



Lagging Behind in Vanity Fair?

by Fayza Haq

Men complain unendingly of how their wives or sisters always delay the seeing of a film, the attending of a reception or even catching of an early morning flight. This is explained as all due to the hours spent on preening and prinking.

Yes, the mirror on the wall is a constant companion of most women. In this context, a female is often compared to a white elephant, and here in the East, it is literally taken for granted that "when a man marries his troubles begin".

A woman's time in manicuring, pedicuring, slimming and hairstyling, apart from facials, are often subject of male public discussion. It is the topic of muffled and mumbled despair of the men who naturally want more of their women's time. Yet, does the male not chop off hours from his daily routine to dandify his appearance, whether it be for office hours or for the Friday get-together card-playing, or singing session of the Rabindrasangeet or Nazrulgeet?

One has only to go through his bathroom shelves, and the portion of the dressing-table, where one can spot the assortment of his bounty of after-shave lotions, hair creams, hair conditioners, tinted shampoo and plain black dye. The hand-lotions, powder and Paris perfumery cater for men specially, as do the other much treasured items from Singapore, Bangkok, London, New York and Rome.

It is not in the bourgeois home alone that one is accosted with the special hair dye brush or the cologne or even the surma. The dilettantes of the days of Moghul Empire have left its indelible impact on our male, as shown by his fussing and fuming over the starched and embroidered pajama-kurta or laundered shirts and trousers. Get a man's tie crumpled or even his collar soiled slightly with lipstick when his vanity makes him beside himself with undue care. Yes, the dolled up Don Juans and Alain Dellons line up from here to Timbuctoo.

The pains with which men of the lower income group do their wardrobe shopping, too, can be the subject of enormous fun and banter. Men are undoubtedly as conceited as maharajas, or dukes in the Elizabethan period, with their untold and numerous line of

female admirers, and with even from highways and by-lanes, as outside the Newmarket, near the Balaka Cinema hall, and even at Bhutergale.

As soon as the clerk or the shop-assistant gets a raise, he dashes for the new pair of soft leather shoes, with off-beat

grime of much of the city, the silk and poplin prints and the rest of the finery are flaunted their numerous peccadilloes. The second-hand shops are scoured for fancy and foreign trousers, slim-fit jackets, and shirts with the suave classic cut.

The multi-coloured hand-

the pale-blue pin-striped, or the purple and orange batik spotted shirt — from Bangkok or New York — are as bad as the fussings in women's coffee-parties and get-togethers. Similarly, the \$200 worth pair of shoes from Beirut are paraded for all to see — before friends and acquaintances — even though the owner of the prized possession may be earning no more than Taka 5,000 per month.

In the same manner, in any office, whether it be a bank or an insurance establishment or an institution of accountants or engineers or even a lawyer's chamber, or a male doctor's clinic, the fancy hair-cut, the new cut and length of moustaches and toned hair are always commented upon as if the place were some boudoir of some lady of leisure, in the days of legendary kings and queens. The cut of the trousers, the flare of the jacket, the breadth of the neck-collar and the material of the bush-shirt — all often appear to be the subject of discussion, even in the so-called intellectually inclined institutions.

This is not to say that men should be bereft of trends of the time or have their women alone parading in the finest of pearls, chiffons or laces. But where women have their obvious weakness, men too have their Achilles' heels, when it comes to dressing up and looking like some dashing Richard Greere or Jeremy Iron, or even Tom Jones or Lancelot in the fiction and poetry books. From the toddling stage to the college years and the career sector of a man's life, as an actor of the universal stage, the male too craves for this dressing-room tidbits to be perfect to the last stroke and stitch.

It is true that the average male is less conspicuous in his penchant for the scramble for looking spruce and dandified, as compared to the average feminine demands for the orange sari or the black netted blouse. Yet, going by the bills of after-shave and pre-shave paraphernalia and the hair-cream — matched with the body-cologne and talcum-powder, used by the male in the average the bourgeois home, the man is certainly not lagging behind in the vanity fair drive and compulsion.



A male model dressed in the height of fashion.

Courtesy: Italian Embassy

colours, in-vogue heels, and Italian or French toek. His eager eyes then seek out the beige jeans and corduroy trousers and Oxford brief-cases are sported by men in the city — on the pavements, buses, rickshaws and taxis — apart from the shops, offices and well-to-do drawing-rooms. Amidst the dust, dirt and

kerchiefs, the gay blue or even most economical but fashionable brand of semi-synthetic material for trousers. And does he love to parade his finery before his colleagues in his office or work-place! The male comments that follow the "ooing and aahing", the sensuous touching of the material, and going into ecstasies over

Why I Love Italian Men

by Letitia Baldrige

A "he" is a "he" and a "she" is a "she" — and absolutely glad of it

NOWHERE is a girl made to feel so desirable, so sought after, so conscious of her sex as in Italy. Here a woman's only qualification for being worshipped is that she be a female; this mere accident of nature is enough to send the Italian male into fantasies of praise and jumping hormones.

Sip an orange juice in a pavement cafe and listen to the Italian men at the next table. As an old "gal" of 70 walks by, one man says to the others, "Ah, see how her legs are still very good." A cross-eyed girl of 12 passes, hugging her schoolbooks. "Mamma mia, what a nice colt! Who cares about her eyes when the hips are that good?"

The Italian male considers it his pleasant duty to compliment just for the sake of pleasing. My towering height — six feet — would often bring upon me in the streets the whispered title of "Athena". Then would follow comments like, "May I bring a ladder, so that I can gaze into you beautiful eyes?" or, "Don't you need an extra man about the house? Even if you're married?" A woman becomes accustomed to these murmured accolades, and to the frankly flattering stares. They help her to "look younger and live longer."

Back in England, I always felt that a young man who asked me out for the evening expected me to amuse him. In Italy it is just the opposite. An Italian beau starts the evening by effusing compliments the minute he sees the girl; after 15 minutes she feels that she is Gina Lollobrigida's main competitor. He notices her clothes, her jewellery, her perfume, and staggers her with things like, "Every man in the room is jealous of me, because I have you on my arm."

A girl may throw back at him some harmless little thing like, "I like your tie." This is a mistake. He replies that he'll buy up every tie of that pattern and colour so that no other man will be able to deserve such a compliment from her lips. A girl finally learns to relax and let the traffic go down a one-way street.

I had heard so much talk about "Latin immorality" that I approached the prospect of

living in Rome with some apprehension. However, after three years of observing Italian men, I found that there is obviously much more "talk" than anything else. We Anglo-Saxons with our fears and taboos attached to "bedroom talk" would do well to imitate

ter?" "I was just thinking," he said, "how pleasant it would be if you and I were off alone together, by the sea or on a mountain top — anywhere far away from people and jobs and everything." I burst out laughing. It all

even catch the name of my Ezio Pinza-type "dream man," and I never saw him again. But the next morning a parcel came to my door, addressed to "Signorina Letizia." Inside the flowered-paper wrapping was a little white porcelain elephant round which crude black stripes had been painted. "When you dream tonight," read the card, "perhaps you will think of me." It was not even signed.

Think of him? I shall never forget him.

This awareness, one sex of the other, pervades the whole day. As I left my flat for the office, the road sweeper would greet me with something like, "Good morning, my beautiful young lady. I see you have a special sparkle in your eyes. I hope that whoever the young man is, he merits it." Immediately, the bags and circles under my eyes were replaced by a "sparkle".

At my garage I find Eduardo — six foot three of bronzed muscle, topped with a Praxiteles head and black curls, and with chestnut eyes that could melt an iceberg. He opens my car door for me, gazes steadily at me as he cleans my windshield, then puts his head into the window to dust the dashboard — all very unnecessary. With his head still inside the car he transfixes me with those incredible eyes and says, "Did you have a good time last night, Signorina? Was he — er — a good to you?"

He means nothing by it, but I go forth from the garage blushing, usually in the wrong gear.

At work, the building superintendent comes in to report that he has ordered a new fan for my office. When I thank him, he says, "To be able to do something to please you, Signorina, brings an intense pleasure that I shall live on all day." Then he bows his way out. Italians even make romance out of business.

It's this wonderful *tenzone* between the sexes that is an important part of the charm of living in Italy. There is no other country where a "he" feels more like a "he" and a "she" feels more like a "she" — and terribly glad of it.

Courtesy: "Roman Candle"



An Italian gallant aiding an English lady

Courtesy: "The Battle for the Villa Fiorita"

the Italians in their facility of expression. They talk of love so animatedly, so constantly, that they work off a lot of steam in the process. Why should an Italian be criticized if he makes a woman feel she is a combination of Theda Bara, Diane de Poitiers and Marilyn Monroe?

Italian men's eyes express in a glance what mere words would require many minutes to say. On my first evening out with a charming Roman named Ernesto, I began to squirm under my escort's continual silent stare. Finally I could stand it no longer. "Ernesto, why do you look at me like that? What's the mat-

sounded like a film script. But, no doubt about it, the guff was pleasant to hear. And, after all, Ernesto's Italian compliments made more interesting listening than what I had been accustomed to hearing at home at the end of the day — the closing stock exchange quotations.

It does not take long to realize just how attractive this romanticism can be. At a party one evening shortly after my arrival in Rome, I met an attractive, distinguished man of about 40. We got talking about dreams, and I mentioned one I'd had, about white elephants with huge black stripes walking through the jungle. I didn't

Angels at Work

The next time you see a zebra or a peacock or a humming-bird, pause and pay tribute

by Dorothy Van Doren



I like to think that while God was busy with the larger wonders of creation — placing the stars in the sky, ordering the galaxies, separating the waters from the land — a group of young angels became a little obstreperous and bored.

The Father of all, though doubtless He might with a wave of His hand have silenced them effectively, chose to give them a task to work off their restlessness.

"Go and make things," he might have said, "small things. I'll attend to the larger ones."

And do it quietly! The little angels were happy to obey. "I," said the smallest, "will colour birds' eggs. White eggs may be good enough for hens, but wild birds should have prettier ones." "I," said one of the larger angels importantly, "shall do

butterflies." The littlest angel set to work with a brush and a box of colours. He made the large egg of the ibis blue-green like shallow sea water over sunny sands. He coloured various eggs grey or pink or blue or green, and then put spots on them. The spots were brown, small and regular on the egg of the brown thrasher; on the crested flycatcher's egg they were delicately drawn, like fern fronds. I can almost see the littlest angel, his wings folded neatly over his back, his feet twisted one over the other, and his tongue protruding sideways from his mouth to mark the seriousness of his endeavour.

There were comies among the little angels. Only one with a sense of the ridiculous could have put a top-heavy protuberance on the sharp curved beak of the rhinoceros hornbill, or have designed the wise, wrinkled faces of young monkeys.

Who but a tiny angel could have put the fastest little motor in the world into the humming-bird's minuscule body? Who but a mischievous angel could have made the puffin: red legs, squat black-and-white body, large black head and fat, striped beak?

I wonder about the crow. Perhaps it was the end of the day and the bird-decorating angle, being tired, thought he would try glossy black and nothing more — although it came out iridescent in the sun. His sense of comedy triumphed; he gave the crow a loud, raucous voice.

I think of young angels doing this busy work on a rainy Saturday, for she: colour and shape. Make it red, one said; put a green stripe here, another proposes; I like pink, says the third, and makes flamingos.

The young angels provide the only plausible explanation for these charming caprices in nature. Surely somewhere in the process of creation there was an intelligence with a sense of humour, a love of fantasy, an airiness and a delight in manipulating a paintbrush and all the colours of the spectrum.

(Condensed from Men, Women and Cats)

Basics of Hair Care

YOUR hair is your most important beauty accessory. Its condition and style can affect your general appearance in a most obvious way. If it is poorly styled or in a bad condition, no amount of clever make-up or fashionable clothes can detract attention from it. Your hair is the frame for your face, and its colour and style should suit your skin and enhance your facial features. How to wear your hair and how best to look after it are determined by a number of factors. These include the texture (fine, normal or coarse), its moisture content (dry, normal or greasy), its movement (wavy, curly or straight) and its natural colour.

Spring reassessment Spring is the time to remind yourself of the basics of hair care, taking into account your particular hair type. Give dull hair a revitalising conditioning treatment after winter and reassess your hairstyle. One that is natural and easy to manage is best in spring, particularly if you have worn elaborate party styles over winter. Look to what is fashionable but always adapt it to suit your face and your particular hair type.

Healthy hair Like the fur coat of an animal, the condition of your hair reflects your general health. Strong and glossy hair is healthy hair whether it is curly or straight and whatever its colour. Usually hair is not in peak condition at the end of winter, simply because most people are less health during colder months.

Some hair facts Like skin, hair is a complex living organism. Basically, each strand of hair consists of three layers. The outer layer or cuticle protects the inner layers: the inner cortex, made up of long, thin cells, gives the hair its elasticity and contains the pigments for colouring; the central medulla is spongy tissue.

Nourishment The root of every hair is encased in a follicle and at the base of this is a tiny nodule, a papilla, which contains protein cells to nourish the hair. Blood vessels and sebaceous glands supply the hair with further nutrients and lubricating oils. As with the skin, the activity of the sebaceous glands determines the degree of dryness or oiliness in your hair.

Texture and movement Whether your hair is wavy, curly or straight depends on heredity, as does the texture of your hair. Most people have between 90,000 to 150,000 hairs on their head (fine-haired blondes have the most, coarse-haired brunettes and redheads have the least) and on average you lose about 100 to 200 hairs a day, which are continually replaced by new hairs. Physical or hormonal changes in the body, and illness, shock or stress can increase hair loss but in most cases this is temporary.

Growth Your hair grows at the rate of about 13mm (1/2 in) per month but this varies not only according to season (hair grows faster in warmer weather) but also according to age (growth slows down as we get older) and your general state of health and fitness. Contrary to popular belief, cutting the hair does not encourage hair growth although it does make the hair look healthier simply because it gets rid of split or impoverished ends.

It is soft and slippery. Generally, it lacks fullness and body and is often difficult to set and keep in a certain style. Women with fine hair should stick to a natural, easily managed style that shows off the shine and texture of the hair. Coarse hair, usually dark brown or black in colour, is thick and often wiry. It generally takes well to setting but is best suited to simple or dramatic styles.

Your hair's natural tendency Your hair may be wavy, curly or straight and it will be easier to manage if you take advantage of its natural tendency. If your hair is curly, get your hairdresser to follow the line of the curl or layer it

Colour Your hair colour is determined by three pigments — black, red and yellow — which are present in the cortex. Hair goes grey when the cortex stops producing any pigment at all. The age at which this occurs is largely a matter of heredity, although emotional shock and stress, serious mineral or vitamin deficiencies, especially of vitamin B, or a thyroid condition can produce prematurely grey hair.

Know your hair type You can identify the texture of your hair by examining two or three individual hairs. Fine hair is like a silken thread and

(straightening curly hair is not generally successful and can be very damaging to the hair). Wavy hair tends to fall in a certain way and you should try to follow this natural waving shape. After setting or straightening, it tends to quickly revert to its own style. Straight hair usually hangs and swings well but many women get bored with it. It can generally be permed successfully.

Every woman needs to alter her hairstyle from time to time but do study your particular hair type carefully before adopting a currently fashionable or radically different style. Remember there is nothing that can alter the texture or thickness of your hair although you can curl it or colour it. Capitalise on your hair's natural advantages if you want hair care to be easy.



Courtesy: Helen Rubinstein Rubenstein Beauty Book

Looking Out of the Window

by Nico den Tuinder

THERE is a very popular joke in the Netherlands about civil servants. Why do they always look out of the window in the morning? The answer, then they have something to do in the afternoon. Having been long enough in Bangladesh to father a child, I wonder why Dutch civil servants would look out of the windows at all. There is simply nothing to see. At my previous employment my window looked out over the frozen outskirts of a dull small town. The director of the publishing house once parked his car in the residential area in order to save a walk from the company's huge parking lot. That was the most exciting event that ever took place. During the two months before, I came

to Bangladesh, I looked out over the glass-and-concrete skyscrapers of The Hague. The sights in Holland were so boring that working hard was the only way of killing time. Now time is killing me. I have a busy job, and there is much to be seen from my window. Going to sparsely inhabited villages, and painstakingly digging out the secrets of the society is what I imagined the job of a cultural anthropologist to be. But now that I work right in the heart of Motijheel, I find it the best place to get to know Bangladesh.

The only thing I have to do is getting up from my chair whenever there is an unfamiliar noise. Cheating politics in-

timidation, mismanagement and strikes: it all happens right under my nose.

My office room looks out over a stray field, a sports club and a drainage canal under construction. The field was excellent for performing "tricky" business. An entrepreneur sucked out petrol from private cars and sold it to "baby taxis".

Some days ago, there were some elections. Of course, tents had been erected right on the middle of the streets. Nobody could park his car anywhere anymore, and the resulting traffic jam was horrendous.

A day later, there was an outburst of violence. Some twenty to thirty men, armed with clubs, began demolishing a slum area. They also began tearing down a shed, and dumped it into a building pit. I could watch the panic on the people's faces. A day later, the slum that had been there originally was there again as if nothing had happened. Bangladeshis have a tremendous resilience.

The following day, there was a big demonstration. Youngsters fired crackers, which resounded like some bombs in the tunnel of high-rise building of the area.

I know a man who once spent several years of his life in Canada. He found it so dull there that he decided to return to Bangladesh. "There is always something happening in this country," he told me. I can acknowledge this.

