

# C@ucAsia

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# GENDER

and

# AGE



photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

## BACK HOME

from festival

feeling the second part of the life

...it is just as if someone laughed together with you for the whole morning, and suddenly said: okay, back to business now.

Or just it is at the end of summer: everything around you was happy and joyful, and suddenly there is a cool wind and yellow leaves.

...It's now time to go back home from the festival. I am a bit tired, there is a cloud at the horizon, and my horses want to go. And I go back home. I feel a little sad and a little bored. I have coevals around me, and I see the new generation: going in the opposite direction, they are loudly singing and rapping. Their festival is still ahead. Some guys look at my face, girls look at me with interest or ignorance. I go to the West, they go to the East, where there is a daybreak and a long noon is still ahead. Here is already evening, and I can only hope that it will be long. Maybe there will be also quiet music? I can only imagine and hope for rest.

Something happened when I turned 30. I got a feeling just as something happened, just as if some door was suddenly closed. More doors remained, but I would never be able to enter this one again. At that time there started a period, when I felt like hiding my real age. For several years I was unable to say "thirty one", "thirty two," "thirty three". I kept saying 29 for at least seven years. And only after I turned 40, the problem disappeared. What was that? I go back home from the festival and look around. I look behind, and see strangers. I try to see what's beyond the horizon with burning sunset. Why do I feel so lonesome? I don't know. Let me come home and see.

Polina MILORADOVICH,  
Georgia

# BEAUTIFUL WOMEN'S MONTH

Age 3: She looks at herself and sees a Queen.

Age 8: She looks at herself and sees Cinderella.

Age 15: She looks at herself and sees an Ugly Sister (Mum I can't go to school looking like this!)

Age 20: She looks at herself and sees "too fat/too thin, too short/too tall, too straight/too curly"- but decides she's going out anyway.

Age 30: She looks at herself and sees "too fat/too thin, too short/too tall, too straight/too curly" - but decides she doesn't have time to fix it, so she's going out anyway.

Age 40: She looks at herself and sees "clean" and goes out anyway.

Age 50: She looks at herself and sees "I am" and goes wherever she wants to go.

Age 60: She looks at herself and reminds herself of all the people who can't even see themselves in the mirror anymore. Goes out and conquers the world.

Age 70: She looks at herself & sees wisdom, laughter and ability, goes out and enjoys life.

Age 80: Doesn't bother to look. Just puts on a purple hat and goes out to have fun with the world.

*photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia*

*Internet spam - author unknown*



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

Maria KIRILENKO,  
Ukraine  
**intent glare**

# OF INVISIBLE WOMEN

THEY WANT  
TO BE VISIBLE

and  
do their best  
fighting depressions

*Women in their forties, fifties, sixties. They can be elegant and well groomed, they can be solid and gained weight. They are the background for all those long-legged girls who look pretty only because of their young age. Someday, they start to understand how it feels being invisible: men's glares don't stop on their faces.*

What about their families? They have grown up kids, all busy with taking care of their own lives, partners, schools, and jobs. They don't care too much about their mothers, who feel permanent worry about their future. They might also have husbands, men, who have forgotten the importance of a gallant gentleman's role. They have climacterium, indispositions, differences of mood, additional kilograms, new wrinkles. They don't go to the doctor, as they can't afford it buying all the services and medicines. They feel no strength trying to make ends meet, get out, borrow money, give it back and borrow again. And they persuade themselves: "It is a shame to want something for myself, I'm too old... I should help my children." And there is no opportunity to please themselves with a trifle, a knickknack bought just because they wanted to buy it. And they don't feel like working at all. Sometimes life is slightly different: husband drinks or cheats you. Or, maybe, you don't even have one. It is hard to understand which is worse - whether not having him at all, cheating with some other woman, or simply passed away. Same about children - what is more severe: when they simply forget about you, or when you feel the lack of their care and warmth. In any way, you would experi-

ence constant fear of loneliness, lack of power, fear of illness, fear to become a burden for relatives. And you would keep 'dreaming' about getting retired, in order to get a tiny additional income.

Isn't it a portrait of an aging Ukrainian woman?

## **RESCUE ROLLING - a handwork rolling**

In our society, every person rescues himself. Or maybe fails to rescue. Or, wishing to be rescued, heats himself even more deeply. The majority of people do not hope for help. Psychologists in Ukraine are rather "exotic" specialists who live mainly in big cities. Therefore we do everything ourselves. We try being invisible, for example. And as financial opportunities do not allow Ukrainian women to do plastic surgeries, they find cheaper solutions, such as using nonstandard hair-cut, makeup, and clothing.

But there is a question: how to fill the life so that there is no space for depression? Every woman chooses her own method to run away from unpleasant thoughts, from the necessity to change something inside. One of the options is to hide in the housekeeping duties. Others find solution in the mania of cleaning everything around them all day long. It is also possible to live in the condition of permanent repairs and reconstructions. Country houses and gardens have already lost their economic importance in Ukraine, but local women continue torturing themselves planting potatoes and carrots. Some of them even die directly on their vegetable beds.

Religion is also questionable option. It is good if faith is the way, but not shelter. The way towards other people, not against them.

## **BAD HABITS as the way to run away from the reality**

This life is so deprived stability, and sometimes desolate, that women, just as men, are tend to hide from it in their bad habits. The most widespread are overeating, smoking and abusing alcohol. Corpulent ladies with a cigarette and a glass of beer are rather symbolically looked in places of drinking. The number of smoking women increases dramatically. Not so long ago the similar phenomenon has been interfaced to some extreme measures - some of smoking women were stylish growing old elite ladies, some others of them were simple alcoholics. But now, smoking women belong to all the parts of the society. The future seems to be scary: medical doctors admit that part of young mothers spend more time smoking, than taking care of their babies.

Women's alcoholism is also a widespread problem. Some of the women become companions to their drinking husbands, slowly but steadily some of them become an inveterate drunkards, and many husbands, feeling panic, stop drinking in order to rescue their wives, but it is already too late. Soap operas can also be considered as a new dependence: you run away into some other's life, forgetting your own problems.

## **SOCIAL WORK, volunteer activities, women's clubs**

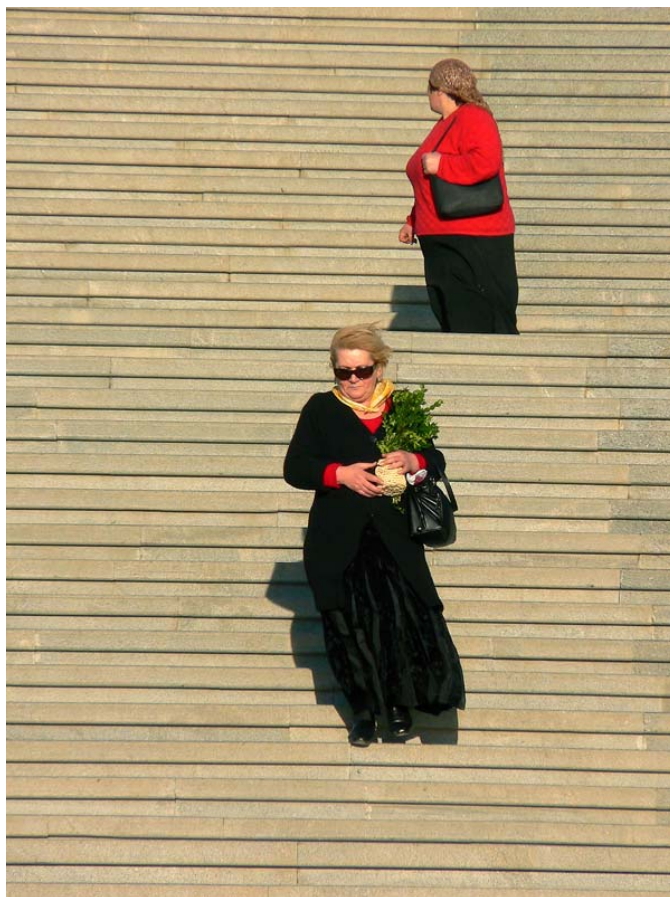
This kind of activity assumes, that a woman gets engaged in the work not connected directly with the interests of her family. But generally, men are not ready to recognize the right of their wives wife to leisure outside of the house. Some women get out "to the public" almost secretly. Time spent outside of the house (not for earning money!), is viewed as the time stolen from their family. Those ladies who have "escaped from home" for any action, feel very tense and hurrying to go back home; they can hardly concentrate on the topic of conversation. It's a paradox, but even those women who have plenty of time, act in the same manner. One 60-years pensioner once complained to me that even when she is home alone, she cannot let herself take a rest, it seems to her that she expects a visit of her mother-in-law who died decades ago... Stereotypes are still strong, our society believes that woman should not have free time at all. If there is some time, she should help kids with the homework. Or clean the house. Whatever! Even notorious soap operas do not foresee having leisure time, as TV sets can be moved into the kitchen. Other stereotypes of the older generation are also very destructive. Those, who spent their young years during Soviet times, believe that those women who actively participate in social life, come home late, do not care about family, and cheat their husband. It used to be considered that alike women are not attractive enough, and as they fail to build appropriate families, they get engaged in social service.

However at the same age, in the same country, with identical incomes and opportunities - one woman runs into depression, and another does not lose optimism. In fact, older age is charming with its opportunity of having internal freedom, without caring too much about how you look and what should you wear, to live in harmony with yourself.

But it is not easy to learn how to feel the harmony. And there are many invisible women around us. All of them need help. And need to be seen.

Source: <http://www.zerkalo-nedeli.com/nn/show/617/54690/>

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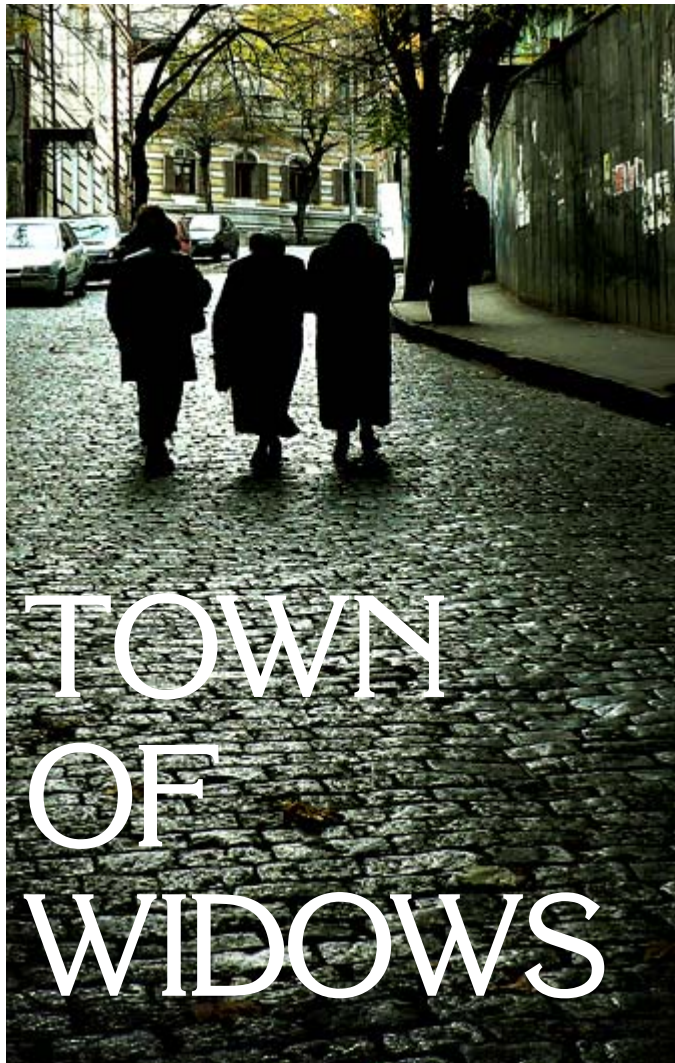
*Women are so different: in the same situation one of them feels depressed, while another one is happy and enjoying life*

*photo by  
Diana Petriashvili, Georgia*

## **APROPOS**

Psychologists recognize 'crisis of the middle age.' One of the signs of this crisis is the wish to change one's lifestyle completely. This is why there are many people in their forties, who start searching for a new job, even if they were not interested in their career development previously. Housewives are the first in this list: their kids have already grown up, while housekeeping have become boring.

photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia



# TOWN OF WIDOWS

**this is another name for Shakhtinsk, after tragic events that happened on September 20**

Nina YERKAEVA,  
Kazakhstan

*According to statistics, average length of men's life in Kazakhstan is 60, the same index for women is 72. But even without statistics it is obvious that there are more elderly women than men, and that they live without their husbands. Almost all of these women are widows.*

Old people say that the territory, where Shakhtinsk town is located, used to be called karamulla, which means "the land of black monk." As the legend has it, nomads tried to avoid this place, saying that an evil called Karamulla lives here killing people. The fate of Shakhtinsk reminds that of other small towns of former Soviet Union, that were the first who lost all necessary infrastructure.

## MEASURING LONELINESS

Woman is emotionally depended on circumstances. The more dense and severe they are, the more bitterly woman's loneliness is. Lack of due attention and care from society and the state transforms economic and social environment into a hostile force for woman. Love of relatives is sometimes the only solution. According to the poll conducted by the Association of Sociologists and Political Scientists of Kazakhstan, more than the half of women (55.6%) do not feel being loved. 74.8% of Kazakh women believe that love is the only what grants them feeling of happiness.

48.4% of local women admitted that they know the feeling of jealousy about someone else's success and happiness. Many women live with the feeling of being insulted by the life. Among the interrogated women, only 25% have noted that they can completely forgive insults. 16,6 % said they can do exception for relatives only, they do not forgive insults of strangers. 31,9 % are ready to forgive insults only in the case if they did make them suffer. 12,1 % do not forgive insults in any cases, 11,5 % found themselves unable answer the question.

73,1% admitted that they can insult in reply, and that they had insulted someone at least once in the life.

Social statistics registers only visible, external reasons behind women's loneliness. However, these reasons are insufficient for understanding this phenomenon. Women's loneliness does not generally depend on the age, nationality or social status.

Life of women and children becomes more and more dramatic. According to the regular opinion polls, monthly income of single mothers in Kazakhstan does not exceed 13-55 thousand tenge. According to the monitoring data, in an average, 76.9% of women get salary at her official place of employment having, at the same time, additional job. This illustrates low evaluation of women's labor and disability of some women to earn enough using their professional qualifications.

Women's loneliness is a serious problem that demonstrates disorder in the norms of the society.

Bakhytzhama BEKTURGANOVA,  
Kazakhstan

The only place where a local man can work is the mine of Mital Stil Temirtau JSC, coal department. The owner of the mines is the internationally known millionaire Lakshmi Mittal. The salary of a miner is not high, but there is no choice and men prefer to risk their lives for some 35 - 40 thousand tenge per month (\$250 - \$300).

On September 20 2006, one of the mines located on depth of more than 600 meters had exploded. The capacity of explosion was so strong that burnt bodies were found in a kilometer from an epicenter. 41 miners, all young, were killed. The oldest worker was 60 years old, the youngest one was only 21, his wife will have a baby in February...

The governmental commission found out the reasons of methane explosion; they were technical, organizational, and violations of labor discipline. The list of those in charge include surnames of those who died. After the tragedy, miners of the entire coal basin organized a meeting demanding to increase wages and allocation

of funds to modernize the mine equipment.

Now, when families of the victims, mainly women, demand fulfillment of promises, the administration of mine responds: "Nobody forced them to go down to the mines." How to live with it? How should a widow woman without any income live with her small children? Men have at least one possible job in the mines, women have none. How should the town live without men?

In the entire town, there are no happy families at all. Those who lost their relatives suffer the most. But those who did not lose anyone are also unhappy, feeling sorry for the others. Nobody knows what happens tomorrow, the September 20 breakdown was not the first accident at the mines. Children grow up without fathers. They live in the circumstances of permanent sorrow in the family. Children hate the word "mine" and are afraid of it. That's the most scary word for the kids of Shakhtinsk.

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Ruta PELS,  
Estonia

**in their forties**

## RUSSIAN WOMAN AND ESTONIAN ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

too early to retire, too late to change yourself

This year Estonian universities face serious shortage of students, including those departments, where education is free of charge. Girls, who generally make up the biggest part of the students do not want to study their native language and to teach it at schools.

First time for the recent ten years, Estonian hospitals faced staff shortage also: doctors and nurses tend to go abroad. For today, there are 36 vacant positions for doctors, their salary varies from 13 to 40 thousand crores (Euro 200-625).

Professionals, meaning nurses, doctors, constructors, bus drivers leave the country not only because they are low paid, but also because they seek higher living quality, which is higher in neighboring Finland and Scandinavian countries. To solve the problem, it was decided to invite Russian doctors to work at

North-East Estonia, where basically all the residents speak Russian. Revolution is underway in Russian schools of Estonia: education reform of 2007 envisages transformation of Russian schools to Estonian language of teaching. This transformation is believed to be slow, with increasing of number of classes taught in Estonian every year. However, today's teachers aged beyond 40 do not quite consider the perspective of teaching their class in Estonian, while many students have problems understanding classes in their native language. Language inspections have already warned that a teacher should not have foreign accents, when explaining a lesson. It is logical that the quality of education should be high, but what Russian teachers aged more than 40 do in the circumstances like this?

According to the European model, retirement age moves farther every year; it should soon reach the age of 65 years old. Thus, it turns out that a person after 35 years old (considered to be elderly in Estonia) should start searching for a new job. This is very important for women, who are largely employed by the systems of healthcare, education and police. Every employer prefers younger, healthy and perspective employees. And women in their forties are not the dream of an employer, especially if we speak about a Russian-speaking woman, who received her education in Russian language. This type of women had their kids, combined duties at home and at work to make the ends meet. Today, their kids have grown up, but they still need support. A woman like this generally has also elderly parents, who need her care and thus do not let her go abroad. The companies that employ cheap labor use these circumstances for their own profit. Certain western corporations open their enterprises in Tallinn and in northeast of the country, where informal unemployment significantly exceeds official data. Women at the sewing enterprises sending products to Finland and Sweden work for pennies. Women in their forties work 24 hours a day for very little salary (190-200 euros minus taxes) assembling Ericson mobile phones. These women usually say their thank-yous to their employees, as they are unable to find any other job

without knowing Estonian or English at their age. The first generation of women in their forties, who had lost their jobs at the very beginning of Estonia's independence, managed to start new jobs and to get new skills. Some of them even have their own business, but the majority of them continues working as a seller of textile or carrot, while a couple of higher education diplomas.

Amnesty International unveiled the results of its research in early December, emphasizing the fact that in Estonia, there remain many people who failed to obtain local citizenship. The major reason for refusing to issue citizenship for a person is insufficient knowledge of local language and local Constitution. Western experts highlighted the discriminative facts against non-Estonian population. Besides other, experts noted that Language Inspections force employers to fire those who do not speak proper Estonian, even in private companies. But the authorities always have their own explanations.



*if not economic prosperity,  
than economic emergency care for the country and the family*

*Photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia*



**world**

# THEY WILL THINK ABOUT THE OLDS, WHEN THERE IS NOBODY ELSE TO WORK

## mankind facing problem of global ageing

A public opinion questioned Europe's young girls and guys about the problems old people face. Many of the respondents replied: olds influence politics more than it is necessary and use some 70 percent of funds allocated for medicine. The general opinion pointed out that the life of olds is hard, but at the same time, olds are sometimes too expensive to local budgets.

On October 1, for the 16th time, the entire planet marked International Day of Senior Citizens, established by the UN General Assembly in 1990. It is expected that during 2000-2050 the number of older people (aged 60 and more) doubles, thus making 10-22 percent of the global population; this index equals the overall number of children (aged 0-14 years old). As the result of this demographic transformation, for the first time in the world's history, proportions of elderly and young people will be equal.

In many developed countries, the number of old people today exceeds that of young people, while birth rate keeps falling down. According to forecasts,

this perspective will result in the dramatic increase of olds by 2050, when there will be more olds than children. The population's aging is likely to turn into demographic crisis, that is why European Union countries are involved in the programs aimed to employ as much people aged between 55-64 as possible.

European experts warn that in order to avoid decrease of economic development, it is necessary for olds to work at least until they turn 70, otherwise, economic growth lessens by 1/3. Experts propose to employers to persuade the 40 years old employees to keep working for at least 30 more years. But presently, the European legislation stimulates early retirement, which means freeing working places for youth. However, economists believe that this approach is unproductive, and this is why certain countries introduce part-time jobs (30 hours a week) to the olds. Germany, for example, proposes the list of vacancies that includes 100 positions: housekeepers, photographers, drivers, sellers, and other...



*...housewives, photographers, drivers, vendors...  
Why does not the list include IT professionals, managers, and other alike jobs, that are taken by younger people?  
There are many questions that need to be answered already today.*

*photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia*

Vafa SALEKH

Azerbaijan

culture scissors

# AGE IS A PROBLEM for any woman

*It's a pity, when a person loses strength and beauty. This problem is the same for both genders, but aging women traditionally feel worse. The problem of age is very important for us, both personally and socially.*

Zumrud Alieva, candidate of philologic sciences worked at her thesis for a doctor's degree for many years. Finally, she had a chance to propose it to the Consultation Council of the Academy of Sciences. But professors never studied her work. The reason, according to them, was that Zumruda was too young. 30 years old! That's too early for obtaining doctor's degree. In Azerbaijan, there are

tens of examples, when men became doctors at that age and even younger. This fact makes the refusal to Zumruda even more absurd.

"They told me that I am young and good looking woman, and thus, the paper I proposed seemed to be written by someone else," Zumrud said.

Age discrimination in Azerbaijan (and in other countries, I assume) may be different. Sometimes private companies propose jobs to young girls only, to those who are aged between 18 - 25. These young girls get employed at low-paid positions at the companies that tend to have sexy-looking staff. However, in the case there appears vacancy for more or less well-paid position (such as: head of office, chief manager, vice president), neither beauty, nor young age is an obligation, and the vacancies get filled by men, who do not have to be attractive.

Recently, there appeared another tendency about those young girls of Azerbaijan, who want to start their personal life while studying or developing their career. In Azerbaijan, it is a tradition that young girls should have a purpose of getting married at the age of 18-25. Those, who are beyond 25 are considered to be "unsuccessful." In some regions of Azerbaijan, especially at the South of the country, girls are forced to get married as early as at the age of 14-15. A tendency like this creates additional problems to more adult girls, who do want to get married, but fail to find couples. In the case a girl decides to graduate from university before marriage, she practically has no chances.



a scientist should not be young and beautiful!

photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

Alina SHAPOVALOVA  
Turkmenistan

## deformations

# YOUNG GENERATION and it's choice

the choice  
is generally done by those  
who are older

*early marriages  
in Turkmenistan are frequently  
caused by the parents' wish to  
prevent their kids from drug  
addiction*

A 16 years old son of my friend got invitation to his classmate's wedding.  
"Well, how old is the bride?" I asked my friend.  
"She is 15. Not a big deal," my friend replied. This is already the second wedding for their class."

Eastern societies have always had a tradition of young marriages. But in Turkmenistan this tendency should not be considered a tradition - young marriages are contracted because of certain problems. One of the reason is drug addition wide spread in the country since it obtained its independence. Unfortunately, this problem is not connected to the age, among those who use drugs are the representatives of all generations. Today, in Turkmenistan, there is a very limited number of young men who can become potential husbands for local girls. Among those, who are 23 or older, there are many of those who are either already married or drug users. To find healthy and single husbands, girls need to address to 15-17 years old teenagers.

Parents of the youth are also very much worried about the future of their kids and thus hurry to make him get married as soon as possible.  
The program of primary education in

Turkmenistan was shortened to 9 years. Those who apply to higher education institutions need to have at least two years of work experience. Which means that if you plan to become a doctor, you first have top work as a nurse at a hospital, or, in the case you want to become a school teacher, or an engineer, you should find a vacancy at school or a plant. The level of unemployment in Turkmenistan reaches 80%, and for a 15-16 years old kid it is quite unreal to get a job. Some of them get registered at a working place only formally, after paying significant bribes. It turns out that the majority of young guys have no occupation for two years that pass after graduation from high school before going to army. Those who planned to complete education after army, have to forget their plans, as the quotas for those applying to higher education institutions were significantly decreased.

A typical 20-years old men face the following problems: there are no jobs in the country, it is impossible to go abroad because of lack of money and lack of knowledge. Many of them become drug addicted because all of the problems they face.

This is why the parents of young girls really worry about her marriage perspectives: every potential husband can turn out to be drug addict. Parents do their best to find a young man they know well, but even if they know him, some prefer to request medical examination.

Some time ago I met a friend of mine, her sons are younger than my kids. It turned out that while my sons studied, hers have already gotten married. They are 20 and 19 years old, and already have their own children, which means that my 39 years old friend have become grandmother.

Official marriage age makes 17 years old in Turkmenistan, but people tend not to register marriages until a couple has children. Thus, the legislation is unable to forbid young marriages. In the modern society of Turkmenistan, it has already become a norm that a couple has their own kids as soon as after 9 months since the wedding. Nobody worries about the fact that the parents are so young, because of the instinct wish to have healthy children in the family.

Roza KUKHALASHVILI,  
Georgia

**changes**

# OLD AND RESPECTED

they are not always respected  
because even good traditions  
are being lost or deformed

In many countries there is a tradition of respecting older people. In Georgia, both women and men are respected equally after certain age. Every Georgian knows special details of how to address to an older person; everyone knows that it is necessary to be extra polite when talking to a senior.

All these traditions used to contribute to strengthening of a family. Divorces and conflicts with parents used to be very rare. But something had changed.

Recently, I met a respected elderly woman and acted in the way I am used to. I got up and proposed the lady to take my seat. But she looked at me and said: "For God sake! please do not emphasize on my age!"

It seems that our people now do their best "not to emphasize" on the special features of older people, of pregnant women, of disabled persons.... I use public transport everyday and see how ignorant we have become to each other. Today, in



*Olds must work! European forecasts are a bitter reality for Georgia.*

*photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia*

Georgia there are many of those old people who are left without their younger relatives' care. Just some time ago, it would be impossible to imagine a situation like this, but because of the bad economic state in the country, some people simply leave the country, thus do not take appropriate care of their parents.

These problems are similar for both women and men. But there is also certain specific. gaining age is a more dramatic process for a woman, than for a man. A man's marriage will be understood by the entire society, regardless of at what age he decided to create a family. But none of elderly Georgian women would dare to get married! Even if she is a widow.

An old woman has thousands of duties at her family (in the case family does not include younger women), and nobody feels uneasy about her age and her business. And a man of the same age simply uses the service she provides.

Diana PETRIASHVILI,  
Georgia

## **stream of consciousness**



# MEMORIES ABOUT THE FUTURE

Once upon a time, me and my husband will get old.

We will move from Tbilisi to Sioni. We own some land and four bedrooms there.

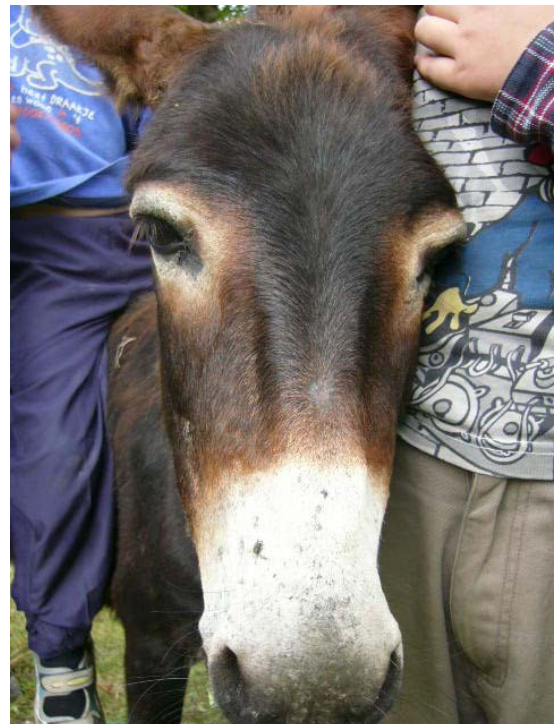
We will adopt all the stray dogs we meet on our way, and, maybe, we will by a horse. We will go to the forest, with our horse and all the dogs, every morning.

And we will definitely have a donkey. He will have a sad and beautiful eyes. Have you ever seen a donkey? Have noticed how sad and beautiful his eyes are?

I will buy a special hair comb to scratch the donkey's years.

On weekends, I will bring together all those little great grandchildren that we'd have. Let them ride the donkey in the garden.

*photos by author*



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