

A CERTAIN AMBIGUITY (A REVIEW OF A MATHEMATICAL NOVEL)

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ABSTRACT. We translated the math novel (A certain ambiguity) during the days of Corona, when the universities were closed, with the hope that math can be brought to the society and reduce the distance between them. First, we will briefly introduce this novel and then we will give a relatively detailed review about it.

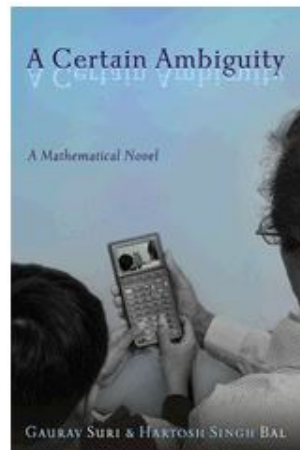


FIGURE 1. A certain ambiguity

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1. Introduction

The novel that we want to introduce and review is written by Gaurav Suri and Hartosh Singh Bal. Writing a novel that presents a philosophical and mathematical truth is a very difficult task, but the novel can communicate between mathematics and society in the best way. However, the translation of literary works that contain technical and specialized content is not favored by translators and writers because they do not have the specialized field necessary for translation. The opposite of this is also true, that is, university faculty translators who are involved in specialized topics avoid translating texts that include literary and fictional content. Therefore, these types of works and books are not easily translated and accessible. We translated the above novel with this mentality. Part of the introduction of the author of this novel is as follows: Our Principal Purpose in writing “A Certain Ambiguity” is to show the reader that mathematics is beautiful. Furthermore, we seek to show that mathematics has profound things to say about what it means for humans to truly know something. We believe that both these objectives are best achieved in the medium of a novel. After all it is human beings who feel beauty and it is human beings who feel the immediacy of philosophical questions. And the only way to get human beings into the picture is to tell a story.



FIGURE 2. Möbius strip

2. Main Results

If we want to preserve the details of the novel and its adventures for people who have not read it I must mention that the story is about an Indian teenager named Ravi Kapoor, who is the grandson of a mathematician named Vijay Sahni. Vijay tries to make his grandson (who calls him Bawuji) interested in mathematics. And he buys a calculator for his birthday.

“Want to see some number magic?” my grandfather had asked as he watched me push the buttons more or less randomly. I was sitting in his room completely taken by his birthday present, if not quite sure what to do with it. He put his notebook down, temporarily giving up on the math problem that had resisted solution since morning.

“Yes, Bauji!” I had rushed over to him.

“Enter any three-digit number in your calculator and do not let me see it.” That is when I had first

entered 342, the same three digits I entered now. “OK.

Now enter the same number again, so you have a six-digit number,” he had said. I punched in 342 again, so now I had 342342 entered in my calculator. “Now, I do not know the number you have in there, Ravi, but I do know that it is evenly divisible by 13.”

By “evenly divisible” he meant that there would be no remainder. For example, 9 is evenly divisible by 3 but not by 4.

Bauji’s claim seemed fantastic to me. How could he know that my number, randomly chosen and completely unknown to him, would be evenly divisible by 13? But it was! I divided 342342 by 13 and I got 26334 exactly, with no remainder.

“You’re right,” I said, amazed. He wasn’t finished, though. “Now, Ravi, I also know that whatever number you got after you divided by 13 is further divisible by 11.” He was right once again. 26334 divided by 11 was 2394. Why was this working? “Take the number you got and divide by 7. Not only will it divide evenly, but you will be surprised at what you get.” He had begun his pacing and I knew that he was as excited as I was.

I divided 2394 by 7 and I got 342! “Oh! Oh! It’s the number I started with! Bauji, how did this happen?” Ravi grows up and passes the Stanford University exam and the way is opened to use the money that his grandfather bequeathed He studies economics and is interested in learning jazz music and jazz clubs. He enrolls in the “Infinity” class for art students and math adventures become important to him

3. Summary of Proofs/Conclusions

During its development, the novel is trying to bring the concepts of the mathematical and its evolutionary and historical course and involve the reader and at the same time use the least mathematical depth. Definitely, the novel wants to use the capacities of the novel to draw the public’s attention to mathematics. We hope to inspire math enthusiasts who have a taste to do similar things that fit our culture. We also hope that an experienced and patient editor will help us in rereading and printing this novel in Persian.

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