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Paper Reference **WEN01/01**

**English Language**

**International Advanced Subsidiary**

**Unit 1: Language: Context and Identity**

**Source Booklet**

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**Text A is an extract from a blog posted to the *India Ink* website by Saritha Rai, a columnist and journalist based in Bangalore, India. The blog references the personal experiences of Sheela Rao (67) and Krutika Kuppuraj (23) at a job fair in 2012.**

### Notes on the World's Largest Democracy

#### Bangalore's Seniors Head to Work as 'Traditional Indian Family' Dissolves By Saritha Rai

July 31, 2012 12:51 am

Senior citizens line up to register themselves at a job fair called "Jobs 60+" in Bangalore, Karnataka, July 21, 2012.

Sheela Rao, 67, has never written a résumé, attended a job interview or used a computer in her life. She has not ever worked in an office. Yet on a recent Saturday, Ms. Rao jostled with 1,000 other elders like her, some in their 80s, at a job fair named "Jobs 60+" in Bangalore.

She can cook, sew and teach music, Ms. Rao told anybody who would give her a listen. She is healthy and can work hard, she said. "I desperately need a job and a steady income," she pleaded with prospective employers.

A job fair for seniors is a paradox in a "young" city where multinational employers from Silicon Valley's hottest social media firms and top Wall Street banks throng colleges to sign up those in their 20s even before they graduate.

The weekend gathering offered a glimpse into the social upheaval in Bangalore and other large cities where older Indians are buffeted by rising living and health care costs on the one side and fading support from their ambitious globally mobile children.

This generation on the cusp of great change has not programmed their retirement finances properly. It is the first age band wedged between the traditional and the rapidly westernizing.

Ms. Rao has five children, all married, and lives in the home of her oldest daughter, a bank employee. There, Ms. Rao has gradually become confined to two rooms at the back of the house, she said. She cooks for herself and has very little independence. For instance, to listen to music she must wear headphones so as to not disturb the family.

The 3,000-rupee (\$54) monthly pension she receives after her banker husband's death is barely enough to survive on, so she makes pickles and snacks to sell in the neighborhood. The income from such exertions too is patchy, so Ms. Rao went to the job fair to look for a steady job and a regular income.

There were dozens of companies looking for accountants, administrators, teachers and insurance salesmen. But, alas, nobody had a job for an elderly homemaker.

The large Indian family has all but disappeared, and the pressures of urban living are being felt in nuclear families. The elderly who expected to be cared for in their old age, as in the generations preceding them, are finding that their busy children are chasing their own careers and ambitions and have no time, inclination or money for them.

At the senior job fair, a dozen young employees from a large multinational bank were volunteers, and they highlighted the age and wage contrast. One of them, Krutika

Kuppuraj, 23, an analyst, was overwhelmed by the tales of despair around her. The Indian value system emphasized respect for elders, but that is eroding fast, said Ms. Kuppuraj.

A few of the volunteers were all too aware that the meager monthly pension that some seniors received is the equivalent of what they routinely spend at a cafe on a casual outing.

Unfortunately, a cruel outcome awaited many elderly job seekers who did not have any computer or other marketable skills.

In Bangalore, a job market long associated with young, fickle, itinerant workers, the fair's organizers thought they had a unique proposition: the loyalty, experience and cost effectiveness of older employees.

Yet Ms. Rao did not make the final cut.

*Saritha Rai sometimes feels she is the only person living in Bangalore who was actually raised here. There's never a dull moment in her mercurial metropolis.*

### **Glossary**

*résumé*: a description of qualifications, experience at work and skills

*Silicon Valley*: a nickname applied to the region in California, U.S.A., in which many companies involved with new technology are based.

**Text B is an edited extract of Nicole Smith's article that was published on *articlemyriad.com*, an online archive of articles produced in the U.S.A. in 2012. Smith is a freelance writer and editor.**

### Societal Look at How the Elderly are Viewed by Today's Youth

Have you ever wondered what young people will think of you as you grow older? I was given some insight into this question the other day when I overheard part of a conversation between two young men. The one said that he thought older people were a burden. The other one replied by saying that even though he respected elderly people they get in the way sometimes. This conversation prompted me to do some serious thinking.

I began to wonder if this is how my own children and grandchildren will think of me. I don't think of myself as old but I'm certainly not young anymore either. Well, at forty-something I don't yet qualify for the category of elderly but according to society I'm certainly past my prime. Then again, many teenagers out there consider you old if you're past thirty. The point is that the elderly are often looked at as if they have lost their usefulness and are no longer needed. I find this attitude truly unnerving not just because I'm getting older but because it is simply not true. Many older people live full, vital lives. Even when they are battling mental health or physical challenges, not to mention the numerous other ravages of time many of these people still live life to the fullest and contribute to their families and society in more ways than we can count.

Is such an uncaring attitude toward the elderly becoming prevalent in our society? Perhaps it has been this way for quite a while and we just weren't old enough to notice or care. Perhaps we have noticed but just turned a deaf ear and walked away. Who is to blame for this attitude? Are parents to blame? Is society to blame? Perhaps respect is just a lost art that people rarely practice anymore. It can be very disheartening to age knowing that you are not appreciated. Why is it so difficult for young people to realize that the elderly were once young too? They also need to realize that they too will grow old as well. Do young people even have a clue how much their parents and relatives struggle to raise the next generation?

It is sad that the elderly is viewed in such a manner. In many other countries and cultures the elderly are respected and honored for their wisdom yet in the United States the elderly are often overlooked. They do not receive the respect and recognition that they deserve. Even in their own families elderly members are often shunned and left alone. Elderly family members should be appreciated, cared for and valued.

Age is sometimes treated like a disease. Young people don't want to be bothered or burdened with someone old. They stay away from those afflicted with old age as if it is a disease they might catch. Well guess what? Age is a disease caused by a bacteria called time and eventually you and everyone else will catch it and succumb to it. It happens to the young, the beautiful, the poor and the wealthy. Even those who can afford to pay for the newest and most expensive cosmetic surgery can only hold off the effects of time and age for so long.

Perhaps one day science will be able to turn back the hands of time on a more permanent basis. Until then we will all feel the effects of age. People of all ages deserve respect. Those of us who aren't so young anymore still remember what it feels like to be young. No one wants to be old. No one wants to be trapped in a body that can no longer function right. No one wants to wake up to bones that ache, legs that don't want to move, a back that doesn't want to bend, fingers that cramp, eyes that can hardly read

anymore or ears that strain to hear. Age is not a choice; it is a fact. The next time you feel frustrated with an elderly person put yourself in their place. Imagine what it must be like to struggle to do things that once came with ease. Put yourself in their place for a moment because someday you will be in their place. There's only one alternative to age and its not one that anyone wants to choose.

Not every young person out views the elderly as a burden. There are young people who devote their time to caring for an elderly relative and many who enter into careers that involve caring for the elderly because they are compassionate and appreciative of older people. This is a diverse world that we live in filled with people of all ages, races and cultures. We should respect all people and we should teach our children do to likewise.

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