

4<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## Interesting

**“No, it is a very interesting number.”**

*Srinivasa Ramanujan*, The Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society, 1921

In 1918, the English mathematician, G. H. Hardy, visited the Indian mathematician, Srinivasa Ramanujan, who was suffering from tuberculosis in London hospital. Hardy arrived by taxi, number 1729, which, he suggested was “a very dull number”. But Ramanujan replied: “No, Hardy! It is a very interesting number! It is, after all, the smallest number expressible as a sum of two cubes in two different ways.”

Though I studied maths in university, I am not a mathematician. So I looked up what Ramanujan meant. 1729 is the sum of the cubes of 10 and 9. The cube of 10 is 1000, and the cube of 9 is 729. Add them, and you get 1729. It's also the sum of the cubes of 12 and 1. The cube of 12 is 1728 and the cube of 1 is 1. And the total? 1729! The affirmation that it's the *smallest* such number would be for Hardy or Ramanujan to confirm. That's beyond me, I'm afraid! But I love that story. And why? Because what one person considered dull, another viewed as something full of possibilities. What one person discounted as ordinary, another saw as special. What one person believed to be unworthy of further consideration, another believed to be exceptional. In Ramanujan's eyes, even 1729 was distinctive.

How many people around us are considered dull, ordinary, unexceptional, yet who have within them possibilities of wonder and distinctiveness? And you, when you believe people see you as ordinary, or even when you think that's true of yourself, might you need to hear Ramanujan's affirmation: “No! *You* are a very interesting number”?

1729 now has the tag of “The Hardy-Ramanujan number”. The one who saw beauty and distinctiveness, and the one who saw what was ordinary, dull and uninteresting, are now combined. We learn from one another. When affirmation is offered, the giver as well as the receiver is changed, linked in a moment of beauty and endless possibilities.

Believe in your heart that you are distinctive, unique, interesting. Value your individuality. Feel as special as Srinivasa Ramanujan considered a random number to be. 1729, whoever you are, you are wonderful!

### **A prayer for today**

*Loving God, thank you for seeing possibilities in my ordinary life.*

*Help me to see them too. Thank you. Best wishes. Your servant, 1729. Amen*