

Eternal Education

“30 seconds to go.” Prof. Edward told Sun and professor Aijaz. They were up on their toes for it was a situation of do or die. While on the other hand, standing there I could hear my heart pounding really strong. At that moment I just couldn't escape my mind from falling in the trap of past memories. It pained. Past pains when you have lost your home. When someone rootless since birth loses his roots again, the plathos of life is hard to sustain on. This alienation is hard to grapple with.

I could remember Ernst shouting while running up the staircase, “What are you working at? I have been looking for you since an hour. You have been saying since breakfast that you will be over with your project in half an hour and now it's noon and still your project on vertical landing of the flying cars isn't over?” asked Ernst. “I am almost done with the prototype. You go and tell Shaltz that I will be there in 10 minutes.”

Ernst was my 6 year old friend, who like me, was a sufferer of the cruel realities of life and hence had fallen in the Paul Jungen Orphanage. He used to consider me as his ideal. I remember how he would keep on sitting beside me passing that childish innocent smile while I would be involved in various innovative projects. So I had promised him that I would become his mentor when he reaches an age of 10. Since then he could be always seen too excited and he started to spend his entire days being a pet to me.

Ernst ran downstairs to tell Shaltz that he better prepare my food urgently and stop making noises with his metallic arms. Shaltz was my personal assistant, which I won in a Design

competition where I proposed a better design for a satellite planned to X21(Distant solar system). Shaltz would, thus, wake me up, make me jog, monitor my heart beats and stamina, maintain my health charts, which was considered important to increase the efficiency, recorded how well I managed time and helped me to manage stuff and cater to all my needs. Shaltz was a great companion who would become a dancing partner for me when I desired to learn salsa and a tutor when I wanted to learn music. He would even 3D print my meals, make my bed and clean all my leftovers. Shaltz in a real sense made my life easier and helped me increase my efficiency in work. He even updated my work profile on a regular basis with respect to my gradual learnings. He was a real gem.

I ran down to have my hotdog when Shaltz came to me and asked if it was the right time to display my mails. The messages in the mails were flashed in front of me, on my clock wall. The hot dog slipped off from my hand. "I had cracked the exams for Stanford University. They had given me the access to be seated in their classes virtually." I told my caretaker.

One can't expect nowadays to board trains and buses or leave your homes for studies. Definitely while sitting in your house, being physically present in your room you could attend classes by transcending virtually to your destined place. The contact lenses issued by Stanford University added virtual projections in reality by displaying information about people I come across and the places I visit. Such a mixed reality made the virtual transition to other places seamless. It was no different from being physically upright at that place.

Everyone in the orphanage celebrated my achievement. A week passed by in the excitement to work with Stanford professors. The day came when I accessed my link which confirmed my admission. I was awe-inspired by the projects I saw people working on with such diligence. I

knew that I was at the utmost right place. I could see myself surrounded by highest possible technologies that keeping my hands off from them didn't seem to my mind a good idea. There were so many AI bots working around testing with utmost precision for the best results. On the floor, there were droids roaming around to keep the floors clean. After an interval of every minute, an anti-pathogenic chemical would be sprayed to keep the air clean. Outside the windows, I could see plants being taken care by the mechanical vases providing the essential nutrients including sunlight, heat, and water within a closed room.

My eyes fell on a round table in the center of the room with chairs spread around it. I saw two people seated. Suddenly a man well suited who seemed to be in his mid-forties appeared on the chair kept on a pedestal in front of the round table. The man introduced himself as a robotics professor at Stanford University. He congratulated us for the new beginning and gave us the schedule for our next one year.

The planner included that we were supposed to meet Prof. Edward twice a week for clearing our doubts. For the first month we had to be present in his classroom from 8-9 for a basic group discussion on general topics like time management, money, psychology and so forth. We were told that for first few days we would have to prepare for the topics in two hours as the topic of the day would be revealed at 6 in the morning. Gradually the time was moved forward from 6 to 6:30 and then to 7 and finally, it was zeroed down so that we could think spontaneously. This methodology of educating us helped to prepare ourselves to be on our toes with full tenacity and presence of mind whenever there was a need.

These group discussions allowed us to gain much more than the daily mundane studies.

Usually, the discussions would never reach their terminal point and often they turned up into heated arguments. We were continuously mentored during the group discussions by teaching assistants and our professors for doubts in a particular area.

For instance, once we had a highly intellectual discussion on the definition of what is the truth?

We got stuck at a point where Andriana, from Boston who was an electronics lover, said, "The only truth is God because, truth is something which remains constant with respect to time and space. Everything else changes subject to time and space." Being a puritan she had strong ideas on this. While Sun, from China who was a creative hacker, believed that "Truth is a relative term according to the socio-political scenario of a place and we ought to accept it as not a constant entity." While I believed the truth as something which was genuinely there.

Such a debate was essential in a world of virtual illustrations. Observing the discussion wasn't reaching to any closure, Prof. Edward virtually stepped in, to sum up the talk, and told us that philosophically truth is something constant. Religion takes it to be God. While we, the engineers, see it logically as a relative term with respect to what is present and exists in this place and time.

Such debates increased the spectrum of thoughts that we carried.

In next six months, we were well versed in our respective fields while simultaneously being worked upon by our professor on the development of our brains for the other areas of life.

Development in such a short span of time was the efficiency of the education system with the full-fledged use of technical advancements.

The use of contact lenses made things handy. It could give answers to all our queries. During our exams, these lenses were not even taken away because the focus was not on what one has the capacity to cram but on the logical reasoning and apt application of concepts. The process of grasping knowledge through practicals with the theoretical part being catered to by the contact lenses made learning easier and efficient. These lenses with many other assistive devices were controlled by a wrist band.

We were often sent to different seminars for a better and in-depth understanding of our respective fields. The merging of universities and institutes made technical learning under different experts easier, on one hand. While on the other hand, there was a complete and efficient utilization of laboratories. The universities who had tied their hands with Stanford University allowed students to access their lecture halls. We just had to get virtually transported while physically being present at home.

These seminars under the 'lecture halls initiative' had a great hand in shaping us into experts in our respective fields. We demonstrated our potential with excellent research papers and even had gained competency to file patents. Under these extensive collaborations, the research works were kept encrypted.

One fine day we were having a gala time interacting with each other about our country's culture, especially by introducing our cuisines to each other with the help of 3D food printer. Suddenly we got a beep from Prof. Edward. We all disappeared from our place of conversations and appeared in front of him. We were stunned by what he had in store for us. This changed my life.

It had such an impact that we as individuals got transformed into much more responsible citizens.

He revealed that the exams weren't even considered while taking us in the University. Rather our selection was the result of a work done since many days, to track down the best students with the potential to learn and mould the present systems, the ones who would be enthusiastic to apply their knowledge in a creative way. Through the contact lenses, he accessed the public database to track us down. This system worked on cloud-based application. It had the previous projects we had worked on, various approaches we had taken and our accomplishments. It updated our work profile automatically whenever it sensed some new and unique methods or approaches made by an individual. This determined our learning curves and they were steep. This system even helped in job recruitments.

Since then he had been trying to educate us in different and unique ways, so as to prepare us for a secret mission. However, now it was time for the next step, to reach our goal. We had developed mixed feelings for each other in past six months. Thus, we were expected to work on our differences.

Further Prof. Edward had realized that Sun needs to be on his toes for the mission. Seeing how restless and distracted he remained, Prof. Edward planted a brain chip in his brain. These chips were regulated by the wrist band and directed our brain when to release chemicals for utmost level of concentration and when not to.

Next day while our professor was narrating us the instigating factor which made him initiate this mission, I felt tremors around. I started losing contact and my virtual presence would have

started to become hazy. And all of a sudden I lost contact with my team. My professor called up his technicians to look into the matter.

Meanwhile, Prof. Edward told Sun and Andriana that recently he was on a trip with his wife and children in Argentina. They visited an adventure park during their tour. It was a bright, sunny day with a soft breeze flowing over their skin. His family was excited a lot, especially his children. He was overwhelmed seeing them enjoy heartily. He went on to the outskirts of the park to get softies for everyone. And there, all of a sudden he heard a sound, a boooooom. Nothing was visible after that but a grey cloud. People breaking through the grey cloud was what he could see. Shouts, cries, thumping of feet, and a lot of disturbed noises could be heard. Since then he had not been able to see his family. They died in that blast. Their corpses were tattered brutally by the blast.

With a sigh, he said, "I tried to contact the FBI but you know how the system works. They didn't revert back".

There was silence. He continued after a pause and told them that there had been an attack three weeks back in Argentina. According to the intelligence one of the terrorists who had been captured claims to be from Taliban-malkafa group. Last week too there had been an attack in the stadium in France. Three months ago there had been another attack in Germany where again the dying terrorist claimed to be a member of Taliban-malkafa group.

"According to the databases and the newspaper reports we all are aware that Taliban-malkafa group has become the hub of training of terrorists and planning of such terrorist attacks. It's the place whose air smells of terror now. It's their home.

So I plan to initiate a mission so as to sabotage their terrorist attacks time and again in near future. For this, I have gathered you all, seeing your creative potentials in your respective fields. I want us to devise a mechanism for our mission.” told Prof. Edward

The technicians informed that there had been an attack in Germany where I resided. So they had lost connection. Prof. Edward, Sun and Andriana were startled with what had happened to my orphanage. This pain was what I am feeling right now. The never-ending trouble of memories in my mind just creates an aura that I am not able to make a move forward.

At that time, Andriana, from Boston, an electrical engineer, even felt that maybe Prof. Edward’s plans must have been leaked and hence this attack took place. She grew nervous thinking that maybe her family’s life would also be at stake. The professor, Sun, and Andriana became more determined for the mission. I was able to come back after three days of the attack.

I had lost Ernst. In the orphanage there had been an attack and me, I lost my entire family of orphans and friends. I lost my Pandora box of memories with a terrorist attack that burnt my childhood down in flames. I became furious to incapacitate the terrorist’s, further, missions and break their morale down so that no other person across the globe feels so fragmented.

Within a month we were well acquainted with the terrorists’ way of working. Now a plan was needed to vandalize the plans of these terrorist groups. For this, the first thing was to hack down their computer systems. Sun was already competent in hacking down systems as per his previous achievements. His methods gained an edge over others with the techniques he learned through the seminars in his graduation.

We hacked down the satellites and got access to images of what was happening in and around Taliban-malkafa group. We tracked down that there was an order to be delivered to these terrorists' base camps. So we wittily camouflaged a pico chip in the order that was to be delivered to the terrorist's base camp. This gave us an access to their daily conversations. Our team under Prof. Edward gathered a lot of data. This had to be analyzed by an AI specialist. Prof. Edward through the public profile of various AI specialists, found the one suitable for his job. It was Professor Aijaz.

Professor Aijaz, who was from Toronto University had been working on a project with his team of students on environmental issues, especially the ozone layer depletion around the Antarctic circle. Such projects were a remarkable mode of exposure for students across the globe.

Prof. Edward contacted professor Aijaz and revealed his plan of action. "It is a life-threatening mission. Also, the higher authorities are unaware of it. What if we get into some serious trouble?" asked professor Aijaz. He was definitely reluctant to be a part of this mission.

However, realizing that it was for a greater cause after Prof. Edward told him how terrorism is spreading at the speed of light and taking over our lives and happiness. The throes in which the world has fallen made professor Aijaz change his mind. He got bucked up to work on another project completely different from his field of work. Both our professors worked day and night to analyze the data. We, further, got an opportunity to interact and get guidance from different professors. Such interdisciplinary projects has become an integral part of our curriculum.

Soon without wasting a moment we started learning about the types of bombs that these terrorists used, their previous planned attacks, their mode of action, about their bases and camps and their mindset. The contact lenses were of great help for laying down the entire

information about each and every term whether it be some terrorist leader's name or about the countries where attacks have taken place or the maps and technology that these terrorists use as had been fed on the public database, or some religious terms that are driving force for these terrorists. All was well flashed by these lenses whenever needed. It made the concepts more clear, especially the ideology and the thinking processes of these terrorists through the trail of incidents that had taken place.

Meanwhile, I studied on the firmware of the machines used by the terrorist groups with the help of Andriana. We had finally reached the point where Prof. Edward's plan could run from.

While after analysis of the data the entire team learned that the terrorists had programmed bombs which would be transported within three hours to 6 places across the globe. Everyone panicked at the revelation of how short of time they were in. Through the research collaborations of both our teams, we found out that the terrorist group was planning something big like the humanoid bombs. We knew now how to disable the attacks which would be controlled by the terrorists in Taliban-malkafa on click of a button as the bombs were programmed to.

Our plan was to hack the system of terrorists through which they would enable the bombs. But the systems could be hacked just for 30secs. On top of this, we had only three trials to diffuse a bomb else the Taliban-malkafa group would get notified. Hence, too much was needed from Sun's side, too much of dedication, speed and efficiency.

However, this was not the only problem we faced. The names of the six places were the key to unlock the bombs and then disable them. The names of these places were TRE5BGE,

HTEN4NEK, HG1UH, IHS6NIQ, ISEL3RAHC and INEH2PETS. We just couldn't get to what these letters meant.

We were left all to ourselves to solve it. Andriana had a habit of reading a lot of books. She had read a lot of history too so as to understand the contexts in which certain writers wrote their literature. She realized while pondering over these names, while only two hours were left before the attacks, that when one eliminates these numbers and reverse the letters in TRE5BGE and HG1UH, then they turn out to be EGBERT and HUGH. These were the first rulers of England and France respectively.

When the other names were too decoded in the similar pattern they got the names as KENNETH, QIN SHI, CHARLES I and STEPHEN I. The names came out to be the first rulers of Scotland, China, Spain and Hungary.

But we had another thing to be decoded. What do these numbers in between the names signify? Prof. Edward told us that it must be the sequence in which the attacks would be taking place.

So at the very present moment, after the hard work of an entire year, we were 30 seconds away from reaching our telos. Whatever we have gained through the hard work since a year made us believe that we will accomplish the mission. The coding to unlock the bombs by hacking the terrorist systems has been done now. Everyone is up on their toes.

Sun typed FRANCE. And entered. The bomb didn't diffuse. We all are quite anxious. Andriana has suggested, "what if the numbers indicating the sequence of blasts was not in ascending order but descending?" Sun in panic has typed CHINA. The level of our anxiety has gone up

with another failure. We just have a last attempt else the terrorists would get notified that someone is trying to diffuse their planted bombs. Prof. Edward has told Sun to type ECN1ARF, To everyone's surprise, the bomb has diffused. Our hearts have stopped pounding at a high speed now. However, we are just left with 4 seconds and we have 5 more bombs to diffuse. The sweat on everyone's face is enunciating how perturbed we were. Seeing the pace and dedication with which Sun is typing, it seems that his mind has started working in the same frame as he used to during his group discussions. The spontaneity that he had mastered during group discussions is making him successfully diffuse the bombs at his crucial time. 1 second is left and we still have two bombs. Sun has typed DNAL5GNE nervously. Everyone is alarmed that there are only few milliseconds left for last bomb. Sun is typing ANI6__ and suddenly we lost command over the terrorist's computer. The link was broken. Our morales somewhere has been sunk and all of a sudden we have lost contact with Andriana. We have received the news that there has been another attack now in China. We knew and we couldn't stop it.

Prof. Edward has been notified that Andriana was in China since three days for a tour. She has been present in the coffee shop in the central mall where the attack has taken place. She is injured. We are now gravely disappointed.

"Bravo!!", Shouted Prof. Edward. "We have successfully diffused five bombs though we have failed in one. Never mind. We tried our best. We will train ourselves further and make ourselves more competent. Don't get disappointed". He knows that such a reaction isn't invited at such a grave moment. But being a professor and a mentor, he even knows that we are shattered and somewhere have lost faith in our capabilities. So bucking us up is what he is intending to do. We are lucky to have him.

Though we have turned the tables. We have overpowered these terrorists with the best use of this modern day technology but we couldn't help Andriana from not being a victim. We are now preparing to leave physically for the first time to see Andriana and celebrate what little we have achieved. Prof. Edward has told us that we should celebrate so as to boost ourselves.

Andriana has got burns on her arms. These are severe. And I am not able to control my tears from rolling down. Sun is shocked and I heard the professors talking that how they feel that somewhere they are responsible for Andriana's present state.

Andriana, the book lover knew what we all must be going through inside. Andriana at that very moment seeing her professor and team, announced that what I have done today, I will continue to do it. The anxiety in her eyes conveyed us what she meant while keeping it a secret from the rest of the world.

Like all the alumni from Stanford University we had access to the university forever and will continue to collaborate with Prof. Edward. He told us with utmost confidence and faith that he would like us to continue this mission as he knew that we have realized that how intrinsic these losses can get. We made the most productive use of these technologies developed by great scientists in the twentieth century to make the world a better place to live in. And Prof. Edward wanted us to keep it a worthy place for times to come.