indicators of analysing wellbeing of aged. This module inquires nature of social/regular activity of elderly respondents.

- **Desire to participate: 1-3 score (1-low, 2-medium, 3-high)**

5.1. What are the activities that you like doing? *(this indicates desire to participate in productive activities)*

Please put scores of 1, 2, 3 with respect to the number of productive activities the respondents are interested in.

Activities

Clues to Interviewer: activities such as sewing, gardening, watching Tv, reading, listening to music, cooking, spending time with friends, creatively participating in activities, actively involved in mainstream activities, looking after grandchildren, doing meaningful/creative discussions.

- **Current engagement: 1-3 scores (1- no, 2-medium, 3-high)**

5.2. How do you spend a regular day? What are the activities that you perform throughout the day? We would also like to know the duration of performing those activities on a regular average day. (indicates duration of engagement in productive activity)

Please put scores of 1, 2, 3 with respect to the approx. amount of time the respondents spend in doing specific productive activities (if any).

Activities

Clues to Interviewer: activities such as sewing, gardening, watching Tv, reading, listening to music, cooking, spending time with friends, creatively participating in activities, actively involved in mainstream activities, looking after grandchildren, doing meaningful/creative discussions.

5.3.If you are engaged in any sort of work (eg. Full-time/part-time/retired/social work, etc), then please describe your nature of work, otherwise write not applicable. ***(if full time or marginal worker/voluntary worker then indicator of current engagement in productive activity) (1-3 point scale measurement)***

1- No engagement
2- Part-time/marginal activities
3- Full-time work

5.4.Are you currently associated with any voluntary organisation? *If yes, please specify whether you are a full-time member of it. (current engagement in productive activity)(can also indicate type of organisation one is involved in).*

Please score in 1, 2, 3 with respect to :

- 1- Not associated with any voluntary organisation
- 2- Associated with voluntary organisation but not its full-time member can be an occasional visitor to the organisation.
- 3-Associated with voluntary organisation and also its full time member.

5.5. Please specify the number of hours of voluntary work per week?

5.6. Are you a participant in the activities that undergo in the organisation?

Yes (1)	No (2)

5.7. Do you consider yourself to be an active or productive member of the society? If yes, then in what manner do you engage yourself? Please reflect on the importance of being a productive member of society. **(Current engagement in productive activity)**

Does meaningful activities that has an impact in society as a whole- 3
Does activities that has impact on his/her community/family to a significant extent- 2
Does not indulge in any productive activities- 1

5.8. Please answer the following questions on your feeling of your community.

I am going to read some statements that people might make about their [block]. Each time I read one of these statements, please tell me if it is mostly true or mostly false about your [block] simply by saying "true" or "false". Community here implies the immediate group you belong to.

True = 1 False =0

- 1. I think my community is a good place for me to live.
- 2. People on this community do not share the same values.
- 3. My [neighbors] and I want the same things from the community.
- 4. I can recognize most of the people who live in my community.
- 5. I feel at home on this community.
- 6. Very few of my [neighbors] know me.
- 7. I care about what my [neighbors] think of my actions.
- 8. I have no influence over what this community is like.
- 9. If there is a problem on this community people who live here can get it solved.
- 10. It is very important to me to live on this particular community.
- 11. People on this community generally don't get along with each other.
- 12. I expect to live on this community for a long time.

VI. SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

This module is intended to collect information on recent positive and negative emotional states of respondents along with their evaluations of their own selves. This aims at determining subjective well-being of elderly at large.

Composite Measures of subjective wellbeing: (Reker & Wong,1984).

- 1. Life Satisfaction Index,
- 2. Morale Scale
- 3. Scales of Happiness

6.1. Life Satisfaction (1-5 score)

1. Please answer the following questions and put scores from (score in 1-5 scale)

Total Score:	1-6=1	7-12=2	13-18=3	19-24=4	25-30=5
OR	1-10= 1	11-20=2	21-30=3		

- 1. “How satisfied are you with your standard of living?”
1 2 3 4 5
- 2. “How satisfied are you with your health?”
1 2 3 4 5
- 3. “How satisfied are you with what you are achieving in life?”
1 2 3 4 5
- 4. “How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?”
1 2 3 4 5
- 5. “How satisfied are you with how safe you feel?”
1 2 3 4 5
- 6. “How satisfied are you with feeling part of your community?”
1 2 3 4 5

6.2. Psychological Wellbeing: Positive and Negative Affect (PANAS): ³ (1-5 score)

You will find a series of words and phrases that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past few weeks. Use the following scale to record your answers:

1- very slightly or not at all 2- a little 3-moderately 4- quite a bit 5- extremely

1. Positive Affect

SCORING PATTERN of Positive Affect: 1-9: 1, 10-18: 2, 19-27:3, 28-36:4, 37-45:5

OR 1-15= 1 16-30=2 31-45=3

1. ACTIVE
2. CALM
3. ENTHUSIASTIC
4. DARING
5. HAPPY
6. DETERMINED
7. STRONG
8. INTERESTED
9. CONFIDENT

2. Negative Affect

SCORING PATTERN of Negative Affect: 1-9: 1, 10-18: 2, 19-27:3, 28-36:4, 37-45:5

OR 1-15= 1 16-30=2 31-45=3

1. SAD
2. DISGUSTED
3. DOWNHEARTED
4. TIRED
5. NERVOUS
6. LONELY
7. DISSATISFIED WITH SELF
8. UPSET
9. SCARED

³ Watson, D., & Clark, L. A. (1999). The PANAS-X: Manual for the positive and negative affect schedule-expanded form. University of Iowa.

6.3. Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale ⁴ (1-5 score)

Individual scores: high morale- 1, Low Morale-0

Total scoring: 1-3- 1, 4-6-2, 7-9-3, 10-12-4, 13-15- 5

OR 1-5=1, 6-10=2, 11-15=3

- 1. Things keep getting worse as I get older. Yes_____ No_____
- 2. How much do you feel lonely? Not much_____ A lot_____
- 3. Little things bother me more this year. Yes_____ No_____
- 4. I see enough of my friends and relatives. Yes_____ No_____
- 5. As you get older, you are less useful. Yes_____ No_____
- 6. I sometimes worry so much that I can't sleep. Yes_____ No_____
- 7. As I get older, things are (better/worse) than I thought they would be. Better_____ Worse_____
- 8. I sometimes feel that life isn't worth living. Yes_____ No_____
- 9. I am as happy now as I was when I was younger. Yes_____ No_____
- 10. I have a lot to be sad about. Yes_____ No_____
- 11. I am afraid of a lot of things. Yes_____ No_____
- 12. I get mad more than I used to. Yes_____ No_____
- 13. Life is hard for me much of the time. Yes_____ No_____
- 14. I take things hard. Yes_____ No_____
- 15. I get upset easily. Yes_____ No_____

Module VII: Computer Knowledge

1.1. Do you use computer?

01	Yes
02	No

1.2. Do you have computer(s) with internet connection at your place of stay?

01	Yes
02	No

1.3. Do you have mobile phone of your own?

01	Yes
02	No

⁴ Lawton, M. P. (1975). The Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale: a revision. *Journal of Gerontology*. 30(1), 85-89.

1.4. Do you SMS your friends?

01	Yes
02	No

1.5. Do you think computer can perform the following tasks of solving your problem?

01	Connecting with loved ones
02	Provide security
03	Provide assistance (please specify)
04	Provide information
05	Erase loneliness
06	Others, please specify
07	None of these

1.6. Do you think ICT has facilitated your living? *(For Computer and Internet Users Only)*

01	Yes
02	No

1.7. Do you think ICT can facilitate your living?

01	Yes
02	No

1.8. If given training, do you think you would be able to learn the basic fundamentals of computer?

01	Yes
02	No
03	Not interested
04	Already knows

AGEING IN TODAY'S WORLD

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