

Unsafe State of Old age Persons in Present Era

Chandrawati Bhatt
Assistant Professor,
Deptt. of Geography,
LSM Govt PG College,
Pithoragarh

Introduction

Old age- the age of dependency, old age- the age of emotional devastations, old age- the age of physical and mental weaknesses , which curbs and fumble down a senior citizen to ground. Old age comprises "the later part of life; the period of life after youth and middle age , usually with reference to deterioration". In China, if older parents/guardians (aged above 60 years) are staying alone and are unable to look after their expenses the children are suppose to look after the financial, medicinal and spiritual needs and even make a regular visit – this is a compulsory act and government of China looks after its application. But in India, we live mostly in joint families, though the current trend of families is changing to nuclear families but still the old people feel safer and happier with families. They are taken well care of in joint families. Do u really think so??? Think again.....

In joint families their rights are restrained, they are ill treated,or treated well only till the time they fulfill the selfish needs of their family members in the form of property, doing household work or giving away their monthly pensions.,We often hear of senior citizens who are homeless, thrown to old age homes, or kept in cages, fed less etc etc.... they all are the examples of unfairness and brutality towards them.

The respect and care for seniors has been our cultural heritage ever since the existence of humanity. In the Vedic literature we hear about the obediency of a son who walked to stay in scary and tough forest leaving all the comfort and riches of palace (Lord Ram) in a single signal by his father (King Dushrath), we hear about the greatest student ever India has produced (eklavya) who gave his right thumb to his teacher just to prove his high regards for his Guru (Drondacharya) , there had been ample examples to be coated. We live in a country which inspires the world the art of morality, obedience, unity , perseverance, etc still why are our seniors suffering from such a demolishment????

Whom to blame?- Western culture? Job scarcity? Generation gap? Profitable generation? School and college curriculum? Parental inefficiency? Values?? Talking of

Western Culture

The culture talks about “independence”, “lifestyle” and “development” here the children after 18 leave their parental home and live on their own but in India we stick to our houses till we don't get placed outside the city , here our parents take care of our needs till the time we get a job or sometimes till they die. So where in western culture parents don't stay with children when they grow old :so is it fair to leave the parents on their own in India?.

Talking of

Job Security

In search of better job opportunities children leave their parents and go to other cities or countries to earn a livelihood. **Generation Gap-** are parents really doing fine by blaming children for being disobedient? Or the luxuries of past are necessities of present? Have they been totally obedient at their times? These points needs some introspection.

Profitable Generation

Are we just focusing on assets that bring us some profit whether its business, friendship or even parents or relatives. Thanks to the competitive world no time to waste on non profitable investment right?.

School and College Curriculum

The curriculum only talks of success and failures. We just focus on winning.

Parental inefficiency

The inefficiency either to fulfill the needs of family in past or the inefficiency in parenting due to time constraints in busy world where both parents work or just one is involved ; it weakens the parent- child bond which hampers in future.

Values

Were the values well given and adhered by children? Did parents practice what they preach to children? Because they are childrens' first teacher and role model. Name a reason and you have it....

Before talking about various perspective of old age issue lets first have a glimpse at the rights given by the government of India to the senior citizens:-

A. Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973

Section 125(1)(2) makes it incumbent for a person having sufficient means to maintain his father or mother who is unable to maintain himself or herself and on getting proof of neglect or refusal, may be ordered by a first class magistrate to make a monthly allowance not exceeding Rs.500/-. It is applicable to all, irrespective of their religious faith and religious persuasions, and includes adoptive parents. This section has been interpreted by the supreme court in its ruling so as to make daughters and sons, married or unmarried, equally responsible to maintain their parents.

B. Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956

By Section 20(1) of the act, every Hindu son or daughter is under obligation to maintain aged and infirm parent, if unable to maintain himself or herself is entitled to maintenance. Amount is determined by the court taking into consideration the position and status of the parties.

C. Muslim Law

Children have a duty to maintain their aged parents even under the Muslims Law. According to Mulla:

- a. Children in easy circumstances are bound to maintain their poor parents, although the latter may be able to earn something for themselves.
- b. A son, though in strained circumstances is bound to maintain his mother, if the mother is poor, though she may not be infirm.
- c. A son, who though poor, is earning something, is bound to support his father who earns nothing.

According to the Tyabji, parents and grandparents in indigent circumstances are entitled, under Hanafi Law, to maintenance from their children and grandchildren who have the means, even if they are able to earn their livelihood. Both sons and daughters have a duty to maintain their parents under the Muslim law. The obligation, however, is dependent on their having the means to do so.

D. Christian And Parsi Law

The Christians and Parsis have no personal laws providing for maintenance for the parents. Parents who wish to seek maintenance have to apply under provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code.

E. The Himachal Pradesh Maintenance of Parents and Dependents Act 2001

The Himachal Pradesh Maintenance of Parents and Dependents Act 2001 (as Assented to by the President on 8th September 2001) makes it mandatory for children to look after their aged parents and other dependents or pay a maintenance allowance. The amount of maintenance is to commensurate with the family's status.

The state Government through this legislation has tried to bypass the court. Complainants can simply go to a Sub Divisional Magistrate or any other appellate authority to seek redressal of their grievances. The Government of Maharashtra has passed a Bill on similar lines.

F. Judgment against Harassment of Parents

The Delhi High Court on 20th January 2004 asked the son and daughter-in-law of a septuagenarian couple, who had approached the Delhi High Court for help, to ensure that the old parents are not harassed. The couple had alleged they were being tortured by their children.

Reasons for Non Practice of Rights

- 1- **Fear of Societal Laughter** - The old persons in India have a social fear of being a talk of the town or being laughed on by the relatives so they don't want to practice their rights.
- 2- **Non Acceptance by Children**- They fear that in acute emergencies their families will not take care if they take legal steps.
- 3- **Slow Judiciary**- India is defamed for its slow legal procedures and almost impossible justice where justice reach when people fighting for it either looses hope and discontinue or has deceased. So disfaith in judiciary is one the reason.
- 4- **Use of Power**- If the relatives,family members have strong position in society old age persons know its difficult to win .
- 5- **Devoid of Love from Grandchildren**- They fear that it might create boundaries which will make them away from from family and specially grandchildren.
- 6- **Fear of Robbery**- At times old people don't want to accept the cold relations to attract robbers to attack them thinking all lonely.
- 7- **Lack of Knowledge of their Rights**- This is one the major reason why old age persons are cheated and misbehaved because majority are unaware of their rights. Many doubt them and many fear to implement them.

Coming to the Specific Perspectives

Social Perspective

Old age persons have a very important role to play in the society. They are guardians, true friends of children and a guide to neighbours. They resolve many issues in neighbourhood and even in families: between spouse or other members. They are mentors who bear immense knowledge of culture and subject. Their free guidance and help is always available which should be used well and respected by youth. Many old people join NGOs and help people in various issues like child marriage, female foeticide, education , child labour etc. they even have many important roles like to elect the government as the majority of voters are senior citizens because the current generation regard voting dates as holidays.... Sigh . many of them become discussion specialist on various news channels .etc etc but many of the senior citizens suffer immense downfall and degradation during old age, most of it start from the family within. Their views are regarded typecasted or too modest to work in current era ,they fight for their existence in society and family. They start feeling themselves useless. A state of loneliness and depression surrounds them finally.

Causes

- a. Overcompetitive world
- b. Practical mindset of present generation
- c. High regards for only English commuters neglecting regional language as a mode of communication

- d. World busy on pleasing outsiders and avoiding their roots
- e. Underconfidence on viewpoint of senior citizen; youth claiming to know more themselves

Suggestions

- a. Assigning the senior citizens with authoritative position in house or in society, whether head of the family or secretary of society.
- b. Involving them or seeking guidance before taking any important decisions.
- c. Introducing them to other old person so that they can spend some quality time together.
- d. Leaving some responsibilities of children and home on them
- e. Making arrangements for their yearly tours with their groups.
- f. Participating in their area of interest.

Financial Perspective

Old age persons fail on independency due to financial inefficiency. Old age people depend on their children for bigger help even if they can afford their day to day expenses, hence expenses on medical grounds are specially relied on children because senior citizens while raising children think less of their post retirement time. they give whatever they have in the education, marriage and propertial scarcity of children. So, finally they cannot live a life they were leading before or have to do various adjustments.

Causes

- a. Spending all the wealth on children.
- b. Not having retirement plans or savings.
- c. Emergency lending of money which was never reimbursed.
- d. Giving away the property too soon to their children.
- e. Overtrusting their children or relatives.
- f. Being robbed.
- g. Frauded, cheated etc

Suggestions

- a. Never tell about your savings or income to others which include your family and friends too.
- b. While focusing on your childrens' career think about your future too and save enough.
- c. In case of male always make your wife first nominee and same goes for the female.
- d. Let your passwords be handled by you only.
- e. Keep good eye on servants as well.
- f. Never show people the area where you keep your money or valuables.
- g. In case of any doubt donot hesitate to contact police.
- h. Donot trust anyone blindly.
- i. Keep your doors locked and safe locked too.
- j. Avoid going out late or try and go in buddy pair telling your family where you are leaving.
- k. Look for a recreational activity that can even make u financially stronger like- giving tuitions, day care etc.
- l. Keep on changing your will as per the people added in the family or deceased. even if you are finding someone unsuitable to take the responsibility.

Political Perspective

Senior citizens comprise majority of our Parliament, they have active careers in politics and few have just interest in politics. While in political parties they are the leaders who are well treated by youth leaders but in few cases we have seen them uprooted by many young leaders. They are often charged of being narrow minded or rough tongued etc but few leaders like ex-PM Shri Atal Bihari Bajpayee who stand out in every sphere is a good example to keep. When old people are in politics there are more chances of mature decisions because experience speaks but the retiring age of politician is a debatable topic. While dealing with competitors outside their party they deal with competition in party and family too. Hence ,they should always secure their position well. The present generation however seem more interested in youth leaders hence here also old age persons are failing to keep the population intact by keeping them interested. The biggest reason could be that India at present is having youth in majority who trust in new methods which young politicians promise and they have lost faith in old traditional politics.

Causes

- a. Overambitious youth.
- b. Cut throat competition.
- c. People favouring more to people who talk of infrastructure and development.
- d. Sometimes even dressing sense and English is found attractive to people and it is considered a measure of intelligence.
- e. Favouring the family members more .

- f. Failing on one issue.

Suggestions

- a. Be flexible enough and change as per the changing trend.
- b. Donot trust the party workers blindly.
- c. Evaluate well what you speaking and its after effects.
- d. Donot promise what you can't provide.

Psychological Perspective

Old age persons are psychologically distressed more than youth because of their lonely less active lives .They are emotionally vulnerable, have a lot of dependency on family for emotional support, small- small incidences which take place in family or surrounding are enough to trigger them, they become acute in expressions, they respond more to situations, they often feel targeted at times or not valued looking at the atmosphere. Hence, old age depression is very common, they feel aloofness. They suffer from dementia and so they become little bit difficult for the family to handle at times. Broken relations affect the old people equally or apparently more than children. We even hear of suicides of old people due to tough situations, hence family support is always required.

Causes

- a. Over expectation from children, siblings, friends etc.
- b. Loss of members of family
- c. Devoid of care and affection
- d. No company
- e. Missing independence.
- f. Aloofness from grandchildren.
- g. Sickness
- h. Missing their age group company .

Suggestions

- a. Giving emotional support wherever required.
- b. Engaging them in recreational activity like satsang or parks for nana- nani etc
- c. Giving them monthly pocket even without asking
- d. Making children more closer to them
- e. Making them final decision matter in their affairs and allowing their opinions in your family as well.
- f. Seeking professional help when required.

Religious Perspective

Last but not the least religious perspective. Old age brings you more closer to religious activity and more belief on spirituality. The old people occupy their maximum time in religious activities. Few lucky have enough money to make their timely pilgrim rest don't. Hence it's the duty of children and other family members to support them. At times they are fraud by babas and priest ,so family members should take a check to avoid falling them prey. Encouraging their religious interest is must because the old people believe to invest the rest of their days in shadow of almighty. While earning for the family they almost neglected the eternal soul but in the last phase they feel more peaceful and protected when they worship , attend pilgrim or attend spiritual speeches/programmes by spiritual leaders. But they suffer a lot of disfavor and rebel from family at times.

Causes

- a. Practical generation who doesnot trust the existence of god.
- b. Competitive world who find doing religious activities as a wastage of time.
- c. Looking for God only in the emergencies
- d. Profitising even religious beliefs
- e. Fake religious leaders who make people more aggressive and depressed.

Suggestions

- a. When young the old age persons should brief well the religious activities to their children so that it doesn't remain a taboo for them.
- b. Individuals should appreciate and encourage the religious activities of their old age family members because it keeps them engage and positive.
- c. Taking good interest in religion and respecting others religion as well. It will help you grow.
- d. Arranging timely pilgrim for family members who are unable to finance it.
- e. Avoiding money makers in the name of religion.

Conclusion

We are living in the generation of fast moving cars, bullet trains ,android etc where the technology is making us closer to people of other counties or states and far from our loved ones, communication to near and dear ones is less. We trust online relations more than offline. In reality we also know that no offline friend can help us it's the family, the friends and relatives whom we have earned in years that will walk and help us. The world is ready to laugh on you ,no one will understand your miseries more than your family and loved ones. Hence its time to inculcate good values in children when young so that they help their parents in old age, doing a little homework for old age will help us live the phase better, over dependency is dangerous its better to be independent. Trust people not relations, but never blindly trust anyone.

The state of old age people can only be improved if both Government and people come together for this rescue. The injustice tolerated is the injustice done. Hence, it should be curbed at the first step itself. There are many Government and Non Governmental

Organizations like: “Old age solutions”, “Agewell foundation”, “Vanprastha “etc who work for old homeless people, they give shelter to the homeless and even fight for their rights. There are even some online sites who come to the rescue like: “ HelpAge India (HAI), www.helpageindia.org”, “International Longevity Centre –India (ILC), <http://ilcindia.org>”, “National Institute of Social Defence (NISD), <http://nisd.gov.in/>” etc.

So the state of old age person can only be improved if they want to improve it themselves. Unless and until they call for help, help can't reach them. Even its our duty to safeguard and protect the old person by making them well aware of their rights. Be it your neighbours , relatives or own parents they should be encouraged enough to practice the existing rights whenever required. We can only hope for a prosperous and developed nation only if the condition of old age persons becomes stable.

References

1. *Kennedy G.J. The epidemiology of late-life depression. In: Kennedy G. J, editor. Suicide and depression in late life: Critical issues in treatment, research and public policy. New York: John Wiley and Sons; 1996. pp. 23–37.*
2. *Laura E. Berk, Development Through the Lifespan, (Allyn & Bacon, 2010), 610.*
3. *Richard A. Posner, Aging and Old Age (University of Chicago, 1995), 112, 116.*
4. <http://www.oldagesolutions.org/>