**Farther Realizations:**

**Realized at a faraway land of Switzerland**

***(Part-II )***

Bonjour!! Comment ca va, mes amis? (Hello!! How are you, my friends?)

Nothing guys, just showing off some (very limited, restricted to a few words) of my French skills!!

I had signed off the last piece (of my writing) on the ecstatic note of being an Indian. If you ask me, yes it actually feels great to introduce oneself as ‘just’ Indian, without any other nomenclature of categories and sub-categories to be placed in.

Anyway, may I ask you a few questions? Please think and then answer honestly.

When was the last time that you had greeted somebody (with a hello, or good morning or something similar)? When was the last time that you were greeted to? Have you ever given a ‘smile’ to a stranger, and/or received the same in reply? When did you thank or apologize to a person for no reason ‘big’ in particular?

Take your to answer time, I am in no hurry.

I guess for the first two questions, most of us won’t be able to remember the answer. For the last question, may be we have done that only when required (formally). I guess, for the third one, you might be thinking, ‘Are you crazy! Who the hell does that (smiling to strangers)!!’ But believe me, try these once, and you will be addicted to these.

Here (in Switzerland, Europe, as far as I have travelled), it is an unsaid custom to implement when you see somebody, that is to greet them. Almost every passing by person smiles at you and you smile back in return. These simple and seemingly almost insignificant gestures make a huge difference. It spreads a feeling of optimism around you. It makes you respect the other person, who shares the same feeling in return.

I realize how these petty behaviors (for which we never seem to find time, that is our excuse always) make you feel truly delightful. On the days when I am sulking, and I board the bus on my way back after office, and my fellow passengers greets me with a smile. It makes me to greet them back (without any extra effort) with a smile on my face. So this petty trivial but profound act is capable of making you smile, even at the end of a not-so-great-day.

Once I had been rejected in an interview for not having an ‘alleged’ *foreign* degree/work experience. Yes, people still become fanatic to see a *foreign* stamp on you!!! Unfortunately it still is the unsaid rule of getting into most of the higher academic ‘business’! Although, none of my works and its’ quality ever mattered to the selection committee. (Yeah, quite disappointing!!) People often had raised eyebrows that I had never been to an IIT. In fact the IITians are always looked up (with an awe) and those like me (instead of producing equally notable works) are always overlooked.

No, I am not sad due to these. These feelings do not hurt any more. However, here in my current workplace (in Geneva), people are simply interested in the work I have done and in my intension to work further. That’s it!! At last, I could that sensation that you get when you are assessed solely based on your work, not from the place that you belong or the marks that you scored in the endless (memory testing) exams. Cheer up, these places, these types of people still exist (though a rare kind but back in India also these type of people do exist.).

It is after coming to Geneva, meeting a lot of people at my workplace from different parts of the world that made you realize that being fluent in English is nothing to be proud of, rather not being proficient in our mother-tongue is definitely a sheer disgrace. It is a hard hitting apprehension, but very comforting one. Pronunciations of the same word differ in different languages, and IT IS OKAY if you have your own pronunciation and accent. You don’t need to replicate American or British or any other accent. Believe me, acquired accents always sound forged. Let’s be ourselves and take pride in the way we are.

I never claim myself as a feminist, but this place made me question some of the notions that we have grown up with. Whenever we see a women in nicely pleated sari or in loosely fitted salwar kameez, we assume that ‘she is surely a housewife with kids’. ‘A girl wearing shorts is not a mother for sure’. ‘A teacher never wears western outfits (anything ‘glamorous’ is barred in the most noble profession!!) while teaching children’. These are the pre-built notions that we are made to believe in. These are all in our minds. Here, in this faraway land, when I see women around me and I am never able to make a correct prediction (while I am trying to judge them, which I should not) depending upon there outfits. This made me realize how wrong are our notions and how lamentable it is to judge people even before you know them, based on their outfits.

Here more and more girls and women wear shorts and mini-skirts. Amazingly, they are not stared upon, they are not taunted, they are not teased. They feel secure. I want to feel this level of calmness about my security back in India, back in Kolkata.

When I see people not littering anywhere, it makes me to love this place and makes me to respect the individual behaviors. What I realize is, Switzerland is naturally beautiful, but the way people behave here makes it a better place to be. Switzerland is very conventional, quite orthodox too, not that spontaneous, but they respect every fellow human. I think this what we have to make changes in your brain’s circuitry to change the way we see, perceive and realize things.

Can you imagine, your office or college/university cafeteria serving beers/wines? Can you imagine having a bar in your workplace? No No No… I am not being gibberish. Here it is very common for office and college/university cafeterias, serving drinks. People (even college/university students) drink, but never misbehave while blaming the drinks for that. It is reality here and it is amazing.

Here people are incredibly organized with all the ideal characteristics. This makes me miss the spontaneity of human nature. I miss the long and lively chat sessions (the ‘adda’ in Bengali, in which we are the only contenders!!) with my friends over a cup of tea (or coffee), or even over nothing at all. Huhh!!

On a funny note at the end, in my office canteen here, there are many buffet counters from where you can choose what you would like to eat. You can make any and every possible combination of food items. Ultimately you have to weigh your plate on a weighing scale and then you pay according to the weight of your food!! You better weigh what you eat!!!

Oh No! I was just about to forget to mention another “sweet” aspect of Switzerland. The Suisse Ice creams. Oh my God!! It’s hard to resist them. Only the Suisse ice-creams can be the only competitors of the Suisse chocolates. Weekends here, are the hardest to survive, because at least in the weekdays the work is your greatest alibi to keep you distracted from missing *home*. So, in the weekends I always find my feet taking me to buy the Suisse ice-creams—my weekend-saviors!!

Now, some readers might ask, if I am so fascinated with Switzerland, then why don’t I shift my base and live the rest of my life here in Switzerland? Or some of you might wonder, whether I am planning to relocate to Switzerland!! Honestly speaking, I have never even thought about this. I am here because of my work, and work only. You might be able to shift your base, but how can you move your roots?!! Mine lies in India, specifically in Kolkata. So I am returning really soon…… because after all I am *made in India*…. I am hankering to go back to *Maa*… I want to return to my “home” (not the house), to my family and to my crazy friends.

Most importantly, I am yearning to return….. to the person who not only tolerates me, but also pampers me at my worst…. the person who is my anchor in the tempest called ‘reality’… who made it sure that I chase my dreams, with my wings spread wide open. I am longing to return to my point of convergence, the south pole to my heart’s north pole… my valiant answer to every contemporary and conventional critics….my ‘personalized’ canopy amidst the scorching heat of burning self-righteousness…return to that last sprinkle of salt in an otherwise perfect recipe…..return to…. my AYAN (my Mr. Perfect, of course)!!