

WHY I PREFER NOT HAVING IFTAR OUTSIDE

RAFIDAH RAHMAN

Ramadan is a month of fasting, prayers, and redemption that help us transform into better versions of ourselves.

In the major cities in Bangladesh, having *iftar* at restaurants is now a trend, particularly if you're an outgoing, social, young individual. To be honest, there was a time when I too was very fond of this idea but having grown older (and hopefully wiser), I began to realise that I don't feel the same about this anymore. Here are the reasons why:

The Food

Ramadan is that time of the year when restaurateurs have the biggest opportunity to make profits. Most restaurants distribute glossy flyers and stay abuzz on social media showing off their flamboyant food platters and startling offers attracting clients. Most people find it extremely difficult to eat a lot during *iftar*. Platters don't work for them and thus, they waste food. Often times the food is cold and stale by the time people break their fast. I don't know about you but I like my food hot and fresh.

The Traffic

If I say that traffic in Dhaka during Ramadan is bad, it will be a colossal understatement. It's horrendous. The roads are jam-packed all the time. I waste almost 2 hours every day, stopping myself from swearing out of frustration when fasting.

Prayers

People who have to pray *taraweeh* or simply their daily prayers find it

increasingly difficult to manage their timings since *iftar* outside makes it challenging for them to leave without disappointing their companions.

Waste of Time

Even if we don't have *iftar* invitations at restaurants, it might just be at someone's place. Home *iftar* is delicious, but the dilemma is that they also expect you to stay for dinner which takes away your time and energy from working on something important you have for the next day.

The Lost Objective

We fast to feel the pain of those who are less fortunate – a sacrifice we

make for the sake of the Almighty. It's a month when we get a chance to repent for our sins and change ourselves for good, let go of atrocious practices of wasting food and over-consumption. It's when we should try more to be with our families and anticipate breaking our fast in a healthy environment. *Iftar* outside kind of diverts us from this whole point.

I'm not against the whole practice; every once in a while it certainly is nice to have *iftar* at a fancy place with your friends and family. I just prefer to stay in my limits and try not to lose the purpose of this blessed month.

Rafidah Rahman is a teeny-tiny Hulk, she's always angry and she's always hungry. A cynical dreamer and a food enthusiast, she's your everyday entertainment. Correspond with her at rafidahrahman93@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/rafidah.rahman.39



A Father's Thoughts on Father's Day

ECHOES BY ASRAR CHOWDHURY

A good two hours before the clock struck midnight in the transition between Jun 18 and Jun 19, 2016, the newsfeed on my Facebook profile started to flood. This isn't unusual. Whenever something happens, people express their inner thoughts on social media. When these inner thoughts find a common ground, they multiply in their intensity. I was up. I didn't have much to do. I decided to observe how people express an event that's universal to us all. As the night progressed till the wee hours of early morning, I observed others and asked myself, what is Father's Day?

We make a day special to look back, to remember, be thankful for, or to reflect upon. People were wishing their fathers with fond photos and sweet words. For some, the day was one of loss because we tend to appreciate the beauty of presence in the cruelty of its absence. Since it was a day for the fathers to receive, not much, if at all, anything was being heard from the receiving fathers. That's what made me inquisitive.

Fatherhood isn't automatic like motherhood. Fathers tend to be the bread winners of the families and also pursue a more rigorous career than mothers. Fathers can be kept away from their families even against their will. It is equally possible for fathers not to spend time with their families should they want to. In traditional societies the bond of a joint family with siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts and grandparents would take care of the child. In modern societies the mother will take care of the child as a last resort. Fathers have more flexibility in determining their role in the family than mothers. However, no freedom ever comes without a price. If a father misses the train of fatherhood in his child's childhood, a second chance may not come again.

As I was watching father's day posts on my newsfeed, I was telling myself fatherhood has to be earned. It has to be earned though investing quality time and quality space in the child's mind. Joint families no longer exist. A father can't put his mind to rest if his work keeps him away from the family. Playgrounds also no longer exist in urban Bangladesh that can keep the kids busy and where they can socialise with others kids outside their school circles. Break-up of the joint family and family size becoming smaller throws the responsibility of parenthood equally on mothers and fathers for kids who were born at the beginning of the 20th century because kids these days are falling short of elders with whom they can share and confide their intimate thoughts.

Modernity comes with its benefits as well as its losses. Our lives have become fast. In the speed of this life, kids end up in broken relationships today more than they ever have in past generations. This has thrust questions on parenthood more than ever not only in Bangladesh, but other countries too, where the traditional life can no longer be taken for granted.

I'm still looking at my newsfeed. I'm telling myself, as a father getting the chance to spend time with your child is a gift some fathers are denied for whatever reason. Fatherhood is a train that almost never whistles a second time in a child's life. If fathers appreciate this, and invest quality time and space, they'll leave memories for their kids to cherish when they are here no more. Leaving sweet memories is the best gift any parent can give. That's my tuppence (two penny) revelation on father's day.

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