



TRUTH IS

AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR PRESIDENT

RECORDED IN 1966

Question: Sir, to keep the present pace of progress, what measures will be taken by you in the coming competitive years?

Mr Abedi: We shall make more intensive efforts to mobilise, improve and bring into optimum operation the creative energies of our personnel. We shall pay more attention towards the quantitative and qualitative growth of the capabilities of our staff. We shall unravel and exploit the hidden opportunities and shall play the 'Art of the Possible' in a manner which would be subtle, beautiful and exquisite.

This was my answer to your question, but if you permit I may say something more...I have no doubt that, God willing, we shall not only maintain but shall considerably improve upon the present pace of our progress. I feel the future of our institution as I feel the morning breeze, or as I feel the fragrance of jasmine.

Question: Sir, it is said that 'deposits are to banking as breath is to life'. Can you suggest some tactics in attracting the deposits?

Mr Abedi: I do not agree with the statement that 'deposits are to banking as breath is to life'. I think deposits are like life to a bank, and

bringing deposits is like breath is to life, and I am sure you would not expect me to suggest as to how you should breathe.

Question: Sir, as the pattern of banking is gradually changing to the Western style where bankers force their clients to avail themselves of more and more advances, don't you think that advances are more a life for a bank than deposits?

Mr Abedi: I do not agree with the statement that 'advances are more a life for a bank than deposits'. In my opinion, advances are like measures that you take to preserve your life and make it purposeful.

Question: Sir, to quote a Chinese proverb, 'If you want to plan for a year, grow corn, and if you want to plan for a decade, grow fruit, but if you want to plan for eternity, grow men — "men of knowledge" '. In the light of the above-mentioned statement, which in your opinion will pay more in the long run, professional ability or development ability?

Mr Abedi: This question shows your interest in the understanding of fundamental problems of banking and management. In my opinion,



officers of your seniority in other institutions do not have the vision to comprehend a question like this. I doubt if even the senior executives of other institutions have ever felt interested in such problems. I am very glad to know that your interest in banking and management is as keen as reflected by this question.

Question: Excuse me for the interruption, sir. There is a proverb 'King is the cause of the character of the time', and you...

Mr Abedi: Well!...in my view, 'King is not the cause of the character of the time'. I believe King is the product of history. He is the outcome of a process of evolution. It would be more correct if you say that 'time is the cause of the character of the King, and King is the cause of the character of time'. They are inseparable... indistinguishable. It is for this reason that in this institution we have created a concept of management in which management is the result of an evolution, through and in the circumstances that exist...and for God's sake, do not confront me in the manner you are doing, and please do not talk of Kings....

The character of this institution is the result of a process of evolution in a situation of which the entire staff and such other conditions as economic, social, political, etc., etc., are the components. These components are neither created nor controlled by one person and they are constantly changing. As you know, the abilities of all of us are also constantly changing. And for this reason we have been taking pains to avoid the establishment of authority and superiority of one staff over the other, except just to the extent that is necessary for keeping an order in the working.

We are trying our best to create a climate of complete freedom and openness, where people can grow uninhibited by pressure of delegated authority and by sheer merit and ability...where every individual has the fullest opportunity and

freedom to assume responsibilities on the one hand and to take the pressures of work on the other hand to whatever extent he may like. In this concept of management, there are two central points, namely that each individual in the institution moves around objectives rather than dances to the tune of authority, and that a unity is obtained in freedom, as against a unity through authority...unity of thought, purpose and action.

Unity through authority is restrictive. Unity in freedom is rich, colourful and far more effective and productive. It is this unity that gives a direction, and when there is a direction the institution acquires a character. The directions would change and so the character of the institution, but each direction would be the result of a new unity of thought, purpose and action. This unity can be achieved only through a state of mind and feelings which in its finality becomes the spirit or the life force of an institution.

In this way the directions would not be shown by one man, who is never big enough to be able correctly and truly to embrace and comprehend, digest and become one with the complex problems of a highly complex society, nor would the character of the institution be enfeebled by the peevishness or bogged down by the ego or neurosis...of one man. The institution is protected from a state of mind and emotion where it does not fully or adequately respond to the finely and intricately woven problems of a situation. By this method, through a subtle, frictional force generated in the process of integration, the institution casts off the frailties and weaknesses of individuals and thrives on the skills and merits of its personnel in the spectrum of a joint personality.

I hope you now see it clearly. It is not 'I' — it is the institution as a whole, including you. Did I ask you to come to me and distract me from my work and drag me into all this, or did you



come to me yourself...? What does this mean...? Is it I or you, or both, or all others in this institution in a similar manner...?

Question: But sir, you are the inspiration....

Mr Abedi: Now look, I am inspired by you and a score of other factors, and it may be that I inspire you. Would you please let us come back to our original question?

I think we are trying to follow the Chinese proverb more than any other institution in this country. In terms of our priorities, growth of our personnel is first and foremost. In my opinion the most effective way for the growth of a person is to provide him with a climate in which he can grow as a 'man of knowledge'. As you know, in the ultimate analysis all knowledge moves around human beings. Your development ability primarily comprises knowledge and insight into human beings. Your business is your client and your profession is the knowledge of your client.

I think the professional ability for a banker is first to know his client and his financial situation and then to serve his banking requirements. If by professional knowledge you merely mean technical knowledge, you are perhaps taking it in a narrow sense. Of course, technical knowledge is essential but its acquisition should not present any difficulty for people like you. What is really difficult is dealing with men, and that you can learn only by dealing with them. I am sure when you bring a client you do everything to satisfy him, and for that you would also acquire the necessary technical knowledge or the professional knowledge in the sense in which you have used the expression.

I think you would now agree with me that it is more through development ability that you become men of knowledge. We do not want to make you human machines like traditional bankers; we want you to grow as men of

knowledge while also having knowledge about machines (I mean technical knowledge). While technical ability or technical knowledge, whatever you may call it, is essential, development ability is the core of ability in banking.

Question: Sir, Staff College is a very recent innovation. Don't you think that it has come out with flying colours in training the officers of our institution?

Mr Abedi: In my opinion, the Staff College is serving a very good purpose. Besides the technical training that you receive here, you get the opportunity of coming to the business and financial capital, looking at the institution from a broader perspective and getting together with a large number of your colleagues. The fact that it was through the institution of the Staff College that it became possible for you to look at the profession and your bank in a perspective, as is reflected through these questions, has confirmed my belief in the usefulness of this institution.

Question: Sir, what do you think has been instrumental in bringing success to you; devotion to professional skills, or dedication to or faith in religion?

Mr Abedi: This question has two parts: one, myself; two, reasons for success. The first part is a cause of a little embarrassment for me, and therefore it is better to remove that before I answer the second part....

Question: Sir, we are sorry for causing this embarrassment.

Mr Abedi: Well...It would be incorrect to say that I have achieved any success. As explained a while ago, when we initiated the discussion, it is the institution that has succeeded and not myself. I am only a small part of the institution. I think professional skill and dedication to and



faith in religion all play a part in the achievement of success, but the source of these and all other factors that play a part in the success of any operation is the ability to discover realities.

I think it would make the discussion too long if I try to help you to understand what I mean by realities. It might help you to understand if I quote somebody who said that 'problems are solutions in disguise'. May I suggest to you to incise the disguise for getting near the reality. Somewhere else I was told that there are hidden opportunities in situations that appear to be a crisis. Can you dig out the hidden opportunities which I believe always exist with or without a crisis? It may be that during the crisis you make more efforts to find out such opportunities. May I request you to discover a simple reality! Would you please try to discover why some of you do not work hard and whether you work because you are forced to work or you work because you want to work? Can you discover your reality in the light of this question? For discovering realities you require the freedom of your being. You have to break through the barriers of such traditions and environments which are not in tune with the reality of your life, and make you ignorant of your own bio-reality. The less you mortgage yourself to ego, the more you are able to disentangle yourself from the web of inhibitions and complexes and the more you relate your actions to realities, the nearer you are to success.

May I put to you a final question? In matters where you did not succeed, would you try to discover as to why you did not succeed? Was it not because you did not want to succeed? I will say that this is perhaps the reality which is hardest to discover. During all the years of my career, I have never heard a man say that he did not succeed because somewhere in his subconscious there was a desire not to succeed. I

have only heard people grumbling that they could not succeed because others had not done them justice, or others had not given them opportunities, etc., etc., precisely because others did not let them succeed. I think if others were the cause of your success, then you would merely be at the receiving end of favours, and success so achieved could not be attributed to you.

Before I close the interview, may I introduce to you two of your greatest enemies? Unless you tackle them squarely, you will never succeed:

1) *Your ego:*

Unless you control and balance your ego you will never be able to see realities. If you know your ego it could be your greatest friend, and if you don't know it, it is your greatest enemy.

The most dangerous character of this companion is that it moves secretly, and therefore you have to live with it in good faith and complete understanding. The other difficulty with it is that it is a constant companion of your life and it can easily find you in some unguarded moments.

2) *Time:*

Time is the greatest enemy of all. This is the reality of life which perhaps everybody knows. But most of the people have surrendered themselves to this enemy and never care to fight it. Are you conscious of the reality of your possibilities and rights against this killer which is eating away your life by each second and each minute? Can you subdue it? Can you take so much out of it that nothing could be left for it, and thus you kill it rather than allow yourself to be killed by it? Can you transform this monster into something beautiful, joyful and purposeful? Beware of it. Maybe it is getting the upper hand with you, and maybe it does not allow you to use it fully and to your best advantage.