

The Religion
called
Pragmatism:

Memoirs of
Dr Veena Ratankumari Jacobs

Rishabh Dubey 'Kridious'



The Religion Called
Pragmatism

©Rishabh Dubey 'Kridious'

CHAPTER 4: THE TRAIN

Intellect... something humankind has defined as its individual, singular and exclusive property. Yet, has time and again failed to showcase it. Definition perhaps is not sufficient for display. This property has been subjected to so much egotistical acute streamlining that it led to the coalesced definition of 'Intellectual Property', which presumably represents belongingness to a particular individual or human organisation. Intellect, primarily and supposedly only exists in humans. But what makes this intellect of ours? What defines an intellectual? There are several factors... Starting with Logic. Logic is basically channelled by isolated or collective perception. What we perceive should apply in the respective situations. That defines logic... the practical way to approach a given scenario. Only logic can help derive an

inference and a possible method to fix a problem. When there is nothing logical evident, then the predominantly logical try to weigh in the probabilities to come about some kind of significant answer. Nevertheless, when the logical simulations are equivalent in weight, are evanescent to an extent comprehensible for the observer or are apparently incomplete, then we come to the scenario we refer to as confusion. Oh Yes! Confusion... the second most imperative factor defining intellect. An intellectual is more often than not also a seeker. They pursue the path to the solution incessantly; and in that pursuit, they are struck with confusion very frequently. That's because they do not want to make an unaware choice; and thus, they seek to unbalance the logical weights. Furthermore, in scenarios where logic is scarce, there are also those who procreate their own logic out of thin air. They represent another category of intellectuals... the most handy and rugged of all of them... that is the self-proclaimed one.

Veena and Amar had officially left on their conjoint vacation of exploration. Why?

Because the former was going through her greatest phase of confusion and self-analysis; and more importantly self-doubt. Veena was perhaps the most sceptical of beings to have ever taken the job of a professor, a job which is innately full of sceptics. Her cynicism had led her to pursue ancient and medieval history as her majors, the subjects in which she found thematic resonance concerning the exploits and lessons of mankind. *To know more* was all she had ever wished for and had thus embarked on this journey. And also, she needed a break; and who could have been a better travel companion than the ever-cheerful ward of hers, Amar. Ofcourse, he had put his semester at stake but that was the least he could've done for the person he idolized the most in his life, Dr. V.R. Jacobs. Sangram had also refrained from contradicting the sudden decision by Veena since he could very well understand the gravity of her ambiguity. Even though the length and duration of the journey was too much for the old Veteran to ward off his inner worries, he had given his blessings to the two for their route of

exploration. Where were they heading to? They were heading for the peaceful, loving and educated state of Kerela; for its capital, Kochi (Ernakulam) to be precise. Sangram had insisted on them having some orderly to accompany them on their forty-two-hour long journey in the prestigious Trivendrum Rajdhani; but Veena assured him that journey in a first-class private cabin needn't require a *Sevak* for security and/or service.

The decision to set-foot on that exploration was a bold one on the part of Veena, since she had never ever hinted at the need to know more about her natural heritage. All religions she knew but couldn't understand, all the saints she ever heard of but could never relate to, all the Gods that she was told about but could never know, all of them along with herself and Amar were oblivious to what had just begun... A journey unlike any other which mankind had witnessed for a long time...

The train had already passed Vadodara but the Ticket Examiner had not yet appeared, maybe not to bother the First-Class passengers early on in their travel. Veena had

bunked on the lower berth after going through a dozen electronic submissions by her students on her laptop. She had also seen Amar climb on top of the Upper Berth, and being positive about him being secure, she could gently nod off. It was around 3:30A.M. at night when she heard a knock on her cabin. About time she woke up to show their tickets, confirm their identities, and also quench the thirst that she had been having for an hour. She asked the TTE to come in. The latter respectfully smiled and asked her name.

“I am Dr. Veena Jacobs and sleeping above is my brother Amar,” she replied as she grabbed her bag to take out their identity cards.

“No need for the IDs ma’am, we don’t want to bother you so much, just go back to sleep again” the TTE said in a gratifying tone. Perhaps a demeanour they hold only for the First-Class passengers. Well, who wants to come in the bad books of someone who has a couple of thousand bucks more to book a ticket, right? This was something exclusive about the respectful Indian Official mindset. Before the TTE left the Cabin, he turned

towards Veena again and said in a polite tone “Which washroom has Sir, your brother, gone to Ma’am, left or right?”

Veena got confused at that query and stood up to check the Upper Berth. The sheet, blanket and pillow were all haphazardly curled up, just like Amar was habitual to doing; but there was no sign of him. She anxiously said “Oh! I don’t know, I didn’t see him leave”.

The TTEE offered to look for him. Veena, worriedly discarding her worry for her bags went along with him to either ends of the Bogey. They waited outside the only occupied WC to find that there was someone else inside and not Amar. The TTE respectfully asked the man for his name, while Veena was lost in wonder. The man replied, but the name wasn’t there on the TTE’s list. He politely asked for the ticket, and the man nervously started searching his pockets.

“I just had it... maybe I dropped it in the washroom.”

The man looked doubtful, so the TTE asked him the details of his journey as well as his seat number. The man had no reply and

looked taken aback. The TTE then shed his generous First-Class façade to confront the man and angrily told him to get off the Train at Vasai. Meanwhile, Veena was trying to grab the TTE's attention towards her situation. The official asked her to patiently rest in her cabin as he searched for her brother since he had a bigger situation at hand. The argument with the man started increasing in verbal and audible magnitude, waking up all the travellers in that Bogey. Veena took the opportunity to go across the carriage to inquire about Amar; but to no resolve. He was nowhere to be found. Her restlessness overwhelmed her and she was about to grab the chain when the TTE stopped her. He told her that the train is stopping at Vasai soon and they can get the Railway Police to help her out, an offer generally reserved for the First-Class passengers. Veena stood at the door awaiting the station's arrival. It was about 3:55 A.M. when they reached Vasai. The TTE went down to inform the supervisors about a missing first-class passenger while also taking the illegal traveller to hand over to the Railway

Police. Veena stood at the door but the TTE didn't return. She got startled when the Train sounded its Horn and ran back to her cabin to grab her and Amar's belongings and rushed down the moving train. She had no time to gather her breath as she wandered here and there to look for the Station-Master's office. She dropped the luggage and busted inside the room with the constables outside having barely begun to convince her otherwise.

"Madam... My brother, Amar, he is missing... We were travelling in this train and when..." she was interrupted by the lady.

"Who allowed you to come here? How can you lambast inside my office like that?" the Deputy said.

Veena saw the ticketless man from earlier sitting on the chair in the corner, with the TTE standing beside him with a small pie of cash in his hand, appearing to be counting it.

"You... you said you would get help..." Veena said as she approached the TTE.

"Arre Ma'am I was getting to that only... (to the Deputy) Madam (with a strange expression) she is the one I was telling you about. The first-class passenger whose travel

companion is missing. Dr. Jacobs (to Veena) right?” he said in an alerted tone.

The words *First-Class* resonated inside the deputy’s head just like it does in the impressionable mind of an Indian Cleric.

“Oh! Yes Yes. Madam you sit down. I will get in touch with the police staff in the train to search for him. Let me make some calls. And (to the TTE) go submit this man’s penalty at the office. Go, what are you looking at? (To her orderly) Get some tea for madam.” The Deputy said.

“He doesn’t have his ID as well... I kept it in my bag since he is too reckless. He is a kid... Where can he be?” Veena said.

“Don’t worry madam let me call the controller and see what we can do. We would find him...” the lady said as she dialled a number on her mobile phone and started talking. The other lady was unaware that Veena was a multi-linguist and was well-versed in *Marathi* as well. She put down her phone and asked Amar’s ID to circulate a picture. Veena did that. After that, there was an awkward silence marked by the humming of the dysfunctional table fan kept beside the

Deputy. To break the pause, she tried to make small talk “My mother has a sleeping disorder... She either sleeps too much or doesn’t sleep at all. The local physician says it is due to menopause. What do you suggest?”

“Apologies ma’am I am not the best person to answer your question?” Veena said.

“Oh! Why (smirks) Donation or Dentist? Or both? Don’t mind I am just joking” the deputy said.

“Neither... Double Doctorate in Medieval and Ancient History” Veena replied.

“Arre Arre you are PHD. Very nice and rare too. My son says he wants to do PHD in psychology. I told him to go for history. Who wants to study the science of madness? Right?” the deputy said.

“Madam, no offence... but can we concentrate on finding my brother?” Veena said.

“Yes we are on to that... (her phone rings) Must be about him only... See” she said as she picked the call.

She started having a serious conversation on her phone and got up from her chair.

Veena was constantly lending her ears to the deputy. All she heard her say was “Vadodara?... A.C. *Compartment te Cigarette Odhata Aahe?*”

Veena looked pale as she heard the conversation. She was now more worried about Amar than ever. The deputy kept her phone down.

“Amar is at Vadodara station detained by the RPF. He was caught smoking near the AC-3 tier Lavatory. He has been charged with creating public nuisance and was not carrying any ID or ticket with himself.” The Deputy said.

“But this isn’t possible. He is a good kid. I assure you of it.” Veena said.

“What can your assurance do to help me Madam? Tell me, how are you two related again? You said he is your brother. His name here is Amar Kumar and yours is Jacobs... I don’t think you two can even be distant cousins... Why were you both travelling in the same cabin again?” the Deputy said with a suspicious expression.

“What are you implying ma’am. He is a young college going kid who lives with our

family. I have seen him grow. He is my brother. Be it not by blood..." Veena said in a commanding tone.

"Please don't raise your voice in front of me... It won't help your case here. Smoking in a train is a heinous crime... Specially near the AC Compartment. I have seniors to answer to. And this case is out of my jurisdiction." The Deputy said.

"So, you mean to say there is nothing you can do to help me?" Veena questioned as she got up from her chair.

"I cannot. Only the staff at Vadodara can. Now it is very late in the night. I think you should go and figure it out. Here take your ID cards" the deputy said pushing the cards kept on the table towards Veena.

"By the way miss... What kind of a name is it? Veena Ratankumari Jacobs? What religion do you belong to?" the deputy asked.

"I don't know... That's what we were trying to find out..." Veena said.

The deputy looked confused. Right before Veena was about to gather her stuff to step out of the room, the deputy received another phone call "*Kaye?... Ho... Dr. Veena Jacobs...* (To

Veena) *Ek Minta Thamba...* (On the phone) *Kaye? Sangram Bhagwati?...* (To Veena) Your self-proclaimed brother has just claimed that he lives in Delhi with you and your father, Sangram Bhagwati..."

"Yes, we do..." Veena nodded.

"(Calls her Peon) Om, take madam to the waiting room. The Air-Conditioned waiting-room. (To Veena) *Arre Madam* you should have said so before. We always take good care of the families of our own and specially that of Veterans of the force. You don't worry. Your brother would be here by 7 A.M. in the morning. Do what... you take the A.C. guest resting room for the while. We will sort this out..." the Deputy said.

Veena was escorted by the Peon to the resting chamber. So far, it had become quite evident to her, the dire significance of apparent status. Now, she was not being troubled by the difficulties that Amar might have been facing. The entire scene she had witnessed... the sadistic diplomatic dominance of beings whenever they find the freedom for it... and the sycophancy of the same when they don't find any such liberty...

it was all troubling her very much. She kept lying down on the rugged bed with open eyes, with her mind dwelling in a plethora of thoughts. The more she thought, the lesser she knew... Her journey had just begun, and the destination had now started seeming farther than it ever was. What would it take to end her quest? What can possibly end the turbulence?