

## Growing with mathematics

I was a high school graduate,  
meaning, I was ready to take up my ‘intermediate’<sup>1</sup>.  
but I had to feed myself.  
There was very little support.  
I chose mathematics,  
because it could help be independent.  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

I could live by myself.  
Private tutoring could be a great help.  
People could invite me to teach in their school  
Mathematics could be my ideal income tool.  
I dreamt this day and night.  
I saw my future days of/with might  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

Poor me! I was thinking about the distant prospect,  
a kind of abstract status.  
I had to live in the present.  
The ‘how’ of my un-living was blatant.  
I needed to think for immediate existence.  
My physical self needed subsistence.  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

Do you think my life was easy?  
I chose a job that made me busy.  
I needed to wait until the buyers appeared  
and finish the orange from my wicker basket.  
I was a street shopper in the public.  
My future mathematics teaching was a ‘dreamt relic’.  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

I could not understand mathematics,  
because it had different tricks  
from the one I used in my shopping.  
I am still seeing,  
how I threw away some of my books.  
But I needed to pass.  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

I became an un-attende in my uni-classes.

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<sup>1</sup> Intermediate of Education is the post-high school diploma equivalent to grade 11 and 12.

Solution guides were the sources.  
Some advised me I couldn't make them.  
Others suggested copying and freezing  
in mind so that I could retrieve.  
Whenever I needed I could repossess for my grade.  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

The world of work did not match with it.  
I never thought of why this is not.  
I had no time and mental fuel to think beyond.  
I learnt mathematics for the sake of test.  
I never brought official mathematics into my workplace!  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

My image of Bachelor's degree math  
was frozen water just not ready to bathe.  
I got to know how I unfreeze.  
I got to stop my *mathsneeze*.  
Gradually I got there to know its system.  
Otherwise I would be its victim.  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

I knew its self-satisfying circular system.  
'Who cares' kind of relationship with the rest of the population.  
Among the mathematics folks,  
I experienced a desire to be an alien troop.  
I thought this is the holy grail of getting there.  
I had no idea how would I connect with here.  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

I rarely saw university professors in my Master's course.  
What they professed was not my 'source'.  
I confined myself within mathematical abstractism  
Mark, merit and division were the source of inspiration!  
I never questioned—I did not have time.  
I never thought otherwise—I was getting within.  
*This is how I grew up with mathematics!*

Though I was a student in the Faculty of Education,  
I learnt to say 'soft education courses' as illusion.  
Perhaps, the perspective was shaped by a far distant world,  
that demanded me to regard mathematics as hard and bold.  
Now I have a question to ask about my future.  
What does it take to be a mathematics teacher educator?  
*This is how I have planned to grow up with mathematics!*

Note: This poem is based on the biography of one of my research participants.