Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



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Recently, during rush hour, I was traveling on a local train. Somehow, I managed to enter the crowded carriage and stand on one foot. Seeing my struggle, a young woman who had secured a seat stood up and said to me, "*Aaji basa*," meaning "Grandma, sit."

Those words brought a big smile to my face. Yes, I have crossed the threshold into a new stage of life. My heart quietly whispered, "Grandma, get ready to face unfamiliarity and uncertainty, but rest assured that it is going to be a pilgrimage of inner transformation and self-discovery."

Later that evening, when I returned home and sat for meditation, I read the poem "For a New Beginning" from John O'Donohue's book *To Bless the Space Between Us*:

> "A path of plenitude opening before you.
>
> That is at one with your life's desire.
>
> For your soul senses the world that awaits you."

These lines touched something deep within me. They invited me to celebrate the homecoming taking place within my own body as I embraced life's pilgrimage toward eventide and the possibilities still unfolding before me.

The poem brought me closer to the proverb, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." "*Aaji basa*" became that first step, prompting me to release my outgrown ways and step into new spaces with creative prospects.

Initially I found a lot of resistance within me to accept that I am no longer a young woman. I had to begin the difficult journey of letting go of the past, attachments to people and familiar routines.

But "*Aaji basa*" reassured me that the world recognizes this new season of my life and the gifts it brings. During meditation, I felt the transformative power of embracing a new chapter in life. I felt as though there was wind beneath my wings.

Growing older is a gift that allows us to navigate life's transitions with grace and reverence. It invites us to see the world through a deeper lens of presence and gratitude. Age does not mean that God's purpose for our lives has ended. Instead, elders often distill the meaning of life and offer wisdom to future generations.

Old age is not a time of decline but a time of refinement, a season to continue walking the path that opens before us and to align ourselves with our deepest desires.

The psalmist reminds us: "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green" (Psalm 92:14).

As elders, our prayers, wisdom and lifelong experiences continue to bear fruit. We are called to live this season with a spirit of adventure.

My own role model for aging was my grandmother, Katherine, who died at 104.

To this day, I remember her rough hands as she braided my long hair before school. I was the recipient of her stories filled with insight and lessons she gathered through a lifetime of experience.

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My grandmother had a remarkable ability to manage her emotions, remain calm under stress and adjust to the needs of her grandchildren. She created a nurturing environment where we felt loved and supported. Through her actions, she taught us courage, perseverance and love.

The loving touch of my grandma's rough hands taught me that life is tough and at the same time beautiful. As she combed and braided my long hair, massaging my scalp, I used to fall asleep. When she finished, she would gently kiss my forehead and say, "Study well. Pay attention to your teachers."

Grandmothers are anchors of safety for their grandchildren. They teach us how to remain calm during chaotic moments. The words "*Aaji basa*" brought back the feeling of serenity I used to feel with my grandmother and led me into a deeper examination of my conscience.

As I approach my 70s, I have become aware of how much energy I have spent worrying about things that never truly mattered. Many times, my actions went against Jesus' invitation to take his yoke (Matthew 11:28-30). Instead of accepting his guidance, I carried invisible burdens, trying to impress others, trying to succeed and trying to be perfect.

My grandmother always valued peace over approval, quiet over noise and contentment over appearances. From her, I learned the deep shalom of letting go and letting God.

Her way of resolving conflicts in the village taught me that spending energy on people's opinions can be exhausting. Winning arguments can cost us relationships, and constantly proving ourselves can steal our peace. She showed me that peace is more valuable than pride.

Looking back, I see how much time I spent worrying about my appearance, trying to maintain a certain image, looking younger and appearing successful. Today, what matters most is comfort over image and peace over status.

Perhaps every stage of life is a homecoming. We spend our younger years searching, achieving and becoming, only to discover that the greatest gift is learning to be fully present. "*Aaji basa*" became my invitation to sit, listen and receive the grace of this moment. In this season of life, I do not feel diminished; I feel renewed, carrying with me the stories, love and wisdom of those who walked before me.