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# THE ELDERLY IN AN INDIAN RETIREMENT COMMUNITY: Influence of the Caste System

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Support for the elderly has been researched largely in relation to the investment and sub-cultural aspects. The family, especially in India, continues to be the prime support provider. Unlike in the west, where complete autonomy to retain self-esteem is the norm at old age (Clark, 1972), in India it is axiomatic that children owe their parents a heavy debt for giving them birth and for feeding and caring through infancy and childhood. Parent-child reciprocity is thus conceived as a life span relationship. Researchers have identified three capital assets as essential for successful aging – economic, familial, and cultural. Economic capital refers to the resources the elderly share with their children; family capital is to have committed family ties (especially good sons); and cultural capital encompasses the norms and values that govern intergenerational relations fostering support to the elderly. The Indian elderly evidently display pride in having these capital resources which help them embed themselves in a close and loving family unit. A good Old Age is defined largely in terms of bounden sons, daughters in law and other persons fulfilling their appropriate roles. “To be alone in old age... to have no one” is the most dreaded fate (Vatuk 1990).

Mutuality being the overarching norm, it is intriguing to consider why some elderly persons choose to live in separate living arrangements. Looking for such elderly, I came across a retirement community, ‘*Vanaprastha*’ in the outskirts of Coimbatore, a thriving south Indian city. What was interesting about this community was that the residents had opted to leave their place, where they spent most of their younger years, for a new local residence in their third age. Another interesting feature was that the residents were Brahmins (*Iyer* Sect).

The name of the community – *Vanaprastha* – denotes a stage of life of a Hindu (*Brahmacharya*, *Grahstha Sanyasa*, and *Vanaprastha*, in that order) wherein one, after having fulfilled all responsibilities towards the family, entrusts the household to his male heir and becomes a hermit, retiring to a forest retreat. In the *vanaprastha* stage he should devote himself to spiritual contemplation, performance of sacred rites, bodily self mortification, all of which should help in the process of disentangling himself physically and emotionally from those relationships of personal and social interdependence developed during the first two stages.

Before exploring into the lives of these elderly, I propose to describe the Hindu caste system, briefly though, to expound how individuals operate within this well structured, rigid social system. The caste system in India provides a gestalt for its role occupants. Every aspect of life and work - right from birth to death, from interpersonal to intergroup relationships, from mundane to metaphysical concerns - is governed by the caste system. There is hardly any aspect of one's life that is not governed by one's caste. The caste system also enjoins upon everyone the responsibility to play strictly according to the rules of the game. Rigid and closed, the system provides for psychological security by ensuring anticipated response/behaviour on the part of others. There is nothing left to be guessed as far as interactions between members of a particular caste are concerned. This, of course, is an outcome of socialization. Social relations are governed by ideas of inequality. The modes of address characterizing equal relationships and those reflecting superiority or inferiority are only too well known. Various studies have shown how the dictums of the caste system affect personality development, and, in cases



## Social division of labour

Varna	Function	Colour	Triguna (Character)	Purusharthas (Goal Orientation)	Marga (Way)	Parsonian Scheme		
						Functional Imperative	Information Flow	Energy Flow
Brahmin	Priest	White	Satva	Moksha	Gnana	Pattern maintenance	↓ ↓ ↓ ↓	↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
Kshatriyas	Protector	Red	Rajas	Dharma	Yoga	Goal orientation & Integration		
Vaishyas	Business men	Yellow	Rajas and Tamas	Artha	Bakthi			
Sudra	Labourer	Black	Tamas	Kama	Karma	Adaptation		

It is evident from the above exposition that this social system is a very rigid one whereas the hierarchical divisions are closed and reinforced by the birth and endogamy. If this is the case, how is one to move from one level to the higher ones and ultimately to the Absolute? Won't the closed system frustrate those in the lower levels? The answer lies in the belief in karma (deed) and punarjanma (rebirth). To become one with the Absolute, one has to take many births and have performed the assigned duties in each. As far as the individuals are concerned, it is a long term process in terms of births. The next birth is a consequence of the previous ones, i.e. a consequence of karma which is embedded in the social division of labour.

Priesthood, tranquility, salvation orientedness, wisdom, purity and whiteness are the attributes of Brahmins and closer to Brahmins, the Absolute. Thus they are the guides to all others. Brahmin being the uppermost level of stratification, and entrusted with the task of teaching and culture maintenance, cannot afford to lower his position, i.e. to have a human rebirth. All his activities are oriented to constant purification of himself. He is supposed to follow the *varnashramadharma* to the letter, and as he grows old he has to learn to become detached.

In modern times, the Brahmin community is a migrant community, with most of the Brahmins not following their traditional occupation of priesthood;

endowed with the tradition of learning, they are educated to migrate to far off places for alternative occupation. During such migrations, they have to face an interim period of cultural loss i.e., where they are not in a position to follow their cultural practices. With subsequent migrations for generations, many have lost their geographical roots, hence *to return back to their roots* means community living. In essence they try to retrace culture. With reculturation, they are able to get closer to the ultimate purpose of life - salvation. As the very name indicates, the residents of *vanaprastha* have started living a life in contemplation and performance of sacred rites. This is evident in the daily activities of the residents.

The day starts at 5.30 am with a recitation *suprabhatham* (hymns to wake god) and other *slogams* (praises of god) like *lalitha sahastranamam* (the thousand names of goddess Lalitha), *rudram chamagam* etc. then they have their breakfast, and discourses on *Bhagavatgita* (the song of god) advaita (non dualism), *vedas* (sacred scriptures), *vedantas* (supplements to scriptures), etc., are arranged on a routine basis. Some have even attended *Sanskrit* language classes to attend and interpret *mantras* (chants) and *stotras* (praises). After lunch they break for rest as their age demands and then reassemble at 4.30 pm to chant *Vishnu sahasranama* (the thousand names of lord Vishnu). They sing *bhajans* (devotional songs in chorus) on certain days.



Overt conflict in the Brahmin family is disesteeming. Hence it makes all the more sense why they would like to avoid conflict.

Both men and women felt that conflict between the mother in law and the daughter in law was the commonest form of family conflict. It was as common as the doorstep for every house ("veeluku veedu vasapadi"), as mentioned by many of these residents. Here we have to understand why conflict is so pertinent among women especially in their third age, in which the first step is to give up (entrust) their heritage to the next generation. The man after retirement has his property/household responsibilities to give as inheritance to his son. The family being her domain, the woman does not have property to give to the next generation. If she has to give something, it is the way she has been doing things (folkways) as to the house, childcare, etc. Here giving becomes teaching. However, to teach, one should have someone who is to be taught. In this case it is the daughter in law who comes into this house carrying with her the folkway learnt from her family of origin. The older woman now has to share her domain with another woman. Old as she is, she does not have sufficient time at her disposal to teach, whereas the young daughter in law has a long life ahead to learn. Perceived rejection of the inheritance is likely to result in conflict. This is evident in the comment by one respondent (age 65): "Nowadays children don't want to learn the right way of doing things. They have their own (wrong) ways. They lack the sense and also refuse to learn when taught...better avoid the conflict before it becomes too big".

The respondents seem to have perceived a conflict threat either because they experienced incompatibilities, or have seen people (reference groups) facing family conflict, or have been hearing cautionary tales about conflict. The experience of one woman (age 63): "She (daughter in law) doesn't know the ideas of purity and pollutions (*pathu pasai*). One day she put cooked rice into the ghee container to utilize the ghee to the maximum which was sticking on to the container and put back the ghee with the milk container...how can we utilize the milk?"

In another instance, a woman (age 72) complained that "After eating (on the dining table), she does not water wash the place where the food has been consumed. . .if you eat polluted food (*echal* meaning saliva, already touched with mouth), even *Ganga* (the sacred river) cannot clean you".

In both the above instances the conflict is about the ways in which a particular activity / function has been performed. The belief on purity and pollution of foodstuff traces back to the difference between food articles that are perishable (polluted) to those that can be stored for more than one time use (ghee, pickle etc). However, milk (of the cow that is sacred) is considered pure in spite of being perishable. In general practice, the pure and polluted foods are not mixed together; even containers are not placed touching each other. One is expected to wash hands after touching polluted food before touching the pure ones. Old food (remains of previous cooking) is kept even more isolated (considered most polluted) and such food is not put on stove for normal cooking. It is expected that a girl from a Brahmin household knows all this.

The complaint of another woman is that her daughter in-law and son eat onion and garlic (taboo for Brahmins) on all days, not being aware of the auspiciousness of the day. Another thing that is evident here is the knowledge of auspicious days. It is expected that the daughter in law has to learn about the auspicious days and associated ceremonies from her elders (from mother in law especially, because auspicious days differ among families depending on their family deity, and the daughter in law's family deity now is that of her husband's).

We have seen why conflict seems inevitable among women. However, most men have considered it normal, as the traditional family is not the male domain and men do not discuss family matters. Actual experience of conflict, reference group conflict and cautionary tales seem less relevant to their conflict avoidance behaviour. Their conflict avoidance seems to be associated with the mediating role they are expected to play between generations which they report as most stressful during old age which one would like to spend peacefully. In the words of one of the respondents, "why let your head

roll when you can be at ease peacefully (*akkadannu irakkanum*)?" Another jokingly mentioned that the life of the man is like a drum being beaten on both sides (*mathalathukku rends pakkam idi*).

### Independence of children

What actuated men to opt for a separate living arrangement was the independence they wanted to give their children. Many have stated that they left their children apprehensive of the difficulties that the younger generation would face with the presence of old people in the family - "why should they (younger generation) struggle with us?"

Both men and women remember their own feelings of antagonism (felt and heard of) during their younger period in the presence of old members of the family. One male respondent revealed: "...during those days, when we used to live in the joint family, I still remember how irritated (*kadupsu*) I used to feel when I came back from office and could not have some time one-to one with my wife. As soon as I came, I had to talk to everybody in the house". He humorously recalled how he and his wife were accompanied by an elderly aunt and her husband during their honeymoon.

Adherence to the rules and regulations of joint family living (breaking of which is seen as a precursor to conflict) is also seen as curbing the freedom of family members, especially the younger generation. One respondent (male, 74) reported "...not following the norms will result in guilt feeling... that uneasiness which is likely to emerge should be avoided". This uneasiness is seen as a precursor of conflict.

Although this need for a free and independent (from joint family) living was mentioned by almost all respondents, except for three couples, most of the respondents during their younger years had migrated to different parts of the country on account of their occupation and seldom had the experience of living in joint family arrangements. This makes one point evident that living separately (from children) is not new to the community. They are socialized to lead a detached life in old age. Even if they were to live jointly, after a certain age they would be expected

to be detached and not interfering in the day-to-day affairs of their children. They are expected to give up their attachment to all materialistic aspects of culture. One more characteristic of this community is that all of them have visited *kasi*, a pilgrim centre meant for salvation where devotees renounce something that is dear to them. What is renounced would usually be a favorite food or addictive habit.

As these respondents feel, lack of freedom in joint family living is a hindrance not only to the young who yearn for freedom, but also for the old who would like to spend the rest of their life in undisturbed contemplation. The feeling of one respondent - "Doing all *pujas*, celebrating festivals, adhering to the norms of purity will be viewed differently by the younger generation. They say, 'why is this oldie (*kezham*) doing all is nonsense? Insane (*piths piduchu*)! Why can't he be normal?"

One more interesting noteworthy phenomenon is the rule of keeping a common kitchen in this community. The residents are not allowed to cook their food except when they require special diet (for health reasons). The kitchen in the house is used only for preparing tea, coffee, hot water and the like. The residents dine in a common dining hall; the menu is decided by them. The reason stated is that women in the third age also require rest and time for self realisation. The Brahmin community gives utmost importance to food. They usually have a four-course meal with minimum of two side dishes. Due to the importance given by the community to food, the general comment used by other communities about Brahmins is "what spoils a man is eating (*thinne kettan Pappas*)". As in old age they require to get detached from physical pleasures, understandably they give up elaborate food habits and accept a common kitchen. From a gender perspective, we see the third age as an age of asexuality; there is a decline of sex role stereotypism. Hence it is easy for the residents to accept that women also need rest in this age on par with men. With regard to the decision for a separate living arrangement, all the respondents had long been contemplating this for their old age although the decision to live in *vanaprastha* was accidental.





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### Plans for death and rites after death

All the residents have paid in advance to a 'death organization' (gnanavapi) for performing the rites after their death. At first I felt that they were undermining the responsibility of their children, who are bound to perform the last rites of their parents properly in order that they can claim *moksha* for themselves. On enquiring, the respondents reported that most of their children were living in places where they could not find a religious guide (*vathiyar*), and *gnanvapi* will facilitate proper performance of the rites. *Gnanavapi* undertakes to perform all the rites from death and cremation to the sixteenth day ceremony. The children of the deceased need to perform only the *hiranya shardham*, which is a short version of the annual death ceremony. During the performance of the death ceremony, observation of purity and pollution standards is very essential to enable the soul to reach the ultimatum. It is believed that a death ceremony not performed in the correct manner will make the soul wander which is a shame for the dead. After leading a detached life, it is obvious that a Brahmin will expect a religious after-death. Most of the respondents have also mentioned that their prayers are for their children's wellbeing and also for a sudden death (*anasaayana maranam*) that will come only to the righteous.

### Relations with children

All the respondents have reported a good relationship with their children, especially grand children. The children and grand children visit them during their vacations. During summer holidays the residents arrange summer camps for their grand children where they are taught slogas, classical music and dance etc. One of the respondents reported "my children were unhappy about my decision to come here...but after visiting me once, they feel they too would retire in such a community". The responses of the children of most of the respondents are similar. Most of them have reported that they are in contact with the children over the net or by phone. Some have visited their children residing in USA and stayed for a period of a few months. In this connection one respondent reported, "I don't want my children to feel that they are being neglected, I want them to know that I am still there with them and they can come to me at the time of crisis".

This statement shows the self-confidence of the resident. This is true of most of the residents. It is note worthy that even in old age they consider themselves on the "giving" side. This is also evident in the social activities carried out by the residents; they have adopted two villages *balvadis* (kindergarten) and are providing midday meals and milk for the children. They are running a charity medical centre for villagers. They conduct frequent medical camps for the villagers, children in orphanages, elderly people in institutions, and women in general. They have a tie-up with the old age homes of the region and offer to meet the inmates to give some kind of emotional support.

### Multigenerational and extended families in the community

There are five two-generational families and one extended family in the community. The man, wife and her unmarried brother constitute the extended family. In the two generational families, we have the widowed mother of the man (three families), the widowed mother of the woman (one family), and the widowed father of the man (one family). These respondents in two-generational families report that taking care of the frail elderly in the family is their prime duty and they believe that shunning such duties will not be conducive to contemplation. One respondent said, "I will serve her (mother) till I send her in a good way (*nallapadiya*) to the other world". In this juncture we have to note that, except for one family in which the husband died of paralysis after coming to *vanaprastha*, all the residents are currently married and living together. The widowed lady has opted to continue living in the community for some time; according to others, it will be better for her to move back to her children. It is evident that as long as they have an emotionally supportive relationship (spouse) they will continue to opt for such an arrangement such as *vanaprastha*, but once they are widowed they prefer to go back to family. By virtue the woman is supposed to serve man- father during her younger years, husband after marriage, and children after being widowed. Widowhood is more common among women as the spousal age difference in India is generally high.

In the extended family where the man, his wife and her unmarried brother are living together, it is evident that in spite of the cultural norm of a detached life, individuals in old age still like to stay



with someone whom they can rely on for emotional support. The detachment, the elderly claim, is only from the children.

### Women in the community

All the sacred literature is primarily laden with prescriptions about the duties of the man. Little is mentioned about the role of the woman except for her virtue of chastity and *pathivratha* (devotion to husband). The woman has to stay by her husband during good and bad times and serve him. She is expected to control his behaviour. If a man goes astray, that woman is generally blamed. Her *pathivratha dharma* is evident in the sacred literature that glorifies *sati* (self-immolation after husband's death), *satyavan-savithiri* (the story of a woman who struggled and won back the life of her husband from *yama* - the god of death), *vasuki* (the woman who left the pot halfway while fetching water from the well when by her husband wherefore the pot hung at the same level where it was left) and many more. Literature also mentions the insults faced by women who do not obey their husbands. The elaborate restrictions placed on a widow are also a depiction of her expected duties. The woman after the death of her husband is considered *amangali* (not blest) and has to renounce bright colour clothes, the sacred vermilion mark on the forehead, flowers, jewels etc. Her very purpose in life is her husband. As discussed earlier, the woman after the death of the husband moves in with her children. She is then expected to lead a life of a hermit. Solace lies in her spirituality.

### Conclusion

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The Hindu worldview reveals that the *aadhi* (origin) and *anth* (end) of every matter is the same. In essence one returns to the same place from which one started the journey of life, to the roots. The reculturation (regeneration of cultural practices) of the Brahmins in *vanaprastha* is a depiction of such a retracing-the-root behaviour. The Brahmin community being a migrant one, retracing to one's roots is made possible by the formation of a new community at the third age, after an interim period of culture loss. The young in general are considered liberal and the old conservative. The potential conflict between the two, and the need for freedom for both the generations, have been the reasons for this third age residence. The detachment of the respondents is only from the children.

The residents of the community possess the economic capital demanded for successful aging, which enables them to renew their cultural capital. As detachment is the norm of the aged in the community, the family capital available, is considered necessary for attaining the purpose of life (salvation). However this is true only for men. Women's duty is to serve men - father, husband, and children. For them, service and devotion to the husband (*pathi bhakthii*) is the path to salvation. So it is not surprising that after being widowed the woman in *vanaprastha* returns back to the family which is now considered more essential for successful aging. The economic capital can be used to renew the cultural capital but to keep intact the family capital it is essential that one keep contact with the perpetual. However, successful aging for Brahmins with insufficient economic capital is equivocal.

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# Elderly People in Russia: Family and State responsibility

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## Abstract

This paper considers questions of position of elderly persons in modern Russian society and family and state responsibility towards them. Forms of social, juridical, economic responsibility that the state has according to the Russian legislative documents have been analysed. The paper demonstrates types of family responsibility for an elderly person in Russia. Peculiarities of types of responsibility are considered in accordance with the mentality of Russian society.

## Introduction

According to the projections of the Russian Academy of Sciences the proportion of elderly people in 2015 will reach 20 per cent of the total population of Russia<sup>2</sup>. From the data of the All-Russia population census, 77 per cent of elderly people live in families, and along with healthy and independent elderly people the number of those who need permanent help and care has significantly increased. At the present time state and family are two principal parties that cover the potential moral, juridical and other responsibilities for elderly people.

State and family responsibility towards elderly people as a phenomenon has not been enough investigated as an actual theme in social gerontology. Many Russian authors (I.N. Bondarenko 2001, 2004, G.A. Minigaleeva 2004, N.S. Degaeva 2004 and others) have studied forms of state responsibility, such as social policy, social service, social welfare, care. The problem of family responsibility towards an elderly person was widely discussed in foreign literature on social gerontology during the last two decades. Earlier works of foreign authors (Brody J., 1978; Shanas A., 1979) concerned interaction and connection between generations. However the subject of investigations by other authors (Matthews J. and Rosner M., 1988<sup>12</sup>) was the needs of elderly parents.

The beginnings of the multi-generation family as a

structural-normative phenomenon were one of the main demographic changes during the XX century. It became quite recently a general phenomenon that family members of three, four and five various generations are simultaneously alive. In Russia three-quarters of pensioners have adult children and grandchildren living together with them or in the same settlement<sup>6</sup>. Care for elderly family members is one of the traditional roles of the family. Family elder help and care, being supported by cultural norms, religious beliefs, economic imperatives and proved by non-official sanctions, is frequently one of the principal mechanisms of care for economically and socially weak and also physically dependent family members.

In every society people are connected with each other by various ties: juridical, moral, economic, social, etc. It is known that people of the third age can live separately from their family or share accommodation with them. However a wish to live independently from families is closely connected with an ability of the state system of social services to satisfy their needs and also with a question of costs of such services for elderly people and their families.

In the context of transformation of family way of life and insufficient support from the state, questions of responsibility arise between elderly parents and their adult children. First of all the family sometimes even over a prolonged period provides help for



elderly people, chronically sick and disabled people. Family duties towards an elderly person are expressed through a "responsibility" notion. Responsibility is one of the aspects of relations of participants in public life that characterize interaction of an individual, society, and state, and interaction between individuals. Responsibility includes agent's realisation of the social significance of behaviour and its sequences, a duty to act within the requirements of social norms that regulate public relations<sup>9</sup>. In most cases the reason for responsibility and care depends on the balance between duty, affection, and reciprocity<sup>11</sup>.

According to the data of some Russian researchers 86 per cent of elderly people get help from their relatives<sup>2</sup>. The family provides elderly people with everyday care, treatment, accompaniment, help in running an individual farm. Besides, the family is the go-between of an elderly person and a system of health and social welfare. As a rule, care for elderly family members is provided voluntarily and free of charge. This care is considered as an alternative for the non-official care system presented by various institutions for elderly people. Traditional family feeling plays an important role in the life of an elderly person, it provides economic, social, and psychological support. It is in the family that a person satisfies needs and at the same time performs personally important functions. Favourable family relations create a positive emotional background and promote adaptation of aging people to new conditions.

#### **Forms of state responsibility towards an elderly person**

1. *Social state responsibility* towards citizens bears a particularly practical aspect dealing with the welfare of population and state as a whole. This form of responsibility is executed through working out and realising social policy<sup>11</sup>. The concept of state social policy in respect of elderly people for the period till 2010, being a product of a socio-political process, in its turn, becomes a guide to action and accelerator of positive social transformations in society. The concept serves for effective partnership with structures of civil society and participation of the Russian Federation in international activity in solving problems of people's ageing. This concept

is guided by the regulations of international legislative acts: General Declaration of Human Rights, the International Pact about economic, social, and cultural rights and special decisions of the United Nations on questions of population ageing and the situation of elderly people, including Principles of the United Nations in respect of elderly people.

2. *Juridical responsibility* in Russian legislation for elderly people can be conditionally divided into three groups:

- Norms that regulate rights of all citizens irrespective of age, but these norms are highly important for elderly people. It relates to norms written in many legislation acts (Constitution of Russian Federation, Civil Code of Russian Federation, Family Code of Russian Federation, etc.)<sup>3</sup>.
- Norms that directly concern rights of elderly people and, corresponding to these rights, responsibilities of state, non-governmental structures, and family<sup>5</sup>.
- Norms regulating the standing of particular categories of elderly people (veterans, Heroes of Soviet Union, Heroes of Socialistic Labour, repressed and subsequently rehabilitated citizens, etc.)<sup>4</sup>.

3. *Economic state responsibility* towards elderly people is executed through the system of social welfare.

In accordance with current legislation the social welfare of elderly citizens is directed to protection of financial standing, rendering pecuniary and natural aid, strengthening of the system of social services.

State financial supporting of elderly people can have several forms as follows:

- 1) increase of payments (pensions) to elderly people that will be able to provide independent living;
- 2) increase of state expenditures for keeping institutions for elderly people;
- 3) decrease of costs of living in institutions for elderly people.

In Russia the network of social services institutions for elderly people has been developed since 1995. Social services for elderly people can be implemented by institutions of social services (departments that are at institutions), and also by departments at the bodies of social welfare of population. The system of social services is presented by the institutions as follows:

*I. Specialized social services institutions for elderly and disabled people.*

1.1. Stationary social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people:

- Internate for elderly and disabled people; - Internate for war and labour veterans;
- Specialized Internate (department) for elderly and disabled people; - Psycho neurological internate;
- Rehabilitation centre (department) for disabled people of younger age; - Internate (department) of mercy;
- Gerontological centre;
- Gerontopsychiatric centre; - Internate of small capacity;
- Social health-improving centre.

1.2. Social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people rendering services of dwelling provision in housing facilities of social use:

- Specialized house for lonely elderly people;
- Social apartments.

1.3. Day-care social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people:

- House of night stay; - Social shelter; - Social hostel;
- Centre (department) of social adaptation; - Social Rehabilitation department for elderly and disabled people;
- Centre (department) of daily stay for elderly and disabled people;
- Centre (department) of temporary stay for elderly and disabled people.

1.4. Social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people at home:

- Specialized department of social and medical services for elderly and disabled people at home.

1.5. Timed social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people

- Agency (department) of timed social services

1.6. Social services institutions for elderly and disabled people rendering socially consultative help:

- Consultative centre (department).

*II. Complex social services institutions for elderly and disabled people:*

2.1 . Complex social services centre for population;

2.2. Complex social centre for rendering help to people without fixed place of residence.

*III. Other social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people, and organizations based at the institutions:*

- Social canteen, trade services department for citizens with moderate means, treatment-and-production workshops, individual farming at the social services institutions for elderly and disabled people and so forth.

Depending on a specialization in rendering social services and in correspondence with the Federal law #122-FZ dated 02.08.95 "On social services for elderly and disabled people" social services institutions for elderly and disabled people can be as follows:

1. Specialized social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people;
2. Complex social services institutions for elderly and disabled people.

According to the form.specialized institutions (departments) render social services to elderly and disabled people, they are divided into:

1. In-patient social services institutions (departments)
2. Day-care social services institutions (departments);
3. Social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people at home;
4. Timed social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people;
5. Social services institutions (departments) for elderly and disabled people that render social consultative help.



## Types of family responsibility towards an elderly person.

The family has various types of responsibilities towards an elderly person: social, moral, juridical, economic. It depends on the norms that regulate responsibility.

1. *Social responsibility* is regulated by public norms and has a historical background. It was expressed over a rather long period during which the family cared for elderly and feeble relatives. No problems existed as respect for the elderly was based on patrimonial consciousness. Experience and authority of elderly people by their presence helped develop family life and solve everyday needs. Elderly people played and still play a specific role in relations between generations. They formulate important human, social and economic resources. In a rapidly changing society elderly people are bearers of “eternal” human values such as love for family, and respect for other people’s health, and friendship. Elderly people play a positive role in supporting the ties of generations both inside the family and in society as a whole; they share their experience, knowledge and “know-how”

In Russia social responsibility towards parents was always based on religion. However, changes in modern society directly affect this problem. Facts of deprivation of care for parents and relatives by adult children have to be faced in Russian society now. This might be caused by general reasons (unemployment, difficult economic situation, instability of moral feeling in new conditions), family peculiarities (conflict frequency, parents’ divorce, long-term separate living). There might be personal reasons for that (parents and children live far away from each other; unsatisfactory health standing of children and parents; poor dwelling conditions; psychological incompatibility).

Patriarchal purposes were always highly valued in Russia. Our compatriots are proud in feeling themselves in this country as in a big family. This archetype demonstrates surprising firmness against a background of historical upheavals.

2. *Moral family responsibility* towards an elderly person is the basis of social responsibility. It can be considered as the realization of correspondence (or lack of correspondence) of human actions and results, consequences of actions according to moral norms. Moral responsibility for one’s relatives is peculiar to all people. In Russia it was always based on the religious norm “respect your mother and father”. In Russia actions for mutual help are very strong and there is no moral basis of discriminatory relations towards people according to their age. Having been guided by responsibility and moral notions, most families in Russia don’t dare to place elderly parents into special institutions (internates) as it is an immoral act towards those who brought them up.

This social and moral responsibility of Russian families towards their elderly relatives might be connected with peculiarities of Russian mentality which are characterized by inclination to collective forms of vital activity.

3. *Juridical responsibility* In Russia there are also juridically proved responsibilities to support family members. They are written in Family Code of Russian Federation in articles 87, 88, 95, 96, and 97<sup>7,8</sup>.

### A) Article 87 "Responsibilities of adult children in keeping parents"

1. Able-bodied adult children are obliged to keep and care for their disabled and needy parents. In legislation of some regions of Russian Federation it is also assigned that bodies of state authorities and bodies of local authorities protect the right of disabled parents for care by able-bodied adult children.
2. When an agreement on alimony payment is absent, alimony for disabled and needy parents is collected from able-bodied adult children by legal order.
3. Care by able-bodied adult children for their parents assumes rendering all kinds of help, support, and demonstration of attention. It is written in this article that there is a necessity not

only of moral, but also financial support for disabled parents by their adult children.

B) Article 88 "**Participation of adult children in additional expenditures for parents**"

1. When care by adult children for their disabled parents is absent and there are singular circumstances (serious illness, parents' disabilities, necessity of paying for outsider help) adult children can be taken to court to participate in covering additional expenditures caused by these circumstances.

C) Article 95 "**Duty of grandchildren to keep grandfather and grandmother**"

1. Disabled and needy grandfather and grandmother in case of impossibility of being kept by their able-bodied adult children or by spouse have the right to press by legal order for alimony from their able-bodied adult grandchildren who have necessary financial means.
2. The grandchildren are obliged to keep grandfather and grandmother as it is required by their close relationship. Quite often grandmother and grandfather take a direct part in upbringing and keeping grandchildren, sometimes even substituting their parents.

D) Article 96 "**Duty of children to keep their actual tutors**"

1. Disabled needy people who actually brought up and kept minor children have the right to press by legal order for being kept by their able-bodied foster children if they can't get keeping from their able-bodied adult children or spouses. Actual tutors are persons who brought up and kept foster minor children without being officially appointed as tutors (guardians) or without taking foster children into a family according to the agreement. Tutors can be both relatives and outside persons.
2. The court has the right to release foster children from the duty to keep actual tutors if tutors brought up and kept the children for less than 5 years or kept them in an undue way.

E) Article 97 "**Duties of stepsons and stepdaughters in keeping their stepfather and stepmother**"

1. Disabled and needy stepfathers and stepmothers who brought up and kept their stepsons and stepdaughters have the right to press by legal order for being kept by able-bodied adult stepsons and stepdaughters who have the necessary financial means if such disabled step-parents cannot be kept by their able-bodied adult children and spouses.
2. Stepfather and stepmother have the right to press by legal order to be kept by their stepsons and stepdaughters due to significant circumstances relating to one and other parties. The most important circumstance is upbringing and keeping stepsons and stepdaughters by stepfather and stepmother in the past. It should be taken into consideration that stepsons' and stepdaughters' duty to keep stepmother and stepfather can arise when step-parents cannot be kept by their able-bodied adult children or spouses according to the law.
4. *Economic responsibility* is closely connected to the juridical as responsibilities on expenditures for elderly family members are covered in standard acts (Family Code, Civil Code, Constitution, etc.)<sup>7,8</sup>.

Old age pensions, individual farming and other work are the principal resources of elderly people. Eighteen per cent of elderly people in Russia have an income from individual farming. At the present time around 6 million pensioners have a job (more than 20 per cent of pensioners) The pension is frequently the sole income for people at the age of 60 and older. According to the data of All-Russian population census in 2002, around 72 per cent of elderly people (21,3 mln. people) have a pension as the only resource; 97,5 per cent of older able-bodied people live on state pension. Old age pensions (including long service pensions) are paid to more than 29 million people, social pensions to more than 1,6 mln. people<sup>1</sup>. The financial standing of elderly people frequently depends on that of their adult children



irrespective of whether they live together or not. It is this financial support that is the most widespread form of help that elderly parents receive from their adult children <sup>10</sup>.

Only with cooperative actions of family and state will it be possible to achieve a positive result in satisfying all needs in elder care. In Russian

society, where market relations have prevailed, serious changes in traditional viewpoints on the family role in providing permanent care for elderly family members will necessarily take place in the nearest prospect. As in industrialized countries there will be a progressive substitution of traditional family care in the natural form by family participation in care expenditures.

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# THE ELDERLY IN CAMEROON

## Socio-Economic Challenges and Measures

SOULAYMANOU YOUSOUFA

### Introduction

It is internationally recognized that, if the population aged 60 and above account for 10 per cent of the inhabitants of a country or region, that community is considered as an ageing society. United Nations projections indicate that developing countries will face notable increases in the proportions that will be above age 60 in the next 40 years, and that within this older segment, the proportion of 80 and above persons will increase tremendously. The shift towards older age structures has gained increased importance in developing countries where they have started worrying about the long-term implications of population ageing, for the elderly population itself and for the society as a whole.

The population of Cameroon was established at 15 million in year 2001. This population is unevenly distributed over the whole territory. There are densely populated areas on the western Highlands, the Mandara Mountains and the coastal parts of the country. In 1987, about 71% of the population were concentrated on 34% of the surface area of the country. The urban population is growing rapidly at the rate of about 5% per year. This grows at an average rate of 2.8% per year. It doubled between 1976 and 2001. At the present rate this population can reach 20 million in 2010 and 30 million in 2040.

The 2004 projections by the United Nations under medium fertility and medium mortality assumptions show that the Cameroonian elderly (age 60 and above) would comprise 8.2 and 11.1 percent of the total population in 2040 and 2050, respectively. The proportion of elderly population aged 60 and above in 2050 will be almost two times as high as in 2000. This is a sign that Cameroon will be facing an ageing society.

The increasing proportion of older people in the Cameroon population will have profound socio-economic implications and thus calls for corresponding policies and measures.

### Socio-economic impacts

Although the economic impacts are still not palpable today, we have to move fast to evaluate the situation and come up with appropriate countermeasures.

First, such demographic development will increase the demand for pensions. Growth in elderly populations may pressure the country by reducing economic productivity of work forces. Today's relatively high level of labour force participation among older adults in Cameroon reflects the lack of comprehensive old-age pension system in that country.

Older persons participate to a greater extent in the labour market because of the limited coverage of retirement schemes and meagre incomes provided under those schemes. Since agriculture is still a dominant occupation in Cameroon, elderly participation is still very high. In the absence of any social security in the informal and agricultural sector, the elderly fare badly and this is more true of the female workers. In the urban areas, elderly males are generally engaged in work requiring considerable use of manual strength and physical hazard while older women are working as servants.

The paramount challenge for an ageing community is how to support and care for these vulnerable people. The health care systems in Cameroon are still focused on childhood and infectious diseases as well as reproductive-health services. Therefore, priority is given to pregnant women and children.



But population ageing leads to increasing demand for care that addresses chronic health conditions. Projections made by the World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that by 2015, deaths from chronic diseases—such as cancer, hypertension cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes—will increase by 17 percent, from 35 million to 41 million throughout the world. But Cameroon has not yet implemented primary prevention programmes to encourage those healthy lifestyle choices that would mitigate chronic diseases or delay their onset.

The growing size of elderly populations – combined with these populations having a disproportionately large consumption of health care per capita – will place increasing pressure on Cameroon health care systems.

In Cameroon, the tradition still prevails whereby old people are cared for in the family home. But, this tradition will face stronger challenges without more complementary measures. The elderly rely heavily on their family for personal care and material support. However, such support is under pressure due to the changing of trends that include falling fertility rates (which mean fewer children as caregivers); changing cultural norms and the migration of rural young people to cities, leaving behind them elderly relatives.

Women generally make up the majority of elderly populations around the world. This observation also applies in Cameroon and the female advantage in life expectancy will probably widen further as gender gaps in education and economic opportunities narrow. Still, elderly women are generally more likely to be widowed, living alone, and to have fewer financial resources compared with elderly men at any given age. These factors must be taken into account in policies on the elderly.

Several trends might also soon have an impact on informal support systems. Firstly, the proportion of the elderly who are divorced or never married will likely increase, reflecting the marriage patterns of today's younger cohorts. Secondly, the percentage of the elderly who live only with their spouse will go on increasing because of declining fertility and

changing norms of familial support. Thirdly, rapid urbanization and growing out-migration of young adults to urban areas may mean that their parents will grow old in rural areas without the direct support of the children and face difficult living conditions without access to various amenities.

The weakening of social control is responsible for the increase in the difficulties faced by older persons. The impoverishment of the population due to the economic crisis resulted in an increase in inequalities, the multiplication of precarious situations and social exclusion of older persons. Social exclusion is more pronounced in urban areas where family solidarity is weaker. In many towns like Douala, Yaounde etc., a growing number of older persons are abandoned to themselves due to the breakdown of family ties.

An ageing population also has potential implications for consumption and savings patterns. Based on the life-cycle theory, when the process of ageing reaches a certain degree, the propensity to save money will decrease and people will be more inclined to consume. As families are one of the major sources of capital accumulation, this tendency will somewhat erode the supply of funds for manufacturing.

In fact, ageing produces a slow decline in the consumption of goods and services associated with childhood and a slow increase in the consumption of certain goods and services connected with advancing ages (a shift in the demand for wheelchairs from prams, an increase in the demand for leisure and other services, dietary products, hearing aids etc.). It may produce specific demands for certain types of housing. The emerging system of smaller families, compounded by rising divorce rates, increase in the number of widows and widowers and increased incidence of solitary living by young adults, will reduce the demand for large housing.

In Cameroon today, Pension coverage is restricted to a small segment of the workforce, such as civil servants and those working for large companies. At the same time the amount of Public pension is not enough for the needs of older persons and other



expressed in the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing convened by United Nations (Madrid, April 2002).

However, providing wide coverage in Cameroon requires political stability and may be administratively challenging, particularly in provinces with high proportions of agricultural, self-employed, and informal-sector workers. These programmes also must be designed with enough capacity to incorporate the expanding ratio of elderly to working-age populations.

Developing or expanding health insurance programmes for the elderly population. improving

the capacity of health care systems to treat chronic conditions, and achieving these without forgoing vital services for other age groups—are major policy questions facing Cameroon Government.

While developing countries can learn from the policy successes and failures of developed countries, adopting these policies in a short time frame and at much lower levels of economic development has never been attempted. Addressing the health care and economic needs of increasing numbers of the elderly will also require balancing these needs with those of other populations, as well as summoning the political will to support often very expensive programmes.

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# Legal Protection for Women in Old Age in India

A. ASHARAF

## Introduction

Old Age is a golden age. But the lives of older women are subject to hardship. Factors creating this hardship are the feminine preponderance of ageing, society's discriminatory treatment in female education and employment, and social discrimination and ill treatment brought out by the traditional roles attached to women in society. Such traditions and discriminations have made the lives of women vulnerable in old age.

Older women are often ill treated and abused in society. Increase in ill treatments and abuse is due to lack of awareness and of access to legal provisions. Since there are no laws specific to older women, laws need to be sensitized to protect their needs.

Older women are ill treated in society in many ways. Neglect by children, nonprioritising of care of older women and institutionalizing of older women are the major forms of neglect. Abuse of older women is increasing. Theft of older women's movable properties and of resources deriving from immovable properties, exploiting them through false promise of care and support, denial of rights of succession and exploiting them for the benefits they receive from government are some forms of abuses that older women are facing.

This neglect and abuse occurs both from family members (children and grand children) and from people outside the family (domestic helpers and thieves). Legal machinery needs to be sensitized and utilized to ensure peace for older women. In this article, the constitutional guarantees ensuring equality for older women, the rights on family properties, the rights of older women to receive means for maintenance and provisions for protection from violence are discussed.

## Constitutional Rights of Equality of Older Women

Older women are to be considered as equal citizens with special provisions made from time to time for the benefits of women. As per articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution older women have rights equal to all citizens.

## Article 14 - Rights to Equality

The article reads "The State shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of laws within the territory of India. Accordingly older women are to be considered as equal citizens before the law. The law provides older women a position equivalent to that of any other person. The article requires that all persons subjected to any legislation should be treated alike under like circumstances and conditions.

## Article 15 - Prohibition of Discrimination

The article reads "(1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth (2) No citizen shall, on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to (a) access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment (b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of state funds or dedicated to the use of the general public (3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children.

According to this article, older women as citizens of India are eligible for all the privileges, and no discriminations can be made on the ground of their age or sex. This article prohibits gender-based discrimination particularly in respect of property. The provision favours older women to attain economic independence. It also directs the states to eliminate inequalities in compensation.

Clauses (a) and (b) of **Article 39** are also relevant for older women. Article 39 reads "The state shall, in particular, direct its polity towards securing (a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood (b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to sub-serve the common good." The clauses make clear that older women have the right to means of livelihood equivalent to that of



men. Resources should be distributed equally, so that all older women will have sufficient means of subsistence.

### **Rights of Older Women on Family Properties**

Inheritance of property is an answer to economic problems of older women. Laws are violated against older women despite the rules of succession laid down in Indian Succession Act, 1925. According to the Act succession takes place in two forms (i) Testate succession under the will executed and (ii) Intestate succession without the will.

### **Testate Succession**

This is succession under the will executed. A will is a written document specifying exchange of property. It should be duly signed by the testator and should be attested by not less than two witnesses. A will is necessary for succession. Older women should be alert while the husband, father or any one else draws up the will. They should take care of their material needs without blindly believing the testator. Properties acquired or inherited by the woman must continue with her till the last day. Even the properties owned jointly or the nominations for insurance, provident fund and gratuity should appear in the will.

### **Intestate Succession**

This refers to succession of properties without a will. A woman inherits through intestate succession in three capacities. As a wife, she is entitled to maintenance, support and shelter from her husband's property or his joint family property. She succeeds to his property along with children and other lineal descendants. Her share in the absence of any lineal descendants is a fixed one half. Where none of the heirs is present she takes the whole of the estate. As a daughter, she has equal right as sons (according to Muslim Personal Law, a daughter inherits only half that of a son) to her father's property. An unmarried daughter has right for shelter, maintenance and marriage expenses. A widowed, divorced or deserted daughter has the right to residence. As a mother, she inherits with wife and children of the deceased (Indian Succession Act, 1925).

### **Maintenance in Old Age**

Maintaining life with dignity will be of importance to an older woman. In the case of widowhood,

unemployment and related pauperism, older women need care and support from their kith and kin. Support must come from social, emotional and economic dimensions. Care of older women is to be promoted by encouraging children (sons and daughters) and the community (relatives). The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956 made care of parents mandatory for children as a reciprocation for the sacrifice of bringing them up. The section 20 of the Act captioned 'Maintenance of Children and Aged Parents' states that a Hindu is bound during his or her lifetime to maintain his or her aged or infirm parents.

The section 125 of Criminal Procedure Code 1973 makes it a natural and fundamental duty of the child to care for older parents. An elderly mother who is unable to maintain herself should receive support from her children who have sufficient means.

The concept of filial responsibility should be promoted to ensure care of older women within their families. But at the current day many older women are in despair due to lack of family care and support. This situation calls for enacting laws that insist on care of older parents. Such a bill makes it mandatory for the children to look after their aged parents or pay maintenance allowance. Such bills protect the interests of aged parents through creating responsibility among younger generations. Retirement benefits forms another means of maintenance in old age. Major retirement benefits are the provident fund (governed by Employees Provident Fund Act, 1952) and pensions (governed by Central Civil Service (Pension) Rules 1972).

### **Violence Against Older Women**

Violence against older women is increasing nowadays. Incidence of violence might be internal - within the family (domestic violence) - or external - outside the family. Internally, violence occurs from spouse, children, grand children, in laws or any other member who co-reside with the older women. Violence occurs externally from domestic servants or from outsiders with an aim of robbery or theft.

The Indian Penal Code explains three types of violence viz., acts with the intention of causing death, acts with the intention of causing bodily injury, which is likely to cause death, and acts with the knowledge that it is likely to cause death. Older women may suffer physical, psychological, sociological and legal violence. Acts causing injuries are physical violence. Acts that create

emotional disturbances are psychological violence. Sociological mistreatments represent suffering as a consequence of not being integrated into the primary group setting. Legal mistreatments include material exploitation such as misuse of money, denial of rights, theft, extortion of properties etc. They may occur intentionally and unintentionally.

### **Legal Protection for Older Women**

Older women have poor awareness of legal provisions and privileges. To raise their access to such provisions, grass root level actions and strenuous efforts are needed. As per the constitutional rights they have equality and they cannot be discriminated. Actions of inequitable treatment and discrimination, if any, need to be identified and brought before the legal authority. Similar is the case with older women who live below the sustenance level. The legal machinery will exercise provisions of constitutional articles and find solutions.

Clause (e) of **Article 39** applies to older women. The section reads "that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength". Older women need to be protected from engaging in activities unsuitable to their health. In such cases alternatives for their survival need to be sought through the law. On the other hand, opportunities need to be provided to healthy and willing older women for activities of their preference. This will be done through training them in various skills and assisting them to find jobs or start their own enterprise.

There are two issues arising out of succession of properties. The probability of a woman obtaining property through testate succession would be less because Indian culture considers women as members of their husband's home. Dowry (Stridhan), a form of testate succession, has been disappearing especially due to changes in marriage pattern. Laws need to be amended so that women can receive a share from their parental properties. Such shares enable a woman to live with dignity in old age. Secondly, in intestate succession, even though women are eligible for a share,

the practice differs. Women leave their share to the men especially because of legalities involved. Here both issues need careful considerations. Women should receive an equal share from their parents in cases of testate and intestate succession. Laws need to be sensitized in favour of women to obtain their share. Community volunteers would play an important role on this behalf. Identification of cases of mistreatment in property succession and bringing them to the attention of the law will definitely help amendment of laws and older women oriented judgments.

As far as the maintenance of women in old age is concerned, children need to be made aware of their filial responsibility. A mutually caring society should be developed through promoting solidarity among different age groups. In such a set up, all the persons in a family share and contribute equally. Activities and programmes are needed in this line bringing all generations together with older women and should aim to reduce the gap between them. Improving communications between generations would result in reductions in the generation gap and conflicts, and it will result in a society where children and family members care for the older women.

Monetarily, older women who are retirees of the tertiary sector receive a pension. The proportion of such older women is very low especially in rural areas. Some states introduced pensions for the informal sector through implementation of the Agricultural Workers (Payment of Pension and Other Amenities) bill. Efforts are required to implement the bill in all states of India. Through the Bill, older women would receive a pension, even though meager in amount. Alternatively, saving potential has to be improved for the economic security of future older women. New provisions for contributory pension schemes should be introduced for the informal sector workers.

Violence is punishable according to the Indian Penal Code. Older women who are under threat should be identified and referred to the legal authority for protection. Community actions should be concentrated to encourage older women to stay with their children or any close relatives. A task force should be developed to protect older women in threatening conditions.

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# Family Inter-generational Support in Urban Zhejiang, China

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*China has a culture of family support for the aged. While a market economy is developing, urbanisation is speeding up, and family planning is being implemented, old persons who have dwelt separately from their children in towns increase. Although old persons may not live with their adult children, they keep reciprocal relations with them. This is the main mode of family support for the aged in China.*

*Based on Social Exchange Theory, the author analyses the statistical data, which come from the survey of basic needs of the aged, in towns in Zhejiang province. The author analyses economic contact, housework assistance and emotional communion between the aged and their children.*

*Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, the author concludes: (1) Old persons who got economic assistance from their children were more than children who got economic assistance from their parents. (2) The majority of old persons have done housework by themselves, daughters who did housework for their parents were more than other relatives did. If old persons were healthy, they would help their children do housework. (3) The majority of old persons have communicated emotionally with their children.*

*The author suggests developing community services for the aged. The author proposes providing old persons with these items: support for the aged service, health and medical service, amusements service, education for the aged, social development service, protecting the rights of the aged. Community centres can administer community service.*

## **Theory Framework**

According to Social Exchange Theory, exchange makes all kinds of persons come together. By paying-returning-paying once more persons unite to form certain social relations and social structures. In the 1970s, Social Exchange Theory was widely utilised in the field of social service research, among which an important topic is to explain care and support for the elderly. Resource Exchange between generations emphasizes reciprocal behaviour. That is to say, children support parents to repay parents' fostering. On the other hand, special cultural standards affect relations between parents and children at home. For example, the rule of filial piety in Chinese cultural standards is very important. In a word, we should understand reciprocal relations in the family as corresponding with social structure.

Based on the Theory of Exchange between

generations, family support means that children repaid parents by means of economic support, housework assistance, and emotional expression. China has a strong culture of family support. Dr. Xiaotong Fei has pointed out that family support for the aged is a pattern of counter fostering. Chinese statute law sustains this traditional ethic. The Chinese constitution of 1954 prescribes that children have a duty of supporting parents. The Marriage law of 1981 sequentially emphasizes this duty. The Chinese Laws of Protecting the senior's rights and interests have put forward that the family should support old age. With the development of market economics, speeding up of urbanizing and the adopting of family planning, the size of the family has dwindled gradually, the aged dwell separately in urban areas. Most old persons have retirement pensions, they are in the condition of independence and some old persons give their children money. The old persons have reciprocal relation with their

children. Children look in at their parents in off-hours. Old persons can be cared for by their children when they are ill or in difficulty.

In conclusion, the Exchange between Generations at home means that grown-up children and their gray-headed parents exchange money, material, time, sensibility, etc. The embodiment of this is economic contact, housework helping and sensibility communion.

#### **Data Analysis**

The survey data of this text come from a survey of basic needs of old age, in towns in Zhejiang province, from July 1 to July 10, in 1997. The object of this survey is old persons over 60 years old (born before June 30, 1937) living in towns.

#### **Method of Survey**

The means of sampling is multi-stage random sampling by group. First, inquirers sampled six cities from Zhejiang province, in terms of the extent of population aging. Second, inquirers sampled one district and one county from the city and sampled one post from the county. Finally, inquirers sampled one or two communities as survey grass roots, which are drawn out from district, county. An inquirer drew out 100 samplings in one district, 50 sampling in

one county and one post. The survey took the form of visiting. Investigators reclaimed 1,303 valid and one invalid questionnaires.

#### **• Basic Character of survey population**

53.1 percent of 1,303 old persons were males, and 46.9 percent were females. 78.5 percent of old persons' spouses are still living; 21 percent's spouses died; 0.3 percent got divorced; 0.2 percent are unmarried. The old persons are usually uneducated.

#### **• Type of Household**

The percentage of one generation per household is 57.9; the percentage of two generations is 18.0; the percentage of three generations is 23.3; the percentage of four generations is 0.8. Urbanisation development and family planning lead to the decrease of the scale of household. 65.9 percent of 1,285 old persons having children do not live with their children; 34.1 percent live with their children. The majority of old persons live with their married sons. This phenomenon can be explained with the concept of 'providing for the aged depends on sons.' Thus adult children can keep close touch with their gray-headed parents; children can either care for parents or gain help from their parents. 54.4 percent of 1285 old persons having children, do not expect to live with their children.

**Table 1 Source of Income of old persons**

	The number of old persons	per cent
<b>Total</b>	<b>1303</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Retirement pension	1059	81.3
Economic assistance from children	100	7.7
Economic assistance from spouse	69	5.3
Pension	25	1.9
Re-employment	17	1.3
Rent from room	5	0.4
Social relief	4	0.3
Personal savings	3	0.2
Interest	2	0.2
Relief from relative	1	0.1
Other	18	1.3

*Source: Survey of basic needs of old persons, in town in Zhejiang province, 1997.*

• **Exchange between Generations**

Mutual economic assistance involves two ways: children offer their parents money and parents offer children money. We use three indicators to describe sensibility exchange, namely whether the aged regard children as objects of support, whether the aged expect children to show filial piety and respect, whether the aged are satisfied with daily life.

**MUTUAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE**

83.1 percent of old persons have retired; 16.7 percent have not worked at all. The majority of old persons are self-supporting. The retirement pension of a retiree is 538 yuan per month. The retirement pension of male retiree is 586 yuan per month, and the retirement pension of female retiree is 463 yuan per month. The income of 81.3 percent of old persons is covered by retirement pension.

Mutual economic assistance between old persons and their children is very important for the aged. In this survey, economic assistance from children is in the second place as source of income of old persons. The outlay for children is in the third place of expenditure of old persons.

In general, old persons and their children share economic relations. Among 1285 old persons having children, 365 old persons got children's economic

assistance, which is 28.4 percent of all. There are 303 old persons providing economic assistance for their children, which is 23.6 percent of all, while 55 old persons got children's economic assistance. The number of old persons receiving their children's economic assistance is more than the amount of old persons providing economic assistance for their children. Commonly, the income of old persons will be decreased after they retire. In contrast with children, they are likely to depend on others. Yet, if they are in good economic condition, they will provide much more economic assistance for children than children do. In this survey, old persons, providing economic assistance for their children, gave children 288 yuan per month. Old persons, getting children's economic assistance, accepted 192 yuan per month.

In this survey, there are 336 old persons needing economic assistance of their children, which is 26.1 percent of sample size. There are 271 old persons receiving economic assistance from their children, which is 19.3 percent of old persons needing economic assistance. Among 365 old persons receiving children's economic assistance, there are 97 old persons not needing children's assistance. Whether old persons can receive children's economic assistance depends on these elements: economic condition of old persons, economic condition of old persons' children, living style between old persons and their children, etc.

**Table 2 Expenditure of old persons per month**

	Expenditure of old persons Yuan	per cent
<b>Total</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Food expenditure	295	56.1
Curatorial expenditure	62	11.8
Outlay for children	55	10.5
Expenditure on water and electricity	43	8.2
Expenditure on costume	20	3.8
Expenditure on pastimes	5	0.9
Other	46	8.7

*Source: Survey of basic needs of old persons, in town in Zhejiang province, 1997.*

Table 3 Economic exchange between the aged and their children					
The aged receiving children's economic assistance			The aged providing economic assistance for children		
Amount	Percent	Receiving fund per month (yuan)	Amount	Percent	Providing fund per month (yuan)
365	28.4	192	303	23.6	288

*Source: Survey of basic needs of old persons, in town in Zhejiang province, 1997.*

### HOUSEWORK ASSISTANCE

In this survey, the majority of old persons did housework by themselves. In contrast with other relatives, daughters provided more assistance of housework for old persons 89.5 percent of old persons did housework by themselves. 69.0 percent of old persons did housework with their spouse's help. 28.9 percent of old persons did housework with their daughters' help. 23.9 percent of old persons did housework themselves with their sons' help. 17.2 percent of old persons did housework with their daughters-in-law's help. 9.4 percent of old persons did housework with their sons-in-law's help.

The majority of male old persons did housework with their spouses' help. Among 692 male old persons, 78.8 percent of them did housework with help. 9.0 percent of them did housework by themselves. 6.4 percent of them did housework with their daughter's help. 2.6 percent of them did housework with their sons' help. 1.4 percent of them did housework with their daughters-in-law's help. 0.3 percent of them did housework with their sons-in-law's help. Among 611 female old persons, 43.9 percent mainly did housework with their spouse's help. 19.3 percent of them did housework by themselves. 18.2 percent of them did housework with their daughters' help. 9.8 percent of them did housework with their sons' help. 4.4 percent of them did housework with their sons-in-law's help.

Most old persons wished assistance to do housework and most of these wished spouse help in the first place. Old persons wishing daughters' help, in the second place, those old persons wishing sons' help are in the third place. In this survey, only 3.8 percent of old persons wished to do housework by themselves, 54.1 percent of them wish mostly their spouse's help. 20.6 percent of them wish mostly their daughter's help. 12.7 percent of them wish mostly their sons' help. 3.3 percent of them wish mostly their daughters-in-law's help while 0.5 percent of them wish mostly their sons-in-law's help doing housework.

In contrast with male old persons, more female old persons wish their children to help doing houseworks. 2.6 percent of male old persons to do housework themselves. 68.6 percent of males wish mostly their spouse's help doing housework. 13.2 percent of males wish mostly their daughters' help. 9.2 percent of male wish mostly their sons' help doing housework. 1.7 percent of males wish mostly their daughters-in-law's help doing housework, 0.4 percent of them wish mostly their sons-in-law's help 37.8 percent of females wish mostly their spouse's help. 29.0 percent wish mostly their daughters' help. 16.5 percent of females wish mostly their sons' help doing housework, 5.1 percent of females prefer their daughters-in-law's help doing housework and 0.7 percent wish mostly their sons-in-law's help doing housework.

**Table 4 Aid in old persons' housework unit: per cent**

Oneself	Spouse	Daughter	Son	Daughter-in-Law	Son-in-Law
89.5	69.0	28.9	23.9	17.2	9.4

*Source: Survey of basic needs of old persons, in town in Zhejiang province, 1997.*

**Table 5 Commonest helper and preferred helper for old persons' housework by gender unity; per cent**

		Oneself	Spouse	Son	Daughter	Daughter-in-law	son-in-law	other relative	the rest
Usual Helper	Total	13.8	62.4	6.0	11.9	2.8	0.5	1.3	1.3
	Male	9.0	78.8	2.6	6.4	1.4	0.3	0.1	1.4
	Female	19.3	43.9	9.8	18.2	4.4	0.8	0.5	3.1
	Total	3.8	54.2	12.7	20.6	3.3	0.5	0.3	4.6
Preferred Helper	Male	2.6	68.6	9.2	13.2	1.7	0.4	0.1	4.2
	Female	5.1	37.8	6.5	29.0	5.1	0.7	0.5	5.3

*Source: Survey of basic needs of old persons, in towns in Zhejiang province, 1997.*

When we compare commonest helpers for old persons' housework with preferred helpers, we conclude that among old persons doing housework mostly with their spouse's help, 17.1 percent of them wish otherwise. Among old persons who did housework themselves, 76.7 percent of them wished for help. Among old persons who wished for daughters' help, 46.4 percent of them did not receive it. Of old persons who wished sons to help them, 77.6 percent of them did not receive it. Whether old persons can receive children's housework assistance depends on such elements as old persons' health, living arrangements between old persons and their children.

In a general way, most old persons in towns have more leisure. If they are healthy, they are willing to help their children. In this survey, 2.5 percent of the aged help their children look after kids, etc.

#### *Personal sensibilities exchange*

As influenced by different cultures, the aged and their children present differences in values, attitudes and tastes. If the aged and their children do not often exchange emotions they will be distant. Meanwhile, the aged will meet with some new problems, for example, they are likely to be in bad health, their spouses are likely to die, their income will decrease, their caste position will fall. If the aged are faced with such problems, lack of children's support emotionally will upset them.

We think that it is important for the aged to alleviate mental pressures through pouring out worries to the daughters, 47.2 percent of old persons poured out worries to their sons. In this survey, 5.3 percent of old persons cared that their children would not give presents to them. 80.5 percent of old persons were satisfied with daily life.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Through data analysis, we conclude: that although old persons may not live with their grown children, they keep reciprocal relations with them. This mode of family support for the aged is usual in China. Of the minority of old persons who have economic relations with their children, old persons who accept economic help from their children are more numerous than children who accept economic help from their parents. Whether old persons can get children's economic assistance depends on economic condition of old persons home and children's home, etc. The majority of old persons did housework by themselves. In contrast with the males, female old persons did more housework. Daughters did housework for their parents more than other relatives did. Among old persons doing housework by themselves, the majority do not wish this. The majority of male old persons wish their spouse to help. In contrast with males are female old persons wish their children to help doing housework. If old persons are healthy, they would help their children do housework. The majority of

old persons could communicate emotionally with their children. After the old persons retire and their social role changes some old persons are likely to feel isolated. If they often communicate with their children, they will keep their mental balance. The aged have rich living experience. Old parents can enlighten adult children by communication.

With the development of a market economy, China has joined in the general world system of politics, economy, and culture. The reform of welfare policy of housing and medical care system has influenced the aged deeply. When they are in active service, their wages are low. After they retire, their retirement pay is low. Some old persons' children are out of work; they can't afford more expenses. Government should care for the economic condition of old persons.

Most old persons hope for support at home. When the economy is developing, increasingly adult children are likely to leave their parents to work in

other cities. At the same time, drastic competition makes adults work and study more. Inevitably, there will be less time for adults to care for their parents. In general, currently old persons have two or so children. Their children can support those old persons.

We suggest launching more community services for the aged. After old persons retire, community is the uppermost circumstance that old persons can contact. In the community, they find familiar neighbourhoods, and convenient establishments for living. Providing old persons with community service can advance old persons' life qualities. We can provide old persons with these items: support for the aged service, health and medical service, amusements service, education for the aged, social development service, protecting the rights of the aged. Government is responsible for shaping such courses. We should adequately use the resources of enterprise and mobilise community members to take part in community service.

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# GRANDMOTHERS AT THE AIDS CONFERENCE

## THE TORONTO STATEMENT

As grandmothers from Africa and Canada, we were drawn together in Toronto for three days in August 2006 by our similarities: our deep love and undying devotion to our children and grandchildren; our profound concern about the havoc that HIV/AIDS has inflicted on the continent of Africa, and in particular on its women and its children; and our understanding that we have within us everything needed to surmount seemingly insurmountable obstacles. We are strong, we are determined, we are resourceful, we are creative, we are resilient, and we have the wisdom that comes with age and experience.

From one side of the globe we are African grandmothers from Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique; from Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Swaziland; from Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, raising the children of our beloved late sons and daughters. We come to the end of this historic gathering filled with emotions: we are grateful for the chance we have been given - at long last - to make our voices heard. We are relieved to have had an opportunity to tell our stories, to share our experiences, to describe our hardships and our pain, to share the anxieties and express the sadness that descended on us late in our lives, and to receive respectful acknowledgement for the ongoing grief that scars our daily existence.

Each of our stories is different, each of our experiences is unique, and yet we are here as representatives of countless women who share in our tragedy: for every grandmother here today, there are fifty, sixty, seventy thousand at home. We have needs today, needs for the short-term and needs that will never go away. It is our solemn duty to the millions of grandmothers whose voices have never

been heard that gives us the courage to raise those needs to demands -- on their behalf, and on behalf of the children in their care.

Today, we demand the ear of the powerful: these words are for the conference organizers and the 25,000 delegates assembled at the 16th International AIDS Conference; for its host government, Canada; for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria; and for the United Nations. Grandmothers are worth listening to. We demand to be heard.

In the short-term, we do not need a great deal, but we do need enough: enough to safeguard the health of our grandchildren and of ourselves; enough to put food in their mouths, roofs over their heads and clothes on their backs; enough to place them in school and keep them there long enough to secure their futures. For ourselves, we need training, because the skills we learned while raising our children did not prepare us for parenting grandchildren who are bereaved, impoverished, confused and extremely vulnerable. We need the assurance that when help is sent, it goes beyond the cities and reaches the villages where we live. In the long term, we need security. We need regular incomes and economic independence in order to erase forever our constant worry about how and whether our families will survive.

We grandmothers deserve hope. Our children, like all children, deserve a future. We will not raise children for the grave.

From another side of the globe, we are Canadian grandmothers, arriving at the end of our gathering enlightened, resolved, humbled and united with our African sisters. We stand firm in our commitment

to give of ourselves because we have so much to give - so many resources, such a relative abundance of time, so much access, so much influence, so much empathy and compassion. We recognize that our African friends are consumed each day with the business of surviving, and so we have offered - and they have accepted - the loan of our voices. We pledge to act as their ambassadors, raising the volume on their long-suppressed stories until they are heard, understood and acted upon. We promise to apply pressure on governments, on religious leaders, and on the international community. We are committed to mobilizing funds, and recruiting more ambassadors among our sisters in Canada. We are dedicated to finding ways to make it clear that Africa's grandmothers hold a place in our hearts and in our thoughts not just today, but each day. We are acutely conscious of the enormous debt owed to a generation of women who spent their youth freeing Africa, their middle age reviving it, and their older lives sustaining it. We will not rest until they can rest.

Africans and Canadians alike, we arrived at our grandmothers' gathering with high expectations, but also with nagging apprehensions. We worried that the grief - our own and our sisters'- would be overwhelming. We harboured fears that the language barriers would separate us. We Canadian grandmothers worried that our capacity to help might be reduced to fundraising alone; we African grandmothers worried that our dire straits might cast us as victims rather than heroes. But we were motivated to make the trip by the special love that every grandmother knows, and we were emboldened to face our fears by the wisdom of our years. Our courage paid off. The age-old African ways of speaking without words broke down our communications barriers. We gestured and nodded. And we sang. We danced. We drummed. We laughed and clapped and wept and hugged. Through our new discovery -- grandmother to grandmother solidarity - we carried ourselves and one another through the grief to where we are this morning.

May this be the dawn of the grandmothers' movement.



[www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org)



## INIA'S ACTIVITIES 2007



7th - 16th February	45th Session of the Commission for Social Development (ECOSOC) (New York)
19th February – 3rd March	International Short Training Programme in SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY, (MALTA)
5th – 16th March	International Short Training Programme in ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF AGEING, (MALTA)
17th – 18th May	International Short Training Programme in MEDICAL GERONTOLOGY (GERIATRICS) (MALTA)
<b>JUNE</b>	
October 2007 – June 2008	International POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN GERONTOLOGY AND GERIATRICS (Dip.Ger) European Centre of Gerontology and Geriatrics, (University of Malta), (MALTA)
5th – 16th November	International Short Training Programme in DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF POPULATION AGEING, POLICIES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMI, POLICIES AND PLANS,(MALTA).



# INTERNATIONAL DIARY 2006/7

**9th – 10th November 2006 – Four Points by Sheraton, San Diego, California**  
Filial Piety International Conference  
Speakers: Dr. David Ho & Dr. Joseph Wong  
Website: [www.filialpietyintl.org](http://www.filialpietyintl.org)

**27th - 30th November 2006 - Innsbruck, Austria**  
European Conference on Aging, ECONAG  
Website: <http://www.econag2006@kmt.at>

**2007**

**16th - 17th February 2007 - Chapel Hill, North Carolina, United States**  
18th Challenges in Geriatric Practices Aging in a Changing World  
Website: <http://www.med.unc.edu/cme/geriatrics07.htm>  
Contact person: Amy Rix

**1st March 2007 – Durham, North Carolina, United States**  
Alzheimer's 2007: Strategic Directions in Research and Care  
Website: <http://adrc.mc.duke.edu/news.html>  
Contact person: Mary Trabert

**7th - 10th March 2007 - Chicago, IL**  
2007 Joint Conference of NCOA and the American Society on Aging

**30th - 31st March 2007 – Edmonton, Alberta, Canada**  
Edmonton Aging Symposium – Repairing the Damage  
Website: <http://www.edmontonaging-symposium.com>  
Contact Person: Kevin Perrott

**16th - 19th June 2007 - Toronto Canada**  
Festival of International Conferences on Caregiving, Disability, Aging & Technology  
E-mail address: [info@ficcdat.ca](mailto:info@ficcdat.ca)

**17th - 21st June 2007 – Jerusalem**  
7th World Congress on Brain Injury  
Websites: [www.kenes.com/ibia07](http://www.kenes.com/ibia07) (Congress)

**5th - 8th July 2007 – St. Petersburg, Russia**  
**VI European Congress of IAGG**  
Website: [www.gerontology.ru/congress2007](http://www.gerontology.ru/congress2007)  
E-mail: [congress2007@gerontology.ru](mailto:congress2007@gerontology.ru)

**24th - 25th September 2007 – Greater Toronto Area – Mississauga, Ontario, Canada**  
2nd Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health Conference  
Website: <http://www.ccsmh.ca>  
Contact Person: Kim Wilson

**2008**

**17th - 20th March 2008 – Washington D.C.**  
2008 Joint Conference of NCOA and the American Society on Aging

**29th June – 2nd July 2008 – Seoul, Republic of Korea**  
Announcement of the XVIIth World Congress on Safety and Health at Work

**2009**

**16th – 19th March 2009 – Las Vegas N.V.**  
2009 Conference of NCOA and the American Society on Aging  
Website: [www.internationalbrain.org](http://www.internationalbrain.org) (IBIA)