

In Search of a Compatible Man — Continually Considerate

by Syed Maqsood Jamil

It is not an infrequent occurrence for us to see that some people come from behind to break the queue, and in indecent haste stride into the elevator with an elitist air. Some do it out of the smug feeling that their status gives them the privilege to do so. There are people who do it to show the bravado of mocking discipline. I tend to believe that, most of these offenders, are perhaps not conscious about the importance of civility and discipline, in personal and public life. Even people who are aware of these virtues, act contrarily, out of impatience. It will not be altogether unfair to believe that many of us are yet to learn to wait for our turn. The habit of waiting for your turn comes with civility and deep respect for discipline. These human qualities tell us to act with great consideration, to show highest restraint in maintaining decency, and to treat others' rights and worth with great respect.

The presence of these qualities in great ones, can prove to be much useful. Because they serve as good models for ideal human conduct. An occurrence which readily comes to my mind, involves Harry S. Truman, the 33rd President of the United States of America. A gentleman, Mr. Gene W. Rosman, narrates the circumstances of his meeting with President Truman by informing that "While attending a business meeting in Washington D.C., years ago, I decided to go to a Rotary Club luncheon. I arrived late, and the official greeter rushed me to the only vacant chair in the auditorium, at a table just below the speakers table. I sat down, looked at the colleague on my left and said 'you know you look just like Harry Truman.' I am Harry Truman", he replied. "Then what are you doing sitting down here with us peons?" I asked, "why aren't you up at the head table with the brass?" "Because" he said "I am a damn democrat."

Harry Truman was waiting for his turn. His inherent respect for decorum did not allow his presidential status to disrupt the normal business of the meeting. It represents a deferential attitude towards propriety. This is one of the many elements that combine to make a man of exceptionally pleasing compatibility with the society he belongs to, the society where he functions, and the company he keeps. We give him a name. A gentleman, let us proceed to develop a broader knowledge of this pleasingly compatible man. A more proper way would be to conduct an enquiry into the qualities and traits which make him pleasingly compatible, and endow his personality with an adorable grace. The enquiry will appear more appealing to the imagination, if we built on an outline of the profile.

It is necessary that the compatible man should be continually considerate. The other integral features are that he should take great care in avoiding unpleasantness, and should not be author of any action or pronouncement which inflicts pain. This is a reasonably demanding task in a world where the business of living, and earning a livelihood produce conflicts of different kinds. Its competitive nature often degenerates into a lowly combat. A more depressing view reflects on it with much

disdain. Hamlet is a celebrated role model of this view. He observes with much anguish, "Fie on't! Ah, fie! tis an unweeded garden. That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature/Possess it merely." The creator of this role model, Shakespeare, tutors Lady Macbeth to advise Macbeth, "your face, my thane, is as a book where/men/May read strange matters. To beguile the/time./Look like the time; bear welcome in your/eye/your hand, your tongue, look like th/innocent flower./But be like a serpent under't."

It is easily understandable that the subscriber of this view and the follower of this pungent prescription, to all practical proposition, can not be continually considerate, therefore, cannot avoid unpleasantness, and will not recoil from inflicting pain. But Hamlet and Macbeth are pathological characters who lived through a perennially foul weather and perished in catastrophic tragedy. Such circumstances can not be the rule of life. Should we not therefore see what it takes to be continually considerate, in a world which is not convulsed by blood and sword. It is convenient that, a considerate man should be at peace with himself. Inner peace can take firmer roots, if self estimation is nourished with a healthy and benign respect. A benign respect for oneself, means a trust in one's strength in goodness. It brings a feeling of security and well-being. Goodness is a matter of cultivation. It grows with care and introspection. Care helps to develop an awareness which seeks welfare for oneself, and for others. Introspection weeds out the vile thoughts, which warp the mind, blacken the heart, harden the soul. As a result, the inner turmoil dies down serenely settles.

Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński draws a splendid picture of serenity, when he tells us the story of a black crow and a tree. "A black crow sits on the top of a tall pine tree. It looks around proudly and lets out a cry of victory. The crow that noisy apparition, truly believes that the pine owes everything to it - the tree's being, the tall beauty, its ever green splendour, its power in battling the winds. What uncanny gall! The great benefactor of the serene pine tree. But the pine tree never stirs; it seems not even to notice the black crow. Lost in thought, it stretches the arms of its branches heavenward. It tolerates its noisy intruder calmly. Nothing can disturb its thoughts, its dignity, its serenity. So many clouds have floated past its brow, so many migrant birds have perched upon its branches." We learn from this story that, serenity is self-containment, equanimity, poise, humility and dignity. A serene person will have all these qualities.

The next step of being considerate is that, you cannot be so, unless you are thoughtful of others. Those thoughts are healthy when they exert a melow influence on our conduct and utterances, and impart a pleasing charm to them. A more common picture of a man is that, he is a bundle of ego, with two hands and two legs sticking out. Ego is the mental state of being in love with oneself. It is the obsessive self-love or overly egocentric attitude which make a man

prickly. Ego becomes overbearing, when it feeds on immoderate estimation of our talents, physical attributes, fame, power and worldly possessions. Anything that is not deferential of these elements evokes fury, which manifests itself in virulent attitude, and unpleasantly bellicose conduct. There are surely ways of deflating the ego, of detoxifying the vitriolic nature of our self-worth. A rational awareness of our resources, however, creates self-confidence. Self-worth when fed sparingly, can be mastered well. If you want to take the roar and bite out of self-worth, discipline it with moderate nature of inattention, which subdues it to low-profile role. Humility, patience, self-effacing easy manners, decency are effective antidotes.

I believe, the subject will appear more interesting if I describe an occurrence which highlights the pleasing effect of easy manners. The narrator Jack Bull recalls in *Harper and Row* magazine "President Lyndon Johnson tells with relish of a time when he got on a state department elevator with Deen Rusk and Robert McNamara. A young aide flustered in the presence of so much brass, pushed the 'down' elevator button by mistake. As the car descended, Johnson glowered at the culprit. Rusk stepped into the breach "you know," he said to the embarrassed young man, "I often push the down button when I mean to go up. This happens to all of us." The young man grinned in gratitude, and the President relaxed with a smile. "That's the kind of man Rusk is" Johnson says appreciatively in discussing the incident. "He makes people feel at ease. And he's the same way in dealing with nations. They feel he understands their problems." Johnson adds that when he told his wife, "Now, Lyndon, that's the way you ought to be."

We can conclude from this occurrence that easy manners can have magical influence in developing pleasant rapport between human beings. The principal reward of this rapport is a relaxed atmosphere. In addition to civility, decency, humanity, patience, dignity and easy manners, self deprecating humour is also of proven worth in enhancing the compatibility of a person. A fine sense of self deprecating humour dispels distance and establishes the man on an informal and earthly level. The company of such a man is greatly adored because it strengthens the faith that he is one of our kind. There is immense pleasure and relaxation in his company. But it is not unlikely that such humour and familiarity can look like coarse vulgarity unless tempered with moderation and good taste.

In this connection James Thurber gives a precise account of humour. He states "By definition, humour is gentle. The savage, the crude, the harsh would fall under the heading of wit and/or satire, as the lawyers say. Now, my definitions are these. The wit makes fun of other persons; the satirist makes fun of the world, the humourist makes fun of himself..." The pleasures and pursuits of a man are also of impor-

tant in judging the compatibility of a person. If one subject, his fellow human beings to embarrassment, inconvenience, pain and are offensive to decency and other civilized values, then he will surely sully his image; his company will naturally be shunned. It is, therefore, necessary that the pleasures and pursuits of a comparable man should be benign, pleasing and inoffensive in nature, and enriching in its exercise.

Such pleasures are commonly thought to be founding good books, good music, harmless sport, the company of good friends, time spent with the family, healthy hobbies, social work, meditation etc. As for his pursuits, those should not have evil intent and tainted with extravagant hedonism. It is equally important that he should have friends, not minions or sycophants to pander to his vulgar taste. A compatible man is not an island. He will not lead an insular life, which only knows satiety of self interest and desires. The bridges, he will build to his fellow human beings, will rest on the enduring strength of sharing. There is one great truth about life. That one should give to receive. One should give, as far as possible, from one's own resources, riches, skill, time, knowledge, etc. And the giving has great practical value, it one gives when one lives. An interesting comparison illustrates the worthiness of this observation.

"A rich man once asked a friend why am I criticized for being miserly? Everyone know, I will leave everything to charity when I die." "Well, said the friend," Let me tell you about

the pig and the cow. The pig was lamenting to the cow one day about how unpopular he was. "People are always talking about your gentleness and your kind eyes, said the pig. Sure, you give milk and cream, but I give more. I give bacon, ham, bristles. They even pickle my feet! Still nobody likes me why is this? The cow thought a minute and then replied "Well may be its because I give while I am living."

Let us now enquire into the concluding feature of the fundamental concept of a compatible man. That he should not be the author of any action or pronouncement which inflict pain. A careful observation tells us that such a man possesses a pleasing disposition, has a clean conscience, is endowed with good moral and great humanity. Now the two major ways, by which pain can be inflicted, are physical and mental in nature. A decent man will not get into a physical combat, unless there is an inescapable need for honourable self-defence. He will, however, not be reckless in the exercise of his self-defence. The courage a good man possesses is more of a moral in nature. It also involves great strength of character and dignity, in deciding not to fight. His moral courage will resolutely persist in coping with his adversity. It also demands that he should not flinch from the duty of rising to the support of a good cause, a steadfast friend, his family, his honour and his country, with all the courage he can muster up and against great odds.

A clean conscience develops from the honesty of thought and action. Honesty, is a righteous conviction which readily distinguishes between right and wrong, fair and unfair, justice and injustice,

good and bad. It is a challenging task, in a world where honesty can become a handicap and make the price prohibitive. Shakespeare, has a similar observation to make when he states "to be honest as this world goes, is to be one man pick'd out of ten thousand." In today's world, the approximation, is higher than ten thousand.

The difficult nature of the task is lucidly described by S. Leonard Rubenstein, "Intention is not enough. The honest man suspects himself always. He knows honesty is a skill which must be exercised always. Most of us want to be honest, few know how. All men know their reaction, few men can identify what they are reacting to. The skill of honesty is to hold reaction at bay in order to know what is causing it. The skill is difficult."

A compatible man does not want to inflict pain. In a way, he takes great care in avoiding unpleasantness. Differences of different kind generate unpleasantness. Diversity is an essential element of life. It is, therefore, natural to have differing ways, thoughts, attitudes. There is nothing wrong with differences. The difference may be on a wide range of subjects, issues, ways, thoughts, conviction, attitude, conduct, ideas opinion etc. These human perceptions and reactions constitute the personality of a man. Personality, to a great extent, is deeply associated with a sense of self worth, better known as self-esteem. The right to differ therefore should be exercised with great discretion. Because unbridled criticism can irreparably antagonise a person. The point of difference should preferably be dealt with issues with the person. If it at all

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IN MEMORIAM

Late Md Ismail



Thirty years ago this month — on 20th May to be precise — Late Md Ismail, for almost 15 years a member of the Central Board of Director of the State Bank of Pakistan, died in a PIA crash near Cairo, at the age of 51. A total of 121 other prominent persons also died in that crash, who were traveling on PIA's inaugural flight to the Egyptian capital.

Born on 12.12.1912 in Nalpur, 24 Pargana, India. He was the only surviving son of lawyer Late Moulvi Lutfur Rahman, and Begum Rabiatul Fatima Rahman.

Inspired by his uncle Late Moulvi Mujibur Rahman, the pioneer journalist, editor of 'The Musalman' he involved himself in student politics from a very young age. Due to his political activities he was barred from sitting for his intermediate exams in Calcutta and had to move to Faridpur, under the protection of Late Mr Muazzem Hossain Chowdhury (Lal Mia) to sit for the exam. Despite disruptions in his academic career he graduated from Scottish Church College, Calcutta.

Since 1928 he led many student groups in the nationalist struggle for independence in Calcutta. Further inspired during his stay at Gandhi's Subornoti Asam, he became an active participant in the 'Shodheshi Andolon' and was arrested in around 1932 spent two years in Calcutta Central Jail.

In 1941 he veered away from active politics towards finance and industry and became one of the promoters of Eastern Alliance Bank Ltd. and United Vegetable Manufacturers Ltd. in India. His association with Mr Ahmed Dawood came at this point in time as investors were required.

After partition late Mr Ismail moved from Calcutta to Chittagong with his family and participated in the development of the industrial and financial sector in Pakistan, always focusing on the advancement in what was then East Pakistan.

He was one of the promoter directors of Eastern Federal Union Insurance Company and subsequently Director of the Dawood Group of Industries.

He was Founder-Director of the State Bank of Pakistan and remained on its Central Board until his death.

As resident Director of the Karnafuli Paper Mills he established effective social welfare programmes for the workers, and his desire for industrial expansion in East Bengal resulted in the Karnafuli Rayon Mills with Japanese Technological assistance. The Rayon Mill was completed before his death but he did not live to see it go into production.

On the international scene, Late Mr Ismail was a member of ILO and was elected to the Governing Body of ILO a few years prior to his death. He represented his country in the United Nations, ECAFE (now ESCAP) and many other international organisations. He was widely travelled and had many distinguished friends all over the world.

His involvement with finance and industry did not however take him away from his commitment to his political beliefs or his commitment to the promotion of socio-cultural activities. He gave continuous and active support and patronage to institutions such as Chayyanaught and Bul Bul Academy right from their days of inception. He also patronised newspapers such as the Sangbad, Bangladesh Observer and Ittefaq. He supported the progressive political parties.

Late Mr Ismail was highly revered by his friends and colleagues not only for his contribution in the professional capacity but also for the person he was, unassuming, free of prejudices, helpful and caring for others.

The Retreat

Let me be by myself
Where there is no allurement for wealth
Where greed is not concealed
beneath a web of ideology,
Where possession is not pursued.

(Let me be buried
in the shade of a 'Jhau' tree
on a desolate hill top).

Oh cast that society away
Where money means more than knowledge
Where the rich reign over the poor
Sanctioned by the Law of the Land.

I crave not for wealth
I yearn for inspiration
That turns the natural
urge for creativity
along the path of unhindered progress.

Translated from the original Bengali by Late Md Ismail's children and Faruq Choudhury.



The French, Death and the Hereafter

by Jean-Marc Dupuich

The loss of influence of religions in certain societies, or simply the decline of dogmas, lead to a change in the way that people look upon death and the hereafter. A survey carried out by CSA for the magazine *Panorama* throws light on how the French view death and the hereafter, today.

FROM the results of the survey, the images of the last Judgement, carved on the facades of cathedrals, have well and truly disappeared from the view that the French have of the hereafter. The image of paradise, where the chosen went like good school-children, and the hell-fire, which was devilishly more exciting than the staid eternity of Heaven, have gone. Saint Michael with his scales is out. Only a few rare believers still have faith in the resurrection of the dead.

However 45% of French people think that death is a stage towards something else, compared with 42% for whom it means the end of everything. Those who believe in another form of life after death are mainly women, farmers and especially young people. The immortality of the soul was the essential question for the French philosopher Pascal. Many Catholics do not count on it either as, for 38% of them, death is the absolute end. However, 29% of atheists are unable to accept that there is nothing after death. Religion and eschatology on longer go together.

On the other side of the mirror, each will be given to according to his beliefs," the devil promises in 'The Master and Margaret' by Bulgakov. So, for the time being, we will forget about the 42% of non-believers and concentrate on the 45% who are ready to journey into the hereafter (3% do not give any opinion). The majority (61%) expect something, but what? That remains a mystery. 17% believe in the resurrection, but this is a dogma that is collapsing as only 44% of regularly practising Catholics believe in it although it figures in the Creed. 9% think that their spirit will join together with other spirits, 10% are prepared to return to earth for a new human or animal life. Reincarnation seems to be gaining more and more followers, particularly among the young and among workers and atheists.

Whatever the choice, 37% think they will be happier and 2% that they will be less happy. 36% think that there will be no change and 25% are waiting to be better informed before passing judgement. These results seem to agree with the French writer Andre Gide who had the author Claudel send a telegram from beyond the grave saying that hell did not exist.

Near-death Experiences

In answer to the question: "Do you think that what happens to you after death depends on the way that you behaved on earth?" 52% say yes and 35% consider that there is no connection between the two. The moral link between here below and the hereafter, which is fundamental in religions, still seems to be fairly strong as it is made by more than half of the people questioned. However, if only 2% of people think they will be less happy after death, it means that very few people feel guilty.

The end of the old myths surrounding death does not mean that the living are completely cut off in their sphere of existence as, out of the total number of people questioned, 42% do not find it inconceivable that there could be communication between the two worlds. Likewise, 48% (including 65% of young people) would like near-death experiences (experiences lived through by people on the verge of death) to be taken seriously.

What happens after death remains a big secret, but the way it is conceived by religious models has been replaced by a curiosity which has been made keener by the accounts given by people approaching the fatal moment. As these accounts occur, they prove reassuring. Another revelation of the survey is that only 8% of French people apprehend the hereafter. 20% fear nothing, 54% are afraid of physical suffering and 42% dread being separated from those close to them

(several answers were possible). It is quite clear that hell is here and now.
— L'Actualite en France



A Plant for All Reasons

IT is hard to imagine how the poor people in South and Southeast Asia manage without the bamboo.

Consider these: apart from its use as food, the grass provides Asians with thatch to cover their house, mat to sleep on, a cup to drink from and even chopsticks to eat with.

Asian farmers use bamboo pipes to irrigate their farms and bamboo rakes to harvest their grains. Bamboo sieves are used to clean the grains and bamboo baskets to carry them.

The use of bamboo for decorative and utility purposes has attained a stage of near perfection in Japan. The classic wood-and-paper Japanese house utilizes bamboo in ceilings, mouldings, rainspouts, gutters, and as the corner post of the tokonoma, the viewing alcove where works of art are displayed.

In Malaysia, bamboo is used for construction of long houses, as water containers for cooking rice and for a variety of other rural domestic uses.

Filipino use bamboos for construction, furniture-making, and related purposes. In recent years, it has been used to reforest denuded areas and to control soil erosion.

Many villages in the lowlands and highlands of Papua New Guinea plant bamboo, mainly the thick-walled species, for building and other purposes. A thin-walled variety is flattened and woven into sheets for use as cladding for walls in houses.

Worldwide, there are about a thousand species of bamboo. They range from plants the size of field grass to 120-foot giants that are a foot in thickness. They grow from the sea-level tropics to 13,000-foot mountain slopes.

The most striking characteristic of bamboo is that no other living thing grows so tall so fast. Japan's most common bamboo grew almost four feet in 24 hours.

The total area planted to bamboo is estimated at about 20 million hectares, with the bulk of this located in India (almost 50 per cent) and China (20 per cent). Total global production at present is about 20 million tons. China predicts a doubling of its production from plantations and natural bamboo forests to 16 million tons by the turn of the century.

Ironically, in spite of its versatility, the bamboo is facing depletion in some parts of Asia. This is particularly true in the Philippines. A study by the Philippine Human Resources Development Centre (PHRDC) showed that the wanton harvesting and lack of efficient management practices have hastened the depletion of bamboo in the country. From more than 200,000 hectares in the early 1900s, Filipino bamboo plantations now total only 5,000 hectares.

The report attributes this to the rapid rise in demand from industries and construction projects. But the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) also blame population pressure, greed on the part of some influential few, and inability of past administrations to observe the correct conservation of the natural resources.

— Depthnews Asia

The Passing Show

by Alif Zabr

Pay More Attention to the Consumers

THE consumers in the countries with developing economies are always having a raw deal. There are several reasons for this state of affair. The supply is less than the demand, and the tight-fisted consumers go for cheaper products, as living wages cannot be ensured due to the average low standard of living and low per-capita income. Also, the "over-population" creates unemployment. Many of the unemployed strive to make a living by hook or by crook. The market is flooded with spurious goods; and quality control (QC) remains in the heaven or inside the files, the bureaucrats deal with files, not QC (regulation)!

Now with the open-market economy, there is global competition as the tariff barriers come down, and the local market has started to be flooded with cheaper foreign products — comparatively cheaper than the goods which used to be smuggled in earlier. Most of the imported stuff have better QC, otherwise it won't sell.

The pre-budget canvassing has started. The papers are full of the nagging problems of the

local industries and businessmen, who are demanding very year, various types of concessions and exemptions from the government to be able to sell their poor quality goods; increasing profits, without improvement in quality. The problems of the consumers are hardly mentioned by the manufacturers thus creating a huge communication gap. The administration has to keep a balance between the powerful business lobbies and the poor representation of the consumers' interest. While muscle-power is operating in some sectors, in this case money-power (kickbacks) wield considerable influence. Be strict — and unpopular! That is the price of leadership.

The administration has to handle a new kind of job of tariff rationalization in the import and export fields. There is much ironing to be carried out for some time more. The bureaucrats need more time to become business-minded, but time is the hidden enemy. The market conditions cannot be controlled with delayed decisions. Prodding and pushing the officers have limited effect.