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- AADITYAAMLAN PANDA

HOW I MET MY GENIUS

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“The vivifying vision of an avid learner,
Embedding the euphony endorsing the ether,
Heaved often under affirmation,
Than being heaved by contemplation,
As the aggrieved soul vests vexations in vain,
On the very vitality than empowers her/his sane.
And the rigour quenches vigour without,
To parch the prodigy within.”

Through his unpolished Fiber-rimmed large circular spectacles, Krishna tried to read between the first couple of lines of a mail that had arrived the inbox of Webmail, IITK, when soon he realised that it was from none other than Professor D Bannerjee from Mathematics and Statistics Department. It read as, “*Thesis Defence of M.Sc Thesis Defence of Mr. Krishnamacharya Rai (22XXXXXX) ...*”, ahead of which he did not feel to read or as if he knew what the mail intended to. Perhaps, the next day, he would be facing the most important situation of his life since his joining of this prestigious campus.

He knew the night would be long but had to be up, that is what education in the vanguard of all myths, demands. His whole effort of almost a couple of years depends on that particular day, the particular hour, twelve hours away from him. But eyes of a scholar would not seek his permission to pay their homage to his enthusiasm and depart into their cyclic dormancy; in no time the world around sacrificed light as darkness mantled reason. But the flame of will had not extinguished then and he rose to his astonishment muttering a great curse on his lethargy for such a setback.

He forsook his chair for a while to get back to his spirit. He moved out of his room and realised that it was already broad daylight and perhaps he doubted to have missed his

seminar. His fear transformed into veracity, as the watch proved his apprehension, “thirty minutes past 10...”

“No....No it cannot be. It is already the end of the semester. A semester more with an incomplete grade stuck on my face, attached to my identity. This subject is not meant for me. I must but I cannot give up...” He rode as swift as possible, as fast as he can, “I can bear it no more. Let my life be damned. Now what will I do!!!” And in no time when gate man screamed, everything came to a momentary halt as Krishna blew out of his senses.

When he regained his consciousness back, he found himself in an altogether different place. He looked around to find a man, quite young in appearance, dressed in a simple but neat attire.

“Is this Elysium?”, Krishna asked.

“Do you really like this place to such an extent! But it is not that, at least for me.”, the man replied.“

“Then is this some new habitation which Dharmraj and Chitragupt have built to punish mortals?”

“Are you in all your senses? I think you must have crossed the sea, which mingled with the compass of your brain.”

“Then where am I?”

“To be precise, you are in the state of Madras, to be specific you are in George Town and to be accurate upto two significant figures, you are standing somewhere around, 80E and 13N on grid.”

“Oh, I thought something else.”

“May I know your name.”

“My name is...”, Krishna looked around to find some clues in the pastoral vista but went completely blank.

“May the Goddess take care of this poor fellow. Fine, come along, my mother and wife live in that distant hut. We can go there to have a cup of tea together. But remember, my mother has a strong religious faith. Do not reveal to her that you had crossed the ocean. Come, come.”

Krishna nodded eagerly to preserve the trust of his empty stomach, which the man mistook as a humble consenting grimace. The supper was indeed satiating. When they ended it was already dark. His mother asked, “How did you both meet each other?” “Do you want some more sambhar?” The man’s wife intervened and a back reply to that, “Janaki, how many times will I tell you that do not speak while others are already in a conversation?”

“Ma, not more than an hour before.”, the man spoke instantaneously, to ease the tension that was augmenting at a gradual pace. “I found him struggling to get up, perhaps a stroke due to the midday sun. Seeking his pale condition, I invited him home.”

“What do you son?”

“I am student yet.”

“Oh! Children of your age are busy studying. See my son, never listens to me. You must learn to take the responsibility of your family on your shoulders than being a liability of your generation.”

“Ma, can we have a stroll outside for some time”, the man said. At this, the lady in the kitchen stopped for a moment and gave a sad grimace, may be some sort of personal apprehension.

“Sure, but don’t go too far. Night is the nest of the devil. May Goddess Namagiri take care of you both.”

In a couple of minutes, both of them were out of the door, counting the stars which seem to perpetuate every novel second.

“So, what do you study?” the man asked.

“I am doing my post-graduation in Mathematics.”

“Wow, it is indeed nice. I too love Mathematics but could not pursue a higher degree. Some financial reasons you know. Which University?”

“IIT Kanpur”.

“What, Kanpur, indeed far. Hmmm... I had never heard of any such college before. How is the interaction between government and people there?”

“We don’t step out of the college. Interaction with outsiders is minimum.”

“Oh, sounds good. Hence you are a student of merit. How did you discover your love for mathematics?”

“I loved it during my school days, when I fared really well.”

“And now?”

“I can’t say. I don’t know rather and fear to admit if I hate some parts of it.”

“You can’t hate it if you love it once. It is so amazing. If you want to try something out, I had framed an expression. If you can find out a solution to this.” He pulled out a paper from his rugged pockets, which he had preserved from a magazine, whose piles laid in his room, which wrote,

$$\sqrt{1 + 2\sqrt{1 + 3\sqrt{1 + \dots}}}$$

“Oh, this one, I can give it try. You can solve it using infinite nested radical methods posed by one of the greatest mathematicians of our country. I read it in one of his books.”

“Really, I thought that it had no solutions yet. Who cares. But I salute your approach, I will try to solve it myself first.”

“Why don’t you refer to some notes.” Krishna said.

“Which notes?”

“Something composed by some great fellow, with all kinds of problems and statements.”

“If I can remember I read one by S.L. Loney and a collection of theorems by G.S. Carr”, the man replied with content.

“But those are boring archaic books, only with main theorems engraved. No simplifications.”

“No, they are the Upanishads of Mathematics, they define every governing law. You can formulate your own simplified versions of various mathematical forms.”

“But that would consume infinite hours. I have less time.”

“What do you see there? The man asked, pointing towards a heap of ocean slit, that lay aloof in a silent corner of the beach.

“A pile of sand.” Krishna said.

“Can you count the number of grains?”

“No, nobody can?”

“Why do you think so?”

“A man with proper sense would definitely think so.”

“But I say you can count.”

“How?”

“Have you heard of partitions?”

“Of course, I remembered them by an expression coarser than these sand particles.”

“Can you recall it immediately?”

“No. I need my notes.”

“Why, because you never cared for the source nor the intuition that can be built upon it.”

“Intuition?”

“Yes, the guiding light of all mathematical principles. Look at the sand. Instead of counting each grain, we can divide into portions of sizes, let’s say x and say larger particles of $x+k$ or $2*x+l$. Adding all these, the expression for the mound can be $n*x+m*k+o*l$ and so on. Is not it easier that counting the total no of grains.”

“Oh, I see but it would eventually go up to infinity, wouldn’t it?”

“No basically we can divide each smaller dimension by the largest in the series, we would obtain a complex function with radius of convergence 1 and of the form: -

$$f(z) = \sum a_n z^n$$

then setting this over a unit circle on a complex plane, we would then partition this into a major and minor arc and calculate the contour integral of some residue function. The sum of major arcs would approximate to the solution while minor arcs can be set within an upper bound.”

“I now realise that I knew this method though I never cared to derive it for the second time, but the example of the sand was intriguing.”

“Mathematics has deep roots in nature.” The man said. “Goddess Namagiri has employed it to govern the time of the Universe. If you gain the perfect depth, the intuition would mature by itself.”

“I see.”

“The whole universe is based on symmetry, every phenomenon has a governing equation, every minute is a formulation of millions of expressions, which correlate into one another. The key is you. Your heart has every answer, your mind can ask and remedy itself. It is the controlling centre of all differential equations which determine, the way you interact and the way people interact with you. And the intuition would govern the initiation of this chain, which you can only develop if you love the development, not the developed.”

“You speak with the firmness of an Oracle, the richness of a Luminary. Oh, pious man, make me your disciple, for the rest of my life, for you gave me the true sense of Mathematics which I could not discover during the past six years of my experience with this subject.”

“Oh! You got too much flown with your words, sounded like some ancient epic being narrated before me.”

“Oh sorry, but your explanation of the subject is indeed mesmerising. Oh, I did not introduce myself. My name is Krishna and yours?”

“Srinivasa. Oh, it is so dark. Ma will frown at us. Hurry! Let’s go.” The man strode towards the hut with swift steps.

“What!!! Hey stop! Please, tell me your full name please!!”

“Under the shroud of futile senescence,
Humans abandon their desire to exist,
The genesis of sorrow of withering patience,
Marauds the stability of peace to persist.
Faith stays at the limit of the latency,
Preserves hope at the brink of extinction.
Life was never a dome of despondency,
But the revered ether of eternal evolution.”

But Krishna could not follow him, not even close to his speed. He felt as if some invisible force pulled him from behind and blended him in the infinite perplexations of time and number smeared all across the temporal space wriggling across through an unstable tesseract.

“Hey Krish, wake up, wake up man, are you fine?” voices cried, resembled as those of Prasenjit and Soumdip, his wing mates.

“Hey! Hey! Where am I?”

“What are you saying? Your desk only. You were not getting up from past ten minutes. You have only thirty minutes in hand. Hurry up!”

“Thanks for waking me up. I am leaving. Where are my documents?”

“Here, take your files.” Soum forwarded it to him.

“Thanks. Okay bye, see you at lunch.”

“Take care. Be confident while stating your points.”

“Yeah, I will.”

Saying this, Krishna glided across the banisters and ran through the gate. Upon reaching the cycle stand, he screamed, “Long live Ramanujan, my God, my genius!!!”. He rode swiftly towards Academic Gate 3.