

Ageing gracefully

T. T. SRINATH

It's important to let go of many things that we cling to in our youth as we grow old

There was once a tall, well endowed tree, full with leaves, blossoms and fruits. This tree was in the centre of a small village in India and was the cynosure of all eyes. People would pluck fruits and flowers from the tree and some would even rest in its shade. The tree was young, sturdy and robust.

Over the years it grew old and began to wither. Its leaves fell off, so did its branches and flowers and fruits stopped growing. Soon all that was left was a tall tree stump. The tree mourned its ageing and looked heaven wards for sympathy. None was offered.

Some months later the country in which the village was situated won independence. The Village elders gathered in the centre of town to discuss where and how to hoist the new National Flag. Turning towards the now withering tall stump, a village elder said "Why don't we hoist our new National Flag on this tree? After all it is the tallest mast we have got and had been a great tree in the past". Hearing this brought cheer to the tree for it realised that it still was being considered valuable and old age had not diminished its worth.

Ageing gracefully enjoins on each of us not to feel diminished. If each one of who is growing old recognises that I am now able to give unlimited time to people, especially grandchildren; that I can help with minding the house, patiently, for hours together, when my children are working hard in their offices, so that they do not have to worry about the house, or who will be at home when their children return from school; water the small lawn and plants therein that my son and daughter-in-law so very much love; that I can go grocery shopping for my children; I will realise that though I may not be handsome or beautiful, anymore, on the outside, yet I am actually very beautiful within.

As we age, we lose hair on our head and become bald, our teeth become loose and fall and from our eyes there is continuous discharge. All this we dismiss as signs of ugliness. Yet, we admire a child though it has no hair on its head or teeth and is continuously drooling. Perhaps we are becoming children again and, therefore, beautiful.

Our life as we age is sometimes a boon; there is little expectation from us and even less demand, other than to be around.

Therefore if learn to let go a little, become less compulsive, receive with thanks the time given us and be less harsh on ourselves and those around, in fact offer our love in its cleanest form, we will surely age gracefully.

(The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at ttsrinath@vsnl.net)