

# PARTY TIME AT CHANDIGARH

By HIMMAT GILL

Mrs. K. was getting ready for the party when she suddenly remembered her husband.

Not that she remembered Kishore often. In fact when she did, she got annoyed. Sullen, untidy, and uncomfortable, he must be sitting over some file on the fourth floor of the Secretariat and pondering over the state of the roads in the capital, buildings, parks and gardens. That is what he was paid for. And paid well, mind you, with the rank of Secretary, and a Government car to boot.

So he was a Secretary and Nalini a Secretary's wife. A spacious house in Sector 16 they had, with a full-fledged garden and a full-time 'Mali'. Besides this, they possessed a brown cocker spaniel, a Grundig stereophonic radiogram and a genuine Persian carpet.

The other highlights, of their belongings, were, an imported Fiat, silver cutlery from Cambodia and a Princess ring from Bangkok. Now if you have these things then by CHANDIGARH standards, you are 'it'. That is you are one of the elite of the town, if you know what I mean.

This thought made Nalini happy. But only for a while. What do you do if your husband is a big fool. Nalini looked at her watch, which said 6.30 p.m. Here she was all set in her latest Chanderi sari and the Princess ring, which was already the talk of the town.

The American Peace Corps delegation was in town and the Governor had very graciously called the Kishores over for cocktails at 7 p.m. It would be pure murder missing such a function at RAJ BHAVAN. The Press, the eats, the Yankees, the publicity. And of course Mrs. S. wife of the other Secretary. That is what worried Nalini the most. What a catastrophe it would be, if Mrs. S. attended and she didn't. Why, she would never hear the end of it from Mrs. S. her enemy number 1.

She made for the phone, thinking, "Let me ring up Kishore and remind him. He must have forgotten." But then she didn't pick up the receiver, saying to herself "I think I should wait another five minutes. He must be on the road by now. So why ring." So in the time thus gained she put on another coating of vanishing cream, tidied up the sari for the sixth time, and patted the cocker spaniel most affectionately, even calling it "My baby darling."

Now whilst all this was happening at Sector 16, a different sort of activity was taking place at the Secretariat on floor No. 4. Kishore looked at his watch and smiled. 6.40 p.m. Another 15 minutes and he would make

it Nalini would be fretting away and probably calling him names. But let her.

He was angry with her, and would teach her a lesson. Why did she never call him, "My baby darling?" He had always wanted to be called baby darling, but she always said "Kalu come here". Now is this the way to address your husband?

Kishore called the PA and sent for one special tea and two gulabjamuns from the canteen. Nothing like gulabjamuns in a crisis.

A few sectors away Nalini was getting most desperate. Mrs. S. had just rung up and enquired whether they had been invited to the party. Just imagine the cheek of it. Now, there was no question of not attending. She would go alone, even if her stupid husband didn't fetch along.

At 6.50 p.m. Nalini could wait no longer and started for the imported Fiat. She told the servant: "Send Sahib to RAJ BHAVAN if and when he comes. I am getting late." And with that she applied vanishing cream for the seventh time, and zoomed away.

At 7.15, Kishore reached home and prepared to face an angry wife. Of course he was mighty relieved when the servant told him that Mem Sahib had already gone. He celebrated with a nimbu-pani, and started going through the latest Town and Country Planning, encyclopedia by JANKI DAS and RAM MOHAN.

What a lucky break. These cocktails. Most horrible affairs. "Yes Sir, pardon Your Excellency, My what a gorgeous sari, Are yar one "peg more," and all that. How he detested such rubbish. Utter misery for an hour, and then come home and eat sour curd and brinjal curry, most slovenly cooked. A working man needed such breaks.

At 7.30 p.m. Nalini breezed in. "Funny, such an early break up", mused Kishore. Probably people were not in a mood to drink. Such sultry weather. How can one take whisky in summer?

"Darling so naughty of you to be late," said Nalini with a twinkle in her eye. Both the twinkle and the 'darling' shook Kishore. What has come over her, he thought.

"Naliniji, you know how I would have loved to come with you. But I completely forgot. Anyhow, next time jarur" and he made a really sorry face.

"Don't you worry Kalu," replied Nalini smelling the rat. "The Governor is indisposed today, so the cocktails have been postponed to tomorrow."

At this moment the cocker-spaniel strolled in. "Come my darling baby," said Nalini to the bitch, and walked out.