

**A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF RETIRED GOVERNMENT
EMPLOYEES OF NAINITAL REGION**

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ABSTRACT

The number of elderly people worldwide is rising, which is significant at this time, as a result of the increased life expectancy that was nearly questioned in industrialized nations from the beginning to the end of the 20th century. The population's age distribution is shifting as the percentage of senior citizens rises. as a result of continuous economic growth and the ensuing modifications to family dynamics. The elderly experience issues and lose their meaning and relevance in their own homes. People have a social circle that expands during productive age, while it contracts after retirement. When a person settles in a new place, they adapt to the social and cultural conditions, developing a specific interaction pattern with locals. This can be cordial, formal, or hostile, depending on individual personalities and the social set-up. Culture and society are different, with culture being a system of behaviour shared by members, and society being an organized group of individuals. Sociologists classify cultures into material and non-material, with manmade objects being civilization and internal customs and beliefs being non-material cultures. After retirement, individuals evolve into their social surroundings, moving from active working professionals to more participatory roles. Retirement offers relief from job stress and opportunities to explore interests, but also results in job loss, income reduction, and loss of status. Many retirees still maintain special bonds with childhood friends, which can be attributed to the availability of free time to explore old contacts. Neighbours' relationships with retirees are also affected by factors like introverted behaviour, unmanageable neighbours, and loud music. Pets and animals are considered essential for managing emotional swings and loneliness, with the majority having at least one dog as a family pet. Religious activities are also highly rated leisure activities for retirees, providing companionship and self-respect. In this study, we have tried to explain the impact of socio-cultural aspects of retirees on their retirement life and vice-versa.

KEYWORDS: *Social-cultural life, Government employee, Religion, Mythology*

INTRODUCTION:

MacIver and Page have defined society, “as a network of social relationships.” this means that society exists when individuals interact with one another. One cannot live in society and remain aloof from it. The relationship between man and society is reciprocal as none can exist without one another. Every person has a social circle in which she/he lives and it is a fact that during the period of productive age, numbers of interactions expand the social circle whereas after retirement it contracts and becomes limited. When a person finally settles at a place, he gradually adapts to the social and cultural conditions of that place and gets accustomed to the lifestyle of the people under that specific socio-cultural circle. A specific interaction pattern develops between the person who has come to settle and the locals of the place. This relationship can be cordial, formal or hostile depending upon individual personalities and the social set-up of the place. Social accommodation is responsible for the kind of interaction, which develops at a slow pace. But along with this the adapting quality of the person to the changed social set-up is very important.

Culture plays a pivotal role in our lives. C.N.S. Rao (1990) has defined Culture, as “A very broad term that includes in itself all our walks of life, our modes of behaviour, our philosophies and ethics, our morals and manners, our customs and traditions, our religious, political, economics and other types of activities. Culture includes all that man has acquired in his individual and social life”. MacIver & Page stated that “Culture is the realm of styles, of values, of emotional attachments, of intellectual adventures.” It is the entire social heritage that the individual receives from the group. According to Robert Bierstadt, ‘Culture is the complex whole that consists of all the ways we think and do and everything we have as members of society.’ Culture is sometimes called ‘the super organic.’ By super organic Herbert Spencer meant that culture is neither organic nor inorganic in nature but above these two. The term implies the social meaning of physical objects and physiological acts. For example, the social meaning of a national flag is not just a piece of coloured cloth, but a flag representation. Similarly, every human being is viewed in their society differently. Their social status and role can be understood only through culture. Further, every society considers its culture as an ideal. The people are also aware of their culture as an ideal one. They are proud of their cultural heritage.

Culture and society are not the same because culture is a system of behaviour shared by the members of a society. A society is a group of people who share a common culture. As Ralph Linton argues society is an organized group of individuals. A culture is an organized group of learned responses characteristic of a particular society.’ Sociologists have classified two types of cultures, material and non-material. The former consists of manmade objects and is referred to as civilization. The latter is something internal and intrinsically valuable. One’s customs and tastes, attitude and beliefs etc. all come in the preview of non-material culture. The dictum, ‘man is a social being, can thus be redefined as ‘man is a cultural being’. When a person comes to settle in a place, it is said an intermingling of socio-cultural ideal types.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Unruh (1983), In the case of retirement, declined economic resources and residential relocation all affect the quality of life. We can take retirement as a point of reference that offers both positive and problematic alternatives. On the one hand, it gives relief from the stresses of a job and creates new opportunities to explore new and old interests with a wider range of choices and time. On the other hand, retirement generally results in loss of job, reduction in income, loss of status as a contributor to the economy particularly and broken contacts with the customary associates (Rao and Parthasarathy, 1999). Changing roles and subsequent re-socialization, level of economic security, time activities, health conditions and health security all-together contribute to the formation of the social and cultural world of the elderly.

The culture of Urbanization and Modernization has brought many changes in the way of life and attitude of people. The role and status in India have also changed. Earlier the family meant to provide care for the aged. The aged actively participated in decision-making, planning and supervising various activities of the household. Religion further legitimized the status of the elderly. Generally, the aged spent time in religious pursuits and looking after the grandchildren. Hence, they were well integrated within the family and spent their last days in peace and happiness. However, with the growing disintegration of the joint family system, the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual security that the aged enjoyed in the past is becoming weak. The elderly persons, whose children have migrated due to family breach of employment reasons, have to fend for themselves. They start relying on neighbours as a substitute for past family relationships, communication and companionship and for emotional support during difficulties and crises.

Bhatia (1983), defined a socially well-adjusted person to be, ‘one who can fulfil various social obligations and roles with the normative structure of the society and there by satisfies the personal interests and motives.’ Since the socio-cultural aspects of the retired people are not so simple they can be confined to a limit of context in which the retirement has to be studied.

Burgees (1958), argued that personal adjustment in old age after retirement life was desirable and this is directly proportional to the degree of happiness. There were five factors had been associated with good adjustment and happiness were good health, satisfactory social and emotional relations with friends, family and the people of one’s cultural realms, hobbies and outside interests, living in own house and some form of work or useful activity in leisure time. Social-cultural contacts and interactions have been reported by and large as the key factors in determining successful adjustment in retirement life (Ekerdt, 1985).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To analyse the views on friendly relationships with their neighbours.

2. To see the views on their visit to religious places more after retirement.
3. To check their visit to religious places after retirement.
4. Views on the socio-cultural problems, being faced after retirement.
5. To find out whether retirement is like the practice of Vanaprastha Ashram as inscribed in Hindu mythology.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed the retired employees living in Nainital District of Uttarakhand. The respondent is selected from the office of the district pension office. A total of 253 respondents were selected for the study. Data was collected in both quantitative and individual interviews of the respondents. A structured interview schedule with partially open-ended questions and sub-questions has been used. The data was collected through careful observation by the researcher during the study. Then the study was tabulated and analyzed with the help of standard methods commonly used in sociological research.

Table 1: Respondents’ views on the statement that retirement is like the practice of Vanaprastha Aashram as inscribed in Hindu mythology

Response	No. of respondents	No. of respondents (in %)
Yes	123	48
No	98	38
Can’t Say	37	14
Total	258	100

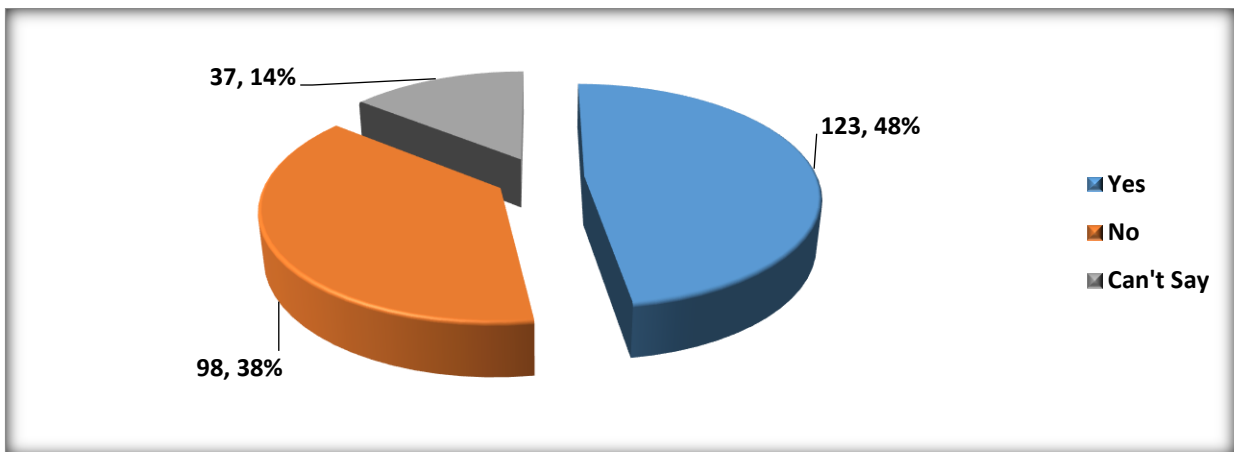


Figure 1: Respondents’ views on the statement that Retirement is like the practice of Vanaprastha Aashram as inscribed in Hindu mythology

It is revealed in the table no. 1 and figure. 1 that 48.0% of respondents see retirement as Vanaprastha ashram so depicted in Hindu mythology, 38% of respondents did not see retirement as Vanaprastha ashram so depicted in Hindu mythology and 14% of respondents can’t say about it.

Table 2: Respondents’ views on friendly relationships with their neighbours

Response	No. of respondents	No. of respondents (in %)
Yes	208	81
No	39	15
Can’t Say	11	04
Total	258	100

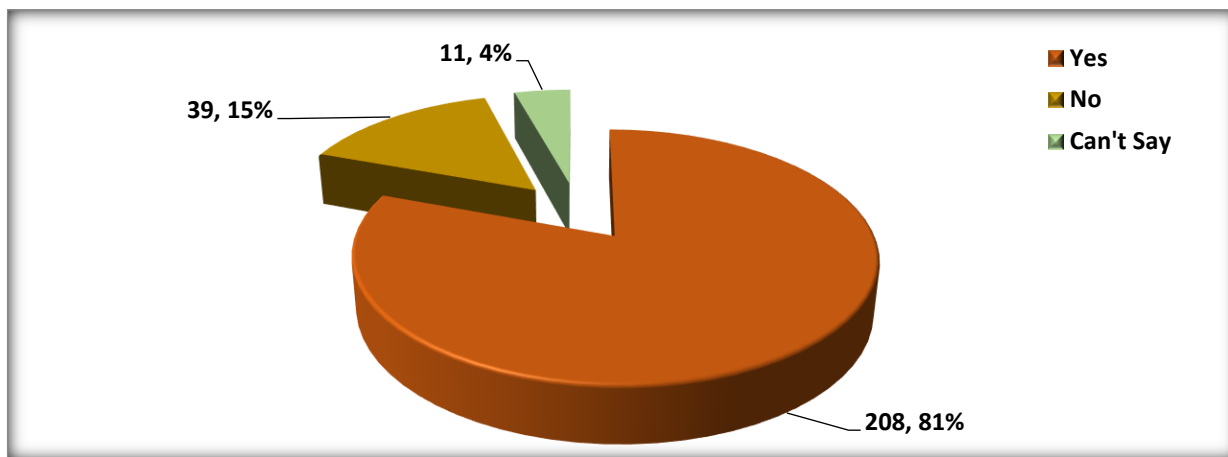


Figure 2: Respondents' views on friendly relationships with their neighbours

It is shown in Table no. 2 and Figure. 2 that 81.0% of respondents have a friendly relationship with their neighbour, 15% of respondents do not have a friendly relationship with their neighbour and 04% of respondents can't say about it.

Table 3: Respondents' views on their visit to religious places more after retirement

Gender	Response						Total
	Yes		No		Can't say		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Male	120	76.4	46	66.7	26	81.2	192
Female	37	23.6	23	33.3	6	17.8	66
Total	157	100	69	100	32	100	258

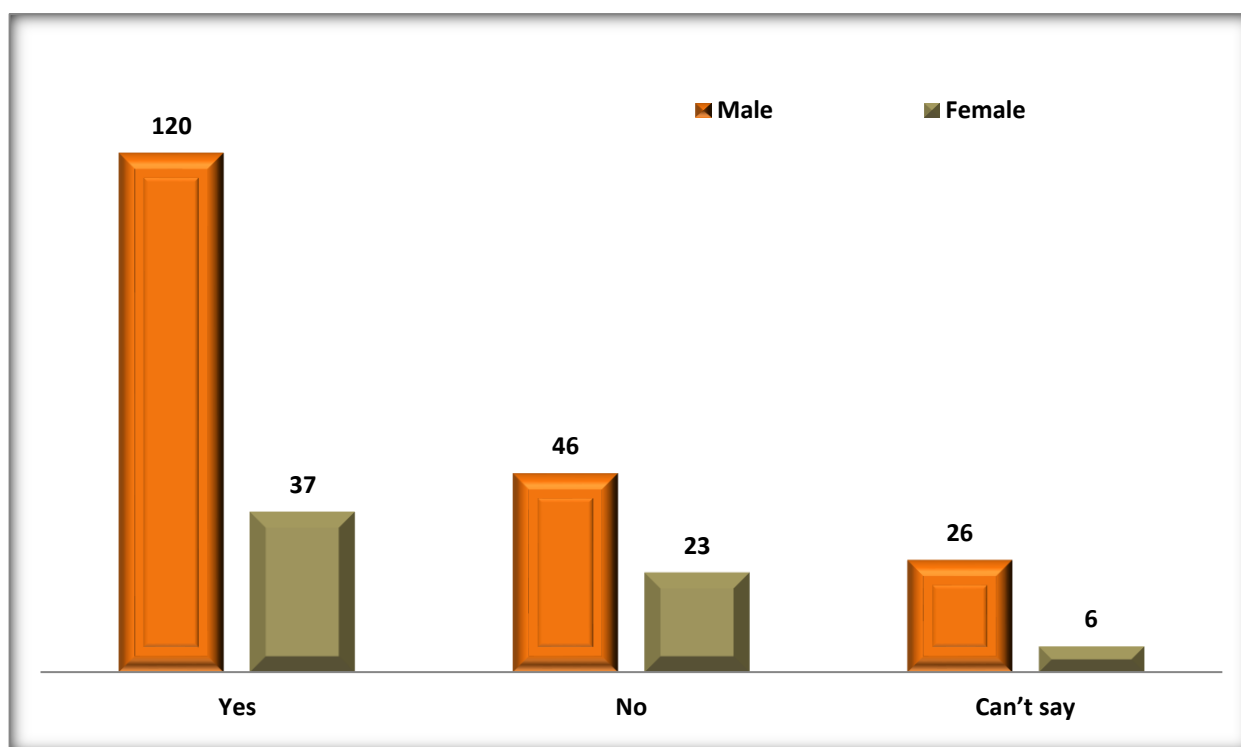


Figure 3: Respondents' views on their visit to religious places after retirement

It is shown in the table no. 3 and figure. 3 that 157 respondents (76.4% Male and 23.6% Female) frequently visit religious places after retirement, 69 respondents (66.7% Male and 33.3% female) do not frequently visit religious places after retirement and 32 respondents (81.2% male and 17.8 female) can't say about it.

Table 4: Respondents' views on their plan to settle in their ancestral village

Response	Service class								Total
	Class I		Class II		Class III		Class IV		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Yes	21	12.8%	33	20.1%	51	31.1%	59	36.0%	164
No	9	17.6%	14	27.5%	18	35.3%	10	19.6%	51
Can't say	3	7.0%	15	34.9%	12	27.9%	13	30.2%	43
Total	33	12.5%	62	23.4%	81	30.6%	82	30.9%	258

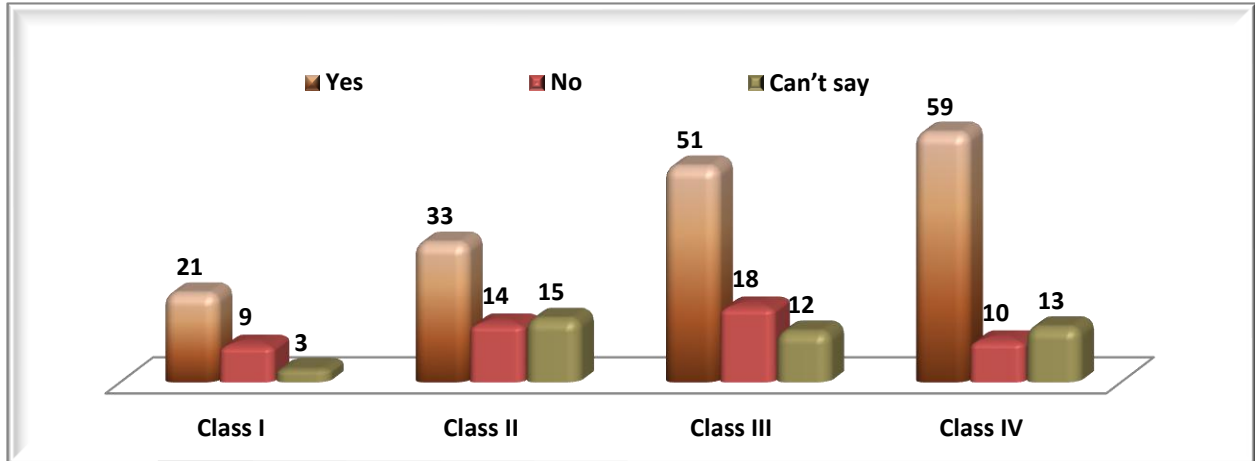
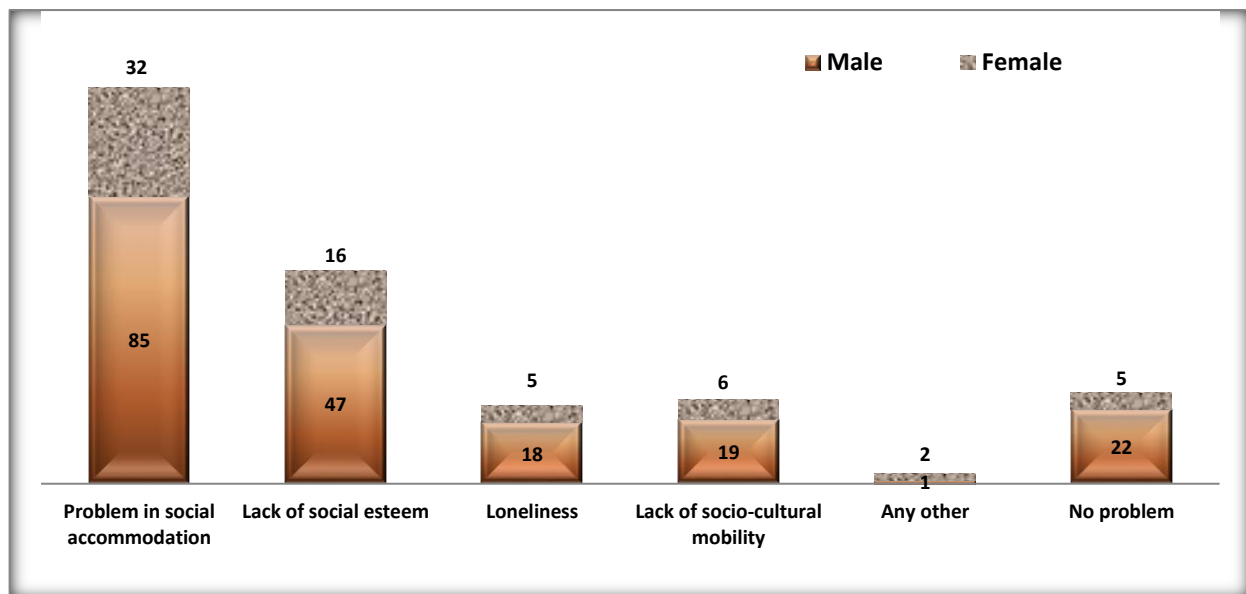


Figure 4: Respondents' views on their plan to settle in their ancestral village

It is shown in the table no. 4 and figure. 4 that most of the respondents i.e. 164 (36% of class IV employees, 31.1% of class III, 20.1% of class II and 12.8% of class I) employees would like to settle in the village after retirement, 51 (35.3% respondents of class III employees, 27.5% respondents of class II, 19.6% of class IV and 17.6% of class I) employees would not like to settle in the village and 43 (34.9% respondents of class II employees, 30.2% of class IV, 27.9% of class III and 7% of class I) employee can't say about it.

Table 5: Respondents' views on the socio-cultural problems, being faced after retirement

Socio-Cultural Problems	Gender				Total
	Male		Female		
	N	%	N	N %	
Problems in social accommodation	85	72.6%	32	27.4%	117
Lack of social esteem	47	74.6%	16	25.4%	63
Loneliness	18	78.3%	5	21.7%	23
Lack of socio-cultural mobility	19	76.0%	6	24.0%	25
Any other	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	3
No problem	22	81.5%	5	18.5%	27
Total	192	72.5%	66	24.9%	258



It is revealed in the table no. 5 and figure. 5 that 39% of respondents agreed that Love marriage is the most important social and cultural change, according to 23% of respondents the orientation of girls towards career instead of marriage is the most important socio-cultural change, according to 17% of respondents the abandoned of social and cultural vices related to women is the most important socio-cultural change, according to 11% respondents inter-caste marriage is the most important socio-cultural change, according to 6% respondents abandoned of religious and caste discrimination is the most important socio-cultural change and according to 4% respondents abandoned of gender and equality is the most important socio-cultural change in the changing society.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we found that after retirement a person gets more evolved into his / her so far ignored part of social surroundings. There was a significant change in the social world of retirees from achieved status and roles playing as active working paid professionals to the ascribed status and participatory role-playing in the socio-cultural realm. Retirement can be taken as a phenomenon that gives relief from the stresses of a job on one hand and creates new opportunities to explore new and old interests with a wider range of choices and time. On the other hand, retirement generally results in loss of job, reduction in income, loss of status as a contributor to the economy particularly and broken contacts with the customary associates. In some social life childhood friendship is the sweetest phenomenon that ever happens again, though necessities of livelihood never give time and space to people to carry childhood friends/ friends always with them, but their memories they do carry. In this study, a majority (66%) of retirees were still having a special bonding some hoe with their childhood friends and most of them agreed that it could have been possible due to the availability of a lot of free time to explore old contacts after retirement. This was also true in the case of friendly relationships with their neighbours, 81% of respondents had good relations with their neighbours, however, there were 15% of respondents disagreed with that statement due to many reasons like- neighbours' introverted behaviour, unmanageable in terms of spreading construction material and garbage on their way, listening loud music which disrupts their peace and matter of caste and region. It was seen in the study that all respondents agreed that having at least one pet or animal was a tension and loneliness buster. According to them, these creatures are the best way to handle the emotional swings and loneliness that a retiree has to undergo after retirement effects. This was the best way to keep busy and physically active after retirement. The majority (81%) of respondents had at least one dog as a pet of the family. Studies related to religious practices and beliefs in old age reveal that participation in religious activities was one of the highly rated leisure time activities in which retirees usually engaged themselves. Bhatia (1983; *ibid*) opined that "there is no as such evidence at large scale that makes elderly turning to religious as they grow old." However, religion was supposed to be an important aspect of the socio-cultural life of the retirees that helped them to meet some of their social needs in the form of providing companionship that may have been lost elsewhere and helped to retain a feeling of self-respect. There were (120 i.e..76.4 %) male respondents out of a total of 192 and (37 i.e. 23.4%) female respondents out of a total of 66, who had visited religious places more after retirement. It was observed that most retirees wanted to spend the rest of life in joy and peace. Most of them agreed on the impact of their busy schedule and fast running life they had, before retirement, on their personal life and they regretted because of not spending much time with their family somehow became a reason for breach between family members and retirees. Thus, for maintaining a sense of meaningfulness and significance of life after retirement and for exploring and utilizing the compensatory values that were supposed to be potential in old age but being neglected due to lack of time to think over this, the majority of respondents started to participate in socio-cultural activities more in later. The majority of respondents (46.6%) strongly agreed followed by (42%) were simply agreed that they had become more participatory in social activities because of having more free time to spend. The majority of respondents (63.56%) had a plan to settle sooner or later in their ancestral village. Most of them,

nearly (66%) of respondents, had a main reason for serving and performing ancestral beliefs and customs in the village, and nearly (26%) of respondents were stuck on the reason for living in peace and calmly after retirement. A huge majority of respondents (87.59%) agreed on frequent travelling the short distant places for refreshment in their life. Travelling ancestral places was still on first choice of the respondents followed by tourist places and visiting the relative homes came after that. In Indian society, women seem to have restricted interests, while men have quite varied interests. It was observed that male retirees were found to have a lower level of understanding of social contacts but were more involved in informal interactions with friends and neighbours as compared to female retirees. It was found that almost all female retirees were spending their free time on interpersonal activities like involvement in interactions with others, while male retirees were found to be engaged themselves alone in their free time. That is why (72.5%) of male retirees and (24.9%) of female retirees had socio-cultural problems after their retirement. Problems in social accommodation, reduction in social esteem, loneliness and lack of social mobility were the major problems being faced by them. Boredom due to free time and utilization of time are two phases of one problem. There were nearly (36.4%) of respondents who were found associated with any cult or party or organization. There were 54%, 11%, 30% and 05% respondents had made choice to join social, political, religious and cultural organization respectively after retirement. Most of retirees were agreed to take social relationship as a cooperative correlation ship, followed by a time immortal relationship. Soodan (1975) had found that women retirees after retirement mostly do odd jobs connected with house hold work. Visit to place of worship or friends or reading books in not very popular among women retirees. In this study it was found that women dominated house hold works itself was a leisure time activity and the majority of retirees (51%) irrespective their specific gender were found indulged in domesticated house hold works, like dish washing, sweeping etc. nearly (24%) were utilizing their free time in watching Television and reading newspaper or books, followed by (9%) spending time with friends and neighbours. It was interesting to know that at least (7%) of respondents were found busy in internet surfing and clubbing, out of which nearly (58%) were internet users before retirement and (42%) had become internet users after retirement. It was seen that most internet -user retirees (45%) were active on social networking sites like Facebook, and (22%) in acquiring knowledge and news through searching web portals. Nearly (8%) were acquainted with video call facilities through the Internet and they were enjoying chatting with their distant family members. It was found in this study that being social in society refers to coordination with the fast-changing values in society. There were found mixed trends in the acceptance of social cultural changes by the respondents. The majority of respondents (39%) agreed on the acceptance of love marriages, (23%) of respondents agreed on the orientation of girls' education and career before their marriage, (17% agreed to avoid social and religious vices against women, (11%) respondents were found to accept socio-cultural changes in term of inter-caste marriages, (6%) were found to accept the avoidance of religious and caste discrimination as a factor of social-cultural change.

In brief, it is found in the study that Changing roles and subsequent re-socialization going through retirement life, level of economic security, time activities, accommodation and assimilation with new challenges arising from the sudden change in active working life all together contribute to the formation of the social and cultural world of the elderly, and for obtaining fullest gist of the retirement life one has to have actively participated in every realm of socio-cultural life.

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