



There is something that rubs an entire segment of people the wrong way when a thirty-something single person is concerned. Push the age to forty-something and you would think the social structure as you know it is crumbling. Even semi-distant relatives or neighbour's friends know of a common individual who has never married, or is single and not looking. Needless to say, the gossip that follows is endless. And let's not forget that these equally hardworking individuals are always on the bad end of being treated as 'lesser humans' who have not accomplished much in life.

COVER STORY

Singling out singledom

Many things are thrown into the path of a single. He or she faces nearly three to four times more sessions of social judgement than the rest of the 'happily-marrieds.' Backhanded compliments and masked concerns become second nature to these individuals who are just trying live their lives, albeit somewhat differently. Conversation with the singles that simply have been through a lot opens up a whole new avenue of talk.

One of the common things that long-term singles face is 'Are you happy being how you are?'

Kashtan Habib, an advertising personnel who loves foods and travelling, when asked if he thinks bachelors are happy replied, "Are married people happy? Just like married people can be happy or unhappy, bachelor people can be happy or unhappy too. No one in this world is just happy or just unhappy."

On the note of happiness, Sayema Khondoker, who teaches world studies at a community college in Florida, USA, answered, "This is one question I get a lot. Even in Florida, where I have been living for



nearly fifteen years, same question from the Bengalis, they also make that 'poor you' expression. Well yes, of course I am. I have a bunch of young people who think the world of me at the community centre I teach. I have money to spare to visit places

almost biannually. Just having a spouse and children can't make you happy."

Tanziral Dilshad, writer and part of a public relations agency, adds that happiness differs from person to person. She mentions, "Happiness is a state of mind that depends on the person's priorities of life, so

I cannot speak for others. As far as I am concerned, I have been in relationships, so can't say if I can be called a 'lifelong bachelor', but my long singlehood has been great and I think I have gotten used to with being by myself."

There is of course, the idea that eternal singles had or have an unrequited love and hence their singleness.

Aoyon Haque, currently residing in Canada and part of an established multinational company, agrees to the 'unrequited' bit, but that was not the reason for his bachelorhood. "My first love, if you put it that way, was a batch mate of mine in BUET. Just months before graduation, she was married off to a doctor living in London. I never got to express my feelings in the first place, so that doesn't count. What counts is that I was resolved to not look for love. And that was it. Love didn't look for me either!"

Habib sees love as an unavoidable part of life. "One can't avoid falling in love. The only way to avoid it would be to fight your internal demons and just not have any contact with that attractive person at all.