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Age-old problems need new solutions

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INTRODUCTION

Aged citizen are valuable resources which need to be utilized productively. The aged were accorded considerable importance in the earlier times, but with the passage of time, their importance has started decreasing. It may be due to numerous factors, most important being the technological innovations which have shattered all traditional values and norms of earlier societies. The aged persons are the most sufferers in the changed circumstances. It is a universal fact that aging is inevitable phenomenon. It is also true that the aged persons are contributing directly and indirectly to the progress of human society and well being of family life. Therefore the aged should be respected and allowed to live a happy and smooth life. Various problems which are now experienced by the aged need to be studied scientifically so that their valuable experiences could be utilized for better results.

In order to reduce the ageing problems of the senior citizen such as biological *i.e.* health problems arising out of their advancing age, the economic problems due to the reduction in the income level and psychological and socio cultural problems arising due to their less participation in social cultural activities and life in the modern family system. The following suggestions will be concern with the working out the action plan for higher awareness about the old age problems and remedies for the same. It will also help them in adjustment in family also.

The state should devise appropriate measures to ensure that the able physically and mentally healthy elderly can get suitable work, full time or part time in the field of their interest and ability they can perform it. Involvement in some economically gainful work will automatically removes psychological problem like anxiety, fear, loss of self respect, feeling that nobody cares or being ignored, conflict tension or stresses. They will resume confidence and happiness in later year. Government should keep some part time jobs reserve for elderly people.

The knowledge and experience of the elderly should be more actively utilized in community welfare. Elderly should be involved in income generating scheme. They should be organized and empowered to increase their bargaining power. Various subsidies, concessions and

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facilities to be provided them.

Geriatric ward are to be opened in every district hospital. Orientation courses should be arranged for the doctors in the field of geriatric medicine, because elderly need special care and attention in the field of medicine.

The elderly who require regular treatment like taking insulin, check-up B.P., heart problem and other diseases, para medical staff should be provided for their care in home. Activities, which are meaningful and ensure adequate incentive to be planned for the aged so that they can keep themselves busy and avoid loneliness. The family members should be made aware of the psychological and physiological problems of the elderly in such a way that they should take a sympathetic attitude towards the old.

Family should develop values in children by acting as model to respect the elderly in family and society. Family should be strengthened as the primary care giver to ensure comprehensive welfare of senior citizen. Elders should do some anticipatory planning for old age. They should keep some finances reserve for the later years according to their health status. This awareness can be provided through mass-media highlighting the need for planning and saving for one's life after retirement.

Need based approach is essential. Besides, covering basic and physical need like food, shelter, clothing, necessary atmosphere should be created to fulfill other needs of the aged like the need of companionship, recognition, the need for love and to belong the need for esteem and finally the need for self actualization in the family. Counselling service will help a great deal in easing out their emotions and suitable self help skills may be made available to the helpless elderly in order to cope up with their respective environment.

Day care centres for the elderly should be started. These centres should be equipped with books, newspapers, games, first aid medicine etc. The elderly could come to these centres in the morning, for play, read, discuss and rest etc. The government should give incentive to families which take care of the elderly like income tax relief and posting in place of their residence where they can look after their elderly parents well.

Facilities to be provided to rehabilitate the incapable elderly who are a burden to the family and those who are left alone when the family members go out for work or far other purpose. The preferences for housing allotment to those who bring their old parent in urban areas. If any family maintains an elderly who is bed ridden, the bread winner of the family should be completely exempted from income tax. Government should also increase the amount of old age pension.

Community homes for the destitute elderly should be established and subsidized food and other essentials should be extended to the elderly who belong to weaker section of the population. Intervention programmes through the mass media should be launched to educate the public opinion on the problem of aged. A National Institute of ageing should be established and studies on the elderly should be declared a priority area of research. A National policy for the welfare of the elderly should be formulated.

Both the older and the younger generation need to arrive at a new understanding for which both need a new socialization. This is a matter of society and culture, of ideas and attitude and not of law and force. Friendly societies could do a lot for the aged in. The aged should be looked after with sympathy and affection. The need of companionship and

recreation. They prefer the assistance of their own kith and kin or friends. They generally want to chat, to sing bhajans to walk a few yards, to work in kitchen, prayers and bhajans are one of routine programme. So the community institutions need to provide a more favourable environment. Thus giving a new form to the ancient idea of old person spending the rest of their life in pilgrim centre.

Consultancy centres must be organized for old people to impart the knowledge in regard to the different policies started by the government. So, that old people are made available about various facilities, which are especially designed for older people knowledge about what old age had in store what hardship one like to be confronted, what role they expected to play should be made available to help the elderly, devise ways and means to face to stresses and strains of old age.

Value education, advocacy on the rights of the aged has got to be given priority in all the programme. Rising the retirement age in public service to 65 years so that the knowledge and skills of the aged can be fully utilized at the same time lessening the burden on pension systems to pay for longer unproductive years. Designing annuity linked defined contributing pension system so as to lesser to the burden on the defined benefit system.

The elderly person should develop the ability of listening to others with silence, patience and sympathy and without the attitude of interruption this develop strong inter personal relationship with others.

The elderly should have keep themselves occupied in intellectual activities. They should maintain the habit of reading varieties of light topics, humorous topics or serious topics depending on their preferences and mood.

Elderly maintain their intellectual practices by teaching students, small children, poor and needy children, their own grand children or the children of their neighbourhood. They can tell them good and exciting stories of success, adventure, humour and jokes derived from their past experiences or from other source.

Elderly should choose to spend more time by interacting with young people and young children through indoor and outdoor games, outings trekking or any kind of social work in the locality. Such situations changes the mood of the senior citizens making their lives lively, relaxed and throbbing with joy, interest and zeal. By this, they are likely to discover some meaning or objectives in their existence at this advanced age.

Building a positive attitude in the children about the aged. The textbooks in schools must necessarily include lessons on the positive strengths of the old people through certain biographies contribution of great people at their later ages. Many writers, artists, scientist and academics are known for contributing their best at their later age with their accumulative knowledge, wisdom and experience. This can be highlighted in the curriculum with the focus on the age factors.

School and college students must be provided an opportunity to do some projects on old age as part of their outreach activity. Such reform in their curriculum would help building a healthy and positive attitude towards the elderly.

The retiring person may be motivated to join the campaign of total literacy, teach in a school, work as a health care volunteer serve in an orphanage, teach her creative talent to the age group of her choice in a school or college or associate in rehabilitation process of

various types of disabled.

The elderly person may be motivate the rural population on saving and investment skills, conservation of rain water, growing a nursery or kitchen gardens. Such schemes not only ensure proper use of the good human resource, but would bring a sense of well being to the elderly. They will be perceived as active and productive consumer by the rest of the society. Documentation of knowledge and experience of elderly in form of case studies.

Involving elderly in developing moral, religious and cultural values or traditions among the younger members. Recognising elderly as a valuable resources and involving them in a number of community services ranging from crèches, community kitchen, canteens, welfare religious, cultural, artistic recreational, leisure and environment related to caring for the young and old and providing informal education.

Expanding the mobile medicare facility and introduce meals on wheels or community kitchen to provide nutritive diet to elderly. Vruddhashram is not easily acceptable by society in urban as well as in rural area instead of this, day care centre developed in community level, where older persons can meet once a week or fortnight to exchange views, share experience, participate in recreational and useful activities such as sports, cooking, crafts gardening, home medicines, exposure tours to place of interest listening to a religious discourase etc. The centres, therefore, make provisions for prayer, satsanga, meditation, yoga practices, bhajans and kirtans.

These day care centres may also equipped with facilities for physiotherapy, acupressure and primary health care facilities to those who require it. Healthy elderly themselves could be encouraged to manage such activities so that they feel useful to others and their self esteem may be enhanced. Strengthening intergenerational dialogue by encouraging scheme as "Adopt a Grandmother/Grandfather"

Recognizing and rewarding youth who take up voluntary care of older persons. Using mass media to change the mind set of people in general and for elderly in particular on issue such as violence against women, traditional health practices and dietary problems etc. Orienting family members to the needs of the old and the way in which they can prevent them from feeling neglected and ensure their participation we should be providing excellent social interventions to two vulnerable groups.

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