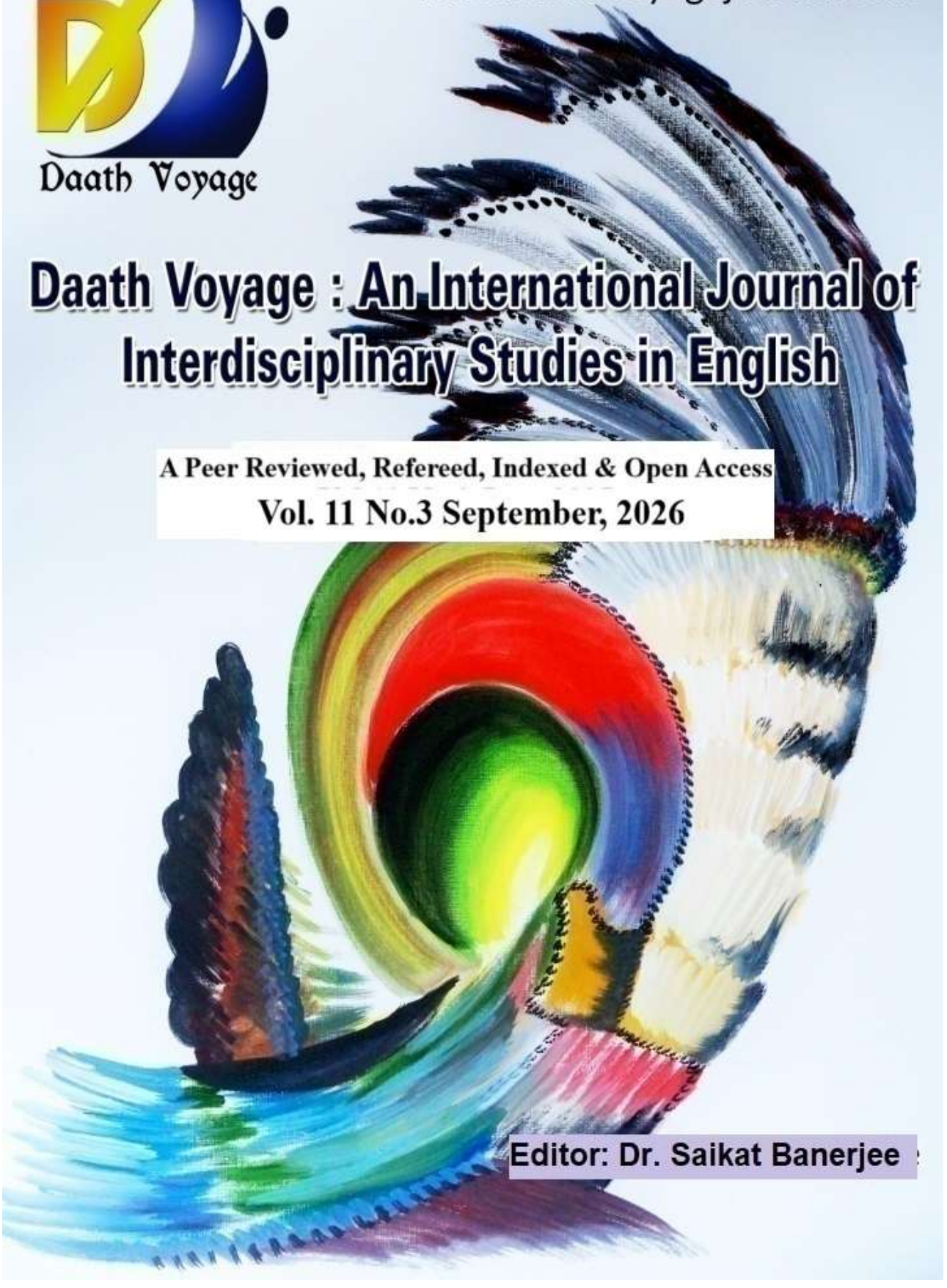
ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com

Daath Voyage

Daath Voyage : An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English

A Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access
Vol. 11 No.3 September, 2026



Editor: Dr. Saikat Banerjee

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English
(A Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed& Open Access Journal)

ISSN 2455-7544
Vol.11/No.3 September, 2026

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

Analysing the Impact of Stereotypes Related to People with Dementia and their Caregivers on 21st Century's Forgetful India's Social Health

Arpita Dutta
Independent Researcher
West Bengal, India

Received 15 July 2026 Revised 03 September 2026 Published 30 September 2026

Abstract: Before we forget the meaning of the term "Dementia", it should be noted that it originates from the Latin expression *Demens*, i.e. being out of one's mind. The reasons of the suffering from Dementia are manifold which include numerous pathological symptoms. Moreover, the stereotypes associated to the people with Dementia make their agony unfathomable. Eventually, they are alienated and erased from the mind of the mainstream society which resembles to the idea of Flipbook. In the 21st Century India, when we often forget to implement the concepts such as unity in diversity and inclusive society, to what extent the clichés related to the people with Dementia expose on the one hand the requirement of counselling by the majority of the nonchalant Indian society that beam with the memory of stereotypes and on the other, the helplessness of the people diagnosed with Dementia who face social stigma along with their caregivers? Based on Kitwood's idea of Dementia care and cultural reformation, I will attempts to answer the aforementioned queries.

Keywords: Dementia, Kitwood's model of Dementia care, Stereotypes on Dementia, Social health, 21st century India.

Introduction

In September 2023, my father had to undergo pacemaker implantation. Prior to this surgery, he was often showing signs of restlessness and along with that, time and again he was unable to remember very recent incidents that had taken place with him. As usual, we, the family members thought this tendency of my father as nothing but a mere forgetfulness until certain pre-operative and post-operative tests conducted by the doctors revealed and confirmed that my octogenarian father developed Dementia. Till that date, Dementia was not a topic of discussion in our family apart from appreciating the roles of the people with Dementia that the actors and or the actresses skilfully played in numerous films. My instant reaction to the doctor's statement of my father having been diagnosed with Dementia was an absolute disagreement. During this period of initial shock to accept the reality, I found in the hospital the family

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English
(A Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed& Open Access Journal)

ISSN 2455-7544
Vol.11/No.3 September, 2026

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

members of some other patients who were suffering from Dementia along with multiple other ailments. I realised that we, the caregivers of the patients and those diagnosed with Dementia were on the same boat and both the patient and the caregivers in this context confronted social stigma that were manifold in nature. It is often said that we cannot understand someone's journey until we have walked a mile in their shoes. Consequently, I became curious to explore the clichés related to Dementia due to the unawareness of the society, particularly in India and simultaneously to comprehend the difficulties faced by the people with Dementia.

What is Dementia?

Dementia is a syndrome that can be caused by a number of diseases which over time destroy nerve cells and damage the brain, typically leading to deterioration in cognitive function beyond what might be expected from the usual consequences of biological ageing. While consciousness is not affected, the impairment in cognitive function is commonly accompanied, and occasionally preceded, by changes in mood, emotional control, behaviour, or motivation. (World Health Organization)

The aforementioned definition given by the World Health Organisation first of all indicates that Dementia is not a single and or specific disease. It is a syndrome. There are numerous forms of Dementia that include Alzheimer's disease, vascular Dementia, and Dementia with Lewy bodies and frontotemporal Dementia (World Health Organisation). With the passage of time, the impact of Dementia spreads its root. The consequences of Dementia are varied for each and every patient. For example: It causes recurring mood swing such as: a person with Dementia can very frequently feel angry or restless for not being able to remember certain things, s/he can become sad and anxious about a certain incident irrespective of whether the incident has actually taken place or not. Dementia can lead to confusion regarding identifying a place which s/he knows for a long time, for example: Despite being at his or her own home, a person with Dementia can face difficulty in recognising the place. S/he often struggles with maintaining the track of time i.e., identifying whether it is morning or night, the month and the year. S/he can remember the incidents of his or her childhood without any complication such as: what s/he used to have after coming back from school or the dish that his/her mother used to cook during his/her birthday, although despite his/her numerous attempts, s/he may not be able to recall for example: what s/he had taken during his/her breakfast on that day. It can also be seen that the affected person asks the same question repetitively despite having received the answer. Some people with Dementia get lost while walking or driving for example:

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English
(A Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed& Open Access Journal)

ISSN 2455-7544
Vol.11/No.3 September, 2026

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

my father who used to go to the same fish and vegetable market almost every day was one day unable to identify where he was and thus could not remember the way back to home. A similar kind of incident happened with him while he went to bank a few days later after the previous episode: He did not only fail to understand where he was but was also unable to recall his address. Thankfully in both the instances, the rickshaw pullers (known to us) present in the market and the bank respectively helped him to return home.

Dementia ≠ Unbecoming of a Person

Dementia is often considered as 'unbecoming' of a person which is not the case. The person with Dementia does not completely lose his/her 'self'. It is rather our perception of 'self' which we need to understand. The 'self' consists of the past, present and the future self. Hence a person with Dementia does not forget his/her 'self': it's rather the confusion of time and space that triggers his/her interpretation of 'self' which we find complicated to adjust as for us, the present version of 'self' is the only version of his/her identity. The person with Dementia is frustrated and angry with himself/herself because s/he tries hard to recall the present incidents and often falls short of achieving the desired outcome. Thus, it is the tug of war between the gradual disappearances of his/her 'self' which comprises of recent incidents and a desperate attempt from his/her side as well as from the caregiver's side to revive that version of 'self'. The person with Dementia can express his/her hunger, thrust, pain, and love like all of us. Hence, the expressions such as 'unbecoming' is inappropriate for a person with Dementia. My father, at final stage of his life confused me with his mother. Hence, the last three months of his life, I was sometimes his daughter and many a times his mother. However, he did not forget to love me as both his mother and daughter, he never failed to ask me while I needed to go outside for certain works the places I would go and the time I would return and he eagerly waited for me till I returned. Hence, his 'self' was in no way completely lost.

There exists a sharp absence of awareness and comprehension related to Dementia and as an obvious consequence, we find the stereotypes or stigmas associated to Dementia which create obstacles in the diagnosis and adequate care (World Health Organisation). In *Intercepting Dementia: Awareness and Innovation as Key Tools*, the researchers have focused on the stigma associated to Dementia and the "devastating burden" on the society and on the family members. They have also suggested to adopt digital innovations which would help to augment the pace of clinical trial and in turn would bring positive outcome to reduce the pace of progression of Dementia (Brai et al.). A team of thirty-eight Indian and American authors did a detailed study on people with Dementia in India and their findings were culminated

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English
(A Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed& Open Access Journal)

ISSN 2455-7544
Vol.11/No.3 September, 2026

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

into an article titled *Prevalence of Dementia in India: National and state estimates from a nationwide study* (Lee et al.). Approximately 8.8 million sexagenarian Indians are under the grip of Dementia. The same article has also highlighted that this syndrome is more common among females than among males along with the increasing number of Dementia in rural India than in the urban one (Lee et al.).

While discussing the scholarly articles related to Dementia, it needs to be mentioned that, if we consider memoir and autobiography as parts of literature review, we could occasionally come across a discussion on public forum and on print media about a memoir or an autobiography written either by an Indian citizen diagnosed with Dementia or his or her caregivers apart from Minakshi Chaudhry's work titled *A World Within* (2015), Ranabir Samaddar's book *Krishna: Living with Alzheimer's* (2015) and Bina Berry's memoir titled *Vismrit – A Journey through Alzheimer's* (2021). However, a completely different scenario gets represented by numerous media and online platform through a plethora of articles on United Kingdom based author Wendy Michell's work titled *Somebody I Used to Know* (2018), Irish author Kevin Quaid's book titled *Lewy Body Dementia Survival and Me* (2018), Keith Olivier's autobiography in diary format titled *Dear Alzheimer's* (2019) and USA based Indian-American author Sandeep Jauhar's memoir titled *My Father's Brain: Life in the Shadow of Alzheimer's* (2023). Strikingly, there is no scarcity of endorsement and promotional strategies as far as mainstream novels written by Indian authors and films directed by Indian film directors based on imaginary characters suffering from Dementia are concerned. Evidently, from the above-mentioned examples, it is not difficult to anticipate the widespread stigma and stereotypes linked to Dementia even in the 21st century's India which prevent people not only to openly talk about their own journey either as a person with Dementia or as a caregiver but also to display interest in discovering the real-life world of the sufferers who require more attention than their reel-life counterparts.

People with Dementia and their Caregivers in India: A Reality Check

Information collected from an article published in *The Hindu* on 16th September 2023 reveals that with the increasing level of aged population in India that is anticipated to reach at twenty crores in 2031, there is an urgent need to prepare a national action plan to tackle the upsurge of one of the most common forms of Dementia which is known as Alzheimer's (Yasmeen). Till date, it appears that despite the existence of a National Policy on Senior Citizen that includes numerous schemes for care and welfare of senior citizens (PIB), there is a visible deficiency of implementation of a nationwide concrete plan on

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English
(A Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed& Open Access Journal)

ISSN 2455-7544
Vol.11/No.3 September, 2026

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

Dementia. The article titled *Early Detection & Management of Alzheimer's Disease & Dementia in India: A Policy Perspective* indicates that only ten percent people with Alzheimer's disease which is the most common type of Dementia are in reality diagnosed (Ray et al.). The lack of awareness is one of the main reasons for the rest of the affected population being deprived of receiving the medicinal support and social help (Ray et al.). At the same time, it cannot be ignored that in India, where any kind of mental illness is still considered as a taboo, the social stigma related to people with Dementia being abnormal and lunatic creates a monstrous barrier for the families and or the person who need to seek medical support. In this context, I being a caregiver of my father who developed Dementia would say that despite residing in an apparently sophisticated area at Kolkata, I found that there were people in this locality whose lack of empathy got reflected through their opinions such as: my octogenarian father could have been sent to an old age home which would have solved the so-called 'problem' according to them and by the questions thrown directly at my father that include asking the reason of his memory loss. Such inconsiderate questions generate among the patients the feeling of being incapable of contributing to the family and thus infuse the feeling of becoming a burden. My role as caregiver was also under the scanner as I being a woman changed my father's diapers. In India, many families deny not only of having a member who requires help for mental illness but also of having a person with Dementia in the house. Consequently, in several instances, either Dementia remains undetected or a person with Dementia initially slowly disappears from the outer world and then often becomes secluded in his or her own family similar to the features of a flipbook. At this time, apart from a well formulated and well executed National Action Plan on Dementia, we need to create a social environment where people will be aware of the consequences of Dementia as well as the responsibility of the society towards the wellbeing of the affected person and his or her caregivers. In this backdrop, Tomas Kitwood's notion of treating a person from a 'person-with-Dementia' to a 'person-with-Dementia' is effective to deal with the social taboos and stereotypes related to Dementia and those who are diagnosed with it apart from their caregivers.

Kitwood's Theory to deal with Dementia in the 21st Century in India

First and foremost, Thomas Kitwood in his magnum opus titled *Dementia Reconsidered* (1997) has laid emphasis on personhood which he defined as a status that should be accorded to a human being by the others based on the context of relationship and social being (Kitwood and Gearing). Kitwood has highlighted that personhood signifies recognition, respect and trust (Kitwood and Gearing). Therefore, the

ISSN 2455-7544
Vol.11/No.3 September, 2026

question that we are required to ask ourselves is that do we recognise, respect and trust a person with Dementia? Till date, the answer is tilted towards the negativity in India. In Kitwood's own words,

If we stay close to mundane reality, and explore how people with Dementia live out their lives from day to day, in their own homes…It is clear that many social, or societal, factors are involved: culture, locality, social class, education, financial resources, the availability or absence of support and services. Also, at the interpersonal or social-psychological level, much depends on how far a person with Dementia is enabled to retain intact relationships, to use his or her abilities, to experience variety and enjoyment. From the vantage-point of the standard paradigm, these things are externalities, separate from the advancing process of disease (Kitwood and Gearing).

Thus, it is undeniable from that the process of advancement of Dementia with the passage of time is related to our culture which considers a PWD inadequate to the society, economy, our clichés, the medical system and last but not the least, our lifestyle in general. In his work titled *Dementia Reconsidered* (1997), Kitwood highlights six psychological needs that art part of Kitwood's notion of Dementia care. Although the term 'need' is subjective i.e., it varies from person to person which is true for people with Dementia too, there are certain basic psychological requirements without which a person with Dementia cannot function. The six psychological needs for Dementia care are: comfort, attachment, inclusion, occupation, identity and love (Kitwood and Gearing 81). A close observation of the above-mentioned figure emphasises the necessity of love and compassion at the centre which is characterised by the other five needs. To comfort a person with Dementia is to help him or her to feel comfortable and to provide the required mental strength to that person during the moments when he or she feels at loss or becomes unable to do certain daily activities on his or her own (Kitwood and Gearing 81-82). According to Kitwood, the need of being within the "safety net" (Kitwood and Gearing 82) of known people and or environment increases among the people suffering from Dementia as they face uncertainties due to memory loss and disappearance of their known people as well as the hostile, indifferent and unsympathetic attitude of the society. The inclusion of a person with Dementia in group activities for example welcoming his or her presence in family gatherings and including him or her while having evening tea or snacks together leaves an enormous positive impact on the affected person's need for social inclusion (Kitwood and Gearing 83). From my own experience while dealing with my father, it can be said here that such activities include: word-making games for ten to fifteen minutes per day, encouraging him or her to read at least the headings

ISSN 2455-7544
Vol.11/No.3 September, 2026

of the articles of a newspaper, playing songs of his/her choice that would encourage him/her to talk about certain good memories. When we talk about identity that is based on Kitwood's notion of psychological needs, much can be done to help a person with Dementia while s/he faces challenges due to cognitive impairment. In the cases where the affected people are unable to remember certain parts of the journey of their life, their family members can play vital roles to fill in those gaps by narrating them and thus reviving them those lost parts. Another option could be responding to the person through empathy (Kitwood and Gearing 80-84). In the same breadth, Kitwood pointed out that in order to incorporate cultural transformation from old set up of cursing a person with Dementia and putting him or her in home confinement to the new progressive and inclusive one through providing these six psychological needs apart from improving in the domain of biomedical science and technology, we would still confront reactionary forces. He anticipated that even in the 21st Century, the lack of taking care of the psychological needs "would be varnished by eloquent mission statements, and masked by fine buildings and glossy brochures" (Kitwood and Gearing 133).

Discussion and Conclusion

Since the term *culture* has diverse facets which symbolise the co-existence of the dominant and the dominated section of the society based on numerous criteria that include the socially defined concept of normal and abnormal, gender, age-group, class, caste, socio-economic status, total population and political belief apart from the others, the desired transformation in the culture would undoubtedly differ from one culture to the other. What appears to be in the case of India is that the expectation of paradigm shifts in the mind-set of the people to treat a person with Dementia as well as his/her caregivers with recognition, respect and trust which would build a healthy inclusive environment of empathy and social responsibility leaving aside the notion of people with Dementia as useless and outsider in the mainstream society needs a revised version with a nationwide all-encompassing Action Plan. The authors of this Action Plan need to keep into account that the socially defined educated and uneducated people can have the potential to reverse their role in the society as far as dealing and interacting with people suffering from Dementia and their caregivers are concerned. Hence, in a society like ours where on the one hand, one section of the society can simultaneously forget the burning social issues which not only include us but our future generations and apparently enjoy the momentary happiness, and on the other, another section of the society do not even have time to know about the rest of the people after working rigorously to make the ends meet,

ISSN 2455-7544
Vol.11/No.3 September, 2026

the implementation of the nationwide Dementia care strategy requires the common plan of introducing the concept of mental health education as an integral part of national education system. Whether this proposal of inculcating people through compulsory education system about mental health that include illnesses such as Dementia will generate constructive outcome in the form of cultural transformation in India as far as stereotypes related to people suffering from mental illnesses including Dementia as well as their caregivers are concerned, depends on the future research works.

Works cited

Brai, Emanuele, et al. "Intercepting Dementia: Awareness and Innovation as Key Tools." *Frontiers*, 20 Sept. 2021, www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnagi.2021.730727/full.

Greenblat, Cathy. "Dementia." *World Health Organization*, 15 Mar. 2023, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/Dementia/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAj_CrBhD-ARIsAIiMxT_eonDjX-LRCxCZFBsvJkpsOIAUsFn56-hihISfvoCKn8a9Qmu3YCsaAsTmEALw_wcB.

Hippius, Hanns, and Gabriele Neundörfer. "The Discovery of Alzheimer's Disease." *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, vol. 5, no. 1, 31 Mar. 2003, pp. 101–108, doi:10.31887/dcns.2003.5.1/hhippius.

"The HIV & AIDS (P & C) Act, 2017: National AIDS Control Organization: Mohfw: GOI." *The HIV & AIDS (P & C) Act, 2017 | National AIDS Control Organization | MoHFW | GoI*, naco.gov.in/hiv-aids-p-c-act-2017.

Kitwood, Tom. *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First*. Edited by Brian Gearing, 1st ed., Open UP, 1997.

Lee, Jinkook, et al. "Prevalence of Dementia in India: National and State Estimates from a Nationwide Study." *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, vol. 19, no. 7, 13 Jan. 2023, pp. 2898–2912, doi:10.1002/alz.12928.

PIB Delhi. "NATIONAL POLICY ON SENIOR CITIZEN." *Press Information Bureau*, 15 Mar. 2023, pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1886686.

Ray, Suman, et al. "Early Detection & Management of Alzheimer's Disease & Dementia in India: A Policy Perspective." *CSIR-NIScPR Policy Bulletin*, Feb. 2023, pp. 1–28.

ISSN 2455-7544
Vol.11/No.3 September, 2026

"Syndrome Definition & Meaning." *Merriam-Webster*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/syndrome#:~:text=1,usually%20form%20an%20identifiable%20pattern.

Yasmeen, Afshan. "India Needs to Gear up for the Emerging Dementia Epidemic, Say Experts." *The Hindu*, 8 Sept. 2023, www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/india-needs-to-gear-up-for-the-emerging-Dementia-epidemic-say-experts/article67277559.ece.