

The Dear Departed

-Mahesh Balasubramanian

“Each day is the first day of the rest of your life”. This symbolizes the spirit of living life to the fullest. Death is an inseparable part of life. It does bring morose & vacuum. Still, it is unfair towards our own lives to let go off the precious moments by indulging in excess brooding over the death of some near & dear one, over a long period of time. It reduces our lives to an exercise of rituals. It is like a burden we carry all along our journey to our destination.

Somehow or other, death does bring about a change in the lives of our near & dear ones. There is one family I know. He was of marriageable age when he died, leaving his parents & the younger brother behind. He used to outdo his brother be it in matters of catching the school bus or making social contacts. He continued with the same spirit and outdid everyone when it came to embracing death.

After his death, his brother donned the mantle of “second in command”, the very moment he came to know about it; as if he already knew it would happen. Sometimes the sense of responsibility comes automatically to some

people rather than by teaching of ages. He knew that first & foremost he had to hold his tears back in order to control those of his parents, especially his mother. As far as I know, the only time he cried was when it was time to bid the final farewell. He tried everything he could to bring back smiles on their faces. When it couldn't bring life to normal for his mother, he sensed that it was because of the brothers' framed photograph hanging on in his home. His mother used to come across it every now & then & stare for several minutes which caused the glum.

To seek an end to all this, he removed it & placed it at an unreachable space on the pretext that it would not bring peace to "his" soul if she continued on staring at it like that. This did the work. A few more attempts made the mother to slowly forget the morose & changed the focus to her son & his future.

She is a happy-go-getter person today, as before. As for her husband, he is enjoying his retired life peacefully. Because he is retired, that makes at least one person who can look after her so that the son can freely go about his own business & look after his career pursuits.

And that is what I am doing now. In between, I do remember my brother & cherish his memories. With the changed order of the day, expectations from parents have certainly increased. Now three years past, I almost

spontaneously laid my hands on the same photograph. I am relieved, and so is he, knowing well that we are carrying on gracefully. After all, life is about living in the present with eyes set on future.