Review of Literature

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Old Age Visited: An Overview

The Hindu Ashrama Dharma theory divides an individual's life into four stages, which are on a continuum and shift smoothly from one stage to the next. The four stages or ashramas, are brahmacharya (as a student), grihasthsharama (as a householder), vanaprastha (as a retiree) and sanyasa (renunciation and preaching). The last two stages relate to the elders, during which they are expected to retire from active social life and give up all their worldly goods. It entails distributing one's property and possessions and rearranging one's priorities. Reflecting on and reviewing one's life, withdrawing into oneself, and being one with god, are the key features of these stages. This concept of old age has been aptly expressed by Gangrade (2000), that, "Old age curtails activities, shows an increase in voluntary withdrawal and abandonment of individual living. For

different people, onset of old age and its phenomenon occurs differently and at different stages of chronological age" (p. 79).

Demographic Features of Elders

The Department of Non-Communicable Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2003), have posted the following facts on the internet about old people, the world over, on their website homepage.

- In 2000, there were 600 million people aged over 60; there will be 1.2 billion by 2025 and 2 billion by 2050.

- Today, about two thirds of all older people are living in the developing world; by 2025, it will be 75 %.

- In the developing world, the very old (age 80+) is the fastest growing population group.

- Women outlive men in virtually all societies, consequently in very old age , the ratio of women/men is 2:1.

A review of the UN documents and Indian projections on population and various population studies support the same.In India, the proportion of elders has increased substantially between 1961 (24 million) to 1991 (52.4 millions). The figures are expected to double by 2016 and reach about 113 million according to population projections in India (Devi, 2000).

The gender differences of the elders in India are brought out by Gulati & Rajan (1999), "The gender difference is apparent only when we look at the marital status of the

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elderly. The incidence of widowhood increases rather sharply for women with advancing age. While only 19.4 % of the men found themselves widowers, about 64 % of women were widows. This was even more sharp for those over 70 years; 77 % women as against 22 % men. Thus, the overlap between incidence of widowhood and ageing is rather striking among women with serious economic and social implications. Aged women without much access to income, were totally dependent on family members for support, forms the future scenario. Such gender differences are a result of a (a) substantial age difference between marriage partners, because of differences in the ages at which men and women marry; (b) the differential life expectancy between males and females; and, (c) the differing proportion of old men and women who remarry.

In such a scenario, States which are on the threshold of modernization, find themselves having a large concentration of urban population, leaving the rural areas with nucleated or smaller families consisting of just the older parents.

Gujarat has been undergoing fairly rapid urbanization. The percentage of the total population living in urban areas increased from 28 percent in 1971 to 31 percent in 1981 to 34 percent in 1991, which is higher than 26 percent for all India in 1991 .... The proportion of older persons aged 60-64 was 2.7, 65-69 years was 2.0 % and 70-74 years was 1.4 % which declined to 0.6 % for the age group of 75-79 but rose to 0.8 % for 80+ .... Rajan, Mishra and Sharma (1999), reported that by the year 2021, the proportion of the old-old persons in Gujarat there will be 3.83 % rise as against 1.85 % in 1961. Besides, the young old persons will increase to 67, 90, 882 from 10,19,095 in 1961. The proportion divorced,

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separated or deserted was small in Gujarat and widowhood too quite rare until the older ages. 42 % of women age 50 or older were widowed, but only 14 % males in that age group were widowed .... There were more married urban men as compared to rural men while proportion of rural married women was higher than their urban counterparts (Dave, Mallya & Bhojak, 2003, p.19).

The Rural Scene

The elders are revered in rural society and enjoy a privileged position in the family. However, the market forces of industrialization and urbanization have led to the erosion of many socio-cultural values in rural families. "In the rural areas, a large percentage of elder males (87.3 %) and females (90.1 %) are employed in the agricultural sector. According to Sharma and Zenos (as cited in Gangrade, 2000, p. 81).

Due to old age, the roles of men and women are altered. Parenting are to be relinquished and loneliness has to be faced by women; whereas, the men lead a less productive life after retirement. Without newer roles to keep them engaged the elders become passive, confused and learn to live with unmet needs. Ironically, empirical studies analyzing their needs and problems are rare. Literature in Gerontology and Geriatrics has classified these problems and needs into three broad areas viz., biological, socio-psychological and health. Even though life expectancy has increased above 60 years, it does not ensure a healthy status of life. The body systems get slowly degenerated. This picture is compounded by chronic and debilitating ailments and diseases.

Theoretical Perspectives on Old Age

A review of literature indicated a paucity of researches on various dimensions of old age especially in the Indian context, therefore a need was felt to provide a theoretical background on old age concepts before embarking on the topic of migration. These concepts, which provided a framework for the present study, have been summarized in Table 1.

Migration: Rural to Urban Scenario.

Migration denotes movement of population with the change of residence within a region, country or outside the country. The criteria to define migrants as permanent, returned or visiting, are both temporal (time span) and locational (directional migration). According to Khan (1986), directional migration has been greatly influenced by the presence of friends and relatives, at the place of destination who have been the major source of information about the potential job opportunities for the migrant. Greenwood (As cited in Khan, 1983) using test data has found this strong tendency in Indians. Singh (1998), after reviewing various studies and the census data from 1961-91, reports that the reasons for migration are employment, education, family movement, marriage and so on. Employment among males and marriage among females are found to be the main reasons for migration, irrespective of the type and distance of the movement.

Motivations for migration are alluded to push and pull factors. Bague (1967), suggests that there are positive and negative aspects of migration provoking situation. Migration may occur as a search for opportunity to improve one's lot in life. In this case destination exerts a pull on migrants. Migration can also occur as a flight from

undesirable social and economic situation. These situations constitute push of the

community. Migration generally takes place when the positive pull factors at the place of

destination are outnumbered by negative push factors at the place of origin.

Background of Migrants

Review shows that the migrants tend to come from large families. Many migrate as they have conflicts with members from the nuclear family and, sometimes due to the desire to share gains within the extended family after migration. However, it is the tightness of kin relations, the extent of patrilocality and the availability of labour-exchange relations to replace absentees, which contribute to high out-migration in the village (Connell, Dasgupta, Laishley & Lipton, 1976).

The community set up and economic considerations such as transportation costs, income and job opportunities make rural migrants go to rapidly growing areas. Once migration takes place, it may be characterized into stages wherein the "rural migrants move into smaller urban areas, spend time in adaptation and then move on to metropolitan areas. It is the older generation that settles in small towns and the younger ones who migrate to bigger metros" (International Development Research Centre, 1977, p. 95).

Khan (1986), in the study on migrants from eastern UP found that the main activity of migrants before migration was agricultural in nature, and, after migration, they were mainly engaged in secondary and even tertiary activities. In addition, the migrants moved from a traditional based cultural society of which they were a part, into a complex cultural set up with urban norms that are entirely new to them. Such factors as well as interest in rural property (security in old age), many obligations and expenses in the rural areas force the out migrants to maintain ties and return back after earning some money in the urban markets. It is observed that both the rich and the poor migrate from rural areas.

Studies also show that migrants are superior to non-migrants in various socio-economic and physical attributes, in the places of origin, and somewhat inferior in the places of destination.

Glimpses of International Migration

International migration is a relatively recent phenomenon gaining solidity in the early part of the 20th century. By 2000 at least 160 million people were living outside their country of birth or citizenship, up from an estimated 120 million in 1990, according to the International Organization for Migration and unpublished estimates from the United Nations Division (As cited in Martin and Widgren, 2002, p. 3). Inter-country migration may be viewed as a natural and predictive response to differences in resources and jobs, differences in demographic growth and financial insecurity and exploitation of human rights in the countries of origin and/or destination.

. Immigration is related to upward social mobility. The first generation immigrants start in the lowest echelons of the host society and gradually improve their social position, while second and third generation immigrants have a better position than their predecessors. A study of female domestic workers in Singapore illustrates that these women from East and South East Asia launched their migration flow as paid domestics (Fortuin, Musterd & Ostendorf, 1998, p. 368).

The factors that encourage a migrant to move are grouped into three categories by Martin & Widgren (2002). These factors are, viz.,

(a)   Demand - pull - economic worker recruitments in receiving community

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(b)   Supply - push - negative social and economic pushes in sending community

(c)   Network - Joining the family in the receiving community, which construe non-

economic reasons; may operate simultaneously and may change over time.

The authors further reflect that in the beginning of the migration, the demand and

pull factors are strongest and network factors take over as the migration stream matures.

Commonly found migration sequence would be of rural migrants returning with

information about job opportunities abroad. However, network factors become very

important to sustain the migration. One of the most important non-economic motivations

for cross-national migration is family unification, wherein the anchor immigrant is a

demand-pull factor for family, till a chain of migration unfolds. People migrate for many

more reasons such as war, seeking refugee status, job opportunities as a result of

globalization, for study, work or personal enrichment and as traditional flows between

former colonies and their colonizers.

The modern migration of Indians began in 1934 when the British relocated Indian

peasants to the plantation of Mauritius. Until 1916, about five million came from

the subcontinent to the plantations of the Indian ocean, the Caribbean, Fiji, South

and East Africa to live in hostile conditions. After decolonization, Gujaratis,

Punjabis and Bengalis moved to England, to work in foundries and textile mills,

to drive trains and buses, to open shops for the workers and to provide some

services for the English. By mid 1980's about 1.2 million South Asians were

found living in England (Making a living in Southall, England).

On the whole, international migration is emerging as a basic structural feature in

nearly all industrialized countries and is a testament to the strength and coherence of "underlying forces" not understood or well known based on existing competent theories seeking a coherent theory (Massey et al., 2002).

In the absence of a holistic model on international migration, the investigator compiled a list of select theories/perspectives proposed by Massey et al. (2000), and Zimmerman (2001). The list is presented in Table 2. From the list, the network theory and the push and pull framework have been referred to for the present study.

Elders in Families: Focus on Rurality

In the Indian culture, the old have been integrated within the family covering the joint, extended and nuclear family structures and the local community according to the prescribed norms.

In rural India, the village elders have been playing an important role in the community through Panchayats and religious sects. In an average Indian family, the eldest owns property, makes decisions about children and their future, no matter what the latter's age may be. The traditional values have always encouraged society to show respect and provide care to the older persons, so that they are well looked after by the family. Those who do not have a family, are looked after by the community vis-à-vis various agencies.

The rural folk continue to live with these values. They also engage in occupations till their strength and energy gives in. Thus, old people may do housework, farm labour or cultivation or be artisans till well into their 70's. These continued work inputs help to

Table 2

A List of International Theories of Migration

The Theories
The Initiation of International Migration • Neoclassical economics (macro) • Neoclassical economics (micro) • "New Economics" of Migration • Dual labour market theory • World systems theory **The Perpetuation of International Movement** • Network theory • Characterized by chain migration; obligations are inherent in network ties; there is risk attention; is conceptualized as a self-sustaining diffusion process; a family/household decision. • Institutional theory • Cumulative causation • Migration systems theory • Push and pull framework (Zimmerman, 1994 as cited in Zhang, 2001) It is demand – pull migration and supply push migration along with shifts in the aggregate demand and supply curves of the receiving economy. In practice, push migration can be measured by variables like unemployment, wages, work, conditions, social security benefits and the structure of the economy.

make them self-sufficient, maintain authority and thereby strengthen their status. Such elders, therefore, are well accepted as guides and counsellors in the family and the village community.

In a patriarchal society, the men retain their position of head of the family, which is replaced by the eldest son in the absence of the father. The women are dependent on their husbands and sons and feel threatened by the entry of a daughter-in-law in the domestic area, which is their power zone. This picture is compounded for a widow, who feels "emotional deprivation and loss of status" within the family because she is solely dependent on her eldest son (Muttegi, 1997).

Himabindu (2002), further says .... "with modernization and industrialization the roles and the status of the old people are decreasing Aging is accompanied by role loss in work, inter-personal relationships, authority, economic independence and the gradual disintegration of peer group" (p. 45). Due to these factors, there arise social issues and problems because of lack of fulfillment of minimum needs or desires, abuse, bad habits, responsibilities of children and grandchildren and lack of social assistance. Physical and social isolation also keep them depressed. Most of the time, the generation gap, culture gap, low profile and disengagement situation leaves the old, somewhat helpless in the hands of kith and kin, friends and neighbours.

The elders are provided care by an informal support system. This mechanism includes family members by blood or marriage, neighbours and members of the community who abide by their social, cultural and religious systems the world over. Women have performed the nurturing role of caring for children and ill family members,

as a gender prescribed role. When the older couple of husband and wife cannot maintain an independent existence in the community, they live within the homes of family members.

A caregiver's role is enhanced or burdened with respect to nature and severity of old age impairments, prevalence and use of community services and caregiver's age, sex and health status (Kosberg, 1992). Sooryamurthy (As cited in Prakash, 2003, p. 34), reflects that in States like Kerala, the young migrate substantially, leaving the problem of elderly care which often results in crisis situations.

Support, Care and Help for Elders : Informal Systems

Social support refers to positive interactions in a person's social system, i.e. in the general social environment or ecology within which that person lives. This environment is made up of an informal system including family, friends.... and neighbours (Mcguire, 1991, p. 2). A social support consists of positive things wherein individuals provide help, guidance, care and so on, to each other. Family support refers to emotional, instrumental and financial assistance obtained from one's own family. Affirmation, feedback, money, effort and information giving, form some of the support types. The factors identifying the types of support are, family size, living arrangement and communication pattern, to name a few.

Communication patterns of the elders are observed through social interaction patterns among families, friends and neighbours. The parent-child interaction in later years is seen as intimacy at a distance. It remains unclear, whether the frequency of

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family contacts has impact on the quality of life of its older members as well as how the interactions with the children affect them (Himabindu, 2002). However, sibling interactions are seen to contribute to instrumental functions, such as providing goods and services.

The older people are mostly known to interact with their peers. If it is intergenerational contact, it is within the family. Many factors affect the elders' social network, such as the size of the family and gender. Since women outlive men, older men are still likely to be married as well as having surviving sisters. Marriage brings in a wider range of individuals as "potential support". In Indian families, especially the son-in-law and his family are specially known to receive full help and support from his in-laws.

Adult children provide support in old age, but according to Wenger (1994), daughters are more likely to provide care to aging relatives than sons. Wenger further says that "migration plays a role in creating networks as the individual has little or no influence on migration decisions of other members of his/her family, friends or neighbours. Stable households in communities or neighbourhoods with high over population turnover may suffer as much disruption to established networks as households which moves frequently" (p. 10). Of course it is in the make-up of an individual to take recourse to a social network or remain alone and isolated.

Through intensive research and focussed case analyses, Wenger has evolved a model comprising five types of support networks which consist of a core of family members with some friends and neighbours, averaging 5-7 members involved in support.

The five types of networks are the result of biology, migration and moving patterns and temperament. Different chance combinations of these factors, result in different types of networks and life styles.

The social networks are valid for various communities including the Indian scenario. These networks are namely, family dependent, locally integrated, local self contained, wider community based and private restricted (Wenger, 1994, pp. 12, 25-26). In rural India, the elders find help and support within their families, from friends as well as the total community, especially in times of crisis because of cultural expectations.

Impact of Children's Out-migration on the Old

Brink (2001) supported by Prakash (2003, p. 34), first outlines the dearth of material related to the impact on elders, due to their children's international migration. He reports from literature review about parents who migrate and the ones who do not. He concludes that the parents, who remain behind, benefit financially and then revert back to the traditional aging process when the children return. Given the lack of formal social services and pension systems, these financial gains and other accumulated assets transferred to the elders, are key resources for aging rural dwellers."Bank accounts and acquisition of land titles, generating savings and investing in better housing" was reported by Fortuiin, Musterd, & Osterdorb (1998, p. 60), due to Asian and Indian immigrant remittances.

Institutionalization of older people is often cited as an important result of migration of children . In rural India, old people are losing their control and authority

and are forced to depend on other kin due to migration of sons" (Rao, 1994). There is

evidence to suggest that migration is leading to nucleation and adversely affecting

intergenerational support (Gangadharan, 1999). Prakash (2000, p. 34).

In a study by Dave, Mallya and Bhojak (2003), 100 elders were examined in

terms of nature of intergenerational relationship and the informal social support available

to them in rural Gujarat after their children's migration. The study concluded that the

elders' social support was not disturbed, as there were other sons and daughters who

lived in their household/vicinity. Thus, the support came mainly from the family

members, followed by neighbours, friends and relatives from extended family.

Migration also brought in foreign funds, which were substantially utilized for village

development and community work.