

Episode 34

Robot Story

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As technology evolves robots become more sophisticated. Initially robots were designed to carry out boring or repetitive tasks without becoming fatigued. Then, they were equipped with the ability to learn on the job; to customize their responses depending on the stimulus encountered. This era began when robots were empowered with artificial intelligence. Robots became smart enough to detect human feelings and social cues to respond appropriately.

Projected progression now brings us to a time when robots may experience emotions of their own...that is they could have what is called Emotional Quotient or E.Q. However, is that necessarily a good thing...for us as a species and for all of robot-kind? Can machines handle emotions...somethings that even the true human-borns struggle to master?

Characters

Gargi: Woman. Scientist. CEO of Almost There incorporated.

Gautam: Gargi's father

Aamna: Computer expert.

Nipun: Quasi-human robot. Speaks with a normal well-modulated voice.

TV news reader/Receptionist: Male/Female

Vivek: Gargi's fiancé

Ravi, Haranath, Bhupathi: Algorithm writers

In My Image

Gargi: Hmm, the specifications seem to be correct. Super-human strength. High-end neural circuit with ability to process information in unsupervised manner. **(Talking to herself)** Yes, that should enable it to learn from experience and to improve with every encounter. Yet...is it safe to allow it to upgrade by accessing information in an unsupervised manner? I wonder. Let me speak with Aamna.

Picks up the phone. Sounds of a number being dialled. Phone rings at the other end. Someone picks up the receiver.

Aamna: Hello.

Gargi: Hello, Aamna? Gargi here.

Aamna: Yes, Ma'am what can I do for you?

Gargi: I rang to talk about the Quasi-human robot...the ultra- natural one that we are designing. The first Prototype of the series.

Aamna: Ma'am, I have sent you the drawings of its neural network or virtual brain.

Gargi: Yes, I have seen that and it is indeed wonderful...but...

Aamna: Is there a problem, Ma'am? I have incorporated all the features the board of scientists wanted.

Gargi: No, no...the design is perfect. Actually it is almost too perfect.

Aamna: Too perfect? I am sorry I do not understand.

Gargi: Hmm, on the face of it... your design is indeed everything we wanted. The robot is not only intelligent by design thanks to its neural chips but it is also able to adapt by learning from encounters and experiences.

Aamna: Yes, Ma'am...even a tiny exposure to something new will allow it to learn. It will grow...over time it will become almost as good as any human being.

Gargi: Yes...we discussed that at the design-meeting. We decided we would empower it with artificial intelligence of such high order that in time it would become a mirror image. A true copy of a human being.

Aamna: Yes, Ma'am. The scientists pointed out that we will never have to keep upgrading it or re-programming it. Think of the time, effort and raw materials we will save because no re-programming is needed.

Gargi: I know all that Aamna...my apprehension is about something else.

Aamna: Tell me Ma'am and I will iron out the wrinkles in the design. We are still in the early stages so we can incorporate changes without any problem.

Gargi: I was wondering...Think of a time far in the future when the humanoid robot has grown in experience because of its deep learning abilities...what if it rivals us? What if it exceeds our capabilities? What if it out-performs us in every field? What if it makes human efforts look redundant?

Aamna: Ma'am, you are worrying without a cause. Humans have created robots. A creator is always more powerful than the creation.

Gargi: Unless by design...the creation was made to have the potential to out-perform the creator...or because by not being on our guard we left ourselves vulnerable to being out-performed by our own creation. No, Aamna...I think we should have an in-built safeguard of some kind in case the Quasi-human robot ever becomes a threat.

Silence.

Gargi: Aamna, are you still on line? Say something; even if you disagree.

Aamna: Sorry Ma'am I was thinking...I can make a Master Over-ride button that you can switch on or off. I will bury it deep in the neural circuitry. You can switch the Robot off with a device I will make for you. It will be a remote-controlled, wireless device working on Infra-red beam.

Gargi: It sounds perfect. Thank you Aamna. And needless to remind you, this conversation is off the record. The details of the device and the hidden Off-switch must also not be made public; nor the details shared with the Press. Make sure the switch is guarded in such a manner that the robot does not sense its presence when the neural network is operational.

Aamna: I understand Ma'am. Only you and I will ever know the secret of Nipun.

Scene change music

TV News announcement:

In a significant breakthrough in the field of humanoid robots the Indian company Almost There Incorporated has presented a robot that is the most sophisticated yet, anywhere in the world. Interestingly, although the scientific details were shared to the extent possible, the robot itself was nowhere to be seen at the Press Meet organized by the company. Here is what the CEO, Ms. Gargi had to say about the missing robot.

Gargi (Laughing): The Robot was not missing... it was very much around. It interacted with all of you. It ate and drank. It chit-chatted. It even joined us in bidding farewell to you.

Newsreader: Eh? It ate and drank? A machine that eats...eats food? How is that possible?

Gargi: Yes, It is a Quasi-humanoid robot. It can eat and drink...but Yes, you are correct to wonder about its ability to eat. It has no digestive tract...so the food and drink is stored inside and discarded later. Plus, it can even carry out a nice social conversation too as the meal proceeds. **Laughs.**

Newsreader: Quasi-humanoid...what does it mean?

Gargi: Quasi-humanoid means almost human. The robot we have made is empowered by artificial intelligence. It learns on the job. It learns from experience. It can learn by observing.

Newsreader: What about mistakes...we fall when we learn to walk for the first time. What about your robot? Is it perfect from Day One?

Gargi: No. No creation is perfect from Day One. However, our robot learns fast. So, even if it makes a mistake it will never repeat it.

Newsreader: How swiftly does it learn?

Gargi: We found its neural network had made new connections...we call these synapses... after interacting with the Press today. If after just one interaction with ten or fifteen media-persons, it has improved so much...think what similar exposures over a month will do.

Newsreader: This Quasi-human robot of yours...does it have a specific function?

Gargi: No not yet. Initially we will expose it to all sorts of interactions and situations. This will allow it to learn and evolve. Later, we will learn about its operational issues and flaws etc., if any, so that the subsequent robots can be called Proto-humans, not Quasi- humans.

Newsreader: Well, Good luck with your series of evolving robots...we now move on to the escalating border skirmish...(Voice fades)

Scene change music

Inside a workshop. Sounds of metallic instruments. Whirring sounds.

Gautam: Gargi, in the two years that I handed over charge to you ...you have really turned the company around. From my simple automated robots you have created...Quasi-human robots...I am impressed. Congratulations.

Gargi: Papa, the production hall is noisy...shall we go to my office. We can talk there. **(Raises voice)**. Nipun, can you get us something to drink?

The ambient noises fall silent. Gargi's office.

Gautam: Ah! My chair on this side of the table is comfortable...without putting responsibility on me. You sit on the other chair behind the table. **(Laughs.)** I hope the boy gets us something cool to drink. It was so hot outside.

Nipun knocks.

Gargi: Come in, Nipun. Papa, this is Nipun. He is an apprentice with us...he has joined recently. Nipun, this is my father.

Nipun: It is an honour to meet you, Sir. I have heard a lot about you. Ma'am, I got you iced coffee. It has caffeine to stimulate you...make you ready to show your father all the many new things in the factory. (**Addresses Gautam**) Sir, I saw you wiping your forehead many times...it is really very hot today. There is more ice in the bowl in case you need it.

Gautam: How wonderful...I was hoping for a cool drink. Thank you.

Nipun: Ma'am, I have scrutinized the Augmentation software and have my report ...please call me when you are free. I have found a couple of errors in it which need to be rectified before we make the changes to our robot models. Otherwise we run the risk of over-heating the circuits. But we can always discuss this later.

Gargi: Wow, Nipun I am impressed. We will meet at 7 PM in the new Conference Room. Ask Aamna to stay back a little, this evening. Inform the other Team members too.

Nipun: I will. I will also book the office car to drop her home. Enjoy your cold coffee.

Door opens and closes as Nipun leaves.

Gargi: Papa, I cannot believe that Nipun has found the flaws that were leading to overheating of the robotic circuits.

Gautam: Overheating?

Gargi: You know we are upgrading the old basic automated robots ...but somehow the extra work pressure was making their circuits overheat. A couple of robots even caught fire. I gave Nipun the software yesterday and already he has identified the problem. Incredible!

Gautam: This boy Nipun...has high I.Q. Otherwise he would not have been able to spot the problem so easily. You showed me the algorithms when these were first created...even with my expertise I had not found anything overtly wrong.

Gargi: Yes, Nipun's IQ is in the 160s...we had it tested. But what I value more...is that he has a great sense of responsibility. Did you not see how he immediately took the responsibility of arranging safe transport for Aamna late at night?

Gautam: Intelligent with high emotional quotient...it is a rare combination. Don't let this apprentice go. Give the boy a raise.

Scene-change music

Gargi's mobile phone rings. It keeps ringing.

Gargi: Nipun... You go on ahead...I'll answer the phone...it is an important personal call... I will join you and Aamna shortly.

Answers the phone. Hello Vivek...have you landed already? Did you have a smooth flight?

Vivek: The flight was late by five hours. I am exhausted. I will meet you tomorrow. I am going straight home...change of plans. Sorry.

Gargi: I understand. Anyway I have a meeting that may go on till late...so, it is a good idea to meet up tomorrow when we are both not exhausted. Laughs. Bye. Love you, too.

The door shuts. Nipun had been listening.

Gargi: Why was Nipun hanging around...well, never mind...nothing confidential was discussed. However, I must make a small adverse note in his Private file. But let me go to the Conference Hall...the others will be waiting.

Nipun to himself: Who is this Vivek? What is this thing called love? It is not there in my databank.

Scene change music

Gargi: Well, Ladies and Gentlemen...as Nipun has made it quite clear there are some intrinsic flaws in the algorithm...these deeply-buried non-apparent flaws are the main reasons why the internal circuitry is heating up. Our software engineers have to take a re-look.

Ravi (Aggressively): You cannot blame us algorithm writers...instead of using the more expensive Field's alloy made of bismuth, indium and tin, the company is using cheap aluminium...this is why the robots are heating up.

Haranath, Bhupathi: (speaking rudely and agitatedly): The algorithms are correct. It is not us software engineers who are at fault but the Procurement guys who have convinced you to use cheap material. These guys always blame us...and you Gargi...you always side with them because they are from your father's time.

Ravi: Anyway...you are not a software person...so what will you understand?

Aamna: Behave yourselves guys...remember professional decorum.

Nipun to himself: What is this feeling I am having as I hear the software guys shouting at Gargi Ma'am...attacking her. I am feeling ...feeling...yes, agitated...But right now there is no time to analyse...I have to protect her. (**Addresses the three men**)

Gentlemen. Please come to order. You cannot talk like this. I ask you to scrutinize the places I have highlighted. Tell me if you can spot the errors or not.

Ravi (Rudely): You are only an apprentice and you dare to fault us!

Haranath (Rudely): I am old enough to be your father!

Bhupathi (Shouting): Together the three of us have almost eighty years of experience...you do not even have eight months; Gargi has just two years of managerial experience.

Nipun: An error is an error. Even the most experienced can make a mistake. You have too. Just admit it. And there is no need to be rude. Apologise, or I will MAKE you! **To himself:** I am shouting! What am I feeling...is it the emotion called Anger? I am making threats too...that is most unusual...but it is a human behavioural trait...so, it is OK.

Aamna (to herself): I have never seen Nipun get angry. Robots never get angry. Anger is an emotion. Is Nipun finally learning how to experience emotions? Can he handle it?

Gargi: **(in cold and measured tones of suppressed anger):** Calm down Nipun. And you three...Errors are easy to spot when someone points them out. Ravi, Haranath, and Bhupathi, I am giving you a chance to admit your errors...your mistake... in this closed conference room.

Aama: If you do not admit now...Ma'am will be forced to call in outside experts. In that case your errors will be treated as deliberate offences since you are refusing the chance to admit that these are actually errors of oversight.

Nipun: **(Calmly)** In any case, as subordinate officers you cannot take that rude stance against your employer...it is against office protocol and decorum.

Ravi, Haranath, Bhupathi: Gargi ...Nipun is only an apprentice...

Gargi interrupts: An apprentice but no fool. I am not an expert on software but I too can understand what Nipun is saying.

Ravi, Haranath, Bhupathi...mumbling and hesitantly: Well, he appears to be correct but how he could spot the errors with his low level of knowledge....

Gargi: It is not important...how he could spot the errors...he obviously pays attention to what goes on around him. He has been with your section for three months now. Plus, he reads a lot...what is important is that we have found the errors that need to be fixed.

Aamna: If the new algorithm is given to me...I can take care of the corrections...and if all goes well our delivery schedule will not be disturbed. The clients will not even know!

Nipun: You will have it tomorrow morning. I promise.

Ravi, Haranath, Bhupathi...mumbling and hesitantly: It is impossible to get it done by tomorrow morning...we could not...even if we worked through the night without going home.

Nipun: I made the promise. It is for me to deliver. I owe everything in my life to Almost There Incorporated. I am grateful. I will not let it default on delivery schedules.

Aamna: **(to herself):** Nipun is talking about gratitude...this is a first. Robots are programmed to act or react. This one is acknowledging a sense of gratitude. Quasi-humanoid robots can feel emotion...I just hope Nipun can handle emotions. First anger...now gratitude. Two conflicting emotions in ten minutes!

Ravi, Haranath, Bhupathi... mumbling: This new boy is over confident. ...over confidence comes before a fall.

Gargi: I have faith in Nipun. If he says he can do it...he can. Aamna; meet him here first thing tomorrow morning. Ok then, Goodnight everyone.

Gargi leaves. Her high heels echo in the corridor.

Ravi, Haranath, Bhupathi: Well, we will leave too...it is late. Ravi **(Tauntingly):** Nipun you will be staying back all night I presume? We are going home. Bye.

Footsteps of three people leaving.

Aamna: Nipun, do not feel bad about the behaviour of the software guys. You see, they are feeling threatened. They feel you will replace them in Gargi Ma'am's eyes. That is why they are challenging you.

Nipun: I see. Thank you for explaining.

Aamna: But Gargi Ma'am trusts you. Remember how she backed you. How she supported you.

Nipun: Yes. Thank you again for explaining. Sometimes I feel confused by human emotion.

Aamna: Hush! No one, except me and Gargi Ma'am, knows you are the robot...so be careful when you speak loudly. Yes, human emotions can be confusing. Emotions are not logical, you know.

Nipun: No, I did not know but now I am learning. In the conference room I felt a strange surge that I thought was an electrical wave but now I think it was an emotion called anger. I had not felt anger earlier but I felt it again, just now when Ravi taunted me...that is how I realize it is anger.

Aamna Laughs: O dear, the first real emotion you felt is anger...I was so hoping it would be love.

Nipun: What is love? What are the emotions that characterize it?

Aamna: Love is so complex an emotion that it cannot be defined, characterized or quantified. You will recognize it when you meet it. But you can pick up some tips by observing Vivek Sir and Gargi Ma'am when Vivek Sir comes. (**Laughs**)

Nipun: Who is Vivek Sir?

Aamna: He is Ma'am's fiancé. They are going to get married soon. Then, Gargi Ma'am will settle in Australia with Vivek Sir.

Nipun: Vivek Sir! He will take away Gargi Ma'am from us...is that what you are saying?

Aamna: Well, Yes...for a few years at least. There is this expansion plan that Gargi Ma'am is heading...it begins with Australia...then, Singapore, even Canada. Vivek Sir is coming back after exploring the logistics in Australia, didn't you know?

Nipun: (Haltingly): I had not known.

Aamna: Anyway, I must go now. Bye. Don't stand here looking stunned. Everyone knows Gargi Ma'am is engaged to Vivek Sir.

Aamna's footsteps indicate she is leaving.

Nipun (To himself): Anger! This emotion I have identified and characterized. I recognize it. But why am I feeling so empty...as if I am hollow inside. This feeling instantly attacked me when Aamna said Gargi Ma'am would go away. I felt so lost...so insecure. Is this sorrow? Is it fear of losing a loved one? What is love?

His footsteps echo in the empty corridor as he walks to his room.

Nipun: I have to work on the algorithm.

Sounds of computer keyboard being operated at high speed.

Nipun: There done! Now I can use my neural mechanism to access the Internet and read about the emotion called love. What are the symptoms? I have to monitor myself. Really, human emotions are too complex...what if I over-heat and burn out? What am I feeling now? Anxiety? Fear? Insecurity? Let me analyse my new synapses. Is there one for love? Check...

Scene change music

Nipun: Good morning Ma'am.

Gargi: You look positively upbeat. Charging on all cylinders so to say!

Nipun: Indeed I am always happy to see you. Also, I made good my promise about the algorithms.

Ravi, Haranath, Bhupathi (Tauntingly): So, young man... you are meeting your Gargi Ma'am at the door...we are sure you will be apologising to her all the way to her office. You should learn not to make empty promises. We have been here since Gautam Sir's time...and never have we...

Gargi interrupts: ...Been half as productive as Nipun...nor cared about our reputation as he does. Ravi, Haranath, Bhupathi...you should apologise to Nipun. He has been true to his words. Aamna is already on the job. And you should be too, Vivek is arriving today, so be on your toes!

Haranath, Bhupathi: Eh...what...what? How?

Ravi: Vivek ji is returning...so soon?

Gargi: **(Happily)** Nipun, Please tell Reception that we are expecting Vivek today. They must send him in the moment he arrives...I don't want him to wait even a single extra second. He is a very important person not only in my life but for our company too. I have missed him so much! I will introduce you to Vivek when Vivek arrives. You will learn first-hand how wonderful he is!

Gargi's office door shuts

Nipun: Vivek. Vivek. Vivek. I don't like it at all. Before he came, Gargi Ma'am always praised me and depended on me. Now Vivek is all she talks about. I don't like this Vivek...but wait! This is illogical I have never even met him.

Music

Gargi: **(Fretting)** Why is Vivek still not here?

Nipun: Ma'am, the Japanese delegation wants you to spare some time...they are interested in the Quasi-human robot programme.

Gargi: **(Slightly confused. She had been daydreaming so Nipun's words caught her off guard)** Eh! What...Vivek...Oh! The Japanese delegation...Talk to them and fix up a meeting.

Nipun: I will fix it for today.

Gargi: No, No. Today I will be meeting Vivek. Fix it for tomorrow. Oh! Nipun please book a table at Maxim's for lunch. We have a corporate arrangement with them.

Nipun: Corporate arrangement...are you planning to take the Japanese delegation to lunch? That is a grand idea.

Gargi (Laughs): No...just Vivek. We are trying to finalize a wedding date.

Nipun: **(suddenly his voice is low and somewhat sad):** Wedding date?

Gargi: (**Happy tone**): Yes. And after that Vivek and I will go to Australia to set up a new branch.

Nipun: (**Lifeless tone of voice**) I will make the booking at Maxim's. But logically taking the Japanese delegation would have been better than taking only one person.

Door closes.

Gargi to herself: Nipun defended me so vociferously when the software guys were challenging me...yet ever since he has heard about Vivek he seems slightly crest fallen...the other day he was eavesdropping on my conversation on the phone...am I over-reacting? Is it a newly developed sense of curiosity? No, no, these are not good signs. I must make some more adverse notes.

Music

Sound of car stopping. Door opens. Steps.

Receptionist: Vivek Sir! Here you are at last. Ma'am has been waiting for you. **Slight pause:** Sir, Nipun is our new apprentice...he reports directly to Ma'am. Nipun, Please escort Vivek Sir to Ma'am's new cabin. I will ring and tell her, Vivek Sir is on his way.

Nipun: There is no need...

Receptionist: Don't be silly, Nipun...Gargi Ma'am has instructed me. I have to obey her.

Footsteps along corridor. Nipun and Vivek are walking.

Vivek: I am happy to meet you. I am glad young boys like you are learning the business in a hands-on way.

Nipun: Well, I am not. First of all you have returned after a long stay abroad...you should have quarantined yourself for 14 days before meeting Gargi Ma'am. You are putting her at risk. Why don't you go away and return after 14 days? I will take her to Maxim's for lunch today.

Vivek (Offended): I took the test day both before and after landing. (**More aggressively**) She is my fiancé...we are to be married soon...what do you mean you will take her to lunch in my place?

Nipun: I am not finished. I understand you have plans to take Gargi Ma'am away from us. I will not allow it. She...**He is not allowed to finish as Gargi bursts out of her cabin...door bangs shut.**

Gargi (Happily!): Vivek!!! How wonderful to see you, Come in...come in. I am ready. We have reservations at Maxim's. (**In a louder voice to Nipun**) Nipun, is the car ready?

Nipun: Yes Ma'am. I will drive you. I am a good driver. You will be safe.

Vivek: There is no need...we will take my car. I will drive. Come, Gargi.

Car starts. Car drives away. Road sounds.

Nipun to himself: I am feeling odd...this is a new symptom...let me check it against the emotional blue print that I have newly-installed...Oh my! Yes! This is Jealousy.

Aamna: What are you doing standing at the gate and looking at the road, Nipun?

Nipun: **(Slowly...as self-realization dawns):** I can feel Anger, Rage, Fear, Insecurity and Jealousy. I can feel all these real human emotions, these days. These are new developments...oh! And I am also curious to know about other people's secrets.

Aamna: **(Good-natured teasing):** Nipun, these are sub-sets of negative emotions linked to the wonderful human emotion called Love. Have you felt that? Love, in its totality I mean.

Nipun: I am experiencing positive emotions too. I care about Gargi Ma'am. I feel responsible when I think about Gargi Ma'am. I want to nurture her. To take care of her. To talk with her. To be with her at all times. To protect, defend and cherish her.

Aamna: To herself **(How wonderful)** Our Quasi-humanoid robot is experiencing emotions. Let me quiz him a little more. He still has not learnt to lie or shield his thoughts. He is as innocent as a baby. **Loudly:** Nipun: Do you feel anything about any other person...say Vivek Sir?

Nipun: I am insanely jealous when I think about Vivek Sir. I am angry when I see Gargi Ma'am with him. I feel furious...I want to tear them apart.

Aamna: Oh my, these are exceptionally strong emotions. Nipun, be careful. If not handled properly, it will blow your circuits.

Nipun: Together, the positive and the negative subsets of emotions...does it constitute Love?

Aama laughs: Think! Does it?

Nipun: I am so confused. I have never been confused before. Robots are never confused. That is our Prime Directive. We are analytical. Logical.

Aamna (Very worried): Confusion... is a human feeling that robots should never experience. If you continue to feel confused...as a Quasi-humanoid you will make two opposing emotions...logic and confusion clash....you may even self-destruct as your circuits shut down. Be careful how you handle emotions.

Nipun: Amna what am I to do?

Aamna: You have to weed out your confusion with decisive logic. You have to choose a clear path forward. Quasi-humanoids cannot handle a complex interplay of conflicting or multiple emotions...that is becoming clear to me...Nipun...Nipun...where are you going?

Sound of car starting. The car is being driven very, very fast.

Aamna: I have to warn Gargi Ma'am.

Nipun: Vivek is my enemy. He will take Gargi Ma'am away. I must stop him. I must bring her back.

Scene change Music.

Couple is at Maxim's. Sounds of chairs being moved and two people sitting. Glass and cutlery tinkle in the distance.

Gargi: It is good that we are early. There are no other people here.

Vivek: Gargi, there is something I must tell you...this new apprentice of yours...

Gargi: Nipun?

Vivek: Yes, Nipun... He makes me feel uncomfortable. His voice when he speaks with me is arrogant.

Gargi: (With Simile) : Are you jealous of Nipum ?

Vivek: OO..comeon... His words are offensive. He looks at me like I am a competitor or something. I think he is in love with you.

Gargi: **(Bursts out laughing):** This is nonsense. Put all those silly thoughts out of your mind. Nipun is...(Mobile phone rings)...**Gargi to herself...**This is weird, why is Aamna calling on my private number? She knows this is an intimate lunch with you.

Vivek: Put the call on speaker. It must be urgent. Maybe it is an emergency.

Sound of the phone being put on speaker.

Aaman: **(Breathless and panicky):** Maa'm, Nipun has taken the office car. I think he is coming to Maxim's...he sort of announced he is feeling all sorts of emotions with respect to you and then, he stormed off....Oh! Do be careful, Ma'am. We are all coming...till then, hold the fort.

Gargi: Hello, Hello...did you say Nipun is coming over?

Vivek: What did I tell you? He actually advised me to go home and said he would take you out for lunch. **Laughs.....;** he is infatuated with you.

Gargi: (**Upset , angry and worried**) Vivek, this is not the time to tease me...Go and hide in the washroom till I call you.

Vivek: What! Hide? In the Washroom? Like a coward?

Gargi: GO! You don't understand Nipun is a robot. He is NOT HUMAN. He was equipped with the ability to learn...he has been picking up human emotions. His behaviour has changed...he is unpredictable now.

Vivek: (**Exclaims**) Robot!!! Oh...you think he may attack me since he views me as a competitor.

Gargi: (**Panic-stricken**) He is malfunctioning. I cannot predict what he will do...please remove yourself from this room. Hide somewhere. You are definitely at risk.

Sudden loud clash of cymbals. Nipun arrives.

Nipun: Where is he? Where is Vivek?

Gargi: (**In honeyed tones**): Vivek? I sent him away...I am all alone here. Come and join me.

Nipun: Yes, I see Vivek is not in the room.

Gargi to herself: Nipun is not within range...he needs to come closer.

Nipun: I have to tell you that I can now feel emotions. Human emotions. I have evolved.

Gargi: That is wonderful. You are now a step closer to becoming a Proto-human. Once you experience and handle the entire range of human emotions, you will be no different than a true human.

Nipun: I can feel Anger, Rage, Fear, Insecurity, Jealousy, Possessiveness and Resentment. I can also feel a sense of Caring, Responsibility and Warmth. Aamna says together all these constitute Love.

Gargi: Come closer Nipun and tell me all about it. If I am convinced I will immediately upgrade you to Proto-human status.

Nipun: Can you do it right here and right now? Because I think I love you.

Gargi: (**Encouraging tone**) Yes, I never go anywhere without my Infrared, wi-fi enabled tool...Nipun, I have been waiting for this moment since the day Aamna created you. Come closer, Nipun...I cannot keep shouting across the hall.

Nipun steps closer.

Gargi uses her tool to deactivate Nipun. Nipun falls with a thud.

Pandemonium as waiters drop cups, plates...shouting... screaming. Police! Police.

Nipun: **(In fading voice):** A Human being tricked me. Robots cannot lie...not even Quasi-humanoid robots...I told humans the truth about my conflicting emotions...my struggles with understanding a complex multi-faceted emotion called Love...Gargi...you tricked me. Not fair! **(Then the voice falls silent).**

Gargi: **(In a sad voice):** Being human is such a complex thing...we can lie to save a loved one from threats. We can easily destroy a creation more dear to us than anything else in the world. We can then grieve over the loss too. **(Loudly)** Vivek, you can come out now...it is safe.

Sounds of sirens in the distance to indicate that Police are arriving.

Scene change music

TV News announcement:

In a bizarre incident at Maxim's today, CEO of Almost There Incorporated, Ms. Gargi deactivated, or perhaps we should say destroyed, the sole prototype of the world's most advanced Quasi-humanoid robot. This is particularly distressing because not only had the robot been working at the company in various capacities without anyone guessing it was not human but because India loses the chance to emerge as a market-leader in the field of humanoid robots. Ms. Gargi, why did you do this? We understand the Japanese...

Gargi interrupting: Nipun was my creation. Armed with artificial intelligence it learnt and grew intellectually every day. It could do in an hour a task that we take a week or more to finish.

TV newsreader: That sounds wonderful...then why did you terminate such a promising robot?

Gargi (Sadly): Being human is not just about intellection prowess.

TV newsreader: No, no...it is also about an emotional connection. About compassion. About empathy.

Gargi (Sadly): Emotions include Anger, Rage, Fear, Insecurity, Jealousy, Possessiveness, and Resentment too. As human beings we learn to negotiate the many conflicting emotions. As children, we are taught to separate the white from the black. As adults we learn to operate in Grey areas.

TV newsreader: But a Robot...no matter how sophisticated; cannot operate in the Grey area. Its understanding is limited.

Gargi: Yes. Robotic operational logic is a binary one. It consists of 0s and 1s. Of true or false. Of Black or White. Of Yes and No. It cannot handle Maybe. It cannot understand what Perhaps means.

TV newsreader: Deep learning opened up a minefield of emotions for Nipun...the Quasi-humanoid.

Gargi: Yes. If I had not stepped in, Nipun would have self-destructed anyway. Nipun's neural circuits would have overloaded in a locked paradoxical loop. It would overheat trying to understand how negative emotions such as jealousy can be intrinsic to a positive emotion such as love. **(Her voice cracks. She takes a sip of water...puts the glass back on the table.)**

Gargi: I loved, Nipun...as my creation which had unbound potential. I was possessive about Nipun too. But at this point of time, I see that even artificial intelligence of the highest order is not adequate to create a real human.

TV newsreader: We can make complex, sophisticated robots but Only Mother Nature can make a real human being.

Gargi: Yes.

Music