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PLIGHT OF ELDERLY WOMEN IN RURAL SECTOR – CASE STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION:

Old age had never been a problem for India where a value-based joint family system is supposed to prevail. Indian culture is automatically respectful and supportive of elders. But the introduction of urbanization, modernization and globalization have led to change in the economic structure, erosion of societal values, weakening of social values, and social institutions such as the joint family. In this changing economic and social milieu, the younger generation is searching for new identities encompassing economic independence and redefined social roles within as well as outside the family. The changing economic structure has reduced the dependence of rural families on land which has provided strength to bonds between generations. The disintegration of the joint family system and the impact of economic change have brought into sharp focus the peculiar problems which the elderly women now face in the contemporary society.

Objectives:

1. To study the lifestyle of elderly women and their role in the family
2. To find out the difficulties faced by the elderly women in rural sector

METHODOLOGY:

The present study was conducted to explore the plight of rural elderly women. Case study method was employed to understand the lives of ten elderly women who are 60 years and above in Vadipatti Block of Madurai District. Ten cases were selected using purposive sampling method. The relevant Information was gathered from the elderly women by means of narrative method.

Insights of Elderly Women in Rural sector:

CASE A:

Mrs. A is 80 years old. She got married at the age of 20. Her marital life lasted only for four years as she lost her husband and was supported by her brothers. Later after their death Mrs. A was living with her only daughter in a rented house with the support of her close relatives. The relatives supported and gave her a house to live in but they scolded and ill-treated her. Somehow she managed and brought up her daughter. After few years her daughter got married and Mrs. A was left alone. Neither she had the stamina to meet out her livelihood nor the means enough to appease her hunger. Hence Mrs. A engaged herself in the 100 days work scheme which not only satisfied her economic needs but also served as a solace to console her. She was able to interact with the other women workers and share her feelings and thoughts.

CASE B:

Mrs. B is 70 years old. She got married at the age of 18. Her marital life had been smooth in the beginning but later it was not so. She had four sons, and all four of them got married. Mrs. B has been living alone after the death of her husband. Though she has four sons, all of them left her alone and maintaining distance from her. Mrs. B has an own house but she struggles to fulfill her basic needs. She has got 13 grand children. Out of them only two help her. She is happy about it, but worried about the rest as they are not close to her. Whenever Mrs. B feels lonely, she thinks about death. To avoid such thought, she engaged herself in the 100 days work. The pathetic condition in Mrs. B's life is that, the children left her uncared but threaten her to give away the property and disturb her a lot in this regard. Mrs. B feels that the effort and hard work which she invested to bring up the children had not been recognized and they fail to realize the core truth that she is their mother.

CASE C:

Mrs. C is above 70 years old, living alone. She has three sons and four daughters. At present she is happy as she has settled all of them in their marital life. She owns a house and due to that Mrs. C faces lots of problems. All her children fight with one another to inherit the property. Mrs. C holds patience to resolve the problems based on property. Her third daughter-in-law who is her own grand-daughter does not care about her, whereas the other two daughter-in-laws take care of her very much. Mrs. C's husband deserted her and left the family abruptly. Mrs. C strived in life to bring up her children. Even though her sons are not supporting, left her in isolation she does not speak ill about them and also not allow anybody to do that. Mrs. C said in a positive way that her sons do not have sufficient money to help her. She is very much confident and works in 100 days scheme. Apart from this, she is also doing agricultural work. Mrs. C's has a positive outlook. This attitude of Mrs. C makes village people to approach her for advice, guidance and to get problems solved.