

Elder Abuse its there!!!!!!

!5 th June is an Elder Abuse Prevention Day. Let us see, what is this Abuse, where it is and let us resolve to reduce it to the extant possible.

There is a general feeling amongst Senior Citizens that children of to-day do not bother about their parents, their wishes, their happiness, their requirements etc and some children misbehave and/or beat their parents! They do not recollect that their parents had the same feelings for their children!! Not respecting parents is also termed by some as elder abuse, as parents expect that as they have brought up their children well as per their then capacity, children must accept this and feel grateful and respect them.

Expectations create problems! In our Society, we rear our children with love & devotion. We expect that our children shall look after us in our old age! While rearing children, it is seen that some times, we become harsh and beat them also for their good, for doing their lessons, preparing for exams etc. Some parents misbehave for their own problems and tensions without any fault or concern of children. Government had to legislate to ensure that children are not maltreated by parents & others! Some of us had not behaved properly with our parents in the presence of our children. All such occasions get recorded in subconscious minds of children and such tapes get repeated by children with us! It is said that life is a series of experiences and all are slave to their experiences and social conditionings. All react helplessly to such social conditionings. This social conditioning is required to be changed consciously by all to avoid abuses & unpleasantness. Each elder should be capable to understand this. He must realize, visualize and accept the situations around him in family & society and do his best to reciprocate for services taken by him sofar from family members & society at large.

The dictionary meaning of Abuse is to take undue advantage, to betray, to misrepresent, to disrespect, to deceive, to mal-treat and to violate. Abuses are at different levels and of different magnitude. **First and Foremost Abuse in our Country is Self Abuse!!** A person retires from service, he feels he has done a lot and now deserves rest! He rests and does not remain active, resulting in deteriorating health & connected problems! He abuses himself!! He develops inertia of doing nothing; he does not participate in any functions, does not go to any Associations, and does not want to learn anything new. He feels, he need not waste his energy, which requires to be preserved at this age! He forgets that we have unlimited energy and even in active life, we have used a very small % of energy. In old age also, we have unlimited energy and the Principle is ``**USE IT OR LOOSE IT.**`` So, plan out your life, once you retire from busy life; you have lot of time at your disposal, which you should use for self, family and society at large. American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has identified the following symptoms and signs in respect of such Abuse: Increased depression, timidity, anxiety, longing for death, confusion, self-neglect, vague health problems, mounting resentment, unusual fatigue, withholding of food or medicines, hostility, unresponsiveness etc

Next abuse arises in family. In some cases, though the retired person gets pension, which is more than what he was getting while in service due to no deductions for taxes, refund of loans etc, he is not respected in the family itself, as he was respected while in service. This is perhaps due to his continuing to behave as he was behaving while in service and do not change his habits, ego, requirements and expectations! So far, he was the head of the family, now he is not! If he is not getting pension or sufficient income from investments etc, position shall be still worse and more unpleasant. In Society also, his value is not, as it was while in service. Perhaps, a Social Conditioning!

On conversation with inmates of Vrudhashrams and conversations by various Senior Citizens in discussions on this subject, the following types of cases of Abuse have also come to light. There are cases, where parents continue to stay with one of the children or say, in some cases, children continue to stay with their parents. There are no major conflicts till children get married. In cases, where accommodation belongs to children, it is alleged that parents are made (forced) to do baby-sitting, bring children from & to schools, bring milk in early morning, grocery, vegetables etc and some parents feel offended instead of feeling happy to be useful to their busy children. Daughter in laws, having not been able to make husband's parents go away, are reported to be insulting, misbehaving as and when possible.

In some cases, daughters in law are sending her children to play boisterously, when and where Senior Citizens are resting and on beds of elders during their day sleep. They are encouraged to use T.V., Music Systems etc very loudly. They are taught to insult elders. When elders use Dining Table, T.V., Computer (even in cases these are provided at elder's cost), children are taught to insist to use these by them at that very time. If some near relative comes to meet Senior Citizens, daughters-in-law shall not come out from kitchen or bed room for a long time to say hello or give water, tea etc to the visitor. There are different types of elder abuses in different families at different times.

In some extreme cases, where mother in law is widow, she is asked, though not physically capable, to do all house hold work of cleaning the house, utensils, clothes etc, not given sufficient & proper food and not in time and that too with contempt and by throwing by some daughters in law. Speaking harshly is also a daily affair. Sons, some how see and understand only, as they are told by their wives and misbehave with parents and occasionally beat also! If father has money and property, all sons will do their best to get it as early as possible and in extreme cases, there will be frequent quarrels and sometimes beating also. There are cases of confining elders in one room, not allowing them to go out or talk to others, making them remain out of the house for the whole day, not giving medicines, not taking to doctors, not taking to social functions, taking away pension, disposing of their precious belongings, furniture etc and so on.

In one of the peculiar case, which will also indicate why such cases continue to occur, it was observed that widow mother already in Vrudhashram is forcibly brought back & sent back 3 times on work being done by son aged 50, who has misspent his lakhs and forced his wife to abandon him along with children. He argues with the mother that it is her duty to feed him, as she has produced her! When money comes to him, he forces her to go away. Mother has only 2 lakh for which she gets less than 1700 p.m. interest. She, at 72, is not able to stand or walk without several orthopedic belts. She does home work and cooks and feeds the son, who beats her often mercilessly for no reasons! He takes money forcibly and spends on what some priest tells him to perform and puts pure ghee for whole day in lamps etc! If mother tells this is not good and should give up such habits, he beats her!

He does not go for any work saying that no body gives him work! Our advice to son does not bring any result and our advice to mother brings only one reply she does not want to report to police & put her son in custody. This is her fate and every day happening and after crying, she just forgets the severe beatings! She was happy singing bhajans with other inmates in Vrudhashram but missing relatives and is happy with beatings and living with son also!! This is perhaps our Culture! There is large number of different types of abuses in various families but very few cases are reported to police or Help Lines provided by various Social Organizations.

In cases, where couples stay separately from children, some spouse abuse the other one less powerful to do house hold work, demand sex etc instead of sharing some responsibility.

Secretary and Working Committee Members are doing good work for Senior Citizens but some of these bearers do nothing at all, which is an abuse of members!

Society is doing good to elders by financial help, medical camps etc but examples of Social Abuse are not vacating by some the seats earmarked for Senior Citizens in public transport & shouting and removing the boards for separate queue for Senior Citizens in Hospitals, Post Offices etc. Doctors do yeoman service to Elders but those not attending them sincerely are abusing them!

Government is also doing a lot through its Legislative & Executive Machinery for Senior Citizens by laying down an extra ordinary National Policy on Older Persons, 99 and the Maintenance & Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens Bill, 07 etc but Government Abuse of Senior Citizens is lethargy in their implementation by some Officers!

Judiciary, although empowered and instructed to expedite cases of Senior Citizens, little progress is achieved, which is an abuse!

Our most powerful 4th Estate-Media is not doing much for its 30% elder readers & viewers and do not take special steps to create respect for elders in the society and this is the abuse of Senior Citizens by Media!

Psychologists & Sociologists should analyze available cases in detail and suggest ways & means to avoid elder abuses and to create better Social Conditioning.

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