

MODERN SOCIETY AND THE AGED

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ABSTRACT

India is a country with fine tradition of respecting loving and supporting the aged. The extended families of several generations under the same roof were the basic unit of production and livelihood in traditional agricultural society in ancient India. Every society has developed its own system of caring of the aged base on its culture and tradition. India has developed a unique system of caring for the old by the family which maintains their dignity and fulfils their physical and emotional needs. In modern society, as a result of changing circumstances due to demographic transition, rapid pace of industrialization and urbanization, breakdown of joint or extended family structure into nuclear ones, the older people have become increasingly vulnerable not only to the physical disabilities but also to social, economic and emotional alienation and isolation.

Keywords: *Aged, Tradition, Generation, Modern Society, Industrialization and Urbanization.*

Introduction

When a human baby is born, it grows, attains its childhood, adulthood and finally becomes old and ultimately passes away. Becoming old is a biological process and it occurs naturally to all living organisms. Man is not an exception to it. This is inevitable but although the process of aging is a biological phenomenon it is very much conditional to or associated with various social factors, cultural values, norms and regulation to at great extent. Old age is a part of our life-cycle; individuals survive childhood, grow to maturity and become old in all societies. At its simplest, modernity is a simpler term for modern society or industrial civilization.

New generation acquire the skills for new occupational jobs and join the industrial workforce, replacing older people to less prestigious and obsolete jobs. Modernizing advances in economic & industrial technology create new occupations in factories located near transportation and services. This often leads to retirement, reversing the role of old & young. In traditional societies, older family members control family production and younger ones are dependents on the old. When older people are removed from the industrial labor market, they become dependent on the young, losing their social status.

Aged, Modern Society & Role Play

Aging is clearly a universal and irreversible process. Old age is the last phase of the human life cycle and the timing of this phase; its impact on role relationship and the meaning attached to it vary in different societies and even in different sub-groups of society. In the process of aging, the last phase is considered as a decline and death; and in this phase majority of the aged face economic, social and psychological health problem which of course, vary from individual to individual. Further, the determination of old age differs from society to society.

The old age there has been a big alteration in the structure of the society. Such a shift in the structure of society, which has resulted in the replacement of multi-generational families with the two generation units, has also had a negative effect on the role of old people many of whom have lost their social security in the family. Gradually most of them have relegated to the fringes of society where they live in isolation as unwanted elements, and this is to some extent true in all industrialized societies.

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The older and aged in our culture have enjoyed social security against infirmities, losses, privileged of being heard by the younger generation and dominated the high status in decision making of the family matter, is now fast disappearing in the urban family setting. The transition of our culture from rural to urban way of life, the reduction in living space per family unit, the resulting shift from a three generation to a two generation family system and the rise in standard of living and care which are considered suitable make the fulfillment of these traditional responsibility difficult.

The urban family is undergoing changes in its traditional status and roles, due to largely the impact of migration, changes in occupations, High level of education and urbanization. The tradition role of the family has a trend towards change, which has affected both younger and older people in their status, respect and interpersonal relationships. The hard hit by these changes are the older people, who contributed a lot throughout their life to the development of family members, and now when it is their turn to receive from their family they are now met with cold treatment.

Deviance of the younger people from this is not normally appreciated by the Indian tradition in traditional society. In this regard Kautilya in his Arthashastra, has reprimanded "Those who neglect their aged parents and has permitted the village elders to punish those sons who fail to provide care for the aged parents".

Hence, within this culture-based social frame work, conscious parents nourish their children with utmost care, educate them with highest sincerity and socialize them as to how they would become self-sufficient in future and support parents during their old age. When the children become parents, they also, follow the same process of socialization and expect the same pattern of behavior from the children. Thus, mutual reciprocity between the aged and the young is quite essential for the sake of leading life safely and enjoying the god-given precious life peacefully.

Perception about Aged in Modern Society

- In present society aged are labeled with negative statements such as wrinkled, cranky, inattentive, absent minded, helpless, feeble, live in the past or a burden in society.
- There is a common perception in the modern society that aged people are less valuable.
- The aged are often considered as being unhealthy, sorrowful, negative personality traits, lonely and excluded from society.
- In present society so many factors are responsible for modern perceptions towards the aged such as their age, gender, level of knowledge, interaction with the aged, and adult's cultural influence and media.
- Modernization is the main reason why the aged loses power decline status and influence in society.
- In modern society the happiness of an aged depends on how they are actively involved.
- Modernization and industrialization leads to socio cultural change, due to which, the importance of family and respecting and valuing the aged become limited.
- In modern societies electronic media also encourages and showcases the youth more. To sell their product or services, companies often reflect aged feeble and unattractive.
- In present society television also play an important role in public outlook towards the aged. It is often responsible for negative thinking towards the aged.

Some Suggestion to Improve the Lives of Aged People

- In the changing society it is important that we should increase our knowledge and understanding of ageing so that we can prevent this discrimination and mistreatment of the aged.
- To ensure that aged people are treated fairly and with respect, government must develop strategies, implement policies and law.
- In modern society, groups and campaigns must be organized to ensure that our aged are valued and respected by providing adequate care.
- By the groups and social activities we can promote how aged has contributed to society.
- Educational programs should be arranged in those areas where the public attitudes about the aged people are most negative.

- We should tell about the contribution of aged people to society through awareness programs, so that they may receive the respect they deserve.
- We should include aged people in community education programs so that they do not consider themselves socially excluded or isolated but more valuable for society.
- In modern societies we should encourage our aged to participate in community social gathering.

Conclusion

The general model of the relation between modernization and aging predict a linear relationship between the status of older people and the degree of modernization experienced in a given society. According to this theory, the more modernized a society becomes, the status of older people decline. Modernization thus inevitably affects the entire social structure of newly modernized societies, including the position customarily held by its elderly community, regardless of when or where it occurred. Most of the aged are fed up with the failed promise of families' life and suffer from psychological trauma and mental distress and in many cases their distress condition and painful annoyance remain obscure for the public. Thus, the need of studying of the problems of the aged has become an urgent concern for all of us with a view to safeguarding their rights and interests and thereby helps in bringing out a healthy and problem free society.

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