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Changing Status of Elderly in Indian families

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One of the most significant demographic changes of our time is the rapidly expanding number of older adults in the world population. In India, as well as in countries across the globe the population is ageing very rapidly. The growing elderly segment of the population has introduced new societal challenges for providing this group with health care, financial assistance and social and emotional support. The ageing population trend in conjunction with social and economic trends is also ushering in new concerns about changing family values, living arrangements and life styles.

Aging and Elderly Although the large population of elderly lives in the rural set up there is a trend of increased mobility of young adults from the rural areas to urban centers for making a living. This trend is contributing to the nuclearization of families, leaving behind the elderly parents, grandparents back in the rural set up. This has, in turn, led to the weakening of the traditional elderly caregiver support system and an increase in elderly problems in this changing scenario.

On the other hand old age is also depicted negatively in terms of physical decline. Elderly are characterized or stereotyped as ill, tired self pitying, unhappy and unproductive. The negative content of the condition of old age derives from the relationship of individuals and society; the absence of a role, the isolation from the significant social life, the marginality in family relationships and the lack of commitment.

The elderly are also said to be losing gradually their decision making authority. Elders suffer from a sense of dispossession that reflects loss of roles and status, as they are deprived of the earlier identities defined by parental or employment functions. The hardest part of being old are declining health and lack of finance, threat of dependence, and the loss of beloved ones.

Methodology In the present scenario, the aged do not have the full authority to take decisions. In everyday life their considerations are ignored. To find out the problems faced by elderly in changing family structure and to analyze the changing status of elderly in Indian families a study has been conducted in Southern Rajasthan and more stress is given on Udaipur, Bhilwara, Ajmer, Kota, Chittorgarh. Banswara and Dungarpur. Elderly person living with their family and living alone are contacted. The universe of the elderly population was divided into male and female categories and 60 male and 60 female non-institutional respondents were interviewed.

Family Behaviour and Interactions In this study more than twenty percent reported that they are neglected by their family members in term of care and affection. It was observed that a kind of unwanted feeling originates with one's role getting limited at old age. One respondent stated, "It is time when a person from 'somebody' becomes 'nobody'. Your importance in family and society falls."

It is a well noted fact that traditional relationships between generations have undergone substantial change and modification. The interpersonal relations between the two successive generations mainly depend upon the family background of the aged, and also influenced by the health and economic status of the aged. It is found that most of the elderly do not interfere in the decisions of day to day life of their children. The family behaviour and relations are seen changing after the death of one of the spouses of the aged. According to widow elderly woman "There is no place for me to relax in the house. My family can't understand my need".

Sometimes they have to depend upon their daughters in law to satisfy their day to day needs "There are restrictions on what I eat, how I spend my time and they have an eye on whatever little money I have saved".

Changing Status Since aged in the family have enjoyed highest status and supreme authority, even in old age they expect the same decision should be taken by them and their orders should be obeyed by all family members. When these expectations are belied they feel that they are being ignored, disobeyed and disrespected.The new ideology and new occupational choices have created clash of views between the aged the young members in the family. The elderly.

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