

CENTRE FOR GERONTOLOGICAL STUDIES
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Brief History - 1983 - 2009

I. Origin

The Centre for Gerontological Studies (CGS), Thiruvananthapuram was established in 1983 by some forward looking social scientists from universities in 5 South Indian States as an international centre for inter-disciplinary studies on aging. These social scientists under the leadership of Dr. P. K. B. Nayar drew their inspiration for this venture from the **United Nations International Assembly on Aging, Vienna, 1982**. The collaborating universities are **Sri Venkateswara University**, Tirupati (A.P.), **Karnatak University**, Dharwad (Karnataka), **Kerala University**, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala), **Madras University**, Chennai (Tamilnadu) and **Marathwada University**, Aurngabad (Maharashtra). The major objectives of the Centre are to (a) organize, promote and execute programmes of study and research on aging and generate knowledge that is socially relevant, (b) examine government policies, programmes and legislations that have gerontological bearing and prepare reports that may be useful for policy makers and programme planners, (c) organize and conduct seminars, workshops, symposia and study groups on major issues of population aging, (d) publish research papers, research reports and a journal on gerontology, (e) develop a library and documentation centre on gerontology in India, (f) collaborate with government, centres of learning and research and other non government organizations in promoting knowledge regarding aging and programmes for the old. The Centre has an **Executive Council**, a **Governing Body** and an **International Advisory Committee**. (It is registered under the Societies Registration Act (Registration No.187 of 1983)

The first Governing Body of the Centre consisted of senior Professors and Heads of Departments of Sociology of the collaborating universities, the Director of the Centre for Social Research, Trivandrum and three faculty members from the Kerala University Dept. of Sociology. Hence throughout its existence, it has had an academic and research orientation. The commanding position of the Members of the Governing Body in their respective universities enabled the centre to have excellent academic base from the very beginning. The Heads were able to bring within the sphere of influence of the Centre, the faculty members, research scholars and students of their departments which in turn gave their teaching and research (including M.Phil and Ph.D research) a gerontological perspective. Indeed this resulted in having a number of Ph.D. theses of these depts. to have aging as their topic. This was also reflected in the themes or sub themes of the seminars and conferences they organized. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the membership of the Heads of Departments of the five South Indian Universities in key decision making roles in CGS has **enabled gerontology to have sound and solid academic roots in South India**.

II. Activities

1. Conferences & Seminars

a). **First International Seminar on Population Aging in India. 1985**

This was the first seminar of its kind in India and was sponsored by the University Grants Commission of India and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) New Delhi and was organized with the active collaboration of the five universities on the CGS Panel. There were 4 panels (demographic, economic, social-psychological and health) and 10 sessions besides the inauguration and valedictory sessions. In addition to 22 invited papers, several contributed papers also were presented at the Seminar.

The Report on the Seminar was duly published and copies were sent to the Govt. of India and State governments besides agencies working for the cause of the old.

b). **International Congress on Aging, 1996**

This Congress was sponsored by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and ICSSR. It was attended by 164 participants of whom 42 were from abroad. The participants included 4 delegates from China under the Vice President of the Chinese Gerontological Society, the Presidents of International Federation on Ageing and International Association of Gerontology, Dr. Charles C. Meyers (a doyen of Gerontology) and other important luminaries who have embellished the aging field. A total of 81 papers including the theme paper by Dr. PKB Nayar and Keynote paper by Dr. S.D. Gokhale were presented. The Congress demonstrated both the Centre's standing and credibility in the global aging field and its capacity to organize a world class conference, given the several constraints under which it has been working.

c). **First International Colloquium on the Oldest Old (80+) February 9 – 11, 2009**

CGS held this International *Colloquium on the 80+ with Focus on Health and Care-giving* in Thiruvananthapuram on Feb 9-11, 2009 as part of its **Silver Jubilee Celebrations**. This Colloquium is the **First Global Conference** on this segment of the elderly which is not taken serious cognizance of by those concerned with aging and age care. **UNFPA and the Government of Kerala** are the **co-sponsors** of the Colloquium. UNFPA deputed a number of delegates from the developing countries to this colloquium. The Centre also has also received financial assistance from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Indian Federation on Ageing (InFA) and the Mehrotra Foundation, Mumbai for this Colloquium. The Colloquium was attended by 96 Indian and 14 international delegates besides a number of local participants. Delivering the Keynote Address at the Inaugural Session of the Colloquium, the UNFPA Deputy Country Representative, Dr. Marc Derveeuw said:

"I would like to thank the organizers of this colloquium for turning the world's attention to this particular matter of the 'Oldest Old' and for alerting us on the existence of a development problem which is hardly taken into account. I hope that the participants from the different countries will be able to share their experiences in the coming days and return with a clearer view on the key areas which need to be addressed in their countries."

A Report on the Colloquium has been published, containing *inter alia* a number of implementable suggestions and recommendations

d). National Seminar on Empowerment of Women with Focus on Old Women - 1998

The Government of India Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD), Dept. of Women and Child Development sponsored this National Seminar on Empowerment of Women with special focus on elderly women, in 1988.

e). First National Seminar on Widowhood in India with focus on Elderly Widows 2002

This was a fall out of the women empowerment seminar (see above) and was one of the recommendations of that seminar (to highlight vulnerable women). It was funded by ICSSR. The seminar attracted much attention at the all India level and especially from the National Women's Commission and delegates from several State Women's Commissions, and women leaders and intellectuals from both academic and professional fields from all parts of India attended the Seminar. Selected papers of this seminar have been published under the title ***Widowhood in Modern India*** (2006)

f). First National Seminar on Abuse of the Elderly in India. 2004

The seminar was funded by ICSSR, among others. This was the first seminar on elder abuse at the all India level and naturally evoked much attention from all parts of India. In fact, the enthusiasm generated by this Seminar was responsible for CGS to decide on undertaking a research study on the same title (see below)

g). Seminar on the International Day of Older Persons 2005

The Centre jointly with the Government of Kerala organized the celebration of the **International Day of Older Persons on October 1, 2005** where the Chief Minister addressed the Public Meeting. The meeting was preceded by a whole day seminar on the problems and needs of the elderly in Kerala. The papers and discussion mainly centered around the **Draft State Policy on Older Persons** which was **on the Government website** at that time. The cost of the event was jointly shared by both the CGS and the Government of Kerala.

h). State and Local Level Seminars, etc.

We are not describing the innumerable seminars, workshops, study groups, discussion groups, colloquia and consultative meetings organized by CGS periodically to highlight the causes and concerns of the old. Only, mention may be made of the latest in the series – a consultative meeting on the Draft Rules on the recently enacted **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007** which was organized in collaboration with the **Human Rights Lawyers' Forum** of the State in August 2008.

2. Studies

a) International

Sandoz Foundation for Gerontological Research, Basel, Switzerland asked the Centre to make a ***Study on Healthy Aging and Independence in Later Life***. This was a major study and was conducted in four places each (rural and urban) in two Indian States – Tamilnadu and

Kerala - by teams of medical doctors and social scientists. This study has brought the Centre on the world map of gerontological institutions.

International Social Security Association (ISSA), Geneva invited the Centre to prepare a paper on Social Security System in the Asia Pacific region. The paper was prepared by Dr. P. K. B. Nayar, Chairman of the Centre who was subsequently invited to present the paper in the ISSA South Asia Regional Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1991. The paper was later published by ISSA.

World Health Organization (WHO), Kobe, Japan asked Chairman Nayar to prepare a theme paper on Methodological Issues in Health Expectancy Research for its International Consultative Meeting on Healthy Aging Development (1999). He was subsequently invited to this meeting to present the paper. This paper has been later published in the book on *Healthy Aging Development* (2000) by WHO

b) National

Government of India Studies

The Centre has taken up quite a number of studies from the Government of India Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ&E). The most recent of them are:

The Study of the **Old Old and Oldest Old** was undertaken by Dr. P. K. B. Nayar. The Report was submitted in 1999.

A study on **Abuse of the Elderly** was also commissioned by MSJ&E and the Centre completed the study and presented the Report to the Ministry in 2006. As mentioned earlier, the study was the outcome of the recommendation of an earlier seminar on the same theme

ICSSR Study

Problems and Needs of Widows: A Study in Kerala This study was a follow-up of the recommendation of the National Seminar on Widowhood in India, 2002 (see above). A research proposal submitted by the Centre to ICSSR was soon approved and the study was completed in 2004

RGNIYD Study

Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development Study on "Inter-generational Integration – A Society for All Ages"

CGS has always taken the view that aging is a life long process and that the aged should be integrated with the younger generations. Based on this "life course" perspective, CGS persuaded **Rajiv Gandhi National Institute for Youth Development (RGNIYD)**, Chennai to sponsor a study on the **Problems and Needs of Adolescents** with a view to find out *inter alia* how the youth of the country view aging and aged people and in what way they could be brought into the culture of aging. The study is in progress. It is hoped that when the study is completed, it will bring out some insights on today's adolescents – their beliefs, attitudes and world views - that may be useful in integrating the adolescents with the generation of the aged. Adolescents have more fluid mindset which could be more easily influenced than other age groups.

University Studies

Inspired by the Centre faculty, the University of Kerala in its different Social Science Departments have produced **around 20 Ph.D. Dissertations and double the number of MA/M.Phil dissertations on aging** since the inception of the Centre. **Aging has now become a compulsory subject in the Sociology and Social Works Departments** in all the universities of Kerala, thanks to the promotional work undertaken by the Centre through its faculty and seminars. In a similar manner the other constituent universities on the CGS Board also have brought out a number of studies on aging as independent research studies and as Ph.D. and M.Phil dissertations.

3. Training Programme

At the instance of the National Institute of Social Defence (NISD), New Delhi, CGS organized a **One Month Certificate Course in Basic Issues in Geriatric Care** during February-March 2007 for Supervisors of Old Age Homes. 25 participants of whom 21 were women attended the course. Certificates were awarded to the participants by NISD at the end of the programme.

4. Library

The Centre has a modest library containing books, reports and periodicals and is perused regularly by the research scholars of local colleges and university departments. Outstation students and faculty also visit the CGS and meet the Centre faculty for consultation and collection of materials.

5. Networking

Over the years, the Centre has built up an **excellent network** with similar agencies, associations and professional groups **across the world**.

The UN International Institute on Ageing (**INIA**), Malta, American Association of Retired Persons (**AARP**), the International Union for Scientific Study of Population (**IUSSP**) and its regional chapters, International Forum for Social Sciences and Health, (**IFSSH**) and its subsidiary the Asia Pacific Network (**APNET**), The Initiative for Research in Health Expectancy Calculations (**REVES**), International Centre for Coordination of National Research in Demography (**CICRED**), International Association of Gerontology (**IAG**), International Federation on Ageing (**IFA**), International Society for Equity in Health (**ISEqH**), International Longevity Centre (**ILC**) and several others in the international field and almost all similar networks and initiatives in India so much so that the name CGS is quite familiar to the international fraternity of professionals and intellectuals on aging.

6. Consultancy

The Centre has been doing a lot of consultancy work, chiefly for those needing assistance on problems related to aging - how to start an old age home, how to take care of Alzheimer's patients, how to cope with an un-accommodative old kin, how to select an old age home for a prospective client, how to select a topic for research, how to prepare a research project

for funding purposes, and the like. These services were free and this added attraction to the advice-seekers. There were other mega requests from bigger agencies including governments, with bigger assignments; CGS has formulated old age policies and plans of action for the states of Kerala and Goa.

7. Monographs on Aging Policy

CGS's activity in aging plan formulation started in 1997 when it called a consultative meeting of a small group of experts to provide inputs for a state policy on older persons in Kerala. CGS thought that since aging problem has been faced by the State of Kerala more severely than other Indian States, it should begin the exercise by formulating a model aging policy for that state. The suggestions of the Consultative Group were coordinated and presented to the Government of Kerala in the form of a document entitled ***Meeting the Challenges of Aging Population in Kerala: A Suggested Policy and Plan of Action for the Elderly of Kerala*** (January 1997). Copies of this document were distributed among the State's Ministers, Members of the State Legislature and State Planning Board, Kerala Members of the two Houses of the Parliament, Heads of Kerala Government Departments, President and Prime Minister of India, GOI Ministers of Planning, Welfare, Labour and Health, Members of the National Planning Commission and Ministers and Secretaries of Social Welfare of all Indian States..

The Governor of Kerala in his Inaugural Address to the State Legislature in the same year (March 1997) declared that his government will soon bring out legislation for the welfare of the state's elderly. However, nothing more than this announcement happened in Kerala in the next 6 years in spite of relentless efforts of CGS

Meanwhile the **Government of Goa** adopted this plan for its ***State Policy and Plan of Action for the Elderly People in Goa State, 2001***

Thanks to the Centre's strong networking, **UN-International Institute on Ageing (INIA) Malta took cognizance of the document** and thought that it may serve as a model for aspiring countries across the world to formulate aging policies for their elderly and accordingly published it under the same title in their quarterly journal ***BOLD*** (Vol.VII, No.3, 1997).

Encouraged by the reception accorded in the professional world of aging to the Centre's Kerala Aging Policy, CGS prepared another document with All India perspective and with similar title ***Meeting the Challenges of Aging Population in India – A Suggested Policy and Plan of Acton for the Elderly of India*** (January 1998).. Copies of this document were distributed to all the critical decision makers in New Delhi. The then President of India, Dr. K.R. Narayanan, wrote a personal letter of appreciation on this to Dr. P. K. B. Nayar, Chairman of CGS. This document was published in the Journal ***of Aging and Society*** Vol. VIII, 3 & 4, 1998).

One of the critical suggestions in the document was Dr. Nayar's concept the "Multi Service Community Age Care Centre" elaborated by him in an earlier article ***"A Plea for Age Care Centres"*** and published in an earlier issue of ***BOLD, Journal of the United Nations' International Institute on Aging*** (vol. 3, No. 4, 1993). The multi service age-care centre concept has been incorporated in the Indian National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) 1999. Dr. Nayar had served as a member of the Steering Committee of the NPOP.

8. The Kerala State Policy on Older Persons, 2006

It will not be an exaggeration to say that the Kerala State Policy on Older Persons owes its biggest debt to CGS. After initial failure to prevail upon the government with its "Suggested Policy", the matter was taken up with the Government of Kerala again in 2003 and this time more vigorously pursued. Thanks to the excellent rapport between CGS and the Government Department of Social Welfare, the Policy document was accepted by the government and announced by the Honorable Minister for Health and Social Welfare in December 2006. The State Government is now taking steps to implement the programmes of the document sincerely. Dr. P. K. B. Nayar, Chairman of CGS has been made a Member of the State Council on Older Persons.

On the request of the Kerala government, the Centre has prepared the Draft **Rules for Establishment and Management of Old Age Homes** in the state.

9. Publications

CGS has to its credit a number of publications, mostly in the form of Study Reports and several books including the book on the **First National Seminar on Aging in India (1985)** and the Study of **Widowhood in Modern India (2006)**. Its faculty have prepared scores of research papers and published dozens of articles in established professional journals and presented papers in several international and national conferences. Several edited books on aging and gerontology contain articles of the Chairman and the Director. CGS has received a grant from ICSSR for preparing a reference monograph on "**Gerontology for India**" which will come out soon.

10. Special Advocacy for the Oldest Old - 80+

This is a fall-out of the "International Colloquium on the Oldest Old with Focus on Health and Care Giving", organized by the Centre in February 2009. The delegates of the Colloquium wanted that its Conclusions and Recommendations should be sent to all important decision makers on the old at the global level, including the United Nations agencies and selected country governments. The delegates from the developing countries agreed to undertake the second one and the Centre is now engaged in sending the document on Conclusions and Recommendations to the different global agencies (such as UNFPA, UNDP, etc.) as well as to the governments of all Indian States and additionally to the Government of India Ministers and officials in the Ministries of Health and Social Justice and Empowerment and the Members of Planning Commission.

11. Multi Service Elder Care Centre

This has been a major recommendation of the Colloquium which found that such a centre will go a long way in relieving the family of much of the burden of care giving and will make the old kin more acceptable. On their part, the old kin also will find that the Elder Care Centre will provide a variety of services which they will require but which the family may not be able to provide. The Centre for Gerontological Studies is pushing this concept and has prepared a proposal for this and is looking around for prospective sponsors.

12. About the Office Bearers

Prof. (Dr.) P.K.B. Nayar, founder of CGS has been Chairman of the Centre since inception. He holds Masters' Degrees in five social science disciplines (including two from US Universities and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Pittsburgh. He was Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chair, Dept. of Sociology and Director, Population Research Centre of the University of Kerala (India). He was also Founder Director of Kerala University's Centre for Women's Studies. Dr. Nayar has been trained in Social Gerontology at the UN International Institute on Ageing, Malta. He was Chairman, Kerala State Education Advisory Board and Visiting Professor in several French, American and Indian Universities. He has undertaken dozens of research projects and prepared reports on them. He has been Consultant to several world bodies – FAO, ILO, WHO and World Bank. He is recipient of French Government's prestigious **Award for Internationally Renowned Scientists**. He is author of several books and dozens of articles, many of them on aging.

Dr. Nayar was Coordinator of 4 world conferences (1). International Seminar on Population Aging in India, (*the first conference on aging in India*). (2). International Congress on Aging. (3). *Inter Congress of International Sociological Association* and (4). International Colloquium on the Oldest Old (80+) at Trivandrum - the **first ever global level conference on this segment of the old**, besides sessions in several international conferences. He has also organized dozens of national conferences/seminars/workshops/consultations. He has attended around two dozen international conferences and chaired sessions and presented invited papers in them.

Prof. Dr. Jacob John Kattakayam, Director of CGS, has been Professor of Sociology and Director of Academic Staff College in the University of Kerala, Trivandrum. He is a popular name in Indian gerontology and has been actively involved in the planning and execution of the programmes of CGS. He has published several books and a number of articles. He was also trained in Social Gerontology in the UN International Institute on Ageing, Malta.
