

## The tragedy of old age

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In childhood and adolescence, there is a general tendency to regard adults, be they twenty-five or seventy – five to be quite over the hill, if not actually in their dotage! Mid-life is considered to be a gloomy distant future inevitably awaiting one, but not worth bothering about. By the time one reaches the fourth decade of life even a septuagenarian seems. In comparison, not the old! This is a gradual process in which attitudes and perspectives, towards age and aging undergo many changes.

One associates youth with health, vigor, agility, and stamina. The young are less plagued by illness, can do anything they apply themselves to and have a great zest for life. They have boundless energy and are full of plans for their future, and in fact are able to make the most of life. The youth, as distinct from the child, is independent and able and in control of his life.

On the contrary, age is associated with sickness and physical incapacity, as well as a decline in the mental faculties. Old age brings in dependence on others for even basic day-to-day action and activities. Along with the boundless confidence one had as a youth, one gradually loses control over one's own life; the spectra of impending mortality is also one that looms large on the aging horizon- and he certainly does want to dies.

Despite the shackles of disease and dependency and the distant threat of death, because they have once experienced youth, men continue to relive that pleasurable experience. Consequently, memories of youth are superimposed on the restrictions of old age. This makes them extremely reluctant to cross the boundary between the positivism of youth and the apparent negativism of old age, to hand over the baton, the keys, the hair-whatever.

The onset of the aging process gives rise to an inner conflict in the mind of the individual. On the one hand he realizes he not live forever and consequently indulges in contemplative stock-taking, in the course of which he wants to be able to turn the clock back and be given a second chance to prove himself. On the other hand, he continues to dream, to hope and to aspire, but he now discovers that it is far more difficult to realize them than in the past. Simultaneously he rejects this discovery believing himself to be just as young and able. It is this inability to accept reality and a yearning for the bygone days that stops him from living fully and age becomes a tragedy.

G.B Shaw once described the seven ages of a woman as infant, child, girl, young woman young woman, young woman, young woman. This seems to be a

universal truth equally applicable to men. One should be able to accept age as a part of life.