

An East Indian perspective on Dating

By Shaley Dehner



Rachel Khona grew up in a conservative Indian-American family. Magically finding the right guy to marry was always a pressure for her; but she couldn't date. She has grown up and gone through sloppy, toxic, and good relationships. Writing for several magazines about relationships; she gives her advice to women in their 20s and 30s about being single and dating.

Q: What has your experience been like growing up in a conservative Indian family related to dating/relationships? Were there standards set up as a child for marriage or were you free to choose?

RK: I was not allowed to date at all. And sex was definitely a no no. I was expected to just meet someone (a well educated upper middle class guy) one day and get married. Ultimately though I was free to choose. My parents weren't so conservative (nor are most Indian-Americans that I've encountered) that they would arrange a marriage for me.

Q: Regarding how you grew up in an Indian-American family, what is your view of single woman in India? Do you think they are ostracized? Do you think they should adopt a more American Emerging Adulthood (don't settle down in 20s, marriage/have children in 30s) attitude or have they already?

RK: I really can't speak for single women in India as I wasn't raised there and things have changed a lot since my parents left. Women (and men) are expected to get married in their early 20s maybe 30 max for more Westernized families. I don't think people there really date as we do here. People date specifically with the intention of getting married. When my mom was in college, it wasn't that she was "single". It was that she hadn't "found a boy" yet.

Q: What differences have you seen (if any) in the cultures you have traveled to regarding women being single in their 20s/30s?

RK: I lived in France for awhile and I find that the French (and Europeans in general) have a much more liberal attitude towards sex and dating than Americans.

Q: What are the relationship standards like?

RK: There are no rules about not sleeping together on the first date. And fewer double standards as well. Being sexual didn't brand a woman a slut as easily as it does here. It's a more evolved (and liberating) way of thinking.

Q: What is your opinion on staying in an unhealthy relationship versus remaining single in order to wait for the right guy?

RK: Bad idea!!! The other person is NOT going to change. At some point the relationship is going to implode and you would have just wasted your time because you're afraid of being alone. Or you'll end up staying with that person and remain miserable.

What's the point of being in an unhealthy relationship? It's a form of self-abuse.

Q: What advice do you have for single women in their 20s/30s?

RK: Good question! I'm no expert so I can only give out advice based on my experiences. So if I were to look back at my own life I would say, **"be true to yourself"** and **"love yourself"**. Easier said than done and sometimes we think we do love ourselves but our actions prove otherwise. Beating up ourselves or dating the wrong people over and over again showed that I didn't value myself. It took me awhile to admit that I like laid back funny punk rock guys. And there's nothing wrong with that! One of my girlfriends really wanted to meet a vegetarian yogi who likes to listen to Hindu chants. But she was clear on what she wanted and she got it! Once I accepted what made me happy, my dating life vastly improved because I was staying true to what I wanted.

I would also look back and say "deal with your shit!" There were things I didn't want to look at or examine because it was too difficult or I was in denial. Now I look back and think I could have saved myself a lot of misery if I just dealt with the giant issues looming in front of my face.

Q: Are you a proponent of avidly dating? For those of us who do not want to avidly date, what is your opinion on this?

RK: I don't really have any thoughts on avidly dating. I'd say do what works for you. I have friends that hate it and others that don't mind it. Personally, I have no problem juggling multiple dates. As long as you don't put too much stock in each date wondering if the person is your next husband/wife, girlfriend/boyfriend and you do it with a positive attitude I think it's great and can lead you to the right person.

Q: Finally, have you ever had an unhealthy relationship either in the US or another country and how did you cope with it?

RQ: Yes I had a boyfriend who was emotionally abusive. He had been abused as a child and was taking it out on me. I tried many times (as I clung onto the good times) to point out that his childhood issues needed to be dealt with and that he was being emotionally abusive to me. But he refused to admit it was a problem. Ultimately, I coped with it by breaking up with him.

It sucked at first because I felt like he had been so abusive to me and wouldn't even admit it much less apologize. But I had to accept responsibility for my own part in it. Though I fought with him often about it, I still allowed him to continually treat me like that by staying in the relationship.

The best part is being able to look back and see that the guy I'm with now is SOOOO much better! He's consistently nice and sweet to me not just when he's in a good mood. And he's appreciative and doesn't take me for granted! I wish my ex the best.

But honestly I feel like I got the last laugh.

Online Article: <http://cultursmag.com/growing-up-conservatively-single/>