

Ageing and Its Impact on the Health of Elderly Citizens in Old Age Homes in Guwahati, Assam

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INTRODUCTION

Ageing is a natural process which is inevitable. Everyone who is born in this world will eventually age with time. There is a rapid change in the demographic scenario and the growth rate of the older population is increasing gradually in India over the past few decades and it will continue to do so. This can be due to improvement in the field of the medical sector and various other factors as well. As a result, the aged are likely to suffer from problems related to health and health care, family composition, so on and so forth. In India, traditionally the concept of 'Joint family' was practised but with the advent of urbanization, modernization, industrialization, and globalization, there have been major structural and functional transformations in the family. The joint family system is disappearing in the course of time as the people now do not have time for their family because of their work as they have to stay away from their family in different places. People have started believing in 'Nuclear family' system because the standard and cost of living have gone high and working class people are not being able to look after their large family. This has led to the elderly people shift to the old age homes either forcefully or sometimes by their own choice (which is very rare). The elderly people suffer a lot emotionally. They go through a traumatic phase. At this stage of life, elderly people need a lot of care, love, support, and affection from their family. Deprivation from all these leads to depression, anxiety and sleep disorder and various other health problems like diabetes, hyper-tension, and high/low pressure, etc. including mental problems among the elderly people. There is an immense need for proper human rights and health policies for the well-being and upliftment of the health of older people.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the multi-dimensional factors that led to the shift of the elderly citizens to the old age home from their own children's home, to study the family and family relationships with them.
2. Lately, to understand the role of the human rights for the aged and how it has its impact on the upliftment of the health of the aged or is there any gap between the implementation of this rights and meeting the needs at the grass root level.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in the two old age homes in Guwahati, Assam. Qualitative method approach is being used for conducting the research. In-depth interview was conducted with the respondents. Purposive sampling was incorporated. The sample size was 30 elderly people and 4 officials from 2 old age homes.

ANALYSIS

The Helping Hand Old Age Home is situated in Binova Nagar, Kalapahar in Guwahati. This old age home is a private body that was established in the year 2015 under an NGO named 'Wide Vision' and is run by three entrepreneurs/ businessmen of Guwahati. A monthly expense of Rupees 10000 each (Rupees 30000 in total) is given by the three partners. All the expenses are borne by the partners. Apart from that, people donate money accordingly to their wish. There are a total of 15 old members residing out of which 9 are women and 6 are men. The major health problems that are found among the old aged members are depression, diabetes, pressure, gastric, dementia, back pain, weakness, can't walk properly or can't see and hear properly. For treatments, the patients are taken to Guwahati Medical College and Hospital. The old age home is also tied up with hospitals like Hayat and Pragjyotish. 9 staff members are working in this old age home. The food provided is a total vegetarian for all the elderly residents because they cannot digest easily the meat.

The Mother's Old Age Home is situated in Bamunimaidam, Guwahati. There are a total of 58 elderly people out of which, 56 are women and 2 are men. Common people donate money and with this money, the old age home is run. The major health problems that are found among the old aged members are diabetes, pressure, back pain, weakness. For treatments, the patients are taken to Guwahati Medical College and Hospital. 12 staff members are working in this old age home. The food provided is both vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian.

The main reason behind the old people living in the old age home is that their children do not look after their ageing parents when they need their children near them the most. Because of urbanisation, the structure of the family has become smaller in size with time. The expenses are increasing. People have become more competitive and have become emotionless. Children began to dishonour their parents and these affect the old parents in a severe way and in most of the time, this leads to mental depression amongst the parents. Many of the children force, directly and indirectly, their parents to leave the house most of the time because of differences in their thoughts resulting in misunderstandings. Another reason is that familial clash regarding property takes place which is one of the most reasons because of which, when the parents deny transferring the property rights to their children, the children forces the parents to leave. Secondly, parents, especially the mother do not have a good relationship with their daughter in law and often clashes and verbal fights take place in the home and it becomes beyond the control of the son/ husband. A point comes where the man has to choose

between the mother and the wife; the man choosing his wife leads to the shifting of the old parents to the old age homes.

Every human has the right to live his/her life with dignity, affection and empathy. Every human is entitled to human rights and no one has the authority to violate the rights of others. But, in this case, the human rights of the old people. They are being subjugated and humiliated, manhandled in their very own home and by their very own people. The old people are thrown out from their own home. The children do not visit their parents in old age homes. This leads to mental trauma and depression amongst old people.

From the above, it can be clearly seen that the basic rights of elderly people are being exploited. They are being deprived of their own family and their love. In this age, where the elderly's need the utmost care and love, they are being mentally harassed by their very own family. When a person becomes old, some health problems arise naturally but with the entire trauma's that they suffer from; the elderly people go through tremendous mental pain along with physical problems. Even though the staffs of the old age home do look after the residents but there is a difference. The old age home's administrative member have had provided every facility and take care of every health issues of the elder people. They do avail all the health facilities provided by the government for the elder people and take good care of health. Immediate treatment is provided as the administrative members take the elder people to good hospitals. What should have been the responsibilities of the children are been done by the old age home administrative and staffs.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that residents of old age home are both men and women suffering from almost the same mental trauma and depression. The majority of the occupants of the old age homes are women. It is very heartening to see that at this old age when they need the utmost love and care from their children and family, they are being abandoned by their family. But one must say there are some good people who work selflessly to look after these old people who have lost hope with the rest of their life. But it is also not possible for the small group of people to look after a large number of old people who are homeless. There remains a question for monetary factor. Though the government of India have implemented rules for the betterment of life for the elderly people it can be seen that despite much effort from the government and various NGO's and individuals are working hard there is still a major gap between the policy-making and implementing at the grass root level. Though the world has become immensely industrialised and urbanised abandoning old parents for the sake of money, property and no time is not what means to be called modern.

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