

The Pleasures of Conversation

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It was the month of June, 1995. All of us faculty members used to sit together in the department's tea room and chat over a cup of tea during recess. Mr. Noor was from our neighboring department. He also used to join us for tea occasionally. There were mixed reactions on Noor's presence among us, some were surprised, others felt he was an intruder from another department.

Noor was a student of a neighboring department who was probably introduced to us by someone from our department. That is why we all respected and initially encouraged him to join us for tea. Thus he became a regular at our daily tea-time.

Some of us were now starting to feel nervous by his constant presence among us. They felt he was there to listen to our conversation, our gossip. One of the colleagues said that Noor is always trying very hard to prove that he is very intelligent. Gradually, everyone had some objection or the other to his presence in our tea room. I said to my colleagues why can't we just enjoy Noor's company; and so what if he gets to hear some interesting good gossip or some useful ideas in our company? Why should that worry us?

One day Noor came to my office. He seemed eagerly in need of something. "Sir, there is a welcome party in my department and I need a good script, a parody, poetry or something interesting that I can present on the occasion. Can you help me with that?"

I was glad that Noor came to me and that he felt I would be able to give him an interesting script. Flattered, I promised to provide him the kind of script he was looking for.

The next day, he was again at my door for the promised script. I hadn't had time to write it yet. I asked him for a little more time.

In a flash of insight I realized that it was his search that brought Noor to our department. He was not looking for any secret information from us. His quest was for knowledge. He was a seeker of knowledge trying to find it wherever or however he may. At last I wrote him a thought provoking Urdu poem which he presented in the welcome party and received much appreciation from his teachers and classmates.

Soon after the welcome party Noor came to my office with a cheerful face to thank me for the poem. I too was happy to be of use to Noor, to the student of neighboring department.

It was a wonderful day of my life when it dawned on me that Noor was only hungering after knowledge and seeking the company of learned men.

At last the day came when he was leaving the university after obtaining the Master degree securing first division.

Today Noor is a responsible government official. He still drops in sometimes to sit and have tea with us.

With time my colleagues too accepted that there was no deep conspiracy in what Noor had been doing. He was, as they say, mingling the pleasure of conversation with the advantage of instruction.

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