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## GOOD SIDE OF OLDAGE HOMES

# Home in In-law of change

Traditionally, Indian society has encouraged a joint family system where children take care of their elderly. However, the recent years have seen a change in this previously existing trend. There has been a steady increase in the number of old age homes reflecting upon the changing family values and priorities of the Indian society. More often than not, people view old age homes as an individualistic, Western practice depicting the crumbling of Indian family values. Old age homes are looked down upon as a failure of self-absorbed children to look after their ageing parents.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that family compositions are changing, as are the demands that are being made on various members of a family. The size of families is shrinking while the daily demands people must cope with are on the rise. For this reason, it sometimes becomes difficult to spend time with parents and take care of their needs in the best possible manner. This is not always the case on account of children not wanting to care for their elders, but it still exists and has, over time, become a significant cause of concern. In such a situation, it is not uncommon for old people, whether living alone or with their children, to be plagued by a feeling of loneliness.

In sight of this situation, a new trend is emerging wherein members of the older generation themselves are opting for an old age home. Such a setting allows them to retain their sense of independence, self-respect

and dignity. Old age homes cater to the specific needs of the aged, thus providing specialised care and attention to their health. At the end of the day, what most people aspire for is companionship and old age homes can provide an opportunity to meet and connect with new people. That, coupled with a host of recreational activities, provides both the physical and mental stimulation required to maintain and enhance the well-being of individuals.

Even though this is a sad reflection of the changing face of our society and the values that have been passed down generations, it cannot be denied that this is becoming an integral aspect of our community. In the past the condition of old age homes have more often than not been deplorable. However, this scenario is changing, and with the rising demand and more importantly acceptability of old age homes, the facilities provided are improving.

At the same time, there still needs to be connectivity with the elders of one's family and exposing children to them is extremely important. Old age homes can be transformed into a safe haven for individuals, which people turn to because they want to, not necessarily because all other avenues are shut.

The space between a spouse and his or her in-laws is one where both backgrounds and generations may clash, and it is not surprising that this may, at times, be a relationship replete with conflict.

Adding to that, primetime TV has indeed played its part in perpetuating the stereotype of scheming and conniving in-laws.

The conniving mother-in-law is a cliché that has, in most instances, outlived itself. The ground reality, in fact, need not be as bad as is made out to be, and a healthy relationship with one's in-laws can, in fact, be a great source of mutual help, comfort and companionship.

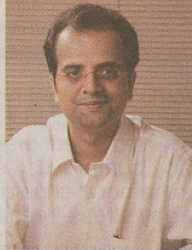
As an individual enters a new family and a new environment, feelings of loneliness and alienation are inevitable. It is here

that in-laws, if understanding and accommodating, can play an important role in helping the new member of the family to adjust.

Particularly, when one's spouse may be away at work, a warm and friendly relationship between in-laws can be crucial. So also can come in handy the wisdom and experience of the elder generation in times of need, particularly in times of conflict in the family.

Additionally, it is now increasingly becoming a custom for both partners in a marriage to be working. In times like this, in-laws can be of great assistance in the caretaking of young children, an arrangement that may be satisfying as well as beneficial to all involved.

In the ultimate analysis, if any relationship is governed by mutual concern and respect, and each member of the family is allowed his or her personal space, it is possible for any relationship to thrive and enhance the personal and collective well-being of everyone who is involved. The scenario is no different when it comes to in-laws.



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## Adopting joy

A child is the greatest gift for young couples. Every individual, post-marriage, develops his own ideas around how and when to have children, how to bring them up, the kind of values and beliefs that need to be inculcated, the activities one would engage in with them and how they would remain unfulfilled, it's shattering.

In the face of such a situation, their dreams are fulfilled via adoption. Though earlier it was an uncommon concept, nowadays couples are turning towards it.

In the past, notions surrounding adoption were a rather sensitive area. The background of the biological parents, in particular, caste and religion were perhaps the key determinants involved in adoptions. For this reason, the common practice was to adopt children of people known to them, be it friends or relatives. But times are now changing, as are the perspectives and priorities. The focus is now on the larger picture and people are transcending boundaries based on caste, race and religion.

People now are overcoming the stigma surrounding adoption and are looking at this alternative in a favourable manner which is a strong reflection of the changing value base of our society trying to move towards inclusion for all and ignoring caste and gender-based barriers. In fact, for a number of people, adoption is now taking place without much credence to where a child is adopted from or who the biological parents were.

Couples are now increasingly looking into orphanages for adoptions. This is a positive trend for society as a whole, which benefits not just the parents to be, but also the child in need of a home, a family, and a sense of belonging.

# Single & ready to mingle

AMICABLE  
DIVORCE

A marriage is formed with the union of two individuals, each with different values and habits. Each individual enters a marital relationship with a set of expectations, needs and desires and the fulfillment of these determine the relationship's longevity.

When needs are not met or when ideologies differ, clashes occur. So, marriages are not simply a social convention, and are most definitely not meant to seem like a life sentence. They are, instead, meant to exist as interdependent and mutually satisfying relationships. When people get married, it becomes impossible to imagine life without the other, for good or bad.

A marriage filled with strife interferes with personal growth of both partners. When all efforts to assuage the situation fail, a divorce becomes the healthiest option. Going through a separation is not easy as there is hurt at the individual, familial, occupational and the community level at large.

To take a divorce is not a reflection of the character of either partner, and does

not imply any wrongdoing on either part. It is important during this time to not fling derogatory comments at each other or make things difficult as, in the long run, that affects both partners. Marriages are about compatibility, and just because you were not compatible, it does not mean that mutual respect and camaraderie cannot be maintained.

Adjusting to a divorce and a new life without one's spouse is a difficult time and brings with it a unique set of challenges. It is a process and needs its own time. However, it is important to try and move beyond what has happened without blaming the other or the self and without developing the feeling that nothing good can happen in future.

Instead of brooding over past failures, look at this phase as a new beginning and an opportunity to regain control and well-being. Integral to doing this would be to take the support of friends, family and well-wishers and working towards what one's own goals and needs are.