A FEW THOUGHTS FOR OUR OLD AGED

Description

â??Why donâ??t you write an article on senior citizensâ?• one of my friends who appreciates my blogs. And enjoys my photos had suggested. He himself is enjoying the youngness in his seventies.

I know them as a couple, since long, who have been going through â??the empty nest syndromeâ??. Although it is a tough calling; despite, they have come to terms with reality. Now, I know they are dividing their time between home and social activities. Both their children settled in the US. Being aware that even remotely, no chances of them returning back. They resigned themselves to deal with the situation. And Iâ??m happy to see them managing successfully their social pursuits.

In reality, many arenâ??t so fortunate though. The fact was harshly clear for me. In my recent visit to an old age home, I have seen the grey side of human remoteness. I came close to record some of the wrinkled realities and sad truths. And located a mere fifteen minutes from my school and where I stay.

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The Old Age Home

I sat with the in-charge and the secretary of the old age home: Sri Kodali Venkatratnam. He is an eighty-year-old retired executive in state irrigation department. For two days, two hours each day to get some of the emotional aspects of the residents. And a few managerial difficulties involved.



Shri Kodali Venkata Ratnam, Secretary.

â??Since its inception, many old aged inmates had breathed their last here. A few unfortunate, who had no near ones to supervise the final rituals. Caring for the living is one aspect. But planning and completion. Of the rituals of the death of an inmate demand an extreme kind of empathy. Itâ??s known that our customs involve many taboos. And includes many doâ??s and donâ??ts over handling a dead bodyâ?•.

â??If he is an orphan the situation presents a bigger problem. People hardly display any sympathy towards a death of a destitute. I feel, besides monitoring all other matters. It is my responsibility to plan and complete the final rituals too. To make sure that such lonely souls get a decent farewell. It is one of my primary human concerns .â?•*This sums the sheer size of the generosity of Sri Kodali Venkatratnam â?? the secretary, who spends about four hours daily. Going about Managing the entire pressing and urgent situation in the old age home. Despite his age.*

He further shared the crookedness of near ones and utter inattention. With which they look upon their old aged parents. Further, commenting on the uncaring biases of our young adults. He referred to one example like, â??For four years one seventy-year-old had stayed in the home. And no one seemed worried to visit him or cared for his needs at his difficult age. But when he was dead. They had celebrated the customary eleventh-day ceremony. With such a fanfare that people mistook it as a marriage functionâ?•. â??This is the hypocrisy of a few younger generations towards their aged parentsâ?•. And for me, I see it as a sad commentary. Of a â??new normalâ?? prejudice to our old aged.

He goes on to recount. The many reasons why the old aged people end up in homes like this.

The foremost reason: the children settled in other countries. The next, the sonâ??s or daughterâ??s family has little time to spare for medical urgencies. Family members are unwilling to provide services necessary for them. The problem gets exacerbated if they were confined to bed. The unkindest

alternative: many speak out defending their choice: â??Itâ??s easy to pay for the services at the old age home. Than to put my kids, my wife into an unnecessarily prolonged predicament. To look after themâ?•. With all, regretfulness the secretary sits before me. Silently.

I could catch a trace helplessness reflecting in his eighty-year-old tired eyes. Further, he continued. â??How Iâ??m looking at the fading values among young families. Failing and finding excuses. To stand by their aging parents at the time of their gravest needâ?•.

Spread in roughly two acres. The old age home got its designs allowing for the social interaction and outdoor movement. Even considering the emotional needs of the elderly persons. Scattered around are small patches of greenery. And useful cozy rest areas under shady trees. I gathered that their physical alertness shoots up. Once they come out to sit in the open.

Whoever works there, for the old aged, I saw them attentively committed. Compassionate caregiving is the byword. Evident in many of the services extended to all the elderly residents. It was visible among all the team members I met in the home. I could see the office staff, the cleaning people, the cooks, the gardeners all engaged with a feel of readiness.

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I noticed one appreciative common thread in their â??on the jobâ?? approach. They were moving with a dutiful keenness towards the inmates. Not allowing any hurting attitudes enter into their working patterns. Remembering, that they are serving the â??left alonesâ??. Who were isolated and uncared for.

Everyone seems to go about their duties with a caring acceptance of the aged residents. â??Donâ??t give up hope, we are here for you,â?• the message I could get. From the secretary when he proudly took me around explaining that. â??We are working as one compassionate group. To make a difference in the penultimate stage of their livesâ?•

Even though our Indian culture, our family institution and our society boast of rich family relations. India is known for its happy joint family culture. Where the eldest always enjoyed being the head of the family. Consulted by their children and loved by their grandchildren. And I remember I touched my grandparentâ??s feet whenever I visited them.

But the sad shadows etched on the faces. Of many inmates revealed evidence that was startling.

The fact baffled me at this point is. â??Why this generation lately has become so selfish. Rejecting our ingrained values. And, leaving behind the fractured family patternsâ?•.

Providing for the psychological care is one critical component of the inmates. There are hundred and fifty, both male and female included. And it mattered certainly for the caregivers. To make sure that the elderly residents wake with a sense of respect. And surrounded by caring people.

The secretary of the old age home has a few interesting notes. Those reflect the strange variants of loneliness and dependency.

â??They think most of their grandchildren. But none bothers to pay a visit. And are not willing to spend time with their grandparents. It seemed like sons and daughters totally relinquished their affiliations. Once their aged ones lodged in old age homesâ?•.

The kith and kin are not seemed even faintly considerateâ?? That their aged parents will be waiting. For their touch and the smallest act of their presence. It would not be a priority for the well-settled sons and daughters. That is the tragedy of their withered existence in our old age homeâ?• the dedicated caregiving secretary heaves. For the gross disregard apparent in this generation.

Itâ??s my turn to get a dash of abusive drifts in our society and ponder. â??How lopsided the priorities of the current generation. And the hurt of prejudice they hurl at their aged parents. And how they had compelled them in cramped old age homesâ?•.

I spoke to two residents of the home for over a couple of hours. My idea was rather to listen to them. The brief encounter gave me a glimpse of their emotional levels. Their unspoken, unlistened versions of their bitter biographies.

He is an active lanky eighty six-year-old Shankar. All through our conversation, I caught his eyes shining with tears; ready to burst. He worked as a village head while he was young five decades ago. Quoting his words, â??I had earned fame and goodwill and money. Sad to say, today, I have nothing left: neither fame nor moneyâ?•. My son quarrels over the lost properties and money. Unwilling to go with him, at this age I have found solace in this homeâ?•.

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Shri K. Shankar

While he was in his prime age he was an active walking buff and in yoga. But today, he is nostalgic. That old age isnâ??t permitting him to carry out any of these activities. He receives a pension of thousand rupees. The sad part is that he is waiting for someone. Who could donate an additional thousand to meet his medical bills every month? Before he concluded, he stands with folded hands. And requests to find someone who could help him out.

A pathetic manifestation. How absences of a family support had reduced a near-octogenarian to a sorry supplication.

Guru Lakshmi is a sixty-five-year-old widow. Who has another story of sonâ??s negligence towards their mother? Her elder son disowned her after his marriage. It was more than twenty years that he had ever contacted her. The younger son was good enough. But financially not strong to take her along with his family. â??A day wouldnâ??t pass without a loud discussion in the family related to my subsistenceâ?•. She recalled controlling her tears. While she spoke she tilted her face away. Perhaps, not willing to show her gloomy face to me.



Smt. Guru Lakshmi

One day at the age of fifty she took a decision. And walked out of the house. She heard of this old age home and landed there. Before she left her sonâ??s house she received a cruel warning from her younger son, â??I wouldnâ??t see you again back in my houseâ?•. But she receives every month eight hundred rupees from her younger son. Which she spends for her medicines.

Haltingly, she spoke of her past, â??In twenty-five yearsâ?? time, as if a thief would steal everything. I got robbed of all my glory of my past. I lost my husband, along with him all the properties. Iâ??m left with nothing except two quarreling sons. Who fought over daily, of how burdened â??caretakingâ?? of me would be.â?•

To my eyes, she appeared like an indescribable fighter. A stubborn optimist. In her twilight years, carrying those suffocating emotions. Living in isolation away from the affections of family members. Requires a mind of steel. She appeared like a diehard hopeful to live and die gracefully. After our conversation is over she sat for a while, tears streaming. She made no attempt to wipe them. I just sat staring at her. Not knowing how I should respond. Words failed me at the moment.

Listening to the intimate, indefinable tales. Hidden behind every fragile inmate runs like an unending saga. It reeks of emptiness. Of betrayal, of insensitiveness.Cold corruption of family relations. The domination of material appeals over the familial devotions. I find an intolerant â??the modern day age groupsâ?? chasing away their debilitated parents in their sunset years. Thrown away into gloomy,

moist, shared spaces of old age homes.

Since the ages of the traditional Indian society and age-old joint family system have been instrumental. In safeguarding the social and economic security of the elderly people. It has been wonderfully absorbed in our society for generations.

But the attitudes towards our old-aged seemed, conspicuously embarrassing in recent years. It may be perhaps, due to rapid changes in our society. And the emergence of nuclear families in recent years. Because of which our elderly are more likely to be exposed to emotional, physical and financial insecurities.

In our city of fifteen lakhs, Iâ??m told, there are more than hundred old age homes. This fact speaks of the gravity of smokescreen reality of today and in the years to come.

The secretary has an appeal. Despite all the facilities, if the government could provide a free health care card to each inmate. All major health issues could be addressed for many who can be called, â??the old of the oldestâ?•. Hospital charges, medicines attract heavy expenditure. That is one nightmare daily for the managing committee overseeing the home. How to arrange for all the inmates a decent medical treatment. He adds, not lost in his optimism, â??For all who are with us the health issues always seemed urgent and now. And we are prepared â?¦.

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The Little Boy and the Old Man
Said the little boy, â??Sometimes I drop my spoon.â?•
Said the old man, â??I do that too.â?•
The little boy whispered, â??I wet my pants.â?•
I do that too,â?• laughed the little old man.
Said the little boy, â??I often cry.â?•
The old man nodded, â??So do I.â?•
But worst of all,â?• said the boy, â??it seems
Grown-ups donâ??t pay attention to me.â?•
And he felt the warmth of a wrinkled old hand.
I know what you mean,â?• said the little old man.â?•
â?? Shel Silverstein

Day by day requests to reside in old age home are increasing. So as to meet the current demand, they have started the construction of extra rooms on the first floor of the existing old age home building. They humbly request donations from philanthropical organizations and individuals from helping them to complete this project.

Also, they accept donations of any kind like furniture, electric gadgets, solar lights and heaters, plants, cloths, food materials, essential medicines etc.

All the cheques/DDs may be drawn in favour of â??**Home for the aged Senior Citizens Forum**â?•

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