

Mr Li Pong and his world of smile and patience



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As I was trying to park my car, I banged into a Wagon-R. Realizing the damage to be huge, I prepared myself to face the consequence. In Delhi a defaulter has to go through a series of verbal abuses before finally paying for the actual damage. The frequency and tune of abuses sometimes varies depending upon appearance and attitude of the stakeholder.

“It’s ok, don’t worry, there is only a minor brush....Chill” owner of the Wagon-R came smiling towards me. “My visit to the workshop is due, shall get it repaired next week” the owner introduced himself as Mr Li Pong from Meghalaya, shook hands with me and left. For a while I could not believe my eyes and ears. I entered my home relaxed and confused unable to come in terms with what I had experienced....a rare kind of behaviour.

A week later I met Mr Li Pong again during our morning walk, we greeted each other and kept walking together. I enquired if his car was repaired, to which he smiled and replied “if for every minor scratch, I run to a workshop, I would never effort to enjoy my life”. Mr Pong , was recently posted to Delhi, like me he too works for a PSU. It was his first posting in a metro city and he had apprehension shifting to Delhi. But finally found three factors in favour of the city; health care, children education and PVR theatre.... he enjoy masala hindi movies .

While walking through the park, joggers and walkers greeted him. Just when I was wondering how come an outsider knew most of the people, a bunch of children cheered up upon seeing him. It was his football team, mostly street children. He said good bye to me and soon got engaged with the game. There was hardly any space but was enough for the 12 odd footballers to sweat it out. Mr Li looks like a footballer around 5 feet 10 inches in height, muscular and without moustache like any other guy from north-east.

In the next few days we became quite friendly. I started observing him very closely, the way he smiles, talks to people and approaches an issue. He was a very ordinary guy in the neighbourhood but I must admit he emits positivity from every part of his body. While driving he would prefer to wait rather than honking. From watchman to the rag picker he would address them by name and they reciprocate accordingly. He always carries his smile and patience with him and surprisingly he succeeded in solving all his issues with his two ‘ priceless weapons’.

One fine day I asked him how can he be so nice and still manage to push ahead with his way in a city like Delhi. He responded smilingly “when you are new to a place or an organization, people consider you to be a threat and treat you in an unusual manner”. He continued “But when you behave with them in a polite manner, they assume, too much of good behaviour can only come from a weak person and that’s when their fear drops down”. Mr Li went on elaborating “once you succeed in erasing the element of threat from their mind, the same people will unknowingly agree/surrender to whatever you say”. He concluded “I prefer to be weak and happy rather than to be strong and unhappy”It’s all about our choice and perception.

I started practicing the thumb rule of smile and patience. I found the formula to be working. Once I was forced to park my car few yards away from my house (in Lajpat Nagar all cars are parked on the road). A lady came yelling at me “this is our space, don’t you have mind, where will we park our motor cycle”. More than the words it was her tune which irritated me. I smiled, but she continue with her verbal gun shots, I smiled again (*I must say it was tough*) she continued. Finally when she stopped I explained it to her that I stay on the other side of the road and if she really wants I am ready to remove my car. I tried to convince her saying that being her neighbour we are like a family as in the case of a small town from where I came. Further, I explained to her that she can count on me for any kind of help even it is at mid night. She stared at me for a while, asked my house nos. and allowed me to park my car. Since, then I never had problem parking my car.

In the second instance, a visitor's car was parked in the slot reserved for our top floor tenant Mr Deepak. Deepak ji was a hot headed guy and when he found his space to be occupied, he intentionally parked his car behind the visitor's car. When the visitors finally arrived, they could go as the path was blocked. Neighbours called Deepak ji to remove his car but eventually they all end up in a big quarrel. The atmosphere was completely charged up and both parties started abusing each other's. The common Delhi's idiom of *"tu janta nahi may kaun hu.....Vidhayak ji mera Chacha hai....ek phone karunga sab samaj may a jayga "* came up several time. The visitors were four guys all in their mid-twenties. Mr Deepak dared them to do whatever they like but refused to remove his car and went back to his room. This continued for around 30 minutes with number of spectators growing every minute including me. Finally I called up Mr Li Pong. Incidentally Mr Li was out of station, however he listened to the problem and finally gave me an instant solution. According to his advice I went to Mr Deepak's room smiling, asked for the car key and volunteered to remove the car. Deepak ji could not refuse me. As the visitors left and the drama ended, my neighbours applauded me. I was given a celebrity status on that particular evening.

Since then, I am trying to follow the thumb rule. I have found success on few occasion but I must confess the process is very tough. If I succeeded I would be the happiest person .My perception to life is changing. Now, sometimes I carry a toffee or biscuit for the rickshaw wala who drop me in the metro station. Last weekend he bought "am ka acchar" for me from his village in Bihar.

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