

AGE IS A MINDSET

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“Age is a case of mind over matter; if you don't mind it, it doesn't matter!” - Mark Twain

A few months ago, Kaun Banega Crorepati celebrated its 1000th episode - justifiably dedicated to celebrating the phenomenal success of the 21-year long run TV series - full of reminiscences, all round bonhomie and great anchoring by Amitabh Bachchan. My thoughts then drifted to his age.

‘Age is just a number’ is a phrase often used to praise active senior citizens who continue to use their time, experience, knowledge and skills to stay active. They achieve glory, much to the praise and envy of their peers or even youngsters. Here are some stories supporting the theme.

Let me start with two ‘twilight trail blazers’ who exemplify why it is never too late to start and succeed.

Colonel Sanders (1890-1980) He founded KFC at the age of 65, despite having been a failure in business many times. He became the face of KFC. His popular product (fried chicken) and asset-light business model (franchising for business growth) were path-breaking, making him a billionaire by the time he died at 90 years.

Srila Prabhupad (1896-1977) After leading a normal but spiritually influenced life, he started the ISKCON movement at the ripe age of 70 in 1965. In 12 years, he obtained a near cult following among millions of followers across the USA, Europe and India. With good credibility, the movement emphasizes Bhakti (deep faith and commitment) besides social upliftment of the poor.

His book, [*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*](#), is considered by many Vedic scholars as the finest of its generation. With truly a simple sounding but socially uplifting goal, his social mission was ‘no one should go hungry in 10 km radius around ISKON mandirs’. His singular achievement has been to establish an organisation that has a clear vision, mission and structure to support, sustain and grow the movement credibly. This is a pleasant contrast to many missions started by spiritual leaders that have quickly faded away.

Now, onto the three living legends who I admire the most for their sustained achievements and longevity.

Jane Fonda (1937, age 84 years) She started as a fashion model in New York City in the 1960s, soon becoming a celebrated Hollywood actress with multiple global awards and accolades. Grace and Frankie, a TV series with her in the lead, had a very successful run for 7 seasons (2015-22) on OTT platforms. It was amazing to see her so committed and successful at the age of 83. In the 1980s, she had also launched a popular set of fitness videos that sold millions of copies, living a path-breaking impact on health and fitness awareness, especially among career-focused women. She is also known for her political and environmental activism, besides being a strong supporter of feminist movements. Particularly noteworthy, in the 1970s, was her staunch opposition to the American involvement in the Vietnam War. In 2019, she founded her grassroots climate change movement, Fire Drill Fridays.

Warren Buffet (1930, age 91 years) Over the last 7 decades, the **Oracle of Omaha**, has been an avid investor, businessman and philanthropist. At the age of 90, he has just now started talking about succession to his business empire with a net worth of over \$100 billion. His millions of admirers are deeply influenced by his successful implementation of a patient but exponential value investing - quite in contrast to the hyperactive but impatient investment strategies.

Buffett is also a big time philanthropist, having pledged to give away 99 percent of his fortune to social causes. Today, not only does he represent the American Dream for growing rich but impresses the world with his deep commitment to giving back to society in a meaningful way.

He is also known for his excellent life concepts and quotes. “I want to give my kids enough so that they could feel that they could do anything, but not so much that they could do nothing”. Of course, just 1% of his wealth could still do that and that is the irony!

Amitabh Bachchan (1942, age 79 years) His case is an analyst’s delight. Starting as a struggling actor in the early 70s, almost written off (despite his deep baritone voice) as being too tall and gawky to be a successful celluloid hero in Bollywood. On the contrary, he became the most successful hero with many super hits. At the peak of his film career, in 1984, he pivoted to politics to primarily support his friend Rajiv Gandhi. But within 5 years, he found himself totally out of depth, quickly abandoning that career path.

Returning to acting, realizing the change in dynamics in the film industry, he then started an entertainment industry focused business enterprise ABCL in the mid-90s. This turned out to be an unsuccessful venture, making him hit a low point to near bankruptcy, making his son Abhishek abort his expensive studies abroad and come back to support his father. Amitabh abandoned business, went back to acting (not always as a hero though). He also launched his TV anchoring career with KBC (TV as a medium those days was considered the second rung by film stars) - the rest is history. Today, we watch him in fascination not only as a successful film industry legend and an outstanding TV personality, but also as someone who has adapted himself to changing times.

With age, we can gravitate to reflect on the theme of the blog,
‘Age is a mindset’

Keep the body moving,
And the mind ticking,
Age is just a word or number,
But living and life is mind over matter,
Happy and purposeful ageing!