

LIVING

Gossip Mongering

by Fayza Haq

ONE was once a ghost when one's colleague once snapped rudely at one, when one was trying to soothe her ruffled nerves. A year later, the young woman explained that people had been spreading "foul rumours" about her, and that she had been deeply distressed over the matter. The wound had been made, and when the apology was tendered, one had to keep in mind the age gap between oneself and the ruffled young woman, and also the fact that apart from being an only child, she had yet to weather the vicissitudes of life. Gossip and tattle prevail the world over, in private and in public. Royalties in Europe, and dead U.S. Presidents have

overwhelmed with mind-boggling matters both at office, home, and as regards friends and families living and struggling overseas. This was misconstrued and reported to Rumana as, "Fayza said that Rumana was having a surreptitious liaison with a Don Juan at Sylhet." This was repeated back to me by Rumana, when Suraiya was not in the office. You can well envisage my confused state of mind and total embarrassment, as I have always considered Rumana as a confidante, whose good opinion I treasured and regarded highly. This is because Rumana is not only sincere, well-read, well-behaved, but has always

family, and yet knew that his wife was having a "gay time", as reported by reliable resources. The gentleman continues to pay homage to his family, and it is a wonder that he still has a sense of humour, and is full of lively anecdotes for all occasions. One got graphic details about the goings-on of the wife from the wife's confidante, who happens to be one's old school-mate and present neighbour. Does not one's blood boil at the injustice and slander when one has more than two facets of a 2-D picture?

"Oh, your cousin has copped with a scum of the earth," ran another rumour. One was re-

duced to tears because one treasured one's extended family, and they in return, held one in esteem. The actual fact was that the cousin was duly married with "shamtanas" and fairy-lights, the marriage having been arranged by the cousin's university professor and female friends. Parental investigations had ensued before the actual marriage took place, and yet there was malicious and needless talk. It was only years later that one realised what had actually happened. In the interim period, one felt one was leaning "on

the thorns of life" over the rumour. One wonders what pleasure people get out of sensationalising and backbiting, instead of minding their own affairs. Do they stop to ponder and ask themselves, if they themselves are leading a blameless life, being mortals, after all?

On many occasions one has heard unrepeatable comments about a particular friend. Without the friend being aware, one has fought his battles, as one knows the friend for at least a decade. Does not one's temper shoot up when one hears "muck" about an individual, who was once an epitome of chivalry and a "chevalier sans peur et sans reproche"? Certainly, time has passed, circumstances have changed, but does the individual not remain the same angelic being intrinsically? How then does one combat the slings and arrows that one's treasured friend receives without his own knowledge? The saying "an idle mind... is known even by children. Yet slander and gossip are not just the works of lazybones, but active hard workers, with conscience, clear minds and complete awareness of what the slander will lead to.

People sometimes do have valid reasons for scandal mongering. They are sometimes envious or discounted. The newsmedia knows only too well how their sales can rocket with tales of incest, wife-beating, suicide, adultery, and what have you. Yet, when there are so many more constructive things to dwell upon—apart from factual reporting and injustices in society—why must people go out of their way to find chinks in the armour of an individual? There are various wonderful things in life, in Bangladesh alone, like music, painting, embroidery, reading, and other hobbies like playing and watching tennis, football, chess, cricket, bridge, or even cooking and gardening. One wonders why people waste the time allotted to them. Everybody does not believe in reincarnation. Why not "live and let live"? "Shanti, Shanti, Shanti!" (T. S. Eliot "Waste Land").



not been spared by tabloids and even by national broadsheets. One has to accept rumours and malicious talks in one's stride, keep one's goal in mind, and not allow the scum and mud of the roadside, metaphorically speaking that is, affect one's peace of mind and tranquillity of existence.

Another day, a friend of mind was in tears because I was supposed to have wagged my tongue. The actual telephone conversation ran thus: Suraiya, "Rumana is away at Sylhet." I: "Is that so really?" Oh, tra-la-lal! I was tired,

proved to be a 'true friend in need. How words can be twisted and distorted! One has only to live with it like some incurable arising eczema due to lack of confidence or inner stability.

Another day, one heard a report that a colleague, who has been a workaholic for the last 30 years, was a vagabond, and not only did nothing for a living, but that he totally ignored his wife and children. One knows the man to be literally "possessed" by spirits or whatever, when he regularly met any wild demand of the

water as comfortably possible during the day. Don't allow constipation — if necessary take a dose of fruit salts or a mild laxative twice see that the bedroom is very well ventilated during sleeping hours. Sports which have not developed but appear as hard lumps under the skin can be dried up with surgical spirit and camouflaged with calamine lotion. Only if the spot has come to ahead should any squeezing be attempted. The fingers should be shielded with a tissue and the matter gently pressed out. A diluted antiseptic should be applied immediately to prevent infection to other parts.

Powder. A wide variety of shades is available, and the selection of one or more should be carefully considered. If in doubt as to the most suitable powders, it is advisable to choose one just a shade darker than the skin-tone. For evening wear it is more flattering to use a slightly darker and more pink shade of face powder. (see Colours; Make-up.)

Rest. Periods of rest and relaxation have an important place in Beauty Culture. To relax thoroughly, preferably after a meal, for fifteen minutes, or even for a few minutes several times a day is a matter of practice. Lie or sit back allowing each joint and muscle to go loose and easy without tension anywhere. In a word, just flop. If lying, it is better to have the feet raised a little above the level of the head. Breathe slowly and deeply through the nose; empty the mind as far as possible of all thought, and just rest. Watch a cat relax, completely and thoroughly. That is the way to do it. Great refreshment and a renewal of energy will follow.

Rouge. Besides having the correct tint, the application of rouge is a matter of supreme importance. Wrongly placed, the emphasis of rouge can be bizarre and ridiculous. In applying rouge always shade it off to blend gradually with the skin colour. Avoid the toy-soldier effect of the bright hard spot. Study the basic shape of your face in a mirror and place the rouge accordingly.

Round Faces. Apply rouge high on the cheeks and near the nose, keeping the outer edges of the cheeks clear. Thus minimising the roundness or broadness of the face.

Long Face. Smile and apply rouge to the cushion of the cheeks, keeping it well a way from the nose. A final touch of rouge on the chin helps to reduce the apparent length of

Illness Stalks the Family

by Sylvia Saleem

I had been looking forward to my fortieth birthday. After all, life begins at forty! Everything was going for me. I had a lovely home and garden, three children all doing well with their education and a good job. In fact, I had just been promoted to head of the English Department in a school with 1500 pupils. I was working hard for an additional qualification in "speech and drama," and had a wonderful social life. After several, unsuccessful attempts at business, my husband had gone back to Training College and had, recently, qualified to be a teacher. We had made our plans for the future. I was not ambitious but enjoyed my

collapsing with a heart attack. One day he was strong enough to pick me up with one hand, the next he could scarcely raise a finger. We had given out two boys a joint birthday party and he had been the life and soul of the party, organising games and joining in with balloon fights and tearing the telephone directory in half. He drove the children home while I did the washing up and prepared for the adult party we were to have in the evening. There was no sign that he was going to have a heart attack, although, there had been clues for several months. There was the pain in his back he put down to indigestion, the blue-

back later to check on Salman's progress. I was far from satisfied with the diagnosis but waited some time before calling the doctor back. This time, he realised that Salman was seriously ill and called for an ambulance. I went to the hospital with Salman and telephoned my next door neighbours asking them to help the children while I was away. They were wonderfully good people and only too happy to help. It was twelve hours before I saw my house again.

Much has been said about hospitals and the way patients are kept waiting, but nothing could have been more com-

passionate and efficient than the treatment Salman received when we arrived at the emergency department. He was examined immediately and made as comfortable as possible.

By now, the pain had gone and he was either sleeping or unconscious. It was impossible for me to know. A doctor explained that when pain becomes too much to bear, the body gives up and the brain cuts off from the agony. As a result, Salman was comatose. As soon as a massive coronary was diagnosed, I was told that Steven would have to be moved to another hospital where there was much better equipment for caring for coronary patients. Again, an ambulance arrived and we travelled to the other side of the city to a specialist heart unit. By now, I was numb with shock, exhaustion and fear. The tests seemed endless. Between the tests, I was allowed to sit with my

husband in the ward. Then, I would be sent to wait somewhere else, while Salman was put through more tests. While the medical staff were wonderful in their diagnosis and plans for treatment, nobody took time out to explain to me just how severely ill my husband was and what the tests were about. A kindly nurse asked me how long we had been undergoing treatment, and when I told her several hours, she brought me a cup of tea. I went on waiting. After what seemed an unbelievable length of time, I was told I could go and see Salman in the ward. He was just conscious and I could hold his hand. He had been dressed in hospital clothes and made ready for bed and a long stay in the special unit for coronary patients.

Finally, I got to meet the consultant who would be responsible for Salman. I can't remember his name, but he was Palestinian and brilliant at his job. Salman could not have been in better hands. The nurses assured me that this doctor was the best. He was gentle as he spoke to me with none of the sharpness that doctors sometimes employ. He told me that there was massive damage to Salman's heart but he was hopeful there would be good recovery. Salman was young and, essentially, a strong man. He, also, warned me that the greatest danger was the possibility of a second attack which would be more than his weakened body could stand at this stage. There was nothing more I could do in the hospital. My job, now, was to go home, give my children some information and reassure them that everything would be all right.

I found myself at mid-night in the hospital grounds with no way of getting home. I had travelled in the ambulance with Salman and made no arrangements for going back. After all, I had left with Salman in the ambulance at one o'clock in the afternoon. In desperation, I telephoned my neighbours and Mr Qudus said he would come for me. He, also, warned me that the children were distressed and unable to understand why I had not been able to telephone to let them know, what was happening. How could I explain that I hadn't known enough and that I was being, continually, sent from one place to another. I had never thought of my children as pathetic. (to be continued)



work.

As a man in education, my husband's prospects were good. We decided that when he became a deputy principal, I would work part time and give more of my life to being a housewife. This suited both of us. The children would, by then, either be qualified and starting out on their own careers, or at University. We had married young and the children had arrived quickly. Now, we could look forward to late middle age and, finally, retirement, together. For the first time in our marriage, we could start to really know each other. I imagined a long and happy retirement, going through the final stages of our careers and the last third of our lives, together. There would be a new awareness of each other and a deepening of love.

ness that would appear round his mouth and, particularly, the family history of early death from heart attack. I knew I was worrying about his health without quite understanding why. I could not accept that the pain was indigestion and was aware that he never looked really fit.

It was the morning after the parties that I found Salman crawling upstairs on his hands and knees. He was in such agonizing pain that he could not stand up. He had intended to lie down for a while without calling me. He had no idea how ill he was. I took one look at his white face and the blueness of his mouth and hurried to the phone to call the duty doctor. For once, the doctor came in good time. He was, though, newly qualified, inexperienced and had never attended Salman before. He knew nothing about us. He diagnosed gall stones and said he would come

It was four days before my fortieth birthday that Salman

Beauty Tips

MASSAGING with cold cream at night-time, and ordinary pinching between finger and thumb will help to increase the blood flow. Start pinching at the tip of the nose and work up to the bridge. Do this as often as you can during the day. Apply a good flesh-tinted foundation for camouflage, and powder well over. Avoid highly spiced or vinegary foods and alcohol.

Perfume. A delicate aura of perfume provides the finishing touch to every woman's toilet. It supplies an air of pleasing freshness, and appeal lending an additional charm to the personality. The choice of perfume is quite an individual matter, and the selection should fit the time and occasion. Fresh, delicate, less-concentrated perfumes are available for day use, while for the evening more exotic essences are to be preferred though this is entirely a point for everyone to decide for themselves. As a general rule, the lighter perfumes are more suitable for fair people. A perfume all one's

own can be achieved by the successful blending of two or more perfumes. Those who are attracted by this idea should experiment by mixing a few drops at a time to avoid waste, for the result of missing two very pleasant perfumes is not always a success. Usually a happy choice to suit one's individuality is easily made from among the many tried and well-known creations of firms of repute. A cheap perfume is never a satisfactory purchase. Never put perfume directly on to the dress, but spray or dab it behind the ears. On the wrists or temples, or massage a little into the hair. The warmth of the skin will soon bring out the perfume and surround you with fragrance.

Pimples. The skin must be kept very clean and all greasy creams and heavy make-up left off until the skin is healthy again. A modified diet is called for and should be free from rich and fatty foods and starches. Instead eat plenty of green vegetables, fresh fruits, and salads, and drink as much

face.

Square Face. Shape the rouge in faint triangles on the outer part of the cheeks, with the straight side of the triangle in line with the nose and point towards the ears. P.E. (to be continued)

Oh! Life Is So Difficult

by Parveen Anam

THAT life is difficult is not an observation, either new or original. Yet, all the same, we do wish at times, that it did not make a conscious effort to be so. At no other time is it better expressed, than when you have spent twenty-three and an odd half minutes trying to unscrew the bottle top of the new ketchup you have just

reach out for the switch, for the fan. First time wrong, second time wrong, third time wrong — it's the fifth switch. Where, oh, where did you go wrong? Why does this have to happen to you, when you are drenched in perspiration, dropping dead on your feet, with sheer exhaustion, and the

Meanwhile, the host and the hostess of the five other invitations, will never have your darken their doorstep again.

The afternoons are hot and sultry, most of the year, anyway, a short nap, when you have a splitting headache, is a sure cure. Just as you have managed to relax and elusive sleep is a wink away, the phone rings. It's a wrong num-



purchased, with your four year-old screaming at the top of his lungs, for the contents to be relished with his potato fries, when lo and behold! there at the bottom of the bottle, it neatly seals the top. Do not 'screw'. You could kick yourself, an achievement not generally achieved successfully by many, anyway. Wog leg, invariably.

There you are, just back from a mad shopping spree, where at one point you were certain you were going to be hauled in for attempted assault, you were having such a tough time trying to keep your temper in check, haggling with the fish-monger, the vegetable vendor, etc. and still

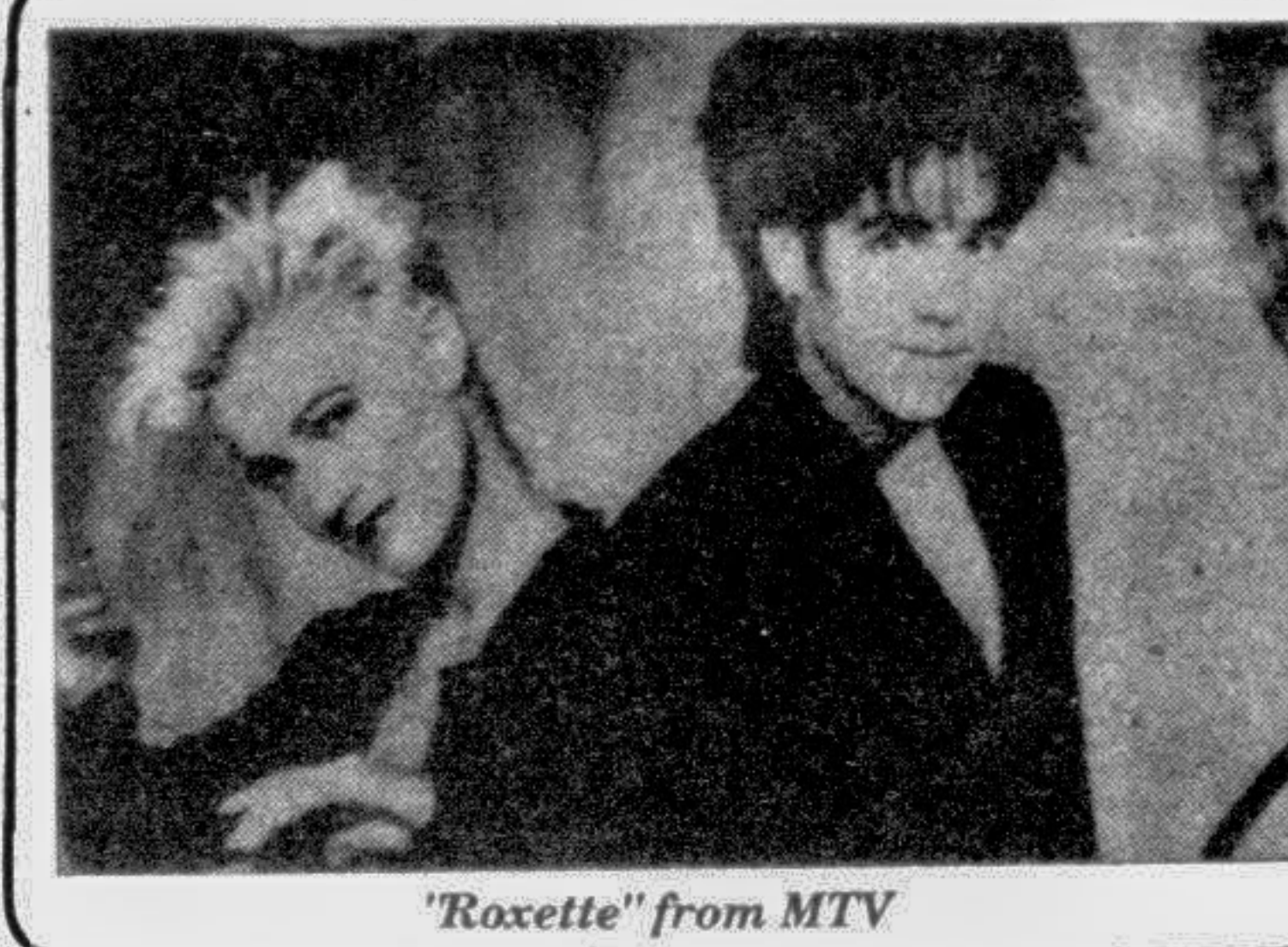
switch you want is invariably the last?

Again, you have been waiting three weeks for an invitation to the social scene, consoling yourself, you have not been forgotten, when it comes. With three telephone calls and four cards; you feel so wanted, but the invitations are all on the same day, sometimes. Why, oh, why does this have to happen to you? You do not remember any moral crime, for which you need such dire punishment. You can go only to two places, and no more.

Considering the traffic scene, and the transport jams, you would be lucky, if you could even make it to that,

ber, quite often. But that is the end of your nap and your headache is worse than it has been in years.

Yet the knowledgeable amongst us, will inform you it's all "Murphy's Law." This Murphy, whoever he/she might have been, surely deserves a pat on the back, and full marks for rubbing people on the wrong side. Life could not have been very difficult for him/her, if he/she went around discovering all these odd things. Either that, or he/she just had a very odd sense of humour. And to term it all, and put it under a heading "law" really stumps you, does it not?



"Roxette" from MTV



"Shalwar-Kameez" is best for work places
Photo: A. Ahmed