

# ZEENAT AND G. M. SHAH

By Mrs Habib

THE young-looking parents of Raza, aged 18, Imdad, aged 16, and Arif, aged 8, are Zeenat and Shah. A zamindar by birth, but an advocate by profession, Mr Shah said that if he had not decided to study he would probably have been a true picture of a zamindar by now—overweight, with long dense moustaches, leading a sedentary life in Sind, his wife living in the lonely splendour of the four walls.

What made you decide to break away from the rule and take to education, I inquired of him. His brother, Mr Shah said, was a graduate and in a short period of time rose to the level of an Education Minister in the pre-Partition time. This brother had already sown the seeds of the desire for learning and, watching his success, he felt like doing the same.

This is how Zeenat came into his life too. He was studying law in Bombay where Zeenat was studying for her S. C. Love at first sight? "No", said Zeenat, "we knew each other for two years before we married". Being a S. Indian, they met with a lot of opposition from his father, but when he finally gave in he did it most gracefully.

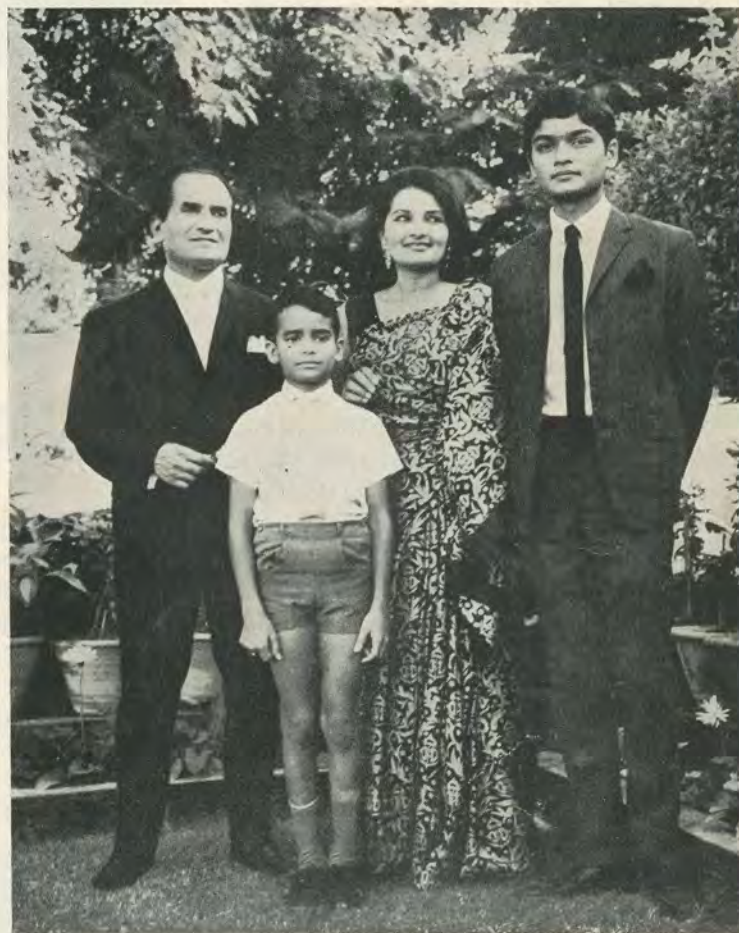
His decision for practising law after qualifying, was mainly due to his desire for giving his wife an interesting city life. With a loving smile he glanced at his wife and confessed that: "The manner in which we effected each others life, made every action which we took to please the other—the most happiness giving deed."

Zeenat said that being married, on leaving school, and coming away to Sind, where she had no relatives of her own and not knowing anyone, alone by herself was very lonesome. Next few years she was engrossed with her two babies and when the babies were both over five years old, with the persuasion of college-going friends, Zeenat decided to continue her studies and joined St. Joseph's College in Karachi.

Very good at sports, she was the triple crown winner of badminton for a few years. She enjoyed being at college, and with an old servant of her husband's family to take care of the boys, Zeenat graduated and again decided to continue and completed her Masters in General History, after which she was teaching at St. Joseph's College till she was due to have her third baby. Zeenat said that she discontinued her teaching for a while. She then joined the faculty of the Home Economics College in Karachi and is still there.

Besides teaching Humanities, she took a keen interest in the extra curricular activities, always using new ideas for parties and training the college team so well that they won many an inter-collegiate event. Her talent at music has been inherited by her three boys (she plays the piano), the two older ones are members of teenage bands, the older one being in the band 'Sinners'. Zeenat feels that though parents are, as a rule, allowing many more liberties to the children, they must find a way to avoid too many distractions for the student. She says that the student's first responsibility is to concentrate on his studies, after which he can relax and spend more time with time consuming hobbies, once he has a career.

As the Shahs' eldest and youngest sons were interestedly joining our discussions, I could see that their mother was a friend to them and not only a parent. So while the hostess was attending to something I asked Raza if he thought he was luckier than his other friends in the kind of parents he had. He paid a compliment to parents in general and his parents in particular. He said: "I have heard of strict and unreasonable parents, but all my friends have as nice and understanding parents as mine are."



Mr and Mrs G.M. Shah photographed with their children.

Discussing her experience at teaching, Zeenat remarked that at college level the relationship between the lecturer and the student is very informal and congenial today. Without detracting from the prestige of the teacher, it gives you a pleasure to treat the girls as adults and equal to you which brings about a better understanding between the student and the teacher. She loves teaching.

Basically, both Shah and Zeenat seem to be home-birds, emotionally easily swayed by another's trouble. After her whole morning is spent at college and after the afternoon rest, Zeenat attends to the supervision of her youngest son's home-work and then her own preparation for the next days work. In between this Mr Shah comes home and goes back to work. At late hours and Sundays too he cannot say no to the many troubled clients, who beg for a little more of his time. As Zeenat hears of a little incident here and there, she cannot help getting emotionally involved.

What she finds most frustrating are the divorce cases and how little rights our women have and the little we have are also not availed of by the many poor women. The procedures make the few rights, difficult to enforce.

The major cause of all the evils existing in our country, says Mr Shah, stems from illiteracy. The basic problem of education for our masses can only be solved by making education free and compulsory. Even the religious teaching or rather the religious knowledge of our masses is at the lowest level, he said. If the masses can be made aware of the true injunctions and mandatory obligations from the Quran, and made to follow them; the social conditions prevalent would automatically improve.

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## Marriage

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For all this it is the individual who is at fault, but the individual too needs guidance and only an organised movement by the social organisations can give this, say the Shahs'. What Pakistan needs is not just a powder puff kind of social workers, who may meet to arrange the rest of the weeks social engagements for themselves. It is the unemployed educated and well-to-do women of our country who are best equipped to do social work and improve the class of teachers in our schools.

What of the duties of the men today? Many of them are in the race for making money or earning money today and get very little time to spend in their homes.



*Miss Farida Sattar, daughter of Mr and Mrs A. Sattar, was engaged to Mr Hanif Motiwalla, son of Mr Latif Arbi Motiwalla, at Karachi recently. Photo shows Miss Farida (centre) with her relatives.*

Mr Shah thinks that today much more money is required to run the modern home with its luxuries and modern amenities, and unless a man gives enough time he cannot bring home the big pay packet. Mr Shah explained that it is man's duty to bring home the pay packet but, he must never forget a family requires devoted attention, thus bringing unity, love and affection. An un-tended family is like a box full of precious stones with a hole in it.