

The Most Significant Moment of My Life

Praveen Suri

This essay was originally published in 1969 in the New Delhi Children's International Fair Magazine.

Praveen Suri won the prize for his essay and the prize was granted by the then Vice President of India, Shri Gopal Swarup Pathak.

This essay has been translated from Hindi to English by the author's son, Raghav Suri.

Original Essay Copyright 1969 Praveen Suri.

English Translation Copyright 2023 Raghav Suri and Suri Translations.

Published by Suri Translations.

www.SuriTranslations.com

One incident which occurred last year remains one of the most significant moments of my life. This incident struck me like a mighty hammer, and it remains etched in my mind. No matter how much I try to forget this incident, it continues to live on in my mind.

This incident occurred when I was studying in the Seventh Grade. I was often the top student in class. My teachers were pleased with me and would encourage me. By receiving so much inspiration, I often stood ahead of my classmates. My fellow students respected me, though I didn't know why. One student, Arvind, was drawn to me. I always tried to build a friendship with him, but I always failed. As such, I began to feel that Arvind was my rival.

Often, I would find that my notebooks were missing from my bag. I suspected Arvind's wrongdoing, but I never complained to anyone.

Arvind was a bright student but always came second in class. I presumed that this is why he's my rival and my presumption was correct. I often thought that I should let Arvind overtake me when it came to exam time. But then I realized that if I did so, I'd no longer have any influence on others.

I felt my classmates and teachers would give him more importance and lose respect for me – and I'd feel less important. I decided not to do this and still attempt to build a friendship with Arvind, but I had no luck.

When the annual examinations begun, Arvind sat near me. But then two days later, our Teacher moved Arvind to the last row next to Rajiv while Kamal was moved to sit next to

me. The examinations continued and I could never imagine what would happen on the final day.

Like every day, we sat down to take our final exam.

I was deeply engrossed in reading the examination paper as was my friend Kamal. Yet, I didn't know why, but the thought of Arvind kept entering my mind. As I was thinking about this, a small paper ball landed on my desk.

At first, I ignored this paper ball. But then I had to open it. I hardly imagined that opening this paper ball would be like swallowing flies! When I opened the paper ball and read its contents, I bit my finger. It was Arvind who threw the paper ball and from this paper ball, I learned that he is a copycat. He had requested that I write the answer to question number 5 and then send the answer his way.

I couldn't decide what to do and began thinking. I then reflected upon the rivalry between Arvind and me. I felt if I send him the answer, our enmity will come to an end. I also felt sorry for him.

Without thinking about myself and with only one thought in mind, I wrote the solution to question number 5 on a paper and threw it at Arvind's table. Luck was not on my side and our Teacher caught me in the act. All my fellow classmates began to stare at me and I hung my head in shame. I couldn't even understand what was going on. I turned my head at Arvind and saw him smiling at me.

I was engulfed with the flame of vengeance. However, at the time Arvind was at an advantage and there was nothing I could do. Seeing his wicked smile, I felt enraged and my desire for revenge went from being a spark to a flame. I was also dismissed from the examination.

After a few days, the examination results came out. Arvind came first and I came second. I gave my parents the news, but they had nothing to say to me. Days passed and I thought this incident would pass but such was not the case.

A few days later, when my friends and I were on our way home from school, Arvind joined our group. My mind was filled with different thoughts when I saw him. I felt that he had transitioned from a simple boy to a cunning one. At an early age, he had developed this cunningness.

The pathway to our homes included going through a forest. We were leaving the forest when I heard Arvind shout: "Help me! Help me!" I then noticed a snake slowly inching toward him.

On one hand I felt vengeful and wondered if I should bother helping him. But I felt pity toward Arvind and felt that I must save him.

My heart told me that this is the meaning of humanity. My mind was arguing otherwise, but alas, the heart conquered the mind. I attacked the snake with a piece of wood that was lying nearby. The other boys began screaming.

Arvind came to understand everything. He came toward me and apologized and decided to reveal the secret. When the other boys learned this secret, they felt regret. Teacher also learned the secret. Arvind had revealed the secret on how he came first in the examination.

Arvind gave me a hug and we became friends. In fact, we became inseparable friends. This incident became the most significant moment of my life.

Till date I haven't forgotten this incident, nor will I ever forget it.