



Putting Your Child Through School

by Fayza Haq

FROM the time a child is born parents seem in a state of panic as to what school to put him in when he is three or four years old. "You have to book years in advance in some of the reputed schools," one parent sighs when asked why she could not put her seven year old child in a school like "Scholastica". One mother cancelled her trip to Dhaka from Ottawa, after her eight years' stay in Canada because her son had just begun school. Another mother stays in USA, away from her husband in Bangladesh, as she has three young children at school abroad.

Not only do both the parents struggle to get a small child's grades up but they also keep a tutor for a five year old child. In one home there is a grandmother, mother, tutor and "maulvi" shouting, scolding and petting three children, all under six, and yet the school results are not always upto the standard that the parents want.

One mother appears to have done well with her son of four years and got him admitted to "Southbreeze" but for that she did little else for four years, abandoning her job, aerobics and her women friends. For years she dedicated herself to grooming the child so that he would have entry to a good school. In between, she went from pillar to post asking headmistresses, assistant headmistresses and teachers for her son's admission. Whenever you met her all she would talk about was her son's possible admission, before he finally got admitted.

Another mother, like many mothers in the country, is perturbed for years as her child is normally an intelligent, well-behaved one and yet she is having problems with her for the last three years, changing schools and tutors. The child was happy when she was transferred to "Nehar's" but the mother felt that the child learnt next to nothing and spent most of her time in talk and games. The child is helped by her uncle, aunt, mother, father, and grandmother — whoever has the time, plus a tutor for mathematics and Bangla. She was recently transferred from an English medium school to a Bangla one and her results were disastrous. "Even her English marks were deplorable," the grandmother laments. They took the child out of school and had a tutor

for months. Now the child is taking an entry test to four Bangla medium schools, with the elders at home all in jitters. "With limited seats and a large number of applicants it is so difficult to be sure that the child will get a place in a good school," the grandmother comments.

Not only is admission a headache but taking the child to school and bringing him



A Scholastica play-group child

back is a bother. Not all parents have cars, chauffeurs, or a retinue of servants for the children and must leave their office work, as both parents are working and they do not trust a servant. The servants can barely cook and clean. How can you trust them with the safe delivery of a girl of six? one mother asks, whose husband drops the daughter to school and she later takes time off from her office to pick up the child. Her employers are not happy about her taking an hour off, but she has not other

studies. As the child grows older sometimes he has as many as six tutors for his different subjects, and this is a drain on the parents' income. The mothers are so tense about their children's examination you would think they themselves were sitting for the tests. They talk about little else in their work places and at home when their friends and family drop by.

Some parents do not have the money for numerous expensive tutors. So they rush home from their offices and

work late into the night with their children.

Mothers complain that admission in some schools is sometimes with the teacher's reference, or it may take place if the child has a sister or brother in that school, or due to giving of large donations, or the candidate maybe from the minority community areas. At the tests they say that essays written by the parents and learnt by heart by the child is given preference to original essays by a child.

It is sometimes seen that a tutor from the same institution where the child studies must be employed so that the child does well, a tutor from elsewhere will not do. However, in some special schools there is a rule, at the same time, that teachers of the school cannot tutor children from the same school. Yet a mother who wanted her child to be admitted at a school had to hire a tutor from the same school paying him Tk 1500 for fifteen days' work, without any guarantee that the child would be eventually admitted at the reputed school.

Occasionally, if the children have been admitted to good schools and colleges, government officers are compelled to leave their families behind in Dhaka and manoeuvre all strings to be posted back to Dhaka within six months, even though the normal tenure is said to be three years.

At times the parents want the child to go to hostels in India, but they seldom have the money for such expense, and a young child often does not want to leave the environment of parents, cousins, uncles and aunts. Parents are also afraid that in their absence the child may pick up bad habits from their comrades. They are also not quite happy with some of the co-educational institutions abroad.

After school there is the tussle at colleges, all parents wanting their children to shine, go abroad for final training and then have good jobs. TOEFL, SAT, and GRE have to be crossed and good students from Bengali medium institutions have quite a task ahead of them. "Mariam is thin as a rake working at her project at the Cholera Research Centre and then coming home to prepare for examinations to be admitted in a college in USA or UK," one mother complains.

To have children is a joy but to educate them satisfactorily is no easy matter.

neat winding does make for an even effect.

Once you have bought the correct home perm kit for the type of wave you require or the type of hair you are to perm, you must follow all the instructions to the letter. It is most unfair to complain of your wave if you have not followed the manufacturer's directions exactly.

If you have had your hair bleached or colour-treated a test curl must be taken, and this is also advisable if this is your first perm of any kind — a few women are allergic to chemicals used in perming processes.

Old perm must be cut away first, and it is much easier to do a home perm on hair that has been layered — that is, cut so that the ends fall in layers around the head — rather than hair that has been bobbed so that it is all the same length. For bobbed hair, an end perm may be sufficient to give a slight bend to a straight style and help to keep it tidy.

A stark white "saree" with beautiful needle work in blue, green and yellow on a bright red border, was one of her best works. But, the Tangail

when one thinks of "days of old" the picture which immediately flashes to the mind, is of peaceful scenes of children playing, mothers cooking and fathers away at work to come back at dusk to a well cared for home.

Not any more though. Thanks to modern technology and advancement, life is too hectic now. Mothers have put away their aprons to join the work force. Modern life is too expensive anyway, to survive on one income only. Hence, the housewives have to earn to supplement the income of the male counterpart. And of course, education certainly plays an important role, as more and more women are arming themselves with professional degrees to meet the man on an equal footing.

And yet, the woman is vexed to find that looking after the family and the children is still very much her problem with little or no help from the superior male. Most men consider it beneath them, to even causally help around the house and the onus is entirely on the woman, harassed as she is, to keep the domestic scene blissful. With very often than not, not even a "thank you" from the man.

However, since the woman has to do all the looking after on the domestic front, the time seems to have arrived for them to find alternative means to ease the pressure in looking after the family. Domestic help is fast becoming an impossibility. And the housewife is unfortunately left looking after a busy career and the household affairs. So many new ideas have

Nannies, Anyone?

by Parveen Anam



A nanny looking after the young one while the mother is away

sprung up that it is quite surprising when one realizes that none seems to be centred on directly helping the busy "lady of the house."

It would be a wonderful idea if someone started a training centre of sorts, to train up women who could be hired out to act as nannies or governesses even in families with small children or busy mothers. This trained nanny or governess could double as a housekeeper and look after the

body to generally supervise the domestic staff, pay their salaries on time, schedule their time off so all are not on leave at the same time (!) and make sure each does what he is supposed to do.

The interesting point is note here is there are any number of educated women graduating each year with little or no job prospects. It would be a wonderful idea if some sort of agency could be set up to train these women and hire them out. These agencies would not only make sure the women were of respectable backgrounds but that the homes they would be working in were respectable too. Our country and society still has a long way to go in accepting women on many job fronts and it would be critical to make sure that the homes wanting the services of nannies, housekeepers and governesses be just as respectable as the women they expect to hire services from. The dignity of labour must be maintained and upheld. And it is never too late to begin.

Once the idea catches on of agencies for trained housekeepers, life would be much easier for the harassed housewife. She could have more time for herself and her family instead of running around in circles trying to match her time and that of her family. These housekeepers or nannies could work a certain number of hours and leave once the master and mistress of the house come back from work, which could ensure privacy all around. It certainly is an idea well worth looking into and giving a serious thought.

Traditional yet Trendy

by Lavina Ambreen Ahmed

HUMAIRA Hossain Urmee, the owner and designer of the boutique "Must" recently held an exhibition at House No. 24, Road No. 5, Dharmod.

"Sarees" and "shalwar-kameez" sets with block-print designs were the exhibition's main highlights. "Our culture fascinates me and I like to experiment with block-print designs, so I combine the two and try to bring out the exact traditional look in my designs," said the young designer. "I didn't have any training. It was sheer enthusiasm and the love for designing clothes, which inspired me into starting up my own boutique," Urmee added. Now, quite successful, she has a few workers helping her with the designs and sells clothes all the year round, selling about 30-40 pieces at each exhibition.

Keeping in mind the budget of the average Bangladeshi woman, Urmee said, she tries to keep the price reasonable. The price of silk "sarees" ranged from Tk 1800-Taka 2400, while cotton "sarees" were Tk 500-Taka 1400. "Shalwar-kameez" sets were available there from Tk 750-Taka 1700.

Among all the "sarees" the shimmering Mirpur Katan silk ones with black block print patterns in emerald green, flaming red, turquoise, electric blue and golden brown vibrant colours were quite eye-catching.

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cotton "sarees" and the handloom ones with block print designs made a big hit with the customers. Some Tangail "sarees" had embroidered motives done all over the body matching, or contrasting with the border.

The "shalwar-kameez" sets were straight in shape with slits at the side, they were

"I give a lot of emphasis on 'dupattas', and all my 'shalwar-kameez' sets have 'dupattas' with them. I believe that a 'dupatta' can enhance the beauty of an otherwise ordinary 'shalwar-kameez,'" explains Urmee.

A white cotton "shalwar-kameez" set with neat, multi-colored embroidery on the red borders at the neckline, sleeves and the sides of the "kameez" was quite impressive.

So was a blue set decorated with white lace and seed pearls at the yoke, the same set also came in a yellow shade.

A bright floral printed cheese cotton set with orange applique flowers at the yoke and the sleeves was again the choice of many.

Besides "sarees" and "shalwar-kameez" sets, shawls with block print patterns, "katha stitch" or "Gujrati" motives were available at Tk 450-Taka 500. Also, one could get colourful "dupattas" at Tk 150-Tk 225.

There was also a collection of exquisite pottery reflecting our tradition, displayed at the exhibition. At present, she is planning to introduce new ideas and styles for the coming Eid.

Designer clothes are gradually becoming quite popular in our country, with women of all ages. Maybe these designer wears would prove to be more profitable for both the buyers and the sellers — if the price was a little less.



Humaira with her display

Macaroon Tartlets

1 lb. ground almonds

1 lb. powdered sugar

4 whites of eggs

a squeeze of lime juice

almond flavouring

jam

puff or flaky pastry

Sieve the sugar into a basin, add the ground almonds to it, also the lime juice and a few drops of almond flavouring. Add the whites of eggs and beat the mixture well together. Line some patty pans with pastry, put a little jam into each and fill up with the almond mixture. Lay two thin strips of pastry across the top, dredge well with sugar and bake in a moderate oven until the pastry is nicely browned and the mixture firm to the touch.

Mango Tart

mango jam

1 pint milk

1 tablespoonful cornflour

2 tablespoonfuls sugar

2 yolks of eggs

2 whites of eggs

vanilla flavouring

pastry

First prepare a custard. Mix the cornflour to a smooth paste with a little of the milk; put the remainder of the milk into a saucepan and heat it

over the fire, mix in the cornflour and let it cook from 5 to 10 minutes stirring all the time. Then remove the saucepan from the fire and allow the contents to cool slightly. Beat the sugar and eggs together and add the flavouring. Mix this together with the contents in the saucepan and stir the custard occasionally until cold. Make an open tart but do not bake it. Put a thick layer of jam at the bottom of the tart and cover with the custard. Bake in a moderate oven until the pastry is cooked and the custard lightly browned. Sprinkle with sugar and serve the tart either hot or cold.

Jam Tarts

short crust

edges with a pair of pincers of a knife, brush them over with beaten egg and dredge with sugar. Place the tarts on a floured baking tin and brush the tops with beaten egg and bake in a brisk oven. When baked fill the centres with any nice jam.

Jam Puffs

sweet paste

egg

jam

sugar

Roll out the pastry rather

thinly and stamp out rounds

about 3 inches and 2 inches in diameter. Place the larger rounds on a floured baking tin and brush them over with beaten egg. Then with a smaller cutter stamp out the centres of the smaller rounds and place the rings upon the on-the-tin. Brush the tops with beaten egg and bake in a brisk oven. When baked fill the centres with any nice jam.

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4 inches in diameter. Place a little jam in the centre of each, wet round the edges with white of egg and fold the paste over on three sides in the form of a triangle. Flute round the

Cookery

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Pitha

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