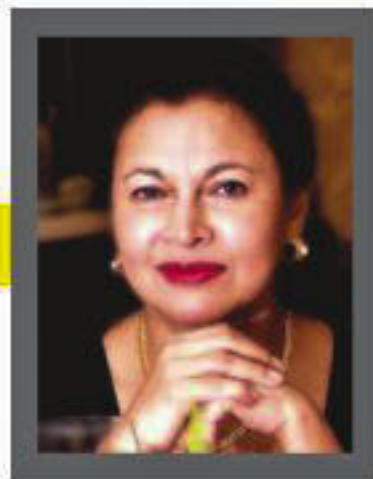


THOUGHT CRAFT

BY NASRIN SOBHAN
Freelance Writer

Manners manners

I had never met the couple or their parents before, nor did I think I would again, thankfully. This is a new world in many ways, and I find that there are more and more young people like this. They go to good schools, their parents are comfortably solvent, and

An unmannered young person can make me very cross, especially if he is unmannerly in my own home: a young couple once came over to drop off a letter. When I entered the room, the young lady remained seated, did not say salaam, and seemed not to know who I was. The young man, her husband, continued to speak on the phone without even looking up at me, legs crossed nonchalantly, foot swinging. I came and stood directly in front of him and had to interrupt him before he would hang up.

“Good manners will open doors that the best education cannot.”

- Clarence Thomas

they own the latest gadgets and the fanciest cars, but they are ignorant of any manners or courtesy, natural as God made them, loud voiced, plump, rough and ready.

Our identity as Bengalis is linked to every form of culture, polished speech, good manners, and kindness to strangers, even among the most humble of us. It would be tragic if these traditions were to be sacrificed to respect only for wealth, ostentation, and alien values.

When we were young, we grew up in what seemed to me a gentler society, where politeness was so prized that domestic employers, far from waiting for their staff to salaam them, greeted them first. As I recall, there was dignity coupled with kindness, a respect for boundaries, and a sense of the appropriate. To cite a small example: when an elder entered the room, we younger folk took our feet off the table, stood up, and turned off the jazz on the radio.

We lowered our voices when we spoke with them and we respected personal physical space. We waited until a slow-moving elder had passed before we moved forward.

We seem to be moving away from these practices, when, more than ever, in this crowded turbulent world, we need strict codes of behaviour.

Life should not be lived in an atmosphere of social permissiveness and laxity where low standards of conduct are considered normal. It is the duty of parents to inculcate good manners and courtesy into their young. What children see is what they learn, so there is a responsibility on the part of the parents, first and foremost, to set the right standards of morality, integrity and values.

As to my first paragraph of respect for our elders, we must remember that we owe them much. They are the parents of our nation, and the repositories of our history and our past. We can benefit from the wealth of their memories, wisdom and experience; and most of all we must give them their just due, because we are looking in a mirror. The old represent a day in the future that is inevitable: the day that young people see that they too are no longer young.

Photo: Collected

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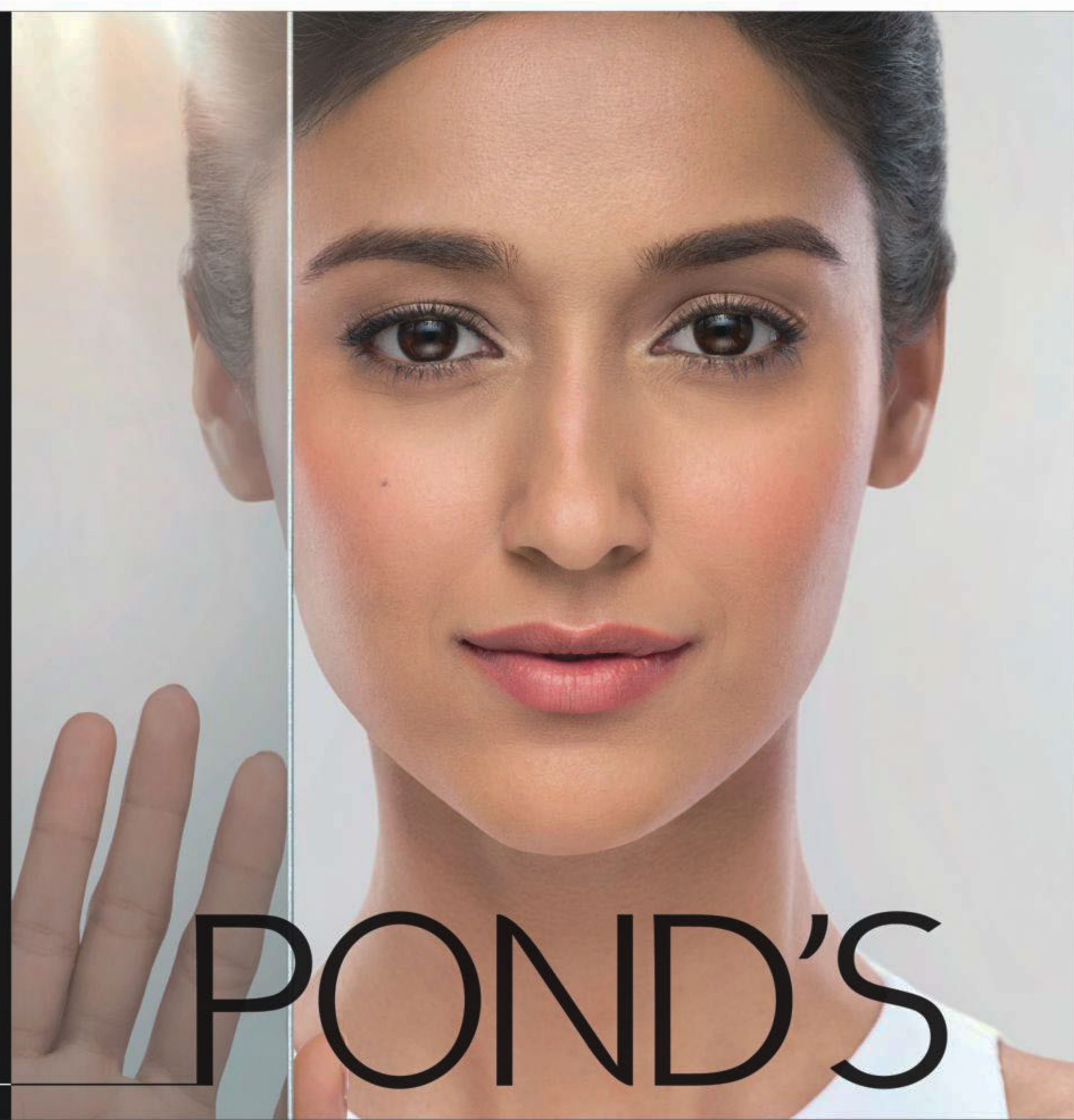


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