*Competent Communicator 9: Persuade with power*

**The pin**

We know about clips and pins.

Clips come in a wide variety of size, shape, colour, construction and competence. Clips are smooth operators with the kind of élan MBAs purchase from business schools.

How does the clip perform when under pressure? (Clip 20 sheets of A 4 size papers)

Could you grab half the sheets of paper and pull them in opposite directions?

Clearly, the clip is a quitter.

Can we repeat the exercise with the pin? ( Pin the 20 sheets and try to pull half the sheets in either direction)

What commitment! What resilience, what reliability under pressure. Wonderful role model!

Good afternoon TM o D, fellow toast masters and dear guests,

Ever wondered why we don’t give the pin its due? Aren’t we biased by its humble, undistinguished looks? By its low price?

We have trained ourselves to judge things by the price we pay and not by the value they deliver.

The pin is only a metaphor for all the ‘unspecial’, honest, ordinary, productive members of our society.

We have trained ourselves to judge people by their pay packets and net worth, and not by their worth as humans, their contributions to the society.

I have an explanation, without prejudice to anyone.

Firstly, in search of results and efficiency, businesses feel sure and confident, only with the proof of numbers. So everything has to be made measurable. In this number centric mind set, we read numbers on people’s forehead.

Secondly, our Vernier callipers to evaluate people has been irreversibly re-calibrated. It is calibrated by the Rs 200 a cup of coffee that we treat ourselves to, using our expense accounts. How much can we value the pizza delivery boy who earns Rs 200 on a long day? And all those ‘unspecial’ people?

What do we think of the postman who doesn’t miss a house, when he could easily have thrown the bundle of letters into Adyar river and nobody would be the wiser?.

Is the pilot a hundred times skilled, compared to a city bus driver, to deserve 100 times the driver’s pay?

How about the midwife, the priest, the primary school teacher, the auto driver, the house maid, the conservancy worker, the class D railway employee who checks the pegs of every fish plate on every railway track? Without them how would we ever be born, attend school, grow, live our lives fully and finally exit as prescribed?

In the random roulette of life, we are what we are, only by the luck of being born in privileged families. If we think it is because of our abilities, remember, our abilities are themselves a function of where we grew up – and the genes.

In the light of all these, friends, is it fair to treat some humans as lesser children of God? No. That will be an insult to God, to accuse him of partiality.

Instead, I urge you to do two things:

One, Let us be honest to ourselves and our wisdom which says the unspecials are not lesser mortals but people who didn’t get their full share of facilities, since some of their per capita share, we wrested and enjoyed.

Two, Let us take a pledge not to insult people based on their social standing. The worst form is when a servant is made to look small in front of his or her children. For a child, parents are pillars of strength- and you declare them incompetent – and the poor man or woman cannot even protest. What will happen to that child’s self confidence?

If someone thinks, why should I change the cosy status quo, remember, more and more of the denied class are becoming aware and assertive, thanks to RTI, education, the confidence from jobs and income. Increasingly, the *Laalbathi* culture is being questioned. Queue jumping leaders are being shown their place. People are claiming their rights. The establishment has become the subject of derision, and cynicism reins. That a new movement could capture the revulsion and the frustration in such quick time, points to a tinder box we fail to see.

And remember, in a broad class divide, the pins will see us as privileged clips, not as fellow pins. We will be at the receiving end, in a backlash.

All societies ultimately progress to an egalitarian state. Question is: Should India’s progress to true equality to be through violent agitations, or more gracefully? The answer lies with us, with what we think of the underprivileged and how we behave with them.

Let us play fair, because it is the right thing. Let us play fair, at least in our enlightened self-interest.

Over to you TMoD!