

As you may have noticed, I was not able to update my blog posts over the last four weeks. The reason has to do with my mother's illness and her eventual passing away. My travelling and a distracted mindset just did not allow me to get back. As we often hear our elders say, taking exit from this world we live in, is a natural process, but it is devastating to lose your loved one. In my case now, with both my parent gone, I am finding it difficult to get on.

Last month, on receiving the news that my mom had been admitted to the hospital at Delhi, I made my way there the very next day. When I first saw her in the ICU, it was a disturbing sight for me. The once sharp and active woman, my mom, was lying there unconscious with a breathing apparatus (ventilator) over her mouth, another tube through her nose, and a drip bag and tube hanging from a stand and ending at a needle on her arm. A couple of impressive gadgets were there monitoring her heart rate, pulse and ventilation. While my brothers and other family members were trying to talk to her, I was dumbstruck and could not utter a word. It was difficult for me to let that sight sink in. The doctors attending on her had said that though her vitals were stable, but the bleeding in her brain on both sides had put her in her present condition, and that it is highly unlikely that she would regain consciousness. So, it was a wait and watch situation, and as per the doctors it could be two days, two weeks or two months.

The visitation hours in the ICU were very restrictive, and so most of the time was spend at my brother's home there. Outside of my jet lag, there was ample time that I spent remembering our younger years and how our parents brought us up. Of course, she had been a patient of dementia for the last ten years or so. I stayed there for a week and then returned but was satisfied that I was able to see her. After another two weeks I received the news that she had passed away after developing some breathing problems. It was then that the reality of her absence hit me. I could not focus on anything and was restless for the next day. As life goes on for other people around, it feels that I am slow in thinking, responding, walking, and really am at a loss at doing anything, least of all expressing it here. I stayed at home, alone in my room mourning her loss. The following day I decided to write out my remembrance of my beloved mother. I append it below for sharing.

We miss our parents the most when they are gone, and each time I have felt being the loneliest. My father was my best friend, and he passed away five years ago, when I was giving a presentation at the AAPG Convention at Pittsburg. As I got back to my hotel there, I received the shocking news, and it was totally unexpected. Though for me it was hard to see him slow down gradually with each passing year when I would visit him and see him somewhat shrunk due to muscle contraction with age, but he was free of any illness and always fit and active. I did go back to Delhi immediately, but I was not there for his last rites. On getting back, the one thing that I missed straightaway was my weekend chats with him on the phone, every Saturday evening. The sharing of the family updates with regard to children, the weekly news about my brothers and their families, the personal milestones if any for any of the family members, was all very satisfying for us all and for him as well. And each time he would be more encouraging than before. But all that came to a standstill, as if life had stopped.

## Remembering our beloved mother

As we gather here today, Mom, we cherish the beautiful memories of our younger years, when your selfless love and care touched our hearts. Those gripping bed-time stories, teaching us right from wrong, the special way you smiled when we lied, the worried look on your face when we got hurt, those long nights you remained awake minding us when we were sick, those endless fasts you observed for us to do well in exams and land up good jobs, the love and gentleness with which you embraced us every now and then, and lots more, are still afresh in our minds. As we remember many of these instances, together with the umpteen protective reminders we received at every step, we cannot stop tears rolling down our cheeks.

We will continue to treasure those memories, and the values and wisdom you instilled in us will continue to guide us forward.

Both you and dad were at the center stage of our growing-up years, but it was YOUR earnest desire to have your children educated in convent schools. That one decision, coupled with its far-reaching ramifications, stood us in good stead, but at the expense of household economizing and sacrificing other comforts in your lives. We have witnessed first-hand how you had to spin many plates at one time, single-handedly. Today, all three of us can proudly and unhesitatingly stand tall, speak and compete in this competitive world. Though these words may seem petty, but for want of a better expression or choice of words, *'Thank you for all you have done for us'*. We remain indebted to you, and your absence will always be sadly missed.

We are blessed to have walked this journey of life with you, and you'll always remain in our hearts and will NEVER be forgotten.

How much we wish you could come back, and we could embrace you and tell you how much we all love you. Yes, we understand, it is not to be, and so we hope and pray you are in your eternal rest. Somehow though, we still feel you are near. We will all continue to love you dearly, and we know you are with us, all the time.

Rest in peace, Mom!