



Memories of our MOTHERS

THOUGHTCRAFT

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Recently I heard about the passing of the mother of a close friend. I was saddened by this news, but I knew that her children had not really lost her. She had just moved to another place but she would be remembered; for her unfailing sweetness, her warmth, her elegance and beauty, and the affection she showered on everyone she knew. She was perfect, or so it seemed to me.

In thinking of her, I was reminded of my own mother who died many years ago. Suddenly, it was as if she was there with me again as she was when I was a young girl growing up in the fifties. I saw her in my mind, sitting on the sofa in a pale-grey chiffon sari with little blue flowers, her usual double strand of pearls round her neck, her nails and lips coloured a perfect red, her hair bobbed and permed.

My mother was good at everything she did. She taught me how to knit, sew and embroider. On free afternoons, I would embroider tray cloths with English flowers, or help knit one of the exquisitely designed and embroidered cardigans in different colours and styles for the winter.

I learnt to love flowers, gardens and gardening through my mother, as I accompanied her on her early morning

walks in the garden to check on the roses and confer with the gardeners. Even today my favourite flowers are the ones she grew in the garden, and her favourite flower arrangements now grace my home.

As she grew older my mother began to concentrate more on her inner life. She no longer bothered with lipstick, perms and chiffon saris, but began to spend more time with her books, and listening to her beloved Tagore songs.

She had passed from one stage of life to another, seamlessly. I watched her change, first with surprise then pleasure. Rites of passage are supposed to be hard at any age but my mother did it naturally and without introspection.

My relationship with her was not always perfect. We had differences of opinion over the years. We had arguments, mostly in the gentle fashion of mothers and daughters. I patronised her a little because I was young. With the arrogance of youth, I had come to view her as too conservative, even cynical in some matters.

We disagreed on matters both large and small, on child rearing, education, politics, writing and relation-



ships. She refused to engage much in these arguments, saying only that one day I would understand her points of view.

Now I am older and have brought up children of my own. They have given me infinite pleasure and a bit of pain, especially my daughter. Most special of all is the mother daughter relationship, though. I visit flower markets with my daughter, and after our explorations we meet up at a corner, and we find that we have bought the same flowers or plants.

My daughter takes books to read from my shelves, and I from hers. I say a word, and she understands the rest of the sentence. We have a special language of word and look. We roll our eyes at the same things. My daughter is made up of what I feel are the better parts of me, a sort of improved edition. I am certain that my mother looked at me in the same way. She showed her love in all the things she did for me over the years, teaching, warning, admonishing, humouring and caring.

My mother left this world before her time, but it was the right time for her. She was never very interested in the longevity of life, only the quality.

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