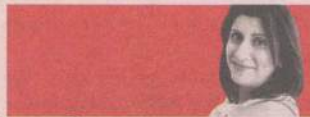


big on little



meher
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SO WE'RE done with another Women's Day. Media madness spoiled us silly: 'Motherhood is sexy, treat yourself.' To pricey spa hours, to smoky make-up flashed around in a selfie, to a meal splurge at a chic cafe...

My morning was made when my cook caught me in a shy hug, saying "Heppy Women Day." I wasn't the sole recipient of this greeting. Running to work between six homes in twice as many hours, this simple Maharashtrian mother wished every employer.

Smile, spine and then some

Her English broken, her spirit not, she is proud. Proud of words picked up from her kids, prouder of being sole provider for them. Proudest of being able to realise her daughter's dream — of using those shared genes to graduate a pastry chef.

I followed her into the kitchen where she turns on Kishore Kumar yodelling a love song. Whose beat she tapped her feet to and matched with the thump of kneaded atta. Motherhood sits sexily snug on her like thousands of women from the same workforce.

With a spine as strong as her smile, our earlier maid hid her very identity to see her children safely through school. At the height of the city's communal riots she pasted a bindi

on her forehead and changed her name to a less obvious giveaway. "Allah knows my compulsions and forgives," she reasoned.

Leela or Laila, she is Everywoman. Her courage is sexy. Her cheer is. Her forthrightness is sexy. Her feistiness is. Her fears are real, not flaky paranoia. Yes, she has to blink back the tears as she counts the monthly money trickling in. Yet, she can often lay claim to more freedom than many a manicured memsaab.

Even her stride is sassier. The road she builds is her ramp. Watch that woman work on a construction site. The corner of an eye fixed on her baby asleep in a sari swing between the scaffolds. Head high with load but still a ramrod-straight

back, cinched tight waist and swaying hip make her model material.

No tricks there. Everywoman is attractive au naturel. She could teach the rich bored mom. That what you want you needn't flaunt. That what you know you shouldn't show. That honest sweat is sexy, cloying scent is not. She wears the fragrance of fortitude. No feeling sorry for herself or the lemons she's landed in life.

Everywoman is an Earth goddess. Humming on quiet power she exudes energy and empathy. Try taking The Mumbai Local Test. Think about a time you felt sick in a crowded train. The first class ladies would've quickly jumped out of retching range from you.

Second class travelling companions most likely bought you boiled orange sweets to suck from a hawker in the compartment.

The sisterhood sparks a sensuous vibe. A midwife cum maalish wali told my grandmother, "Women are great. Just by being and birthing, we're one half of the world and the reason for the other half." If that itself isn't incredibly sexy, what is?

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