

Watch watching

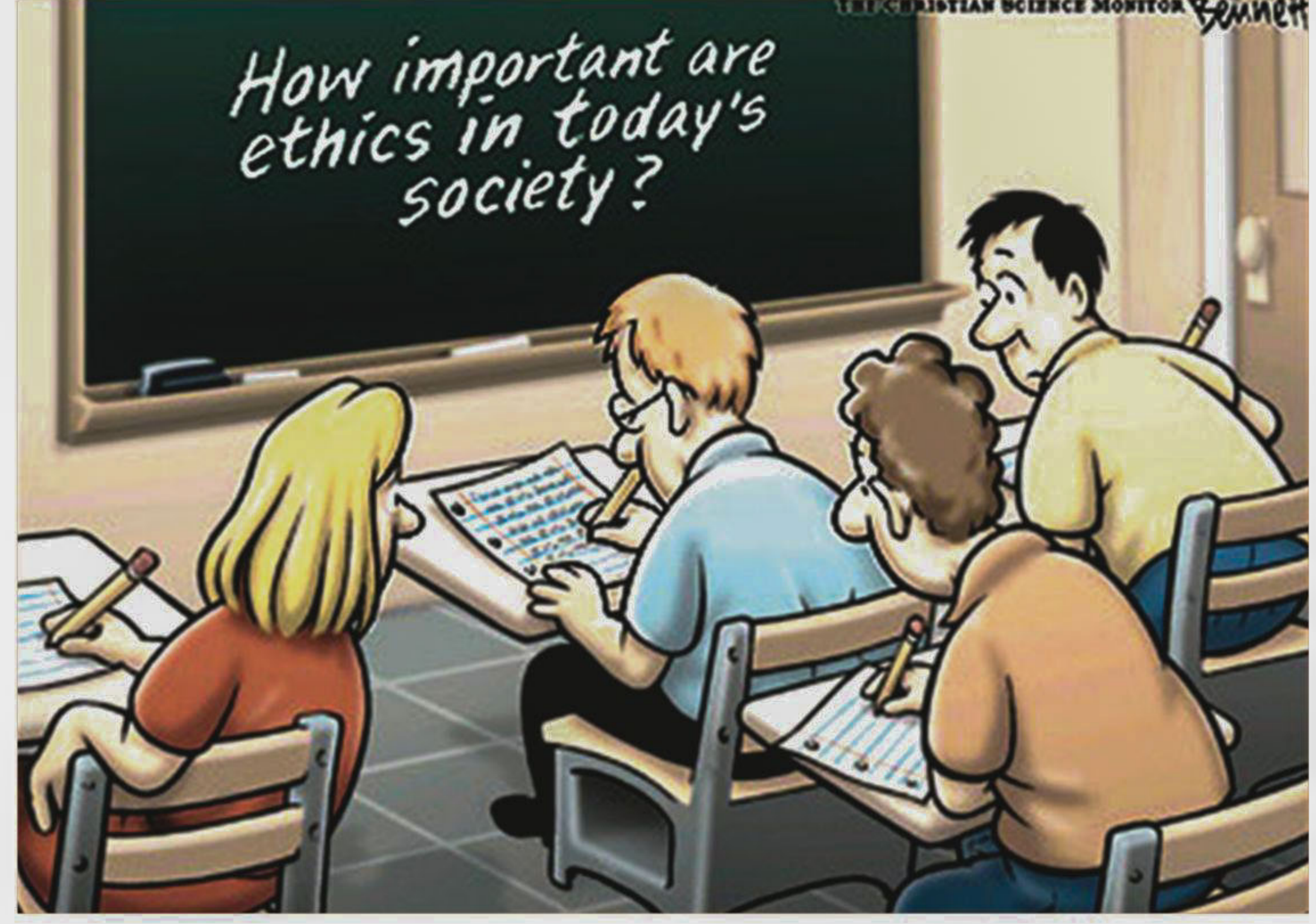


CHINTITO SINCE 1995
NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

SINCE long I have been intrigued by Desmond Morris's *Manwatching* (1977), admittedly one of the few books that I have gone through, not as much for its brazen content as for the very fact that the writer could think of a topic as absorbing as watching human beings. We all more or less do that, i.e. watch others around us (artfully or unashamedly), but Desmond (no, I do not know him on a one-to-one basis) transformed his zoology studies into a hobby; or, was it the other way around? No wonder then that a favourite quote of the ethologist, surrealist painter and popular author is 'I viewed my fellow man not as a fallen angel, but as a risen ape'. That really does bring out the monkey in the Englishman.

It is now clear that BCS examiners have been watching their examinees for a long time too. Based on what they have observed, this year over two lakh government service hopefuls have been barred from carrying a watch (wrist, pocket or electronic) to the 162 examination centres during the preliminary test. The irony is many among those who took that momentous decision did wear a watch or carry one when they appeared in this life-changing exam.

The test-takers are increasingly feeling unprotected after the previous ban on calculators, mobile phones and electronic devices. One wonders what will happen if further observation uncovers another common means of cheating - making notes on the underside of one's non-writing arm. How do I know that? Well, more on that some other day. What if an examinee arrives with a designer dupatta or an *urtorio* made of all the answers to the probable (leaked or otherwise) questions? This divesting of one's personal belongings has to be stopped at some point if only to avoid pain (disarming) and embarrassment (disrobing). Some watches are just that, they tell the



time if they are working. They should be of no use to any cheat anywhere, unless its brand is Psyche and the expected question is: What is another word for 'soul' that begins with a P? There are other useless watches, such as the ones that stop working during exams, occasionally to the peril of the wearer. When asked, not all invigilators are in a mood to tell a helpless examinee the time, simply because the invigilator already has a job. *Mui ki honu re?* Some watches are many times more

expensive than the starting salary of a government employee. I am not referring to the Phoenix-shaped Cartier that is priced at \$2.755 million, or to the Tourbillon Diamants Blancpain having a price tag of \$1.812 million. You read those numbers right. I am assuming (and logically so) that of the more than 30 million watches with a price higher than \$1,000 that are sold each year, a few find their way into our examination halls. We are indeed gratified that persons of such noble backgrounds are opting to serve the people. I believe some

invigilators would tell them the time. Psst! What do these ultra-costly watches do besides telling the time? You guessed right, I do not wear a wristwatch. The point is why ban watches (and what more articles will you bar?) when the solution lies in the question-setter gaining more knowledge than the wristwatch, rising above the calculator, and giving more time in setting intelligent and perceptive questions that transforms even an eight-digit calculating time-telling digital gadget into a vegetable. Please don't ban bananas; they are the lifeline

of many students and scholars. For instance, if a question seeks to know how many hands a wristwatch has, it is a not a legitimate question these days because with the options available some watches have more than two. Besides making the one possessing a no-hands digital clock go berserk, it will compel the examinee to take a look at his/her watch, which will tantamount to copying. Got you! You can imagine the TV scroll: *Thousands expelled for watching their watch by examiners who were watching.*

A better approach could be to ask about the greatest benefit of, say, a pucca road instead of making them watch the watch by asking the road length that had to be built if 33 percent of a 100km stretch was to be made pucca.

Why not set a question asking which country (among the options given) does not manufacture watches instead of which does, and why? Poke their intelligence instead of prodding their calculating skills. Let us be inspired by the method of 'open book' exams.

But, what if a receiver of text messages is disguised as a wristwatch? Aha! To begin with, we could teach our children from as early as primary school level that cheating is a sin. We could transform our societies to condemn cheats and penalise them in all sorts of ways. But, we do not.

Sadly though, there are cheats at the highest institutions in our country, our universities, where teachers have cheated in their professional applications, and held on to their jobs, with the help of conniving vice chancellors; the reason being poor schooling and dubious social upbringing, and a society debased enough to accepting the wrongdoers.

It is thus an almost impossible task to catch them at BCS level, if we have not taught them at primary. Cheating has become the norm, honesty an exception. Instead of awarding the honest, which we sometimes do most ceremoniously, we should deal exemplary punishment to the cheats.

The writer is a practising Architect at BashaBari Ltd., a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow in the UK, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout leader and a Major Donor Rotarian.

"Unfairly" lovely



SHIFTING IMAGES
MILIA ALI

I often hear Bangladeshis say: "Most Americans are racists." Interestingly, 50 percent of Americans also support the view that racism is a "big problem" in the country (according to a poll published in August 2015). This is hardly surprising since the United States has been at the centre of the race controversy for many years. It is one of the few countries that fought a civil war because of racial injustices. And today, black icons like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Barack Obama are part of the country's proud legacy. On the other hand, recent incidents where African Americans were unfairly arrested or shot by the police have reignited racial concerns. When Nina Davaluri, the Indian-American dark beauty, was crowned Miss America 2014, she was subjected to abusive racist comments on social media, reinforcing the fact that many Americans have deep-rooted prejudices against people of colour.

All this notwithstanding, I cringe when I hear South Asians talk about American racism. The truth is that Davaluri would probably never have won a pageant in South Asia since she is far darker than the current standards of beauty in the region. We, South Asians, are quick to rise up in arms against the discrimination that non-whites face in the United States. But have we ever acknowledged that we are perhaps equally, if not more, prejudiced against dark-skinned people? Our society perpetuates outlandish white standards of beauty and social acceptance that stem from years of colonisation and the rigid caste and class system. As an aside, let me mention that in a book that I am currently reading, *The Mughal World*, the author Abraham Eraly asserts that fair-skinned Muslim invaders were more easily accepted as masters in India because "a bias for fair complexion was part of the Indian psyche." The book quotes 17th century French traveller Bernier's observation: "the children of the third and

fourth generation, who have brown complexion, are held in much less respect than the newcomers." Even today, many prospective grooms look for fair brides and employers give a slight preference to fair-skinned candidates since they are more likely to be accepted in leadership roles. The idea that fair is superior is so deeply ingrained in our culture that many of us don't even recognise it as a form of discrimination.

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Fair skin is more than just an obsession in South Asia. The first comments that are uttered by relatives when they see a newborn are about her skin colour! As young girls, my sister and I (we are both not "fair") were often subjected to negative comments from social auntsies who would wonder out aloud: "Both parents are fair - what a pity the daughters are not...!" Needless to say, my self-image suffered quite a lot as a result of these remarks. Although with

age I have realised that there is more to life than just skin colour, the subterranean psychological scars still surface occasionally.

So entrenched is our preference for fair skin that the cosmetic industry thrives on the promises of lightening a woman's skin colour in 10, 20 or 30 days. In 1978, the whitening cream Fair & Lovely was launched followed by a series of similar products. Many dark-skinned women resort to these beauty aids - some even opt for a complete "whitening" makeover often suffering serious skin problems due to the chemicals used in the products. While the beauty industry cannot be blamed for our society's antipathy toward dark skin, the blatant marketing of whitening creams has made it more difficult to overcome the prejudice. Even an icon like Shahrukh Khan advertises for the "Fair & Handsome" cream. The ad features the star striding through screaming fans, pausing to give a dark-skinned young male fan a pack of the bleaching product. Women then start rushing up to the star and kissing him. He winks at the fan. The idea is clear: "Bleach your skin, and women will throw themselves at you." The "Fair & Lovely" ads for women also display a flagrant disregard for women's sensitivities since they clearly state that fairer skin will increase a woman's chances of making a suitable match!

In a society that attaches such a high premium on fair complexion, it is difficult to reassure young people that in the long run attributes like hard work and good interpersonal skills are far more important than one's skin colour. Indian actress Nandita Das has joined a "Dark is Beautiful" campaign where she is giving the younger generation a powerful message: being comfortable in your skin gives you a better sense of worth than trying to be something you are not. It may take decades, even centuries, for our society to overcome the prejudice against dark skin. But one needs to start at some point. And a starting point may be to accept and reflect on our own biases rather than point fingers at the west.

The writer is a renowned Rabindra Sangeet exponent and a former employee of the World Bank.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
 Construction of Bangladesh Film Archive Bhaban Project (Revised)
 Bangladesh Film Archive, Ministry of Information, 27/A (6th Floor), Monipuri Para, Dhaka-1215

International Re-Tender Notice

Reference No: 15.58.0000.110.07.108.2015/472 Date: 06-01-2016

International sealed tenders are hereby invited from renowned foreign manufacturers or through their local agents/suppliers for supply, installation, testing & commissioning of the following equipments and providing relevant training to the operating personnel of Bangladesh Film Archive. The details are as follows:

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Information.
2. Agency	Bangladesh Film Archive.
3. (a) Procuring entity name and address. (b) Procuring entity code & district	Project Director, Construction of Bangladesh Film Archive Bhaban Project (Revised), Bangladesh Film Archive, 27/A (6th Floor), Monipuri Para, Dhaka-1215. (b) Project Code: 3373 (5020), Dhaka, Bangladesh.
4. Invitation Ref. No. & date	15.58.0000.110.07.108.2015/472 Date: 06-01-2016
5. Procurement method	Open Tender Method (OTM)
6. Budget and source of funds	Development Budget, Government of Bangladesh (GOB).
7. Tender package No. and name	GD-02 (2015-16). Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of a (01 No.) 16/35mm Combined Real Time Film Scanner (2K) with necessary accessories on turnkey basis and onsite training.
8. Tender publication date	10 January 2016 (on or before).
9. Tender last selling date	07-02-2016, Sunday, 15:00 hours (BST).
10. Tender closing date and time	08-02-2016, Monday, 15:00 hours (BST).
11. Tender opening date and time	08-02-2016, Monday, 15:30 hours (BST).
12. Selling tender document	Accounts Section, Bangladesh Film Archive, Ministry of Information, 121, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, 2nd Floor, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
Receiving & opening tender document	Projection Hall, Bangladesh Film Archive, Ministry of Information, 121, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, 2nd Floor, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
13. Eligibility of tenderer	(a) The tenderer should be the manufacturer or authorized distributor/agent/supplier of the manufacturer having at least 2 (two) years' experience of similar job. (b) The tenderer/bidder should comply all conditions and qualifications stated in the tender document.
14. Price of tender document (Tk.)	BD Tk. 2,000.00 (two thousand) by treasury chalan to DDO, Bangladesh Film Archive, Code No. 1-3373-0000-2366.
15. Lot No. Identification of lot Location Tender security amount Completion time	01. 01 No. 16/35mm Combined Real Time Film Scanner (2K) with necessary accessories Bangladesh Film Archive BD Tk. 3,35,000.00 (three lac thirty-five thousand) or US\$ 4,200.00 (four thousand two hundred) in the form of an Irrevocable Bank Guarantee issued by an internationally reputable bank and shall require to be endorsed by its any correspondent bank located in Bangladesh. 03 (three) months
16. Name, designation and address of official inviting tender	Md. Nizamul Kabir, Project Director, Construction of Bangladesh Film Archive Bhaban Project (Revised), Bangladesh Film Archive, Ministry of Information, 27/A (6th Floor), Monipuri Para, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh.
17. Contact details of official inviting tender	Phone: 00-88-02-9133813, 00-88-02-9111772, 00-88-01712036468 Fax: 00-88-02-9132849, E-mail: pdbarchivebd@gmail.com
18. Special instructions: (a) The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender or all tenders partly or completely without assigning any reason whatsoever. (b) All the activities in connection with the said Procurement Act 2006 & the Public Procurement Rules 2008 (with latest amendment).	

MD-80

Md. Nizamul Kabir
 Project Director
 Ph: 9133813

QUOTABLE Quote

MARIA MIES
 Sociologist & Feminist

Peace in patriarchy is war against women.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
 1 Bawls out
 7 Outdoor promenade
 11 Weak excuse
 12 Lake near Buffalo
 13 Playwright Sean
 14 Sea wall
 15 Front parts
 16 Put on the line
 17 Music's Waller
 18 Louisiana school
 19 Noted lab assistant
 21 Slutter Williams
 22 Winter song refrain
 25 Auction signal
 26 Presidential power
 27 Brings together
 29 Tube tops
 33 Board
 34 Insertion symbol
 35 Comfy home
 36 Big Apple player
 37 They may clash
 38 Salad base
 39 City on the Truckee

DOWN
 1 Express disbelief
 2 Winter quaff
 3 Swirly prints
 4 Wigs out
 5 Membership cost
 6 Pig's place
 7 Olympics award
 8 Tokyo thanks
 9 Shiny, perhaps
 10 Acted the lecher
 11 Food served with kraut
 18 Lugs
 20 Donated
 22 Pedigree
 23 Newspaper issue
 24 "Wish I could help"
 25 Taps tooter
 28 Trunk
 30 Alan of "Argo"
 31 Irritate
 32 Rider's horse
 34 Jargon
 36 Agreeable answer

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

S	P	A	R	S	C	A	U	S	E
P	A	R	E	E	O	G	R	E	S
A	N	T	O	N	V	E	S	T	S
R	A	H	A	B	E	U	S	A	
E	M	U	T	O	Y	L	O	Y	
D	A	R	O	W	F	A	N	O	
C	A	R	T	A	L	K			
P	A	C	T	I	T	A	L	I	C
A	L	L	N	E	T	E	R	I	A
S	P	A	U	S	E	G	I	N	
T	I	R	E	D	S	O	U	S	A
A	N	K	L	E	T	R	I	E	D
S	E	E	K	S	S	A	N	S	A