



CHANGING LIFESTYLE OF ELDERLY WOMEN IN DIGITALLY EMPOWERED SOCIETY

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Abstract : The elderly women population lives longer and prolongs to put up with a disproportionate volume of the financially uninsured population or vulnerable group. In this context the term elderly woman refers to those who have attained the age of 60 years and above. The dependency of the elderly women is getting changed from human beings to gadgets. It is the need of the hour for every member of the society and particularly for the elderly women it is a real challenge to survive in this digital India. In today's context besides the need to get the benefits from the government, the survival of the elderly women demands them to be digital literates. Apart from this they also need to be updated in using the modern technologies for sharing their past and ideas with their friends, relatives and loved ones and involve themselves in internet banking, online payment of utility bills, online entertainment etc. Hence this paper attempts to portray the changing life style of Elderly Women in Digital India.

Key words: Elderly Women, Digital, Empowered, Society, Life style

Introduction:

“To teach a man how he may learn to grow independently, and for himself, is perhaps the greatest service that one man can do another.” -Benjamin Jowett

The portrayal of women in media and in the reality is often miles apart. They are tongue-tied, silent spectators living longer to put up with a disproportionate volume of the financially hardly insured population (the weaker vessels of the society). Their pathetic plight and the tragic dependency on their-male counterparts, off-springs, grandchildren, peers, their dear and near ones-the ceaseless crusaders ever since the dawn of humanity. The dependency of the elderly women is getting changed from human beings to gadgets. Historically, the joint family system blessed them with a comfortable cushion. But now the traditional social structure is crumbling amid risking worker mobility, nuclear families and the shift towards a more individualistic society.

There had been several news reports from foreign countries during the outbreak of the pandemic covid-19, an elderly woman, who attempted to pay for her medical insurance with cash was refused due to concerns that her cash might be carrying the virus. In another case, an elderly man without a phone was asked to get off the bus, after failing to show the driver his health-status code via the App used at all public places. Therefore the old woman was ignored as she had not set up a mobile payment and was left alone in

the service centre at a loss. It has become mandatory inevitable and the need of the hour for every member of the society to become a digital learner to survive in the society.

India is a country marching towards the path of development. In the process of development the nation focuses on the different aspects like economy, education, employment, communication and technology. As it grows, there is a need to focus on digitalisation to survive in today's context. The flagship programme of the Government of India is to create a Digital India; the vision of the programme is to transform the Rural India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. In successful implementation of this programme, there are several challenges put forth like digital illiteracy, poor infrastructure, low internet speed, lack of coordination among various departments, issue pertaining to taxation etc., since the nation has to be transformed, it has to depend on every sections of the society. This transformation process creates an impact on the people particularly among the elderly women. Being physically weak, financially poor, emotionally fragile, socially backward and technologically challenging, it is rather hard for the elderly to draw due attention. In India they are falling worse quiet a greater number of factors from 'digital divide' to a crumbling social fabric, from ageism at workplace to a tendency to discount experience, from raising healthy care cost to missing pension coverage have rather converged to push the pitiable elderly further to the fringes. The technology led world favours the young, reshapes every aspect of their life, work, communication, environment, government services etc and has thrown many seniors behind. They become alienated from their contemporary digital society. Therefore socially, it is tough for the elderly.

The Silver Lining:

Digital is a set of skills associated with the use of ICT that every individual should develop to be able to perform in a computerized society. To put it simple, digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create and communicate information, requiring both cognitive information and technological skills. This technology aids to share thoughts and ideas and maintain relationship. In this way Google, face book and whats app will keep the elderly minds busy and connected. Digital education platforms are opening new doors for the needy to constantly update and upgrade their knowledge at very low cost. Even as the joint family system structure crumbles, 'New Social Structures' are emerging with housing complexes for the aged for 'Community living'. Festivals, birthdays, anniversaries are celebrated here with the spirit of togetherness entertaining the sense of belonging. Through various governmental programmes the elderly are given training regarding online shopping and Internet banking. In fact, digital products and services that help the elderly get into the digital world. In spite of all these efforts, certain aspects like lack of internet access, complex usage, fear of knowledge, insecurity, and social isolation, limited awareness of the e. government benefits and lack of trust prevents the elderly from becoming digital literates. It is rather challenging and quiet new for the elderly to get used to modern technology to fully make advantage of it. Social loneliness and seclusion has a negative impact on the lives of the elders affecting not only their emotional welfare but also cause disastrous consequences on their health and their physical well being.

Besides the efforts taken by the government, Non governmental organisations also offer digital literacy programs introducing elders to the online world by conducting workshops across the country paving the way for elderly empowerment. Computers and smart phones learning are also made very easy. Versatile technology based intervention have been carried out to reduce the stress and loneliness amongst the elderly. In addition to the elderly empowerment in digital space, the seniors are offered counselling for financial planning for later years, made aware of their rights and entitlements and given legal advice on how to make out their wills and legacies. Social media such as whats app, skype and face book have changed their life dramatically and have liberated them from the dependency of their children and grandchildren. As per India's Annual report by 2050 the number of India's senior citizens will be equal it's under 18 population. So the elderly has immense potential to constitute an entirely new customer base. Digital empowerment for the seniors is really the need of the hour. Without it the older generation may face the risk of digital isolation. Online payment service, Internet and utilities bills to banking transactions can easily be done from the paradise of their homes now-a-days.

Other online services such as booking a cab, ordering food, hiring housekeeping help and entertainment on demand are also availed by the elderly. Be it for shopping needs, travel needs or even ordering food to satisfy a craving there is an exclusive app for everything.. Internet provides all information. It's an incredible resource for the elderly for learning popular search engines and video portables can be visited by seniors and get to know whatever they want, exercise routines and the world cuisine recipes.

The seniors become digitally independent. Digital know how leads to digital independence. The focus of the government digital India project has been on the country's youth. But it becomes quite essential to extend the scheme to the growing elderly community and a training program on technology should be introduced for contemporary life. To see the digital progress in the nation we need to ensure that our senior citizens too are made digitally knowledgeable. It becomes quite essential to observe the fact that almost all the challenges during the pandemic period were resolved through technology. In addition to this, financial inclusion has been taken to the last mile through technology via Aadhaar enabled solutions.

For accessing daily needs to social activities, everything went online overnight. Though many urban seniors had the requisite smart phone they knew little about the know-hows to use beyond the basics. 'Easy Hai' a digital-literacy platform was launched for adults and seniors. More than 9000-over the age of 60 were the beneficiaries. They were taught to think of technology as a language all its own. To create a safe space for the elderly been the primary essential. Prior to pandemic the share of Internet users in the 55 plus age group was only six to eight percentages. Within six months it became 25 percentages to 30 percentages for various categories like communication, medicine, commerce, entertainment etc. Healthcare, payment wallets, e-commerce, grocery are some of the categories to have witnessed a notable jump in monthly active users. The elderly across the country with varying degree of comfort with digital platforms have adapted to the ways of the Internet world to save time to ward of loneliness, to stay safe indoors and to feel just confident. 300 middle-aged women from Rajasthan had been taught how to operate basic apps on their smart phones via zoom sessions. They were taught how to mute unmute themselves during video conferencing. They learn how to change the language of typing for whats app and how to send voice notes.

It is known that Andragogy provides the full fledged learning environment to the elderly adults. It is the discipline that allows knowing the most relevant educational principles and processes based on the characteristics of adults both in their maturity and in their old age. The Knowledge of ICT provided to the elderly must be really useful and for that it must respond to their personal and social needs. The teaching should focus on teamwork, support, cohesion and interaction to achieve more proactive learning. The educational model for digital literacy of the elderly should be developed in the framework of a personalized cooperative, collaborative and meaningful learning to make them inherit ICT as a part of their life. Likewise, this should be based on andragogy taking into consideration the biological, psychological and social characteristics typical of their age.

The digital world, it's not easy to meet anybody in person especially during pandemic and post pandemic. The situation demands the survivors of today to get connected with the world outside impersonally via the social media like whats app and skype. It also paves the way for reunion of the elderly with their old school mates who lives across the globe just giving a click in the mouse and having seated in the drawing room. To overcome the loneliness and to compete in the present day society the elderly women need to be updated technically and stay connected socially. The technology favours them as follows:

Online Payments:

Due to the digitalisation and online payment it's easy for the elderly women to complete the payments within a fraction of seconds, but this is not the case those days where the individuals need to walk in person all the way to the spot to finish the required task.

Online Shopping:

Having become old the situation makes the elderly women to depend on somebody to live on this earth for anything and everything. Depending on others creates uneasiness for these elderly women pampers and disturbs to purchase this and that now and then. But having updated the elderly women know how to operate and understand the function of this online shopping.

Online Bank Transactions:

Even though the elderly women find it difficult and slow in grasping the technology, they have now started to use the ATM cards or green banking and more focussed to safeguard their savings.

Health and Social Services:

The trends of using mobile phone for health and to intake telemedicine have paved the way to solve the health issues and guides the elderly those who reside at home. This action stops the elderly women to visit hospitals frequently in turn reduces the vigour of spreading the infections.

Assistance to Care Elderly Women:

Wireless sensors have helped the elderly women in regulating sleep patterns and give information about the health status of the elderly women to their family members and the care givers respectively. Initiated digital voice prompts helps in reminding the elderly women to consume the medicines on time regularly.

Access to Modern Gadgets:

These modern technologies have reached the elderly women hearts by engaging and assisting in household activities. It makes cooking simple, easy and faster. The advance technology completes the task within a short duration of time.

Communication:

The smart phones help the elderly women to communicate and interact with their loved ones even though they are far reaching.

Online Food:

The elderly women living in nuclear families or living alone can order food by using online resources without any stress and strain.

Entertainment:

In this digital era, the elderly women become familiar in using technology of various sources for watching movies, listening to favourite songs and watching news in their preferred channels. This helps them to get relief from stress and other worries.

Conclusion:

Thus the digital India makes everyone to move fast, progress and access modern technology. It has become the part and parcel of every individual's life. All the more it enables the elderly women to wipe away loneliness and isolation and helps in smooth functioning of their life. The proposals of the innovative practices of Government should make it possible to open up more areas to provide education to older adults with effective intervention strategies in order to include them into digitally era. Digital literacy has evolved rapidly from an option into need due to the constant change in technology and its vast application. These constant advances make it inadequate to provide digital literacy to older adults using single technology. It's quite important to propose strategies where adults can develop flexible skills and technological self efficacy to maintain their digital literacy despite the changes and advances.

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