



Do not judge a book by its cover. We all know this, but in life we do find people who play judges based on others' appearances. Sometimes, unconsciously, we may be guilty as well.

When you are in dire straits, you need to turn to someone of help. Most likely, the first thought is to draw attention to your plight from someone who is well-dressed, who looks to be of good social stature and who has all the ap-

pearances of being most likely willing to lend a hand.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the person who readily stepped forward to help a badly injured man was not a priest (who was supposed to be regarded as one of good heart by virtue of his religious standing) or a Levite (one highly respected in the society). These two who came by the injured man just walked by, ignoring the man's plight. Obviously, the needy man (a Jew) would least expect to get help from someone (a Samaritan) who would usually shun people of his race. In the end, however, the "least dependable" person (the Samaritan) became the most reliable helper that the injured man should be grateful for, rather than those to whom he had attached much fraternity in good times. The Samaritan was a friend in need and a true friend indeed!



On 22nd May, a homeless man was his usual self hanging around the streets doing nothing. I wonder what images of the man passers-by would form in their minds that they wouldn't deign to give him a second look. The homeless man would seem to deserve despise, of little value to society in his penniless condition ... in contrast to the well-groomed, busy-looking and decent-looking people dashing around for their respectable businesses.

Then something very bad happened. A huge explosion! It was a bomb! As shrapnel flew, badly injured victims screamed for help and thousands of people rushed for safety. Where was the homeless man? Rather than being a nobody who just hanged around the streets seeking alms, or going by instinct to run to safety and escape from the melee, he became a hero. His name is

Steve. He immediately sprang into action to be among the first to render first aids to the victims of the bomb carnage. Why did he do that? In answer to a reporter's question, his short and sweet answer tells us a lot about not judging a book by its cover (i.e., judging a person's value or character by his appearance): "Just because I'm homeless doesn't mean I haven't got a heart and I'm not human still."

In our midst, people who are judges of others but not of themselves are not unheard of. In any group characterised by whatever description (race, colour, religion, social status, wealth, etc.), there is bound to be black sheep; and this includes the groups that we ourselves are in. Stereotyping is a bad-habit indulgence by some people who think of themselves more highly than they should. We have doctors (black sheep) who turn away poor patients in urgent need of treatment; but then we also have good-hearted doctors (white sheep) who live by their Hippocratic Oath to render medical assistance to all and sundry without expectation of rewards whether in their off-duty or on-duty times. We have domestic servants (black sheep) showing bad behaviours to vent their frustrations; but we also have news reports of good servants (white sheep) performing admirably beyond expectations in outstanding acts of selflessness for the sake of their employers. On the other hand, we have employers (black sheep) guilty of obnoxious behaviours to their innocent domestic servants too.

Nowadays, travelling by public transport is an easy way for us to be in a gathering of varied people groups in close proximity to one another. From time to time, I observe great examples of unselfish behaviours from those who are smelly from sweat as well as those who are fragrantly perfumed in their attire. If people focus attention away from physical looks, they will see in each and every one (regardless of our stature) good qualities deserving of respect – notwithstanding the fact that all of us have our personal flaws.

John Lee