

Published: Monday July 08, 2019

Our unlived lives

T. T. SRINATH

Do not let yourself drown in the possibilities of 'What if I had...'

At a seminar I recently attended, the facilitator placed several prompts on the floor inviting participants to respond to each of them. One of the prompts offered was 'my greatest regret is....'; this prompt drew a huge number of responses and the constant refrain was 'I regret not having done so and so, not having lived.... etc.' The list seemed endless.



Listening to each of them, I realised that many of our lives, mine surely, are about the lives we are not living, the lives we could be leading yet are not. I also realised that in not living the life I am missing out on, I fantasise what I long for; the experiences, the things and even people that I sense are absent in my current life.

I see myself as living somewhere between the life I have and the life I would like. The parallel life for me thus is the life that never actually happened that I tend to live in my mind.

I also tend to assume that my unlived life is because possibilities did not exist and my present existence becomes one of protracted mourning.

When I search within, I recognise it is because of the myth of my potential, the unexpressed part of me that makes my living one of continuing loss.

Yet, if I continue to stew in this, it only evokes in me rage.

The antidote that helps me climb out of this pit of constant regret is to grab what is there in front of me, to take in my stride all the possibilities that are now available and convert potential to kinetic. I have learnt, even if painfully, that possibility can be born only by experimenting, by risking and by biting the bullet.

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