

# The THINK Club<sup>©</sup>

A forum to encourage  
independent thinking

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## Trump Wins!

**Book Review: In Other Words  
Hack**

**One Way Back: A Memoir**



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# Editorial

## It's Abortion Stupid

Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

About half of registered voters in the United



While most of the world is dealing with conflicts and violence, poverty, healthcare, unemployment and climate change, the biggest problem facing the Americans is freedom to abort. Presidents, supreme court judges, congressmen and Senators are chosen and elected on the basis of their stand on abortion.

States say this year's elections will have a major impact on access to abortion, and about 1 in 8 voters says that abortion is the most important issue driving their vote, according to a new KFF survey.

Around 100 countries have some restrictions, typically permitting abortion only in limited situations, including for socioeconomic reasons, risks to the physical

or mental health of the woman, or the presence of fetal anomalies. However, legal language concerning exemptions for fetal impairment is often vague, resulting in uncertainty for medical professionals about whether performing certain abortions is legal.

In 2024 election Harris favors federal abortion protections; Trump opposes them. Trump supported nationwide restrictions on abortion as president but now downplays the need for a federal ban, as Republicans are divided over the issue. Harris does not support federal limits.

Harris and Biden have championed the Women's Health Protection Act, a bill to protect abortion rights in all 50 states under federal law and prohibit medically unnecessary hurdles to accessing the procedure.

Trump has boasted that he "broke Roe v. Wade" by picking three of the five Supreme Court justices who overturned it, delivering on a four-decade goal of the GOP. More recently, Trump has openly fretted that the backlash may cost him and his party the election. Trump has repeatedly said the issue should be left to states, a shift from his support for nationwide restrictions when he was president. His new stance has drawn pushback from GOP allies, like Sen. Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina, and anti-abortion-rights advocates, who say that he is wrong, and that Republicans should not be deterred from their long-standing

goal of enacting some nationwide abortion limits.

Some Republicans downplay the prospects of federal abortion restrictions' passing Congress, even if they win full control. Harris and her allies are telling voters to look at the GOP's long history of championing federal restrictions and not their recent rhetoric.

The vast majority of abortions (about 95%) in the USA are the result of unintended pregnancies. That includes pregnancies that are mistimed as well as those that are unwanted.

Other reasons for not wanting a child—or not wanting one now—include finances, partner-related issues, the need to focus on other children, and interference with future education or work opportunities.

In short, if there were fewer unintended pregnancies, there would be fewer abortions. So, American women, try not to get pregnant and American men, you too be careful.

## “Trump’s Victory -Some Thoughts” by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’



A friend of mine who always wears his heart on his sleeve was lamenting over Trump’s victory and spouted that the American democracy was threatened as Trump would become a dictator. His sentiment is shared by many of my acquaintances. Obviously, they are oblivious of the built-in safety in our constitution against such happenings. That is called checks and balances.

The system of checks and balances in government was developed to ensure that no one branch of government would

become too powerful. The framers of the U.S. Constitution built a system that divides power between the three branches of the U.S. government—legislative, executive and judicial—and includes various limits and controls on the powers of each branch.

The Greek philosopher Polybius 200 – c. 118 BC is the earliest known pioneer of this system. Polybius analyzed the ancient Roman mixed constitution under three main divisions: monarchy (represented by the

consul); aristocracy (the Senate); and democracy (the people). He greatly influenced the idea about the separation of powers.

The framers of the U.S. Constitution saw checks and balances as essential for the security of liberty under the Constitution: "It is by balancing each of these powers against the other two, that the efforts in human nature toward tyranny can alone be checked and restrained, and any degree of freedom preserved in the constitution" (John Adams).

The president can veto the law passed by the legislature (which Congress may override by a two-thirds vote) and legislature can impeach and remove the president. The language of the 25th the amendment of the United States' constitution says if the vice president and either a majority of the executive Cabinet or a review body appointed by Congress declare in writing that the president is unfit for office, then the vice president immediately becomes the acting president.

Checks and balances have been used in the U.S. several times. The House of Representatives initiated impeachment proceedings for President Andrew Johnson in 1868 (acquitted by Senate), President Richard Nixon in 1974 (resigned), President Bill Clinton in 1998 (acquitted by Senate), and President Donald Trump in 2019 and 2021 (acquitted by Senate).

Trump will, of course, try to keep some of his promises should the Supreme Court

deem them unconstitutional. Donald Trump's promised plan to deport illegal immigrants en masse, known as "Operation Aurora," could now become a reality.

Trump has proposed tariffs of 10% to 20% on foreign goods. He will make sure that the international trade is conducted on level playing field.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has to be terrified that the presidential candidate that they tried to kill has just won the election. Iran's currency tanked to an all-time low Wednesday after Trump clinched victory. The Iranian currency rial traded at 703,000 rials to the dollar the day after Trump won the presidency.

All in all, Trump will fully implement his America First policy. America First's policy blueprint lays out a number of priorities in line with policy views that Trump and his allies have pushed, including imposing tariffs on imported goods, lowering corporate tax rates, protecting "religious freedom," increasing domestic oil and gas production, getting rid of climate change efforts, opposing policies supporting transgender rights, opposing any gun control measures, imposing work requirements for Medicaid recipients, curbing immigration and reducing America's role in assisting with international conflicts.

So, in contrast to my friend's views, I believe that America will be stronger under Trump. Things will certainly be interesting.

# HUMOR

## Third Wednesday

Musafir



We had decided a day ago that I'd give a ride to my friend and go for lunch together. The next day I called him to be ready as I was about to leave my house to pick him up. My friend was still in bed. When I reminded him about our appointment, he seemed surprised and said that he thought that the appointment was for tomorrow and not today.

"It was for tomorrow yesterday," I said annoyingly.

"So what is today?" He replied.

"Today is what was yesterday tomorrow," I tried to clarify.

"Yes, it is tomorrow not today," he answered and went back to sleep.

A group of us who come from the same state in India meet for lunch every third Wednesday of the month. Because we sit longitudinally (length wise) we only talk to the person sitting either next to us or directly in front of us. After having lunch, we gather at someone's house (host of the month) for an extended get-together.

Though we call that a tea session, it ends up in overt indulgence.

The session is very informative and explorative to say the least. We come to know about the happenings in our community, state, country and the world at large. We try to reach a consensus on topics like the timing of the next world war, probable presidential winner and the true ethnicity of Kamala Harris. A member of the group who specializes in Nostradamus' predictions often comes with the answer. The name Nostradamus sounds so gravitas that we all agree with his prediction.

While feasting on snacks the members are reminded to refrain from certain items depending upon the ailments they suffer from such as hypertension, diabetes, ulcerative colitis, high cholesterol, obesity, kidney disease, alzheimer's disease and stroke. No one cares; they just indulge.

Not to sound rude by asking the guests to leave, the host often looks at the watch and utters, "Guys what time is it."

"Six O'clock" someone answered.

"OK guys you enjoy yourselves. I'll be back after attending our grandchild's baseball game."

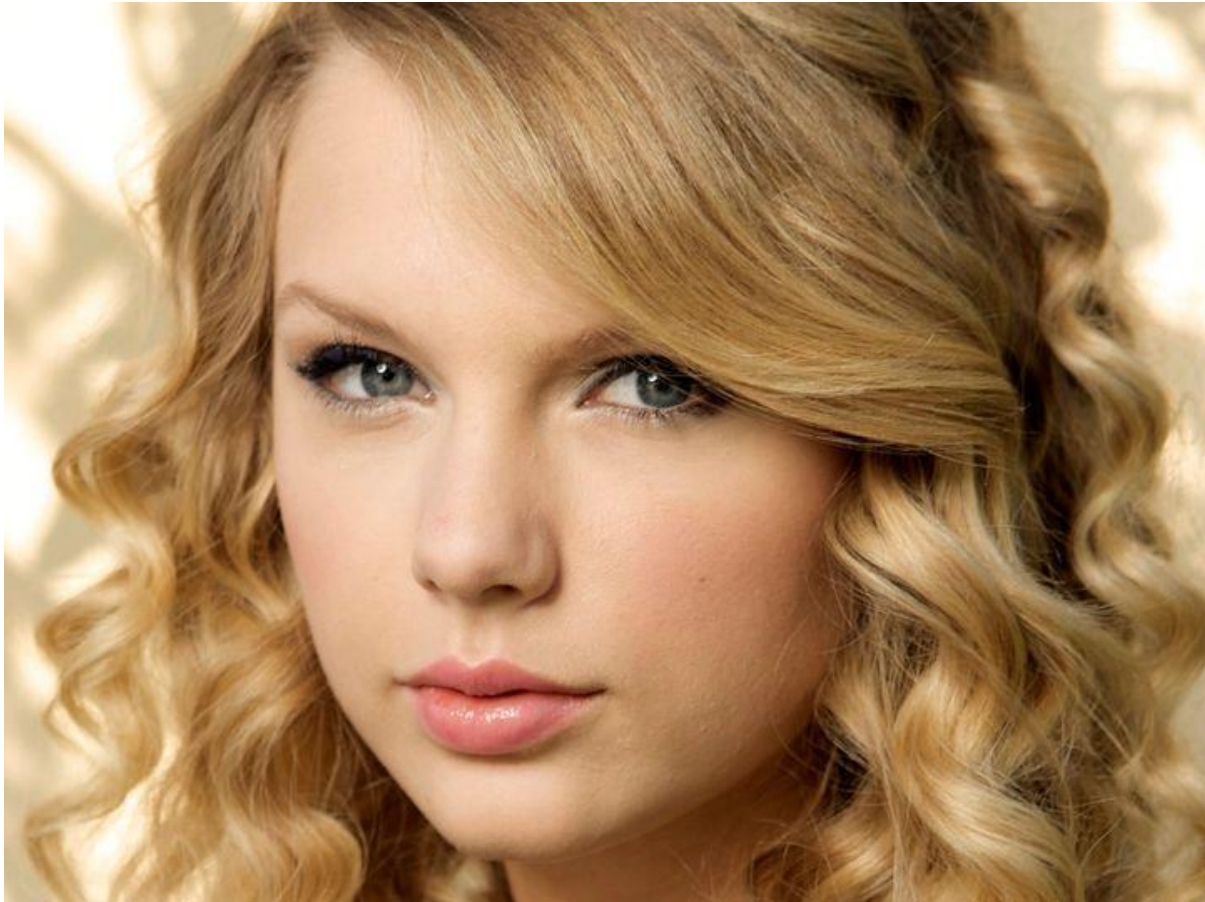
At that point, the guests get up ready to go. Of course, everyone gathers at the front door for another half an hour to bid goodbye and then they gather again around guests' cars to bid a final adieu. During the farewell ritual someone needs to use the restroom again thus extending the goodbye

session even longer. The session finally ends when the last guest leaves. I don't know when that happens because I have never witnessed the last guest leaving.

## Current Affairs

# A Phenomenon Called Taylor SWift

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



Taylor Swift is not only a music icon, but a cultural and economic phenomenon of the 21st century. She is not bashful to use her fame to address political and social issues, like LGBTQ+ rights and voter registration in the US and who to vote for in the presidential election..

All those social influencing and activism have not affected her following and record sales in the music world at all. She's in the middle of the highest-grossing music tour in history; she's won 14 Grammy Awards; she holds the record for the most albums to debut at number one consecutively (beating Elvis Presley) and has the record for the most number one albums by a woman in history. And as of 2024, she is only 34 years of age.



It's hard to think of a single artist that has had more profound implications on so many facets of contemporary life – from gender and fanbase to economics, popular culture to politics. She was named TIME's 2023 Person of the Year making her the first woman to appear twice on a Person of the Year cover since the franchise began in 1927. Just think of her influence by the fact that Donald Trump's camp is reportedly preparing a holy war against her.

Swift involves herself in an open dialogue with her fans. This sparks many fan-driven initiatives, from voter registration drives to social media campaigns, demonstrating the co-creative potential of celebrity advocacy.

When celebrities like Taylor Swift engage with their audiences on sensitive social issues, they can go beyond public personas and forge deeper connections. However, celebrities can be wrong too thus leading their fans in a wrong direction. And we can see the ripple effect of celebrity advocacy in real time measuring its influence on public opinion, community initiatives and broader social movement.

Since the beginning of her career, Swift has treated her fans exceptionally well. She does extensive "meet and greets" after every show. Her staff pick out the particularly dedicated-looking concertgoers, who are brought to meet her. Fans are invited to her house to listen to her new albums with her. She donates money to some who are in need.

Swift is rewarded with the world's most loyal and numerous fan base. Several million fans attend her tour. Most of the fans camp outside the stadium for months to get the best spots. She has over 500 million followers on social media. It has been estimated that globally there are 100 million dedicated Swifties (a term for her dedicated fans).

"Swift Inc," according to Bloomberg, "is essentially a multinational conglomerate with the world's most devoted customer base, its most charismatic CEO and significant economic power."

Swift has been writing her own songs from her childhood and she still does so today. Her songs reflect her personal experiences and feelings. I hear her songs on Hit 1XM channel while driving. I've started liking her songs. It's getting better as she is maturing.

# In Sunshine And Shadow -Musafir's Memoir

## Chapter 4: The Indian Diaspora



Looking back, we are now a part of the Indian diaspora spread on almost all the continents, Asia, Europe, Australia and North America. I was talking to my nephew this morning (my sister's son) who lives in London, England. He has a baby girl, named Vanya. Vanya is only 3 and a half years old. I met her once but my children and grandchild have never seen her. I asked my nephew how would Vanya and our grandson know each other. The relationship will be further diluted by the time they would have their own children. These thoughts puzzle me and sometimes even disturb me.

I already notice differences in lifestyle, value systems and habits among family members living in different countries. They talk about different set of sports, politics and day to day problems. We don't relate to each other except when reminiscing about common relatives and ancestors.

Social media plays an important role in integrating relatives from different countries and continents. Members of our extended families (My wife's and mine) keep connected through platforms such as WhatsApp. At least

we know about each others' birthdays and important events and milestones which would have been, otherwise, totally neglected.

I always remember a poignant moment that I witnessed in one of my coworkers' life. His name is Tom. We were on a business trip to Strasbourg, France together. Strasbourg is on the river Rhine which separates France from Germany. One evening after work we decided to have dinner in Baden-Baden, Germany which is only 26 miles from Strasbourg across the Rhine. While eating dinner in Baden-Baden, Tom asked the waiter to give him the local phone directory. It so happened that Tom's ancestors were from Baden-Baden. Tom looked for some names in the phone directory and became teary-eyed. When I asked him the reason, he said that his ancestors were from here. I suggested to Tom to visit them. Tom said, "Anil there is no use doing that. They won't know me and I don't know them."

Tom's story is the story of all immigrants. It's heartrending but the river of life flows through sunshine and shadow. **(To be continued)**



## In Other Words

Author: Jhumpa Lahiri

Published by Vintage Books, New York (paperback edition) in 2015 (231 pages)



I decided to read Jhumpa Lahiri's book, "In

Other Words" because I loved her earlier book, *The Namesake* and also watched the movie directed by Mira Nair. I must admit that I was disappointed to read "In Other Words," where Lahiri characterizes herself as a linguistic nomad trekking across her mother tongue Bengali, day to day language English and her adopted language Italian. It's a memoir that examines her long sense of lexical displacement.

Learning to read and write in Italian has clearly been an invigorating experience for Ms. Lahiri. She compares this to an intense sexual affair. "When you're in love, you want to live forever," she writes. "You want the emotion, the excitement you feel to last. Reading in Italian arouses a similar longing in me," she writes.

She began to study Italian and, living in Brooklyn, hired a series of language tutors. Eventually she moved with her husband and

children to Rome for what she calls a "trial by fire." She stopped reading and speaking in English almost entirely; she also stopped writing in it. She achieved near-total immersion.

"In Other Words" is printed in both English and Italian side by side, Italian on even pages and English on odd pages. I didn't find this format appealing at all.

I loved Lahiri's juxta positioning of her statements such as. "There is pain in every joy. In every violent passion a dark side. That someone gets a lot out of writing something does not necessarily mean anyone else will get a similar amount from reading that thing. If only literature worked that way."

Lahiri has dealt with a unique topic related to language displacement but she has failed to do justice to the topic. She seems to lose her way at the T-junction of dealing with Bengali, English and Italian.

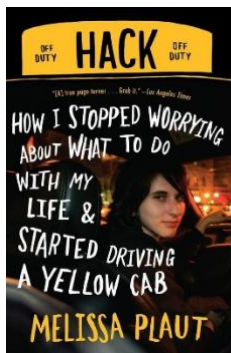
## **Hack: How I Stopped Worrying About What to Do with My Life and Started Driving a Yellow Cab** Hardcover – August 28, 2007

**Author:** Melissa Plaut

**Publisher:** Random House Publishing Group

First Edition (2007), 237 pages

Random House Publishing Group



Usually I don't read off beat books by random writers, but "Hack: How I Stopped Worrying About What to Do with My Life and Started Driving a Yellow Cab" somehow drew my interest. Melissa Plaut, the author of the book is a free spirited young woman

who decided to drive yellow cab in New York City as an adventure. She also had to earn a living after losing her job in a corporate office.

Hack gives an intimate look at the life of a New York City taxi driver which is full of danger, frustration, sexual abuse and mistreatment by passengers and cops alike. A woman taxi driver in New York City is an anomaly and I give credit to Ms. Plaut for toughing it out.

Plaut, a white girl from the suburbs of New York, joined the 1 percent of female taxi drivers working in NYC. After graduating from college, she decided that driving a taxi was the adventure she was searching for, and completed the cumbersome paperwork and exams in order to get her taxi license. Like all drivers that she knows, Melissa is borderline broke, relying on the money

from her daily shifts and gloating about any tip she receives.

The pursuit of a sustainable living is the driving force of the taxi cab drivers in New York and provides the motivation to spend hours at the wheel. Drivers work long stressful hours, often skipping bathroom breaks, altering natural sleep schedules, and putting up with obnoxious New Yorkers—all so that they can make enough money to pay back the dispatcher (from whom they technically rent the car), cover gas costs, and then go home with sufficient pocket cash to pay bills and feed families.

Hack is easy to read and initially engaging. Like the nature of the job itself, Hack reads as a repetitive cycle of passengers and street names. The reader gets a feel for the occasionally stimulating but mostly monotonous hours on the job. Though there are some reflective pieces about New York City and its people, Hack is filled with "route talk." Route talk is explained as boring conversation "when people tell you how they arrived, or how they came, how they got on the road, which road, how long it took." Overall, this was a different kind of read and I found it enjoyable.

# Love And Marriage

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



Married people and people in a relationship usually avoid having close friendship with the opposite sex because it may either become adulterous or viewed as such. I've witnessed several instances of close friendships between colleagues of opposite sex over 45 years of working life. Some of them, mostly single individuals, got married to each other and some who were married got divorced.

Question arises whether it's possible to have a non-sexual or non-emotional relationship between two people of opposite sexes. I've several women who admire my writing and send their

appreciation to me, but I don't see them personally unless they happen to be either our family friends or my wife feels comfortable with them.

That's us but that's not the norm. When someone you have an intimate relationship with objects to an opposite-sex friendship, it is a mistake to assume that this is jealousy stemming from insecurity. Partners with high self-esteem will not tolerate poorly handled opposite-sex friendships. This is usually a sign of their emotional intelligence and their understanding of what is required to maintain an intimate bond. The problem very likely isn't the partner who is objecting, it is very likely the way the opposite sex

friendship is being handled by one or both of the friends.

There are a lot of female readers who admire my writing and poems. Some even want to meet me or visit my home to have a conversation on certain topics. I outrightly discourage such contacts for personal reasons. I meet both female and male writers in a group setting at the local library but never see them alone on one-to-one basis.

After several initial conflict over this issue with my wife, I have reached this conclusion that if your behavior with your opposite-sex friend is being perceived by your partner as a threat to your intimate bond, then accept it for being exactly that. It is not just your partner's problem to deal with. The intimate bond you have with your partner is being created between the two of you. If this bond is meaningful and worthwhile to you, then you must protect it. Sometimes protecting your relationship means giving up some of your own personal freedom or choice so that you build something that is greater than the sum of its parts. If you are unwilling to do this, then perhaps you aren't ready for the relationship.

I recall that two of my colleagues of the opposite sexes, Larry and Renee were very close to each other. They always went out to lunch together and drove in the same car while going on business trips. They were both married (not to each other) Although there was no proof of impropriety between

them, it struck odd to me that they were so intimate with each other.

In heterosexual relationships, partners can sometimes feel jealous when their significant other has a friend of the opposite sex. These jealous feelings stem from fear that their partner may form a deep or romantic connection with their friend. This is more often true. When people become intimate with the opposite sex, it's natural to exchange emotion and feelings with each other. This causes a sexual tension between them which ultimately develops into inner feelings of longing between the two.

The world is full of such instances. Prince Charles, leaving his first wife Princess Diana for Camilla Parker Bowles is a recent example. It's complicated with no clear-cut answer. The great Urdu poet Ghalib has said "There is no control over love or passion. "Love is like fire that can't be started nor can be put out deliberately."

# QUIZ

- 1. Who plays Samantha in "Sex and the City"?**

Kim Cattrall

- 2. Which is the world's largest rainforest?**

Amazon Rain Forest

- 3. Which brand of ice cream is served as "beads"?**

Dippin' Dots

- 4. The first known system of writing was called**

Cuneiform

- 5. What was Sheldon Cooper's catchphrase on "The Big Bang Theory"?**

Bazinga!

- 6. "Mrs. Robinson" by Simon and Garfunkel is featured on which movie's soundtrack?**

The Graduate

- 7. In chess, which piece can move only diagonally?**

Bishop

- 8. Who was the Greek god of war?**

Ares

- 9. Water Lilies was painted by:**

Claude Monet

- 10. A cell that lacks a nucleus is a:**

Prokaryotic Cell

# Church Crisis

(Published from The Statesman)



The resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, over historic abuse allegations is a moment of reckoning for the Church of England. His decision to step down, citing “personal and institutional responsibility,”<sup>0</sup> underscores the gravity of accountability in safeguarding children ~ a responsibility that the Church and its leaders have, in past decades, often overlooked. The fallout reflects broader issues around transparency and reform within religious institutions that remain unresolved, even after similar crises in churches across the globe.

This resignation brings painful truths to light. Many within the Anglican community are grappling with the painful legacy of abuse and cover-ups that went unaddressed for years. The cases associated with the Christian camps in question reveal abuse not only of power but also of trust. The Church, for its part, must ask why such abuses went unchecked despite being known to church leaders since at least 2013. When high-ranking officials fail to take definitive action, it betrays not only the victims but the entire faith community. The resignation of the archbishop highlights the need for clear protocols, transparent



investigations, and, above all, the moral resolve to prevent further abuses. As spiritual leaders, bishops and archbishops must embody the principles they preach, taking swift action to root out abuse and restore faith in their institutions.

Today's churchgoers seek more than sermons and symbolism; they demand honesty and commitment to protection. Moving forward, church leaders must show through their actions that safeguarding young people and vulnerable individuals is an utmost priority. Beyond addressing abuse, the new leadership will face challenges in unifying a fractured Anglican community. Divisions over LGBTQ+ rights and the role of women clergy have strained relationships, particularly between liberal congregations in the West and more conservative members in regions like Africa. These disagreements have become defining issues, with many conservative voices feeling alienated by policies perceived as departures from tradition. For years, the Church of England has walked a tightrope, but it's clear that patchwork solutions are no longer sustainable.

Reconciliation must be a top priority for the next archbishop, who will need to navigate these ideological divides with empathy and clarity. Additionally, the Church is contending with a rapid decline in membership and influence, especially in the UK. With church attendance dropping and religious affiliation waning, the incoming leader must confront the question of how to make the Church relevant to new

generations. Rebuilding trust, especially after such a painful scandal, will require sincerity, transparency, and outreach that extends beyond traditional forms of ministry. This pivotal moment calls for fresh perspectives and perhaps even a re-evaluation of what it means to be a moral leader in the modern age. Rebuilding may take time, but with resolute leadership, the Anglican Church can emerge stronger, more unified, and more responsive to the values of justice and protection that its followers expect and deserve.

(Reprinted from Fall 2010)

# The Story of Modern Medicine

By Niru Prasad, MD

The knowledge and practice of medicine goes as far as Hippocrates (circa 460-370BC) when a Greek born physician Hippocrate earned respect and honor for the revolution he initiated towards the practice of medicine based on scientific facts and reasoning on which the diseases are based. He is also known as the father of medicine since he established the first medical school in the western world in the era before Christ. In the ancient cultures, people believed that diseases came out from supernatural causes such as ghosts, demons and witchcraft as curses due to wrong deeds in life. They also believed that every living soul contained a mixture of 4 elements -- earth, fire, air, and water -- together called "humours". These humours in the body consisted of black bile, phlegm, yellow bile and blood and their sickness began when one of these constituents was out of place. The Emergence of Hippocratic Medicine Early evidence of Greek medicine, later supported by Romans and ancient Egyptians, shows they realized that any illness in the body can be scientifically linked to internal derangement and the remedies should be based on a proper diagnosis. A further study of literature during the Hippocratic

era shows that Hippocrate routinely tasted his patient's urine, sampled their pus and earwax, and smelled their excreta before establishing a diagnosis and rendering treatment accordingly. Medicine and Surgery in Ancient Rome Early Romans (Galen 130-200AD) had a religious yet fundamental understanding of medicine with knowledge from the Greeks, Egyptians and Hindus. Their practice of medicine involved combination of physical tools and holistic medicine. Ancient Roman medicine was split into different specialties with strong emphasis on surgery to the wounded soldiers from the 15 years of civil war following the assassination of Julius Ceasar. The pain killers and sedatives were derived from plants opium and scopolamine. The soldiers' wounds were being washed with acetum and listers' carbolic acid in 1860; this is still known in 21st century as Listerine. Victorian Advances in Medicine During 18th and 19th Centuries Human medicine advanced tremendously in the 18th and 19th century due to advanced techniques, precise medical equipments such as anaesthesia in 1846, ophthalmology in 1851, antiseptics in 1865, pasteurization in 1862, the

discovery of TB bacilli in 1882, cholera in 1883, and rabies in 1885. Most Common Methods of Treatment in 18th and 19th Centuries

- 1 Phlebotomy. This was the remedy for minor or major illnesses with the belief that it released 'ols', bad blood from body.
- 2 Blistering. This technique was used to treat arthritis, fever, and persistent pain with the belief that being blistered caused a patient to focus on new pain and forget his past pain and suffering.
- 3 Plastering. Plasters and poultices were both popular remedies for a variety of ailments. Plaster was paste made from a variety of ingredients including cow manure and was applied to the chest for a chest cold or pain. Poultices were made from bread, milk, herbs and linseed oils and were applied to treat cuts and wounds on the body.
- 4 Amputation. This surgical removal of arms and legs was being performed without anaesthesia until 1840.
- 5 Purging, puking and sweating. Dosing a person with purgatives to expel poison from the body as well giving emetics was a common practice for treatment of poisoning. Sweating was a remedy for high fever and patients were kept warmly dressed during fever.

Practice of Medicine

in the 20th and 21st Century

The practice of medicine in 20th and 21st centuries saw very advanced changes due to new technologies and advances in each field of medicine. Doctors changed almost beyond recognition during the 20th century. In the early years your doctor was usually a man, with a limited range of medicines and techniques. By the end of the century doctors were as likely to be women as men, with a whole arsenal of pills and treatments to help make you better. At the beginning of the century local doctors still visited the sick in their homes, usually carrying their sturdy Gladstone bag. Doctors could do little to cure disease, although they had learned some ways of preventing it, and some new techniques of caring for patients. The modernisation of medicine changed the role of the doctor. 60% of new doctors are now women. Familiar illnesses, previously dangerous, can often be treated by a course of pills. Many other diseases now call for the use of expensive technology so, by the end of the century, most medicine was delivered in hospitals (in The Think Club

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