



*A man who knew how to empathize especially with the common people and women - **Periyar E.V. Ramasamy** (1879-1973)*

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Have a

meaningful Deepavali

What Malaysians Want:

Empathy for One Another

Empathy is the ability to understand, be aware of and sensitive to, what others are feeling; to identify completely with the other. It is the capacity to imagine what the other is going through, sometimes to the point of responding physically. It is *being* in the other's shoes.

When we can feel what the other is feeling, we appreciate and value the other. We are connected and united. Malaysians want empathy for one another because we want connection and union with our fellow brother and sister Malaysians so that we may prosper and grow from strength to strength as a nation.

Even when or perhaps, especially when, the other is practicing something you dislike; you can still have and show empathy because he or she is a real person with feelings and you honour that fact. For example, we can argue that smoking is a bad habit and should be banned, however, the reality is there are smokers and they have the right to smoke and should be able to in designated areas, without having to hide in corners like criminals. They should be able to smoke with ease.

Many eating establishments do not serve pork in respect of Muslims but they serve beef with disregard to Hindus. As a rule, non-Muslims should not serve pork and non-Hindus should not serve beef when one or the other is present. At the very least non-Hindus should show some awareness and sensitivity to the Hindu belief and feelings towards cows.

When you are in group, be mindful that you speak in a language everybody understands and offer explanations to members who do not speak the language.

When in a mosque or *gurdwara* or during community activities, be mindful of dress codes. At the same time when out in town accept others who dress differently even if you think the dressing is less than modest, understand that the other's need for comfort and expression is different from yours and learn to tolerate it. We are all here in this great nation and we all want and need to thrive.

We Malaysians accept traffic disruptions during special events like Thaipusam, Hungry Ghosts festival, St Anne's day and *Maulud Nabi*. We understand the need to double and triple park during Friday prayers and Sunday church. Muslims and non-Muslims agree to and are accustomed to the azan and temple bells.

However when we blast *ceramahs* after *maghrib* prayers on loudspeakers, we are not empathizing with Muslim and non-Muslim students who need to study and are doing their homework. We are not showing compassion for households trying to settle down for the evening, who are wrapping up the day to rest for tomorrow. Let's have

ceramahs

for the ears of mosque attendees and not broadcasted to the general public, let's understand and empathize with the needs of the community as a whole.

Acceptance, tolerance, compassion and understanding, these are the hallmarks of empathy, the keys to connection and unity. We Malaysians want empathy for one another so that we may love and care for our fellow brother and sister Malaysians and prosper and progress as a nation.

let us add value,

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