

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 11 : 4 April 2011

ISSN 1930-2940

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A Date with an Academician

Tanu Kashyap

The usual perception of an academician is that of an unruly, excessively intelligent, dingy and dry person... but what happens when a lady meets someone 190 degree opposite to this stereotype. The story does not have any resemblance to anyone dead or alive. Any resemblance is purely coincidental and the onus does not lie on the writer or the journal.

It was the sultry summer of August... not a speck of dark cloud could be seen on the Persian blue sky. The breeze that was blowing brought in hot gushes. The trees seem to just tolerate the heat by nodding their heads. The people walking on the roads of Noida kept on wiping their sweat while walking, for summer has become a way of life... heat stroke or sun stroke nothing can stop life in this satellite city of Delhi. The smoke of the unlimited vehicles past by the pedestrians added on the intensity of heat. The sun was shining at its glory as it was 2 o'clock.

The extreme warmth of the day could not stop the flight of fancy of a pretty lady. The lady was clad in olive green printed chiffon saree. The lady had finished her household work. Her two children had gone off for their afternoon nap in AC room. The lady also felt like sleeping with her kidsbut today was an important day in her life....she had an interview in one of the Management Institutes. She had to arrange her documents, degrees, certificates....oops...lot of work to be done.

She saw the watch, it was 15 past 2, that means there was a dire need of divine intervention... otherwise there was trouble at hand. 3 0'clock is her interview time. The place was far and it would take 30 minutes to reach there. At one point of time she felt like leaving it but lucky for her, father in law voluntarily agrees to drop her. She sits in the non-AC car and says little prayer to God. The car seemed to swim in the heat that was on the road and the Sun God above was smiling to see her courage and enthusiasm to face interview.

The lady finally reached her destination. The lady was walking towards the path way of an impressive building. The lady as it was holding a huge bag containing her certificates and her thesis, dissertations...she could not walk fast in the scorching heat. Her heart was beating fast for it was 10 past 3 o'clock already. She dragged herself in the reception area. Already 5 people were sitting for their turn and she was 6th to be interviewed.

As she sat on the black leather sofa, all the other candidates started looking at her with amazement. The lady green looked charming with crimson pink complexion; cool matching green jade and white pearl jewellery, medium size round maroon bindi, bob cut hair and wore excessive rose deospray. The reception area had AC and thus the entire area was filled with the fragrance of roses.

She was made to fill a form of expected salary and stick her photograph; she did all the formalities uncannily. She looked right and left and she suddenly realized that she was sitting amidst crystal, flowers, computer, semi circular table, a smart young receptionist who kept on exchanging smiles....time and again. To the right of the lady, a couple was sitting staring at her with inquisitive gaze as if asking her-why did you come dressed up so well and in the second place why are you here

with bag full of certificates and testimonials?.....To the left of the lady, the receptionist was still smiling....for now she came to know that the lady's name was Dr. Kusum Lathika.

Just then a lady entered with long hair open and wearing an old salwar kamiz, light make up done but without any enthusiasm. She brought lot many CDs and degrees. She too was asked to fill up a form....but to her dismay....there was no pen in her bag.....again the receptionist smiled at the absent mindedness of the other candidate.

Dr. Lathika suddenly saw the clock that struck thirty past four. She was waiting for her call with studied silence. Her looks seemed crucial and she was not exchanging smiles with the receptionist.... Already two candidates had left after facing the interview.....these were tense moments for Dr.Lathika.....she could feel butterflies in her stomach. "Anyways", she said, "I'll face whatever comes my way". Meanwhile when she saw a smart well fed, short lady, dressed up in western clothes coming her way...she stealthily stooped towards the young receptionist and asked, " Hey tell me who is taking the interview". The receptionist uttered in Punjabi accent, " Madam ji... fikr not(don't be tense)... Director Sahib is taking the interview."

Dr. Lathika then recalled the facial expressions of those who had left....she presumed that the gentleman must be haggard looking, grey haired, dull, uninteresting ,chain smoker, unkempt, ill dressed type of man. May be that is the reason why those who have left were looking so drained out. Well, the fat short lady came up to her and informed her the next turn is hers. Dr Lathika picked up her folders, dissertation and thesis.....she was taken to the Director's office.

Dr. Lathika knocked on the door....knock.....knock. A husky masculine voice said, "Come in". This lady in green (beautifully dressed) gracefully entered the room. As she glided in, she saw the reverse side of a huge black leather chair and someone equally huge sitting on it. The color of his hair was salt and pepper. She waited for some moments before the occupant of that black leather seat turned towards her..... A.C. was full blast in this room and the strong but pleasant

fragrance of her rose deospray encompassed the room.....The occupant also could sense that someone with refined taste has entered his office.....

The gentleman on the chair, without turning towards her signaled her to sit...but she did not do so...she could sense some kind of authoritarianism in the air. With each passing moment, the first encounter was becoming intriguing. The gentleman who was busy with her file could not resist seeing the lady with brains (as it was evident from her C.V.) and beauty as he had already seen her sitting in the reception area through the hidden camera. To add to the magic was the fragrance of the roses that was coming from her body.

The lady on her part was much innocent. She knew nothing of this man ...not even his name. She stood there guessing.... who would he be. As she stood there engrossed...just then the chair rolled right in front of her. Here was a man 6'2" tall, fair complexioned, well dressed in formals, sporting a smart tie, French cut beard(salt and pepper in color), glowing skin and spectacles. He seemed to be a Vice President or Executive Director of a management institute. In short this man seemed from Corporate and not from academics. The lady stood mesmerized by the refined looks of the man.

Just then he said, "Good Afternoon Dr. Kusum Lathika . Please have a seat." The lady thanked him and took her seat. He skimmed through the testimonials that she got with her and said, " Madam your appearance and presentation both are impressive." The lady had no clue but a beautiful smile on her face which made her blushing beautiful. Her face appeared even more radiant. The interview began with a positive note. He asked just ordinary questions about her personal life and smile on his face too said it all. The atmosphere in his room was no longer tense.....it was on the contrary full of smiles and happiness.

The director was a worldly wise man and he was calculating what salary should be offered to her and the lady was thinking how she should get this job? Suddenly the director broke the silence and said, "Madam, What do you expect?" The lady said to herself "I expect you to give me the job" But soon sanity returned to her and she said, "what do you offer?" The fiasco was bound to happen because both were busy asking each other "First you, no first you" in pure Lucknowi style.

The shrewd director found himself in a peculiar situation: he did not know whether to laugh or control himself for his reputation as HITLER would be at stake. If he controls he would have stomach ache- he choose to go in for latter. He just managed to smile in refined manner. Whereas the lady laughed heartily- poor thing did not realized that the director will trick her. It did not take much time with the director to realize that the lady is intelligent but not street smart as the other ladies'. But in his heart he knew that she was the best faculty in his institute but the least paid too. He knew that someone on the 7th cloud had smiled at him and he was sure to get an increment from the President of the institute for striking gold.

He very trickingly told her, ‘’ Dr. Lathika I see that you are a qualified faculty but you see I am not recruiting you for the regular course but for an add on course. However we do pay our regular faculty AICTE scale but since English is an add on course therefore I will offer you 15000 and at the max 18000.’’ Lathika was left with no choice but to go for 18000 consolidated. The moment she said ‘‘yes’’, there was no dearth of smiles on the face of the Director and an expression ‘‘I did it’’. Immediately he called his personal secretary Deepa and PGDM coordinator Ms. Sunidhi and introduced her to both of them. The twosome greeted Dr.Lathika sweetly and the Director wasted no time in informing them that the new faculty has been hired at 18000 per month, startling both of them. Dr.Lathika though understood that there is something was wrong but could not stop smiling because she was employed and Director could not help but laugh because he just made a kill. The twosome could not help but smile because their boss was smiling.

Thus smile had an intriguing connotation in the director’s office....Many could not understand the meaning of that happiness for it had many connotations.

The lady is sitting pretty in her cubical and she has made friends with a lot of people and she does not has any inclination as to what has happened to her and what will be her destiny ahead. She comes and goes every day without any remorse or sadness because she is pure and innocent still.

She wants to enjoy every moment of her life and there she wants to learn so much and prove herself at all costs....specially to her director who thinks that she is just a PD teacher and she will do nothing.

On the morning of 28th August a paper was being circulated that anyone can write a paper on ‘‘Intercultural intercommunication’’ The biggest incentive would be an opportunity to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Everyone in the faculty room was so excited. But lady of bliss had no thoughts coming to her mind. She was busy planning that what would she be wearing. She had to finalize not one but three saris as the conference was slated for three days.

Finally the D day arrived and she was looking pretty in her vendetta green sari. She entered the venue for the conference that was PMI hall. Dr. Kusum was blooming like fresh Daisy. Though she was trifle late but there was no palpitation, she glided her way in the conference hall. She was not aware of the top management as she had interacted with none of them. She was conversing on phone and she looked right in the eyes of someone who was following her from last two minutes. ‘‘Take good care; okay show yourself to the doctor’’. ‘‘If you can stop for some time: stay back’’, she was busy talking on her mobile. Suddenly she realized that the person who was following her was the Chairman of the college. Just then he was interrupted by the Director.

‘‘Is she a delegate? She seems to be sitting in the wrong row,’’ said the Chairman. The looks of the lady were dignified and graceful. ‘‘She is our faculty member’’ was a prompt reply of the Director.

The delebrations of the conference began and everybody was mesmerized by the beginning. Suddenly Dr. Lathika was struck with an idea. ‘‘Why can’t I present my own paper?’’ The Goddess of Knowledge, Saraswati seemed to have gifted an idea.

‘‘The intercultural intercommunication between North and South India and impact of media’’ was the title of the paper she was to present on the second day of the conference. The paper was conceptualized and written on the first day of the conference and people could not believe that an ordinary faculty of English could do such a thing. People around her just hoped that she would be joking, but little did they did not know the lady who seemed to be ignorant about the salary negotiations, knew her work well. She was well verse about the research methodology and could speak fluently and fearlessly in any august gathering.

The entire college crowd knew that she knew nothing of computer and that in such an international conference, one is supposed to present with ppt. A million dollar question still remain how will she make those ppt. It was anyone's guess that Dr. Lathika was about to land herself in hot soup. Meanwhile the coordinator of the seminar seemed fairly convinced that Dr. Lathika could deliver an effective presentation. The same were the thoughts of the director, who smilingly agreed to this calculated risk.

The celebrations on the day two started and her name was in the post tea session. Dr. Lathika could hardly believe the sudden unfolding of events. She for a moment questioned her own abilities but at the very second moment said to herself "I will do it."

The celebrations began and she thought of rehearsing downstairs with Aruna, her colleague. She sat with her and started rehearsing with her loudly. She went on and on. Little did she realize that there was someone closely watching her and that was her Director. As she rehearsed in full volume, from nowhere he landed just there, apparently to give some orders to Aruna. But she hardly took notice of him because she wanted to prepare herself really well.

He liked her dedication and ordered tea for three of them. Both of them had tea but our Madame refused because she was too busy preparing herself. She did not even lift her eyes to see who was sitting next to her. The tick tock of the watch was only what she remembered.....

The celebrations reached to the post lunch session and just then a student walks up to her that she was needed in the Narmada Hall and she should give her pen drive. Dr. Lathika gave her pen drive very promptly, making many eye brows rise. As she stood on the podium, she started radiating, she did not read out from the paper even once and she took off beautifully. The audience comprised of mostly foreign delegates, enjoyed the diverse flavor of Indian scholarship and for the first time there was someone putting across the Indianess of India. This was truly the intercultural intercommunication for the delegates, who till now heard only about UK, Canada and USA.

Here was an Indian academician clad in 6 yard black and maroon pure silk sari introducing them to the most colorful country of the world, India and most interestingly the PPTs were equally colorful to corroborate with her forceful verbal presentation. No one in the hall could know that whatever she was speaking or showing was preparation of just 12 hours- which included one printed paper, at least 8 slides and forceful presentation because it was international conference.

She dazzled many by her presence, force, energy, conviction and self motivation. The news of her silent triumph reached the director. He was happy for her and for himself too. He could now boast of finding a perfect academician who could present her paper at the fall of a hat and economically speaking, she was the cheapest as compared to any MBA (she was a doctorate).

The third day of the conference was a very special day. It was 5th September, a day which is called “Teacher’s Day” in India. Incidentally, this was going to be a special day in the life of Dr. Kusum Lathika, M.phil, Ph.D.

The morning seemed special for her. She chooses to wear a royal deep purple silk sari with small gold border, solitaire lookalike jewellery. She took time to get ready. Today was her day, as she was to see her childhood ideal His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He was to come on the last day of the conference.

Dr. Lathika was hopeful of getting her certificate of paper presentation from His Holiness. She reached her institute on time and all the faculties were invited for the Teacher’s Day celebrations. She was looking like an empress of some state. The students wanted her to be clicked but she declined very gracefully.

Finally they all reached the PMI conference hall. The student as well as the faculty was made to sit in a huge hall which had the capacity of 25000 seats. Unfortunately, the back rows were vacant only. Dr. Lathika was accommodated at the back but her heart guided her differently. She saw His Holiness coming and that very moment she decided not to sit at the back but do something to grab his autographs. But the security was so tight that she could not stand.

As the address began, she stealthily came forward and managed to reach midway with a book on Buddhism in her hand along with a pen. The address was followed

by question answer session. She decided to take the way to the back stage. As she went up the stair case, she saw Dalai Lama sitting on the dais. The security thought that she is a member of office bearer committee and therefore she was allowed to come forward.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama was busy answering to the questions and she kept on looking at him as if she was seeing a dream. The entire scene was purely magical and she started glowing. The people of top management who were sitting with the Dalai Lama and they could closely observe the sudden change in her. One of the guests wanted to know about her from the director.

This was by far the best day of her life. She was the first one to get the autograph of the Dalai Lama in the conference hall. Her friends could not believe their eyes. She lived her life in these three days. There was no dearth of happiness in her smiles and twinkle in her eyes. She was giggling and smiling to glory and said a prayer to thank God.

It is said very rightly, “Time and tide wait for none.” Six months have already passed. The achievements of those three days had the element of folklore. Dr. Kusum Lathika no doubt lost on the financial aspect (as she was underpaid) but she earned a lot of admiration of her students and colleague. She learned computer because she was made cultural coordinator and she had to take care of the mails coming from the other colleges. Her mail ID was created by her friends because every time she had to go to the director with hand written application and he would not say anything but his looks would say that he did not like her style. Within a span of 2 months, she not only picked up computer but also became a proud owner of a laptop.

Sometimes when she ponders over her journey, she thanks God of having come across an academician who not only changed her thought process but also changed her life. An ordinary faculty was transformed into a writer, speaker and researcher at the age of forty. She never thought that an academician has the power to make heaven out of hell and hell out of heaven. She proved him right and showed to the world that she is not just a PD faculty but much more than that. She dared to dream because she got conducive environment and with God’s grace her dreams came

true..... She owes all of it to just a date with an academician, who went much ahead quitting his job to chase his dreams.

As time went by, the good days became history and bad times struck...she thought of writing a self obituary to a professor who belonged to the institution of academics every inch, did half the things she wanted to do but there are things that still are in her heart.

If one believes in the blue print of the heavens above, FATUM as is called in Greek has to play an important part in shaping up our future. It is pure adherence to the ways of God that we meet someone and the mere acquaintance to someone brings a lot of change in us. We start thinking differently...our persona undergoes a change and we actually start ... dreaming of things that we want and we start putting our efforts in that direction...that is what we call...Destiny. If we are scared of those dreams then we stand on a different platform and if we are not scared and we wish to take our chances then the ball game changes...we may have to wait for some time to make it happen...but believe me it will happen the way we want it to happen. It will be so because we wish it to happen with all our heart and soul ... the whole universe will conspire with us to make happen...this is what we call Power of the mind. So whatever we become and whatever we are is a beautiful interplay of power of our mind and Destiny. Thus there is nothing that happens aimlessly in this world...all of it has a purpose.

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