gone, with the wind. There is something about the wind which keeps us in thrall of it or makes us desperate to get out of its range. In our youth, we love it when the wind runs through our hair, when it plays in the hair of the women we fall in love with. But then comes that moment when the wind causes all that effect of weathering on our features, which begin to stamp on our faces that sign of aging we would rather not have.

That said, the worst that the winds of time do to us is to have our hair desert us, strand by precious strand, as we, at least some of us, move into middle age. Now you could argue that bald men are often handsome men. Think of Yul Brynner. Think of Telly Savalas. Think of Mikhail Gorbachev. Think of Jawaharlal Nehru. Such knowledge is certainly music to the ears. But what happens to the comb you always carry in the back pocket of your trousers? Ah, but didn't you know that it is always people with no hair who carry a comb with them, always? Perhaps they do that because of that certain sense of nostalgia which comes of a remembrance of the days when hair was all around and over and across the head.

Forgetting is hard; and memories are a consistent part of the consciousness. Often in the mornings, indeed throughout the day, bald men are observed pulling out their combs and letting it pass all across that spot on the head where hair once was. And every time they do that, a fresh few of the remaining strands of hair come back with the comb as it is taken off that glistening, almost clean-shaven head. It breaks the heart of the owner of the head, for whom every strand of hair divorced from the head is a mark of dying heroism or youth or both.

For balding men, the comb is testimony to a rich past. It is a memorial to glory and glamour that have passed. But, yes, there are the men who, buoyed by thoughts of stoicism, have defied the process of balding brought on by a fall of hair. They are the minority; and since life has conditioned us into thinking that minorities are not to be pampered, that the majority is all, we ignore such brave men as being of little consequence. They understand not the value of a comb. It is not the law of diminishing hair that is important. Of more significance is that comb, whose permanence is a perpetual reminder of happiness that once was. The comb is that ageless mountain or that perennial cockroach which remains, defiant and part of creation, even as the earth has changed shape and the rivers have dried up.

Keep a comb, if you are losing hair. It is the comb which stays loyal to you even after your hair has committed treason of a most appalling sort.

The writer is Executive Editor, The Daily Star.

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