

I have been one of the lucky few who have had the chance to grow up under the care of a doting grandmother. My maternal grandmother in whose home I grew up as a child, perhaps, has been the greatest educator, motivator and inspirer to me in my life apart from her being my biggest idol.

At the age of eighty three, even now, she is the person, with whom I do not shy to discuss even the most complex issues of life and existence along with the items concerning politics and society inspite of the fact that her qualification is *second standard pass*. It amazes me how she can understand everything, particularly when it is on tv, no matter what the language is. Most times with pride I say, if I do have any intelligence, the entire credit goes to my grandmother.

I am sure she was a beautiful lady when she was young because even now, at this age, her skin is flawless and her hair is mostly black. It scares me whenever I look in the mirror, that what I may look when I am her age.

She lost her husband when she was about twenty four, and was left behind with four children under her care. The stories of her struggle have made me see her in the same light as any Rani Chennamma or Laxmi Bai. As per the custom, as a widow, she was asked to wear white clothes and ever since then for about sixty years now she has not worn any colour on herself. Sometimes I feel that till a few decades ago she used to visit one particular temple with devotion, regularly only because that gave her a chance to wear red kumkum on her forehead at least in the name of god.

I have always known that my grandmother is one of the most progressive people, that I have ever come across. She is so forward in her thinking that I feel that she is capable of understanding emotions and relationships better than me all the time. Recently, I even had a talk with her about how it has been to wear white clothes for over sixty years now. After contemplating for a while she said, 'Maybe I should have not agreed to wear white the first time itself. I am sure my husband would have not wanted me to live like this.' I have been able to understand old age and the process of experiencing life, with her, and I only wish that I would be able to hear everything she has to tell me, and know everything that there is to know from her, before it is too late.

Sometimes I wonder, what it must be to be her. And one day I did even ask her 'Avaya', as I call her, 'what have you been doing all these years, for eighty three years? Aren't you bored of life?' because considering myself young in every sense, I am already bored and feel extremely old.

I have always been curious about nature and quite interested in science. I don't remember my granny having read any book of science and of having had any great exposure to knowledge from science (I must remind myself that she can only recognize the letters of the English alphabet.) Once a few years ago, sitting in the kitchen in her home in Kodagu, I commented about the weird weather. It was in the afternoon and the atmosphere bore a strange heat. My granny who had not stepped out the whole day, just sitting inside the kitchen, not even peeping out of the window said, 'It is because the sun

is shining between the clouds'. I sprang up and ran out to the yard and looked up. There was sun, shining in metallic light in the space between the clouds. I was proven right, my grandmother was indeed wiser than a lot of wise people.

I know that I have more to learn and much more to experience with her, and I know that understanding her life, I maybe able to live better, if I am to live for long.

But, I also know that I do not have the patience for life that she has had in abundance, all through her life, till date.