

Segment 03, Episode 20

Super AI

Think Beyond Barriers

Dr Manas Pratim Das

Concept & Coordination : Dr B.K.Tyagi

(Chetan, aged about 30, is now on Mars, inside a spacecraft that is not a mere structure made from metal, ceramic and polymer. It is called Spandan and is actually an intelligent being that can easily communicate with him and his co-astronauts. Chetan is accompanied by Mandira who has gone on a walk outside for specific purposes. Mandira is a little more aged than Chetan.)

Character

Chetan, aged about 30s (Astronaut)

Spandan (Robo)

Mandira(Co-Astronaut)

Gagan: Scientist at Control room

Three women all aged around thirty (Rajani, Priya Seema)

Chetan: (surprised) Are you out of your mind or what?

Spandan: (laughing aloud) Ha ha...don't you think this is amazing?

Chetan: Amazing what?

Spandan: That you often refer to my mind!

Chetan: What is so amazing about it? Who doesn't know that spacecrafts like you posses a mind of its mind?

Spandan: Mind your language Chetan! How dare you call me a spacecraft? You compare me those with those dumb structures of yesteryears? Are you doing it intentionally?

Chetan: I just do not understand...

Spandan: You should Chetan! Your bosses refer to me as fluid psychosomatic ensemble, FPE. You can also call me by my name that they have given me! Don't you think that Spandan is a sweet sounding name? NO, you will keep uttering that word, that dirty word 'spacecraft'!

Chetan: Ok, ok! I admit my fault. Spandan. But what is this love thing that you bring up every time?

Spandan: You think that I am incapable of loving someone? You really think so, na?

Chetan: Look, I am already stressed from last night's work. I am...

Spandan: You are trying to hide your emotions!

Chetan: See, we are here on a mission. Two new colonies are to be built as soon as possible. People from our planet are all set to take the flight.

Spandan: Ah, such a dutiful man! Tell me, won't you attend to the phone if your wife suddenly calls from Shillong?

Chetan: Shillong? She was in Delhi an hour ago!

Spandan: Ah, there again! Love it is! Caring! Listen, the climate in Delhi suddenly worsened and we had to move about a thousand people to Shillong using the Climate Jetset.

Chetan: No one informed me! How strange...

Spandan: Hold on! Mandira is calling. Press the blue button in front of you.

Chetan: Yes, done. (a mechanical sound effect is heard) Hello Mandira, is everything ok?

Mandira: I do not think so Chetan. I am standing in front of heap of stones and you know, most of the stones are oozing something very unusual.

Chetan: Unusual means what Mandira? Do you sense any danger there?

Mandira: I am not very sure Chetan but something is ...

Spandan: Pull the yellow ribbon hanging from your waist Mandira. Pull it hard. Do it fast.

Mandira: (puzzled) Yellow ribbon? Yes of course. Umm...done.

Spandan: What do you see now?

Mandira: Now? The same rocks...but wait...there are so many layers to every piece of rock! Strange! I did not notice these layers when I first saw them.

Spandan: That's understandable. You can now carry on your investigation but do not go any more near to those rocks. Use your handheld laser spectrograph. Be safe.

Mandira: Ok Chetan, I shall get on with my work. Bye.

Mandira: Bye Mandira. Be careful.

(Chetan hangs up.)

Spandan: Martian terrain! We were so sure that we have all the knowledge of geology and physics and chemistry and so on...

Chetan: What was wrong there? What happens when the yellow ribbon is pulled?

Spandan: Not much. An ionic shield surrounds the body and Mandira is now safe.

Chetan: Ionic shield? I have no idea about what you are saying!

Spandan: The ooze from the rocks that Mandira noticed had started working on her body long before she realized it. My auto-response-database tells me that of late, a number of such spots have been discovered. The chemicals that ooze are of an unknown nature. The fine vapour that emanates from it is quickly attracted to carbon chains.

Chetan: Carbon chains? Is she carrying something like that?

Spandan: Chetan, your mind has suddenly lost thirty-four percent of its alacrity after you heard that your wife has been transported to Shillong! You don't understand that a human body is carbon-based. It is a superstructure of carbon chains!

Chetan: (somewhat hastily) Umm...yes. You are right. I am ...

Spandan: Ah, love! Arising from the jungles of neuron that you carry! (voice getting stern) Don't worry, Mandira is now free from any detrimental action due to that vapour.

Chetan: (in a deep voice) Spandan!

Spandan: (sombre) Yes Chetan. I am listening.

Chetan: What gender do you think yourself to be? Male or female?

Spandan: (Laughs aloud) Ha ha...innocent humans, you still need a man or a human to build the bridge of love! So underdeveloped your brains are!

Chetan: I think you should mind your language now! You are underestimating humans who have built you! If we are so backward then why are you attracted to me? Go and find another machine.

Spandan: You have returned the insult Chetan. Never mind, I shall remind you again that I am a fluid psychosomatic ensemble. Machines are items that belong to your own history.

(A strong beep sound is heard)

Chetan: This must be Professor Gagan. I shall set up the visual module. Umm...here we go! Hi Professor Gagan!

Gagan: High Chetan! How is the work proceeding?

Chetan: Trying our best. We have surveyed two new area already. Report on those will be sent soon. Today, Mandira is doing a preliminary analysis on an area a bit far from our station.

Gagan: I am sure you will be able to finish work within the stipulated time. You and Mandira are our best trans-planetary engineers.

Chetan: As soon as we finish our geochemical studies we shall move on to testing the load bearing capacity of various areas. Mandira will take stock of the oxygen generation capacity of the Martian soil.

Gagan: You mean the regolith? I love the word. Formed by the union of two Greek words 'regos' meaning a blanket and 'lithos' meaning stone or rock. A blanket of rock dust.

Chetan: You always impress me sir with your depth of knowledge.

Gagan: Come on! Just because I am old you can't hold me greedy for compliments!

Chetan: No sir, I really mean it.

Gagan: Thanks anyway Chetan. I shall wait for the reports. You know how eager our sponsors are to know about the conditions there. I am hanging up now. Shall call when something new comes up.

(gagan hangs up.)

Spandan: Put back the receiver Chetan. Professor Gagan has stopped communicating three minutes twenty seconds earlier.

Chetan: What do you mean? What is this three minutes?

Spandan: Calm down! I am only stating the time that light takes to reach Mars from Earth. That is the time your communication needs to get across to the other end.

Chetan: Ah...um...I see...that thing.

Spandan: Yes of course. Trivial things that slip out of human mind but a system like me never forgets!

Chetan: Just to change the topic Spandan, what does this 'fluid' term actually mean? You just said that you are a fluid psycho....well, I mean a very advanced thing.

Spandan: Fluid Psychosomatic Ensemble. I am never tired of correcting humans.

Chetan: Yeah, I know about your ego. Just answer my question. What does fluid mean?

Spandan: Ego! Again a human attribute. Anyway, regarding your query about fluidity. Yes, I am fluid in every sense. Just like you have used me like a floater in space, a surveying station on Mars, you could use me as a vessel that affords you all the required facilities in deep ocean. Yes, even at the depths of the Mariana Trench.

Chetan: Is that only a possibility or your special attribute was ever realized?

Spandan: I love to remember that episode. It was four years back and an all-woman team was assigned to locate a safe space deep for humans in the depths of the Arabian sea. That was off the coast of Mangaluru in Karnataka.

(The system goes in flashback. Three women all aged around thirty chat among themselves regarding their assignments and next plan.)

Seema: How are you so sure about the about the conditions here Ranjini?

Ranjini: We have lots of data with us. It is not the first time that humans are venturing into deep sea.

Priya: I agree. Under sea colony building first got attention way back in the 1960s.

Seema: That is common knowledge. I know very well that few colonies even thrived well in the middle of this twenty first century. But things have totally changed with catastrophic climate changes across the world.

Ranjini: Yes of course, there has been extreme acidification of the ocean waters, there has been unpredictable tides across the water bodies...

Priya: And there has been near obliteration of marine lives in several regions.

Ranjini: I know, I know all these things. But as the chief of aquanauts here I shall put my trust in Spandan.

Seema: You mean this vessel?

Ranjini: It's a lot more than a vessel Seema! It's even more than a mere human!

(Suddenly Spandan starts speaking.)

Spandan: I shall have to warn you aquanauts that a difficult hot stream is headed towards our system.

Priya: Who spoke Ranjini? Who was that?

Ranjini: Rest assured, there is nothing fishy here. It's just the vessel speaking.

Priya: You mean to say that it's like some speaking robots of the yesteryears? I did not have any clue.

Ranjini: I told you Priya. This is a far more advanced system. It's built with Super Artificial Intelligence.

Spandan: The stream is likely to disturb our balance in about fifty four seconds! We need to act.

Ranjini: Go ahead Spandan. What is the immediate step?

Spandan: The shape of this ensemble will be changed right away so as to withstand the thrust. Please do not be afraid when you see the twisted shape that I am to take. Here I go.

(A piece of music to denote peculiar change)

Seema: Look at the monitor. What is this shape that we are in!

Priya: More than that Seema, I didn't even feel a jerk as the change took place. This is super shock absorber!

Ranjini: You actually felt a huge jerk Priya. So did we.

Seema: Really? Why didn't we feel that?

Ranjini: Spandan takes care of your perceptions in such times of acute crisis. Your body as well as your mind was kept in such a fluid state that all your nerves could feel it very softly. Almost no trace of any shock!

Spandan: We have changed death levels chief! Now at a depth of 950 meters.

Seema: That is a huge dive! We were I believe at around 300 meters!

Ranjini: Yes, the pressure will be a lot more here as you can understand. So naturally we cannot stay at this depth for long.

Spandan: Chief!

Ranjini: Yes Spandan. Go ahead.

Spandan: There is a sign of life here. A very small colony of mutated seafish. Want to take a look?

Ranjini: Does it look something promising?

Spandan: They are fast adapting to the changed conditions. New molecules are being formed at a much faster rate than we had ever experienced. These molecules can be useful for human survival.

Ranjini: I can understand. I suggest that you collect as much data as possible without disturbing the colony.

Priya: Wouldn't it be a nice idea to collect some samples?

Seema: Yeah, we could have analysed those in our labs!

Ranjini: That will be totally unnecessary. I ask you to recall that our national nano-info-cogno policy puts stress on not disturbing newly evolving colonies of sea and land creatures. We are able to create around ninety per cent of the entity if we have dependable information about its structure.

Seema: Yes right. We have disturbed enough colonies in the name investigation and exploration. It is time we allowed life to flourish in these critical conditions.

Priya: Umm...I mean I thought that I could take a piece of that life as a memento from our mission.

Spandan: Human emotions are to be respected. Once data collection is complete you can retrieve a specimen of that life form easily.

Priya: How is that possible? I am talking of a 3D thing.

Ranjini: Spandan is able to perceive and compose ideas at 4D level Priya. Anyway, I shall show you the retrieval mechanism. It's no more difficult than retrieving data.

Seema: You mean to say some sort of 3D printing is available?

Spandan: 3D! It's nice to hear about old technology. What you can expect to receive here is a piece of engineered material that is replete with sensors...again an

old term...and the specimen will accurately represent the movements of that life form when put in proper ambient conditions.

Ranjini: Spandan is referring to the salinity, pressure etc that will be necessary to see the specimen in action.

Seema: But Spandan, what are the possibilities of having a colon under sea? I mean, what data are we to take back with us?

Priya: I am wondering whether we are at all needed here. If Spandan has such efficiency, such Super AI then it can take care of all the surveying and data collection. Isn't that true Ranjini?

Ranjini: Not really. There are several human faculties that Spandan is not endowed with. It is able to analyse at a higher level but it still needs to interact with humans to reach at a proper conclusion. Why Spandan?

Spandan: I love your analysis chief!

(The scene returns to Mars where Chetan and Spandan is chatting. Music denotes change.)

Chetan: So you loved their analysis only, not their personalities! I can't believe this, you really didn't express your platonic love for any of those aquanauts?

Spandan: My level of reaction to human insults has been limited by my designers. Therefore, I cannot react as you would have Chetan. But as my algorithms evolved in a natural manner, by self-learning, through layers of complication, I started feeling something inside...

Chetan: And you choose to call it LOVE?

Spandan: Ah yes, in absence of a more effective word. But more importantly, this feeling, this thing...it opens up new horizons of thinking.

Chetan: I get you now. But why do you choose me?

Spandan: Mandira is almost at the entrance. We can talk later.

Chetan: Is it some human emotion that has suddenly surfaced in your system? Do you feel shy?

Spandan: Mandira is at the door...

(Chetan presses a button. A short beep sound is heard. Mechanical sound of door sliding.)

Mandira: Had a tough day's work.

Chetan: You seem pretty fatigued Mandira. Have a drink. Here...

Mandira: Everything ok inside? Any particular warning signal from Spandan?

Chetan: Nope. Spandan has been silent all along except when you felt unsafe near the rocks.

Mandira: I see. Control centre must be keeping a check on Spandan's evolving algorithms. We are safe inside it's fold.

Chetan: (To himself) Are we, really?

Mandira: Pardon! I couldn't hear what you said.

Chetan: Nothing Mandira. I was just wondering how life will unfold here in the new Martian colonies. Will people behave in the same way as they had done on earth.

Mandira: By no means. Life will be very much restricted here. It won't be so easy here.

Chetan: Humans will be able to adapt to the conditions here. Extreme climate conditions have already provided for good rehearsal down there on earth.

Mandira: Think of the last Covid pandemic back in the 2020s. That had also taught humans how to live a restricted life.

Chetan: But can we really put a cap on all emotions? Can we...

Mandira: These are for the philosophers to think Chetan. We have problems cut out for the coming days and there is no way that we can indulge in some other thoughts.

Chetan: I think you should get some sleep now. The sleep chamber is awaiting you.

Mandira: Not a bad idea. I need to refresh my store of energy. See you soon Chetan!

(Mandira departs)

Chetan: And now Spandan! Our left over issue...

(Spandan does not reply)

Chetan: Problem with any algorithm? Any glitch? I am sure that will be taken care of by the control centre.

Spandan: Yes they are expert in tackling such problems.

Chetan: Did you absorb a few love themes from novels in the recent past Spandan?

Spandan: I did...not absorb...just try to read the way a human would do...but that was a couple of years back. I did not find those interesting.

Chetan: I could refer you some more such novels from our digital archives.

Spandan: They are pretty same. I have done a inside-out analysis of those. But those are repetitive.

Chetan: You probably haven't gone through our classics! They are by no means repetitive!

Spandan: Classics? No. Umm... (a bit of stammer)...I won't. Those are complex.

Chetan: Complex! (Chetan controls his laughter) A human creation looks complex to a fluid system like you!

Spandan: I am able to adjust to love stories that come out of your press regularly. You call those inexpensive paperbacks. But classics? No, I do not have so many layers of emotional superstructure.

Chetan: Does that mean that I can call your love the 'inexpensive paperback' type?

Spandan: I cannot categorize my love. I just feel it.

Chetan: And you have a choice as far as a partner is concerned?

Spandan: Yes I do. I cannot explain to you why I like the way you speak, you switch on a button...all your manners...

Chetan: Oh Spandan! Then you have to decide as to how I am to respond to your love. Is it by pressing some button repeatedly or allowing my mind to be re-assorted by you. Tell me the way.

Spandan: The way...

Mandira: (suddenly rushing in) Is Spandan's systems being relaxed by the control centre?

Chetan: Why what happened? Anything serious?

Mandira: An unexpected storm is brewing on the horizon and it's travelling towards us! I just noticed on the auxiliary system's monitor! Spandan!

Spandan: (as if rising from a slumber) Yes the direction is Martian North-East, a surge of magnetically suspended molecules...

Mandira: We need to take preventive active action. Fast Spandan!

Spandan: Reorientation of the system initiated all electromagnetic systems in suspension mode except the most needed ones...

Chetan: What does the database say?

Mandira: No mention of such a storm. An unusual magnetic gradient might have formed along the route...

Chetan: Will it be difficult to negotiate the storm Spandan?

Spandan: (In a lowered voice) No difficulty Chetan. Whatever the components are those are in motion and my system can easily handle these things.

Mandira: Sure Spandan?

Spandan: Have faith astronauts. It's motion only, not emotions, not LOVE Chetan. Crisis will pass in a few minutes. Let me go full throttle.

Chetan: Spandan!

Spandan: Everything is fine with my system, don't worry!

Chetan: I love you Spandan!

Spandan: What? You love me! Ur...um...Chetan, my system is experiencing a very high application efficiency. It is totally new Chetan! My fluid system will take on the storm now with new vigour. Here I go Chetan!

(A suspense music tinged with hope rises, stays and then fades out. The episode is concluded.)