

# LIVING

## When Women Have a Parley

by Fayza Haq

It is often believed, even by some of the intellectual and well-informed males in the Bangladesh metropolises, that women, when they get together, do little else but gossip and tattle about trivia, or matters of family concern alone.

Interests of fixed debentures, between two women, one residing at Dhaka and the other at London. Health reports have also been obtained by a five-minute exchange of overseas telephone calls, after preceding query, report and following

"Ekushey Boli Mela." — as is the conception of a revered and unquestionable male expert of photography, that one might happen to know of. Women may do this by telegraphic transfers, and shopping of essentials have literally

them down to Virginia Woolf and her contemporary women writers, one wonders why G. B. Shaw thought that women wished to be "chased by men". This is not to undermine the profound and unquestioned psychological insight of writers and thinkers like G. B. Shaw, Havelock Ellis or even that of Sigmund Freud, for that matter.

Not having any desire to deviate from the subject, one should not forget, at the same time that women poets have been known to exist in recorded history and delineated sculptures and pottery pieces of the Greeks, to remove any doubts. Furthermore, queens ruled centuries ago, both in the East and West, going by archaeological records found in places like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan (Harappa and Mohenjodaro), India and even Bangladesh (Maimamati and Paharpur), and going by the "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata". Surely these rulers had their "advice and consent," and who would believe that Chand Sultana or Jhansi ki Rani wasted time in inconsequential matters in their discussions, or that, years later, Queen Victoria failed to hold an empire?

Surely the women ruling heads of the nations in the Subcontinent have been known to be intelligent and have played their parts to the best of their abilities. This could not have been done by idle chatter or destructive talks. Yes, women are gregarious; but are not men too, as they belong to the same human species?

What can be done, one wonders and ponders over sometimes, to dispel some of the male concepts about the empty-headed exchange of conversations between women? When there are eminent Bangladeshi women doctors, architects, lawyers, business executives, bankers, professors at the university level and women teachers of the Koran Sharif are available at various parts of the metropolis, and not necessarily in the affluent areas, what should be done to dispel the misconception by some of the responsible and highly educated male members of our society? The books in private and public collections as well as the news media have been unable to remove the narrow image of women, so far, in the minds of some of the seriously inclined male members of the metropolis.

Women have run homes and carried on serious official responsibilities, without broken homes, in Dhaka alone, is that not a simple proof that they do not waste their time in marathonic, wasteful, whining or giggling, as is the belief of some of our men, both at home, and overseas?



Two Women speaking: one at Dhaka, the other at London

They sometimes say that women, no matter how well educated, coming from the best of social backgrounds, talk about "saris", perfumes, the latest vogue both abroad and overseas; or get involved in match-making or tale-bearing.

One would like to know if these high-browed men have ever cared or condescended to make a careful and accurate survey of what educated women of the upper strata of our society discuss in simply five or fifteen minutes that they might have to spare having often to cope with situations at home, office, and the possible problems of the extended family, living overseas.

There was an instance, in which a woman met another woman, for some necessary official information at an office, and in the process, collected detailed reports about some of the intellectual pursuits of her cousins and colleagues, which she had not known earlier. This was done in exactly four minutes. And this is not an attempt at an imitation of a section of a "Believe It Or Not" preface.

Similarly, on a two-minute telephone call, one got vital financial information about investments, debts and credits, as well as a stocktaking of in-

diagnosis. This too was done between two women, one staying at Dhaka, the other being at Ontario.

Reports that the Police Force and National Security Investigation agents have failed to notice, or cared to investigate into, have been done once again in the city, between two women, living at Uttara and Tikatuly respectively. This is not a flight of fancy but an authentic statement which can be analysed, cross-examined and presented even at an international court. This is written without bias or an iota of exaggeration.

The environment, similarly, has been changed between one island of a country, and another adjacent country 600 miles apart, by careful consultations by two women, one a Bangladeshi and the other, a Sri Lankan. This has been documented in a national daily, which has been backed by photographs. This was achieved by telecommunication, and of course, manual labour botanical know-how and memories of basic "O" level Physics and Botany.

Women, to prove the point further, do not necessarily doll themselves up and go window shopping, or even do their essential purchases at the

been done within two days, as has been done by a woman overseas, and her friend at Dhaka. This, once again, is no figment of imagination, or an exaggerated report.

Essential haute couture designing and displays have been done in a month by a woman in Dhaka along with her mother. If one is prepared and has correct consultations, one can discuss, play and carry out ventures, even though no woman has as yet succeeded in flying to the moon and back. One wonders, then, why women are sometimes minimised, discriminated against, and looked upon as "the weaker sex". One does not have to be an avid reader of Germaine Greere or Simone de Beauvoir to ponder about the misconceptions of some of our male intelligentsia.

If women in the neighbourhood have many published books to their credit in Bangladesh alone, and that too, a generation back, while those in London have been famous as writers since the time of Lady Mary Wortley Montague in England, centuries back — leaving aside the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett-Browning and tracing

## Woes of the Hypochondriac

by Parveen Anam

It takes all sorts to make the world. At least, on this adage, even the Bengali is united, and that is saying quite a lot. It never fails to surprise one how the Bengali disagrees on just about everything. Beginning from the sighting of the moon on holy occasions to remedies for the common cold, the Bengalis stand divided. There indeed seems very few things on which he can share the same views with his fellow country man. And in fact the less said about his political views the better. Put three Bengalis together and they manage to form five and a half political parties within the hour. Marvellous state of affairs, there. For real life comedy, the Bengali probably takes the cake. Unwittingly perhaps, but takes it nonetheless.

The one aspect the Bengalis stand united on, is when they start to exchange notes on their mutual woes. And nowhere else is this sharing of woes more evident than when it comes to comparing their statistics on who has suffered more than the other from the cold or "colic", "gout" or rheumatism. Put the two, three, four or seven common "sufferers" together and it's a delightful situation.

After the initial introductions are over and they have managed to mutter their apologetic words of welcome, these seven are the ones who slink off to their respective corners with their hand-dog expressions and the worries of the world weighing down their frail shoulders. Life has given them a raw deal and they are resentful. Nothing tempts them and they can think of nothing very exciting to say to their neighbours.

Suddenly, their eyes light up, and they start taking an interest in their surroundings. The magic word has been uttered and they swear that they can begin taking a renewed interest in their lives and their surroundings. For across the room they have heard the familiar strains of a fellow sufferer eulogising the merits of a popular brand of herbal drug, just right for the condition he

suffers from — or thinks he does.

In the wink of an eye, they are at the side of the kind soul who is the only one on earth who can understand how he feels, and thereafter begins the sharing and comparing of notes on symptoms, causes, reasons and remedies of the ailments which are familiar to them and them alone, for the rest of the unkind world has no time really to listen to the endless tirade of their complaints. In spite of what those people might think, the world does have other things to do besides dropping everything and sitting in the corner, day after day, listening to endless symptoms and reasons for the sufferings of those unfortunate few.

Psychologists have of course come up with a name for these sufferers and the name we are all familiar with is "hypochondriac": the hypochondriac is the miserable soul who suffers from an

endless series of complaints, physical in nature, and magnified beyond all proportions. Sleepless nights turn into nightmares of stomach ailments, accompanied by equally awful breathlessness, all as a result of the headache he had the previous morning. Convinced that he is in the initial stages of a life threatening heart attack, he will shake awake his life partner, who has just dropped off to sleep after ministering to his endless demands of home made remedies from herbs and oils procured from the kitchen shelf. The doctors of course are quite useless, is the considered opinion of these exalted few and their useless prescriptions are no good for the ailments these unfortunate beings suffer from. The search for a really good doctor has been in vain, and they can only draw solace from each other's company and complaints!

What of course never occurs to these hypochondriacs is the

very simple fact that if they just complain and simply forget about their varied and various forms of sufferings, life would suddenly seem simpler.

If they could just come out of their little shells, look life in the face and decide to enjoy the little time they have left, in spite of their enormous burdens, they would indeed be surprised. All he needs do is try and convince himself that the little cough is not an indication of lung cancer, the full feeling in the stomach is not because of that huge big tumour about to smother their insides, that little wart on his little toe is not the beginning of some horrible degenerative disease, about to engulf his entire skin area and he will be fine. It will be difficult at first, but he will eventually convince both himself and his friends who share the same unspeakable terrors of physical ailments that life is not that bad after all.



A young hypochondriac having illusions

## Savoury Salads

garnish each section with beans. **Mixed Fruit and Vegetable Salad**  
2 bananas Nuts  
Orange A small cucumber  
Lettuce 2 tomatoes  
Watercress

Arrange some whole inner leaves of lettuce on a dish. Peel the bananas and slice them and the cucumber. Peel the orange and remove the pith. Slice it thinly and remove the pips. Slice the tomatoes. Arrange these four ingredients in quarters and garnish with a little watercress and a few walnuts.

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**Russian Salad**  
Cooked peas, beans, carrots, potatoes Mayonnaise



## Cream Cheese and Pineapple Salad

Pineapple rings  
Cream cheese  
Salad dressing  
Lettuce  
Cress

Make cream cheese balls by wroking enough cream cheese into salad dressing for the mixture to bind, and then rolling it on a wet board with a wet knife. Put some lettuce leaves on a dish with pineapple rings on top and put a cream cheese ball into the centre of each. Arrange the cress in between the rings.

## Egg and Green Pea Salad

Hard-boiled eggs Mayonnaise  
Green peas Lettuce  
(cooked) Cream  
cheese balls

Wash the lettuce and arrange the leaves whole in a dish. Cut the eggs in half lengthwise, scoop out the yolks and fill the eggs with green peas mixed with mayonnaise. Arrange the eggs on the lettuce. Mix the yolks with a little cream cheese and enough mayonnaise to bind and roll into balls. Garnish with these.

## Pineapple and Banana Salad (for 1)

2 slices canned pineapple  
Salad greens  
1 ripe banana

Place a ring of pineapple round each end of a peeled banana. Garnish with crisp salad greens. Serve with mayonnaise.

## Potato Salad (Cold)

Cut freshly cooked, peeled cold potatoes (cooked in their

skins) into cubes and add dice and mix well with mayonnaise. To decorate the top, divide into squares and

Cut vegetables into small dice and mix well with differently: one with chopped egg yolk, one with chopped white, one with peas and one

## Hair Styles



Courtesy: "Living Doll"



Simplicity and Modesty Create Bliss

## Hair Loss and Baldness

by Dr Md Abdul Matin

IN medical terminology, partial or complete loss of hair from the scalp is known as baldness or alopecia. The common but unpopular problem itself is so evident that its presentation is quite self explanatory. This unwanted, sometimes more or less embarrassing condition of human being, is resulting from some genetic factors again and few particular local or systemic diseases. However the alopecia may be categorized in following pattern of typing:

(1) Male baldness pattern is extremely common and extensive, mostly acquired as familial inheritance reportedly due to the presence of andro-

gens (male hormone). Hair loss starts at vertex and lateral frontal forehead.

(2) Female baldness pattern — it is not infrequent but confined to thinning of hair calibres ordinarily in the frontal and parietal regions of the scalp. However complete baldness is very rare in female.

(3) Toxic baldness — results from any severe toxic conditions e.g. often febrile sickness, sub-normal functions of thyroid and pituitary glands, early syphilis, pregnancy, reactions of anti cancer drugs, ingestion of excess vitamin A etc.

(4) Alopecia areata — is the condition of sudden hair loss in a circumscribed area without any obvious skin disease or any other physical disorders. However this condition may be reversible.

(5) Alopecia universalis — where rarely all the body hair may be lost. Some inherent internal body conditions involving some particular hormone producing glands e.g. thyroid, adrenal may be the underlying

loss ensues due to skin atrophy or scar formation following any injury like burns, trauma, X-ray, radiations, bacterial or fungal infections, ulcers, syphilis and tuberculosis and rarely slow growing tumours that extend upto the scalp.

Unfortunate part of the story is that the commonest form of baldness (male and female patterns) are imposed on human being without any definite causative factors, so its diagnosis and successful treatment is yet to be achieved by the medical science. For other conditions a concrete and definite diagnosis needs to be done as a part of the satisfactory cure, which may include microscopic examinations of plucked hair roots, cultures of skin scrapes, excision biopsy of the tissues, immunofluorescent examination etc.

No therapy is so far known for idiopathic male pattern baldness though hair transplant in bald areas are effective performances now a days. In alopecia areata, ingestion or injection of corticosteroids may help the re-growth of hair but its long term use entails some body complications those are not justifiable to be accepted for such cosmetic defects. In scarring alopecia, the treatment is directed at eliminating the underlying cause.

Really it is not wise at all to be worried and to think much about the loss of hairs and ensuing alopecia which in true sense helps very little to combat the situation. Rather a comprehensive scientific programme should be adopted to treat the condition and avoid further extension of baldness.

causes behind this situations. This is sometime irreversible especially if its onset in early childhood.

(6) Trichotillomania i.e. hair pulling — it may be a neurotic habit in some childrens without any evident cause resulting in localised but a reversible hair loss.

(7) Scarring alopecia — is a special condition where hair



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