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## Conversations with self-36

### Its not what, but how that matters

T. T. SRINATH

A king once dreamt that he had lost all his teeth. He summoned the court astrologer and asked him to interpret the dream. The astrologer said “Your Highness, your relatives will die before you do and you will witness their deaths.” The king was furious and consigned the astrologer to jail. The next day the dream recurred. This time he called upon a wise old astrologer and asked him to interpret the dream. The wizened man said “Your Highness, you will outlive your relatives.” The king was pleased and gave the old man a bag of gold.

What you say is less important than how you say it.

For example, when somebody says something hurtful, if I say to the person that “You are hurting me,” it is likely that the person will become defensive and react. Instead if I say, “I am hurt by what you are saying,” the other person realises that you are choosing to be hurt and you are not blaming him. When we take responsibility for our feelings we do not undermine the other person and therefore do not foist the role of persecutor on to him.

When we choose our words with care, responsibly and with ownership, we let the other person know that he is not victimising us. Often times we tell people that they are the cause of our suffering. While it is true that what they have said or done may have caused us pain, shifting the responsibility of our feelings on to the other person is a way of excusing ourselves.

Psychologists believe that uttered words contribute only 7 per cent to the impact they create. Tone of voice, however, constitutes 38 per cent. It is evident, therefore, that how I say what I say is more significant than the mere words I employ.

*(The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at [ttsrinath@vsnl.net](mailto:ttsrinath@vsnl.net))*