

The Life-saving Cards

by Inam Ahmed

One single card can save the lives of three children. It is not a magic card, but the UNICEF greetings card.

A UNICEF card can fund the cost of twelve oral salines and with these three children can get over a diarrhoeal attack without which all of them might face post-natal death.

UNICEF recently launched its 1991 Eid greeting cards in Bangladesh at Dhaka Club, as a part of its global Eid card launching. Each card costs taka 13, taka 130 a pack of ten. The money collected from the campaign will be used to the service of the children.

UNICEF funds the oral saline programme in Bangladesh and the money collected from selling the cards will go for the treatment of diarrhoea affected children as well as for 32 other programmes undertaken by UNICEF for the development of children.

The idea of using greeting cards for fund raising was adopted in 1949 when Jitka

Samkova, a seven-year-old Czech girl gave a painting to UNICEF in gratitude for the help it had given her war ravaged village following the World War II. This painting of hers became the first UNICEF card.

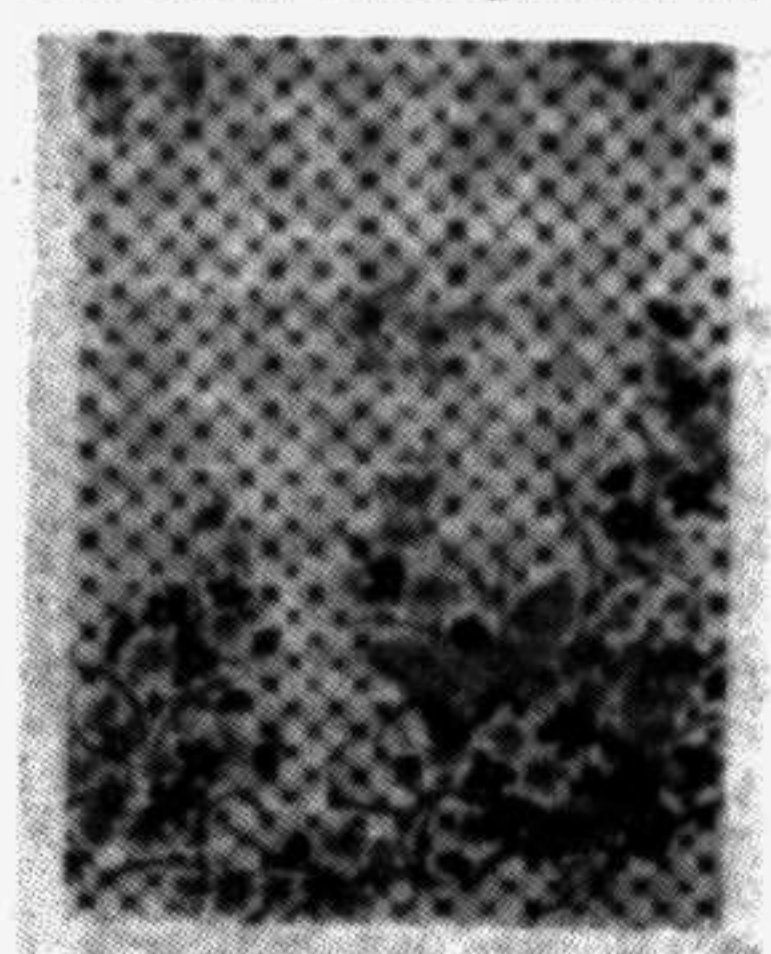
UNICEF first organised as a relief agency in 1946 to provide urgent supplies to children in war-torn Europe, decided to print Jitka's joyful design in 1949 as its official holiday greeting card.

The next year the UNICEF greeting card operation was established and two more cards were printed and sold. From then, the idea of selling greeting cards to help promote the work of UNICEF got headway.

The greeting card programme got momentum as its

sale since 1950 reached 400 million dollars. With this money, UNICEF can fund its programmes in Bangladesh for more than ten years.

These cards have also been sold widely in Bangladesh. In



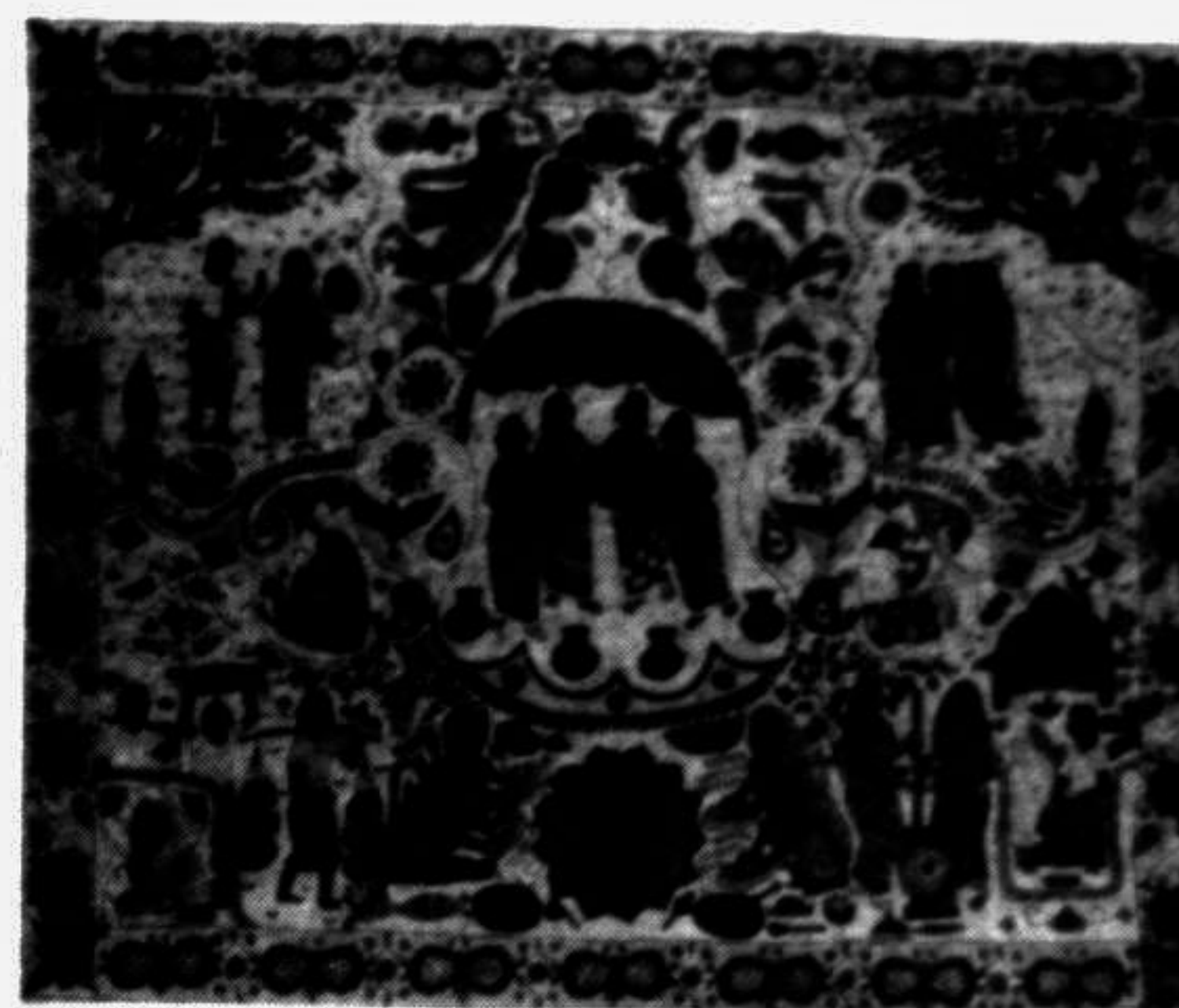
1990, about 70,000 cards were sold. About 30 thousand US dollar was collected from the sale. But the amount is still small compared with the sales in other countries. In Pakistan, over four lakhs cards were sold during the same period collecting about 1.7 lakh dollar. India recorded sale of four million copies.

All of this money was spent on basic services for children and mothers, maternal and child health care, clean water supply, improved nutrition, education and social services. Over the years UNICEF have assisted governments to establish multifaceted projects of long range benefits to children. This assistance is provided in the form of planning of services for children, supplies and equipment for these

services, and fund to train the personnel needed to work with and for children.

The effect of UNICEF assisted programme can be witnessed in Bangladesh with the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI). In most areas, the EPI achievement has gone as high as 80 per cent. In fact, the EPI success story in Bangladesh is greater than that of New York city and it has become an example for other developing countries. With the success of EPI, six major diseases which claimed millions of child lives nearly been eradicated.

The UNICEF cards have their other faces too. They are indeed environmentally sound. UNICEF uses recycled paper for its cards, envelopes, card boxes, mailing cartons and other items. Card designs are printed on recycled paper whenever the artwork is adapted to this process. In an age when forests are fast vanishing with the felling of trees for paper making to furniture making, the UNICEF recycled



cards can set an example for economy and ecology conservation.

The card designs are contributed by artists and museums from all over the world. An international art committee reviews the artworks and rec-

ommends the designs they most suitable. Over the years more than 140 countries have you send well-wishes to friends, you can pick a UNICEF greetings card and help the destitute children of Bangladesh.

been represented in UNICEF greeting cards.

Lately UNICEF has undertaken the responsibility of supporting the artists of the developing countries. Recently, Bangladeshi artist Surayya Rahman's 'Boat Race', a Nakhshikantha (embroidered quite) design has been included in the UNICEF greetings cards selections. This is the first time that a Bangladeshi artist's work has been selected as a UNICEF card. Three more designs by Surayya are awaiting selection board's decision.

The problem for UNICEF cards in Bangladesh is its poor marketing system. Only few push shops like Aarong, hotels and new market card shops display and sell these cards. Recently, UNICEF have geared up its sale campaign. The Dhaka Club has agreed to let its reception desk used as a UNICEF sales counter. Some more shops have been taken into the sales programme of UNICEF cards.

Therefore, this Eid, when

THIS collection of 22 articles based on the actual experiences of field workers in the course of their development projects is a "must" for all who have anything to do with the subject.

We may describe the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme as a global counterpart of the American Peace Corps concept, which started by the late President J. F. Kennedy, grew to inspiring proportions. Under the auspices of the UNV programme, the mandate was given in 1979 to implement and strengthen the Asia-Pacific countries' Domestic Development Services. The intriguing title is how a volunteer perceives herself/himself to be a catalyst who starts a chain of changes (hopefully) for the better.

As we travel through the Asian countries of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, we are able to witness firsthand experiences of volunteers from the region tell their versions of development at grassroot levels, that is in the countryside. A large number of the projects deal with the fundamental necessities of life (which the city dweller take for granted) that are still lacking in the Asian villages. For example, basic hygiene such as latrine facilities and clean drinking water are concepts not considered to be of life and death importance to some rural folk — probably due to large-scale illiteracy. In some places, clinics and schools are non-existent. So the volunteers (with the help of local officials) organized a hospital on wheels to reach the remote villages. Yet in others, villagers have very little visible sources of income, hence the volunteer tries to supplement them by using his/her imagination to make maximum use of available raw materials to produce income-generating projects.

In most cases, living conditions are rudimentary (usually a room in the home of the village chief); the local language is a formidable barrier (English

The Volunteer as a Catalyst

LIKE A SPOON IN A GLASS OF MILK WITH SUGAR. Produced by the United Nations Development Programme and the UN Volunteer Programme, Asian Region. Available from UNDP/UNV office, Wisma UN, Damansara Heights, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and other UNDP offices on request.

Reviewed by Nancy Wong

BOOK REVIEW

being unheard of except for a very few); the food very different from what one has been used to; and the customs quite alien. Yet, there has been no lack of suitable candidates for

the available posts in the DDS programme. During the 1980s more than 400 volunteers signed up and dispersed throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Most of this sturdy band



A session in family planning education — one of many projects the UN agencies are involved in.

of unruffled field workers have had experience in grassroots development in their own countries, who wish to widen their horizons in the area of their choice in a foreign land.

Whatever the expertise needed, be it the starting up of a duckery, digging of a fish pond, initiating a pre-nursery school or teaching vegetable gardening, the field workers are ready and willing to apply their considerable skills at it. Very often the "settling in" stage is filled with orientation problems and frustrations arising from a change in environment, but this period often does not last long as the young people are made of stern stuff, fired with a vision of neighbourly aid across the Asian continent. Moreover, the local people appreciate their help and are eager to co-operate. All too soon, the two-year contract (renewable on occasion) flashes by and the volunteer has to return "with a tear in the eye" for the deep friendships formed and rich memories of the help he has given in changing lives for the better. Incidentally, quite a number remain in the development arena upon returning to their respective countries. Some agencies in the United Nations have been criticized in the last decade for a variety of reasons, with some developed countries leaving the ranks of UNESCO and ILO, but few critics would dream of urging the scrapping or diminishment of something as useful and dynamic as the Domestic Development Service programme.

"Like a Spoon in a Glass of Milk with Sugar" is a valuable handbook for all involved in work at the grassroots level. However, one would have wished for some editing of the various monographs, to make the flow of ideas and narration smoother and more readable.

The reviewer is a Singaporean free lance writer who currently lives in Dhaka with her Bangladeshi husband.

Film Industry

From page 9

rooms is not the only reason middle-class viewers have stopped seeing local films. Poor quality films and the deteriorating and insecure atmosphere in cinema halls often with poor projection equipment has also contributed to the declining viewership. "We have lost the class of viewers who came to see movies earlier," noted Subhas Dutta, a renowned actor and director with long association with the film industry.

What then is the way out of the crisis facing the film industry? In what way can the country start producing feature films in Bengali that the country would not be embarrassed with?

Some in the industry suggest that the government should intervene. But that would interfere with the spirit of the private sector, others pointed out.

However, since there is already a Film Development Corporation one may as well assume that the government already has a role in the making of our industry. May be this role of FDC will have to be re-examined and if necessary modified in order to strike a balance between state inter-

vention and private entrepreneurship.

One suggestion advanced by a critic is that the FDC should encourage short, inexpensive experimental films to be produced and directed by young enterprising producers, directors and actors. It is possible that these experimental films, each one of no more than an hour's duration, could establish a direct linkage with our highly resourceful theatre world and develop new talents for the industry.

A strong view prevails within the film industry that the Censor Board should play a more positive role in helping to raise the quality of our films. The Board must be firm in dealing with movies which rely entirely on sex and violence for its mass appeal. It must also play a similar role in ensuring that Bangladeshi films are not based on copies of films made in Bombay or Hollywood.

In the final analysis, one acceptable formula is to set up a committee composed of intellectuals, writers, poets, journalists and representatives of the industry to look into all the problems and recommend acceptable solutions to the industry's problems.

This can only be a start on the road to recovery for the ailing industry.

How Much . . .

cinagoers are staying away from cinema halls in droves, yet there remains a good-sized captive market in the country. Middle-class viewers are said to have virtually stopped seeing local films because of the huge influx of video cassettes players in the living rooms and the wide availability of video cassettes, and also because of the poor quality local films and the generally bad atmosphere prevailing in the movie theaters. But there are over 700 cinema halls in the country with a seating capacity of over a million and the film market is effectively a protected one here. Any foreign film which can directly compete with locally produced films—Indian films, for example—are not allowed to be screened in any cinema hall of the country. Thus local film-makers have a large captive market in their hands.

It is estimated that the government collects over Taka 50 crore as entertainment and excise tax from the film industry. It is also estimated that over Two lakh people are employed in the production, distribution and exhibition of films.

If a movie does well at the box-office then it takes about six months on a first run basis to get the investment money back. Even films made several years earlier keep making money when they are screened in small-town cinema halls. But producers pointed out that majority of the movies released flop at the box-office.

The producer of Shatya-Mitha released in 1989, Shamsah Ahmed of Shaonsagar film producers, said that the film did quite well at the box-office and that "it doubled the investment in about six to eight months on a first run basis, and which we assume is the actual market". But Beder Maye Jotsna—a super-hit movie released in 1989, which broke all previous records at the box-office—far exceeded that standard of the industry, he pointed out.

When producers spend such huge amount of money in producing a film, then the overriding factor is to make a profit or at least get a fair amount of return on the investment, industry sources noted. But quality of the films suffers in the process, they added.

—S. Y. B.

Death threats are all part of the job for Filipino journalist Edgar Cadagat. Bullets in the mail, "Your days are numbered" pamphlets, potshots and threatening phone calls are all frequent.

Once, when the threats became too hot, Cadagat and his colleagues sandbagged the plate glass windows of their news agency office in Bicolod City on the central island of Negros.

Nothing has quite matched the Christmas "gift" Cadagat received in December. He was immediately suspicious of the bulky envelope that arrived by special delivery from a private mail firm and was put on his desk.

"I thought it was a bomb at first," recalls Cadagat, a correspondent for international news agencies and a key official in the Union of Journalists of the Philippines. It turned out to be a cardboard miniature coffin.

He says: "I'm used to threats, I've had .45 and .38 calibre bullets sent to me. In the post. But this is the first time I've received a coffin, the international symbol of death."

Ironically, it came just after he had returned from a Manila conference of the Philippine Movement for Press Freedom (PMPF) where issues such as the death of 27 journalists since the Aquino government came to power in 1986 were discussed.

Cadagat, 46, heads CobrANS (Correspondents, Broadcasters and Reporters' Association-Action News Service) and writes for the Philippine national daily Malaya, the Japanese news agency Kyodo and the French news agency AFP.

He believes the coffin-senders were trying to "scare me off from my probing journalism." Cadagat has reported on human rights, agrarian reform and other social issues which might have angered "the

The Day They Sent a Coffin to a Journalist

I am used to threats. I have had .45 and .38 calibre bullets sent to me in the past. But this is the first time I have received a coffin.



EDGAR CADAGAT
A bulky envelope

For three years the Philippines has topped the world's list of killings of journalists. In 1990 seven died making a total of 27 since the Aquino government took power. Media commentators say the pressures on the press are worse than during the Marcos dictatorship. Journalists, reports Gemini News Service, are often threatened by the military, powerful landowners and ambitious politicians because of stories they dislike. by David Robie

powerful" in his troubled province. Negros is one of the most militarised provinces in the country. Fighting between the military and guerrillas of the communist-led New People's Army has left thousands of people homeless.

Several weeks before the coffin was sent, says Cadagat, the military tried to implicate him and other journalists with the rebel NPA. "Linking journalists and the underground is a crude way of trying to destroy their credibility and to

intimidate them into silence." The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and several other international media organisations have protested to President Aquino.

An editorial in a recent issue of the Philippine Human Rights Update said the news media in the country is now in a worse state than under the Marcos dictatorship. In 14 years under Marcos, 32 journalists died.

The editorial added: "The so-called 'democratic space' enjoyed by the Philippine press at the onset of the Aquino presidency has become a myth. Journalists are (being) beaten and killed. The People's access to the media and their right to know is curtailed."

The death toll of seven journalists in the Philippines last year topped the international listing published by the CPJ. Twice before the Philippines has also headed the list—in 1987 (nine out of the world total of 24) and 1988 (five out of 24).

Under Aquino, many of the killings have been political: "The victims were vocal against graft and corruption, human rights abuses and illegal gambling." Update said press censorship was wielded by both government and media owners in many ways. "They clamp down on newspapers and broadcast networks allegedly because of anti-government and anti-military publicity."

"Self-censorship prevails in the newsroom: investigative reporting is a taboo, writers are told not to 'rock the boat'—i.e., reports should not 'destabilise' the government." Through its press department, the Aquino government has rejected any responsibility for the media killings and harassment. It claims neutrality on the issue of recognising reporters and broadcasters as "non-combatants"—a universal right ignored by military officials.

WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,

I have a marriage problem. I married 4 years ago, a girl from Khulna. But soon she began hating my parents, brothers and sisters. I separated with her from my family, but without solution. If I visit my mother she goes into a fit. In small matters, she becomes angry, and calls me bad names. I have no peace at home. The only solution I see is dissolving the marriage. But I am afraid about that because she has some brothers who can harm me. Since the family law favours women, they can manufacture a charge against me under 'cruelty to women' and me in put me in trouble. Please advise what I can do.

Abdus Sobhan
Ibrahimpur, Dhaka.

Dear Mr. Sobhan,

The information you have given in your letter is not sufficient for me to understand the actual problem in your marriage apart from the fact that your wife does not get along with your mother. It seems there is a basic problem in your relationship, and the mother is being used as a pretext. I don't know if you have tried talking to her in a non-confrontational and non-accusing way. Perhaps she is trying to communicate something to you but is using the wrong method. Dissolving a marriage is the easy way out but to try and make a problematic marriage work is both difficult challenging and also rewarding. I find it hard to believe that woman will so easily agree to break a marriage in a culture where divorce or separation is still a taboo. I also disagree that family law "favours" women. There are some laws that protect women in cases of extreme cruelty. She cannot manufacture charges and send you to prison without proof. Please try for a reconciliation and get to the root of the problem.

Dear Mita,

My teenage daughter has become distant and aloof and hardly talks to me anymore. I don't know how this happened as we used to be close when she was 12-13. She reacts negatively to everything I say and feels insulted when I try to discipline her. She even seems to be ashamed of me and hesitates to introduce me to her friends. This is very painful as I always wanted to be her friend. Is there anything that can be done now or is it too late?

Reba,
Shatmasjid Road.

Dear Reba,

Some of what is happening is inevitable and we parents have to accept it. However what you described seems more than the usual alienation teenagers feel towards their parents. You have given very little information regarding your daughter and about the expectations you have from her. Sometimes parents have exaggerated expectations and children, on failing to meet them, react in different ways such as what you described above. Some of the things you could do is try to be as patient as possible, and avoid being repetitive and lecturing. Also, if possible share some of her interests and hobbies in other words try to enter her world as a friend. I know it is tough but it might work.

Dear Mita,

I recently gave birth to a baby girl. The delivery was normal, the baby is healthy and both our families are very happy with the new addition to the family. Everything is going well but I feel very depressed and moody. I feel tired and listless and get irritated at minor things. I also start crying at the slightest provocation. My husband does not understand and is not sympathetic enough. Is this normal? Please advise as to how I should handle this.

Secma,
Banani, Dhaka

Dear Seema,

Yes, depression is normal after the birth of a baby especially for a new mother. It is termed as "Post Partum Depression" or is commonly known as "Baby Blues". However if this condition persists for too long then it is time to take professional help. For a new mother her changed physical appearance breast-feeding and the confinement which a baby subjects a her to is all difficult to adjust to and needs a lot of understanding from family members especially the husband. Discuss this with your husband, show him some literature on this subject and together approach the problem. Think about the joy a baby brings to the family, the rewards are so great then soon your depression will go.

Dear Mita,

My husband never pays me any compliment, while he is very generous with his compliments to other women. It did not bother me very much in the beginning but now that I am older and maybe annot as attractive as I used to be it is becoming more of a problem between us. My husband my reaction exaggerated and says that he paid me the biggest compliment when he married me and there is no need to repeat it. I cannot accept that explanation and this is making me very unhappy. No matter what I wear, how I look, what I cook or how I decorate the house he never makes any comment. Do you think this is right? Please advise, as this is causing a strain in our marriage.

Shahida,
Mohammadpur

Dear Shahida,

This is a common complaint among married women so you are not alone. In our society, people are not very generous about paying compliments and even more stingy about paying compliments to their wives. Husbands usually take their wives for granted and stop treating them as persons or as women, but only see them in their role of wife and mother. The myth in our culture is that women are the self-sacrificing angels who never want anything in return from their husbands or children. What you can do is make him aware of yourself as a person who needs attention, just as anybody else, probably he does not realise the pain he is causing and by the way, when is the last time you paid him a compliment? Try it, it might work.

WRITE TO MITA



Run by a trained and experienced Family and Marriage counsellor, assisted by a professional team of doctor, psychologist and lawyer, this column will answer questions relating to family, marriage, health, family laws, and social and interpersonal relationships. Please address letters to Mita, The Daily Star, GPO Box 3257 or to 28/1, Toybee Circular Road, Motjheel, Dhaka-1000.