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With this aim Research Chronicler, Multidisciplinary International Research Journal (RCMIRJ) welcomes research articles from the areas like Literatures in English, Hindi and Marathi, literary translations in English from different languages of the world, arts, education, social sciences, cultural studies, pure and applied Sciences, and trade and commerce. The space will also be provided for book reviews, interviews, commentaries, poems and short fiction.

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A Mother's Promise

Dr. Archana Durgesh

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Death is like a rosebush in winter, which contains the potential for flowers (life) within, and when correct external circumstances are present, the roses will bloom (birth). It's a true philosophy but can this be explained to a grieving mother who has lost her only daughter, a husband who has lost his beloved wife and a daughter who has lost her loving mother – her favorite mate.

Family, friends and relatives all gathered to grieve Maryada's death. Each of them present had a pleasant memory of her. Somebody breaking the chain of thoughts said, "time is running out, last rites have to be carried out before sun set and there isn't much time left." Somebody consolingly tried to reason the grieving mother that it's time to take away the body. I simply don't understand every human has a name then why suddenly after dying instead of using the name, people call it body.

Anyways, the most important task before taking a *Hindu's* body for the last rites is the *antim snan* or the last bath. When it came to that – Maryada's husband announced her last wish—"nobody and I mean it, nobody except my mother when I was young, my husband, and my gynecologists saw my body, so I wish that no one else should be allowed to give me my last bath except my mother and my husband."

It's gainsaid that everyone's last wish should be honored. So it should be. Both looked at Maryada with a different perspective. Her

mother recalled the day she was born, a tiny bundle of joy and happiness. Kashyap her husband held her close, recalling the day he saw her for the very first time, when he fell for her and out rightly decided to marry her. When she loved him so much how could she leave him alone? If only he could follow her to bring her back or be with her forever as they had promised – till deaths do us apart.

Suddenly Mardaya's each and every little acts came flashing to her mother Gayatri. *Thirty years back.....*

"Maryada is an apt name" said, Gayatri after asking everybody possible-what should be her daughter's name? Daughters are like climbers, they grow and blossom fast. Her daughter's first day at school came so early while Mardaya was a quiet child still she created ruckus for going to school. She got naughtier as she grew up. Gayatri dedicated her entire life to her daughter. She became the epicenter of her being.

Gayatri toiled all her life so that her daughter could become a surgeon. The day Maryada became a doctor it was as if all *Holis* and *Diwalis* were finally celebrated. A perfect life – a perfect daughter, in fact Gayatri's prayers were answered. Her lovely daughter caught fancy of a charming and handsome knight in shining armor. So the marriage was solemnized. How much full of life Maryada was! Her joyful presence surcharged the environment and if she was gloomy it seemed as if sky cried with her.

Gayatri was Maryada's mother, best friend, mentor and guide. She always confined her secrets and opened her heart only to her mother. After her marriage Kashyap became a part of their gang. The three talked and enjoyed life to the fullest.

Then a day came when Maryada for the very first time asked Kashyap to tell her mother something she couldn't muster courage enough to say. So after much hustle and bustle, to all the family members Kashyap declared that Maryada is carrying. She is going to be a mother. There was a pin drop silence. Everybody was so ecstatic. Congratulations filled the air. Women of the family withdrew with the expectant mother to other room and showered her with all possible advice, literally forgetting that she was a doctor herself.

Kashyap's and Maryada's family blessed the unborn child and the mother. Everybody expressed their desire for a healthy, beautiful child. Gender didn't matter for anyone of them except Kashyap - who wanted a daughter, as a son is son till he gets a wife and a daughter is a daughter all her life. Expectant parents enjoyed each morn and night equally and prayed fervently for their child. Maryada added fair and handsome son to her prayers and Kashyap added fair and pretty daughter to his prayers. They never talked over that issue somewhere they loved each other so much that they never intended to hurt each other in anyway.

Kashyap pampered Maryada like a parent and fulfilled her each desire, as if his life's motto was to make his wife happy. In turn,

she did whatever she could to express her everlasting love for her darling husband.

The day arrived when these two love birds were blessed with a fair and pretty daughter. Kashyap toyed with Maryada, "better luck next time for a son." A sudden cold touch brought Gayatri out of her blissful dream. She was facing a beautiful bride draped in a red *saree*, vermilion in the parting of her hair, long tresses dripping with water, *bindi* on her forehead, bangles adorned her wrists. Her face shown with immense satisfaction, the only thing that lacked was life.

It was as if she was sleeping and will get up asking, "Hey!!! Has moon shown up yet, I'm dying of thirst and hunger. Every year on *karvachauth* the moon comes late." But she didn't stir a little, as if she was enjoying a divine endless slumber.

With a heart of lead, Gayatri summoned family members inside. Each one was awe struck, seeing her once again dressed up as a bride. She looked still the same the magic of her mesmerizing and dazzling eyes was only amiss. Kashyap went ahead and held her in his arms and whispered, "I loved you, I love you and will always do, please don't leave me alone."

I am standing there like a mute spectator looking at everybody somewhere searching in everyone's eyes for recognition. I want to hold Kashyap in my arms and say, "I love you too." But it seems he's not listening. I want to console Mumma saying, "don't worry I am here and I'm not going anywhere." But everyone present is crying and wailing on top of their lungs. The moment they stoop down to pick my body, my Mumma's sobs seems to have caught in

her throat. Kashyap looks as if he'll collapse and my darling baby is holding my hand tightly not letting me go.

Their lives have bound me to this world where I no longer belong. My mother had her share full of me, for so many years, even Kashyap enjoyed the shower of my love, the only one left suffering is my innocent child whom my untimely death has left behind so unloved by her mother.

We all are standing on the *ghats* where last rites are to be performed. I felt if only I could be revived to live my life full, just one kiss of *Pygmalion*, let once again Aphrodite - goddess of love take pity on this singular lover, a mother and above all my child to live her life again with her ever loving and caring mother. The moment funeral pyre is lit my baby runs to save me from the bursting flames but to no avail, I can die a thousand deaths but can't stand her pain, my heart will burst with this excruciating pain I yell to nobody, "take whatever I am left with but let me stay with her; for her sake, she needs her mother damn it. I am can give away anything to be with her." "Ok, if you can bear your soul to wander in this world for eternity, your wish can be granted," a voice came from the seventh sky. "Yes, a million yeses for being with her; I can wander and die thousand times a day for eternity." "So it be." My wish got granted.

Mumma, Kashyap and Paawan are looking at my picture on the mantle; it's adorned with garland of fresh pink roses. There is so much silence that I can hear them all breathe. Breaking the silence Paawan said, "I hate Maa for leaving me alone. I will never forgive her." Mumma and Kashyap

are speechless still I can read the anger and love that they have in their eyes.

Death may be cruel but I've always had an amazing understanding with the Almighty. So here I am. Paawan is sobbing over her loss. I slip in her room; got down on her desk, I have written a letter to darling my daughter. Night has fallen, I am waiting for her to come, I was praying fervently for her to come alone and read the letter, and because that's the only way she can see me and feel me. She has entered her room quietly as expected she sat on her bed and picked the journal I always wrote since her birth, her eyes misted, tears are gushing out, I want to wipe them away but I stay back controlling myself; I don't want to scare her away, the moment she opens the journal our recent picture and my letter fell in her lap, she opens it softly and as per her habit reads it softly in her engaging manner:

My darling Paawan,

*Jis tarah jism mein jaan hai,
Jis tarah phool mein khusboo hai,
Ussi tarah mera wajood tujhme hai.*

*Kaun kehta hai, main ab nahi,
Ek baar dil ki aakhon se dekh,
Pyar se awaaz to de, hamesha mai tere
aas paas hoon*

*Chahoon bhi totujhse dur ja nahi
sakti,*

*Teri saason ki door mere ehsaas se
bandhi hai,*

*Main maanti hoon zindagi aur maut
mere bus mein nahi.*

*Par Maa jo hoon teri....amesha tere
paas rahungi.*

Maa.

My loving words moved her so much that now tears are falling wildly, I couldn't stop myself, I wiped her tears and as sweetly as I could say, "Paawan, baby I am here, I will never leave you alone. She is looking straight into my eyes as if searching for reassurance of the promise I have made to her through the poem. I smiled; she beamed with joy and fell into my arms. Thanks Oh dear God! I can feel her. At least now I am satisfied with what I did. Let my soul wander for eternity, but my family can have me again. My baby came closer to me and went in deep sleep; I didn't want to disturb her so I remained unmoved.

Tiny droplets are falling on my face; I open my eyes to find Paawan my daughter hovering over me with wet tresses. I stretch myself to full and follow her to the dining area to face my mother and my hubby. For a moment I stand transfixed, Kashyap is preparing breakfast. Mumma is dressing Paawan for her school. I hug Mumma warmly, "kiss" I stoop down to obey my cherub, "kiss" I stand on my tip toes rest my hands on his shoulders and oblige. Smiling warmly I said to myself – Alive is awesome.

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