

Mother

Beheroze F. Shroff

Sucked into currents
of married life at nineteen,
your youth and energy were harnessed
to serve a mother-in-law's sickbed.

Husband, pushed into background,
the family machine took over;
Speculating the promise
of the bride's fruitful womb,
they turned uneager
after the yield of three years:
"Only daughters?"

They required your reproductive organs
to function again,
and as aids offered prayers,
holy water from Babas
and charms from Gurus.

Like a bucket of water
scraped out of a low-lying well,
a son was obtained from you,
claimed from birth by each aunt and uncle
to be the product of *their* holy effort.

The Father, made hero
was congratulated, praised, feted.

The Mother was given
tips on child-rearing.