

LIVING

Some Male Notions about Women's Obsessions

by Fayza Haq

It is sometimes believed by experienced, intelligent and fully sympathetic males that the opposite sex prefer to be recognised as correct rather than being reasonable. It is often believed by them that women will leap to what they believe is the correct solution to a problem with bewildering and unmatched speed. There are innumerable ways by which women clutch on to a conclusion, believe the "wise men", universally. They believe that women have a "hang-up" about being omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent about vital matters of the mind and heart. They do not like to be criticized or lectured goes the common male belief. If there are important matters such as deciding which career should be chosen for the child, or whom the eldest "heir apparent" should be affianced to, the mother, grandmother, aunts and sisters will want to have the first and last words, goes the common male belief. Decisions such as budgeting for the house, or making future plans for investment, are matters that lie in the hands of these destiny makers, men often comment. Minor matters like which plants to grow on the roof-garden or which domestic pet to be kept, often have women as the main dominating decision makers, goes the common male understanding. Women will not listen to patient guidance, or gentle or reasonable cajoling or explanations, say some men.

Another matter that puzzles the male mind, no matter how sophisticated and sympathetic, is that women, according to them are obsessed about how they look, when they are in public. They spend a large portion of the income that comes to the house, whether jointly or singly, to spend on sarees, shalwar-kameezes and the cosmetics and jewellery that are sported by them. In an average case of a middle-aged bourgeois couple in the metropolises and even in the suburbs and villages, it often may happen that money has to be put aside for children's education, clothes, transport, food and other investments.

As a consequence, the woman's apparel may be out of fashion and unmatched. The male remains confused but cannot blurt out and say to the woman, "You are a ratbag" or "You are not far from a stuffed partridge with your confused

and unmatched clothes and accessories" for that would be harsh and undiplomatic. To comment, "You look perfect for the occasion" would again be a white lie that any perceptive woman could easily see through and not be gulled. There is not much, most males believe, that they can

important happenings may be taking place. Men may say that when a couple are out at a wedding reception, *milaad*, or a well-earned table for two at a restaurant or hotel, at a weekend, quiet anniversary, or a private and secluded birthday celebration, the woman will needlessly chat with other

been told about, by expert and half-baked beauticians, or even friends, family, acquaintances — settling apart what they see on the TV screen and what the video supplies them with. They swim: go in for aerobics; yoga; jogging; stand-still bicycling; morning or evening walks; they pine after figures like that of Naomi Campbell, men sometimes say. This is even though woman may appear like some scrawny chicken. They regularly weigh themselves on the bath scales, or even along the foot-paths, goes the story according to certain men. Next follow a quixotic binging on *mishi*, *biryani*, sweet curds, cream biscuits and ice-cream, when the mood takes the women, so that they appear to possess no will-power at all, according to male comprehension and observations, as is sometimes believed.

An idea of female memories are another matter that embarrass and confuse some men. They say that while expensive birthday or anniversary jewellery is misplaced or laid aside absent-mindedly by women, they will recall trivial or minor events that may have occurred literally ages ago, which the male mind does not necessarily lock up in their grey cells. At times say, at a merry gathering, the fun of the occasion may be marred by a wife or *petite-amie* who will suddenly and unmeaningfully make a faux pas, and recall the blunders of the male counterpart, on the first picnic or the honeymoon.

Such fluctuations in the mood and behaviour are surely beyond the common male comprehension. It is often said that responsible males do not gossip, while at their *bureaux* while they hold their official meetings; make important decisions, and give marathon dictations for carrying out of distribution of official work. Yet it is a fact that they find time to gossip and tattle over the tea-break or lunch-break. Meanwhile, the female counterpart, according to some males, behave like a prime minister or the leader of the opposition at a parliament: busy cleaning and scrubbing the house or ironing the children's clothes when she is offered a bouquet of *rajanigandha* on an anniversary or birthday occasion.

The difference between the two adult sexes, and partners in life, is perhaps, due to an opposite outlook of life and living.

male/female friends, families and acquaintances about matters about how to select and control domestic servants, the children's school or college progress, or even the passing rumours and gossips about the goings-on at the *Shangshad*, till the food gets cold, lumpy and unappetising. Women of all ages and IQ level cannot resist the interfering *tete a tete*, when more vital matters are at hand, goes the average male belief.

An often-heard complaint about women from men is that they follow all possible diets that they have read about in local and foreign dailies and periodicals, or they have heard or



"Maschka with a Mask" by Otto Mueller

Courtesy: Expressionism German Painting 1905-1920

comment about a woman's appearance, without a disastrous and dramatic crashing of crockeries by the frustrated, over-worked and perplexed woman. "To be or not to be" honest or deceptive applies here, goes the common male conjecture, who cannot be a successful smooth-tongued liar, and get away with it scott free. Neither can he be blunt and to the point. Here, again, the every day male feels trapped in a maze of puzzles about female psychology.

Yet another common lament, confined to only best friends by males is that women tend to talk at length about unnecessary matters, while

by Anita Aparna Mueyed

of small cottage industries, which were basically extensions of the domestic unit. With the formation of market systems, merchant entrepreneurs began to provide material to independent families and paid them set wages for the items completed over a certain period of time. Now, this was the crucial point where the subtle transition occurred: the period where labour force quietly slipped into the hands of commodity, and evolved into what is called abstract labour.

These cottage industries sought improvement and specialization and rapidly burgeoned into little factories in order to control quality and pace. These small factories, in

association with the growing market demands, expanded and grew larger and larger. With this burst of growth, the implementation of mass concentrations of workers in a single locations emerged. People who were one from dispersed areas were gathered into a workspace away from their homes. Henceforth, workers could no longer devote their time on domestic work. Consequently, customary community-life was destroyed.

According to Marx, the material world and labour are of nuclear importance to existence: the driving force in people's lives. One produces and reproduces physical existence through labour. One produces material things to

meet one's biological needs, and to sustain human life. Once these needs are materialized, new needs emerge. And since Marx believed that humans are inherently social, he perceived production and labour not only as natural needs, but also as social needs. Cooperation is a productive force which not only connects humans together, but determines the kind of society they inhabit. Hence, the way labour is organized paves the trend in which people think and act.

As a result, classes and inequality were ever-nurtured. Similarly, the development of the capitalist mode of production directed people towards alienation and prompted the existence of desperate classes. According to Marx, the division of labour dehumanizes, and is the prime factor in activating alienation. It bounds the individual to one task, inhibiting him/her the enjoyments of any other business. In the factory, the proletariat became nothing more than a tool, an extension of a machine. Labour, that should have been free and natural, became a heavy burden.

Marx observed that both the proletariat class and the bourgeois class were undergoing alienation. Yet, this effect affected both groups very differently. Marx was convinced that the contrasting experiences would incite class struggle and conflict. The bourgeoisie was in a position of vantage. Its task was to procure the accumulation of surplus wealth produced by the proletariat, and empower itself by the comprehensive exploitation of the latter. In contrast, the proletariat was alienated through severe degradation of human condition, self-destruction, poverty,



A delineation of life in Russia

Tribulations of a Female Adolescent

by A S M Nurunnabi

IN the present stage of our social ethos, an adolescent of the so-called weaker sex faces a number of problems, the nature of which sometimes appears to be inexplicable or incomprehensible to her. In most families with a fairly conservative outlook, such an adolescent comes under constant surveillance of her parents, especially in our eastern society. This attitude appears quite different from that adopted in the case of her male siblings. The reason for such a differential treatment, in general, is the parents' concern for her own behavioural conduct and welfare. When she goes for any reason outside the house, her parents remain worried until her return. The social reality is that in our everyday existence many things which a male adolescent can do without most people raising their eyebrows, become questionable in the case of his female counterpart.

Complaints are often aired by the female adolescent that her parents, by and large, fail to comprehend her. Say, for example, there is a telephone call for her from a male acquaintance or classmate, she may feel perturbed as her parents might look askance at her. She is furthermore confronted with queries, at times, as to who, when and where the telephone call had ensued from. If she returns home, later than the usual, she may be often faced with a barrage of questions or even a stern rebuke.

Such embarrassing situations, however, may not affect her male sibling. At times when the son marries his partner in life, which may be of his own choice, the family does not always create too much of a row over it and accept the marriage. If, on the other hand, a young woman expresses her desire to marry the young man of her preference, she may often face considerable oppositions from her own family and relations. Even if the opposition is finally overcome, she is sometimes made to feel as if she had

committed a misdemeanor — difficult to be easily forgiven or forgotten by her or anyone closely associated with her.

In our eastern society's city life, most female adolescents, particularly of the bourgeois strata, tend to lead a confined life. Even in her leisure hours, say, in the afternoon, she is not always permitted to take a breath of fresh air on the rooftop of her house. This is because her parents may be afraid that any neighbouring wayward

young man may tease her by some thoughtless and irritating remarks.

Female adolescents often receive obnoxious telephone calls. Again, there are few commendable parks in the city, where such an individual may spend some leisure time, without drawing unwholesome remarks or attention from unruly elements. Her male sibling, on the other hand, does not necessarily meet such embarrassing situations. This again, applies

mostly to the female adolescent coming from our middle-class members of society.

The problem is that in most cases, the female adolescent believes that her parents unduly interfere with her personal liberty, which she believes she has a right to. At times, parents harbour unfounded suspicions on the slightest matters about their teenage daughter, and impose strict discipline and prohibitions on her. This may create adverse reactions in her mind resulting in her being obstinate, thus creating an undesirable mental barrier between them. In such a situation, misunderstanding on both sides becomes the inevitable outcome.

The point at issue is how to ensure the security of our female adolescents in the context of our social bourgeois tradition. The prime need appears to be to effect a gradual change in our mentality, so that the gap between them is finally bridged. To achieve this, it also appears necessary to put up a firm resistance to the conservative and reactionary elements, bent on stifling the growth and development of a healthy social outlook on this issue. The parents need to understand that times have changed and this results in new social values which are inevitable.

Youthful exuberance is natural in the process of development of personality of a teenager. This must be clearly comprehended and sympathised with. Youth and inexperience, which go hand in hand, may sometimes lead to the commitment of lapses. In such circumstances, parents should try to understand it with sympathy. The teenager should also try to comprehend that her parents have only her welfare at heart and that being "with it" does not include thoughtless conduct. There is a definite necessity for maintaining trust in a spirit of mutual compromise between the parents and their teenage daughter so that both sides trust and understand each other.



Taking a breath of fresh air

Courtesy: India Perspectives

Are You a Hypocrite?

by Rashida Ahmad

A quick quiz to find out how genuine you really are: Remember to answer all questions truthfully. Just look up the answer that is appropriate.

1. You bump into a friend in the street about whom you have recently heard some unsavoury tales.

Do you:
a) Smile sweetly and ask some subtle questions to

find out more, so that you can later add to the gossip?
b) Inform your friend of the rumours being spread, and ask if they are true?
c) Make some cutting remarks, and walk on with your nose in the air?

2. You notice someone at a party that you have met before and dislike. You try and avoid them but later the hostess introduces the person to you as her favourite cousin.

Do you:
a) Say you have met before and pretend you are the best of friends?
b) Say you have met before and have a short but civil exchange of greetings?
c) Say you have met before, and declare that you cannot possibly remain at the party a minute longer under the circumstances?

3. In a friendly conversation about politics, a person you are rather attracted to is in favour of a principles you disagree with.

Do you:
a) Agree publicly and support every word?
b) Enter into an intense debate with them by stating your objections?
c) Decide that there is no way you can like a person with such beliefs, and never speak to them again?

4. Your children are becoming as headstrong as you were as a child. You are having the same problems disciplining them that your parents had with you.

Do you:
a) Tell them that you were a model child, and your parents never had any problems with you?
b) Tell them that you remember what it was like at their age, but also tell them how wisely your parents dealt with you, and how much you learnt from them?
c) Tell them that they can do as you please, because that is what you would have wanted at that age?

5. At work, your boss makes an offensive joke at the expense of a close colleague.

Do you:
a) Laugh uproariously, even though you do not find the joke funny?

b) Ignore the joke?
c) Tell your boss what you think of him/her?

6. The child of an influential acquaintance is a spoilt one.

Do you:
a) Buy expensive gifts and make a fuss over the child, whenever you see them?
b) Tolerate the child with good humour?
c) Make a point of displaying your distaste at the child's behaviour?

7. Your two best friends have had a serious argument.

Do you:
a) Make snide remarks at each of them about the other behind their backs?
b) Refuse to take sides, but help to reconcile them?
c) Decide to have nothing to do with either of them, until they have made up?

8. At your brother's house, you notice a painting on the wall that is quite atrocious. You ask about it, and are told that it was painted by your sister-in-law.

Do you:
a) Extol its virtues at great length?
b) Avoid any criticism of the quality of the artwork but comment on the

therapeutic nature of painting as a hobby?
c) Tell them that it is quite atrocious?

9. You go with a group of friends to see a rather boring film at the cinema.

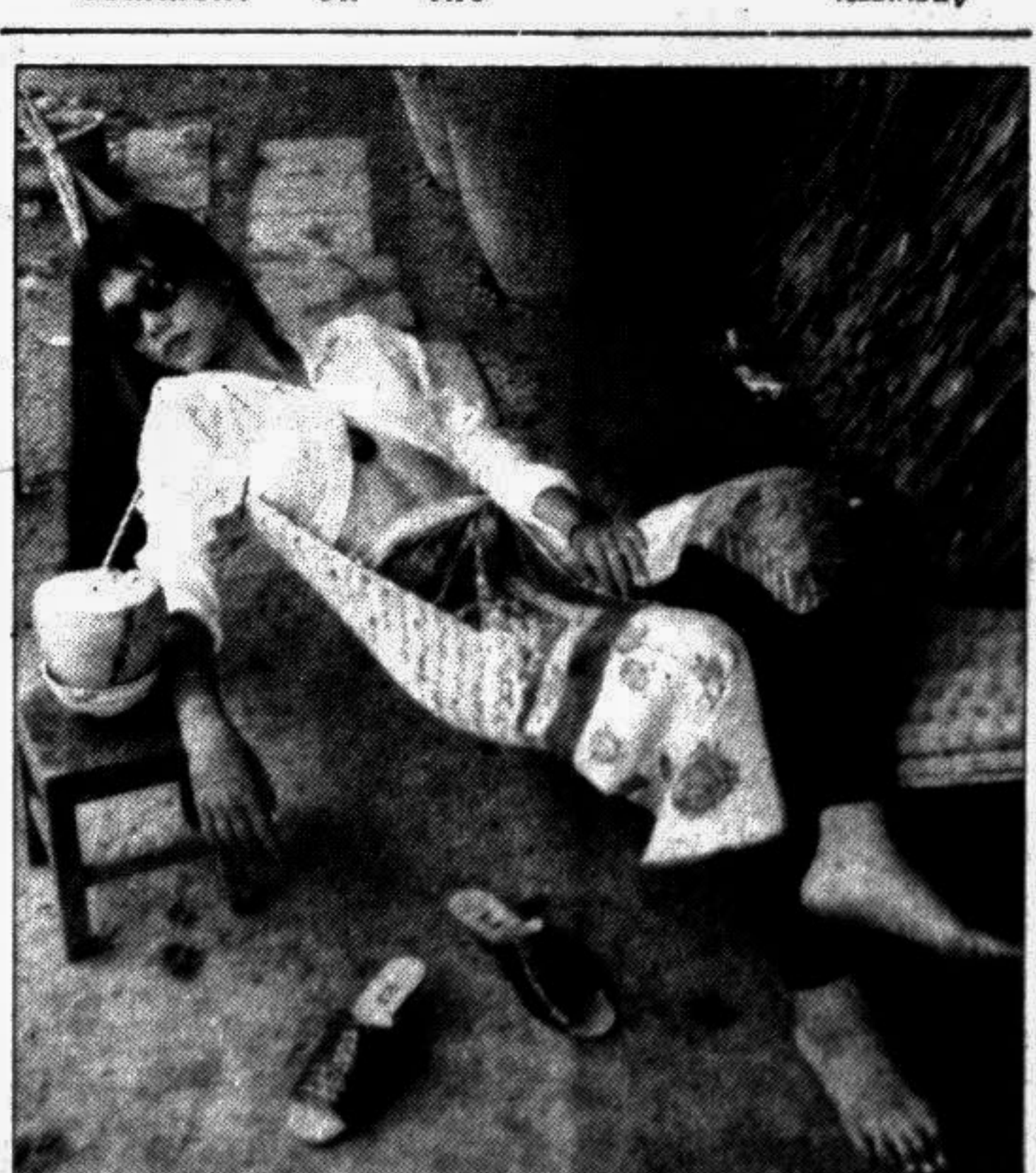
Do you:
a) Wait to see what the other's opinions are before you say anything?
b) Announce that you would not recommend the film to anyone else, but you had a pleasant evening nevertheless?
c) Declare that you will not be going to the cinema with them again, unless you get to choose the film?

10. How many times in the last week were you forced to say something you did not really mean?
a) 10-20
b) 1-5
c) 0

Mostly "C's": You appear to learn some more social skills.

Mostly "B's": You appear to be quite tactful. But you are certainly too good to be true.

Mostly "A's": Ever heard the expression "have faced"? Are you sure that you have faced? Are you friends?



Relaxed and cool

Courtesy: Elle