



A Study Of Shanti Old Age Home In Kokrajhar, BTR, Assam

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Abstract

This study explores the socio-economic backgrounds and reasons behind the residence of elderly individuals at Shanti Old Age Home, located in Choraikhola, Kokrajhar district, BTR, Assam. In India, the elderly population has been gradually increasing, leading to caregiving challenges, especially as family dynamics have undergone significant changes due to urbanization, industrialization, migration, the market economy, and the erosion of traditional value systems. As a result, many elderly individuals may experience loneliness or inadequate care at home. In response to this, we have seen the birth of old age home which provide a solution by offering medical assistance, recreational activities, companionship, and a structured routine for seniors. Shanti Old Age Home, administered by the Peace Foundation Choraikhola and registered under number RS/KJR/253/U/18-20-21, currently has five inmates, each with a unique personal story that led them to reside there. The study employs a qualitative and exploratory approach, utilizing primary data gathered through field visits with open-ended questionnaires, along with secondary sources such as books and research papers.

Key Words: Shanti Old Age Home, Socio-economic Background, Family Dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Every human being undergoes the continuous, irreversible process of aging from conception to death. The term 'aged' refers to those who have reached or marked the later stages of their life cycle. Old age, the final stage of human existence, is characterized by a vast range of social, biological, and psychological changes¹. One of the key demographic trends of the 21st century is population aging. In India, the population's age composition has changed over time, leading to a progressive increase in both the number and proportion of elderly individuals. According to the 2001 census, older people made up 7.7% of the total population, which increased to 8.14% in the 2011 census. The projections for the population over 60 years in the next four

¹ Neeraj, & Bhardwaj, R. K. (2021). Old age home for the elderly: A study of old age home in Faridabad district, Haryana, India. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 10(11[6]). <https://doi.org/10.11.111>

censuses are as follows: 133.32 million (2021), 178.59 million (2031), 236.01 million (2041), and 300.96 million (2051). The increases in the elderly population result from changing fertility and mortality patterns over the last 40-50 years (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2011; Central Statistics Office, New Delhi, 2011)².

Indian civilization has a long-standing tradition, reinforced by religious and cultural beliefs, that sons taking care of their aging parents. Living with their married children is a common example of this practice. Until recently, three-generational households were prevalent, facilitating intergenerational interaction. In these extended families, the amount and quality of intergenerational connection ultimately determined the standard of elder care. However, the family-the primary caregiving institution has undergone structural and functional changes due to ongoing trends such as urbanization, industrialization, migration, the market economy, and the erosion of value systems³. As a result, younger generations are becoming increasingly indifferent or even disrespectful toward elderly authority figures. Consequently, many elderly individuals may experience loneliness or a lack of proper care at home. In response to this issue, old age homes serve as an alternative by offering medical assistance, recreational activities, companionship, and a structured routine for seniors. Furthermore, recognizing the significance of this age group, the UN General Assembly declared October 1st as the International Day of Older Persons in 1990 to celebrate and honor the contributions of the elderly to society. Following this, the year 1999 was designated as the International Year of Older Persons by the United Nations. In India, the first old age home was established in Mumbai in 1843, followed by the second in Pune in 1863.

In light of the rapid social changes in contemporary Indian society, the number of public and private care facilities for the elderly is steadily increasing. Rising poverty rates, high living expenses, and costly medical care have made elder care a significant concern. This study examines the socio-economic background and the reasons why elderly individuals reside at Shanti Old Age Home in Kokrajhar, BTR, Assam.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the socio-economic background of elderly individuals residing at Shanti Old Age Home, Kokrajhar.
2. To identify the causes and factors that lead elderly individuals to reside at Shanti Old Age Home, Kokrajhar.

LIMITATION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted within a limited time frame i.e. from 10th May, 2023 to 17th June, 2023 and the scope of the study is confined to Shanti Old Age Home, Kokrajhar; as a result, the findings may not be widely generalized.

² Shamsi Akbar et.al., (2014). Reasons for Living of Elderly to In Old Age Homes: An Exploratory Study, *The International Journal of Indian Psychology* | ISSN 2348-5396 Volume 2, Issue 1.

³ Suganya, M. (n.d.). *Quality of life of elderly people in old age homes in Chennai city*. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/278337>

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study area is Shanti Old Age Home, located at Choraikhola in the district of Kokrajhar, BTR, Assam, India. The old-age home has a population of five inmates.



Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative approach and employs an exploratory method. To achieve the study's objectives, both primary and secondary sources were utilized. Primary data were collected through field visits using open-ended questionnaires. Secondary sources include public books, journals, articles, theses, research papers, and other published materials.

SHANTI OLD AGE HOME

Shanti Old Age Home is located in Choraikhola, within the district of Kokrajhar, BTR, Assam. The Bodoland Territorial Region comprises of five districts viz. Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpur, and Udalguri. The region falls under the jurisdiction of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), which is divided into 40 development blocks and 10 civil sub-divisions and it covers an approximate geographic area of 9,612 square kilometers which are predominantly inhabited by the Bodo people and other indigenous communities of Assam.

Shanti Old Age Home is voluntarily provided by the leaders of Krishnaguru Sewashram, Kokrajhar, to serve older adults. It began operations in 2022 and later merged with Krishnaguru Sewashram, a religious institution. Krishnaguru Sewashram owns a six-bigha plot of land. Currently, Shanti Old Age Home is managed by the non-governmental organization called Peace Foundation Choraikhola, with registration number RS/KJR/253/U/18-20-21.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF 5 INMATES

Gender-wise distribution of Respondents

Table 1

Gender	No. of Respondents
Male	02
Female	03
Total	05

Source: Field Survey

The table 1 presents the gender-wise distribution of respondents in the study. Out of a total of five respondents, two are male, while three are female. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are female, making up 60% of the total sample, whereas males account for 40%.

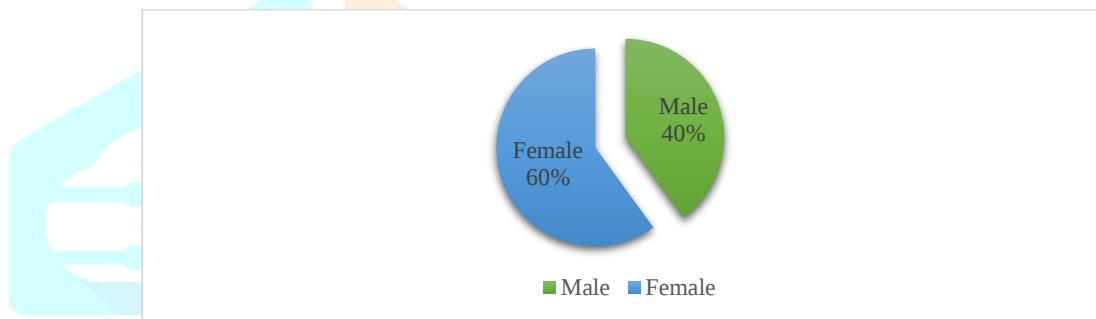


Figure 1: Gender-wise distribution of Respondents

Age-wise distribution of Respondents

Table 2

Age	No. of Respondents
48	01
60	01
65	02
80	01
Total	05

Source: Field Survey

The table 2 illustrates the age-wise distribution of respondents. Among the five respondents, one is 48 years old, one is 60 years old, two are 65 years old, and one is 80 years old. This data highlights that the majority of respondents belong to the elderly age group, with most being 60 years and above.

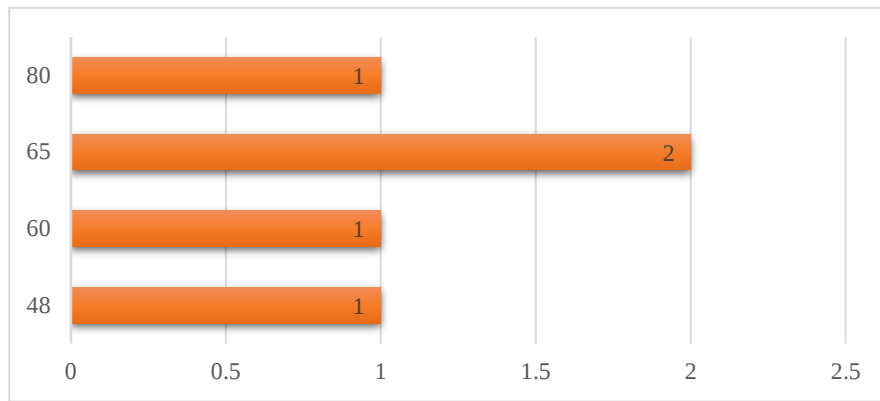


Figure 2: Age-wise distribution of Respondents

Religion distribution of Respondents

Table 3

Religion	No. of Respondents
Hinduism	05
Islam	00
Christian	00
Total	05

Source: Field Survey

The table 3 presents the religious affiliation of the respondents. All five respondents in the study belong to Hinduism, while there are no respondents from Islam or Christianity.

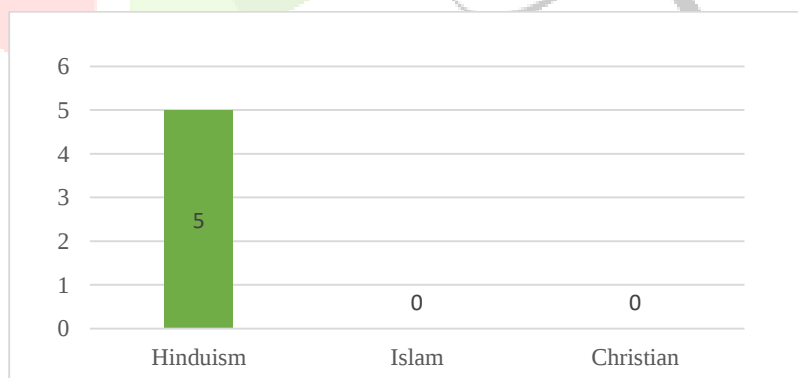


Figure 3: Religion distribution of Respondents

Caste distribution of Respondents

Table 4

Caste	No. of Respondents
General	00
OBC	00
SC	00
ST	05
Total	05

Source: Field Survey

The table 4 represents the caste-wise distribution of respondents. All five respondents belong to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category, while there are no respondents from the General, Other Backward Classes (OBC), or Scheduled Caste (SC) categories.

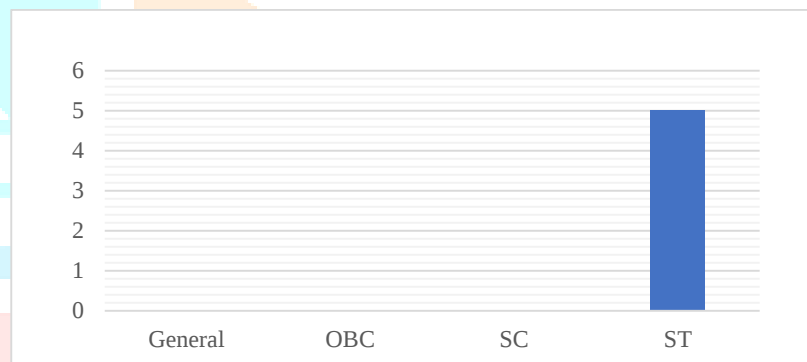


Figure 4: Caste distribution of Respondents

Marital Status of Respondents

Table 5

Marital Status	No. of Respondents
Unmarried	02
Widow	02
Widower	01
Total	05

Source: Field Survey

The table 5 provides insights into the marital status of the respondents. Out of the five respondents, two are unmarried, two are widows, and one is a widower. This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents are either widowed or unmarried.

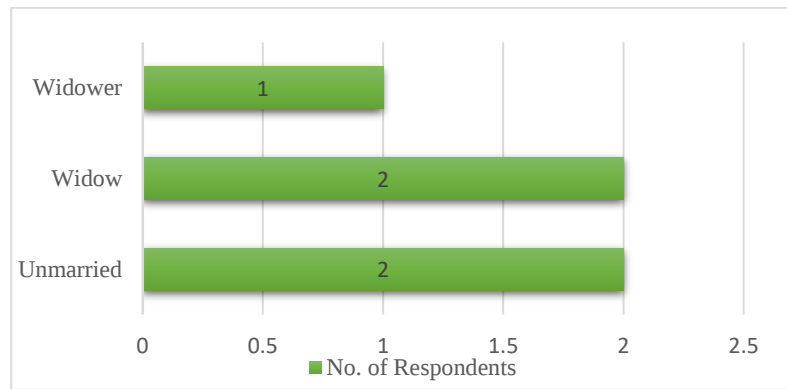


Figure 5: Marital Status of Respondents

Educational Level of Respondents

Table: 6

Educational Qualifications	No. of Respondents
Illiterate	04
Matriculation	01
Total	05

Source: Field Survey

The table 6 presents the educational qualifications of the respondents. Out of the five respondents, four are illiterate, while only one has attained matriculation (completed 10th grade). This indicates that the majority of the respondents have had access to formal education.

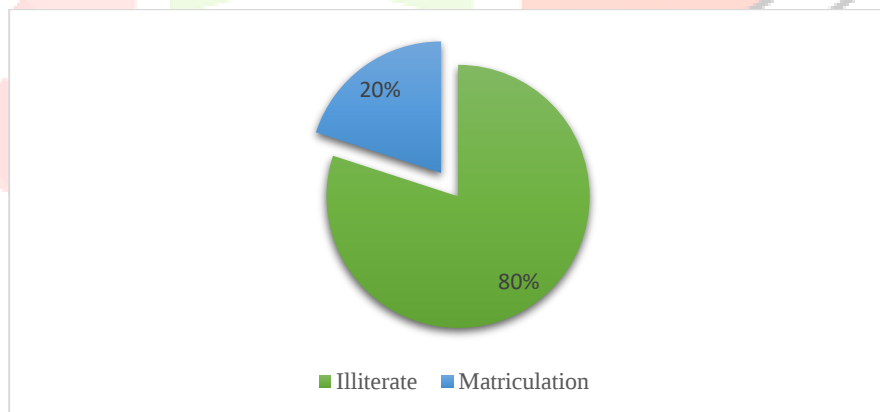


Figure 6: Educational Level of Respondents

Occupational Status of Respondents

Table 7

Occupation	No. of Respondents
Daily wage worker/ Labour	02
House-Wife/ Homemaker	02
Semi-Govt. Jobs (Assam Home guard)	01
Total	05

Source: Field Survey

The table 7 represents the occupational status of the respondents. Among the five respondents, two work as daily wage labourers, two are housewives or homemakers, and one is employed in a semi-government job as part of the Assam Home Guard. This data indicates that the majority of respondents are engaged in informal or non-salaried work, with only one individual holding a semi-government position.

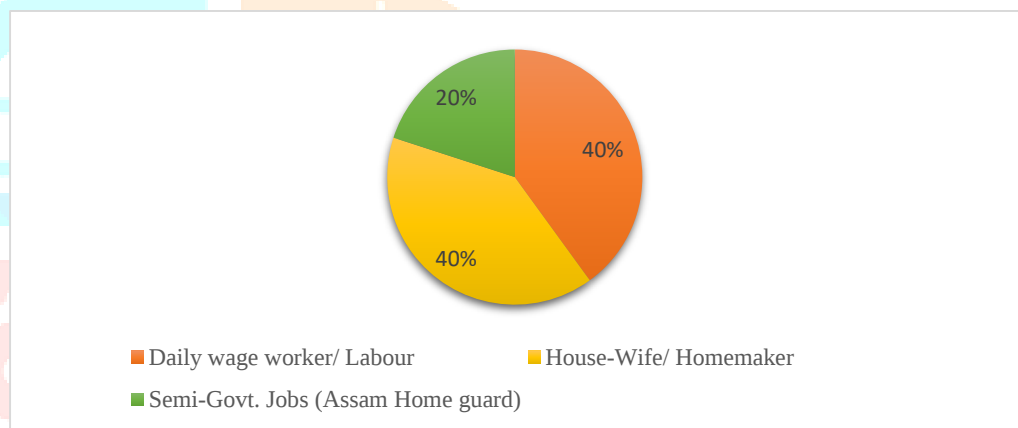


Figure 7: Occupational Status of Respondents

Past Residence of Respondents

Table 8

Rural/ Urban	No. of Respondents
Rural	05
Urban	00
Total	05

Source: Field Survey

The table 8 presents the past residence of the respondents. All five respondents come from rural areas, with none having an urban background. This indicates that the study focuses entirely on individuals from rural communities.

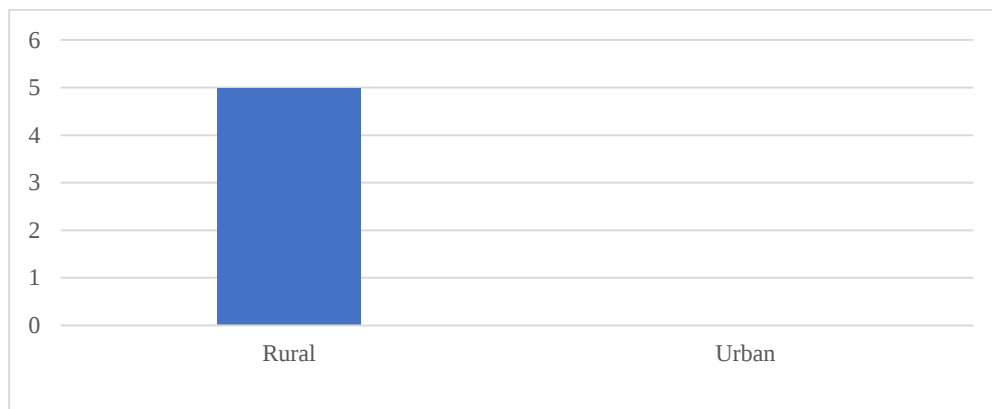


Figure 8: Past Residence of Respondents

REASONS OF 5 INMATES FOR JOINING TO THE SHANTI OLD AGE HOME, KOKRAJHAR

Inmate 1

The 80-year-old Brahma (name undisclosed) resides in an old age home. He was adopted and is unaware of his biological parents. At the age of seven, he was diagnosed with an illness called Mwkra Kaiya, which has severely affected his health. Despite his health issues, Brahma managed to perform all the household chores. However, over time, he became too physically frail to work, and his family members began to mistreat him. He was not provided with a proper place to sleep or eat, and his bedroom was located next to the goat's lodging barn. Mr. X (name undisclosed), a local resident who had observed his struggles, gathered the necessary paperwork and brought him to the Shanti Old Age Home on January 5, 2022. Brahma mentioned that he enjoys having visitors and wishes that more people would come.

Skill: He can play flute.

Inmate 2

Mrs. Goyary (name undisclosed) is a 65-year-old woman currently residing in an old age home. In the early years of her life, everything was good. However, after marriage, she began facing serious challenges, particularly infertility. Her inability to conceive led her mother-in-law to accuse her of failing to bear a son. As a result, her husband married Mrs. X (name undisclosed) as his second wife.

Another tragic incident in her life was the death of her husband. Since she was childless, she was not given any share of his property. As she grew older and became physically incapable of doing household chores, she endured domestic abuse from her husband's second wife.

One of her relatives, Mrs. Y (name undisclosed), brought her to Shanti Old Age Home on January 6, 2022. Goyary stated that she has no desire to return because she has no one to look after her and wishes to remain at the old age home for the rest of her life. She also mentioned that she enjoys having visitors.

Inmate 3

Mrs. Mushahary (name undisclosed) is 60 years old and currently resides in an old age home. She stated that she had a happy childhood with her family, which consisted of seven members-her father, mother, three elder brothers, and one sister. She mentioned that her family was well-off, but the sudden passing of her parents marked a turning point in their lives.

After the loss of her parents, her elder brother got married and started living separately, and her other siblings followed suit. However, she was fortunate enough to secure a job in the Assam Home Guard. During her service, she lived away from her family, and after her retirement, she moved in with her elder sister.

On January 23, 2022, her religious Guru (name undisclosed) advised her to come and stay at Shanti Old Age Home. Following his guidance, she voluntarily decided to move there, primarily to devote her life to God and assist the other residents. She was entrusted with the responsibility of welcoming visitors and managing tasks such as collecting mail and handling power bills.

Mushahary mentioned that all of her brothers have passed away, leaving only her sister, whom she occasionally visits and who also visits her at Shanti Old Age Home. She added that she sometimes feels melancholy when she sees families visiting their relatives, as it reminds her of the happy days she spent during her childhood.

Inmate 4

Mr. Basumatary is 65 years old and currently resides in an old age home. He stated that after his marriage, he did not have a son but was blessed with five daughters. As the years passed, his daughters grew up, got married, and left home, leaving him and his wife alone. The situation worsened when he had to cope with the loss of his wife. After her passing, he went to live with one of his daughters. At first, things went well, and his daughter gave birth to a child, bringing joy to the family. However, as the family grew, resources became scarce, making it difficult to meet everyone's needs. Realizing this, he began considering other options. One day, his daughter and son-in-law suggested that he move to an old age home. Upon hearing this, he willingly agreed and eventually arrived at Shanti Old Age Home on April 9, 2023.

Basumatary stated that he has no desire to leave the old age home, as he voluntarily chose to live there and intends to stay for the rest of his life. He also mentioned that his relatives occasionally visit him.

Inmate 5

Mrs. Baro is 48 years old and currently resides in an old age home. She stated that after her husband's dismissal, she was left to take care of the family while working hard to support them. During this difficult phase, her younger daughter fell seriously ill and needed treatment in Guwahati. However, she had little money to cover her daughter's medical expenses. Her only option was to sell some of her property, specifically land, to afford the treatment. Another tragic incident in her life occurred when her youngest son, at just 18 years old and immediately after passing the HSLC exam, decided to marry his girlfriend and brought her

home. She had no choice but to arrange the wedding. Afterward, her daughter, facing financial struggles, discontinued her education after completing the 9th standard and began working as a housekeeper for a family. A few years later, her daughter fell in love with a boy and got married. By the time her eldest son turned 22, he too married.

The main issue she faced after her son's marriages was that they were too lazy to work and instead expected their mother to bear the family's expenses. Additionally, her daughters-in-law did not treat her with respect. Feeling trapped in this situation, she eventually decided to leave her family and seek work for herself.

The first time she left home, a villager took her to Guwahati, where she found work as a cook in a girls hostel. She later moved to Vidhya Ashram, where she stayed for three months. During her time at the ashram, she met several friends from Kokrajhar, who told her about Shanti Old Age Home. After learning about it, she decided to visit and eventually moved in.

Baro stated that the mistreatment by her daughters-in-law and her son's inability to stand up to their wives were the main reasons she left home. However, she acknowledged that her sons did care about her. She also mentioned that her eldest son had once visited her.

Table 9: Facilities & Activities in Shanti Old Age Home

MEAL
Breakfast- Morning
Lunch- Noon
Dinner- Night
Non-Vegetarian Meals- Twice a week (Pork, Chicken, Fish, Egg)
FACILITIES
Separate living rooms
Separate washrooms
TV room for leisure
Electricity connection with an Inverter
ACTIVITIES
Daily Prayer Service- Every day at 5 PM, a prayer service is held by lighting a lamp, enabling devotees to connect spiritually.
Monthly Prayer Gathering- On the second Sunday of every month, a special prayer service is conducted, where outsiders are also welcome to join.

Source: Field Survey

FINDINGS

According to the study, most of the elderly people residing at Shanti Old Age Home are from rural areas, uneducated, and widowed. Female residents outnumber male residents. The findings revealed that the main reasons they chose to join old age homes were verbal abuse from their daughters-in-law, a lack of caretakers, financial struggles, and health concerns. The majority of the elderly residents were satisfied with the amenities provided by Shanti Old Age Home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am deeply grateful to the President and Secretary of Shanti Old Age Home, Kokrajhar, for their kind cooperation and support. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the residents of Shanti Old Age Home for their willingness to participate in this study.

CONCLUSION

Humans require care and interaction, as well as someone with whom they can communicate and share their feelings, especially as they grow older. However, the reality for today's elderly is quite the opposite. Therefore, this situation demands coordinated efforts from the government, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, and individuals, not only to comprehend but also to resolve, or at least lessen, the full range of issues caused by a graying society, thereby enabling the elderly to live a dignified and fulfilling life. Furthermore, it is important to educate the younger generation on the importance of showing the elderly the love and attention they require. In doing so, we can once again revive the rich Indian tradition where elderly people were respected and loved both within the family and the community.

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