

LIVING

Friends, Good Friends, and Such Good Friends

by Farzana Haque

FORGETTING subjects such as love, hatred, war, price of goods, or the latest in fashion, let us embark upon a different subject — friendship amongst women — and take a different perspective. A message I discovered in a card has prompted me to write on this subject. Women are friends, I believe when they bear total love and support and trust towards each other and bare to each other the mysterious secrets of their souls, and run no questions ever asked to lend helping hands and shoulder to cry upon and tell harsh truths to each other. For instance, you are too childish or materialistic or you cannot wear that dress unless you lose a few pounds, or you should not go to the picnic in that unbecoming dress.

chalent and casual play mates. Let us consider these varieties of friendship:

(1) Convenience Friends: These are the women with whom, if our paths were not crossing all the time, we would have no particular logic to mingle; a next door neighbor, a car ride partner, a mother whose child is in the same school etc. Convenience friends are very convenient indeed! They give us rides in their cars, lend us novels and magazines, provide us with the names of good doctors, pick our children from the school etc. But we don't, with these friends, ever come closer or tell too much, we maintain our public face and emotional distance. But this does not mean that there is not any sufficient

kind of genuine intimacy shared is the one which exists in the friendships formed across generations as mother-daughter, auntie-niece grand-mother-granddaughter relationships. In our younger generation roles, we tend to do more than share-revelation, in our older generation role we tend to receive what is revealed. It is another beautiful friendship based on share sharing, giving and receiving.

(4) Cross-Road Friends: Like the classification mentioned above, our cross-road friends are important of what was — for the friendships we shared at a crucial, now past, point of our life. A time, perhaps, when we spent every possible hour together, cried on each other's shoulders, confided one's feelings, sorted out adolescent problems or

whenever we go to Chittagong or USA, we have time to visit our friend or call up to chat with a friend who is of our girlhood and who knows just how we looked in pigtails, with braces on and no make-ups or in frocks and who by her presence puts us in touch with an earlier part of ourself, a part which is too precious to be lost.

(6) Part-of-a-Group Friends: Some of the women we call our friends we never see or meet alone... we see them as part of a group we hang out with. And though we share interests in many things and respect each other's views, we are not moved enough to depend on the relationships. Whatever the reason a lack of time or chemistry, our friendship remains in the context of a group. Other Part-of-a-group friends that come with marriage are husband's close friend or husband's friends wife, etc.

(7) Men as Friends: I wanted to limit myself solely on the subject of women friends but I feel I should touch another important aspect of friendship. However men are good friends too! Some might shake their heads and nod in disagreement and lecture on the impossibilities of platonic relationships between men and women. However, many women would readily agree that men friends make the best of friends, are prepared to render all support and chivalry in days of need. In fact, they seem to possess drier and harder shoulders to cry and lean upon.

There are medium friends, pretty good friends and very good pals indeed and these friendships are defined by their level of intimacy. But it is only to our best friends that we really open up, ready to tell all. The best of friends and their friendships, I still believe, totally out-class all other relationships in the world and reside like a hermit out of jurisdiction of time, place and money. But friends need not agree about everything (Only 12 year old girls agree about everything) to tolerate each other's point of view, to accept without judgment, to give and to take without ever keeping score and to be there as I am for them as they are always there for me, to smooth our sorrows, to balm our minds and share our joys.



Women are friends, I would say, when they share the same affection for Madonna or Rajiv Gandhi, plus enjoy rickshaw rides in the rain, care for cats, love icecreams, fairs, and hate with equal ardor the great cricketer Imran Khan, Tagore's songs, Shakespeare's Hamlet or jogging. In other words, I would say, a friend is a friend all the way but sometimes I think that is a very narrow point of view. You see, the friendships I have and the friendship I have seen are conducted at many levels of intimacy, serve many purposes, meet various kinds of needs and range from those from which may be referred to as all-the-way as the friendship of the soul sisters aforementioned to that of the most non-

value attached to these friendships of mutual aid.

(2) Special Interest Friends: These friendships are not intimate, they need not involve kids or lending/saving anything in particular. Their value lies in some interest jointly shared. And we may have an office friend or friend in cooking or aerobics class or a friend from Y.W.C.A.

(3) Way-Back-Friends: We all have a friend who knew us when... may be way back in nursery or class four, when our family lived in Chittagong or when our dad worked in Dubai. Many years have passed and we have little in common now, but we are still an intimate part of each other's past. And so

went through miseries of marriage, studies or bouts of passion. Cross road friends forge powerful links; links strong enough to endure, with not much more contact than once-a-year letters on birthdays and other occasions. And out of respect for these cross-road years, for those dramas and dreams we once shared, we always remain friends.

(5) Cross Generational Friends: I believe that historical friends, and cross-road friends seem to maintain a special kind of intimacy... dormant and stagnant but always ready to be revived, to be revitalized... and we rarely get, opportunity to see or meet, whenever we do connect it is personal and intense. Another

Aptitude is not Hereditary

by Fayza Haq

IT is not always that the teachers or parents are quite bothered about finding out what the young man or woman is really fit to pursue as a career. Just because the father is a doctor or a lawyer, it is taken for granted that the son should follow the footsteps and prove as good a physician or a surgeon or advocate or what you will line of professions. Similarly it is lamented if the son of a professor of literature is not interested in poetry or drama and spends all his time at the garage mechanic's joint, or if a tailor's son is indifferent to learning the skill of haute couture and would rather spend his time reading detective novels in the hope of being a writer or trying his hand at crack shooting with the dream of joining the army. It would be considered a pitiable state of affairs in the first

case and unusually strange or overambitious or even utopian in the other situations.

It often happens that a student is made to study mathematics and general science for a future career as a physicist or chartered accountant or even physiotherapist or chemist though the young man or woman may not be keen on being a banker or a doctor as willed and dreamt by the parents and guardians. Yet, he will be expected to swallow large dosages of physics, chemistry, biology and subjects like trigonometry like some bitter medicine. It is a small percentage who can afford tutors although these teachers are hired at incredibly low prices due to the ill paid teaching profession.

The youth will play hockey, cheat, copy and try all unfair

means to please his parents or even run away from home out of sheer frustration. "I must get first division in Domestic Science," gasps the young female college co-ed as she cheats her way through her laboratory work. She feels her doubtful activities justified with parents' happiness in the long run.

"I'd love to wash my hands off commerce if only I could. But that banker father of mine dreams of his son being more than a freelance painter or writer. So I must absorb dosages of accounts and economics, business correspondence, auditing and such matters in which I have so little interest. I'm doing layouts for poems in magazines but I don't get paid enough or in time for that to call it a living. I love painting but I'm discouraged

again as even commercial art is not considered a safe bet for earning by my family, nor is it considered the done thing by my elders," one student explains.

He elaborates on his fate, "I can't ignore my aging parents. After all, they have sacrificed enormously to give me the school and college education. My dream of being another Gauguin or Picasso must be shelved along with the penchant to be another second Sartre or Jacques le Carre. One has one's private dreams but they must be shelved for the greatest good of the greatest number."

Another lamentable story of a relatively, successful young executive runs thus: "Yes I've begged, borrowed and stolen my way into being an accepted businessman but I'm bored to tears with the tedium of buying and selling in which I see no charm except a regular income at the end of the month, which does not exactly fascinate me, as there's been money in the family always. I'd rather be a roving singer with my guitar but the thought is shockingly scandalous for my orthodox family. In college too I had little encouragement or outlet for my musical drive except in the occasional annual concert at the school and college level. Singing is condemned as outrageously sinful by even my uncles. So my youthful wishes and cravings had been limited to a hobby and is diminished to merely watching musical programmes on TV or listening to the radio. This surely would not so obviously be the sob story in the west, with the occidental liberal outlook.

Similarly a bearer's son is often never given the opportunity of higher education. "What's the use", his father comments, "in sending the child for anything beyond Class V? It is safer and more sensible for him to be a 'bawarchi' or 'mali'. White col-



Telsa/Black Crows

FUNDAMENTALLY a mother finds it very difficult to accept the fact that her daughter has grown up, can look after herself, and has got her own life to lead. Daughters, too, may have dreamed of marriage as the bit of the film when the picture fades and the music grows louder. No wonder that they want to rush home to the security of mother when the husband remarks that the meat tastes as tough as old boots. All these things are revealed — walk into a house and you will be surprised how much you can learn about the owners. Nothing out of place? All bright and shining? Obviously this housewife takes a pride in her tasks and no doubt will be delighted when you compliment her. But now take a good look at her too. Is she as spruce and sunny as the furnishings? If so, here's a girl doing a job she finds she enjoys better than all others and her happiness is reflected everywhere.

What, though, if her face has a strained look? You see her eyes follow the few biscuit crumbs that fall from your lap, though she is too good a hostess to comment! Her conversation turns to the household gadgets she lacks, rather than to all the assets she has. Here then is a wife to whom outward appearances mean a very great deal. Her constant striving for more and more material goods is her way of saying she is really seeking something that she feels is lacking in her marriage. In all this picture her husband features very little. Love has been swept up in the vacuum cleaner.

But it doesn't follow that the greater the squalor the greater the happiness. The untidy, the I-was-just-going-to-clear-it-up-only... sort of home tells a story as well, and for the clues, look at the wife again. Is she as dingy and overburdened as the kitchen sink? If so, she is dispirited about her marriage, and life has lost its sparkle. She does not feel cherished, so she can't cherish her home and all it might mean to her. But, in very similar surroundings we might also find a welcoming, warm person eager to hear what we have to say. She thinks that crumbs on the carpet are of little im-

portance. After all, she did bake a delicious cake which pleased everyone! So you see it isn't just how a home is run that is the important part, but why it is, as it is.

Hobbies and Interests
A young wife once complained that her husband wasn't friendly. Extraordinary, you may think, how could two people live together and not be friendly? But this doesn't necessarily follow. When we think about the possibility of marrying a particular person we become more and more interested in the things they like and dislike, their tastes, opinions, wants and needs. Sometimes we are quite shocked that anyone so lovable should have such extraordinary ideas. All this happens because we take for granted that there is only one right way to dress, to divide up money, to behave with one's friends and so on.

It is all very well to say these are personal tastes. They are, but it is not the actual decisions about these things that matter but what they imply. So the young wife with the "unfriendly" husband was really saying that they hadn't managed to explore each other's ideas sufficiently to know how each felt about even trivial things.

When two people begin to think about marriage it is as well to see what interests and hobbies they may have in common. True, they may have met because they were both very keen on sailing, for example, but it is just as well to remember that sailing has a limited season each year! However, it does not follow that both have necessarily to take part in the same activity to have common interests. A wife doesn't have to stand beside a windswept football pitch. Yet each can take a lively interest in the other's hobby. It is interest in the person, rather than in the hobby, that matters.

Happy Ever After
Whatever the cynics may say, people embark on mar-

ried jobs are hard to get without contacts and bribing or at least constant nagging and begging and where do sons of underlings like us get beyond petty clerks in some second rate office after years of expensive education?"

The son might have a flare for both humanities and science subjects but there are very few charitable institutions to absorb him and encourage his talents. His schooldays are soon terminated when he enters his eleventh year and he is employed to bring in the so called bright future to himself and his family. What with the high wages for menial tasks in places like the Middle East, apart from the outdated areas like Manchester and Birmingham, education is nipped in the bud for many a promising student. "It's all such a waste," is the comment from the some quarters. Teachers at school do little to help out and not every child is lucky enough to get the merit scholarships at a higher level. As for the girl student, it is

Happy Marriage

by Sylvia Saleem

riage wanting it to last. Whether the wedding is in a register office, or with a religious ceremony, the couple think very seriously of their future together. The majority of us still regard our marriage vows as solemn promises, not just pious hopes.

One has to be grown up to manage a marriage. This hasn't anything to do with actual age; a girl of 18 may make an excellent wife and mother, or a man of 45 may still be acting like a schoolboy. Maturity shows in the way we react to situations. Of course, there are times

difficulties. But it stands to reason that if you feel that troubles are brewing you should try to do something about them. First, make an effort to talk frankly and freely with your partner. If you can honestly do this you will have gone a long way towards setting things right again.

Sometimes, however, we can't talk, because we feel deeply hurt, or frightened or shy, or the words simply won't come. Then is the time to find someone reliable to turn to. You may have someone you know and trust, but if you haven't there is always the

National Marriage Guidance Council. They will put you in touch with a counsellor trained to give help in these matters.



So much talk of marriage difficulties may become rather frightening, but remember that for every broken marriage there are many, many more happy ones. It's simply that much less is written and said about them.

Marriage is the toughest, biggest, most difficult job we undertake. At the same time it can be the richest, most exciting, most rewarding, and the most secure adventure of our lives.

In your marriage there is no need to wait for the future — create it together.

When all of us want to lash out in anger, or feel so desperately unhappy that we want a pair of loving arms around us. What we actually do about these feelings at the time depends on what emotional age we have reached. The more adult we are the less compelled we are to act on our feelings. Don't think that the feelings lessen. They do not; but we learn how to cope with them.

We all make mistakes — big ones at times — but what really matters is whether we learn from them or not. Running away, either literally or mentally, when marriage becomes too difficult, is not the answer.

Talking Together
There are no golden rules, no magic spells to avoid all the

the dust in the atmosphere. Nevertheless, an occasional douching by means of an eyebath with a mild lotion is beneficial. One teaspoonful of boracic crystals dissolved in half a pint of boiled water is a harmless and effective eyewash: use the eye-bath with fresh lotion for each eye. The first signs of eye-strain should be reported to your doctor, who will put you in touch with an eye-specialist if necessary.

Beauty Tips

EXERCISES. Six simple exercises have been selected as a daily routine. Five to ten minutes given regularly on rising will soon leave a sense of well-being and keep the body fit and supple. Wear just a vest and panties.

Deep Breathing. Exercise 1. Feet together and hands on the hips at the waist-line. Fingers in front and thumbs at the back. Rise slowly on the toes and inhale deeply through the nose, with mouth shut, until the lungs are fully expanded. Keep the shoulders well back and the head held high. Exhale slowly as the heels come to the ground and press the fingers firmly into the waist to assist the emptying of the lungs. Repeat ten times.

Exercise 2. Stand firmly erect with feet together. The arms extended to the front hands together. Slowly swing from right to left as far round as possible, swivelling the body from the hips. Reverse the movement from left to right and repeat ten to twenty times. The heels only may leave the ground just a little to increase the length of the swing. Breathe through the nose. Inhaling and exhaling smoothly and without hurry.

Exercise 3. Stand upright with arms extended to the front. Swing them back horizontally, expanding the chest to the full. Repeat this move-

ment, breathing through the nose, ten times, increasing gradually to twenty.

Stomach Muscles. Exercise 4. Lie flat on the floor, arms to the side. Slowly elevate the legs to an upright position without bending the knees, and as slowly resume the horizontal position. During this movement the head and shoulder must not leave the floor, nor should the arms move. Five times may be all that can be managed at first. Gradually increase to ten or twenty times after the first week or two.

Exercise 5. Stand with the hands together high above the head and as far back as they will go; then slowly bend, keeping the body taut, and touch the toes. If the toes cannot be reached without bending the knees, give three or four little jerks towards the toes. Then slowly resume the upright position, breathing through the nose. The knees must be kept rigid throughout the movement. Do this five to ten times. With practice it will be found that the toes can be touched with ease.

Exercise 6. Lie flat, keeping head and shoulders to the floor. Raise the body with the hands supporting behind buttocks, elbows on the floor;

scidom that the average child is encouraged to go beyond the university in the average Bangladeshi family. "She'll have to manage the household matters. It is better for her own future to spend more time on the household cooking and sewing than pouring over her history or geography books. What are the terms of women working today? Which man wants his wife to work in the long run, though he would like her to read, write and speak fluently? Too much of reading will go into her head.

She's such a bookworm as it is. We've planned to get her married to her first cousin who works in the airlines, which we consider is a lucky catch for a plain girl like her, with no housekeeping talents into the bargain. Yes, her old pile of books and magazines will be put away and locked up too," ring out the death knell of the promising intermediate college student. And so the strangled and suffocated dreams and buried under ground.



Young Women Like Sporting Western Clothes in the City. —Star Photo