

Elderly Care Economy in India

Abstract

With India's social and economic structures changing, so does the experience of ageing. Increasing migration for education and work has left many parents living alone, while the children carry a quiet, silent guilt for not being physically present. This article explores how the traditional concept of elder care was embedded within family life and has now been disrupted due to shrinking households, mobility, and changing work patterns. As the population is rapidly ageing, this article investigates the emerging "silver economy" not as a commercial trend but as an answer to an emotional and societal gap. In highlighting the role of NGOs, start-ups, and technology-enabled care platforms, the piece reflects on the reimagining of the way older adults get care, companionship, and dignity. Finally, it discusses how elder care should be seen not as a substitute for the duty of the family but as an extension of it-one that enables elders to age with grace and allows families to live with reassurance rather than guilt.

What's the matter about?

‘I wish I could be there for my parents...’ this thought must have crossed our minds for at least once in our lives; be it as a student gone away for studies or having migrated countries for opportunities or simply, as a result of being engrossed with personal commitments.

India is quietly growing older. Across cities and villages, more parents are living alone, watching their children move away for work, opportunity or survival. Families are shrinking, homes are quieter now. What was once a shared care has slowly turned into an individual responsibility, carried with love but also uncertainty.

Many elders today spend their lives alone as life has changed much. Work is no longer local, people move places for opportunities, often leaving their families behind; support systems are no longer automatic. And ageing, which was once woven into everyday family life, now feels like something people are unsure how to navigate. This creates a void in the minds of children living away from parents which is often filled by guilt.

Emerging economy out of care

Taking care of your parents and serving them is considered one's ‘dharma’ or duty here in Indian society. This duty undone due to various reasons, bring about a sense of guilt in the minds of children of these parents. The elderly population is set to shoot up by 20.8% which is close to 34 crore Indians. By 2050, one in every five Indians will be elderly and we are not prepared to care for them with dignity.¹

¹ India Ageing Report 2023.

With this shift in demography of elders and emerging trends in silver economy, there comes a growing space, the need for care, companionship, medical support, and dignity in everyday living. This space is often called the “silver economy” but it is simply about how society chooses to show up for its elders.

NGOs and Start-Ups in place

Caring for the elderly is seen as difficult, expensive, and emotionally heavy. Many families feel guilt for not being able to do enough, and many elders hesitate to ask for help, fearing they might become a burden. In this space, small organizations are emerging with a focus on giving elders shelter, healthcare and emotional care when family support is missing. Others help seniors live independently with dignity, offering assistance at home, emergency support, or simply someone to check in. Several NGOs including *Manavlok*, *Abhoy Mission*, *Shraddhanand Mahila Ashram*, *Asha Kiran* work towards improving the lives of vulnerable elderly populations.

App-based platforms like ‘*Yodda*’ and ‘*Khyaal*’ offer emergency and professional support for seniors, leveraging technology for screening, monitoring and caregiver training. Meanwhile companies such as *Portea*, *Bharat Home Medicare* and *Geri Care* highlight a growing demand for in-home clinical services, emphasizing comfort and mobility for elderly users.

On the entrepreneurial front, start-ups like *Emoha*, *Pranyaas*, *KITES* are already active in areas of Delhi NCR, Mumbai-Pune region and Bengaluru. These organizations aim to provide comprehensive and dignified care solutions to seniors living independently.

These initiatives may look different, but they share a common belief i.e., ageing should not be lonesome or invisible. For adult children living far from home, such support brings reassurance. For elders, it brings the feeling that life still holds purpose, and care. These services are not about replacing families, but about supporting them in a world that no longer is the way it once looked.

END THOUGHTS

India is at a critical juncture. As India continues to age, the question is no longer whether we will need elder care, but how thoughtfully we will approach it. This is where thoughtful elder-care support begins to matter. Not as a replacement for family, but as an extension of care. Over time, such systems can grow into something larger, a network of support built on innovation, and sustained effort, designed to meet the realities of an ageing society.

Caring for the elderly is often spoken of as a responsibility, but it is also an opportunity to build systems that allow people to age with dignity and families to live without constant guilt. When done right, elder-care ecosystems offer the assurance that care does not end when presence becomes difficult.