

**Problem 11789**

(American Mathematical Monthly, Vol.121, August-September 2014)

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Let  $a$  and  $b$  be positive integers. Prove that for every positive integer  $m$  there exists a positive integer  $n$  such that  $m$  divides  $ba^n + n$ .

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We will show a more general statement.

Let  $a$  and  $b$  be positive integers. If  $m$  is a positive integer then for any  $j = 0, 1, \dots, m - 1$ , there exists an arbitrarily large positive integer  $n_j(m)$  such that

$$ba^{n_j(m)} + n_j(m) \equiv j \pmod{m}.$$

We proceed by induction on  $m$ . If  $m = 1$  then it trivially holds. For  $m = 2$ , let  $n_j(2) \equiv j - ba \pmod{2}$ . Now assume that the statement holds for  $1, 2, \dots, m - 1$ . Due to Euler-Fermat theorem, the sequence  $\{a^n\}_{n \geq 1}$  is eventually periodic modulo  $m$ . Let  $T$  be the least positive integer such that  $a^n \equiv a^{n+T} \pmod{m}$  for all sufficiently large integer  $n$ . Note that  $T \leq \varphi(m) < m$ , because  $a^{n+\varphi(m)} \equiv a^n \pmod{m}$  for all  $n \geq m - \varphi(m)$ .

Let  $d = \gcd(m, T) \leq \min(m, T) < m$ . Then, by the inductive hypothesis, we are able to consider the following set of positive integers

$$\{ba^{n_j(d)+kT} + (n_j(d) + kT) : j = 0, \dots, d - 1, k = 0, \dots, m/d - 1\}.$$

It suffices to show that these integers are all distinct modulo  $m$  and therefore they cover all the  $d(m/d) = m$  possible remainders.

If for some  $0 \leq k_1 \leq k_2 < m/d$ , and for some  $0 \leq j_1 \leq j_2 < d$ , we have

$$ba^{n_{j_1}(d)+k_1T} + (n_{j_1}(d) + k_1T) \equiv ba^{n_{j_2}(d)+k_2T} + (n_{j_2}(d) + k_2T) \pmod{m},$$

then

$$(ba^{n_{j_1}(d)} + n_{j_1}(d)) - (ba^{n_{j_2}(d)} + n_{j_2}(d)) \equiv (k_2 - k_1)T \pmod{m}.$$

i) If  $j_1 < j_2$ , then  $0 < j_2 - j_1 < d$  and we obtain the following contradiction

$$0 \not\equiv j_1 - j_2 \equiv (ba^{n_{j_1}(d)} + n_{j_1}(d)) - (ba^{n_{j_2}(d)} + n_{j_2}(d)) \equiv (k_2 - k_1)T \equiv 0 \pmod{d}.$$

ii) On the other hand, if  $j_1 = j_2$  and  $k_1 < k_2$ , then

$$(k_2 - k_1)T \equiv 0 \pmod{m}.$$

which implies that the positive integer  $(k_2 - k_1)T$  is a multiple of both  $T$  and  $m$ , which is impossible because  $(k_2 - k_1)T < (m/d)T = \text{lcm}(m, T)$ .

□