



How Aadhaar is Coming to the Aid of Abandoned Elderly

India is home to nearly 90 million elderly individuals and in the last few years such cases of abandoning have been on the rise

Sujit Nath | News18.com

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The figure in one hospital alone depicts the sorry state of the elderly across the country. (Getty Images)

Kolkata: Minoti Das could not hold her tears back after her son abandoned the 72-year-old at Dakshineswar Kali Temple in Hooghly a few days back.

Minoti's son while dropping her off at the temple told his mother that he would soon be back with puja flowers and incense sticks. When her son didn't return till evening. Minoti, who suffers from age-related issues, started crying and pleaded for help from passersby.

She didn't take much time to understand that I was abandoned by my son. I used to call my son shona (loved one) when he was a child. I don't know why he left me alone here. A few people thought that I was a beggar and threw coins but I kept crying and told them I wanted to go home, +she said.



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It was dark by the time someone took her to nearby police station and from there she was taken to the College of Medicine and Sagore Dutta Hospital. Since then, Minoti, along with 15 other elderly women, who have suffered a similar fate, stay at the hospital hoping to reunite with their families.

The figure in one hospital alone depicts the sorry state of the elderly across the country. India is home to nearly 90 million elderly individuals and in the last few years such cases of abandoning have been on the rise.

Taking note of the issue, the West Bengal Radio Club (Amateur Club) has come up with a unique idea to reunite the abandoned elderly with their family members. The club is using a Biometric system in assistance with Aadhaar card agencies certified by the government to track down the families.

%We along with Aadhaar card agencies are going through fingerprint tests of the elderly in order to get their residential address. This particular method gets a positive result only in case of those who have registered themselves under the Aadhaar scheme. But for those who have not, we take the help of the police to locate their houses,+said Ambarish Nag Biswas, a licenced amateur radio operator and a member of the West Bengal Radio Club (Amateur Club).

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Talking about Minoti Das, he said, %We have managed to locate her address to Kestopur near Salt Lake. Her son runs a chicken shop. We are taking the help of local police to reunite Minoti with her family members. We are also counselling family members not to abandon the elderly.+

%The alarming fact is that in some cases, we have found people from other states abandoning their elderly in Kolkata. Recently, we reunited two women from Chennai and Bihar, abandoned by their family two years ago,+he added.

Another such case that stood out was 76-year-old Minoti Chakraborty, who was admitted to a government hospital a year ago by her son under a fictitious name and address. %For the last one year, she has been admitted in the hospital. No one came to take her back home. When we looked into the address, it turned out to be fake. Through Aadhaar we managed to track her original house to Chandan Nagar in Hooghly district,+said Biswas.

A similar case was of 79-year-old Sandhya Banerjee. Her house was found to be at Banerjee Para in Shyambazar, Kolkata. There are many such cases and we have started this project to bring a smile back to the faces of the abandoned elderly. We are also getting help from the local administration,+said the radio operator.

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