

Senior Citizens of Twenty First Century

Happiness is the state of mind and this feeling being abstract can not be assessed for entire group of Senior Citizens of the present decade and before some decades, unless some standards/measurements are laid down. Let us lay down specific standards as below and then compare us with our fathers & forefathers of 3-4 decades before.

- 1) Financial Position: The dawn of 21st Century brought prosperity for our country due to adoption of Economic Reforms earlier. Lot of investments by NRIs & Foreign Companies increased the production as well as liquid cash. Overall prosperity & increased GDP gave advantage to Senior Citizens also. Government employees got revised pensions on par with their erstwhile designations with 100% benefit of Dearness Allowance, which was meagre earlier. Public Sector paid their employees well, resulting in better retirement benefits and also through substantial handshakes for voluntary retirements. Those in private sector also got considerable advantage of increased GDP. Those dependent on children also got relief due to increase in income of their children. Along with more money, availability of commodities not only in respect of food but in all respect became very easy as compared to earlier period, when one had to go to Vasai on Western Railway or Sahad on Central Railway for 1-2 kilos of rice and eat red imported wheat! Standard of living and quality of life of Senior Citizens are increased in general due to more money and more facilities like easy transport, quick communication through phones, mobiles, computers, more entertainment through TV, Cinema, Music, Drama etc. Life earlier for Senior Citizens in last 4-5th Century was difficult with limited income and limited availability of commodities. Basic requirements of Roti, Kapda, Makan are now easily met. Earlier Home Loans were not easily available without obtaining title of land. In this century, all loans, including Reverse Mortgage Loan for various purposes are easily available even for Senior Citizens. Help to needy from Charitable Trusts etc is easily available. For those Below Poverty Line, Indira Gandhi Pension, though a mockery of a living human being, is available from Government with free insurance of Rs 30 thousand, subsidised grains etc. Even second careers are easily available, as compared to earlier period.
- 2) Cultural: The present generation of Senior Citizens is much more organized and have more time to devote to cultural & religious activities. More Associations of Senior Citizens, many big temples, masjids, churches, cultural & social associations have come up now and atmosphere is also more favourable for such activities as compared to earlier times. There are better avenues for passing time usefully and being helpful to others. Laughing Clubs, Gyms, Yoga-Meditation Centres, Spa, Health Clubs etc are available in plenty. Learning facilities in various fields of interest at late age are also available. More literature, more information,

more Newspapers, Magazines etc and what not more is easily available!
Senior Citizens lead in all fields like Politics, Society, Science, Trade,
Marathons and Games etc.

- 3) Medical facilities: Advanced medical facilities are available as per one's financial position. There are free Hospitals belonging to the State, Municipality, Trusts etc and very costly Hospitals also. Incurable diseases of the past have been eliminated and the results of better medical facilities are apparent by way of longer life span & healthy Senior Citizens moving amongst us.
- 4) Family: Due to children going away for service etc, there are many Senior Citizens staying alone and enjoying independent life! Though, there is a general nostalgia of disadvantages of Nuclear family and depriving Senior Citizens of love & respect, the fact remains that present generation of Senior Citizens prefer separate independent life till last. They prefer to stay in Oldmen`s House rather than play second role in their children's family. In view of this, there shall be need for more Palliative Care & Hospice Centres shortly. Senior Citizens of the earlier times were happy in joint family because they were continuing to be Head Of the Family.
- 5) Security: The present day Senior Citizens staying alone are not more secured than earlier in Joint Family but sufficient security exists by way of Police Protection, if they get registered with Police and follow their instructions. NGOs also look after them in case of keeping contacts with them. Help Line exist for 24/7. Show of prosperity to unregistered servants leads them to trouble.

Government has not done enough inspite of clear directives in NPOP,99. It will be sufficient, if NPOP is implemented quickly by laying down a time bound plan for implementation, as ordered by Chief Information Commissioner on 27-6-08.

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General Impression:

This subject was discussed informally in a group of about 15 Senior Citizens. The general consensus was that earlier Senior Citizens were happy than present generation. They gave the following reasons/their thinking/feelings:

- i) Old is Gold.
- ii) There was less population and less wants.
- iii) Due to joint family system, financial & social support was available.
- iv) People were god fearing and as such less problems.
- v) Knowledge of diseases did not exist and as such, no rushing to the doctors.
- vi) Money had value and things were cheap.
- vii) Nature & Environments were good.
- viii) Respect for seniors existed in families. Even guests were looked after well.

- ix) Pure eatables like ghee, vegetables, grain etc were available, as compared to present day adulterated things.
- x) Body was remaining fit due to hard work in fields.
- xi) People believed in theory of KARMA. If bad things are done, they will be punished.
- xii) There was a unity in villages, mohallas etc and people used to come to the help/rescue, as compared to present trend of running away from the site.
- xiii) People were less selfish.

With Best Wishes,

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