

# LIVING

## The Mother-in-Law Bogey

by Fayza Haq

**Can the modern Bangladeshi woman, with her penchant for a career drive, university education, and her unquestionable elan vital cope with the unavoidable "slings and arrows" that may sometimes ensue from the in-laws? She obviously, often, has to placate, pander to, and play-act with them, according to reports. Yes, there is also the other side of the picture, where a new female individual from, more often than not, a different social, economical and cultural background has to be absorbed into the fold of the in-laws themselves. However, more often than not, whether the marriage be a love match or an arranged one, it does not necessarily have "and they lived happily ever after" finale of marriages, as the formative fairytales, at school are read out to the girl-child. All marriages are a gamble, say some psychiatrists. Yet the hackneyed concept, the ideal for the eastern woman is to marry, fall in love, and later pay homage to her male, is sometimes too much of a naive belief to swallow whole for our wives.**



A bitter mother of three growing children, who works from eight to six for a living, as her husband was once incapacitated, says about her mother-in-law, "She is there only to point out my faults and to say that I'm not looking after her son as he deserves, when he has his occasional bouts of illness. She refuses to help out with minding the children, when I go to work and they have to be at the mercy of the neighbours. She has her second husband as the perpetual excuse for her lack of interest in the upbringing of her grandchildren. However, when Asif, my husband, is now better, and has a job of a sort, she insists in practically living with us, and finding faults with the running of the house, as if I were the bonded maid of the house and not its mistress."

Another perplexed and frustrated young woman, who has married outside her community, and without the approval of her in-laws, narrates with choked feelings and tears in her eyes, "Salim's mother has asked me to leave behind my son, and to go back home with my baby daughter, the second child. She has objected to my occasional cups of coffee and a cigarette or two. No one points out her addition to the paan or the hookah. She is like some unquestioned Juno of the house and repeatedly poisons Salim's mind against me with one complaint or another. The repeated crushing criticism not only reduces me to smitherens but piles up endless doubts in his mind".

A happier and luckier housewife, who stays with her in-laws, Nigar Hussain, has this to comment about married life. "There is the nonstop and cut-throat competition between one daughter-in-law and another. A wife is valued for the expensive trousseau and dowry that she brings with her. Her parentage and her ability to produce healthy male heirs is as much an obsession today as in the medieval times".

been a vivacious teenager and the life of every school or college gathering before her marriage. Not all in-laws are understanding or cultured enough to have the newcomer in the family have her own way, no matter how harmless that might be," she comments further.

"Some of the independent spirited college and university educated wives are lucky enough to have their husband to themselves, should the young man have a job as a doctor, or an engineer aboard. But these lucky few can be counted on finger tips," observes another disgruntled and confused wife, who, still paranoid of her in-laws, after eleven years of marriage. "Aslam my husband, is bothered about the marriages of his numerous sisters, the foreign training of his brothers, and husbands of his sisters — who literally live off him, and make a despicable sucker out of him day after day, as he has an eternally soft corner for his family".

"It appears, in comparison that his own children occupy a secondary place in his heart and mind. He is even galled into maintaining a Mercedes for his dilettante younger brother Ashgar, while he himself drives a small Austin, and even pays for this loathsome first wife's alimony. And when my in-laws are invited to my children's birthday, as usual, do not even bother to bring along Tk 50 worth of sweets as a mark of affection. Who can believe that they can be so utterly callous and selfish? She comments without meaning to purposely malign anyone but merely give a candid portrayal of her side of the in-law picture".

There is no running away from this common in-law confrontation. Wives have to be more tolerant, hard-skinned and ready for any pitched battle of a devious or open nature. Women can't possibly, in this day and age, swallow their identity, or forget their individuality by being a pale inconsequential shadow of their husbands or a puppet in their strings. They can only learn how to make it in the struggle for survival.

## Perming Hair

by Blossom Kochhar

**T**ODAY'S new perms are professionally designed for the active, on-the-go lifestyle.

There is a special perm for every individual, depending on the texture, condition and style of the hair. Every perm can and should be as individual as your own hairstyle and lifestyle.

Any perm can give you curls, but successful restructuring of the hair necessitates the expertise of a professional cosmetologist. Their knowledge and experience is essential in determining exactly what technique is required to create the look designed just for you.

The advantages of permed hair are numerous. The finished perm offers the wearer adaptability and versatility. The hair benefits from the support of a professional body wave.

both aesthetically and functionally.

### How Often Should One Have a Perm?

As the name implies, curl is permanently waved in the hair. Although the curl may relax a little after shampooing and day-to-day wear, it will never entirely go away. As the hair grows and you have your hair cut, your perm will be cut off. The new growth from the scalp will be straight and on the average, most people need a new perm every 3 to 4 months. When your hair does not hold the style you desire, lacks body, then it is time for a perm.

### The Difference Between a Salon And a Home Perm

A salon perm is different

from a home perm in that most perm lotions contain chemicals that damage hair when used by inexperienced users and frequently result in underprocessing — that is little or no wave. Your stylist, however, has the technical knowledge and expertise to know exactly which strength of perm solution, rod size, and wrapping technique is best for your hair and hairstyle.

### How Long Does the Service Take?

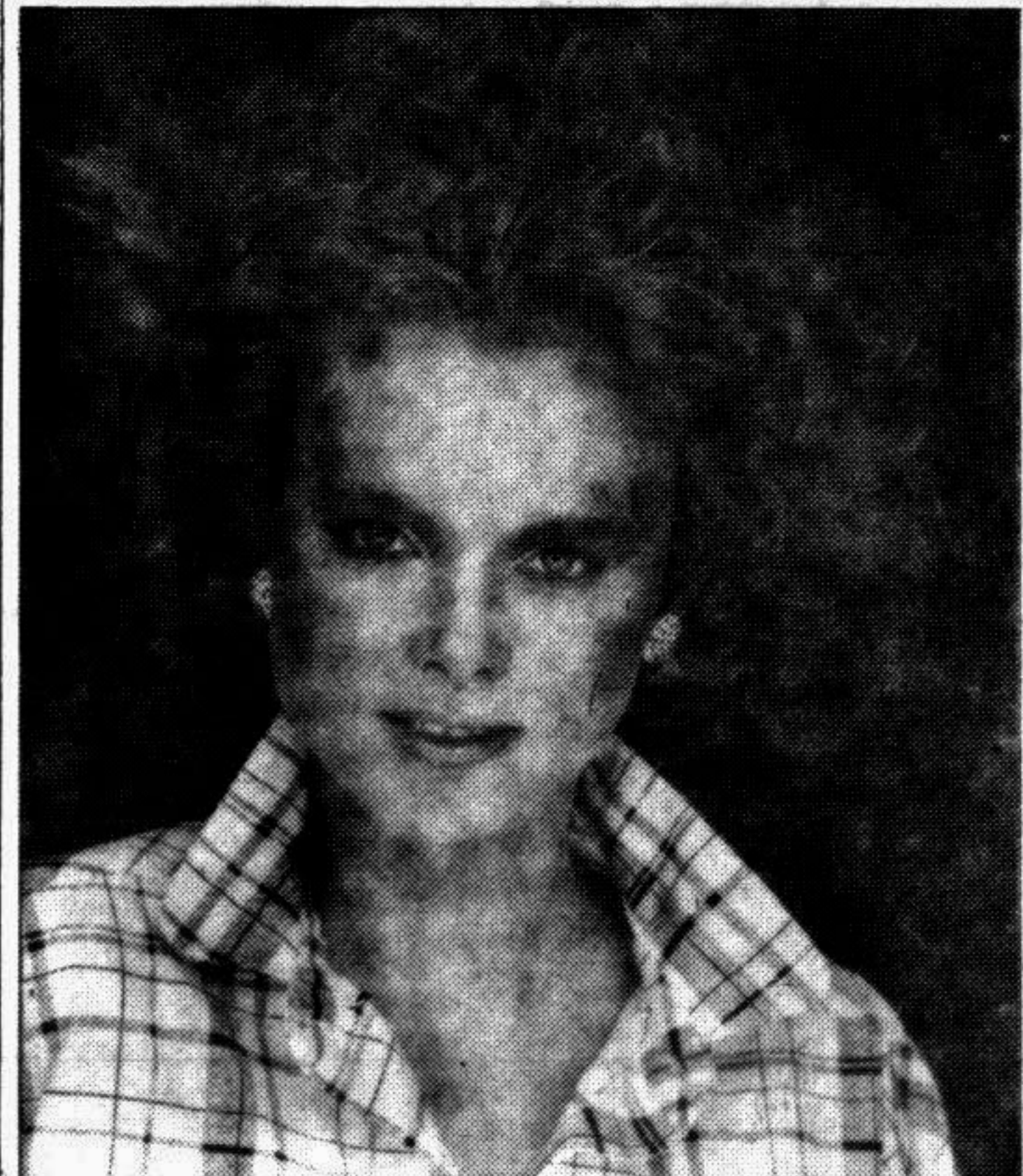
With today's busy lifestyles, the busy woman is hesitant to allow time for a perm. Once the decision is made to have a perm, allow from 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours for the service. The largest part of the service and one of the most important is the wrapping of the hair on the perm rods. Do not try to rush your stylist; some wrapping techniques can take as long as one hour.

### Does natural Curly Hair Require a Permanent Wave?

People with curly hair do get perms, to re-direct the natural curl into a more manageable pattern or to achieve a particular look or style and to even out the curl. Also if you would prefer a smoother, less curly look, a perm on larger rods can reform the curl into a larger smoother curl pattern. Your professional cosmetologist is trained to redirect your curl pattern the way you want it to be.

### Some Cautions on Permanents

1. There is no reason why anyone cannot have a perm. However, if you have skin abrasiveness or scalp irritation, it is advisable to tell your stylist and wait until they are healed before proceeding with the service.
2. Some medications build up on the hair shaft affecting the results of the perm.
3. Some people who have abused their hair will need a series of treatments prior to a perm service; and
4. Always consult your professional cosmetologist who will advise you about the proper procedures.



## Picky, Picky, Picky

by John Tierney

New Yorkers are the sort who shouldn't have any trouble finding a partner. Manhattan is a magnet for people with intelligence, talent, money and good looks — qualities that have traditionally insured success in the mating game. So why do they have so much trouble? My theory, developed in years of field research before being tested in the personal-ad survey, is that single New Yorkers are singularly picky. They are afflicted with what I can think of the Flaw-O-Matic. You can think of the Flaw-O-Matic as an inner voice, a little whirring device inside the brain, that instantly spots a fatal flaw in any potential mate.

This phenomenon, while

most prevalent in New York, is found in other places, too, and I happened to get my first clear sighting of it on "Love Connection," the television show featuring couples just back from their first date. As I recall the scene, even the placid host, Chuck Woolery, seemed surprised by one contestant's report:

"Well, it started out great," the young man began. "She opened the door and she looked fantastic — beautiful face, great body, nice smile. Everything was going fine — until she turned around." He paused ominously and shook his head.

"Chuck," he said sadly, "she had dirty elbows."

And that was that. The guy went through with the rest of the date, but he knew the relationship was doomed.

Watching him, my first instinct was to suggest that there might be some way for the two of them to work it out — maybe some couples therapy and a little soap and water — but then I realized that it wouldn't matter. He'd just find something else. He sounded too much like the single friends I'd been hearing in New York explain why their latest relationship had gone wrong:

"She mispronounced 'Goethe.'"

"How could I take him seriously after seeing The Road Les Traveled on his bookshelf?"

"If she would just lose seven pounds."

"Sure, he's a partner, but it's not a big firm. And he wears these short black socks."

These New Yorkers all sounded like victims of their Flaw-O-Matics, although none of them would admit to having one. No one ever does. During my years living alone I always knew that my own requirements in a woman were perfectly reasonable — all I wanted was a nice novelist/astronaut with a background in fashion modeling. But I could see that others needed help. One evening, in a Japanese restaurant with my friend Eugene, we noticed heads turning nearby. A svelte blond woman was being escorted to her table. Eugene took a quick sidelong glance at her and gave a bored shrug.

"Your basic blonde," he said. "I was still staring. I don't see how you can call her a basic blonde." I said to Eugene, "You must have one of the new digital Flaw-O-Matics." He glanced at her again.

"She's not even a real blonde," he said. "You can see her roots."

Five minutes later, the woman was joined by a man whom we recognized as Alec Baldwin. Suddenly we realized who the woman was.

"Well," Eugene said, "when the Flaw-O-Matic starts rejecting Kim Basinger, maybe it's time to get it recalibrated."

In an attempt to quantify New Yorkers Flaw-O-Matics, I turned to New York magazine's "Strictly Personals" ads, whose spirit was best captured by an ad beginning: "Not willing to settle? Neither am I!" It was placed by a woman who "Loves all NY has to offer" — except any New Yorker who is not handsome, successful, over 5 foot 9, and between 29 and 35. She and her fellow advertisers could find flaws in most of the planet's population sight unseen. One woman required a man over 5 foot 10 who played polo. A bachelor sought a "cosmopolitan, earthy, high-positive-energy, curvaceous, simpatica woman, 35-42, who has resolved her control drama (I mean it!)." A lawyer, after listing 21 requisite qualities in his "princess," said he was "astonished" to find himself unattached.

Were people in the rest of America like this? I randomly picked a page of personal ads from three issues of New York from the past year and compared the ads with pages in corresponding issue of the city magazines of Boston, Baltimore, Chicago and Los Angeles. The New Yorkers were easily the pickiest. The average ad in New York listed 5.7 criteria required in a partner, significantly more than second-place Chicago's average (4.1 criteria) and about twice the average for the other three cities.

But while New Yorkers were going to such lengths to spell out their partners' qualities, they were strangely reticent in describing their own virtues. On average they listed only 3.6 of their own qualities — fewer than the figure for any of the other cities, whose combined average was 5.1. Everywhere else the singles were more interested in describing themselves than their fantasy partners — they wanted to impress prospective mates. New Yorkers weren't trying to win others' hearts. They were too busy issuing non-negotiable demands.

Source: Naem Moihaimen

## Russian Drinkers in Search of the Real Thing

Julia Nunes writes from Moscow

Millions of Russians are turning to foreign brands of their national drink because the mafia is flooding the market with cheap and sometimes dangerous imitations. And in the topsy-turvy world of the Russian economy sports clubs and disabled groups have become major importers.

**I**N communist times it was called "liquid currency" — a product so dependable it could be traded for virtually any other goods or services.

Among a nation of hard drinkers, vodka has been the drink of choice for centuries in Russia. As Mikhail Gorbachev soon learned in his failed attempts to creak down on alcoholism, the Russian predilection for hard liquor, and especially for vodka, has always proved resilient.

Today, the average Russian male consumes half a bottle of vodka a day. All that is changing is the price.

In Russia's current inflation-ridden market economy, vodka may be the one product whose price is actually falling.

In kiosks across Moscow, a litre of Russia's national drink of choice sells for as little as one dollar a litre. As salaries rise and vodka prices fall, a bottle has become one of the best bargains in town. Four years ago, the average Russian salary could buy 16 litres of vodka a month; today it buys 44 litres.

Prices have been driven down by a flood of cheap, imitation and sometimes poisonous vodka.

"A lot of our Russian vodka is fake," says Mikhail Berger, economics editor at the daily newspaper Izvestia. "The bottles may have water inside or poisonous liquor. We know many cases where people actually went blind and even died because they bought this vodka."

The trade in fake vodka is controlled by the mafia, Berger says, and is flourishing because of poor state controls and a lack of regulations.

"I would never drink this," says one Russian driver as he pours a bottle of cheap vodka into his winter windshield washer fluid. "My health too important."

The problem for reputable Russian vodka-makers is that the imitation product is often poured into their own bottles, marked with the labels of such famous brands as Stolichnaya and Moskovskaya.

Distinguishing the real brands from the fake can be difficult and many Russians

have chosen to stop buying domestic vodka altogether.

"I, like many Russians, prefer to buy foreign vodka," Berger says. "When I see an Absolut bottle, with a special seal on it, I trust that it's the original vodka."

In a country known throughout the world for the quality of its national drink, imported vodka has now grabbed more than one-quarter of the market. Of the almost two billion litres sold each year, about 500 million are foreign brands.

Absolut, Finlandia and US-made Smirnoff have become a

cluded deals worth more than \$3 billion. Vodka is one of products most often imported using the tax exemptions.

The flood of tax-free vodka has drained an important source of state revenues and hurt domestic producers, who complain their own tax rates are prohibitively high.

The Kristall distillery in Moscow is a good example. One of the biggest and oldest distilleries in Europe, it has been making high-quality vodka since 1901. Today, its taxes eat up 92 per cent of the company's profits.

"We are for healthy compe-

tarist rule, Bolshevik revolution and communist regimes, has fallen on hard times.

Production is 30-35 per cent of capacity, the workforce has been cut by half in the past two years and the assembly lines are operating only three or four days a week. The one area of growth is in the export business, which is now one-quarter of Kristall's production.

"We will continue to increase our exports," Ermilov says. "Before we tried to supply our domestic market first but now everything has changed. The taxes make it impossible



**A**FTER Computing the results of a five-city survey of personal ads, I have evidence that may help answer the question so many New Yorkers ask themselves on Valentine's Day: Why am I going home alone tonight?

Expect for an Hawaiian islands settled as a leper colony, no other place in America has such a concentration of solitary souls. Forty eight per cent of the households in Manhattan consist of people living alone, a figure twice the national average and exceeded only by that other island, Molokai. Many of these single people are here only briefly — they find a partner and flee to the suburbs — but many remain alone. In Manhattan nearly one fifth of the women over 45 have never married, the highest ratio of any American country.

As their mothers will gladly attest, a lot of these single



The 'dhoti' shawl from '90 may still be sported with penache in '95. Courtesy: 'Rivaaz International'

to develop at home so we have to increase our exports."

So, as foreign brands flood into the country, Russian brands will be flowing out to Europe and North America, beyond the reaches of the mafia-controlled trade in imitation vodka at home.

And when foreign drinkers pour themselves a glass of Stolichnaya, the enjoy a kind of certainty on Russian can — the knowledge that they will be drinking the real thing.

—Gemini News. About the Author: Julia Nunes is a Moscow-based freelance journalist.