

Nilay Bhatt

Math 450 Spring 2017

Why I like math?

Why I like math?? ah! I am not sure where should I start with this. Starting from my 2nd grade in my elementary school Math had been my strong pursuit. Well not entirely true, I was better at doing Math than reading and writing or trying to ace my Friday spelling tests. Math felt easy and hard at the same time. For all who are in this course probably get what I am saying. My schooling society that I grew up in was highly competitive and peer comparison based. It was not a good idea for me have friends who were better academically than me. My parents will always be like, "Look at Prajal, the guy plays soccer for the school and still manages to get better grades than you".

It was not until my 4th grade, when we had a new Math teacher named "Alex" who actually really believed in me and used to tell me that I am different and that I have it in me for what it takes to be good at Math but more importantly, be a good person. It was then I got a 50/50 on my semester end exams and that news spread like wildfire among my friends and their parents. I still remember that particular evening after the results, my friend Prajal's mom called my home and asked me to confirm the news that I really got full points on that exam for which her son got a 42. Man, that was the day! After that I did math because I got better at it and it came to me easier than comprehension or languages like Hindi or Sanskrit (agh! their grammar sucks). But more important thing to note here was that I liked math because I was good at it and it was fairly computational based until my junior year in the high school. Even then the Math was fairly computational based and it was all about problems in calculus, integration, Diff Eq, Linear algebra, logic etc. And only other place where I saw math was in Physics where I used in mechanics, electrical and thermodynamics. Essentially math was seen as a means to an end not an end itself.

It was not until I took my discrete course in my freshmen year over here as part of my CS major with Dr. Schwell. She is the only reason (did a great job convincing me) I am here and writing this essay or even a Math major in the first place. Over the last 4 years the idea of what Math means to me or why I like math has evolved. Even after my discrete course with her, I was looking at how Math helps me become a better computer scientist or also to the very least a better programmer. But the real transformation happened after I took Abstract algebra with her two years back. It was then when I found another dimension of why I loved math.

Math looked beautiful all of a sudden. The way the group operations worked and how things just fit in beautifully put me in awe. Also, the conferences which I attend on a yearly basis helped me realize that there is big community out there who just think like me and believes that math is beautiful just by itself. At MAA MathFest 2015 at one of the paper presentation I heard the following sentence by the presenter: I do math because I can, I do not need to add any salt and pepper to digest it. I paraphrased it but you get the gist of it. Needless to say, I also love Math because it is everywhere! Starting from our patter of the ear, to the laptop that I use to the Rockets that we send in space! All in all I like math for a lot of reasons, but I laid out the top two reasons for me. It has helped me make better, rational decisions. It has helped me think clearly and in a concise fashion, helped me become a better problem solver and most importantly helped me appreciate the just the innocent beauty that it holds but yet it is so humble that it does not rub it in the faces of other sciences.