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House of elders



The Hindu Invaluable: New generation values the elderly

Are the aged in the affection loop of busy and working youngsters? A review on the Day of the Elderly

The aged, have a panacea for their worries and troubles. Their progeny's presence! Which is wishful thinking indeed? For their progeny has flown far away. The aged have come to terms with the fact that affection comes in the form of phone calls or emails! And duty, in remittances to their bank accounts!

The dividing line between parents and their progeny is distance and time. And the offspring fret; especially those who have migrated. Priya and Sangeeth working in the U.S., say.

“There is the misery of not being there when we are needed most. We worry if dad or mom will fall sick in the middle of the night. Will they be able to cope till we reach there in a day or two?” But their parents Jaya and Madhu brush their fears aside. “Living in an apartment makes us feel

safe for there are people around us. With our relatives in the same town, help is just a phone call away.”

Gone are the days of the great Indian family or the joint family living under one roof. Despite squabbles, the common bond of affection was strong enough to hold them together in a crisis. The joint family was a place where the old could live and die with dignity.

Today, the value system and family scenario have changed in our land. George Mathew and his wife Mary, say, “We do not want to impose ourselves on our children. Luckily we are mobile, and manage well, despite our aches and pains. Oh! We are thrilled when they come home.”

There is a flipside to the present social scenario. The revamping of the value system has not tilted favourably to the parent’s side. There is lesser inclination to bring parents home, especially when they are ill. Kesavan Pillai and wife Saraswati have put the cart before the horse. They decided to live in an old age home before any crisis struck.

“We are happy here, for we enjoy the companionship of the inmates. Our children can visit us whenever they like. There is no hassle of housekeeping and the pain of being a burden on the children.”

But, there is a silver lining in the clouds! There is another generation which believes in ‘as thou sow, thou shall reap’. A generation which feels it is gross ingratitude to shun the persons who moulded their life. Vasant Menon and Smitha feel that whatever comfort gained by insensitivity to aged parents, is bound to hit back at a later time, for age catches up with all. They have brought their ailing parents home and lavish the same amount of love and care which they shower on their little one.

The parents forget their frailty when the tiny tot is around. Vinod Nair and wife Malini are enjoying their retired life. Catching up on reading and socialising for which they never had time when they were working.

Malini says, “I have taken a back seat and handed over the reigns of housekeeping to my daughter-in-law Poornima. She is eager to try out new recipes though our grandson keeps her on her toes.” So, the aged plod along measuring life by the moments which make their children smile.