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independent thinking

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In Sunshine and Shadow: Chapter 1

Unlearning Hinglish



**Book Review: One Second After
Start with Why**



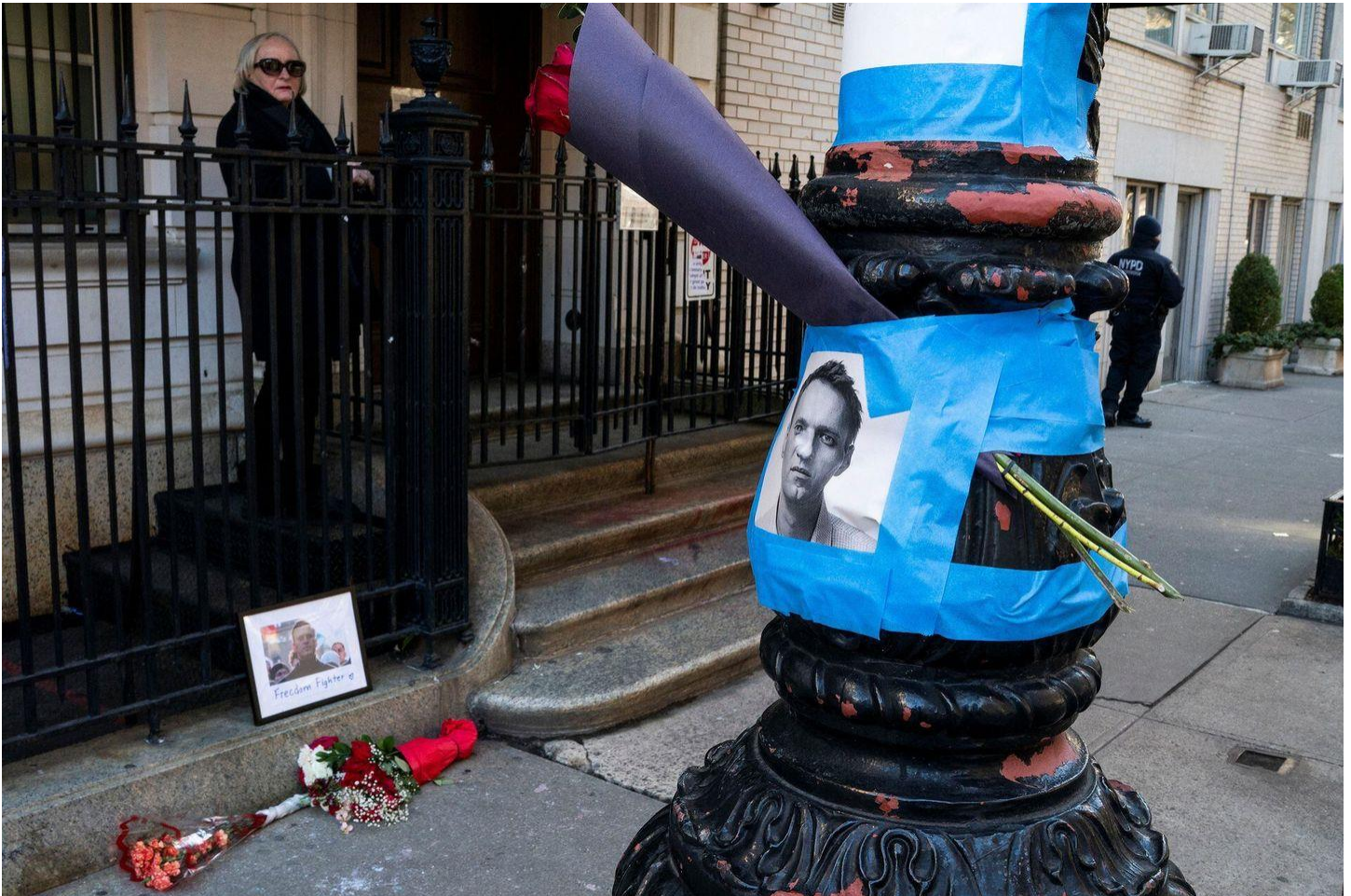
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Editorial

America's Weakness

'Musafir'



An Iranian backed militant group killed three American soldiers in Jordan last week. Despite pressure on Joe Biden to respond to the situation, there is no retaliation from him. Simply speaking, the administration is afraid of escalation the situation by retaliating against Iran. In my opinion it was a good test on Iran's behalf. They have now exposed to the world how spineless president Biden could be.

The attack in Jordan marked the first time that U.S. service members have been killed in the Middle East since the war in Gaza began in October, adding a new layer of complexity for the White House.

"We do not seek another war. We do not seek to escalate. But we will absolutely do what is required to protect ourselves ... and to respond appropriately to these attacks,"

national security spokesperson John Kirby told reporters Monday.

Biden has pledged to respond to the latest attacks in a “time and manner of our choosing.”

“This attack over the weekend was escalatory, make no mistake about it. And it requires a response, make no mistake about that,” he said. “I will not get ahead of the president’s decision making.”

American troops have come under fire from Iranian-backed groups more than 160 times since late October.

The death of U.S. troops will not leave Biden alone, particularly among Republican defense hawks in Congress who are already calling for retaliation, including inside Iran.

Ali Vaez, director of the Iran project at the International Crisis Group, said if the U.S. wants to hold Iran responsible, it may target sites or facilities in Iraq or Syria used by the Iranian military wing the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

But the U.S. will likely refrain from targeting Iranian soil, he added.

The dilemma here for the Biden administration is how to retaliate against Iran. It’s an irony that Iran seems so powerful who can bully America. Seems obvious that the US doesn’t have guts to harm Iran by going inside their territory.

The deaths sparked outrage in Washington and calls from some in the GOP for a more

forceful response to Iran, the sponsor of the militia groups.

Former President Trump, Biden’s likely GOP rival in November’s general election, blamed the attack on Biden’s “weakness” and claimed the U.S. was “on the brink of “World War 3.”

Republican lawmakers similarly piled on, ripping the White House for failing to hold Iran accountable and urging Biden to take swift and decisive action in response.

“Real leadership requires real action,” Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.), chair of the House Armed Services Committee, said in a statement. “Attacks on our servicemembers, allies, and interests will continue until this president shows strong leadership and strikes fear in our enemies.”

Any U.S. response to Iran will likely be met with further retaliation from Iranian-backed groups in a continuous cycle until the Israeli war in Gaza ends. The Iranian-linked groups say they are fighting against American troops in solidarity with the Palestinians.

But she said the U.S. already assassinated an Iranian-backed leader in Iraq earlier this month and carried out several destructive strikes, none of which has deterred more attacks. The sheer number of attacks of Iranian-backed militia groups on the U.S. meant a fatal strike was only a matter of time.

For the time being Iran seems to have an upper hand and America with all its might looks weak.

Commentary

Trump's Second Term

Musafir

Iowa caucus 2024 results have just started pouring in. Donald Trump is up with 52.8% votes. His nearest Republican rival, Ron DeSantis has 20% votes. Trump's popularity among the Republican voters is enormous in spite of all the court cases and indictments against him. According to the present trend, he will beat Biden in 2024 by 2 percentage points (50% to 48%).

Biden has repeatedly condemned Trump as an "existential threat" to the United States. During a fund-raising meeting in Boston, Biden said, "If Trump wasn't running, I'm not sure I'd be running."

Whatever the case, it seems that Trump will return to power in 2025. Trump is dominating the race for the Republican nomination and has already laid out a sweeping set of policy goals should he win a second term. Trump would try to strip tens of thousands of career employees of their civil service protections. That way, they could be fired as he seeks to "totally obliterate the deep state." Given his anger at the FBI and federal prosecutors pursuing criminal cases against him, Trump probably would target people linked to those prosecutions for retribution.

Trump has pledged to "immediately stop the invasion of our southern border" and



end illegal immigration. As part of that plan, he says he would immediately direct U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to undertake the largest domestic

deportation operation in American history. Trump wants to reimpose his travel ban that originally targeted seven Muslim-majority countries and expand it to "keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the country." In the

wake of the Hamas attack on Israel, he has pledged to put in place "ideological screening" for immigrants. His aim: bar "dangerous lunatics, haters, bigots, and maniacs," as well as those who "empathize with radical Islamic terrorists and extremists."

To deter migrants, he has said he would end birthright citizenship, using an executive order that would introduce a legally untested interpretation of the 14th Amendment. The order would prevent federal agencies from granting automatic citizenship to the children of people who are in the U.S. illegally. It would require that at least one parent be a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident for their children to be eligible for passports, Social Security numbers, and other benefits.

Trump says he will institute a system of tariffs of perhaps 10% on most foreign goods. Penalties would increase if trade partners manipulate their currencies or engage in other unfair trading practices.

He will urge that Congress pass a “Trump Reciprocal Trade Act,” giving the president authority to impose a reciprocal tariff on any country that imposes one on the U.S.

Much of the agenda focuses on China. Trump has proposed a four-year plan to phase out Chinese imports of essential goods, including electronics, steel, and pharmaceuticals. He wants to ban Chinese companies from owning vital U.S. infrastructure in sectors such as energy, technology, and agriculture, and says he will force Chinese owners to sell any holdings “that jeopardize America’s national security.”

Trump claims that even before he is inaugurated, he will have settled the war between Russia and Ukraine. That includes, he says, ending the “endless flow of American treasure to Ukraine” and asking European allies to reimburse the U.S. for the cost of rebuilding stockpiles. Trump has said he will stand with Israel in its war with Hamas and support Israel’s efforts to “destroy” the militant group. He says he will continue to “fundamentally reevaluate” NATO’s purpose and mission.

Trump’s goal, he says, is for the U.S. to have the lowest-cost energy and electricity of any nation in the world, including China.

Under the mantra “Drill, Baby, Drill,” he says he would ramp up oil drilling on public lands and offer tax breaks to oil, gas, and coal producers. He would roll back Biden administration efforts to encourage the

adoption of electric cars and reverse proposed new pollution limits that would require at least 54% of new vehicles sold in the U.S. to be electric by 2030.

And again, he says, he will exit the Paris Climate Accords, end wind subsidies, and eliminate regulations imposed and proposed by the Biden administration targeting incandescent lightbulbs, gas stoves, dishwashers, and shower heads.

Trump would again push to send the National Guard to cities such as Chicago that are struggling with violence. He would use the federal government’s funding and prosecution authorities to strong-arm local governments.

He says he will require local law enforcement agencies that receive Justice Department grants to use controversial policing measures such as stop-and-frisk. As a deterrent, he says local police should be empowered to shoot suspected shoplifters in the act. “Very simply, if you rob a store, you can fully expect to be shot as you are leaving that store,” he said in one recent speech.

Trump has called for the death penalty for drug smugglers and those who traffic women and children. He has also pledged a federal takeover of the nation’s capital, calling Washington a “dirty, crime-ridden death trap” unbecoming of the country.

Those are some of the obvious and immediate actions Trump will take, should he win the presidency again. The only caveat is he should not become too powerful to become an autocrat. Fortunately, we have legislature and judiciary to check the executive branch.

HUMOR

Gateway to America

Musafir”



In Mumbai, on average, the local traffic moves at 15 miles an hour. It gives the passenger plenty of time to chat with the driver. My driver’s name was Hanif, a middle-aged Muslim guy who lived alone in Mumbai. His family, wife, and 5 children lived in a village in Uttar Pradesh, a state in India.

I hired Hanif to chauffeur me for all five days that I stayed in Mumbai. It’s more convenient than looking for taxis every day. Mumbai’s taxis are cheap. It costs

around 50 US dollars for the whole day plus tips

Hanif’s taxi had a set of rules printed on a card placed on the back of the seat. The rules were “Don’t sit with your legs apart; don’t look at unknown women; don’t use curse words; cover your body with your bag; don’t let your undershirt show.” This last rule cracked me up. I asked Hanif to explain that to me.

“If you’re riding public transport, you won’t like the woman next to you showing

her bra strap. A random woman may even say, "Excuse me, madam, your bra strap is showing." And that to me has been so annoying, because men have three buttons open, they're showing their chest hair and undershirt."

On the second day, Hanif asked me how much a taxi driver earned in the U.S. Though I never cared to know that, I guessed a number and said, "They earn around \$50,000 a year."

Hanif wanted me to convert that to Indian rupees. "That would be around 4,100,000 rupees," I answered.

"Well, that can't be; that is almost equivalent to how much the president of India gets paid," Hanif reacted.

I somehow assured Hanif that that was true. Hanif was shocked to hear that and immediately asked me to take him to the U.S.

"See Hanif, you cannot go to the U.S. legally because most folks from India either go there for higher studies or they have to be highly qualified in technical fields. "

"So, how can a person like me go there?" Asked Hanif.

I thought for a while and said, "The easiest way for you to go there will be like an illegal alien,"

"What's that? Asked Hanif,

"See Hanif, our president, Mr. Biden allows the illegals to enter the USA from the southern border. Those illegals become a part of his future vote bank." What you should do is get a ticket to Mexico and come to the US border and just walk inside the United States"

Hanif was amused by my answer, "But what will happen once I enter the U.S.?" Hanif asked.

"Once you enter the U.S. illegally, you'll be fed and sheltered. You may be bussed to bigger cities like New York, Los Angeles, Denver or San Francisco. They will allow you to work and earn money. It's that easy."

"Did you go to America like that?" Hanif asked.

"No Hanif, I was not that fortunate. I was educated and trained as an engineer, so I had to wait for my turn in India for five years. Not only that, I had to show that I had enough money with me to survive there for a month so that I didn't become public charge."

"Looks like it is difficult to go there legally, especially for an educated person like you," Hanif said sympathetically.

"Yes Hanif, you are a fast learner." By then I had reached my destination.

Hanif is planning to come to the States and bussed to New York city where he'd drive taxi and will earn more than the president of India. My only hope is that



Hanif, some day will give me a free ride or maybe not.

My friend, Chris Cross just got fired from his job for being extremely tardy and nonproductive. So, I decided to call him. Me: “Why did you choose to be tardy every day? Do you suffer from alarm clock dyslexia?”

Chris” “Cuz my body requires that I sleep until 11 in the morning after watching Squid Game on Netflix until 3 am the night before. My body has to heal in order to be productive.”

Me: “I can understand that, but how about the employer's needs and requirements too?”

Chris: “We care enough for the employers. Now, it’s their turn to care for the employees. It’s my life, my body, my universe, after all. Moreover, my government does not require me to do scut work. They send checks to folks like me for being a slacker. I don’t need to work for keeping myself alive anymore. You see why?”

Me: “Did you ever consider watching Squid Game at different hours so that you could reach the pole position in the morning?”

Chris: "What for? I am not a morning person. My employer can't torment my body by requiring me to do a nine-to-five job. My body has to heal to be able to be productive."

Me: Is that not asking a bit too much from an employer?"

Chris: "Not at all! I believe in work-life balance and so should my employer. They do this in Europe. The Europeans are a happy bunch. They take a siesta between 2 pm and 5 pm every day. Parents are encouraged to keep their children indoors and ball games are strictly off the agenda while the town's inhabitants get their forty winks. In Germany, they spend the entire October celebrating Beerfest. In the Scandinavian countries, the average weekly working hours is 29.2 and the people there are, like, a billion times happier than us. That's the sign of a progressive and caring society."

Me: "So, you think that your boss was unjust in firing you. Right?"

Chris: "Yes, he needs to understand the criticality of individual biology but he is such a freaking idiot that I am expected to work on his terms, whereas, I need to put

myself first. After all, I am young with my whole life ahead of me!

Me: "So, what's the plan now?"

Chris: "Go to my favorite bar; have a beer or two or, maybe four. Like to join me?"

Me: "Sure, but what's the plan for the future? Aren't you gonna find another job?"

Chris: "No! First. I want to wait for the Build Back Better plan to pass. I want to see what kind of social reform they are going to have in there. Maybe, I'll never have to work again."

Me; "What, if it doesn't pass for some reason?"

Chris: I may have to find a new job then. The new employer will pay me a hefty joining bonus and will bend over backward to keep me happy. Do you know how hard it is to find someone willing to work these days? Moreover, "having a job is cool but it doesn't mean that you got to work also"

Me: "Carpe diem my friend."

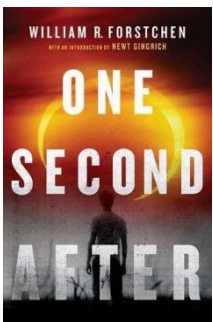


One Second After

Author: William Forstchen

Publisher: Forge Books

First Edition (November 24, 2009), 352 pages



The premise of the story is that an EMP (electromagnetic pulse) is created by the detonation of 3 nuclear bombs above the earth's atmosphere, which renders all electronic, digital, computerized elements in the infrastructure of the U.S. inoperable, which leads

to a complete breakdown of life as we know it.

Although fiction, this book is a very believable & terrifying. Characters in this book get deprived of modern amenities such as phones, computers, refrigeration, air conditioning, with no ability to produce basically anything that we have come to depend on in our daily lives.

The story centers around a man and his family in a small North Carolina town and what he is capable of doing to help not only those he loves but the townsfolk to survive and carry on after basically being blasted back to the Dark Ages.

For me, just knowing that this weapon is a reality and could be used against our country or any other was as frightening as any horror novel I've read. The impact of such a weapon would be devastating. This is one of those books that stayed with me and made me think for quite some time - could I be a survivor or more to the point - would I even want to be?

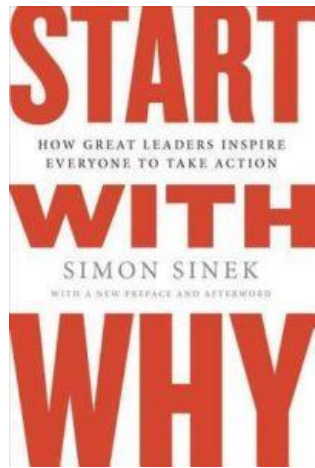
Unfortunately, the book is full of grammatical mistakes such as "It must of cost a fortune", "An accident must of shut it down", "You might not of seen it", "You think they'd of seen this coming", "I'd of used it if you hadn't showed up", etc.

All in all, this is quite an interesting book, including some very gripping battle scenes. This is a compelling story that could come true.

Start with Why

Author: Simon Sinek

Publisher: Portfolio Penguin 2009
(233 pages)



“Start with Why” is one of the best business books

I ‘ve read on leadership.

In this book, Sinek clearly outlines what it takes to be a great leader. He discusses leading with the purpose behind what a business does rather how it does. *Why* you do what you do. As leaders we need to share this Why to get our team members completely on board and engaged.

Many leaders use fear, manipulation and authority to control their staff but as Sinek points out these tactics are awful for the staff member and they do not benefit the leader \or the business long term. Trust, loyalty and commitment are not built on fear.

Sinek shows us how inspiration plays a huge role in leadership, even more so than motivation or incentives. If a leader can

inspire those who work for them, staff engagement will increase which will in turn have a positive effect on productivity and profits.

If people don’t share your belief and your vision, it’s going to be very difficult to get the best out of them. On the other hand, when you have team members who get your vision it’s amazing how much they will bring to the table. After a few years of trial and error we now have a great team both here and in Vietnam, I’m often impressed at their initiative and commitment to achieve the goals we set.

Another thing I loved about this book was the step by step guide to using Sinek’s ‘Golden Circle’ as a tool to discover and understand the Why of your business. Once you do understand it is so much easier to share it with others.\

Sinek uses a few highly successful business models to demonstrate the value of leading with Why; Apple, Walmart, and Southwest Airlines are fine examples. He then turns back to your own business and leadership style and gives suggestions of how you can take it further and start sharing the Why of your business with your team.

I found the book to be packed with value as a leadership tool; this value is increased hugely with access to resources and podcasts available on his website.

I highly recommend this book to anyone in a position of leadership or running their own business. If I could only give one book to a small business owner, this would be it.

Current Affairs

America's Weak Response to Putin

'Musafir'

Mr. Putin just executed another of his opponents, Alexei Navalny who defied the oppressive forces that govern Russia. His recent demise leaves a void in the opposition's ranks in the autocratic regime. Navalny's was unwavering in his commitment to truth and justice which collided with the fear-driven regime of President Vladimir Putin.



before also. All the U.S. and its allies do is voice concern and warn of consequences. Russia is well familiar with Western weakness and just laughs them out

The West's response cannot be passive. It must be a resolute

stand against autocracy, an acknowledgment that Navalny's struggle was not his alone but a shared battle for human rights and dignity. The leaders of the free world must recognize that Navalny's murder is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern of oppression - one that demands a cohesive and unwavering response. As we reflect on Navalny's brave odyssey, cut short in the prime of his defiance, we must remember that the fight for justice and freedom persists. Navalny's legacy calls for a reevaluation of our values, a renewed commitment to standing against tyranny, and an unyielding belief that, in the face of evil, the inaction of good people is not an option. The voyage that Navalny embarked upon may have ended, but the echoes of his courage should reverberate as a rallying cry for a world that refuses to bow to fear and greed.

Navalny's anti-corruption crusade exposed to the Russian masses that nothing has changed in Russia since Lenin's revolution of 1917 when the ruling class enjoyed a lavish life in the face of mass poverty. His astute understanding of Mr Putin's two pillars of power, fear and greed, enabled Navalny to not only expose corruption but also confront the regime with unyielding resilience.

After Surviving a poisoning attempt with the nerve agent Navalny's return to Russia defiance. His gesture challenged Mr Putin's narrative of invincibility. Navalny's very existence posed a threat to Mr Putin's carefully constructed image and power. Navalny's death was officially and falsely attributed to a blood clot.

For the West, Navalny's death is not awake-up call. This kind of murders have happened

Memoir

In sunshine and in shadow

Musafir



Part 1: Childhood

“We Are Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On” (William Shakespeare: Tempest)

The first thing I remember about my life is I was an infant and was an object of affection of women of Kothia who wanted to take me in their laps in the front yard of our village home. I gather from one of my rare baby photos that I was a beautiful child adored by the village women.

There are no road signs or markers leading to my village, Kothia in that forgotten and forlorn part of rural India near the Indo-Nepal border. On a silent night, one can hear the droning sound of incessant melody reciting the life of Sita. If you do, you have unmistakably arrived in Kothia. That is the distinctive trait of my village – the women of Kothia singing songs in praise of Sita in

eloquent Maithili (a regional Indian language).

Sita suffered and led a miserable life despite her piousness and good deeds. Sita was an angel. Her legacy still lives among the women of Kothia who continue to suffer until this day despite their virtues and sacrifices. Those women gave me a wonderful and a happy childhood.

My mother died when I was six months old. My responsibility was given to my aunt who lived lives in that remote village. She took care of me until I was seven. She would never let me out of her sight and had an inseparable attachment towards me. I never

knew that she was not my real mother until the day my father wanted to take me with him to a more sophisticated environment for my education and overall development. At that point, my aunt did not resist. She made this sacrifice for my betterment. Today at the age of eighty, she lives alone in the same remote village of India without any expectations from me.

While living in the village, I was the darling of all the women of Kothia. They all loved me and cared for me despite their own horrific and pathetic life. They brought joy and security to my life by adoring me. I owe my life, success and well-being to my aunt and all those women of the village who came into my life like angels.

Growing up with my aunt and uncle was the happiest time of my life. I lived in a village about 100 miles from Mount Everest. On a clear day, one could see the cap of Everest from there.

Ours was a crowded place. We had lots of visitors as both my uncle and aunt were extremely gregarious people. They used to accommodate and feed everyone. I was a happy child. Everyone in the village loved and protected me. Whenever I needed shoes, I just ran to the village cobbler and got a pair made for myself. My uncle and aunt used to give them grain in return. Watching the jugglers come to the village or listening to the movie songs on the deafening amplifiers of a passing procession was the only entertainment. My friends and I would sneak out of home and jump streams and climb trees. We ran for miles or went to the graveyard in the hope of catching ghosts and then return home to a warm meal. The grains and vegetables came from our farm and the fresh catch from our own pond.

After leaving my village, I always felt like a caged bird that had lost its freedom. I have lived three lives. My childhood is described above. The next fourteen years of my life were horrible. I was removed from the loving home of my uncle and aunt. Although I was provided a better material comfort in my father's home, emotional comfort was lacking. Man doesn't live on food alone.

I had to prove my worth. I was always compared to my more sophisticated cousins and children of family friends. I was always afraid of my father and pretended to sleep before he came home in the night. It's surprising that I was not demented. That was 1957. Sherpa Tenzing Norgay climbed Mt. Everest around that time. He was the first man ever to reach the highest peak in the world. Although that glory goes to Edmond Hillary, it was Tenzing who let him put his step there first.

Norgay Tenzing was my first hero. Unlike today's poster child, he was not imposed upon me as a role model. He didn't make statements by wearing ribbons nor was he promoted by any special interest group. He was a mortal figure of supreme significance to me. Norgay Tenzing was my first hero. Unlike today's poster boys greatness was not imposed upon him. He didn't make statements by wearing ribbons nor was he promoted by any special interest group. He was a mortal figure of supreme significance to me. There were a lot of similarities between Tenzing's and my childhood.

Tenzing came from a large family in a village in Nepal. He was considered a lucky baby as the family crossed many hurdles after his birth. His childhood house was small and crowded. They ate the simplest food, but there was always enough. His family made clothing from yak wool and hides to keep warm during the winter. He

had a very happy childhood until he came to know that his parents wanted him to become a lama (a Buddhist priest). He believed in Chomolungma (a Tibetan expression meaning to climb Everest or a mountain so high that no bird could fly over it) and that's what he did his whole life. Tenzing knew the dangers of climbing Everest. Thousands of Sherpas had perished in helping the mountaineers climb Everest. Tenzing later took Indian citizenship. When asked about his nationality, he said, "I was born in the womb of Nepal and brought up in the lap of India. I am both a Nepali and an Indian.

I never met Tenzing in person, but I remember his confident smile and his rugged but kind face. His personality had a unique combination of western squint and eastern immaculateness. After leaving my village, I always felt like a caged bird that had lost its freedom. I thought of Tenzing when yearning for freedom. We had a similar childhood, happy and full of innocence.

I left my childhood home and lived in many places because my father had a transferable job. Now I live in the U.S. Although I am an Indian by birth, I am also an American.

Climbing Everest those days was much more dangerous than space travel. Unlike space travel, the climbers were on their own without any guidance. They had to face deadly avalanches and blinding blizzards. They spent nights on sheets of ice in sub-zero temperatures. Every step taken could mean death. If they slipped on the sharp-pointed icy slopes, they could slide hundreds of feet before regaining a foothold. At times they would be in a free fall, flying headfirst down the mountain. But Tenzing didn't care. He only dreamed of Chomolungma. Tenzing had three lives. The first was as a child in Nepal in the village of Solo Khumbu. The

second, lasting twenty years, was as a porter and mountain man. The third began on the day he came back from the top of Everest. Tenzing's life and struggle inspired me and gave me the needed jolt. As for the third phase of my life, I still have to climb my brand of Everest. My Chomolungma is to be a good writer.

I have always been a dreamer. It won't be an exaggeration to say that I am a product of my dreams. I didn't dream to achieve anything higher than what I already have accomplished in life. All I wanted was a good education and security in life. To a degree I have obtained that. Some people dream of greater things in life. All men who have achieved great things have been great dreamers. I also read somewhere that some great people found their achievements in real dream.

"The theory of relativity was given to Albert Einstein ($E=MC^2$), Elias Howe received knowledge about the sewing machine, Robert Louis Stevenson received ideas for the book "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", Thomas Edison received the invention of the light bulb, Dr. Vivien Thomas got the cure for blue baby syndrome, and Christopher Columbus received direction to discover America, all in a dream!"

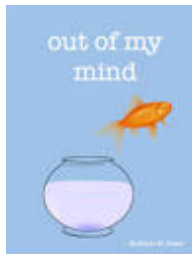
I must also add that all men who have achieved great things are not just dreamers, they are a doer also. The dream I am talking about relates to ambition, aspiration hope and desire not the dream that comes to us in our sleep only. I always dreamed that I'll be successful, will have a nice job, and a great family and will live in another world away from bleak and dismay. Though there are always ups and downs in life, nevertheless I got what I wanted, nothing more and nothing less.

I knew at an early age I wanted to move to the USA one day and work for a large company like General Motors. It came true along with sundry other things that I dreamt about. Though I studied engineering for earning a livelihood, I wanted to be a writer. Now after my retirement, I run an online magazine and have four published books to my credit. They are all results of my dreams.

Dreams can be synonymous with ambition. Usually, ambition is looked down upon as something bad. We always hear people complain that such and such person is

ambitious. In fact, ambition is a strong desire to achieve whatever goals we set for ourself. It's the spark inside us that compels us to keep putting effort into whatever we do.

Having achieved the dream is the best feeling in the world. I always remember, "We Are Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On" (William Shakespeare: Tempest). ...**to be continued**



Unlearning Indian English

Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

I grew up in India, so I was used to speaking English the way it's spoken in India. Initially it caused me trouble at work because people at work were not used to Indian diction and phraseology. It took me years to get read of my old locution.

Once I wrote a memo to the entire department informing that the scheduled meeting date was preponed. That caused a stir at the workplace, so my boss called me and asked me what I meant by preponed. When I explained to him that actually I meant that the meeting was moved to an earlier date, he recommended that I take a basic English course which I did.

My English teacher was a grim looking older lady. On the first day she asked me to recite English alphabet. She corrected me and asked me to pronounce zee instead of zed. I insisted that zed was correct.



"In India we pronounce zed like this only," I insisted.

"Don't add only. Like this is the right way to say." She corrected me again.

Once while revising my resume, I wrote that I passed out in 1981. The interviewer asked me what made me pass out in 1981. To me that was an absurd question. Later I realized that in American way of speaking pass out meant to become unconscious.

Another problem area was the use of a couple of. I used it to mean two but, in the USA, this may mean several. For example, "it took me a couple of hours to get here which could also mean 3 or 4 hours.

In the old country cousins are addressed as brothers and sisters to show intimacy. To explain to a strangers Indians usually say cousin sister or cousin brother. This was

confusing to my friends because here all the cousins are simply referred to as cousins.

We Indians are not used to saying switch on the light or fan. For many years I simply used to ask people to “on the switch.” That was considered very funny. Similarly, I used to call blisters caused by tight shoes a shoe bite. That used to cause a good laugh.

I remember ending my memos at work with “do the needful.” Some of

the other oddities were “revert back to you” and “which school did you go to” instead of asking “what school did you attend?”

My boss used to be annoyed with me for my use of “same to same.” Whenever I found similarity in our actions, I’d shake my head and utter, “same to same.”

Well folks, that’s all for now.”

QUIZ

1. In which country is Mount Fuji Located?

Japan

2. Which country has the longest coastline in the world?

Canada

3. What is the world's most populated country?

India

4. What is the world's smallest country?

Vatican City

5. In which country has the world's highest waterfall?

Venezuela

6. What is the capital of Australia

Canberra

7. In what country is the Cape of Good Hope?

South Africa

8. What country has the greatest number of volcanos?

Indonesia

9. Where is the highest temperature ever recorded?

10. Which country has three national capitals?

South Africa

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