



Circle of Life

Jyoti Jha

London is a beautiful city. We had only been transferred to the UK last year and I was glad to be spending my days in what is known as the world's major tourist HubSpot. Although it had been difficult for me to make this decision and I was slightly uneasy leaving my career behind in India and moving across continents to accompany my husband to this effervescent city. However, seeing my five-year-old son thriving in the bustling, multicultural, historical heart of the country and flourishing in the high-quality education system of this nation was both comforting and reassuring.

We resided in a large principal town in the outer London which was only thirty minutes away from the bustling city. I had fallen in love with the town center culture in this lovely county and liked spending hours at the high street, shopping and running errands. Spending my quiet afternoons at the rich libraries and enjoying recurring family fun at the swimming center had become a regular norm amidst the orderly hustle-bustle of daily routines.

The ease and convenience of the fabulous public transport system made it a compulsory habit of exploring the museums and other tourist spots in London during the weekends.

One such weekend, we were out at the famous Madam Tussauds. It was an exhilarating experience getting up close with the various lifelike wax statues of eminent people across the globe. We were engrossed along with the crowd of curious spectators swirling everywhere in the museum. We couldn't help marveling at the wax figures that seemed to have come alive with the swell of humanity around them.

My fingers were tightly entwined with those of my son's and held on to the feeling of safety although I could hardly glimpse his face in the river of the crowd pushing by.

I suddenly stopped at the statue of the greatest writer and dramatist, William Shakespeare. I was enthused to take a moment here and discuss with my son about this famous poet and playwright. It was a joyful moment to glance at the life-like grandeur of this persona whose literary work I had grown up reading, and now my son was also studying the famous plays and stories written by him.

I tugged at my fingers urging my son to come ahead and stand alongside me, only to stare at my empty hand and my suede brown handbag dangling there. I was stupefied! Had it been all along that my hand was entangled to my bag thinking I had secured my son's tiny fingers around the safety of my grip or was it only in that moment that I had lost him?

I was transfixed with fear and confusion as I looked around in despair. I was jolted out of my shock when I realized someone apologizing to me for having accidentally stepped onto my booted foot. My gaze skimmed through the crowd and I desperately started pushing through the swarm of people. I was sweating profusely and although a while ago I felt perfectly fine in the warmth of the crowd in the bitter cold of January, now all of a sudden, I felt claustrophobic in it.

My son was not the kind of child who would inadvertently get distracted and ramble away. He is an aware, alert, and a smart little kid. Negative thoughts started clouding my mind, and my heart suddenly froze. With awful pit of dread in my stomach and buckling legs, I felt like a slow-moving nightmare as I attempted to locate my husband who had been following right behind me all this while and now was abruptly nowhere to be seen. My eyes scanned the room while I now struggled through the horde to locate my husband.

It had only been a matter of minutes and which seemed like an eternity to me. I was about to faint with the anxiety when I sensed my handbag vibrating and humming with a dim sound. Though the blur of my panic-stricken mind I had forgotten to decipher that I was living in the age of technology and only needed to reach my bag and use my mobile lying in it to call my husband and locate him.

In a flash, I reached for my vibrating phone and grabbed it with my life's count. My husband's name displayed on the screen with my favorite caller tune quietly humming.

"Hello", I almost choked on my own meager voice.

My nervous ears vaguely picked up the words he said, 'they were unable to locate me a little while ago and hence had moved to the other floor towards the Superheroes unit'. Well, on any other occasion I would have indulged in a brief couple's bickering as expected at such instances, but right

now, my entire focus area and string of hope were hooked on the assuring word “they”.

I asked feebly if our son was also with him and the dawn of relief made me choke with merriment as he affirmed that he was right beside him.

I quickly glided through the crowd and my happy legs jumped the flight of stairs to reach the next floor. I reached the spot that my husband had mentioned a few seconds ago. I saw my world in front of me and I ran to embrace it.

My son began complaining how he was bored at the section we were skimming and hence had asked his dad to move to the superheroes section. He apologized for having forgotten to inform me before splitting. My hand instinctively flashed in the air with an intention to place a tight slap of both relief and anger. However, I stopped midway as I realized in that split-second a similarity of situation, and also that in a country like the UK, we cannot freely hit our child as it is considered a punishable act.

Instead, I hugged my son tightly, tears afloat in my eyes. I couldn't help but flashback my memory of childhood and a resemblance of a circumstance when my parents had thought that I was lost while we were out on a family trip years ago. All these years I had been harboring a feeling of resentment as to why my dad had to scream at me in front of everyone just because he thought that he had lost me.

Today, the circle of life had brought me to realize the mental state of my parents from that particular incident of my childhood. I stood once again stupefied and pondering.

Strangely, every so often it is only with the advent of time that we learn some important life lessons. I could now completely relate to my father's anxiety and his momentary outburst, from that day in my childhood.

Since that day and my moment of realization, I have discussed this with my mother countless times. However, how I deeply wish that my father was still alive so that I could apologize to him for having harshly judged him that day and having carried that resentment until several years of my adulthood.

Note: This story is from the story anthology, *Heart's Sanctuary & Other Stories*' by Jyoti Jha.



Jyoti Jha's

An HR-turned-Author, Jyoti Jha's story is a mother's tale of rebuilding her career through the pursuit of passion. An MBA by qualification and having worked with corporates like Infosys and Whirlpool, she chose writing as a medium of expression after a decade-long career gap during which she globetrotted and dwelled in the USA and UK with her family. A Storyteller, Columnist, and an esteemed winner of 'The Times of India Write India Season 3'.

TEDx speaker, Speaker at major events like 'Times LitFest', Pune International Literary Festival, and prestigious institutes like IITs and IIMs, Jyoti has been awarded 'Vidya Vachaspati' from Vikramsheela Hindi Vidyapeeth.

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