

The Account of Rajesh Vijaybhaskar M .Sc

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My name is Rajesh Vijaybhaskar. I am by profession an assistant professor at the Illustrious Institute of Technology (an occupation listed under the Dangerous Professions Act of 1988). The head of my department is Dr. Premila Vincent, popularly known among the students as the Old Hag, not necessarily, I think a point of opprobrium. She is a scholar of seemingly high achievements, as her doctorates suggest, and much given to the expression, "The Department comes first, Vijaybhaskar". I attach no particular meaning to this remark.

At 10 on the morning of Wednesday, November 3, I entered room 356 for the purpose of instructing the fourth batch in Basic Statistics, one of the subjects for which I have been engaged by Dr. Premila Vincent. There were present Agarwal, Babykutty, Chatterjee, Gunashekhara, Kumar, Latif, Mishra, Ravi Teja, Sharma, Schweinsteiger, Tamilselvan and Zohrab. Singh, who has, I am told, a fractured leg, was absent. It should be explained that even though I have listed out the names of my students in the alphabetical order of their surnames, that is not the order in which the students were seated on this occasion. It should be noticed that almost all of the female students were seated in the front rows and Tamilselvan, the student whom I am now accused of assaulting, was in the middle row. The last row was shared by Gunashekhara, our Sri Lankan exchange student and Ravi Teja, a cretin. I do not have the slightest inkling that these facts will be of any bearing upon this case, but I have lavishly furnished them for the sake of completeness.

I walked into the class to find the following quote scrawled across the board by the professor who had previously occupied the room. It went: "The postulate or common understanding involved in speech is certainly co-extensive, in the obligation it carries, with the social organism of which language is the instrument, and the ends of which it is an effort to subserve". The quote had created a considerable excitement and restlessness in the students, though of varied kinds.

"Today", I remarked, taking up my Davis and Pecar, "we shall focus our energies on problem solving which involve the population confidence interval", and I told them at once that if there were to be anymore of that groaning they would do nothing but solve problems involving the Poisson curve for the next one month. It is my experience as an assistant professor of some

years' standing, that if groaning is not checked immediately, it may swell to enormous proportions. I make it my business to stamp on it with hob-nailed boots.

Mishra, a fair boy with glasses, remarked that it would not be possible to do problems on the Poisson curve for the next one month, and on being asked why not, he replied that there were only three more weeks for the semester to close upon us. This was true, and realizing that the numbers were against me, I made no reply. I proceeded to write a problem on the blackboard, a sample problem which I felt would prepare my students for their end semester examinations.

"A researcher determines that a margin of error (or sampling error, e) of no more than plus or minus 0.05 units is desired, along with a 98 percent confidence interval. Calculate the sample size." Agarwal promptly replied "Eighty seven". I enquired of him how, unless he was the next Ramanujan in the making, he imagined he could produce the answer without troubling to so much as set a pen to paper. He said, "I saw the answer in the back pages of the book". This reply caused a great deal of laughter, which I suppressed with an iron hand.

I should have spoken sharply to Agarwal, but at this moment I noticed that in the bench right ahead of him, Gunashekhara appeared to be feasting on a small piece of cheesecake, causing considerable excitement. I ordered him to stand up.

"Gunashekhara, you are not perhaps quite used to our Indian ways, and hence I shall refrain from punishing you for this deviation of etiquette; but please understand that I will not have eating of foodstuff in my class. You did not come here to eat, but to learn. If you pay attention and work hard I may not despair of teaching you something, but if you do not wish to learn you might as well as go back to your country".

Mishra, without being given permission to speak, cried excitedly, "He cannot, sir. Didn't you know? His father was chased out of Sri Lanka in some big revolution or something. A big man with a moustache and a cap chased him for three kilometres and he had to escape in a small boat. He is lucky to have made it here to Chennai. It is true, sir. You ask him. Gunashekhara got hit by a falling branch on the small of his back, didn't you Guna? And his sister- at least I think it was his sister-"

That will do, Mishra", I said. "Who threw that?"

I am, I hope, not a spoilsport, but I will not tolerate the throwing of paper rockets or other missiles in my class. This sort of thing has to be struck down with great vengeance and furious anger or work becomes impossible. I accordingly warned the boy responsible that another offence would mean an imposition. He had the impertinence to ask what sort of an imposition. I told him in clear terms that it would be an imposition that would make him wish he had not taken my course, and if he wished to know the exact details he had only to throw another rocket to find out. He thereupon threw another rocket.

I confess that at this I lost patience and threatened to keep the entire class in for at least three more hours if I had any more trouble. I proceeded to solve the problem. It was not until I had spent fifteen minutes working out the problem on the board that I realised that I had worked on the assumption that the confidence interval was 89 percent, rather than 98. This led me to an impasse. Some one from the back whistled. I at once whipped around and demanded to know who had made the infernal noise. Latif suggested that it might have been Tamilselvan whistling in his sleep. I was about to reprimand Latif for his impertinence when I noticed that Tamilselvan was indeed asleep and had in fact, according to Chatterjee, been asleep since the beginning of the period. Mishra said, "He hasnot missed much anyway".

I then threw my Davis and Pecar. It has been suggested that it was intended to hit Tamilselvan, but nothing could be further away from the truth. It is an entirely false assumption. I never wake sleeping students by throwing books at them, as hundreds of students who have passed through the doors of the Department in the college will be able to ascertain. I intended to hit Mishra, and it was a tragedy I shall always regret that I did not hit him right on the nose. Blinded by my anger, I believe, my aim was compromised and Tamilselvan was struck. I have had, as I have told Dr. Premila Vincent, a great deal to put up with Mishra, and no one who knows the boy would blame me for the attempt to inflict some physical violence on him. It is indeed an accepted maxim in the staff room that physical violence is the only way to deal with Mishra to obtain any desirable result; to this Dr. Premila Vincent some time ago added a clause that the boy be deprived of his spectacles before being assaulted.

I do not blame myself for the unfortunate stunning of Tamilselvan. It was an accident. I did all I could for the boy when it was discovered (I think by Schweinsteiger) that he had been rendered unconscious. I immediately summoned Dr. Premila Vincent, who then summoned the ambulance. We agreed that concealment was impossible and that I must give a full account of the events to the police if they came asking. Meanwhile the work of the Department was to go on. Tamilselvan himself would have wished it. Dr Premila Vincent added that in any case the Department should come first.

I have made this statement after being duly, cautioned, of my own free will and in the presence of witnesses. I wish only to add that the boy is now none the worse for the blow, and has indeed shown increased zeal in his studies since the incident.