



Time to fly the nest

FEEL ABOUT THEIR KIDS BECOMING INDEPENDENT



HANAN SAEED AHMED

"I have two daughters; Manal, who is 18-years-old, and Mahitab, 23. I married at 18. Raising my first child was very difficult because I was very young and had only just finished high school. I stopped living and was unable to complete my studies.

"My life revolved around my children. The days were difficult and there was very little money, but I managed to give my daughters the best life I could, including enrolling them with great difficulty into private school.

"I completed my studies only 10 years ago and became a professional photographer. Today, I happily balance my life between a job I love and bringing up my wonderful kids. I am so proud of how they have turned out. I was and still am I afraid for them. I try to go with them everywhere, but now they are independent with distinct personalities and I have to accept that.

There are moments when I have cried privately thinking about how they will cope in the big wide world without me, because in an Arab society it can be difficult. The relationship between my daughters and I is friendship and trust, which is something that gives me great comfort. I pray to Allah to keep them safe.

"My eldest daughter is now studying business administration and the younger one is now in a beautiful arts college. They are becoming strong independent girls who will not run away from a problem.

"One blessing has been Mr Amitabh Bachchan, who I have known for a long time and someone who has kindly blessed them since childhood as if they were his own children. He has been a great role model for my kids.

"I do have a bad feeling when I think that one day they will have a home and a husband far away from me. But this is life and I will cherish every moment I have had with them and will always be there as their devoted mother."



AALIYA FAKIH

"We lived in Hong Kong when my daughter Anaya was born.

"From when she was 10 weeks old, I've been working and often wondered if I should give up my career to spend more time with her. Even though I got time on weekends and evenings, I hated the morning when I would leave my baby and go to work.

"At eight months she was already walking and much before that rolling and tumbling. I always knew she would end up pursuing some sort of performing art where she would use this in some way.

"As she turned into a little girl, her flexibility and independence both grew. She would man-

age her timetable, get dressed for classes and set her own alarm in the mornings from a very young age.

"She pursued gymnastics, ballet and contemporary dance, and realised that for the past three years she found her passion growing for aerial silks and was flying and hanging upside down every free minute.

"This year my daughter turned 14 and announced she is very keen on going to New York to learn silks and choose a month-long residential programme. Although I dreaded the day she would be apart from me, I wasn't surprised. As a mum, I wasn't ready or prepared to let my little angel face the world her own.

"The doubt I faced was: 'Have I taught her enough? Will she be able to face all the challenges? How would she manage on her own?' But she surprised me.

"She flew unaccompanied, figured the shuttle to her school and travelled from Manhattan to Brooklyn to meet her cousins regularly. What I realised is that not all mums need to feel crazy guilty if we can't be there all the time for our children. There are great advantages to teaching them independence at an early age and letting them fly, literally in my daughter's case.

"I know the day will come where she will become fully independent, but knowing we will remain connected gives me solace."



Priya Mulji

Follow Priya Mulji on www.twitter.com/priyamulji or log onto www.priyamulji.com

NO MEANS NO!!!

Just stop

IF YOU'RE a regular reader of my column, I'm sure you will be expecting me to complain about boys not texting me after a date or something equally frivolous. But today I'm going to talk about sex, but perhaps not what you are thinking.

Well this is a different subject for me, which is something quite difficult and emotional to write about. This isn't about sex in the pleasurable sense or for the purposes of reproduction. But it needs to be addressed.

In 2017, India had a population of 1.3 billion, only second to China, so obviously people in India like to have sex. Recently I read a book called *Louisiana Catch* by Sweta Vikram, based on the subject of marital rape. I then saw *Love, Sonia* at the London Indian Film Festival, which is about sex trafficking. I also read an article about a group of men taking it in turns to rape an 11-year-old child.

I was brought up in the UK in a fairly-conservative family. We didn't talk about sex, even though it is how I got here, but I have friends and we openly talk about it in all forms. So why are things like marital rape and child sex still happening in 2018? This isn't just limited to South Asia, I also read online that USA has the highest rape rate in the world.

If filmmakers, journalists and writers can talk about sex without consent, why can't we? But more importantly, why isn't something being done about it? Why aren't perpetrators being punished enough? In my eyes, the biggest question is that in 2018, do people still think that having sex with someone without their consent is okay?

One thing that also needs to happen is role models need to speak out and do more about the subject, not just journalists. Sadly, cricket and movie stars in the Asian subcontinent are looked up at more than an activist. You see Bollywood stars tweeting their views on such matters, but when will someone actually do something? I know it isn't up to Aamir Khan to play superhero, but for rape of any form to stop, isn't it time for someone powerful to put on that cape and change something?

Something has to change and me writing this column isn't going to make that difference. The mentality of people committing the crimes needs to change. The government in countries like India, USA, Pakistan, Philippines and Saudi Arabia need to change their punishments. Education needs to happen more than anything.

Educate men and women from a young age that no means no and it is never okay to have sex without the consent of the other person. I will be sharing this column on social media in the hope that it changes at least one person's mindset and sincerely hope that one day rape is eradicated, but we're a long way from that.

Rape isn't limited to countries in the East. so if you are affected by anything in this column go straight to the police. Do not ever be scared to report anything. No means no - always.