

# Philadelphia calling!

That is the last address I have of my Maldivian friend Rashida Didi. Heaven knows where she is now. As teachers working in a school at the Islands, she and I were thick as thieves. Rashida would often grace our dinner table where we would engage in care-free conversations.

I first went to the Maldivian Island as a French teacher with recommendation from Alliance Francaise teachers' in Dhaka. And this helped me immensely. The person taking the interview just asked "Why didn't you say you were staying at George's house?" And thus I joined the club.

Rashida was educated in Sri Lanka and then in Australia. Rumour had it that she had an affair with a foreigner and as far as the

men were concerned, she was off limits.

The food we shared was often brought from Sri Lanka. Nothing grew on the island, as such, except chicken and eggs. But we spent happy times. Our other Sri Lankan friends would often serve ribbon sandwiches at their parties and danced the 'Baila!'

We stacked up our refrigerators with fresh fish from the market. Fish was aplenty in the Island. Cooking, however, was never my forte. I could barely make soup, and boil chicken and with time learned how to make chicken and vegetable mixture. But my late husband was a culinary genius, his specialty being the exquisite roasts made either from lamb leg or fowls. And whenever some-

thing special was on the menu, Rashida was always invited, often as the chief guest.

I would spend holidays at Rashida's house regaled by details of old Indian songs, and details of decorations in the house. The food was invariably good as she had a trained cook to do it. The cook was sent by one of her brothers, a minister of the land.

Rashida once took me to their mosque, where I was introduced as a fellow believer, and so allowed to enter. There was a mosque just for women on one of the islands which we frequently visited.

Once a day, once a month, we had to bring food from the house during break time and this is where Rashida was a great help. Although George invariably helped, so did

Rashida. She helped me to participate at the school functions too.

And so my days went on until it was the day to go and we had to pack our stuff for good or for worse. Before that there were pictures on the TV and we were the guests of the president. I put on my fancy clothes and my gold bangles for the occasion. It was a rare treat.

I miss Rashida and wonder where she is now. Somewhere in Philadelphia I heard. Hope she is just the same, so many years later.

By Fayza Haq

## Advantages of being single

Singlehood, which revolves around an abundance of freedom and personal space, can be an incredibly joyful phase in your life, no matter how much people claim that jumping onto the relationship bandwagon is akin to reaching a milestone in their lives.

### TIME AND OPPORTUNITY

Being in a relationship can be exhausting as it requires a significant amount of time and energy to maintain it, what with the incessant texting, talking on the phone, going on dates and sorting out fights.

Going solo allows you to invest that time and effort in engaging in more constructive courses of action, such as studying, participating in extracurricular activities and climbing the career ladder, all of which help you pursue personal growth on a greater scale and develop more fully as an individual.

Moreover, you also get more opportunity to spend time with your most beloved friends and family, who, once you enter a relationship, will tend to complain about how you have forgotten their existence and pushed them to the farthest corners of your mind.

Basically, being single gives you the chance to do whatever you please without being bogged down by responsibilities that a relationship demands.

### MORE SLEEP AND FEWER HEADACHES

As appealing as PDA in university cafeterias and Facebook statuses by your beloved heaping you with praise sounds, a relationship is not as rosy as it appears on the surface. Sometimes even the smallest of arguments with your special one can give you the biggest of headaches that not even the best medicine can cure.

The aspect of eternal commitment is bound to rise at some point or another. Do you imagine tying the knot and starting a family with your boyfriend or girlfriend in the future? Do you want to support him or her in sickness and health until you die or is it just a seasonal fling?

If you dread the idea of taking the

plunge, questions circulating lifetime commitment are likely to rob you of a peaceful night's sleep because chances that you will be awake half the night worrying what the future of your relationship holds for you are quite high.

In this case, singles can save themselves from sleep deprivation and headaches which arise from dilemmas faced by couples on a regular basis.

### MORE MONEY TO SPEND AND SAVE

Being in a relationship places you under the obligation of pampering your significant other with gifts, as well as paying for dates, and if your frequent dating spots include high-end cafes on Banani Road 11, then settling the bill is most likely to topple your finances and leave you bankrupt.

Even if you do not indulge in extravagant dates or overspend on gifts, every penny spent buying your boyfriend/girlfriend a KitKat or paying for a date in CP could have fuelled your savings if you were single and made you rich without your parents giving you access to your inheritance. Furthermore, all the money that goes behind paying for your phone credit and Internet package required to communicate with your beloved 4000 times a day could be invested in many other things, for example the much coveted iPhone 6 that your father refuses to pay for. Hence it is rational to assume that singlehood can make you feel like Bill Gates at the end of the day.

Despite the benefits that singledom has to offer, deep down we all wait for our Cinderella/Prince Charming to light up our lives, with whom we can share our happiness and sorrows.

I once stumbled across a post in my newsfeed which stated that when the timing is right the person who is meant to be for you will automatically walk into your life. Till then my advice to all the singles out there is keep calm and enjoy it while it lasts.

By Mehnaz Tabassum Khaleel

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