Editorial

Old age is the range of ages for people nearing and surpassing life expectancy and is often referred to as old people, elderly, elders, seniors, or senior citizens. In India, a senior citizen is defined as anyone 60 years of age or older. With the number of elderly individuals in India expected to rise from 153 million to 347 million by 2050, they face numerous challenges including loneliness, isolation, neglect, and impairments in vision, hearing, and mental health. The National Policy on Older Persons provides a legal framework to support their needs, and programs like Ayushman Bharat offer healthcare services tailored for them at primary care centers.

Elders should be respected not only because of their wisdom and experience but also for their contributions to society, their mentorship to younger generations, and their role in safeguarding cultural heritage. When seniors feel valued, their emotional well-being improves, often leading to better health outcomes. Supporting the elderly, through regular physical activity, can help them maintain a healthy weight, lower cholesterol, and improve their mental health. Giving older adults a sense of purpose allows them to look forward to the days ahead and feel connected.

In India, government initiatives like the Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY) and Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY) provide financial security, healthcare, and assisted-living devices for elders. Non-governmental organizations, such as HelpAge India, offer additional support through programs including mobile healthcare units, cataract surgeries, cancer and palliative care, geriatric physiotherapy, and digital literacy programs.

Maya CARE has been a pioneer in this space, offering comprehensive support to both the elderly and persons with disabilities (Divyangs). Since its inception in 2009, Maya CARE has stood as a beacon of hope by providing free services to the elderly while empowering Divyangs through training and employment. Operating in 72 cities across India and 4 in the UK, Maya CARE ensures that seniors receive the care they need to live dignified lives.

The organization's unique approach involves a team of volunteers and Divyang professionals who provide companionship, technology assistance, and daily support to the elderly. This inclusive model not only addresses the needs of seniors but also offers meaningful freelancing work to individuals with disabilities. Maya CARE is especially notable for its commitment to promoting Divyangs in leadership roles, particularly through initiatives like Project Bindu, which fosters skill development and economic independence for disabled individuals.

Through this holistic approach, Maya CARE has become a lifeline for both the elderly and the disabled, ensuring that they receive the support necessary to maintain independence, dignity, and quality of life. By joining hands with Maya CARE as a volunteer, recommending elderly or disabled individuals, or partnering with elderly care organizations, you can play a crucial role in this mission. Your support - whether through donations, volunteering, or collaboration - ensures that Maya CARE can continue to expand its services, providing free, empathetic care to those in need.

Together, we can make a meaningful difference for senior citizens and persons with disabilities across India and beyond.

Feedback From Beneficiaries

1. Today, we successfully completed our first session of the French class totally free of cost, and I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Maya CARE and its volunteers for making it possible. The experience was enriching, and the free session surpassed my expectations. The dedication and support were exceptional, and I'm eager to continue with the upcoming sessions. I deeply appreciate Maya CARE's efforts in offering such valuable free services.

Kashi Nath, 64, Bengaluru, 9940137572.

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2. Providence Home is truly a home away from home, run by the Society of Daughters of Divine Providence. We are delighted to share that, through Maya CARE Foundation, J.P. Morgan visited our home. They entertained our residents and provided provisions. It was a joyous moment for everyone. The activities conducted brought happiness to our residents, and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. We are grateful to Maya CARE, especially Mrs. Pallavi and her team, Mr. Mohammed from Guddera Volunteer Company, and J.P. Morgan. Special thanks to Mrs. Pallavi and Mr. Mahesh Sharma, a volunteer who regularly brings joy to our residents. Thank you once again, Pallavi.

Providence Home, +91 8747977228, Bengaluru.

Home manager, Sister Valsa

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3. My first stitching and free tailoring class with Rani from Maya CARE was unforgettable. She arrived on time—five minutes early, in fact—and stayed beyond the hour to help. Rani is a dedicated teacher who guided me methodically through each basic step totally free of cost. Her slow and steady teaching gave me ample time to understand. Thanks to her, the Maya CARE team, and you, Shobha, for making my childhood dream of learning stitching with a sewing machine come true.

Smt. Kalavathi, 65, Bengaluru, +91 9882181399.

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4. I called Maya care for help and it is my luck I had Swati Phapale to help me at Deenanath Hospital. She was there before I reached and was constantly with me. She guided me to the Doctor, got my file and helped me hold my hand in the crowded lobby. I have not enough words to praise her. She helped me not only in the hospital but got me a Rickshaw and then called me afterwards to see if I reached home safely. She is very diligent and kind. Maya CARE and I are very lucky to have her.

Padmaja Joshi, 60, Pune, +91 860190116.

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5. We had a classical dance performance from volunteer Minal Joshi and Vishaka Joshi who are from Maya CARE CIC. We all enjoyed the performance so much. Everyone appreciated it, and the claps and kind words from the audience were well deserved. Thank you for visiting our home and delivering such a wonderful performance.

Woodbury Care Home, Milton Keynes, UK, +44 118 911 1224

Marin, Activity Manager.

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6. I have been dealing with health issues, particularly with my blood pressure. During a recent episode, I needed assistance to visit the hospital, and Maya CARE Foundation promptly arranged for volunteer Jitesh Rajput to help. My treatment went smoothly, and I am deeply grateful for their timely support. I won't hesitate to reach out to the Maya CARE helpline in the future. Thank you for your assistance.

Ramnarayan Gupta, 66, Madhya Pradesh, 9993913314.

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7. I am very grateful to Maya CARE Foundation for their wonderful support. Whenever I needed help, the volunteers, especially Siddharth, were always there. Thank you, Maya CARE!

Bholanath Pramanik, 70, West Bengal,9433133684.

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8. Volunteer Mahesh Kulkarni has been visiting once a week my father Rajendra Naik (80 yrs) since the last 2+ years as Maya CARE representative. We all siblings are in the USA whereas my father resides alone at Pune. Maheshji is a really dependable person. His soft, caring, loving and really helpful nature makes him a great person. Within a few visits he gained full confidence and close touch with my father and started helping him in his chores like Phone bills, Internet / I - Pad issues, withdrawing money from Bank etc. In the social work world, I would call Mahesh Kulkarni a 'Rock star'. Thanks.

Yogesh Naik, USA, +1 (919) 607-3603.

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MAYA CARE activities

1. Health Camp with BOHECO: Maya CARE collaborated with the Bombay Hemp Company (BOHECO) to organize a health camp at Jan Seva Old Age Home, providing free health check-ups and medications for elderly residents, ensuring their well-being and medical care.

2. Independence Day Celebrations: Volunteers from Maya CARE celebrated Independence Day across many cities in India which includes Akola, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Kolhapur, Solapur, Wardha, Satara, Nagpur, Nashik, Kolkata, Amravati, Jaipur, Delhi, Bengaluru, Coimbatore, Chhatarpur, Bhopal, Lucknow , Kanpur , Gwalior, Sonipat and Panipat to celebrate Independence Day with the elderly. The occasion was marked with engaging activities, creating an atmosphere of patriotism and joy.

3. Raksha Bandhan Outreach: Female volunteers visited old age homes in several cities including- Jaipur, Akola, Kolhapur , Wardha, Solapur, Nashik, Ahmednagar, Nagpur, Sonipat Panipat, Vododara, Delhi , Bengaluru, Coimbatore, Chhatarpur, Bhopal, Lucknow , Kanpur , Gwalior, on Raksha Bandhan, sharing the festive spirit and making the elderly feel cherished by tying rakhis and celebrating the bond of protection.

4. Ganesh Chaturthi Celebrations: During Ganesh Chaturthi, Maya CARE volunteers led creative activities like painting and drawing at various old age homes in different cities such as- Jaipur, Akola, Kolhapur , Wardha, Solapur, Nashik, Ahmednagar, Nagpur, Sonipat, Panipat, Vadodara, Delhi , Bengaluru, Coimbatore, Chhatarpur, Bhopal, Lucknow , Kanpur , Gwalior, fostering a sense of joy, community and artistic expression among the elderly.

5. Personal and Old Age Home Visits: From July to September 2024, Maya CARE facilitated 580 personal visits and 248 old age home visits across different locations, continuing its commitment to providing consistent care and companionship.

6. Providence Home Event with J.P. Morgan Volunteers: On 8th August 2024, Maya CARE Bengaluru partnered with J.P. Morgan volunteers to organize activities such as mehendi, nail art, dance, and games at Providence Home, Bengaluru, bringing joy to over 30 elderly residents.

7. Event at Prashantha Old Age Home: Maya CARE Bengaluru, along with CGI volunteers, conducted an event at Prashantha Old Age Home on Begur Road. The elderly participated in activities like drawing, music, dance, games, and mehendi, enhancing their sense of belonging and happiness.

8. UK Gratitude Gathering: Maya CARE CIC in the UK held a gratitude gathering at the founder's home, with over 96 supporters and beneficiaries attending. The event acknowledged and encouraged Maya CARE's efforts to support the elderly in the UK.

9. Independence Day Celebrations in the UK: Maya CARE UK marked Independence Day by hosting a classical dance performance in Reading City. This event also served as an excellent initiative to expand Maya CARE's services to the elderly in care homes across Reading.

10. Volunteer Engagement: Volunteers across Maya CARE's locations actively engaged with elderly residents through creative and cultural activities, demonstrating a strong sense of community service and commitment to their well-being.

11. Growing Impact: With a steady increase in personal visits and collaborations with organizations such as J.P. Morgan and CGI, Maya CARE continues to expand its outreach, positively impacting the lives of the elderly across India.

Dementia and Alzheimer's

WHO defines **Dementia** as a group of symptoms that can affect 1) memory power, 2) cognitive abilities (i.e. ability to process thoughts), and 3) the ability to perform daily activities. There can be mood-swings and lack of motivation. The illness gets worse over time. There are many causes for it. It mainly affects older people but NOT all people will get it as they age. Prevalence: In India, it affects about 7.4% of those above 60 years of age, which is about 8.8 million. **Alzheimer's** disease is the most common, chronic and severe form of Dementia. Alzheimer's is a degenerative brain disorder which destroys neurons and connections in Cerebral Cortex, resulting in significant loss of brain mass. However, Alzheimer's and Dementia are not synonymous. It is important NOT to diagnose any form of Dementia by oneself. If you suspect you have any of the above symptoms, then do not panic. You must have yourself checked by an expert doctor. While it is normal to temporarily forget some things, if it happens frequently, it could be of concern. At any age, one should make efforts to improve memory power. All Prevention Measures given below will help. It is said that the brain is also like a muscle, and the brain remains healthy when it is exercised properly.

In Dementia, changes in mood and behavior sometimes happen even before memory problems occur. Symptoms get worse over time. Eventually, most people with dementia will need others to help with daily activities. Early signs and symptoms are: forgetting things or recent events, losing or misplacing things, getting lost when walking or driving, being confused, even in familiar places, losing track of time, difficulties solving problems or making decisions, problems following conversations or trouble finding words, and difficulties performing familiar tasks. People with severe dementia may not be able to recognize their own family members or friends, develop difficulties moving around, lose control over their bladder and bowels, have trouble eating and drinking and experience behavior changes such as aggression that are distressing to the person with dementia as well as to their care-givers and those around them.

Prevention, support and self-care: There is no cure for dementia, but a lot can be done to support both people living with the illness and those who care for them. For those diagnosed with dementia, these are things that can help manage symptoms:
- Stay physically active. Do stretching, exercises, Pranayama and Yoga
- Eat healthily. Treat depression, Control diabetes and High B.P.
- Stop smoking and drinking alcohol.
- Get regular check-ups with your doctor.
- Write down everyday tasks and appointments to help you remember important things.
- Keep up your hobbies and do things that you enjoy, like music, singing, dancing, reading, writing, drawing and painting etc.
- Try new ways to keep your mind active. Solve puzzles, Sudoku, and crosswords.
- Spend time with friends and family and engage in community life.
- Take part in activities and social interactions that stimulate the brain and maintain daily function.

HELPLINES: FREE 24/7 Tele counseling Tele-MANAS Toll-free No. 14416 or 1-800-91-4416

National Helpline for Senior Citizens: Toll-free helpline number 14567 Project of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the National Institute of Social Defence.

In Pune, Deenanath Hospital's Center for Brain disorders runs a Memory Clinic and you can contact their Consultant Mangala Joglekar (M-9011039345) for enquiry.

All Maya CARE volunteers are committed to support affected people by helping them to solve Sudoku, Crossword and puzzles, play mental games and by motivating them to be active. They also serve them physically by taking them for walks and doing simple daily tasks.

Reference: Websites - WHO.INT, Britannica and Wikipedia
Compiled by: Avanish Thanawala, Pune Volunteer.

Our Pune Senior Volunteers

Pune has been a role model for the Maya CARE Foundation. We are fortunate to have many sincere, devoted, and hardworking volunteers in Pune. Their dedication to the cause is highly appreciated. Some of our notable volunteers are mentioned below:

1. Vidyadhar Joshi, Age 73
Shri Vidyadhar Joshi is the seniormost volunteer, associated with Maya CARE since 2013. A former bank manager, he has served numerous senior citizens with excellence during his 10+ years of association with Maya CARE. He has also conducted various awareness workshops and facilitated donations to Maya CARE. He is the driving force behind the creation of the first Maya CARE newsletter in Marathi.

Vidyadar Joshi Pune Volunteer

### 2. Makarand Nimonkar, Age 68
Shri Makrand Nimonkar holds an MSW degree and has previously worked in government roles focused on social welfare activities. He has been with Maya CARE since 2013 and has significantly contributed to spreading awareness about Maya CARE through his extensive network of friends. He has also served many elderly individuals with dedication and has been instrumental in facilitating donations.
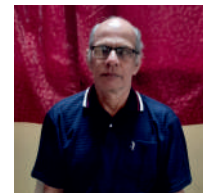
Makarand Nimonkar Pune Volunteer

3. Anil Natu, Age 71
Shri Anil Natu, a former bank manager, has been associated with Maya CARE since 2014. He has served numerous elderly individuals and received much appreciation for his services. His contributions in facilitating donations and raising awareness have also been commendable.
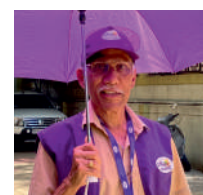
Anil Natu Pune Volunteer

4. Mrs. Manik Vaishampayan, Age 73
Mrs. Manik Tai is the senior most female volunteer at Maya CARE, having joined in 2015. She has served many elderly women and received excellent feedback for her services. Her dedication to the cause is an inspiration to all.

Mrs. Manik Vaishampayan, Pune Volunteer

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The Journey of Jaya Kishore (Bindu team member)

I am Jaya Kishore, born in a small town in Andhra Pradesh. In this quaint town, my childhood was filled with joy and laughter as I played endlessly with my friends. From a young age, I was captivated by cricket. My friends and I would watch the game on TV with immense happiness. Inspired by those moments, I began playing cricket and participated in school competitions. Gradually, through practice and determination, I honed my skills and started winning.

Life was moving smoothly until one tragic day when my mother, little sister, and I witnessed my father's death. The shock and grief were overwhelming, and the loss felt insurmountable. I think about my mother often, and even today, I can't forget the pain in her eyes.

Years later, a glimmer of hope entered my life when I got a Government job as an Electrician. It felt like a small ray of light in the darkness. However, another tragic event struck our family when I was involved in an electrical accident that left me hospitalized for three months with little hope. This incident left me partially paralyzed.

Returning home, my mother supported me through physiotherapy, and slowly, I began to regain movement in my hand. Despite the dark times, I decided to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree and joined various groups to rebuild my confidence. I shared my CV with Enable India and six weeks later, I joined Maya CARE in 2023. This opportunity boosted my confidence, improved my computer skills, and enhanced my communication abilities. Step by step, I learned how to handle challenges, and eventually, I saw the metaphorical raindrops in my desert-like life. Today, I am proud to be working as an Assistant Project Coordinator at Maya Care, managing multiple projects. I bring happiness to my mother and sister, who is a yoga instructor, and whose tips have greatly aided my recovery. My journey continues, and I dream of building a small, accessible house by 2025. I always trust that the hand of God is with us, guiding us and showing us the way.

1. Kanpur: Ashish Saksena helped Prem Gupta bring Ganesh ji home.

2. Lucknow: Bipasha Sharma and Neha Sharma celebrated Raksha Bandhan with seniors at Seva Tirth Old Age Home.

3. Delhi: Nazneen assisted Akhtari Begum with a hospital visit and health checkup.

4. Chhatarpur: Naresh Rajpoot celebrated Independence Day with seniors at Darshan Mahila Old Age Home.

5. Chhatarpur: Heeralal Kushwah spread Maya CARE awareness at a hospital.

6. North 24 Parganas: Siddharth Jana helped Bholanath Pramanik with medicines.

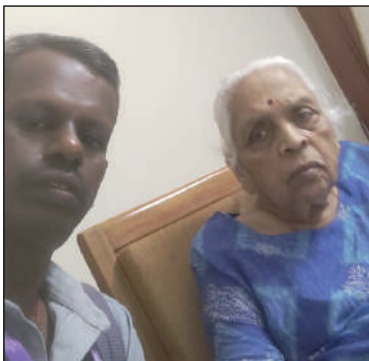7. Kolkata: Simanthini Sinha assisted Saanjib Chatterjee with hospital visits.

8. Howrah: Prasenjit Chakraborty accompanied Sagar Bera.

9. East Medinipur: Manoj Kumar played Ludo with seniors at Amar Seva Sangh Old Age Home.

10. Chennai: A team of volunteers, including Afila, Sajithvan, Swetha, and Siddharth, brought joy to seniors at Annai Teresa Old Age Home.

11. Chennai: Mrs. Meena Eashwar received mobile transaction assistance from Maya CARE.

12. Jabalpur: Rishi Patel led a happiness activity at Nirashrit Old Age Home.

13. Bengaluru: Pallavi and JP Morgan volunteers organized mehandi, nail art, and dance for seniors at Providence Home.

14. Bengaluru: Lalita assisted Mrs. Sarojamma with pension-related work.

15. Ludhiana: Sukhvinder Kaur helped Aarti Roy with documentation.

16. Vadodara: Jaymala Mam and Keyur Sir celebrated Raksha Bandhan with seniors at Shri Jalaram Old Age Home.

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1. Accompanying senior citizens for a walk within or around the premises of their residential area.
2. Accompanying senior citizen to visit doctor / hospital / bank work.
3. Seeing them off / receiving them at the railway station / bus station / airport.
4. Sitting with a patient during hospitalization / outside the ICU.
5. Reading newspaper, magazines / religious books to senior citizens.
6. To withdraw / deposit cash / cheques in Bank, Technical help for smartphone.

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