

Foreword

Since last time, I've had to evacuate my building for a Saturday because of a bomb threat, and I've fit in a short trip to Dubai seeing as other plans fell through, and happily, a weekend trip to Copenhagen has emerged. Watching Ludovico Einaudi live was spectacular, and a long-standing dream fulfilled. A weekend trip to Belfast means I can no longer claim I've never been to Ireland.

Mr McConkey's parting present

It started even before I left Manchester. The plane to Belfast was full of people who sounded more like me than I did. In short, it was everything I wanted from a weekend away. Zack sent me on my first test, ordering breakfast- a better version of the full English - for us, at a cafe. We then went on and hiked for a few hours, appreciating the backdrop of the sea and bracing against the wind as many of you will remember from my social media. We returned to Belfast whilst grappling with a potential punctured tyre and Zack took me on a night out, which Belfast does the right way. Forget being packed like sardines and sweating onto other people in a club, our night started in a pub with Guinness and conversation to live music and ended with a band playing traditional music and all patrons vibing with traditional dance on the floor. I got lucky enough/I was drunk enough to vibe with a small group who taught me some of the basics, and before long, I had my moment in the middle of their circle where I'm certain I embarrassed myself fully.

The following day was more relaxed as we recovered from the previous night and I was shown the city centre. Zack's family treats me as one of them, and the trip concluded with a lovely dinner rife with humour based on friendly insults. Gautam O'Garwal I was for the day.

Upon my return to Manchester, Zack informed me he'd got covid, and given the amount of time we'd spent in close contact, I got it as well. It was likely to happen eventually, and I'm glad it was off the back of an experience well worth it.

Miss Morel's expertise

Sarah, a mate from equestrian, is a difficult woman to get a hold of. Making up for lost time over coffee, she agreed to join a dinner party I was hosting for a few coursemates. Whilst I was impressed, I was not surprised at the ease with which she integrated into the room. Her talent, however, emerged as the party descended from prim and proper to progressively inebriated. One of my coursemates had had far too much to drink, and Sarah realised they were about to throw up well before they did themselves, and prevented what would have been a catastrophic loss of my security deposit owing to a carpet cleaning fee. Take notes people; this is how you leave an impression.

Miss Pavothil's allure

I met Malvika at IDS. I'd be lying if I said the connection was instant - we hardly spoke initially apart from introductions. It did however feel very comfortable very quickly. From everyone I've met here so far, I went on dates with a few and would consider it with a few others, but no one else remotely elicited the buzzed feeling from highschool days when everything felt electric- for perspective, I veritably jumped in the air after a crush at the time agreed to go out. Though the attraction turned out not to be mutual, it was exciting to be reminded of the intensity of spark I wish to have. It is of curiosity the similarity of circumstances under which I met both Nadia and Malvika, and several overlaps between their characters.

Miss Kaur's faith

Though Jasmeen may have been highlighted a dozen other ways, it is a trip to the Gurudwara that was most unique. As many of you know, I am not a particularly religious person, though I do appreciate the sense of community it often provides. Thus when Jasmeen revealed she's a regular patron of the Gurudwara, I decided to join her on her next visit, rather tempted by the ghee laden halwa they often serve.

I'm glad I went. Though I had trouble sitting cross legged for any length of time in the prayer hall, and my mind wandered too frequently to reach a state of rest, I found relaxation in everyone else's focus. Jasmeen, too, had transformed. If it were a film it'd be the point where she prepared to meet the parents.

Although we had to leave before langar was ready to be served, I relished listening to conversations in Punjabi, and discussed what faith meant to Jasmeen. As we talked, another girl from uni, Sanya, also walked into the langar hall. The sense of community I was referring to was much heightened with the backdrop of university. Although I don't know if I'm ready to say I will start visiting regularly, I will concede it was a nicer experience having done so than I thought it could be. I was also appreciative of having Jasmeen to lead me through it seeing as I had forgotten a number of basic considerations such as carrying change for donations, sitting on a specific side of the prayer hall, etc.

In terms of faith overall, Jasmeen's views are for her to share. The impact the conversation had on me is perhaps one which my mum has been attempting for years - recognising a potential separation of spirituality and religion. Let's see if I subscribe to that way of thinking any time soon.

Miss Gupta's distress

In many Bollywood movies, especially out of the early 2000s story lines hinge on two main characters bumping into each other abroad and finding either solace or conflict in the only other Indian around. It is of course commonplace to meet compatriots -there are a lot of us- but this case was strongly reminiscent of the creative liberties Yash Chopra relied upon.

Queuing to check in for my flight to Zurich from Manchester, I'd happened to remove my headphones to get a sense of what was happening around me. I noticed a woman with an Indian passport at the counter also flying onwards to Dubai being given trouble over wanting to use a visa on arrival service. Put plainly, the staff there were either incompetent or discriminatory. As I got to the front of the queue, they gave me some trouble as well but backed off when I put my foot down with the residence permit.

Aditi had been asked to wait whilst they awaited confirmation from Dubai's immigration authorities, so after my check in had been sorted, I went up to her and inquired to see if everything was alright. To say English airports have been chaotic as of late is an understatement, and Aditi was under considerable duress grappling with the possibility she may miss her flight. This is where the Bollywood moment occurred, with us bonding over a tirade against the airline and her appreciating some support. Eventually with me backing her up, the staff issued her boarding pass under waived liability and she managed to wrangle us fast-track security passes from them as compensation.

With the trauma behind us, we finally had a chance to exchange names and basics. As it turned out, she was visiting Dubai on holiday for the exact same week I was, and we're scheduled to be on the same flight back to Manch. The exchange of favors continued with me pilfering snacks and cutlery from the airport lounge for her in both Manchester and Zurich seeing as she'd not eaten anything that morning.

She'd called her parents to keep them updated on her progress, and I was amused but not surprised to see her skirt around mentioning me. We got the gate agent to seat us together for the next leg to Dubai, where having some company naturally made the journey feel considerably shorter. Towards the last third of the flight, after some fitful sleep, I realized I was suddenly doing a lot more of the talking. Seeing her take a Combiflam explained a lot, and so I tried to do my part and be of assistance from giving her my pillow to telling the parents across the aisle to calm their bickering kids down. As her pain killers kicked in, and Swiss air pulled through with some ice cream, the vibe picked up again and we indulged in stereotyping the passengers around us, shielded by whispering in Hindi.

We parted ways right before immigration, where she waited for her parents flying in from India. It's an exciting feeling knowing it's not goodbye but see you soon with a stranger.

Closing Remarks

There are two papers I've recently come across which I'd encourage you to skim.

-Research from 2011 showing empathetic behaviour in rats

<https://gtmagrwl.com/Empathy%20in%20rats.pdf>

-Work from last month showing how attraction can be treated as a 2nd order phase transition as is common with many other systems in Physics, and how prediction closely aligns with analysis on literature. It opens the door to a new way of analysing human behaviour.

https://gtmagrwl.com/Physics_attraction.pdf

(Both uploaded without a paywall)