

Ageing and end of life spiritual needs

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Kudos and thanks

- **(1) Hats off to The Selwyn foundation:-**
 - (a) With every 5th person a veritable Rip van Winkle by 2050, ageing a crucial world issue
 - (b) Spiritual aspects not recognised:- no mention in millennium development goals
 - © Theme end of life issues, usually taboo
- **(2) Gratitude to the Foundation and to many others:-** For facilitating my participation

Bliss of being in Heaven on Earth

- Fell in love with God's own country as early as in 1993.
- I came, I saw and I surrendered. Left my heart and family behind.
- Part of my family already settled here. My third visit.

Brass tacks on end of life

- Following laity, life of a human being on earth is taken to end with death
- No splitting of hairs on the definition of death
- Skirts also issues like spiritism, rebirth etc.
- Interesting to know the age of normal end of human life
- Initial and later stages of one's life-span
- "End" of life issues get greater and more immediate attention towards the end of life due to imminence

People grow old and die

• Country	LEB(W)	LEB(M)	LEB(T)
• India	64	62	63
• New Zealand	82	78	80
• All countries	69	65	67

Source(WHO,2008)

Increasingly living up to a ripe old age: oldest old 80+

• Description	in millions and as % of total		
	• 1950	2000	2050
• Women	8.5(0.7)	45.2(1.5)	235.8(5)
• Men	5.2(0.4)	24(0.8)	143.2(3.1)
• Total	13.8(0.5)	69.2(1.1)	379(4.1)

Alive does not mean kicking

- Fries (1980): Along with mortality, morbidity also gets compressed in old age
- Am 72 with difficulty in IADL - Oldest old often have difficulties in performing ADL
- Attens (2007): Evidence that risk of being demented is as high as 50% by the age of 95.
- Look at years lost to disability (HLE-LE) as % LE at birth and at 60 gives overall substantiation

Compression of morbidity (M) in old age

• Region	M at birth	M at 60
• Africa	18.9	39.5
• America	10.4	21.7
• S .E. Asia	11.9	24.7
• Europe	8.8	19.4
• E. Meditteranean	12.0	27.2
• Western pacific	10.2	23.9
• Global	11.9	24.7

Important end of life issues faced particularly by the aged

- Fear of dying
 - Thought of being reduced to living vegetables
 - Ageist attitude of society
 - Paucity of resources
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- CRUX OF THE PAPER THAT SUCH ISSUES CAN BE BETTER TACKLED WITH SPIRITUAL ORIENTATION AMONG ALL

Commonsense view of Spirituality adopted

- Intention not to start a battle of religions defining the term
- Deeper, long-term and divine compared to the material and physical aspects
- Inevitability of death and human body decaying accepted
- Detached attitude to life-nishkam karma
- Unselfish love for God and God's creations

Fear of dying

- General shudder at thought of death, taboo at discussions even among the old
- Spiritualists thinking beyond the material and the physical will not fear the process of death reducing human body to dust
- Leaving unfinished jobs and parting from dear and near ones bearable for a spiritualist
- Jain Santara inviting death

Fear of becoming a living vegetable

- Nightmare of many an old person
- Spiritual attitude from young age can postpone/ prevent life-style related diseases
- Spiritualists often retire when they are sufficiently aged as per aasrama philosophy
- Invite death by prayer and refuse to be put on life support systems to prolong life a la Ichhamrityu

Ageist attitude of Society

- While age-related vulnerability is involuntary, aged discriminated against as drones
- Worsening as family ties weaken in developing countries with more than 70% aged by 2050
- Inculcation of spirituality will increase the woefully short supply of committed and efficient age-care givers
- Spirituality by aged will help the change

Resource-crunch for the elderly

- Wrinkles come with mirth and laughter if there is spiritual perception among people from early years
- Bugbear of intergenerational war due to conflicting societal choice: kindergartens vs old age homes
- Corporate spirituality to build intangible corporate and brand image leading to long-term profitability even at the cost immediate losses
- Such an attitude will enable the corporates to chip in as part of their CSR to mitigate the resource crunch

Main findings(1)

- People are increasingly living, in general, up to a ripe old age before life ends in death.
- Being alive does not however mean kicking due to compression of morbidity with age
- Some important end of life issues, particularly imminent for the oldest old, are fear of death, thought of being reduced to a living vegetable, ageist attitude of people and resource crunch

Main findings(2)

- Spirituality, defined even in a commonsense manner, can help mitigate considerably the adverse impact of these issues
- Spiritual perspective called for from all – rest of society, the aged and even corporates.
- A FEW MORE DROPS OF SPIRITUALISM IN THIS OTHERWISE VAST, MATERIALLY GUIDED & MARKET-ORIENTED OCEAN OF HUMAN EXISTENCE WILL THUS MAKE A QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCE IN THIS REGARD

Some references

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Thank you

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