

Age

no Bar



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Is age a mere number to you, or does it mean more? Bordering on the thirties, I recall with a prematurely wizened expression, a time when the first blush of teens had deceived me into believing that I would forever be a teenager. Then came that mad rush of the teeming twenties with the deluded thinking that the twenties were it - the maturity, the lust for life, the career decisions, the belief that youth was power. The treacherous thirties were really never to arrive, you know how you have laughed in mocking, teasing tones at older cousins who in no mild tones told you that you'd get there sooner than you thought. But honestly, what does age mean to you?

A friend's grandmother, in her eighties, is as excited about learning as she was when she was young. Sometime back, she had enrolled for a distance learning program, which she passed with flying colours, and now wants to study something else. This, besides her voracious appetite for books in general. And she still takes care of her health.

This is all quite common in the West, this zest for life. A friend tells me of his neighbour, a kindly old lady in a

wheelchair, who hires an escort to take her sightseeing every now and then. Her enthusiasm for what the world has to offer hasn't dimmed with age. And this is a common sight.

Shoulders saddled with societal expectations, people here tend to age much faster. The majority of us have age moulds to fit into - from education to marriage to babies. Much as children are expected to reach certain milestones at specific ages, parents are also inextricably linked. If not, you have to learn to deal with the exclamations of questioning eyes and raised eyebrows. There are stereotypes for parents, in-laws and grandparents. And individual desires for life's offerings are expected to wane with age. One isn't expected to harbour ambitions beyond the societal sanction for that age. A Zohra Sehgal, a darling old actress in her nineties, is a rarity. With age is expected the dawn of a forbearance of sorts, a forced restraint on desires, an obligatory sacrificial maternal instinct. One is expected to satisfy oneself with pilgrimages, attending religious gatherings, watching television serials, escorting grandchildren to the park, picking them up from school, and the like. 'Is this the age to do this? Shouldn't you have done this by this age? Isn't he too old for something like that?' - The odd comments that need tackling when someone does something a little unusual. There is no denying, however, that some of all this is self-imposed.

A retirement from work life does not necessitate a retirement from active life. There are still a zillion things to do, still so much to learn, great many places to visit, glorious new experiences await. Age is a mere number, a statistic, a yardstick for achievements, but not a final call on anything. Live with passion, with a persistence that denies the number any bearing at all on your desires, your ambitions. Let the allure of life never dim in its brilliance. Let not the rheumatisms of time seep into your bones. After all, age is just arithmetic.