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## **Needs of Ashram for Senior Citizens A Study of Bishranti Bridra Ashram, Mulghat Dhankuta**

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### **Abstract**

*This research article has been prepared in the context of why the elderly need ashram. Its purpose was to emphasize the importance of ashram in solving the problems faced by senior citizen. Analyzing the key information gathered through interviews and observations, it was found that it effectively addresses the physical and spiritual needs of senior citizens. The proximity of ashrams and religious institutions has played a role in making the elderly more spiritual and peaceful. Any family home is not built only for the convenience of the elderly, but as soon as it is called an old age home, its physical structure and immaterial environment are prepared to suit the elderly. There is still a belief that those who have the children stay at their home and should not keep the elderly in ashrams. Old age Ashram is considered as a residence, care and spirituality for the elderly. It is a great option for elderly people who are helpless and want to get out of family. The old age home is becoming known as an attractive and residential place for the orphans, the bereft, the childless, the single, the deprived from basic needs and lack of family affection of elderly. Bridha Ashram is developing as a care center for the elderly in Nepal.*

**Keywords:** *Bridha ashram, ghat, care center, senior citizen, needs*

### **Introduction**

As the age increases, the problems of the elderly also increase, such problems are related to physical disability, illness, lack of love, respect and care they receive. The problems of the elderly make them feel needier. A person above sixty years of age becomes a senior citizen. Senior citizens are also considered as a time of retirement. According to Senior Citizen Act 2063, "Senior Citizen means a citizen of Nepal having completed the age of Sixty years". Procedures related to providing grants to organizations working in the field of senior citizens through the local level-2075 have been implemented by Nepal Government. This procedure has

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been implemented with the aim of increasing trust and goodwill towards senior citizens by making use of their knowledge, skills, abilities and experience in protecting and social security of senior citizens (MOLJPA, 2018).

Due to the progress in food and health care, the number of senior citizens is increasing all over the world. Currently, the total population in the world is 7.51 billion (2017) and the population above 60 years is 12.3 percent (UNFPA). This number is estimated to reach about 22 percent by 2050. The number of senior citizens in Nepal is 8.13 percent of the total population ie 24,22,494 (Census, 2068).

Modernization has also affected the lifestyle of senior citizens in developing and developed country. Social phenomena such as urbanization, social transformation and migration are driving family members apart (Adhikari, 2013). Senior citizens are classified into five categories like Senior citizens below 70 years of age, senior citizens who have completed 70 years of age, Helpless Senior Citizens, disabled senior citizens and single senior citizens, According to Nepal's Senior Citizens Regulations 2065.

If senior citizens are found to be neglected, arrangements will be made to keep them in nearest caring center run by the Government of Nepal. The care center or the day care center should arrange for the senior citizens in their center to go on a pilgrimage at least once a year and visit different places twice (MOLJPA, 2065). Article 41 of the current constitution of Nepal states that senior citizens will have the right to special protection and social security from the state.

Old age is a natural process of human starts with life, continues until death. Senior citizen consists of physiological, psychological, sociological and chronological changes not a pathological process of human. Physiological age concern with the structural and functional losses of the body and forgetting and unlearning problems occurs in psychological old age. Like this, value of individual and expressing capacity become decreases in sociological old age (Ozdemir & Unal, 2019).

Senior citizens have not gotten proper care by the government. So private and public sector involved to provide the services for carefulness to senior citizen as a welfare and profit. Senior citizen have so many problem like disease, lack of basic needs and services. They have no balanced nutritional food. Physical and emotional health become weak in old age. Old age people don't get proper care due to absent of family member in their home, although primary caretakers of senior citizen are the family (Subba, 2021).

Senior citizens are supernatural shrines of language, religion, culture and community. They are living with family problems such as sending senior citizens to old age homes without keeping them at home, abusing them, neglecting them, forcing them to eat even if they don't want to, staying in a closed room, no one listening to their thoughts and staying silent. Incidence of senior citizens can be measured in different ways. The total population aged 60 years and above is divided by the total population below 15 years of age and the quotient is multiplied by 100 to get the senior citizen index. Population over 60 divided by working age population (15 to 59 years) divided by 100 after calculating the old age dependency ratio (Old age Dependency Ratio) comes.

Despite the implementation of policies and program of social security, allowance, Ashram, Day service Center for senior citizen, safe care center for the disabled senior citizen who are poor should operate systematically in all provinces in Nepal. The main problem facing senior citizen today is the lack of family affection and respect (NHRC, 2077). As the problems of the elderly in their families are increasing day by day, so it is necessary to find out how the Ashram can serve the elderly.

### **Methods and Materials**

This study covers these senior citizens who have been staying Bishranti ridha Ashram since different period of time. This study was focused on all 40 elderly citizens living permanent in that ashram. Information related to them was collected from some senior citizens who could answer well. The reason and necessity of staying in the ashram was revealed through in-depth interview. Some of the information is collected through the record of using document of this office. Some of key informants lived in outside of the Ashram are interviewed to taking required information. Some information about senior citizens was received from committee and some information from the office staff. Since the researcher himself has observed the place, it is found that he has some of knowledge about it. The collected data has been tabulated and analyzed according to the needs of the study.

### **Results and Discussion**

This article has been prepared focusing on the needs of the Ashram to senior citizen. Information obtained from the study has been presented and analyzed. Here the Ashram activities related to senior citizens are mentioned.

### **Introduction of Bishranti Bridha Ashram**

This Ashram is located in Dhankuta Municipality Won No-9 at Mulghat on the banks of Tamor river. After the concept of Brahmanal Shiv Panchayan Mandir was developed for the Ghat to manage firewood for burn the dead body, it was established as Bishranti temple in 2040 BS after late Hari Prasad Ghimire donated his private land to the name of the Bishranti temple. Bishranti temple started as an ashram in the year 2042 when an old couple started living here, calling the temple a holy land and a place of pilgrimage. Bishranti Ashram has the capacity to accommodate 60 senior citizens, but currently there are only 40 senior citizens. Most of the old people living in Bishranti Ashram are childless, sonless, helpless, homeless and orphans. According to the rules of the ashram, the elderly gets free entry, stay, eat and participate in the religious activities of the temple. To live in the ashram, one should be a senior citizen who has completed 60 years of age and is in good mental health and free from chronic diseases. The Rupee one to one crore program brought by Bishranti temple has given significant support to the long-term financial management of this organization. In terms of ashram management, this program can be considered as a financial revolution. Both, couples and singles elders can live here easily. Apart from the couple, everyone has separate rooms for living. There are a few toilets and bathrooms along with a dining hall for the elderly. Near the ashram there is a bhajan house, temples, library, cool Chautara and the holy river Tamor flows to the south making it a charming and picturesque place for the elderly. Every day the elderly meet and interact with donors and visitors. Many of this information have received through the interview of secretary of this Ashram management committee.

### Demographic Health Structure of Senior Citizen

At present, elderly people from Chitwan and Kathmandu along with the districts of Eastern Hills and Terai have come to live in this Ashram. The age-wise size and health condition of 40 senior citizens living in this Ashram is mentioned in the table No 1. Good health refers to the general state of health of a senior citizen apart from old age. Likewise, partially disable means some kind of health problem have them but they can do participation or involvement in some light work. Full disable means ill health refers to mental or physical impairment while care assistance need for them. 57 percent of the elderly living here are women. There is no gender discrimination in living here.

**Table No1** Size of Senior Citizen

Below 60 age	60-70 age	70-80 age	80- above age
4(10%)	8(20%)	22(55%)	6(15%)

Source: Field Study 2022

According to the rules, people above 60 years of age are called senior citizens, but 4 percent of the residents are found to be below 60 years of age. As being senior citizens residents, they also help with necessary work of Ashram. Maximum 55% of the elderly are in the age group of 70 to 80 years. This data shows that elderly people who are about to reach the age of 60 also need the Ashram too. About 58 percent of the elderly living here belong to the Chhetri Brahmin community, while 37 percent of the elderly are from the tribal community and 5% of the elderly are from the Dalit community. Analyzing ethnically, it seems that old age ashrams are required for most of the Chhetri and Brahmin.

**Table No.2** Health Status of Senior Citizen

No. of totally disabled of old age	No. of partially disabled of old age	No. of good health of old age
6(15%)	22(55%)	12(30%)

Source: Field Study 2022

15% of senior citizens living in ashrams are totally disabled. Their day-to-day activities are carried out with the help of a caring aide. They cannot do any activity by themselves without help. Most of the elderly are partially incapacitated by some illness and have to take regular medication. Since 30 percent of the elderly do not have any physical or mental illness, they also help in small tasks in the ashram.

### Life style of the Senior Citizens from Past to Till Now

Previous(past) living condition indicates their socio-economic condition of family where they spent their life. When studying the family background of the elderly living in the ashram, it is seen that most of the elderly are from rural areas and some of the bereft elderly are brought

from the streets. No one has seen the high financial status of their family. It seems that elderly people come from families with low economic and social status to live in the ashram. Most of the senior citizens living here have mentioned that the lifestyle here is much better than their past home life.

### **Responses of Senior Citizens Regarding Current Life**

Their satisfaction and dissatisfaction are simply measured based on the service, facilities, care, stay and enjoyment available in the Ashram. From this, it can be determined whether the elderly need an ashram or not. Many senior citizens seem happy and joyful during their stay at the Ashram. The study did not show that any seniors were dissatisfied with the overall stay of the service, facility and catering of Ashram. The greatest satisfaction for the elderly is having a friend in the ashram who can share their feelings, thoughts and their life history. Every day some of the pilgrims, visitors and donors come to this temple and Ashram place. In this way, interacting with them gives satisfaction to senior citizens. It has been found that senior citizens enjoy interacting with the same age group.

### **Major Reasons for staying in the Ashram**

The study discusses the reasons why senior citizens leave their families and come to live in Ashrams. According to the discussion of key informants, Nepali people are brought up from the tradition of living in their community and family home. Nepali people have a belief that they are happy by assimilating the misery of their home rather than the convenience of others. Living in an ashram is not considered a basic custom of Nepalese people. Therefore, staying at an Ashram is considered as a lack of poverty and support. This is a practice that has come from western culture. Eastern civilizations only associated it with elders and religious institutions. The study has shown the reasons for staying in the ashram as detailed.

- i. Orphan elders: Those types of elders have lived in Ashram whose blood and marriage related kinship are lost. The ashram has become a home for those who have no relatives and are orphans.
- ii. Bereft elders: Even the old people who are living without support in the corner of the city and on the streets, are brought to the ashram. Such old people are also staying in this ashram.
- iii. Sonless elders: In our patriarchal Hindu culture, there was a tradition of considering a son as a mandatory child. It is still believed that if there is no son, there is no one to take care of the parents. In our society, the custom of going to the daughter's house and staying there is still not going well. That's why parents without sons come to live here thinking that it is better to live in an ashram than to live in their daughter's house.
- iv. Childless elders: In their old age, they need their children to take care of their parents, but when they don't have children, an ashram becomes an alternative place of residence.
- v. Single elders: Elderly people who are living a single life after one of the couple died or did not get married prefer the ashram to stay.
- vi. Holy land: The temple on the banks of the river and the hermitage site within the arms of the temple is considered the holy land of abode. Because people become more religious in their old age, they also wish to die in the holy land.

- vii. Starvation: Ashrams have become the mandatory choice of the elderly who are deprived of basic needs like food, residence and cotton. The ashram has been providing free food, accommodation and clothing and services to the elderly
- viii. Lack of Affection: When they feel do not get love from their family and relatives, they feel rejected, the thought of staying outside their homes has led the elderly to ashrams. Even in the single family system and the lack of family members to take care of the elderly, it was found that elderly people stayed in old age homes.

### **Provision of Goods and Services for Senior Citizen**

This organization provides free food, accommodation and clothing to all the elderly living here. The ashram has become the best shelter for the destitute and deprived elderly. After attending the morning tea and breakfast, the senior citizens chant Bhajan Kirtan and then have dinner after the food is ready around 9/10 AM. Elderly people who are in good physical health also help in the work of playing rice, planting vegetables, uprooting weeds, and growing during the day. Devotees, pilgrims and donors come here every day, so there are discussions and interactions with the elders. They also spend the old age allowance through social security at their own will.

### **Conclusion**

Old age home is a necessity that has led to a single and busy family lifestyle, On the other hand, it is also a compulsion to take care of the bereft elders. Most of the elderly feel that old age homes have a freer and friendlier environment than their families. The family background of most of the elderly living in this Ashram was poverty and deprivation. Senior Citizens are the invaluable treasure of the nation and are the guideposts of the society. There seems to be no shortage of facilities provided by this Ashram for the problems and needs of the elderly. Due to lack of relatives, lack of care, inability to meet basic needs, lack of children, the elderly is forced to live in Ashrams. In the same way, the old people are attracted to Ashrams because of their desire to sit on the holy land and worship God in their old age and give up their lives on that holy land. Here, the elderly are happy because there is a favorable environment where they can share their life stories. Ashram is not necessary only a senior citizen but also the condition of his body makes a person a old age. 70 percent of the senior citizen living in the ashram are suffering from some kind of disease. Most of the age group living in ashrams is found to be 70 to 80 years.

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