



IT'S COMPLICATED.....

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When people say, “Let’s try to remain civil to each other”, it basically means “Let’s try to be nice or amicable.” I guess that could very well serve its purpose, because it entails a kind of collected demeanor in an otherwise highly-tense situation.

This applies to erstwhile friends and associates, estranged couples as well as separated partners. The situation is actually difficult to comprehend for those who have managed to remain comfortable within their own relationships, mainly because there is no apparent pattern or arrangement involved—just...just civil, that’s all.

I have often been amazed by blatant declarations in social networking sites about current relationships that go ‘it’s complicated’. I have watched the movie with the same title and found it quite hilarious, and which had given me a glimpse of the meaning of relationships that are characterized as, well, complicated.

As civilized beings, we are expected to act in an educated manner befitting our stature in life or our status in society. Openly bickering in public is uncalled for; even eating with one’s bare hands has been qualified as ‘so primitive’ by a certain food seasoning brand.

I still remember a particular episode that happened more than six years ago involving a Filipino child who was reprimanded for what the modern school’s authorities deemed as, to put it mildly, ‘bad table manners’: the poor child had used a spoon and fork instead of just a fork while eating. That shocking episode created huge brouhaha on the net and off, with a host of reactions ranging from disgust to extreme anger to bland acceptance.

We cannot pass judgment on the poor child and neither are we in a position to beg the heavens to rain down stones upon the punishers. I believe the case was closed a few years back, with the child getting indemnification for his trauma and exoneration for his perceived infraction. I dare use the word “perceive” here because the poor boy was just employing a mode of using utensils that has been widely accepted in my culture. I eat with a spoon and fork, which is an upgrade, I guess, from what I used to do as a child: eating with my bare (clean) hands.

As enlightened beings, we should never think that we belong to a more “civilized” culture than that of our neighbors’. What is considered civilized in our own culture might just be looked upon as novel in others’, a new way of doing things that other people can learn from but not exactly copy, espouse or emulate.

This is the 21st century. Hearts are bolder and minds are broader. So what if relationships continue to be complicated and many people eat with two utensils instead of one? To each his own, right?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Would you consider a person who is unable to eat with chopsticks “uncivilized”?
2. Have you ever been in a “complicated” relationship? If yes, be able to tell why you characterize that particular relationship as “complicated”.
3. What attitude/s or behavior/s would you characterize as barbaric, uncivilized or primitive? Be as specific as needed.
4. What is a civilized society? What makes it different from older ones that have come before?
5. If you had a time machine that could take you to less civilized societies in the past, what particular period in history would you visit? What would you tell the people in that era?