

# Mother's Day and Women's Day

By Rose Ghurayyib

**They** were both created to honor womanhood, but each in its own way.

To most people, mother's day is an occasion for showing gratitude to mothers by offering them presents and flowers or singing hymns of praise to motherhood.

Women's Day hails the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement all over the world, a movement which is blessed and supported by the United Nations Organization.

These days come and go, like all other national or international feasts. They give people the satisfaction generated from performing or conforming to traditions. But alas, they rarely ever stimulate their thoughts and intellect.

In the following paragraphs, I shall try to consider these two days from a feminist point of view.

**Mother's Day** brings to mind the period when the matriarchal system prevailed during which descent and inheritance were traced through female lineage. The mother was glorified as the perpetrator of the race, the producer of heroes and the keeper of the family name. Mother worship persisted even after that period ended and continued to influence people's minds all through the ancient world and even later until the present time. When she received women guests in her house, Cornelia, the famous Roman matron, showed them her two sons (the Gracchi, who later became brilliant states-men) instead of displaying her jewelry, as was the custom then. "These are my Jewels!" she would exclaim. Simone de

Beauvoir violently criticized Cornelia for her arrogant attitude and her narrow visions which restricted her *raison d'être* to the function of bearing and raising children. Furthermore, mother worship was revived by the Romanticists of the 19th Century when they resorted to woman as a motherly creature giving solace and refuge, comfort and inspiration. Like Mother Earth, she showered her blessings and was ready to sacrifice herself for her children.

**Women's Day** represents a recent development, a new era, and an evolving mentality. It represents woman in the various stages of her life, from childhood to old age. It evokes a long line of women who shared men's interests and activities and did not limit themselves to a stereotyped function. Woman's Day speaks to all women of the world, without distinction of age or race, in a tone that awakens their dormant self, arouses their self-consciousness and leads them to self-discovery. Here I like to recall a poem written by Fadwa Tuqan, the well-known Arab contemporary poet, entitled *Wajadtuha* (I Have Found It). In this poem, moved by a sudden idea - like Archimedes who shouted "Eureka" when he discovered the law of specific gravity - Fadwa declares that "She has found herself". She rejected the myths which obscured her mind. She discovered the freedom to think, to choose, to act, and to realize herself by cultivating her capacities, without limiting herself to one activity or one way of life.

Each of the two Days carries a message or an idea for those who celebrate them. Consequently, people ought to discover and practice these

inherent messages. Hence, Mother's Day should raise the following questions: Is it enough to show our gratitude to our mothers by offering them a present or a bunch of flowers?

What are mothers' rights in the dictum of the Women's Liberation Movement? How far do they agree with those listed in the Charter of the Rights of Man? If she is a widow without a family or if her children neglect to provide for her, who will be responsible for her sustenance? Why doesn't she have the same rights of inheritance, divorce, testimony and guardianship of children that her husband has? Why is it that her multitude household duties do not receive the same evaluation as a regular profession, though they have the same importance and value? What is the use of Mother's Day if it only means encouraging women to go on with a life of self-denial, deprivation and sacrifice for their families?

Women's Day implies a larger set of questions and connotations. It is an opportunity for our numerous women's organizations or groups, to meet together, join hands, discuss and agree on strategies and solutions.

They would thus start an act of reconciliation to be adopted by men. They would take a first step in the difficult task of wiping out the effects of horrible periods of massacres and disruption. Starting with a process of self-criticism, those associated women should work on the evaluation of definite projects to be carried out rather than remain ink on paper.

Celebrations consisting of routine meetings and emotional, laudatory speeches are a waste of time.\*