

LIVING

Magical Mystery Show

by Fayza Haq

CHRISTMAS Eve was a delight for the children at Alliance Francaise, with Ulfat Kabir waving his hands, saying magic words and filling the atmosphere with flowers, feathers, a pigeon and rabbits. The young ones specially loved it when they participated in the magical performances themselves.

"As a child I learnt a few magic tricks from a peon at school. I happened to watch a magic show at my father's office and got inspired by that. While studying at Chittagong I came across a book on magic and I began writing to the author Aladdin. I also started learning from him and assisting him. When my father was transferred to Pakistan I watched a number of foreign magicians performing in hotels. I talked and learnt from them. I would search for

books on magic in the book-shops and libraries." Ulfat explained about his entry to the world of magic.

He is now a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians at USA and gets a magazine "Linking Ring" from there regularly. There are magic shops abroad and he gets some of his materials from there, although, he like other magicians makes quite a few things in Bangladesh. He gets video cassettes from abroad for teaching too. Ulfat has now been performing for thirty years.

He is not a full time professional. He has a steel furniture factory and he practices magic on the side. "Magic performances are a seasonal affair. It is in winter that we are most in

demand. Every year I give about a hundred performances and on an average get Tk 5,000 for each show. Sometimes we charge less and at times nothing at all as in the case of charity shows for orphans and cripples," Ulfat elaborates.

Among the items that thrilled the children was "appearing cane" in which a handkerchief was transformed into a cane. This cane was again changed into a handkerchief. Ulfat then placed a balloon in a small pagoda and brought out a white pigeon in place of the balloon. Next he placed ten leaves of plants into a container and these he changed into red and yellow goldfish.

He then produced a rabbit from fire and mysteriously

made the rabbit disappear after placing it in a cardboard house. There was then the multiplying of billiard balls which came out of the mouth of the magician. There was "the miser's dream" in which coins were plucked from the clothes of the audience or from their temples and ears.

There were a number of magical performances with flowers — the small sized ones became magically large. They changed colour before the eyes of the audience. There were performances with rope cutting and restoring. A scarf with dots was shaken and all the dots fell out. The dots were then restored to the scarf with another shake of the hands of the magician. A black rabbit and a white one were interchanged in their containers. There was also the "water of Bangladesh" in which a container was emptied several times and yet appeared full the next few times. Bottles of drinks were multiplied and replaced by a glass of milk.

"We magicians would like to go abroad and gather experience. I have been to China, Thailand and Hong Kong on invitations," Ulfat commented. When asked to explain his magic he elaborated, "Eighty per cent is a psychological game and ten per cent is skill. The trick is to divert the audience's attention elsewhere, while the hands perform the mechanism." He informs that there is an academy where magic is taught in Dhaka for which, on average, there are about ten students paying Tk 1,500 for the three month course.

"Magic is an ancient art which goes back to thousands of years and should not be snuffed out due to lack of encouragement. There is no language barrier and it appeals to one and all," he stressed.



Ulfat and his wife Rukhsana performing a trick along with a member of the audience

Winter and its Delicacies

by Parveen Anam

JUST as we are about to despair with the state of affairs in this our beloved land, heaven smiles upon us, the weather gently turns gentler and summer months are but a memory. Even the most hardhearted will bear with us here and admit no place can quite match the glory and beauty of the glorious months of winter.

The endless weeks of the most wonderful blue skies puts the proverbial "South of France" to shame. (weather wise, I hasten to add) and the Bengali's love for his country and nature is renewed. It is a time of "mellow fruitfulness" and the bounty both in terms of the weather and the vegetables, fruits and fish, gladdens the heart of the weary soul.

Starting mid-October, when actually it is still quite hot, the winter vegetables, as we lovingly like to call them start to make their tentative appearance in the city markets. Admittedly, the price, the first couple of weeks is prohibitive and most city dwellers can only look longingly at them and bid their time till the price starts to slide down. It is generally a downward trend from mid-November onwards and quite within the reach of most till February-March, when they again begin to sky-rocket. By then of course, the Bengali has more or less had his fill and sighs and waits for yet another winter.

Winter is the time not only for the vegetables to fill the stands, it is also the time of the year for the fish market to be inundated with the most wonderful and delectable fish. The price of fish generally is high in the summer months and the supply, erratic. Come the winter and the fish market starts to fill up. It is easier to fish in the winter months, when the water starts to recede and the fish have been allowed to grow in



Buyers at a winter market

the monsoon. The prawns, perhaps some of the best in the world, reach a gorgeous size now and are delicious cooked or stir fried with the equally delicious winter vegetables. The cauliflowers, beans, car-

rots, cabbages, all are a delicious advent with the winter and there is nothing the Bengali loves more than to go shopping for these delectable items, to cook and put on the tables for the family to enjoy.

This is also the time to go visiting relatives in the village homes; once the children are done with their exams, entire families will take time off to visit the village. There, the story is delightfully repeated with the eternal "pithas" the most loved of all winter delicacies by the Bengali, made and eaten round the fire, early in the morning.

It is a busy time of the year for the housewife of course, who will fuss around the household as she tries to prepare the ground rice for the "pitha". The "pitha" can be eaten either by itself, or for the discerning palate with fish freshly caught and fried or better still with duck specially cooked for the purpose. The variety of "pithas" is of course too vast to actually list here but whichever is made, the Bengali loves it. No other delicacy can quite match the pleasure the Bengali derives from his "pitha" made from freshly harvested rice. Winter is certainly the time for the Bengali to renew his love affair with his beloved country, and if the political parties would leave well alone and not smash cars and call for hartals, in these glorious months, the average man would be quite content to enjoy the months which do not last long enough anyway. An icy ray of horror runs through the sane minds, as hartal call after hartal call is given by successive political pundits, as the months become cooler and the Bengali is less than amused at this tendency of these "so-called" representative of the people to deprive these same people of the simpler pleasures of life.

Please, let us all, for once, resolve to enjoy these glorious months — they were meant to be enjoyed and not go around trying to make everybody unhappy. There is enough unhappiness as it is. Winter is too precious and beautiful to waste on hate and ugliness.

Do You Ever Gossip?

DO you know that a housewife with the proverbial "time on her hands" is less of a gossip than her working counterpart — because she has less to gossip about? That gossip is as universal as eating and sleeping? That it reveals our neurotic weaknesses and is the mirror of the inner woman — or man?

These facts, and more, are emerging from recent studies of the art of mind-reading of people's business.

Dr. Gordon Allport, a psychologist who has probably studied gossip more thoroughly than any other man, says, "The type of gossip your neighbour prefers is a pretty reliable index of her fears, frustrations, ambitions, insecurities and guilts."

"If she tells stories of her friends' infidelities, she may be expressing her sexual guilt — stemming, possibly, from her own unconscious desire to be unfaithful. If her gossip leans to racial or religious prejudice, she may be seeking a scapegoat for her own social insecurity. Almost any personal anxiety will serve gossip's purpose."

Research workers have been unable to find any marked difference between the gossip quotient of the male and female. But recent study has shown that it is the busy woman, or man, rather than the idle one, who has more information to swap and therefore gossips most.

Our customary justification for gossip — "Where there's smoke there's fire" — is also off the track. On the contrary, where there's smoke, the experts discover, there's more generally a liar.

"Bog" is the name given by psychologists to one of three main forms of gossip. The others: "the wedge-driver" and the "pipe dream."

The wedge-driver is defined as: "hostile or aggressive gossip designed to divide people, ruin faith or destroy loyalties." No one will ever know how much martial trouble has been caused or how many reputations have been ruined by wedge drivers.

The wedge-drive has its unprincipled uses in the business world, too. Some years ago a cigarette company was shaken by a deliberately planted story to the effect that a leper had been found working in one of its factories. The story spread and sales fell, despite the health reports on its workers published by the company and the reward unsuccessfully offered for uncov-

ering the source of the rumour. It finally died, but not before the company had suffered considerable financial loss.

The pipe dream is born of wishful thinking. Office gossip of a bonus, or of the imminent firing of an unpopular boss, is typical of the superficial pipe dream. But the pipe dream is also an escape valve.

Someone once observed that sex leads to more gossip than it does to mating. Our heritage has endowed most of us with a deep rooted feeling that sex is naughty. So, to avoid a sense of guilt, we try to blot out of our consciousness any thought or impulse that deviates from the accepted standards of sexual behaviour. Yet we gossip with ill-concealed gusto about the amorous antics of others.

Such pipe-dream gossip, says one professor of social psychology, allows us to have our cake and eat it too. We can enjoy a vicarious erotic thrill and, at the same time, stifle any guilt feelings we might have with the self-righteous thought, "well, I'm not so bad — look what he did!"

Whenever we gossip, and no matter what motive impels us, we are really seeking just one goal: a greater sense of personal security. Sometimes we are only seeking to bolster our social egos. As Dr. Allport explains it, "To be 'in the know' always exalts one's self-importance. While telling his tale, the gossip finds himself socially dominant." Our centre-stage role is doubly gratifying if our choice bit of hear-say knives someone whose social achievements surpass our own. Quite illogically, we feel that we increase our own stature by whittling someone else down.

In much of our gossip, however, we are searching for reassurance of an inner rather than a social nature. "People who can't face up to their faults often try to find scapegoats," Dr. Allport tells us. It's much easier to shut our eyes to the fact that we may be narrow-minded, or sexually frustrated, or prejudiced, or even just selfish. And we find it even easier to believe the worst about others, using a convenient mental process known as projection. We project on to others the things we don't like in ourselves. This process is also known as the pot calling the kettle black.

"We'd all be better off if we exercised intelligent control over our tongues," says a psychologist. But can they be controlled? One cynic says, yes,

by amputation. Dr. Allport isn't that drastic. He suggests five simple defences you can build up:

1. Don't be afraid to ask for evidence to support a story or rumour being passed on to you. If it isn't forthcoming, let the story end with you.

2. Appraise the narrator of a piece of gossip. Does he or she have any hostility towards, or prejudice against, the subject of the gossip?

3. Consider whether or not the gossip you are about to relate reveals any of your own psychic dirty linen.

4. Distrust all gossip that reflects a current hysteria, whether it be racial prejudice, an election campaign or a bitter factional fight on your local committee.

5. Learn your own weaknesses, and then face up to them.

"When you're mature enough to be able to face up to yourself," Dr. Allport says, "you'll discover that you can actually like yourself, flaws and all. And then you won't need a scapegoat."

— Courtesy "Glamour"



Cookery

Potato Cheese Cakes

- 1/2 lb. potatoes
- 1/2 lb. sugar
- 2 oz. currants
- 3 eggs lemon flavouring

Boil the potatoes and mash them finely, then add the butter, sugar, currants, flavouring and the eggs well beaten. Mix all well together. Line some patty pans with pastry, three-quarters fill them with the mixture and bake in a moderate oven until nicely browned.

Rice-Flour Cheese Cakes

- 1 oz. roasted rice-flour
- 1 oz. soft sugar
- 1 oz. butter
- 1 oz. currants
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder

Beat the butter to a cream and beat into it the eggs and the sugar. Mix in the flour gradually, then the currants picked and cleaned, and the flavouring, and lastly the bak-

ing powder. Line some patty pans with pastry, fill them with the mixture and back in a moderate oven until the pastry is crisp and the mixture nicely browned.

Chocolate Tartlets

- 2 oz. grated chocolate
- 4 oz. cake crumbs
- 2 oz. sugar
- 2 oz. butter
- 1/2 oz. corn-flour
- 3 eggs vanilla flavouring

Beat the butter and sugar together, then beat in the yolks of eggs, add the chocolate, cake crumbs, cornflour and flavouring and, lastly, the whites of eggs beaten to a stiff froth. Have ready some patty pans lined with pastry and fill them with the chocolate mixture. Bake in a moderate oven. When done dredge with sugar.

Coconut Tart

- 2 oz. desiccated or finely ground coconut
- 1 oz. roasted and finely sifted rice-flour
- 2 oz. sugar
- 1 oz. butter
- 2 eggs vanilla or rose

Flavouring cadjunuts

Beat the butter and sugar together, then add the eggs well beaten, the rice flour and the coconut, flavour to taste and mix well together. Line a pie-dish with any kind of pastry preferred, but do not bake it. Fill up with the coconut mixture, sprinkle the top with sliced cadjunuts and bake in a moderate oven until the pastry is cooked and the mixture lightly browned.

Custard Tartlets

- 1 pint milk
- 4 eggs flavouring
- 1 tablespoonful sugar

Put the milk into a saucepan and heat it over the fire. Beat the eggs with the sugar and pour the hot milk on to them, stirring all the time. Flavour with any flavouring liked and stir the custard occasionally until cold. Have ready some patty pans lined with pastry. Fill them up with the custard and bake in a moderate oven until the pastry is cooked and the custard lightly browned.

Hair and Beauty

by Sylvia Saleem

AN elegant woman knows how to use a mirror — best of all a three-way mirror in a good light. This is the way she comes to understand her facial structure. She learns her good points and plays them up for all they are worth. Her bad features she camouflages.

shorten the face. With a long jaw line and long nose bring hair forward over cheeks to shorten the line of the jaw — wear it high on the crown of the head to balance the length of nose. A high forehead calls for a short fringe starting from a cross-parting. A coloured hair-



Elegant and Economical

ARZU Subuhi Chowdhury who held an exhibition of clothes recently at the Alliance Francaise, sells designer clothes from her house in Mohammadpur. She uses two tailors at home and employs four others from the Geneva Camp.

Arzu had included light "zari", "katha" stitch, beads, seed pearls and glass in her exhibition. "Different types of embroidery is in vogue. The 'Banarasi' yoke is welcomed by my clients. The fabrics I use range from handloom to linen silk and tissue. Thus I use both local and foreign materials. The prices range from Tk 550 to Tk 2,500. The clothes are sold mostly during Eid. Otherwise there is a lull in the sale. I have decided to have regular sales. I earn about Tk 40,000 every Eid and Tk 7,000 every month," she said.

In the 34 items exhibited the most attractive pieces included a pale green set with embroidered work at the yoke and sleeves.

There was a flaming red tissue with delicate beads at the neck, to be worn with culottes.

There was a pale mauve set with a lining of satin. It was an

"angarakha" with a coatie and embroidery of sequins.

An off-white set in gold tissue with dots had paisley patterns in red and green, which was quite eye-catching.

Of reasonable price and sober design was a yellow "shalwar-kameez" with embroidery in green, blue and red, using different shapes and sizes of glass work. So was another blue linen set with sequins and embroidery in orange, with floral motifs.

A "Shornkatan" ensemble with lining and floral patterns with a "Banarasi" yoke was liked by many. A "shalwar-kameez" with glass work on front and two sides was also the choice of many.

A handloom "kameez" set with gold threads in it, decorated with black buttons and a black collar suited buyers with limited budget. So did the flowered cotton set with its contrasting panels and its "V" neck.

Exhibitions and sales of clothes are always welcomed by the women in the city. It sometimes turns out to be cheaper than going to a tailor and certainly saves a lot of hassle.

The greatest help in creating an illusion of perfect facial structure is choosing the right hair-do.

The wise woman will wear an off-the-face hair-style only if she has the shape of face worth showing off — oval or heart-shaped — with a good profile.

Wide faces and long faces need a more helpful hair-style. A wide face requires height on top and soft side-pieces curving on to the face to narrow it. Flicks of hair turning outwards on a short hair-style can soften a wide jaw line.

A short, lump neck can be emphasised disastrously with a long hair-do and a large collared neckline. Keep hair short, tapering into the back of the neck or swept up into a swan-necked style. Wear necklines low and simple to create length.

A small face is pretty but will disappear behind masses of hair and ropes of beads. Keep hair and accessories short and simple for a neat, sweet look.

The long face must beware of too much height, and hair should be brushed across the brow rather than taken straight back. A short style with plenty of side fullness will

band looks pretty with this style.

For a long chin, balance with a little height on top, plus a wisp of hair fringed horizontally. Avoid a fringe with this shape of face as it will shorten the upper part of the face and make the chin look longer.

A girl with a low forehead can also wear a fringe but must start high up on the crown of the head. This is a particularly flattering style if you have big eyes and well-shaped cheekbones.

For eyes which are too close-set wear hair brushed back diagonally to give a wider look. Keep eye shadow to the outer corners of the eyes and elongate eyebrows with a soft pencil.

A long neck is something to be proud of but if it is thin it can be a problem. It is easily disguised with high necklines or jewellery but do not top it with too wide a hair-do or you will look top-heavy. Do not be afraid to experiment. Even the most flattering style will become a little out-dated. If you have the right shape to work on, you will find that a few slight variations on your chosen theme will bring your familiar hair-style right up to the minute.