

By Ranjini Rao

Women I Am

The years have a funny way
Of making different women
Out of you.

I am now my mother, for instance.
In my callused hands and
Cracked feet, I see snatches of her.
My kitchen smells like hers,
All asafoetida and cardamom,
Burnt milk and curdled ghee.

My voice raises new questions,
Stuck somewhere between her
Hindola and my Bouree,
Calling out to my child,
Reminding my husband
Of tasks consigned to oblivion.

In all these and more - in -
A kitchen napkin folded in rectangular precision,
A ball of yarn rolled up in linty confusion,
A recipe scrawled on sepia-tinted paper in the spice tray,
The slovenly bag that bears all the answers to life's exigent needs,
The little rock upon which time has etched Ganesha's face,
Safely hidden from external forces in my silver trinket box -
I see my sister, my mother, and her mother, perhaps,
As I become them, and life becomes
Me.
