

#PERSPECTIVE

“Of This, That and Passion”

The pandemic has made insomniacs of a lot of us, including me. So late into the night, whilst listening to some Tango music, I stumbled upon a Tango, the dance, belonging to the same genre. The Argentine Tango is a dance that originated in the streets of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, Uruguay. Google will yield up masses of information on the subject if one is inclined to look. But here, I sift through it and put a slightly different spin on the subject. What I watched was a piece of exhibition Tango dancing performed in front of a gathering of highly knowledgeable, discerning aficionados and spectators. It was a display by renowned late master of the dance, Carlos Gavito, partnered by Marcella Durand. Gavito, when he performed this, was well past his prime, portly in girth. He had dedicated his life to the dance and toured the world with his group “Forever Tango.” The Tango is a dance between two people trying to connect and communicate, through innovation and improvisation. It is also a conversation of passionate mystery and seduction. It requires in the partnership one to lead and one to follow and within that framework to maintain accord, to listen, to keep harmony of step and that intangible connect of the soul. The leader leads, the acolyte decides what to accept and thus the dance is born. “Like the symbols of Yin and Yang, the roles of both, each have a little of the other within the collaborative process, which encourages the development of sensitivity, clarity, trust and respect.” I suddenly became aware that this could be a corollary, a parallel and embodiment of the qualities a great leader may bring to a country and the people he/she may lead. The people, if progressive and democratic, may be willing to put their trust in being led and guided by the leader’s connection and sensitivity towards their needs and welfare. The leader and the people both need to bring passion and trust to their beliefs and that, in short, is the subject of this essay. The operative word for people when they endeavour to do the best they can, is that they set to it with passion. However banal and clichéd it may sound, the world turns on passion. Passion leads to the desire to excel. It is life’s greatest motivating force. It is a force both emotional and mental. It is our power to pursue dreams, our belief in ourselves, to reach out for that, which lies beyond our grasp, or even to die in the trying.

Passion is not only relegated to romance; it is its driving factor. “It is the fuel for will.” “It helps to withstand adversity with excellence.” Passion should make us love whatever it is we undertake to do, and not allow us to give up on our dreams. “The passion we hold to each goal, each achievement, helps substantially overcome the discouragement in front of any loss.” We each need to find passion in our own ways, make our own discovery of it, for then is life truly worth living.

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer,” said Nelson Mandela. “There is no passion to be found playing small, in

settling for a life that is less than the one we are capable of living.” This great man was jailed for 27 years for his activism against apartheid and regularly recited the poem *Invictus* to keep his spirits up in captivity. It was his unbounded passion and conviction to free South Africa from the injustice of apartheid that fuelled Mandela through those unspeakable years and changed the face of his country forever.

TS Eliot had said, “No one can explain passion to one who has not experienced it than we can explain light to the blind.”

Our world is full of examples of passionate dreams, outlandish ideas that



have propelled thinkers and men and women of vision to be able to give them form, shape and bring them to fruition. Every successful endeavour, be it big or small, has had a dreamer behind it. Great works of art, literature, music, architecture, dance, politics, the sciences, technology – all achievements and all successes in these fields have had passion as the motivational force. Case in point could well be in Bangladesh, our own successful completion of the immense Padma Bridge, the dream of our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina. Her untiring zeal and passion saw its remarkable completion and inauguration in the face of what had appeared as insurmountable odds. The subcontinent is littered with the names and examples of a litany of passionate achievers in every field of the arts, letters and sciences from earliest times to the present day. Picking a name out of the hat at random, I come up with Ludwig

van Beethoven, a name most people are acquainted with. The German composer and pianist from the 18th century, Beethoven turned totally deaf at the age of 44 or thereabouts, yet remains one of the most performed Western classical musicians to date. One cannot help but wonder what incredible passion had driven a completely deaf musician to compose piece after superlative piece. Beethoven believed in liberty, equality and the brotherhood of all men. His drive was to turn music into sound poems and his immense passion related to his life’s purpose.

Other forms of passion bring to mind

but to thrive, and do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour, and some style.”

The other day, I came across a YouTube video a close friend had sent me of his son Fuad Ahmed, a very personable, young and talented thespian, with a very good body of work to his credit, living, working and based in Canada. The video was of Fuad Ahmed speaking on TEDx Canada on “Reclaiming my identity, why I changed my name and my journey.” He says he came to Canada as an immigrant, as a person of colour, and as a Muslim. His appearance belied his Asian origins, as he looked completely Caucasian. Yet he changed his name to Gabe Grey, not only to match his appearance, but to find roles in films and theater, his chosen profession and passion. Going with Fuad Ahmed left him open to discrimination and bias. The moot point of the TEDx talk was that after a considerable period of living with his assumed name, he came to realize he was not “thriving” in the fullest sense of the word. He brings to the fore the most telling question we need to ask ourselves, which is, are we just living or are we thriving in our lives; and if it is not the latter, then why are we settling for second best? His change of name to a totally Western one brought him roles by the dozen, fame, recognition, but despite all those trappings, there was a sense of incompleteness that he could not deny. He realized he was not being his truest self, true to the essence of who he actually was. His assumed name made him feel a disconnect and incomplete. His talk is fiery and impassioned. It subscribes to his complete belief and conviction in what he advocates, and the motivation that drives him in pursuit of excellence based on his talent, his value system, all of which he regains by taking back his given name of Fuad Ahmed. The young man’s talk exemplified the driving force of passion at its best.

Reverting to Tango, I have witnessed performances by world-famous touring groups called Tango Argentina when domiciled abroad, countless exhibition dancing competitions featuring the Tango, numerous films, and the night that I stayed awake, a selection of a minimum of twenty YouTube videos, good and bad, from early recordings to the newest ones. Most were a brilliant compilation of perfection of movement, particularly the newer forms of Tango, which were a combination of gymnastics, acrobatics, and balletic movements. To me, most lacked the pure, undiluted and singeing passion of Carlos Gavito’s performance with Marcella. The ageing Maestro of the Tango, embodied in every step and movement what in Latin is described best as “Fulminare,” flashing with thunderbolts! Seneca said, “Vivamus Moriendum est,” let us live since we must die; and to live fully is to live a life lived with passion.

By Lita Samad
Photo: Collected