

The Pursuit of LILLIPUT

Mukund Dharashivkar

Translated from the Original Marathi by

Harshad Santosh Pore



Himalaya Publishing House

ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED

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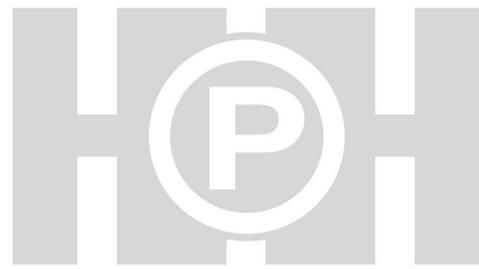
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To,
All the great adventurers
Who shaped the future of humanity
By flinging themselves
Into the great pool of unknown,
To the scholarly mystics
And
By saluting sage Valmiki
Who dreamed up these things
Before they became real

— **Mukund Dharashivkar**

B.E. (Civil), M.I.E., M.I.C.C., F.I.V., F.I.I.I.A.,
F.U.W.A.T.



❧ Preface To The First Marathi Edition ❧

About the Story

I feel great pleasure in handing over this story to the readers, especially to the young adults.

I had read *Gulliver's Travels* in my early school days which might have remained hidden somewhere at the back of my mind and might have unknowingly affected the plot of my story. I use the word unknowingly because now I can't really recollect Gulliver's story that well. But still, to accept that debt, I have named the unknown region explored by our hero as 'Lilliput' and the story *Lilliputchya Shodhat (The Pursuit of Lilliput)*.

Scientists strongly believe that there must be a civilization beyond our earth. The research is also in progress towards this mission. As per this belief, there is a high probability of finding life on the planets that revolve around other stars and have earth-like atmosphere. And this is the hope behind the scientists' efforts. With the base of this probability, I have built this story by fantasizing that we have found new worlds on the planets around the stars like Mitra and Vyadha which are nearest to our solar system but are not visible to the naked eye. The names like 'Cirker', 'Oma', 'Narayu', 'Chamunda', 'Sarkoma', 'Irkoma' and 'Nankruma' came to my mind in the course of writing this story.

I have tried to deliver the information about different milestones in space research, space travel, basic information about launching the rocket, about the planetary bodies, moons and stars wherever possible in the story.

The names like Bhishma, Hanuman, Panini, Usha, Chandralekha and Aniruddha might have sprung to my mind due to the way I was brought up as a child. On the other hand, the names like Sunil, Sandeep, Kapil, Mohindar, Amitabh, Amjad and Shatrughan invaded the story unknowingly.

Although a science fiction is always fantastic, it shouldn't become a fairy tale. My friend Late Vasant Rao Sahastrabudhe was instrumental in helping me juggle this task by providing me all the necessary celestial information. He told me that the star nearest to us is Mitra (Alpha Centauri, as per Bayer designation), near which, there is a star called 'Proxima Centauri' which cannot be seen from earth with the naked eye, and so on. With the help of this kind of information, I could bring my ideas into existence. And due to daily cajoling of my wife Meera, I finally picked up a pen and started to write.

I wouldn't have taken up this writing task without the encouragement of my friends. If this story gets any success, then it all goes to my pals. I take whole and sole responsibility of the lacunae, if any. Do convey me if you like my story and I will be the happiest person to know about it. Many new ideas are lingering on my mind. I will be surely motivated to make them reach to you.

This story had been lying abandoned in the form of a manuscript for last eighteen years. Today it is going to be published with the help of Saket Prakashan. I am grateful to Saket's proprietor and his team of typesetters and illustration artists. It will be too ceremonial to thank them formally, one by one.

Eagerly waiting for your feedback.

— Mukund Dharashivkar

☞ Translator's Note ☞

Science fiction never went mainstream in India. Most of the Indian novels, written either in English or in other regional languages, largely took up the local issues or the aspects of human relations that targeted adult readers. There is good literature available for the kids of course, like the stories of Akbar and Birbal or Panchatantra, but the teenagers, a group with very peculiar needs, was largely ignored in the Indian literary market.

It is because of this, *The Pursuit of Lilliput* stands out. Mukund Dharashivkar wrote this novel especially for the early teens when most of the publishers in India didn't categorize this as a special reader group.

I discovered this novel—it's a novella really—when I was in my early teens and my fascination with it remained well into my adulthood. Sometimes I wonder if my decision to pursue a PhD in Postcolonial Science Fiction had anything to do with it. It felt only natural that some academician should make an effort to translate this novel into English and bring it before the national audience.

India lacks a rich tradition of science fiction that the west has. After Bengali, it is perhaps Marathi that has the most literature on science fiction. There are young academics and journalists who are taking efforts to translate Bengali science fiction into English. It was only a matter of time before the time for Marathi sci-fi came. So, this is the first book, hopefully among many more to come. I hope the readers enjoy this story as much as I enjoyed it in my school days.

Cheers!

— Harshad Santosh Pore

1

It had been two years for Abhijeet's return to earth from his space exploits. The repercussions of his miraculous journey could be still felt everywhere. He was a hot topic for the articles. The information he brought back was being studied. The scientists were interviewing him, matching their own theories with his experience. New areas of research had opened up for the world.

Abhijeet was in constant spotlight for last two years. His feat was honored by Indian government by rewarding him Bhabha Award. Bhabha was supposed to be one of the greatest accolades in the world. In the world of science, it was as important as the Nobel of the twentieth century. HWC, as the Human Welfare Committee was commonly known, had given him the title of 'Momentous Man'.

But Abhijeet was now fed up of daily interviews, photographs and news. His *Bapuji* was upset. He was worried about Abhijeet's education ahead and most importantly, his future. He knew that the fame acquired at such a tender age could be disastrous in the life later. But

✧ *The Pursuit of Lilliput* ✧

the only thing he could do was to think, worry, and get gray hair.

But *Bapuji* wasn't ready to stop at this. He was a natural scientist. He decided to find a solution to all this. He thought about making Abhijeet in-charge of an important mission. But prior to that, to check Abhijeet's spirits, he asked him to write down a detailed review of this world-famous space voyage. And Abhijeet, a smart kid, wrote his whole story, as if it happened to some third person.



The match had come to an interesting moment. The excitement was on its peak. Both the teams had scored three goals each. To win the match and bag the Winner Shield was the ultimate goal of both teams. Both teams were playing furiously, charging like a wild animal, and flinging themselves in the path to stave off any attack. The match was becoming more and more thrilling with each passing moment. The climax was approaching and the excitement in audience beyond control. The supporters of both the teams were cheering feverishly. Applause and