
Old age, Marginalization and Human Rights

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Human Rights are universal, and civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights belong to all human beings, including older people. Everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity. Everyone has the right to have a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of sickness, disability, widowhood, old age.

Older persons are entitled to lead fulfilling and productive lives and should have opportunities for full participation in their communities and society and in all decision-making regarding their well-being, especially their shelter needs. Their many contributions to the political, social and economic processes of human settlements should be recognized and valued. Special attention should be given to meeting their evolving housing and mobility needs in order to enable them to continue to lead rewarding lives in their communities. We commit ourselves to promoting shelter and supporting basic services and facilities for education and health for older persons.

Old age –As A Social Problem

Old age is generally accompanied by a number of problems that the aged have to adjust within varying degrees. These problems are insufficient income, ill health, need of recognition, dignity and social participation. Economic dependence, poor health and non-participation in the life of the family and the community tend to create problem among the aged, feelings of meaninglessness and powerlessness. When the aged have lost friends, spouse, job, influence, income, health etc., that cannot be replaced, it brings in them intolerance short-temperedness, rigidity of attitudes, selfishness and suspension and this shift in the psychological make-up which makes their living and adjustment in society more problematic. The loss of decision making power, consultation status and control of productive resource leads to the problem of isolation, loneliness and a deep sense of worthlessness.

Old age, as a social problem, has two dimensions. One is that a group of old people suffer from poverty, illness and isolation. This group of needy aged creates acute problems in the field of social welfare. The other dimension of the problem is the adjustment of the individual in the family and society to the new patterns of life.

Marginalization in Family

One of the basic familial problems of the elders is feeling loneliness, when they are away from their spouse. It is understood that most of the elders feel lonely when they are away from their spouse.

Problems of adjustment among the members of the family are quite common. To be specific, the status of the aged women in a family is more precarious. Traditionally women did not enjoy much social status. Old age and loss of spouse would further down-grade her position in the family. They are being abused directly or indirectly by their daughters –in-law because of being old, sick and not earning.

In some family's daughter-in-laws object their husbands to spend money on the old people in the home. Some of the daughter-in-law objects spending money on the aged. Problem of adjustment among members of the family are normally associated with women. This is more so with mother-in-law and daughters-in-law. Aged women, especially widows, are put to all kinds of sufferings. There is no understanding between them.

The aged complain that daughter-in-law do not ready to do domestic chores. A general observation is that mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are always at logger heads. Their quarrels and conflicts are the primary source of disputes and dissension in the household. Some aged opined that, educated daughter-in-law are more ego-minded and do not want to respect their elders in the family.

The aged feel that today's young children want a greater degree of autonomy, independence and freedom what was needed that the aged recognized the changing value system. Further the aged feel that it is the bounden duty of the youngsters to serve the aged parents. But generation gap makes them frustrate and feel marginal.

Aged people can lead a happy and contented life if their basic needs are fulfilled to their satisfaction. But many times in many families they are not served with good food and clothing satisfactorily. This makes them marginal.

In India every one believes that it is the duty of the daughters-in-law to look after the aged father-in-law and mother-in-law in the family. In fact, not all the daughters-in-law feel happy to live with their father-in-law and mother-in-law.

Human Rights of the Old age

These are some prominent relationships and adjustment problems among the aged. This made them marginal. It is inevitable to remove the problems and bridge the gap to establish warm and harmonious relationships between the aged and younger generation. Otherwise the old people become completely marginalized. Hence it is necessary to provide all sorts of rights to the aged. Some of the Human Rights of the Aged include the following indivisible, interdependent and interrelated human rights:

- The human right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, shelter and clothing.
- The human right to adequate social security, assistance, and protection.
- The human right to freedom from discrimination based on age or any other status, in all aspects of life including employment and access to housing, health care, and social services.
- The human right to the highest possible standard of health.
- The human right to be treated with dignity.
- The human right to protection from neglect and all types of physical or mental abuse.
- The human right to full and active participation in all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural life of society.
- The human right to full and effective participate in decision-making concerning their well-being.

CONCLUSION

The eradication of problems in old age requires universal access to economic opportunities that will promote sustainable livelihood and basic social services, as well as special efforts to facilitate access to opportunities and services for the disadvantaged. There is an urgent need for policies ensuring that all people have adequate economic and social protection during disability and old age. Particular efforts should be made to protect older persons, including those with disabilities by improving the situation of older persons, in particular in cases where they lack adequate family support. Ensuring that older persons are able to meet their basic human needs through access to social services and social security, that those in need are assisted, and that older persons are protected from abuse and violence and are treated as a resource and not a burden. Strengthening measures and rights to ensure that retired workers do not fall into poverty.

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