

[Indian Mothers are Best](#)

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Indian Mothers are Best

Jacobs, Leslie Even though I am a 40-year-old American woman and not a mother myself, I lived in South India for 15 years and came away with the feeling that Indian mothers are the best, most maternal mothers in the world.

I lived with a Tamil family with four children. The first shock I received was their extremely close, communal family life. And at the center of the whole family is the mother. She is like an eternal fixture for the children - she is THERE for them always. This expresses even in very physical ways that surprised me. The children call out to 'their mother continuously, and she comes to them with whatever they need - food or water or attention! In sharp contrast, in my childhood, it was not "polite" to call out to our mother. We were all taught to go to wherever she was and make sure she wasn't busy before we "bothered" her. The Indian mother is the total mother. I watched one mother feed her 12-year-old child with her hand - a practice commonly used with babies and small children - because the daughter was in a sad mood and needed the reassurance this act would give her. The mother I lived with always fed her children before herself. She also made special dishes for each one, and no one was forced to eat something they disliked. After lunch, she would lie down with the youngest even if she herself was not sleepy. In the evening she would always lie down with the youngest child, waiting for her to fall asleep before resuming her activities. I have seen the mother drop whatever she is doing because the child felt sleepy and wanted her mother to lie down with her. This physical contact is an enormous security factor.

The Indian mother is not just playing the "role" of mother along with other roles, as many Western mother do. She IS a mother - totally and completely. She loves it.

When I describe to my American friends the way and Indian mother relates to her children - feeding them with her hand, sleeping with them till they are 8 or 10 or 12 - they are usually dismayed. This behavior goes against the grain of our highly individualistic society where mothers treat children as only one "part" of their life,

placing equal importance on pursuing ambitious money-making careers and private interests. This attitude causes mothers to shut their two- year-olds in a room at nap time and set a timer for 15 minutes, letting them cry until the timer rings! It creates anger, irritation and frustration with children and a need to fill their days with one planned activity after another to keep them out of their mother's hair.

When my own mother (a mother of five) came to visit me in India, she said, "The children are so happy, so secure, so relaxed." One day she was sitting on her balcony, watching a beggar woman sitting below on the sidewalk with her baby. This woman was in rags and had all her worldly possessions with her - a little clay cooking pot and a dirty bundle of bedding. She was throwing the baby up in the air and laughing with joy. My mother watched her for days and finally came to me saying, "I don't understand it. She is so poor and starving. How can she be like that?"

When I came back here after 15 years, I was in shock for months seeing the sad and sometimes empty looks on children's faces. I realized that the children just two blocks away from my house in India who lived in thatched huts had always looked happier.

I am presently working as a nanny here in America and it is painful to see the complexes building up in the children because their parents leave them for 12 hours a day with me. They display deep tensions and take to biting, scratching hysterical crying, etc. One day when a three-year-old I care for was again having trouble with napping in a dark, closed room, I thought, "Let me lie down with her like an Indian mother." When I did, she was amazed, overwhelmed and so grateful that it really touched me.

I pray Indian mothers will go on being the complete mothers they are and have been for thousands of years - glorifying in their motherhood, and raising content, well-adjusted and secure children.

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