

CKO 4860

You might know that the great mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan found what later came to be known as Ramanujan's number on a taxi's number plate. It was not CKO 4860. This is another car's registration number, which has stayed with me since I was seven years old.

I do not remember what day it was. However, I still remember very well the way I carefully cut a photograph of a car from the local newspaper of that day. It was not a racecar. It was not that I was collecting photographs of cars for my album. It was a photo of a wrecked car. A car that a genius named Shankar Nag had driven a day before...

As a six-year-old second standard school kid, I was taught to collect interesting pictures from magazines and newspapers, which would tell stories by themselves. I started collecting photographs of eminent people, and sceneries. Even today, I have a moderate collection of such images. The wrecked car of Shankar Nag was one of the images that struck me as a kid, which made me cut it from a newspaper and paste it in my book. No, I was not interested in accidents. I was told not to concentrate on violence and bloodshed. Nevertheless, this photo made me do it. Why did this happen?

I had watched 'Malgudi Days' on Doordarshan as a six year old. I could not understand Hindi. However, people in my house used to love it like anything. They used to make specific mention of one man named Shankar Nag and praise him for his talent. This made me think of Shankar Nag as an important person. When I saw that Shankar Nag had died in a car accident I had just cut the photo from the newspaper. Now, when I look back, I see that more or less as a prompt response of a seven year old.

I look at it now, and I feel unlucky.

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