

MENTORING AND COUNSELLING TECHNIQUES IN THE FIELDS OF SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

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COUNSELLING: A LIGHT HOUSE FOR ROBUST AGEING

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Introduction:

The demographic changes that have taken place over the last few years, increased life expectancy and a reduced birth rate have led to a very significant increase in the ratio and impact of the elderly in our society. This increase has been accompanied by a greater diversity within the community of senior citizens, in terms of their age, health and social conditions, and by a new discourse; that of the active elderly person. While becoming old is a natural phenomenon, the problems associated with it are also inevitable. It is at this stage of life that one needs housing, healthcare and financial care more than ever.

Current Scenario of Ageing:

Ageing is the process of growing old, and it is a gradual biological impairment of usual functioning. These changes have a direct impact on the ability of organs, such as the heart, kidney and lungs, and biological systems such as the reproductive and digestive systems. These all affect the organism as a whole.

What we mean by "old" has also changed over recent years. Due to medical advances, improved hygiene and sanitation, people tend to live longer. Our life expectancy is the average number of years of life remaining at a given age – in other words, the average expected life span of an individual. Every day thousands of people around the world hit the age of 65 and start the road of living as a senior citizen. The Registrar General of India forecasts the share of older persons (age 60 years and above) in the total population to rise from 6.9% in 2001 to 12.4% in 2026. The United Nations projections put the estimated number of elderly in India in 2000 at 77 million. The projection for the year 2025 is 168 million and for 2050 it is 326 million. These are frightening numbers: an elderly population of 20 million in 1951 increasing to 326 million in 2050. Census data 2001 about the elderly population showed that as many as 75% of elderly persons were living in rural areas. About 48.2% of elderly persons were women, out of whom 55% were widows. A total of 73% of elderly persons were illiterate and dependent on physical labor. One-third was reported to be living below the poverty line, i.e., 66% of older persons were in a vulnerable situation without adequate food, clothing, or shelter. About 90% of the elderly were from the unorganized sector, i.e., they have no regular source of income. This important group of people has unique concerns when it comes to family. Although the age of considering senior citizens varies countries to counties but the issue of old age and the problem of senior citizens are remain there. The percentage of the population above 65 will be highest in developed countries, but the absolute number will be higher in developing countries.

Developing countries such as China and India have the largest total population, and will continue to have the largest absolute number of elderly people. With a comparatively young population, India is still poised to become home to the second largest number of older persons in the world. The problems of the aging process has to be understood in the back drop of far reaching social, economic and value based changes in India. Indian society has witnessed an erosion of traditional values which has undermined the traditional position and status of the elderly. The family has undergone a sea change like the decline in the joint family system, fewer children due to acceptance of small family norms, increasingly participation of women in economic activities and migration of younger members from rural areas to cities for employment. Added to these is paucity of adequate housing facilities arising out of urbanization.



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