

# SINGAPORE PERSPECTIVES 2010

*Home.Heart.Horizon.*

25 January 2010  
Raffles City Convention Centre



# Reasonable Persons of Goodwill

## *Personal Experiences Navigating Diversity*



# Some Stories



Singapore Perspectives 2010

# Indian-ness

- “Apa macam punya Mama?”
  - Drink Seller at Newton Circus
- Alagappan
  - Tamil names: “rolling l’s and lolling r’s”

# Explorations into Faiths



Singapore Perspectives 2010

# We can despair ...



# ... or try to “navigate” diversity.

- “Reasonable Persons of Goodwill”
- Possible values underpinning “civic” nationalism
- Actualises “deliberative democracy” that accounts for differences in human identities.
- Forges “common narratives” that have unifying and galvanising force.

**Reasonable**

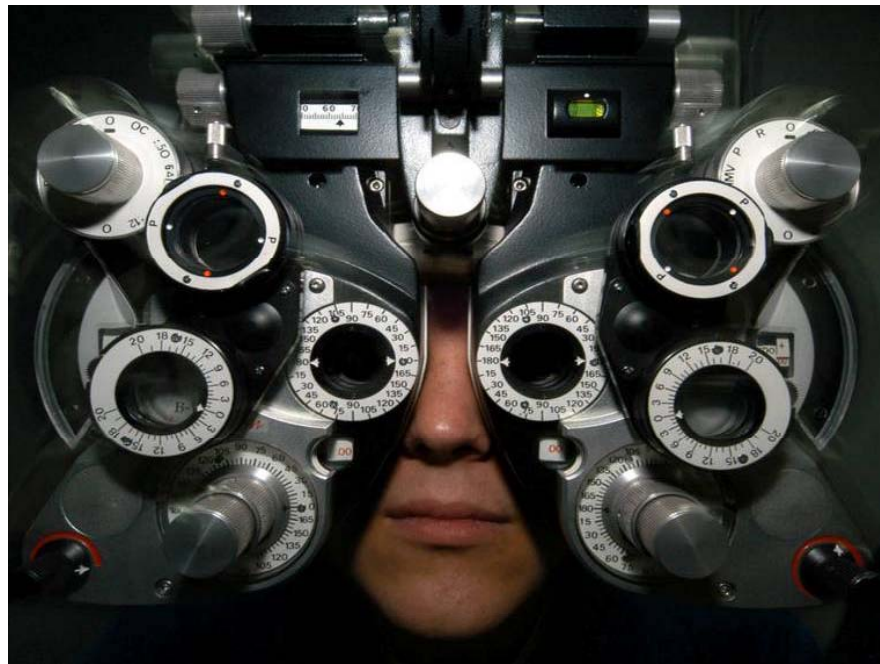
**Persons**

**Goodwill**



# Reason & Rationality

- Amartya Sen, Romanes Lecture 1998
  - “Reason Before Identity”
  - Descartes – “natural light” of reason



Singapore Perspectives 2010

# Reason & Rationality



- We each have multiple identities.
- Different identities matter more or less according to context.
- Different aspects of our multiple identities can generate connections between us and many, if not all, other people

# Reason & Rationality



- **We each have multiple identities.**
  - Social Diversity
    - Gender, ethnicity, race, religion, language, nation, professional affiliation, tribe, educational background
  - Individual Diversity
    - “Hyphenated identities”
    - Professional, personal and other identities in dynamic equilibrium.



# Reason & Rationality



- Different identities matter more or less according to context.
  - Response to the drink seller
    - Prata, mee goreng and *teh tarik*
  - Hari Raya and Christmas
    - Beryani, Nasi Minyak, *Feng*, Curry Devil
    - Kumquats and Ketupat



Singapore Perspectives 2010



# Reason & Rationality



- **Different aspects of our multiple identities can generate connections between us and many, if not all, other people.**
  - Lattice of shared cultural links
  - Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad
  - The Lord's Prayer and the Fatihah
    - Hallowed be Thy name, on earth as it is in heaven – Praise be to God, the sustainer of all known and existing worlds
    - Lead us not into temptation – Guide us on the straight path
  - Prayers for the dead – 3, 7, 40, 100 days

# Reason & Rationality



- We each have multiple identities.
- Different identities matter more or less according to context.
- Different aspects of our multiple identities can generate connections between us and many, if not all, other people

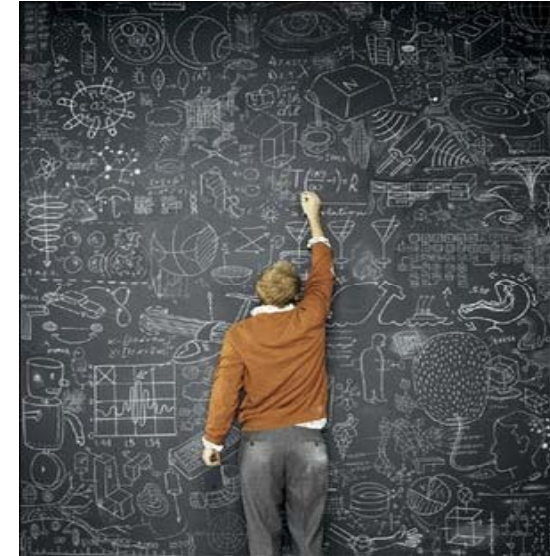
# Persons and Personhood

- **Multiple identities**
  - “liberal” selves and “communitarian” selves
- **People as individuals**
  - “Fellow pilgrims”, not abstract “Others”
  - Avoid “the narcissism of minor difference” (Ignatieff 1999)
- **Births, Weddings and Funerals**



# Goodwill

- **Beyond tolerance to celebration** of difference
  - Trust & social capital
  - Intrinsic and instrumental goods
- We have no monopoly on knowledge, and need to *“learn together what we cannot know alone”*
  - One God, Many Gods, Only God
  - Allah, Elohim (singular – Elowah), Ilahi
- The **benefit of the doubt**
  - Obligations not to offend
  - Prerogatives not to take offence





# Navigating diversity - a journey ...

- ... not a destination.
- Continued challenges
  - Reason is not uniformly or universally distributed.
  - Emotion lies at the limits of reason.
    - Interfaith Marriages



# Questions



Singapore Perspectives 2010