



**ECHOES BY  
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# The Average Story of the Average

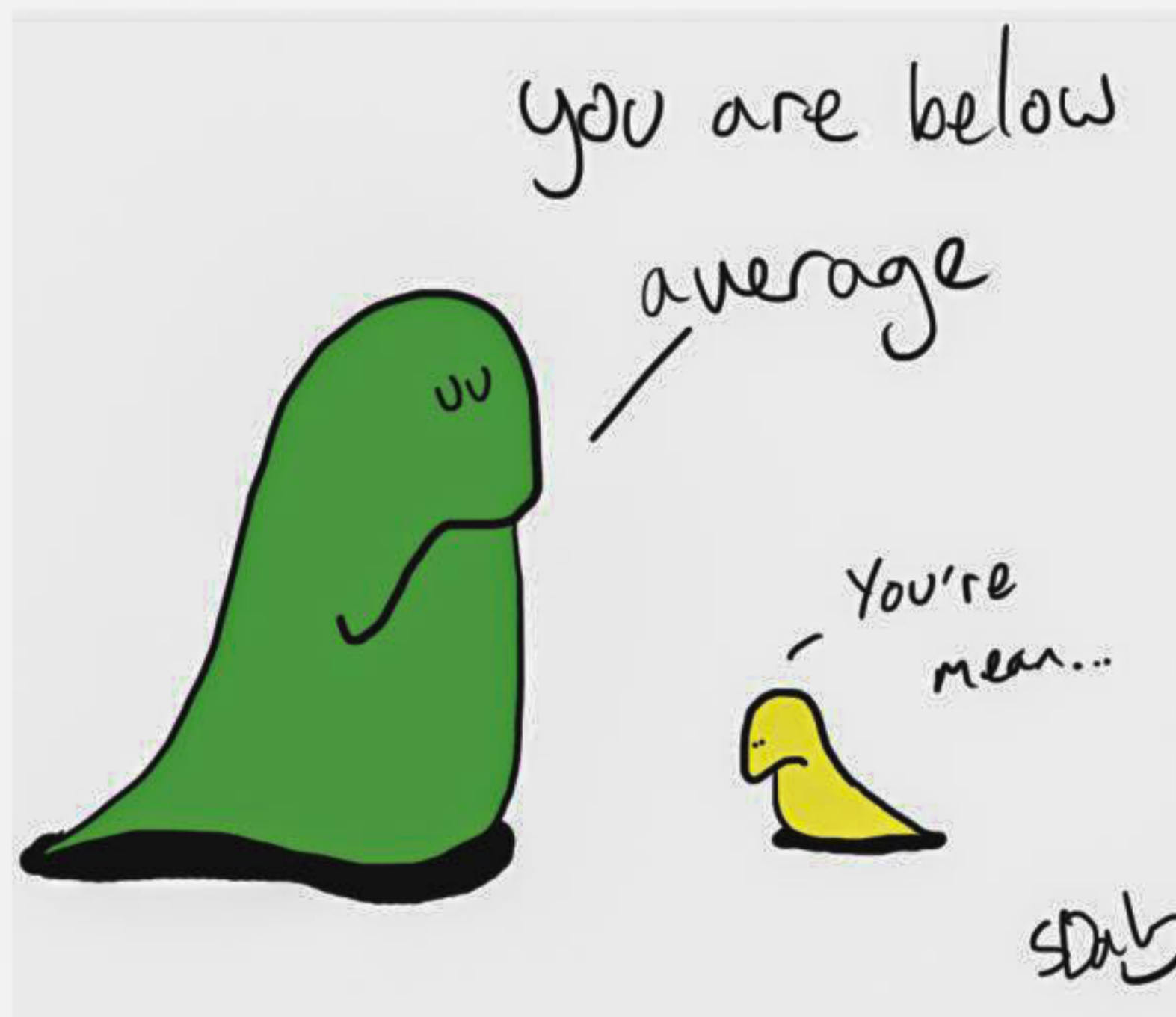
We all want to be normal. The irony, though, is nobody wants to be average. Yet, this very benchmark, the average, is our constant companion from the moment we realise anything in life to the moment we stop realising everything. We compare ourselves and others against an average. Others do the same. The story of the average doesn't end here. From the moment we enter school, we're told that every one of us is a genius. We're told that each individual is different from others. If we work hard, all of us can be an Einstein or any other genius. Alas! Einstein was an exception to an average. He was what we call an 'outlier'. If all of us become an outlier like Einstein, we would all become the same. We would all converge to the benchmark, the average. The reality is each one of us is different.

An average is the centre towards where data in a set converges. The average of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 is 3. Once the average has been calculated, it can act as a benchmark through which we compare other numbers in the set asking a simple question: how far away from or how near to the average is the data we're observing? Different data sets will lead to different results on how well the average represents the data set. The problem or the challenge arises when the data set are performance or features of people being represented as numbers. When this happens, the average can become misleading. Think about the following two examples:

First: a doctor advises a drug to his patient with the cautionary warning – results suggest five percent of patients have fatal side effects. Ninety-five percent of the patients don't experience such side effects. Thus, the drug

administration has classified the drug to be 'safe'.

Second: The two greatest Sri Lankan players – Muttiah Muralitharan and Kumar Sangakkara – played their entire Test career without tasting a Test victory against Australia. Prior to the 2016 tour to Sri Lanka, the first and last Sri Lankan Test victory against Australia was in 1999, before



Murali and Sanga made their Test debuts. Based on average calculations, there was no way one could have thought Australia would experience a Lankan whitewash of 3-0 in 2016. But it happened.

In the first example, the benchmark of ninety-five

percent success rate is based on a historical data calculation that does not include the patient. It would be useful if the patient could know which side of the ninety-five percent they fall in. The patient's survival depends on this information. In the second example, the performance of Australia and Sri Lanka in Tests is also based on historical data between teams that no longer exist and on past forms that are no longer relevant. Rangana Herath's magic was not calculated in the average performance between the two teams before the 2016 tour.

Do we give up the average? No. An average is certainly useful. It gives information on what we expect to see. However, it's not a good guide to predict individual data regarding individual people. The Sherlock Holmes creator, Arthur Conan Doyle, had a disastrous school record. He would barely pass in all subjects except for chemistry. His average performance was well below the average of the class or what the school expected of him. However, he was talented. History suggests it was all 'elementary, Dear Watson'.

Fortunately, a new science of the individual has emerged that argues that talent is not a straight line and CGPA's and other average calculations don't reveal many aspects of a person's talent. Google, Microsoft and other leading corporations are slowly adopting results from this new science. Echoes will 'echoe' on this new science soon.

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# The Disadvantages of Freelancing

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Freelancing has become quite popular in the modern world thanks to the many benefits it comes with. The thought of working in pajamas, with snacks and coffee on the desk next to a laptop in the comfort of your home has prompted many people to quit their jobs for earning money online.

Although freelancing may seem to you as a way of pocketing easy cash with complete freedom, it can at times be quite the opposite. With the advantages of better work-life stability, flexible choice of working hours and the option to not go to an office, there are also several factors which may in turn make your life difficult.

## No Job Security

There isn't any guaranteed work in freelancing. Work comes in the form of different projects you take from one or multiple clients. You will not be contracted to the client(s), which leads to the possibility that your employer may not continue to work with you once you're done with the project(s). You could go from having a high income one month to being unemployed in the next one.

## Messed Up Routines

Although the flexibility of choosing your work hours may seem enticing, it can also mess up your daily schedules. Permanent jobs have a specific timeframe and you have fixed hours to go to and return from work which helps you maintain a certain level of consistency in life. As a freelancer, you could find yourself working through the night till the sun comes up.

## Unreasonable Clients

You won't find likeable clients as often as you would like. You'll notice that your life will revolve around your client and meeting their demands will be your top priority. In return, they will reward you with surprise late night calls, force you to return from parties to get their work done, and voice their disapproval of your assignments. Furthermore, if you're an office goer or a student who turned to freelancing for some extra cash, your client will



most likely not pay any heed to your other responsibilities. Work, classes or even studying for exams will all fall on deaf ears.

## Isolation

Even though permanent office jobs can be quite stressful, you at least get to be in a workplace with colleagues to interact with. Working at home, isolated from the rest of the world can get very lonely and doing it for a long time may take its toll on a person.

## Chance of Unequal Compensation

The prices for projects are set by the employers according to their will which means you could find yourself earning a meager sum for a taxing project. You could even earn a

lot for a very small project. Also since you're being paid on a project-basis, the inconsistency in cash flows may hamper you when it comes to paying your bills.

The introduction of freelance into the dense job market has undoubtedly made its mark. It has provided relief to thousands of unemployed job seekers and a way to make extra money for others. Like most things, being a freelancer has its perks as well as a lot of negatives.

*Tahmeed Chaudhury is a diehard Liverpool fan and procrastinator who is finding it hard to come up with a catchy blurb. Send him ideas at tahmeed789@gmail.com*