

Am I Alive?
A Journey Into Myself

Srikanth K S

0.1 Preface

This is not a travelogue. I have written what all happened to me and in me during the one day visit to savandurga, a trekking destination 60 km from Bangalore.

Trek on: 5-nov-2006

Distance: 60 km approx

Time taken: 1 day

Cost: Nearly 100 Rs excluding food.

What started as a normal trek ended as a pilgrimage. Please adjust to my bad use of language. Writing is too casual. I would like if anybody wants to rewrite this stuff in a readable form. There are constant reference of my previous trek to Savandurga through out. Photos were taken by my still camera. I scanned them later, so quality is not that good (roll did not last till the end of the journey). It was a philosophical experience, you shall see. Thanks to Vinay for suggesting the sub-title and his constant review and appreciation while was writing this big manuscript after my office hours. I am looking forward for your comments and suggestions. It shall be of great help to me.

Yours,
Srikanth K S

0.2 The Pilgrimage

Just as the white summer cloud, in harmony with heaven and earth freely floats in blue sky from horizon to horizon following the breadth of the atmosphere- in the same way pilgrim abandons himself to the breadth of greater life that leads him beyond the farthest horizons, to an aim that is already present within him, though yet hidden from his sight.

–Lama Govinda, Way of white clouds

You are no longer a kid. You may do as you please I knew Appa was frustrated.

But I said, with strange determination.

I am going to trek tomorrow, let whatever happen.

Both were awestruck. I would have never answered back appa that way. I saw he could sense the strong determination in my voice, his eyes seemed to agree and he went without speaking a word.

However appa had all the reasons for his worries I had decided to trek savandurga alone. I had not been to any major trek after coming back from Bhubaneswar (Aug 06). All my tries to collaborate a trek with others had gone vain. I decided to break away from the Infy work monotony.

Preparation went on normally. I loaded my bag with three 1 litre water bottles, emergency torch, another pair of dress and ಅವಲಕ್ಕಿ avalakki that amma had prepared for me. Appa dropped me till the nearest bus stand, with many words of caution of course.

The feeling was too strange; it was completely different from my previous treks. Though I had traveled alone till the trek base camps, I had never

trekked alone. Ring road bus was yet to move and mist on the Hebbal Lake had still more time to survive.

Mind was in search of the algorithm I had been trying from a day before for a combinatorics problem. Newer approaches seemed to come.

But, this was not all. Something else kept reminding me of my endeavor. As usual with all the treks, journey seemed to remind of life. Mind seemed to forget it was srikanth, I had started thinking externally about myself (I realized this state later).

What did I seek?

Where was this journey towards?

Breakthrough strikes in the algorithm, I make a note of it. Again I turn inward.

Things seemed to acquire new dimensions; I had been exposed to many harsh realities after being at Infy. Bengalooru seemed contrastingly cold after Bhubaneswars warmth (I am not talking of weather). Relationships had taken topsy-turvy upheavals.

Was I playing a forced middle game? Intuition said, pieces were in my control. Career in science, my dream of winning fields, many other things, all hanging in air.

ಮನಸಿನ ಪುಟಗಳ ನಡುವೆ ನೆನಪಿನ ನವಿಲುಗರಿ
ಕಾರ್ಮುಗಿಲ ಅಂಚಿನಲ್ಲಿ, ಭರವಸೆ ಹೊನ್ನ ರುರಿ

As expected, I did not get seat in the village bus that took me to Maagadi . Along the way, I could catch the glimpses of the rocky peak. I kept waiting for ಅರ್ಕಾವತಿ (arkaavati river). I had kept track of smaller streams but was sure that she was none of them. (she had good volume as I had seen from weekimapia).

Did I miss her?

She flowed from south to north (this is a local phenomena, Deccan plateau is still inclined south-west) and I was traveling eastwards. So by no means I could have missed her, encountering her was a mathematical certainty.

This enigma strikes me whenever I think of Mathematical certainty. I am always sure when I establish it, prove it. But the process of this discovery itself is unclear and illogical. For that matter, life itself strikes as a hoard of illogical connections. Here connections is the word that creates the impression that system could be logically breakable. I no longer agree with Einstein believing we can understand the subtle lord. Submission seems natural; belief is getting stronger in ಭಕ್ತಿ ಮಾರ್ಗ (bhakti maarga).

ದಾಸನ ಮಾಡಿಕೋ ಎನ್ನ ಸ್ವಾಮಿ

ಸಾಸಿರ ನಾಮದ ವೆಂಕಟರಮಣ

...

...

ಕೊಡು ನಿನ್ನ ಧ್ಯಾನವ ಮನಶುಚಿ ಮಾಡಿ

I met her. She was a small stream.

Back to the algorithm. Last resort was to call a recursive function within itself which indeed had a for loop within a for loop. I got down from the bus where deviation to the Durga indicated 14 km.

I sat on the stone bench waiting for another village bus that would take me to the foot of the hill. Rest of the job, was to introduce a variable so that so to prevent the recursion from going infinite. This variable had to be connected with the variable that controlled inner loops. Nearly, 15 minutes, connection established ! Smile curved my lips momentarily. I got into a maxi cab.

Cab was packed; people were frowning, for he was taking 15 Rs, while a bus would take you for 6 Rs. But he kept saying, he would be taking us up to the base of the hill while a bus would leave at the entrance from where foot of the hill is 3 Km. We had no other way (Bengalooru to Maagadi had cost me 18 Rs). The family in the cab blamed each other for being late and therefore missing the bus. Slowly, women picked up an animated debate. A guy (probably husband of one of the women) looked at me and we laughed. It was a guy thing. Women came to know why we laughed. (Usually outsmarting happens the other way)

Women left their discussion. We acquainted to each other. They were from (tumakooru) visiting their ಮನೆದೇವರು (ancestral deity) . Then came the much expected question.

My parents have already reached yesterday. I had some work. So ...

Forest outside was a constant reminder of the unexpected which I expected to happen. Looking at the rocky mountain, I could feel my fist tighten.

Lot of things had worked unconsciously behind the screen when I talked to the family. I had wore clothes that were not citish (city-ish) and talked in village accent (else they would not have talked to me). This was not the situation a few years ago. The ever widening gap between Rural and Urban India has reached alarming proportions. A rapid change in culture due to

globalization has led to stark contrast. (Remember angry villagers outside Bengalooru digging up Mysooru-Bengalooru highway built by NICE). I feel a subtle risk traveling countryside, which was a free risk zone a few years ago. Terrorism and the Naxal activity together with other unfounded beliefs has made villagers feel insecure seeing city folks enter their territory.

With the implementation of SEZs (Special Economic Zones), I feel, situation is getting worse. This borrowed concept (from china) intends to setup industries in the agricultural hotspots. The argument is: better accessibility, avoiding middlemen and a profitable play ground from the point of view of FDI (Foreign direct Investment). But the fallouts can be disastrous from Indias point of view. Once given an opportunity, Multinationals shall establish monopoly over food, water and essential resources. Rural folk after tasting money would never return to agriculture. Government loses its control over natural resources, becomes a mere president or a governor. Forget what happens to nature.

With world facing crisis regarding future fuel, terrorism, global warming I feel we are heading towards total destruction.

I got down from the cab. There was a big crowd near ರಂಗನಾಥ ಸ್ವಾಮಿ ದೇವಸ್ಥಾನ (ranga ganaatha swami temple). I had planned to climb from where I, Sudeesh and Neha had left last time. I was nearly 3 km from that spot, so decided to take the same route as our previous trek, but this time the left flank.



Let me explain about the mountain and the terrain. (I smiled while I wrote this sentence, this is like stating Let there be three non negative numbers ,cant help it comes by default) If you are traveling towards Savandurga, you meet a temple to your left that is some 2 furlongs away from ranganaatha swami temple. From there road takes a curve towards right. Durga is to the north of the temple. You shall see a white peak to right, called ಬಿಲಿಗುಡ್ಡ (biligudda) and a comparatively darker peak towards your left, ಕರಿಗುಡ್ಡ (karigudda). In the middle lies the valley full of vegetation. Plan was to trek up in the valley till I meet the relics of the fort. Then constantly moving towards left to climb Karigudda (last time we had taken right here to meet Biligudda, Mr. Nandi sits here).

I headed straight towards the valley. I dont know what drove me; mind was fixed on the goal. Found a comfortable place to change to trekking attire. I seemed to do all activities like a robot. I have observed the same thing happening whenever I do things with concentration. I do it and then realize I did it. This puts me into duality what 'I' is here?



The power of such mountain is so great and yet so subtle that, without compulsion, people are drawn to it from far and near, as if by the force of some invisible magnet; and they will undergo untold hardships and privations in their urge to approach and to worship the centre of this sacred power. This worshipful and religious attitude is not impressed by scientific facts, like figures of altitude, which are foremost in the mind of modern man. Nor it is motivated by the urge to conquer the mountain...

Lama Govinda, The way of white clouds

I entered into the dense part, to my surprise I saw a big ಉಡ (monitor lizard) lying on the forest floor and a bunch of monkeys on the trees amazed (or petrified) looking at the creature (not me, the lizard). They also got surprised, lizard disappeared and monkeys took a defensive position, their leader in the front made a grill face at me showing its teeth set. I knew what to do, I ignored them, but they followed me for half a furlong or so, then I lost their sight.

This valley has small boulders arbitrarily fallen has reached stability (during the formation) forming crevices. If you get underway any crevice, you can get out some distance away, it is fun going on like this (this is what we did last time). I decided to climb up the rocks, hop from one rock to the other without getting into a crevice. Decision was fine but implementation was hard. It was 9 30 by then, I was feeling hungry. I had to find a sufficiently well protected place to eat; else the monkeys would figure it out. Once if monkeys know you have food, if they are a team and you are alone, only solution is to leave the food and move away. Amma had stuffed all food in one box, so losing food to monkeys meant no food for afternoon also. Birds were another thing to watch out for, as monkeys and birds of a locale have good understanding between them. They alert each other for food or in case of danger.

I found a place, felt good enough to hide. I stayed there for sometime so all rumors of my presence die away. I was there in semi crevice only one opening from where good amount of forest was visible. I had chosen so because I could detect arrival of monkeys early. It also gave them a chance to see me, but I had to optimize under two constraint conditions of my visibility and my vision area. Slowly, opened the box. No leaf moved. Avalakki was still hot. Buried my fingers into it, took a mouthful, saw a monkey baby peeping from the edge of the tree branch almost immobile.

I put the avalakki back, closed the box. I was feeling a burning sensation in my stomach. We stared at each other and then it disappeared. Normally, these kids keep wandering without any sense of responsibility, so the probability that it would give clue to its elders was less. I did not want to take risk. I began to realize how difficult it was to move on the rocks without getting into the crevices. This needs greater grip, precise pre calculation and sustained physical endurance.

I had now come to open region from where I could see the region below, detect slight movements (this was surely the monkey gang). My shirt was completely wet due to scorching sun. I was out of danger zone now; I thought so and started eating. Avalakki tasted like amrutha, went on eating, later realized I ate more than $\frac{1}{2}$ and stopped.

Rocks lay ahead, seemed like petty challenges like ones in the math Olympiads. They look simple, tricky to solve, have a beautiful idea behind. Food fostered my spirit, I went on.

Challenges started becoming formidable. I had to use multiple skills from my skill set (usually things happen without much thinking, things happen by default). But now I had to analyze different approaches and then try each one. I learnt and analyzed a few new ideas.



One such instance is worth mentioning-I found a crevice interesting, looked entirely dark and some sign of movement.

Should I risk going inside?

I did not think, got into the crevice. Put my hand pump torch on, the crevice was too long than expected, did not seem to open up anywhere. Within a few yards, it broke into two sections, one leading to an opening and other into a dark space. I could smell something strange- it was excreta of some animal

(similar to the smell you get if you enter dilapidated structures in hampe where bats take refuge). Focused my torch there, surprise- three fleshy white structures sleeping, I could see fur growing on them slowly. They seemed like young wild boars (?), not sure. What if mother boar was there? Simple-you would not be reading this article. What if they had made some sound when I put light on them and mother came running? I turned the light off and backed off. Before this thought had occurred to me I had thought of lifting one of them and do some ಮುದ್ದು (kissing and cuddling, they were really cute). I decided against it.

When I was 10 or 11 year old I had seen a young one of a crow on the ground and its nest destroyed due to heavy wind and rains. I saw some part of the nest still hanging on the tree. I put this creature into the pocket, climbed the tree and placed it back in the nest. Tomorrow, I again saw the small one laying the ground, this time dead. Appa said mother wont accept the child once it comes to know that a human has touched it. I dug and buried it. Felt guilty, convinced myself with the pretext of not knowing the fact. I still wonder why this happens.

As I ran towards the opening of the crevice (where I had got in), I realized another mistake. This crevice was un climbable, a sort of one way entry.

As usual, analyze-try-fail, analyze-try-fail... this was not easy. Another opening of the crevice was there, danger of mother arriving was also there. Going out through another opening was the rational choice.

But, this crevice challenged me. I decided let whatever happen, let mother come, I am going to climb out of this. I dont know how much time lapsed. I climbed out of it.

When I look back at my life, I see that these fearless moments have led to path breaking success. I love challenges; I want to keep breaking them.

I was almost at the halfway mark, rough open rock where we had all climbed leaving our shoes below last time. I climbed, my new shoes was gripping well, came up to the place where we ate food last time, clock showed eleven. Last time we had run up and down throwing our shoes. This time I had nothing, ran randomly, for the fun of it.

Sat at the same place where I had sat last time. How strange it feels? Now there is nobody. Same place, same rock, same sun, same me. I could visualize the way we had sat. Sudhir behind me, Neha to my upper right, Maninder at right, Sudeesh and abhishek still up and Raghu far below.



I was mesmerized. Does time play the drama? Questions started emerging from no where. Why had I come here? That too alone? Have I changed? Who am I?

Life goes on.. I moved on, relics of the fort were visible now. I chalked out a strategy-I have to continuously move towards my left and hit karigudda. This left flank was more challenging compared to the right side that we had taken last time. I knew my trek was about to begin now, all that happened till now was a warm up. Upon thinking this, new life flowed like a current through my veins. I moved up stepping at right spots, making correct decisions at crux positions. This made me feel about my elegance, confidence level was high.



Next big problem was the bulging rock that stood between me and the valley of karigudda. There were two ways- 1. Climb up the rock and get down the other side. That shall land me in the valley of karigudda. 2. Keep moving parallel to the rock on its right, where the bulge is less, cross over.

I could not help taking the time consuming second way as first way was ruled out because rock had thorny bushes next to it which made climb on it impossible, rock was smooth, even I clear this other side (which side I could not see now) may have had thorny bushes.



So, I kept gaining altitude keeping the bulge rock to my left. This was not an easy job as way had thorns and I frequently lost sight of the bulge rock. As I went up I could notice a slit in the bulge rock. What if this slit continued all along and let into the other edge!

Aha, a fairy tale story-I said to myself. But it was compelling. I was in a mood to try out anything. Moving till the slit itself was a 10min task and from then on just hope was on my side. I went up to the slit.

Whew! Slit was big enough to let one person in. Way was curvy. It was surrounded by 8 mt stone walls and the place was wet with water trickling over the rocks, carving out beautiful patterns on the rocks. Hope looked plausible, but this way seemed to cut through the rock. I sat there for a while and meditated. *What if I spend my whole life meditating here, doing yoga and discovering mathematics?*

Thought process could not be continuous. I had to watch out for deadly crevices. One miscalculation and I am buried a few meters below *taken aback*

by the thought of death, next second fascinated, I should die once and see how it feels. I stared at the black hole, decided, 'one day I will do this.

If rain erodes the inner surfaces of the rocks at the rate directly proportional to thickness, then the law is exponential? then, halflife?

Oh! It is a dead end. Clock showed one. *I still had a lot of time. My intuition said there is a way, reality strikes back boy, next time.*

How many times has this happened to me? If I discover something, somebody would already have. Multiplication, trigonometry, results in geometry and number theory, my models for integer partition, have already been done. Let me see how longer this evades me have lost many things following my intuition, I consoled myself.

I was about to turn back when this interesting thing happened. A brown grasshopper jumped from far left of the dead end to the dead end so perfectly camouflaged that I could not locate till it jumped again. The interesting thing was not about camouflage, but there must be some vacant space at the far left.

Yes, there is a way, a sudden turn left turn creating the illusion of dead end. This struck me as a sign of my future success, instilled confidence in my intuition. Somewhere in the interior of my mind you are a genius. You know, you are destined to achieve. Did rocks resonate this thought? I felt so.

Wait! What if this leads me into home of some wild boar or bear? I peeped in like a thief. There was a hint of slit opening up, yes, I could see sunrays reaching the bottom of the slit. Slit had opened up into a waterway. World opened into a small window. I was looking into the outside world after about half an hour. I felt I was just born to have a look outside.



A happy moment

I remembered how we ran up in the waterway at devarayanadurga, it was a breakthrough soon after lunch. How I had trekked Nandi hills for the first time alone and it had rained, how I had stood below jog with water splashing all over me, how I had yelled I have already discovered this when I read Loney's trigonometry book for the first time, how water had trickled down my body on the top of malegudda, how I had told appa I feel multiplication is just a matter of notation. I can prove it is same as addition, it was almost midnight, that evening appa had introduced me to multiplication tables. The connection kept burning till I figured it out.

Appa said what about a number divided by three times say 1 cut into 3 parts multiplied another number of same kind?

I had no idea of any other kind than whole numbers. *My theory had failed.* It is too late, sleep now, Appa said. Frustrated, I slept. I was 7-8 year old then.

Waterway had fed to rich vegetation; this part was dense and thorny. I was now in the valley of karigudda. *Karigudda-it stood like a sage, welcoming a student.* Fighting thorns was difficult this time, no stick, no knife. I learnt a new trick, I would throw my bag into the thorny bush and then step on it. I was gaining altitude but was clueless regarding how to approach karigudda. Climbing the rock was out of question as it was too steep, I kept through the forest. Scenery I left behind was breathtaking. I could see the lake below and the peaks of Ramanagara. I am going to climb each one of them, that one, this one, that one...

Clocked showed 2, decided to sit below the lightning tree and finish rest of the Avalakki. It did not fill my stomach. Expecting such a situation I had brought a few bananas, by then they had become paste like.



How was the life of the Naayakas(fighters) who guarded Durgas like this? I have rejoiced being a fighter from my childhood. Appa took me to ಚಿತ್ರದುರ್ಗ (chitradurga) fort whenever we went to our home town. As I became older, I explored nook and corner and tell him about my adventures. Then, it was the other way, I showing him the places he missed. *Was I born as some Naayaka?*

I saw a clearance to my left. It was unusual, it seemed manmade. Surprise, I saw a ದಿಡ್ಡಿಬಾಗಿಲು (a small door of the dilapidated fort probably used for emergency exit), it was an unexpected coincidence as I had been just thinking

about fighters of the durga.



Am I seeing a dream? It was like going some centuries behind ... There were hardly signs of anybody using it, spiders seemed to have converted it into their laboratory. Plants had grown so dense that it took me some time to know that I was walking on the stone slabs; roots of big trees had even displaced these slabs. Vegetation had changed by altitude, characteristic smell moist decaying leaves heralded the presence of trees which had taken over the thorny bushes. The way directly led me up the Karigudda (?), I started experiencing a strange feeling, trek was about to end (I would call you smart if you looked at the page number after reading the previous sentence). Karigudda was about to be conquered.

I stood on the top. Breathtaking view. I saw a small pond on the top. *I looked at the track I climbed; it was like looking at my life in fast forward mode.* Clock showed 3. This is too early for my normal trekking standards. Biligudda seemed to be at much higher altitude than where I sat, but statistics said peaks differ only by 20 feet, Biligudda winning. Wondering about this fact and unaware of what was in stock for me, I turned back.

What happened from now on, rattled me, killed me, I was dumbfounded with what life offered ... It made me realize, this was not a simple trek, it turned out to be spiritual journey.

Oh man! What is this? I saw a monster rising like a constricted normal function. The peak looked marvelous, almost a perfect cone. This was unmistakably the one I had come for

Karigudda !! I said to myself.



From the side I had approached, high raised trees had blocked the view of the peak and it only appeared when I stood on this rock which I had mistaken for Karigudda from the beginning the trek. I took the last snap of the pond, the peak of Biligudda in background seemed to remind of a distant aim.

I ran down into the forest to get to the base of the karigudda. This is no simple task. One needs skill to clear this strip; it is the steepest I have ever climbed till date. It is my practice to never grip using hands while climbing a steep rock as walking on the legs gives superior grip. But while I was almost halfway, I lost the grip. If I hadnt fallen on my hands, death was certain. I was climbing with the mentality of let me beat this guy and that was not a good state of mind. I realized how my mental state had led me to imperfection. I

did lie down for a while, it was a submission. My arrogance was shattered. I meditated, my was clear. It walked up to the peak on my legs as usual. It was a miracle.



Peak was narrow, mind was pristine. I was one with the mountain. I knew I had to be calm, but, why was I impatient during the climb? No answer. I made a mistake, I corrected it, and I smiled, all the peaks around me smiled. Me, my life, adventures, mathematics all seemed to muddle up in space time. I stopped asking philosophical questions to myself. I saw the true meaning when I submitted. There was no me, I dissolved into the rock and became a part of it. I had no necessity to ask any question, I am here to play my role; I am him, its true, Advaita.

Like the hush in these snow mountains, the silence swelled with the intake of my breath into a presence of vast benevolence of which I was a part: in my journal for that day, seeking in vain to find the words for what had happened, I called it the smile. The smile seemed to grow out of me, filling all the space above and behind like a huge shadow for it was I who smiled; the smile was me. I did not breathe; I did not need to look; for it was everywhere. Nor there was terror in my awe: I felt good, like a good child, entirely safe. Wounds, ragged edges, hollow places were all gone, all had been healed; my heart lay at the heart of all creation

–The Snow Leopard, Peter Mathiessen

I realized that some people were waving me from Biligudda. I waved them back. They must have been surprised to see a lone person on the other peak. I could identify Shivagange (), distinct triangular peak. I was confused in deciding which Nandi hill among other peaks is. I climbed down and waved back at the peak that taught me life.

Far stretching expanse of the monolith was stunning, there was a lot unexplored. Relics of the fort on the other side were in good condition due to sparse human intervention. I thought, the trek ended but fate had a different story to say. I unsuspectingly started walking towards Biligudda. I had underestimated the difficulty of the path from Karigudda to Biligudda. As I got down the Karigudda a steep rock blocked my vision of Biligudda. Since this rock was too steep to climb, I had to go into the valley of Karigudda (now there were two valleys. One was where I trekked from and the other on the other side of Karigudda). In order to explore the other side of the valley, I started getting down. I encountered deadly crevices, at beginning I lost altitude uniformly. As I progressed crevices became difficult to handle, my speed was too slow and at one point I had to stop with black holes all around me ready to show me way into new universe. Another unnoticed thing was that I was in the

shadow region of karigudda and vegetation was so dense that I was almost in darkness. This was a serious setback.

I put the torch on, but it did not light up. I trekked up the valley again, now with half the speed I had come because of bad light. I came back to the place where I started from. It was almost half an hour and my displacement was zero. Together with low visibility, possibility of getting struck here for that night made me get tensed (this was unusual for me). I tried the other side of the valley. Ah! Crevices again. This was irritating. I could have cleared them if I had enough light. I knew sun was not yet down, it was still 4.15 or 4.30, but I was still in shadow region. Time was running out, if I was not out of the shadow within another half an hour, I would be bestowed with complete darkness.

Panic!

I decided to try other side of the valley again. Being struck between Karigudda and the steep rock, I was forced to operate within small tunnel like area. Gathering all my courage, I moved down the valley on the other side to give another try. There was a clearance where grass grew and maximum light penetrated. I decided to sleep there if there was no way out. But this time I could not go down till where I had gone last time-reason Darkness.

Up stream in the inner canyon, Dark silences deepened by the roar of stones, Something is listening, And I am listening too, Who is it that intrudes here, Who is breathing?

–Peter Mathiessen

I decided I was struck and took out my mobile phone. Yet another blow, no network! (I had talked to a few friends while I was getting down karigudda). I felt all the bad luck was heaped on me alone. I had promised to call home at

5 and it was 5 minutes to 5. Unlike Devaraayanadurga trek time management was perfect. Now I had to keep the home tensed, I knew Mom wouldnt sleep. Then we were five and now I was alone. Parents would be seriously upset if I could not reach home today. All the cautions appa had told me today morning were in vain. I am helpless, I cried to myself. But the fact wouldnt sink into me.

Dejected, thoughtless the next second, I walked towards the clearance I had marked earlier. Pair of snakes was having sex. My body climbed the tree, mind said Now I cant sleep with shanti. I was exhausted. If I had got some restable place, eyes would close by themselves. I was put in the worst position I could imagine. Lips started drying. I felt thirsty and remembered having emptied the last bottle on top of karigudda.

Suddenly, this idea striked me. How if I keep moving next to the steep rock till it opens up somewhere? This was a superb solution because, as I kept moving next to the steep rock there is no chance of missing the track at all, no chance of meeting crevices and once I get out of this Biligudda shall be visible to me and I would be out of shadow region(*remember there was still light in outside world*).

Snakes had departed, I got down. I walked the way as I planned, this time not caring for thorns, let them kill me how much ever they could, I wanted to get out of this place. I moved with such elegance as if I knew the place from my birth.



Yes! I was out of the shadow. Biligudda was shining; rather it was reflecting the last rays of the day. Celebration! No, there was no time. If I was not on the Biligudda peak within half an hour, *I would again be lost in darkness, this time forever.*

Plan was to take the familiar side of the valley till I got some hint of the way we had taken last time. Progress was slow but steady. I met many cave like structures like the ones we had met last time, felt ideally suited for solitary meditation.

When the trek had started, I had too little involvement. I climbed by default, then it became tougher, I put my conscious thought. It became still tougher during my climb of Karigudda, nature taught me a lesson, I realized 'oneness with nature. Then, I was challenged to escape from the shadow, a bright idea flashed and it worked. But there was this strange meness all over, 'I kept winning, this event happened and changed me forever.

Two rocks were separated by 2-3 mts, these two rocks tapered to create a crevice. I had to cross over. There was no other way. There was a tree almost in between. I tried to perch on the tree, sail and land on the other side like the girl in crouching tiger and the hidden dragon. Then came the unexpected jolt. The branch I was holding broke, I fell into the crevice.

Death!

It comes to you when you don't expect it, it tumbles you when you are riding on the success wave.

A quick move, I struck myself at the centre of the crevice with my back pushing the one rock and my legs pushing the other. It took me sometime to comprehend what had happened, after studying my situation fear gripped me. I had 15 minutes more to live. I was struck in an awkward position, I slowly started sliding, I could not sustain in this situation too long. I could slowly feel myself going down, every inch I moved, I grew weary of the thought that I was going to die.

Death was certain. I didnt feel like shouting. Mobile was in the bag on top the rock, even if it was there, only thing I could tell was where to search for my corpus. Body started to tremble, shock was immense.

Ok, I am going to die, fine, tell me a problem I can solve now, I ordered my mind.

Riemanns Hypothesis!

Partition theorem! ...

Oh! Stop. I smiled. I had thought I was born because these problems were there. I felt I was seeing my life as if I am seeing a cinema and now the cinema is over. Get up and go out of the theatre- this was obvious, again not easy to digest. I had to wave goodbye to this beautiful world before witnessing my 21st birthday. Few of the Hiberts problems still remained.

With the certainty of my end, I decided to do ಪ್ರಾಣಾಯಾಮ (pranaayaama). Slowly I convinced(a sort of) myself and grew confident of the fact. I was happy with what life offered me ... smile ... perhaps the last smile.

At rest, free and immortal All the things abided eternally as they were in their proper places sometimes infinite behind everything appeared.

–Thomas Traherne, Centuries of Meditation

No solvable problem striked to me. I could hear birds chirping above my head while they were moving towards their nests. I looked up. I saw the part of the broken tree. I hit upon this idea.

If I can travel a little upwards balancing between my legs and back and since the gap between the rocks increased there I cant grip above a certain point. If I can take a leap from that point (simultaneously I have to get disconnected

from the rock) and hold on to the tree and then I can climb it and cross over to the other rock-not to the rock I came from, else all my circus goes waste). All this was assuming that tree would not give up again.

Well, I had got a simple problem to solve. Two person non-co operative game where min-max theorem yields no saddle point. In simple words, trying out what I had thought was my best alternative as this offered some chance of survival, else death was sure. I need not say what happened next.

Sun was now behind Karigudda, a light haze prevailed. Half of Srikanth was still left in the crevice wondering, other figured out the way we had taken last time.

Days and months are travelers of eternity. So are the years that pass by ... I myself have been tempted for a long time by the cloud moving wind-filled with strong desire to wander ... I walked through mists and clouds, breathing the thin air of high altitudes and stepping on slippery ice and snow, till at last through a gateway of clouds, as it seemed, to very paths of sun and moon, I reached the summit, completely out of breath and frozen to death. Presently the sun went down and moon rose glistening in the sky
–Basho, The narrow road to the deep North

I sprinted for nearly 10 minutes and climbed the Biligudda rock unlike hopping rocks like last time. Completely exhausted, I fell to my knees, amazed and amused what is happening with me, I wanted to say I am alive, but no voice would come out. I sat at the feet of Nandi and meditated.

Life and death have no difference to me. If you go too close to death, you shall realize the meaninglessness of 'you. All problems seemed trivial. One thing I learnt - 'fear not time, fear not anything, fear not myself

Here, on top, in the ಸನ್ನಿಧಿ (spiritual presence) of Nandi, I lost my ಅಹಂ (aham).
Life detachment, pursue because it interests you, no fundamental questions.
Self dissolved into supreme, no questions, no answers, its bliss.

0.3 Epilogue

I walked back to Savandurga entrance as I did not get any bus. New found idea of 'Detachment from oneself kept me going. I reaches raamanagara and then took a bus to Bengalooru on mysore-bangalore highway. Called home and concerned friends telling my safe arrival. As of mathematics is concerned, I found it was not two person non co operative problem. It needs generalized Bayes theorem, I am working on it.
