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Rubana Huq

## HVD (Happy Valentine's Day)!

February 14, 2011



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HVD is indeed not a disease and most certainly a day that brings in expectations of bouquets, gifts, dinners and celebration. Flowers are sold from before, hearts are racing for attention. This day, a young woman proposed just a minute ago, should be used for fund raising through 'speed-dating'. Unfamiliar with the term, I enquired and found that it is the most modern form of match-making in the West where single, eligible couples sign up online, pre pay for their attendance and then table hop and get to explore their prospects.

A little bit more of looking around and there I was...reading The New York Times story (13th of February) on Speed-Dating: Muslim Style. It reports an event with some 75 participants, with parents watching their kids in a middle-school dance, hoping for a match to be made and marriage to follow within a month by paying \$270 price tag ensuring five-minute "dates" over a plate of biryani complete with hot tea or Kool-Aid.

Now, why didn't 'we' think of that before? After all, if Hallmark and Archies and the neighbourhood flower vendors are making their extra bit on this special day, why shouldn't development practitioner use the day for a nobler cause and raise some funds from the single people and of course help a social cause ☺?

Now is it time for Valentine's wish? Yes it is. It's also part of our routine to indulge in a little critique and share that Rome had revised its Catholic Calendar of Saints and removed St. Valentine's birthday in 1969. I guess the official pressure on the Italian hearts was more than what its amorous hearts could bear. As it is, Rome has always hosted the grand lovers. A glass of vino, a non-delicacy even by the sidewalk café, and some nervous bread crumbs...speak of love. A scene from a new mushy movie 'Tourist' had even me checking out the Hotel Danieli in Venice with the hope of checking it out at some point in my life, perhaps even list it as one of the 'must-see' destinations before I die. Somehow, the ambiance, the setting has a lot to do with love.

Somehow, the thought of riding on a gondola in moonlight is enough to give one goose bumps. Somehow, settings need not have the perfect character to complement it. Somehow, love is what it is on its own.

It's all about your own tools. The better tools you have, the finer the tuning will be. Old,

experienced hearts often have trouble getting their engines to roll. Either there's a lack of grease, or the battery is ancient. In worst cases, it's like my daughter's car where the reverse gear never works. Perfect example of what a heart can be...moving forward: broken, mended or raw. But what it does along its journey is expected. A heart never moves without its baggage. It's almost always overweight with memories...

I just discovered a treasure trove where an old friend had taken painstaking efforts of drawing a heart, a perfect picture of that elusive organ, which he had probably practiced for his Biology test. It was the perfect sketch with its bleeding vessels popping out. He had titled it 'My Labour of Love'. The effort left me unimpressed for obvious reasons. After all, it was the late 70's when I had just begun to understand the real meaning of Donny Osmond's Puppy Love. Love in our times was watching a kite fly past our house with our names written on it. Jealousy was cutting the threads of the kite. That's how our emotions were placed. Today one may stamp, seal and deliver love through the net. You paint an item and it becomes real. A virtual parcel manages to get the real meaning across to the recipient. Whichever music you want to share flows through a link and you hear it. It's all about downloading love into your own personal system. Distance does not matter; you wifi or bluetooth your emotion. If you are lucky enough to be in the same network, sign in to your domain and uplink your love into your cloud network. This is how one shares modern love. It's fast, accessible and instantaneous. Just like instant coffee. Relieves you of fatigue and costs you a simple stir.

Once my mother came into my room and snatched Donna Summer's tape away from me. The lyrics were: Love to love you baby. That's it. It was that simple. But there were noises that constituted the background ambiance of that song that she caught on to. Apparently, the artist was moaning and way back then, that equalled blasphemy at home.

Today, the world has graduated to music that not only conveys the noise but also has videos to go along with it. Today, love is noisy, abbreviated and visual.

Our generation has always thanked Eric Segal for 'Love Story'. The single line, 'Love means never having to say you are sorry' meant the world to us. We grew up reading the book, watching the movie and loving Ryan O Neil and Ali McGraw's close up specials. To the kids today, 'He's Just Not That Into You' gives a taste of the feeling.

To us, revisiting the old albums of love songs is a treat in leisure. To our children, love is lounge hits.

In our times, our parents detached mouth pieces from our phone sets and kept them under lock and key. Today the young wear their hearts on their cell phone sleeves.

In our times, we tested our mothers' levels of tolerance and had parties with curtains drawn in the afternoon, long before our dads got back home. One would lie for the other if one ever got caught. Curfew hours were tight, punishment in case of violations meant being grounded for the rest of summer with no options of reading the Mills and Boon or Barbara Cartland stacks, but being pushed to the corner with old hard cover volumes of Readers Digest, reading stories we still talk about.

To us, love was having a brief walk around Abahani grounds, having someone meet us one minute with the next minute followed by the horn of an old beetle. Yes, our dads were following us all the time.

Today love is mostly about wearing a rock in the finger. Back then, one of our friends got lucky enough to get a quarter of a rock from her future husband and scratched her bathroom mirror with it, just to test its authenticity. She still wears that thing. That was how old hearts were stored in tiny music boxes with keys lying under our pillows.

With time, love has ended up looking smart. It looks for space, brand and comfort. With time, it has become a package. Old hearts walked in the parks, current ones fly miles and meet across the continents. Old hearts blushed with every invasion of privacy while new ones flaunt the acquisition list. Old hearts suffered serious tremors, while young ones remain unshaken even with 8.00 Richter scale seismograph rating.

Pretty soon, human race will be able to deliver custom made hearts and arrange home deliveries. A little stretch of imagination will help us enlist hearts in our current stock market where the index of Hearts Inc. will never betray the share holders and for which there'll always be a taker for the new hearts without any chaos, threat or cry.

The reason is pretty simple: While old hearts had to dodge the main avenue and resort to alleys, the new ones risk open rides with an unmatched transparency. Neither are they afraid of exposure nor of disappointment, which eventually should make them better lovers, and hopefully better friends and parents in the process.

Happy Valentine's Day!

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Mohammad Hamidul Islam on February 15, 2011 at 6:04 pm  
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Regards  
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