

**Original Article****Activity Specific Study Pertaining to Old Age**

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Dr Mohammad Asrarul HaqueEmail: asrar428@gmail.com, Mobile No. +91 8755198534**Abstract**

Elders are abused everywhere without distinction of geography, socio-cultural and politico-economic system. This imply that when the body becomes weak and the mind wandering, elders slip quietly and unwillingly in to so-called perceived security of the younger ones. However, the demand of the present life style and the urge to forge ahead of others does not leave much time or space for the family to accommodate the elders. The collateral phenomenon off-shooting out of the dual paucity i.e., time and space led to the establishment of old-age care homes. Nevertheless at the other extreme is a phenomenon, typically Indian, which is seen by all, acknowledged by few and redeemed by no one. That is the collection of animal dung and preparation of its cake as bio-fuel. This is generally done by old Indian women in villages and hamlets and people do not consider it an abuse. On the contrary it is considered to be a daily chore which the granny in the household is assumed to be well prepared to tackle. After all she has been doing it since childhood. This paper analyzes this phenomenon critically and argues why it is an abuse.

Keywords: Animal-dung, dung-cake, elderly abuse, women abuse, granny ill treatment.

Introduction

Preparation of animal dung cake is a traditional method and is widely practiced in Indian villages. This cake is used as bio-fuel and is used for preparing food in open 'chulha'. In local dialect it is called 'kanda', 'upla' etc, and comes in circular

shape, big and small. It takes effort to collect the animal-dung from fields and bring it back to the house. Several ingredients are mixed in to it to give it the required consistency and thickness. The ingredients used are themselves flammable, like husk, chafe of grain, wood powder etc. This paste

is then kneaded and shaped in to round pieces. Very carefully these are picked up and deftly thrown against the wall (Fig. 1)¹. They stick on the wall, left there to dry and finally after a couple of days by gentle prodding with a stick they are brought down and collected at one place. There is method in storage though, because these provide ample cushion during the time of scarcity of wood fuel. Therefore, a thick layer of animal dung along with straw covers the heap of animal-dung cakes (Fig. 2)². This preserves them dry through rainy season. This is preferably used in winters – though not necessarily – for cooking food, keeping the room heated and shooing away the mosquitoes.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Utility v Disability: Is it elderly friendly or elderly abuse under camouflage?

Collection of animal-dung is a toiling activity. The authors have seen old and very old women walking behind the animal herd and collecting dung whenever the animals splash them on the ground. On to the pasture animals are in no hurry to relieve themselves. Therefore, the old women have to walk miles and miles in their pursuit of dung collection. All the authors have seen on

different occasions old women with hunch-back walking with great difficulty with the help of a stick. They are old, under-nourished, anaemic, emaciated and consider their duty to do this specific chore. It never crosses their mind that they are harming their bodies. Some are suffering from respiratory diseases and allergies. For them mere walking is an effort in condemnation. These women by training in reticence remain quite and suffer the ignominy silently. They realize the futility of complaining because they know that no one would come to their rescue. Instead of succor, complaint would drag them in to the spinning vortex of humiliation and sarcasm.

Conclusion

It is a recognized and acknowledged fact that elderly abuse may acquire different shapes and incendiary missiles. These can be physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuses. Every entity may not distinctly stand aloof. Shaded overlapping areas may exist like physico-emotional abuse, psycho-sexual abuse, emotional silence and deliberate unconcealed neglect. Hence, the authors feel that the healthy Indian population must realize that activity should be commensurate with age and align with health permissibility. Activities performed over decades may become heavy burden as age advances. Such elderly women ultimately would feel alienated from their own kith and kin. This feeling alone vanquishes their existence. There is always the probability of their lives ending in a tragic note. It is better to be cautious than to repent later.

The cardinal principle is: never allow the obligation to turn in to duty.

References

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