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Understanding the everyday processes of aging in urban Delhi

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Abstract Gerontological literature in India has primarily focused on the macro processes of aging. Studies on population aging have examined themes such as health outcomes, financial arrangements and alternate caregiving arrangements in different parts of India. Though these studies have highlighted important issues surrounding aging, nonetheless the more micro perspectives such as the everyday processes of aging have remained under explored in India. In fact, studies on perceptions of aging have indicated that generally older Indians associate aging with disengagement, withdrawal and death. While studies on older Indians have projected them as detached and accepting decline, nonetheless this sort of a generalization is not true for all older Indians. Drawing from in-depth qualitative interviews and detailed narratives this study examines the lived experiences of aging in urban Delhi, India to understand the complex processes of growing old. Findings from the study suggest that older adults in urban Delhi are developing their own "selves" to determine their process of aging. Adopting a socio-gerontological lens and building on the Successful Aging model and the Dramaturgical Theory this study will demonstrate how the experience of aging and intergenerational relationships are changing in urban settings. Finally the study will also indicate how gender dynamics are shaped in later ages among older Indians in the urban context.

Keywords Successful Aging · Dramaturgical Theory · Experience of Aging · Self · Intergenerational Relationships

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Background

Growing old in India is mostly associated with physical decline, frailty and physical decline. Most of the gerontological scholarship in India have suggested that older adults in their course of aging experience detachment, are dependent on their adult children for their physical and mental needs and have accepted the inevitability of death (Vatuk 1990; Dhillon 1992; James 1994; Cohen 1998; Bhat and Dhruvarajan 2001). However, a few of studies have offered a different perspective of aging and have indicated that the process of aging is undergoing change in India and that older adults who are financially comfortable are relying on religion and network ties outside their family to remain engaged and active (Vatuk 1980; Van Willigen and Chadha 1999; 2003; Lamb 2009, 2013; Chokkanathan 2013; Gangopadhyay and Samanta 2017). Due to urbanization and globalization, there have been considerable changes in the aging processes of upper middle class of urban India. For instance, older adults belonging to the upper middle class in urban India are part of various social clubs, spend time with their friends and participate in the activities of the neighborhood to remain involved in their later lives (Van Willigen and Chadha 1999; Lamb 2009, 2013). Building on these studies, the current study focusses on the lived experiences of aging among upper middle class older adults in urban Delhi. Drawing from the Successful Aging model, the present study highlights how these older adults rely on their own "selves" to attach meaning in their everyday lives. In the process, based on the findings of the current study, this paper suggests how the Successful Aging model is gradually gaining a global perspective.

Studies on Everyday Processes of Aging and attaching meaning in India

Few studies in India have focused on the everyday experiences of aging in India. In particular, these studies have demonstrated that older adults who are financially comfortable in urban India develop their social capital outside the family setting to shape their sense of purpose in their everyday process of growing old (Van Willigen and Chadha 1999; Lamb 2009, 2013). For instance, in an earlier study located in an urban Delhi neighborhood, Van Willigen and Chadha (1999) indicated that older adults with economic security rely on their network ties which are beyond the family members to combat loneliness. These older adults are members of elder organizations, clubs and associations which keep them engaged and enable them to attach meaning to their lives (Van Willigen and Chadha 1999). Similarly, Lamb (2009, 2013) through her research in urban Kolkata, found that while older adults who live alone and are financially independent might become members of different clubs and organizations to remain engaged, they continue to ambivalently miss their family members on a daily basis.

While these studies demonstrated how older adults with financial means shape their lived experience of aging, a few studies indicated how older adults dependent on their family members formed their process of growing old. Specifically, older adults in these studies expressed that they relied on religion to attach meaning in their later lives (Vatuk 1980; Bhat and Dhruvarajan 2001; Chokkanathan 2013; Gangopadhyay and Samanta 2017).

To summarize these studies it could be suggested that economically independent older adults developed their network ties outside their family and older adults dependent on their adult children for their livelihood resorted to religion to remain involved on an everyday basis. Building on these studies we examine how the lived experiences and cultural constructs of aging are shaped among older adults who belong to the upper middle class in urban Delhi. Additionally, we borrow from the Successful Aging model and interrogate how there is a gradual reliance on the "self" among these older adults. In particular, we rely on the Dramaturgical Theory to demonstrate how everyday interactions with children shape intergenerational relationships. In the process we also study how gender roles are blurred in later lives.

Theoretical Considerations

The current study draws from the post-modern, biomedical and social psychological 'Successful Aging' theoretical model to understand how the everyday processes of aging are shaped among upper middle class older adults in urban Delhi. The discourse of "Successful Aging" has gained immense popularity in North America as it stresses on individual agency to maintain satisfaction in later lives (Havighurst 1961, Neugarten et al. 1963; Rowe and Kahn 1987, 1997; Menec 2003; Lamb 2014) The Successful Aging model suggests that low physical disabilities, high cognitive engagements and active participation in life activities are the main components to have a satisfying old age. Specifically, the third component of the model involves depending on interpersonal relations and to participate in productive activities to remain engaged in later lives. This framework further suggests that relying on network ties and contributing in events which provide societal value result in increasing longevity (Rowe and Kahn 1997). This model also stresses on independence, self-reliance and individual needs to grow old effectively (Rowe and Kahn 1997; Menec 2003; Moody 2009; Rozanova 2010; Wahl et al. 2016). All this finds ready acceptance in North America owing to the country's emphasis on individual ethos. While the Successful Aging model has been used considerably in the North American context, very few scholars have used this model in India. Studies on older adults in India have mostly identified aging as a process of disengagement and withdrawal (Vatuk 1980; Dhillon 1992; Ramamurti 2003; Lamb 2009). The present study is based on the conviction that the ethos of the upper middle and upper classes in India may be better explained in terms of the Successful Aging theory rather than in terms of disengagement and withdrawal. Hence, the study relies on the Successful Aging model to highlight how older adults belonging to the upper middle class in urban India develop their own "selves" to attach meaning in their process of growing old.

In addition to the Successful Aging model, the study also draws from the sociological Dramaturgical theory as proposed by Erving Goffman (1959). In this theoretical perspective, Goffman had suggested that every individual is an actor and their everyday performances are shaped by their daily social interactions with other individuals and their own self-consciousness. In particular, Goffman (1959) had proposed that individuals manage the presentation of their selves depending upon requirements of both the "front stage and the back stage". The front stage is where the actions of an individual are visible to a set of audience and the back stage is where no audience is present. For the front stage, the individual puts up a well-rehearsed performance and behaves as per

the cultural values, norms, beliefs and expectations of society. While, in the back stage resides the protected self which is relieved from all rules, customs, principals and regulations which govern society. In particular, the front stage is relegated to the public sphere and the back stage is the private sphere. (Goffman 1959). Previous studies in the West which have drawn from the Dramaturgical theory to understand aging have indicated that older adults rely on several mechanisms to camouflage their bodily decline. In particular, these studies have demonstrated that older adults use several cosmetics, medicines and involve themselves in several activities to portray a youthful self and mask their present aging self (Featherstone 1991; Biggs 2004; Blaikie 2006; Dowd 2012; Marson and Powell 2014). Specifically, these studies suggest that since individuals value the integral self to a large extent they continue to present an ageless self to maintain their dignity, independence and self-sufficiency (Kaufman 1986; Featherstone 1991;; Biggs 2004; Blaikie 2006; Marson and Powell 2014). The current study uses the Dramaturgical theory to indicate how older adults present their "selves" to maintain their own identity in later lives. Additionally, building on the Dramaturgical framework, the present study also highlights how intergenerational relationships are shaped based on daily interactions between the older adult and their adult offspring.

To summarize it could be suggested that building on the Successful Aging model and the Dramaturgical theory, this paper aims to highlight how older adults in an urban prosperous context rely on their own "self" and attach meaning to their daily existence. Additionally, this paper also explores how perceptions of aging, intergenerational relationships, loneliness and gendered experiences of aging are shaped by individual needs and day to day interactions.

The Study Context: Delhi

To examine how upper middle class older adults experience aging, the current study has been situated in one of the major metropolitan cities of India, such as Delhi. Delhi is also the capital of India and the center for major educational, commercial and industrial activities (Khan 1997). At present, Delhi is one of the biggest destinations for migration within India and it witnesses high migration from several states in India such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan (Times of India 2013; Indian Express 2015; Chaudhary 2016). In fact, as per the Economic Survey (2016–17), Delhi is the most favored area for labor migration within India.

In addition to experiencing high migration rates, Delhi has also attracted the highest foreign direct investments (FDIs) in the country. In the post-liberalization era, Delhi is the second most preferred destination for FDIs and has received $45.77 billion FDI from the year 2000–2014 (Fact Sheet on FDI 2014; Hindu Business Line 2015). While Delhi has attracted high rates of migration and FDIs, urban planning in Delhi continues to remain disorganized. Lack of basic services such as water supply, power, transport, solid waste collection and shortage of housing facilities are some of the common problems in Delhi (Dupont 2011). Given the nexus of high migration, economic growth and poor infrastructure, Delhi makes an interesting site to study how older adults negotiate their everyday existence in this fast changing metropolis.

Given the transitionary nature of Delhi as a city, it has attracted the attention of several gerontologists. Previous studies on older adults in Delhi, have focused on

health, loneliness, elder abuse, old age homes and financial arrangements (Van Willigen and Chadha 1999; Gupta et al. 2002; Joshi et al. 2003; Alam 2004; Alam and Mukherjee 2005; Chadha et al. 2005; Tyagi et al. 2005; Ingle and Nath 2008; Singh et al. 2012). While these studies have focused on some of the major issues of older adults in India, a detailed analysis of aging on an everyday basis, family ties, filial obligations and gendered experiences of aging have not been explored in the context of Delhi. Additionally, the major sample of all these studies belonged to the middle class, lower middle class and the poor categories. The upper middle class with access to financial resources have not been examined in-depth in the context of Delhi. In particular, this class needs to be studied in detail because recently Delhi has witnessed the rise of several firms which cater to the needs of urban older adults who are financially secured. Specifically, these firms view the older adults with economic security as a potential market group and provide tour packages, home based products and intellectual companionship and in the process, aid these older adults to age independently (Bhatia 2014; Matta 2017). With the growth of this particular class of older adults in urban Delhi, the current study aims to understand the lived experiences of aging, intergenerational ties and role expectations within this group of older adults.

Methodology

To understand the transitionary nature of Delhi a qualitative approach was adopted to understand how older adults adapt to these transitions. Since the study was qualitative, respondents were identified through non-probability sampling techniques such as snowball and purposive sampling (Babbie 2012; Bhattacharjee 2012; Creswell 2013). For instance, since all the authors were based in Delhi, the first two to three interviews were started with one known respondent by each author. A total of ten interviews were conducted based on each author's personal contacts. For the rest of the twenty interviews the contacts were taken from the first set of respondents who were interviewed. While snowball sampling was used to identify respondents, purposive sampling was employed to ascertain that the older adults who were interviewed belonged to the upper middle class of urban Delhi. In particular, these two sampling techniques (snowball and purposive) were used because the aim of the study was to interview older respondents belonging to the upper middle class group and residing in urban areas of Delhi. For example, those respondents whose monthly income ranged from $774 to $1498.37 and had completed their graduation were interviewed for the study. Following the identification of the respondents, the study relied on in-depth narrative style interviews to understand how the process of aging is shaped among upper middle class older adults in urban Delhi. The interview instrument was semi-structured and it included both open and close ended questions. The main sections of the questionnaire were developed using the deductive method (Quadagno and Knapp 1992; Babbie 2012; Creswell 2013) and the major themes of the study were predetermined based on the existing Indian gerontological literature and theoretical approaches such as Successful Aging and the Dramaturgical Theory. The major subdivisions of the questionnaire were: Part 1- Sociodemographic Information, Part II- Perceptions of Aging, Part III- Loneliness and Network ties, Part IV- Relationship with adult children and Part V- Health Concerns.

Part 1 (Sociodemographic Information) focused on the background of the respondent. Information such as marital status, income level, educational background, caste, religion and gender were collected. Part II (Perceptions of Aging) focused on the daily activities of the older adult, their opinion on the process of aging, activities which they enjoy doing the most, their use of technology and their biggest sources of anxiety and fear. Part III (Loneliness and Network) ties dwelt on the role of network ties in the lives of the respondents, their memberships and associations in various groups, conversations with different network ties and their thoughts on loneliness. Part IV (Relationship with adult children) mainly emphasized on decision making, filial obligations and family ties. Finally Part V (Health concerns) indicated some of the major health concerns of the elderly and their sources of caregiving services during health crises.

In addition to developing the questionnaire, the deductive method was also adopted to analyze the main findings. For instance, the narratives of the interviewees were linked with the existing gerontological literature and theoretical frameworks to highlight the process of growing old in urban Delhi. Specifically, all the themes mentioned above are examined in the "Main Findings" section to see if they are relevant for all the respondents. Since, owing to their length, all the dialogues cannot be quoted, the most significant ones have been highlighted in the "Main Findings" section.

A total of 30 older adults were interviewed. Within these 30 older adults, 15 were older men and 15 were older women. All the older respondents were settled in Delhi for more than twenty years. Before the interviews were conducted, an informed consent form was signed by each of the respondents. All interviews were scheduled as per the convenience of the respondents. Since, the respondents were identified through snowball sampling, all the respondents are either Hindus or Jains and all of them came from the ethnic groups of Punjabis, Marwaris, Bengalis and UPites. The inclusion criteria for the study was that the respondent had to be more than 60 years of age, had lived in Delhi for the last twenty years and spoke either Hindi or English. Chronically ill and disabled older adults were not included in the study. All the interviews were conducted in either English or Hindi. Based on the interviews the study mapped perceptions of aging, filial obligations, loneliness and gendered experiences of growing old.

Main Findings

Locating Meaning in Everyday Processes of Aging

Previous studies on experiences of aging have indicated that older adults in India rely on religion and social networks to locate meaning in their everyday lives (Vatuk 1980; Van Willigen et al. 1995; Bhat and Dhruvarajan 2001; Chokkanathan 2013; Gangopadhyay and Samanta 2017). Building on these existing studies, the current study focuses on the narratives of the older adults who are economically settled to suggest how experiences of aging are constructed on an everyday basis. Additionally, the study also suggests how these older adults evolve their own selves and attain a sense of purpose in their later lives. While being interviewed, many of the older respondents in their interviews mentioned that they did feel lonely at some point of the day. They also mentioned that to reduce loneliness from their lives, while they relied on friends and relatives, however it was also important to note that such network

ties were not always available in their times of need. Additionally, with respect to dependence on religion, these older adults indicated that while they prayed every day, they did not devote a considerable amount of time to religious activities. For example, none of the respondents visited the temple more than once a week. Additionally, none of these older respondents spent time reading religious scriptures on a daily basis. In fact, none of the participants were members of any religious group or engaged in religious activities regularly. Instead of relying on network ties and religion, all the older adults interviewed indicated that they had developed several other ways to keep themselves engaged and to attach meaning to their lives on an everyday basis. While their regular activities such as reading the newspaper, watching television, exercising, doing yoga, walking in the parking and doing household work kept them busy - development of their own hobbies such as listening to music, painting, writing, gardening and travelling also helped older adults to locate meaning in their later lives. The quotes below further highlight these other forms of engagement:

"After my retirement, I have a lot of time in hand. I start my day by doing yoga, then read the newspaper. In the evening I go out for a walk and come back and listen to music. I have always loved music, but I never got the time to spend time listening to it. Post my retirement, I had decided that I want to develop my taste in all kinds of music. While my yoga keeps my body fit, my mind is fit and active because of music. I also feel my music will always have time for me unlike my friends and relatives who give me time when they are free. When I listen to music, I feel all the chaos of life has disappeared. I listen to folk songs, traditional classical music, contemporary Indian film and non-film music. In fact, I just don't listen to music, I also compare the different styles and forms of music. It is not that I can share my thoughts with anyone in particular but I think my own self has developed in my old age. I am happy that after my retirement and with my children settled and all my responsibilities over, I can devote time to something I had always loved. Music has helped me inculcate my inner self and achieve mental peace." (Older Male Respondent, aged 76, widowed, lives alone).

"I am still working. So I spend quite a lot of time in the office. However, since our children are grown up and do not need attention all the time, after I come back I spend my time in writing. It helps me relax. Though I engage in other activities too such as watching television with family, buying the grocery, but I keep sometime for myself. Of course, I could not write earlier when my children were going to school and I had to spend time with them for their homework. But now they are in college and they can manage themselves, my wife is usually busy with housework, so I spend my time in writing down my thoughts. I also think it is best to have some hobby of your own because friends, children, relatives, neighbors are all busy in their own lives. I write about everything. Something I observe at the office, something I hear at the grocery shop and I come back home and jot down my thoughts. Writing on an everyday basis has opened my mind. It gives me immense pleasure and also it helps to nurture my own self. In fact, next year when I retire, I plan to write more frequently. Actually writing has made me a calmer person and takes away all my stress." (Older male respondent, aged 60, married, lives with spouse and unmarried adult children).

"*I spend a lot of time exercising and doing yoga. It is important to remain fit in old age. I also go on walks alone and I like to read news blogs on the internet. However, both I and my wife spend a lot of time in travelling. After my retirement and with our children settled, I told my wife that we should see as much as we can before we become frail and fragile. Now there are several schemes for senior citizens sponsored by several travel agencies such as Thomas Cook and they give you special deals which look after our food needs, sleeping habits and also provide us with recreation facilities. These tours are very relaxing and we go once a month. In fact, these tours refresh our minds and then after I come back I write down my travel encounters in a blog. I put pictures, small snippets and videos in my travel blog and many people have benefitted from my blog. In Delhi, the hustle bustle, traffic and noise tire us. So once a month we go to some place where we can have serenity and beauty. In the journey we also meet different people and it is interesting to exchange experiences. After all these tours, I feel refreshed and rejuvenated. They never tire me and my wife. We have been doing these tours for the last five years now and it gives us tremendous satisfaction and happiness. Plus travelling prevents us from getting depressed or feeling lonely. Additionally, we do not have to rely on our children and relatives for their time. We direct our energy and effort in planning our tours and this process gives us a lot of happiness*" (Older male respondent, aged 68, married, lives with spouse).

"*My day begins with doing housework such as giving instructions to the maid, cleaning and cooking. My husband and I stay with our adult children and our grandchildren and I love spending time with them. But they are usually very busy with their own lives. They have their school, office and social life. So my husband and I have started spending a considerable amount of time in gardening. We had a lot of space near our house and now that my husband has retired we can give full attention to our plants. Over the years our collection has increased and many of our relatives and friends have come to visit us just to see our gardens. Spending time with the plants has helped me and my husband to discover a whole new self in ourselves in our old age. We derive a lot of self-fulfillment from gardening*" (Older female respondent, aged 74, married and lives with married adult children and grandchildren).

"*I was always interested in art and after I turned 60 I have started painting. Now that my children are settled, I can spend a certain amount of time painting. Throughout the day I am busy with housework, but in the evenings I paint regularly. I do not paint to for any commercial purposes but just for my own pleasure. It helps me relax and also develop my own inner being. I felt I have given my whole life in doing things for my husband and children, this hobby of painting is my own development and it gives me a sense of purpose in later years. Whenever I feel lonely I start painting me and it has helped me a lot. These days it is impossible to expect that your children will have time for you and so it best to rely on your own self in your old age*" (Older female respondent, aged 72, married, lives with spouse).

"*I exercise, watch television and also go out on walks in the park nearby on a regular basis. I also read various blogs on travel and cooking. We stay with our adult children and while they are important part of our lives, they have their own friends and schedule. Throughout the day I have several housework and ever since my husband has retired we also do the marketing together. But once my children started going to college, I have started learning singing. Once my children passed out of school, I realized they do not need my constant attention. They are adults. I was 61 when I kept a private tutor for my singing lessons. I always loved music and have learnt singing as a child but was out of touch for a very long time. But now my singing classes give me a lot of joy and I derive tremendous contentment from singing. In fact, through singing I think I can express myself better and also I have evolved as a person. Particularly when I feel lonely or depressed, I start singing and immediately it changes my mood. I feel my singing lessons have added a new form of meaning to my later years.*"
(Older female respondent, aged 66, married, lives with unmarried adult children).

Building on these quotes, it could be suggested that upper middle class older adults mostly depend on their own "self" to remain engaged. Through these narratives it could be further suggested that often these older adults depended on television, housework, laptop and newspapers on a regular basis to remain engaged with life. However, the quotes also indicate that in their process of attaching meaning to later lives, many the older adults relied on some particular activity such as writing, travelling, singing, gardening etc. which gives them mental satisfaction and inner peace. In fact, based on the quotes it could be suggested that older adults belonging to the urban upper middle class are striving to self-reliance and independence in their course of growing old. Drawing from the Successful Aging model it could be further suggested that this particular class of older adults is reconstructing the process of aging in India by depending upon themselves for later life satisfaction. In particular, it is important to highlight that none of these older adults spoke of death because they have attained a sense of purpose in their later years through these self-developing activities. Specifically, as suggested by the financially comfortable older adults, their later life hobbies have helped them grow as individuals. Additionally, as indicated by the Successful Aging model, it could be suggested that the upper middle class older respondents in urban Delhi spent considerable amount of time in maintaining themselves physically fit and mentally active in their everyday processes of aging. As a result, despite the age of the respondents differing from 60 to 85, all the older adults developed their own selves and nurtured their own interests in the course of aging. Building on the Dramaturgical Theory and drawing from the above mentioned quotes it could be suggested that in order to retain their self-respect, many of these older adults have developed an inner "self". They have adapted to the fact that to tackle loneliness in the process of aging, it is important to engage with one's own self because they cannot all the time depend on their family members and network ties for companionship. In particular, building on the Dramaturgical Theory, it could be indicated that these older adults view aging as an opportunity which allows them to give preference to their own inner satisfaction and retain their own identity. Based on the interviews it could be further suggested that in the front stage, these older adults do spend some amount of time in interacting with their adult offspring, grandchildren and spouse, however, for the back stage they rely on

their own selves for mental strength, a sense of purpose and ways to avoid depression. In fact, as mentioned in the quotes, in the back stage, these older adults spend their time engaging in activities which they never had the chance to indulge in. Hence, it could be suggested that in their everyday process of aging, older adults who have access to financial resources prefer to engage and cultivate their own selves to attach meaning to their later lives.

Intergenerational Ties and Experience of Aging

Studies on intergenerational ties in India have primarily focused on economic and financial arrangements (Prakash 1999; Liebig and Irudaya Rajan 2003; Rajan and Kumar 2003; Pal 2004, 2007; Pal and Palacios 2008; Bloom et al. 2010). Only a few studies have focused on the emotional bonds in intergenerational relationships in India (Chadha 2004; Lamb 2005; Verma and Satayanarayana 2013). For instance, Chadha (2004) in his study on older adults in New Delhi highlights that older adults continue to take all the major decisions in the household and are considered to be the source of wisdom and knowledge in the family. Corroborating similar findings, Lamb (2009) in her study on older adults in Kolkata indicate that older adults expect respect and not time and companionship from their adult offspring. Elaborating on intergenerational ties, Verma and Satayanarayana (2013) in their study in Uttar Pradesh state that older adults and adult offspring experience ambivalence in their daily interactions. While the adult children do provide support to their older parents, the parents also prefer to remain independent and retain some authority. Similarly, the older generation is also not fully satisfied with the contribution of their adult offspring because the offspring may not yield them full authority Verma and Satayanarayana (2013). Building on these existing studies on intergenerational relationships and emotional ties, the current study indicates how intergenerational relationships determine the process of aging.

Through their interviews many of the older adults indicate that they are involved in all the major decisions of their adult children. Additionally, these older adults mentioned that these days adult children are independent minded and listen to their own peers. Though on an everyday basis they do not expect their adult children to offer caregiving services or spend time with them, many of these older adults expect their adult children to consult them on the important decisions of their lives and maintain the generational hierarchy. The quotes below illustrate how intergenerational relationships are maintained and constructed:

> "*My son is busy throughout the day. He comes home late and then over dinner discusses general stuff such as the weather, news, traffic and his work. I don't interfere in his day to day lifestyle. But of course I was involved in his marriage decision, the choice of his education. He consulted me on all these matters.*" (Older male respondent, aged 85, married, lives with married adult offspring, daughter in law and grandchildren).

> "*I live alone and my children do not call me more than twice a week. But when my son was changing his job, he took my advice and did exactly what I told him to do.*" (Older male respondent, aged 74, widowed, lives alone).

"My daughter was studying law and then she wanted to pursue public policy. We both sat down and looked for colleges and she went to the college I told her to. On a day to day basis she does not have time for me, but I am involved in the important decisions of her life." (Older female respondent, aged 69, married, lives with unmarried adult offspring).

"My son wanted to buy a house. He wanted to buy it on loan. But I didn't let him buy the house for quite some time. Now that he is financially better off, I asked him to buy the house and he listened to me." (Older male respondent, aged 80, married, lives with spouse).

"There was this girl my son was dating for one year. Once he brought her home and I generally felt that she is not the right one for my son. Initially my son refused to listen and thought I was being apprehensive. But eventually he started having fights with her and he realized that I was right. Now he keeps telling me he wants to marry the girl of my choice." (Older female respondent, aged 71, married, lives with spouse and unmarried adult offspring).

"The day to day decisions are taken by my daughter in law. What to cook, where to go on weekends. But major decisions are taken by my husband and myself, such as the education of our grandchildren, buying property and investments." (Older female respondent, aged 67, married, lives with spouse, married adult offspring and grandchildren).

Based on the quotes it could be suggested that while, economically independent older adults do not expect their adult children to look after them on a regular basis, nonetheless, they are involved in all the important decisions of their lives. This finding, corroborates the findings of recent studies on intergenerational relationships (Chadha 2004; Lamb 2005; Verma and Satayanarayana 2013) which highlight that older adults expect respect and as a result are involved in all the major decisions of their adult offspring. Previously, in the pre liberalization era when the joint family system prevailed, the head of the family (mostly the grandfather) would control the choices pertaining to major life events such as marriage, education and property, while the matriarch of the household (the grandmother) would manage the more minute details of the household such as food, daily routines and religious activities (Kapadia 1959; Desai 1965; Shah 1973). Post liberalization in 1991 there has been a sea change in the joint family set up and a rise in the nuclear family system in urban India (Saggurti et al. 2005; Uberoi 2005; Lamb 2009). As a result, intergenerational relationships have also undergone changes and gradually the regulation of the parent has shifted from daily activities to more important ones (Chadha 2004; Lamb 2005; Verma and Satayanarayana 2013). In this backdrop of changing intergenerational ties in urban India and also applying the Dramaturgical Theory as proposed by Goffman (1959), it may be indicated that on a regular basis, upper middle class older adults do not interfere in the lives of their adult children. In fact, as suggested by the Dramaturgical Theory, these older adults determine their role in the lives of their adult children based on their day-to-day interactions. As indicated by the older respondents, interference over micro details such as eating habits, spending too much time on the phone and sleeping late

result in arguments with their adult offspring regularly. Hence, often these older adults understand that on an everyday basis, it is important to retain the independence of their adult offspring. Due to the maintenance of this independence by the older adults who were interviewed, they are able to maintain the generational hierarchy and their adult children seek their opinion in all major decisions such as career, investments and purchase of property. Hence, it may be suggested that while on the front stage financially comfortable older adults present themselves as non-interfering parents, they continue to dominate the back stage through their personal guidance. Thus, in their everyday experience of aging, although these older adults may not receive the required attention from their adult offspring, nonetheless, they continue to command a significant amount of respect in the lives of their adult offspring. This further suggests that by not intervening in the micro issues of their adult offspring, upper middle class older adults are able to participate in the macro concerns.

Experience of Aging and Gender

Studies on aging and gender in India have indicated that the experience of growing old is very different for older women as compared to the aging process of older men. In particular, these studies have highlighted that older women face constraints on mobility, are expected to depend on religion for disengagement and mostly rely on their husbands or adult offspring for financial arrangements. Specifically these studies have suggested that older women are expected to conform to a life of restrictions and dependence (Lamb 1997; Kalavar and Jamuna 2011; Samanta and Gangopadhyay 2017). Contrary to these studies, the present study suggests that the gender roles are getting blurred and gradually the experience of growing old is becoming similar for upper middle class older men and women in an urban context. As per the findings, often financially settled older men and women rely on themselves to attach meaning to their process of growing old. For instance, similar to the older men, the older women interviewed also relied on television, newspapers and exercise to remain engaged. None of these older women mentioned that they depend on religion to attach meaning to their later lives. Specifically, both older men and older women who belonged to the upper middle class spend a considerable amount of time in developing their inner selves in order to attain mental peace and self-fulfillment. Both older men and women of this class strive to lead such lifestyles as reduce physical as well as mental decline in later lives. Hence, it may be suggested that the Successful Aging model is equally applicable for both older men and women belonging to the upper middle class in urban settings such as Delhi.

In addition to increasing their self-reliance in the process of growing old, as discussed both older men and women who belong to the upper middle class participate equally in the important decisions of their adult offspring. Both have equal roles to play in terms of providing guidance to their adult offspring on important issues of their lives. Though upper middle class older women in urban areas are transitioning towards self-sufficiency, it is important to note that financially, more number of older women are dependent on their adult offspring as compared to older men (indicated in Table 1) and also as per occupational status, majority of the older women are homemakers. In this context it may be suggested that while a significant number of older women who

Table 1 Sociodemographic Information of the Older Respondents

Feature	Sample Information
Gender	Older Females (15) and Older Males (15)
Mean Age	75 (older females) 73 (older males)
Religion	Hindus (27/30 older respondents) and Jains (3/30 older respondents)
Marital Status	Married (10 older female respondents and 13 male respondents); Widowed (5 older female respondents; 2 older male respondents);
Average number of years in Delhi	20 years
Occupation Status	Homemaker (12 older female respondents); Currently working (1 older female respondent, 1 older male respondent); Retired (14 older male respondents, 2 older female respondents)
Years of education	Graduation (3–4 years after high school) (10 older female respondents and 5 older male respondents) Post-Graduation (5 years after high school) (10 older male respondents and 5 older female respondents)
Average monthly household income	$1498.37
Main Source of Income	Pension (5 older female respondents; 12 older male respondents); Dependent on adult children (4 older female respondents; 1 older male respondent); Personal Savings (3 older women; 1 older male respondent); Currently working (1 older female respondent, 1 older male respondent)
Living arrangements	With spouse, married adult children and grandchildren (11); with spouse (6); with spouse and unmarried adult children (7); with adult children and grandchildren (3); alone (3)

participated in the continue to be dependent financially, nonetheless, their everyday experience of aging and locating meaning in the process of growing old is parallel to those of the older men.

Additionally, previous studies have indicated that there are several cultural constructs and deprivations associated with widows in India. For instance, widows are made to abstain from eating spicy and non-vegetarian food, are restricted from attending auspicious functions and are expected not to wear colorful clothes (Chen and Drèze 1992; Lamb 2000; Reddy 2004; Chandra 2011). On the other hand, the present study highlights that gradually customs for widows who belong to the upper middle class are changing in urban settings such as Delhi. The older widows interviewed in the study indicated that they did not follow any restrictions in terms of food, clothes or refrain from attending auspicious occasions. They also mentioned that their family members, neighbors and friends do not expect them to observe any form of restriction in their daily lives. From these narratives and the findings it may be suggested that there is a gradual change in the normative role expectations for older widows and older women who are financially secured and who reside in urban settings.

Conclusion

The main aim of this paper was to examine the various socio-psychological factors that shaped the everyday processes of aging among older adults in the city of Delhi. In the process, the authors have shed light on perceptions of aging, coping with loneliness, intergenerational ties, and changing gender norms in later lives. In concluding, the authors highlight how the major themes of the study are interrelated with each other. Drawing from all the themes which have emerged from the study, it may be suggested that older adults belonging to a particular class and residing in urban areas are gradually transitioning towards self-development and self-reliance in their process of growing old and thus attaching meaning to their later lives. Also, it becomes apparent that they have devoted a considerable number of years in raising their children and now in old age they would prefer to give time to their own interests and desires. This finding departs from those of the earlier studies on experiences of growing old and subjective meaning of aging in India - that older adults rely on their network ties or religion in their daily existence of aging. Additionally, applying the Successful Aging model, this paper also showed that older adults are not affected by the inevitability of death, instead they rely on several other means such as television, newspaper, internet and exercise to remain physically and mentally fit and active. In addition to the Successful Aging model, the study also relied on the Dramaturgical framework to highlight the changing intergenerational norms in urban Delhi. For instance, in their everyday interactions with their adult offspring, older adults usually do not interfere in the lifestyle of their adult children. However, they play an important role when their adult offspring take major decisions in life, ranging from employment choices to investments or marriage. Finally, this paper throws light on the gendered experience of aging and highlights that in urban settings and among the upper middle class, distinction between older adults' gender roles is gradually diminished. Both older men and women engage devote a considerable amount of time in developing their own

selves in their process of growing old. Additionally, both participate equally in the major decisions of their adult offspring. This suggests that even though older women continue to be dependent financially, they share an equal status with their male counterparts in terms of their experience of growing old.

By examining the interconnectedness between the subjective meaning of aging, intergenerational relationships and gender roles in later lives, this paper has attempted to expand the discipline of gerontology by highlighting that the process of aging is gradually changing in urban India.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of Interest   All the authors of the paper declare that they have no conflict of interest with each other.

Informed consent   "Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study."

Ethical Treatment of Experimental Subjects (Animal and Human)   "All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards."

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