

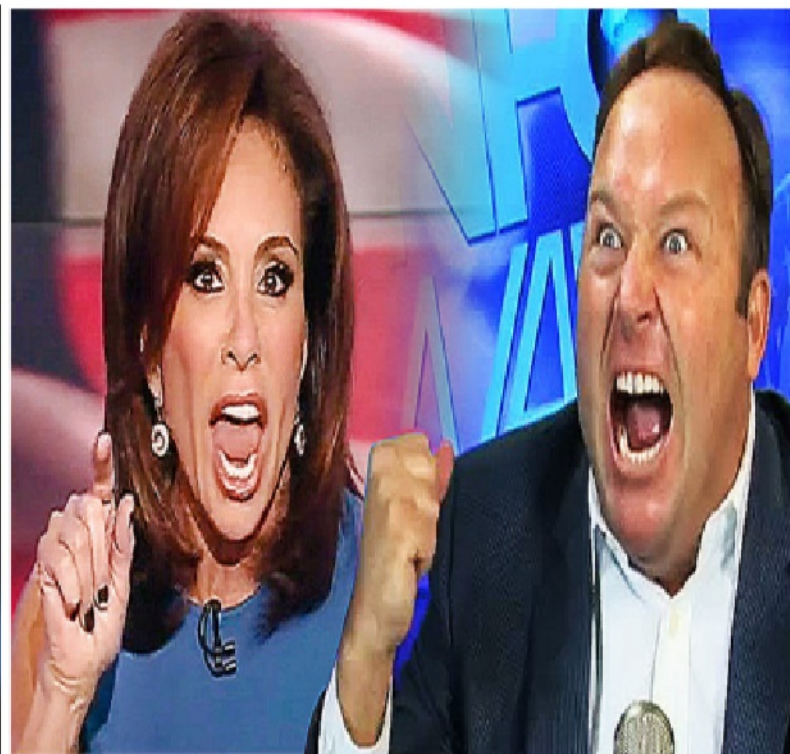
A forum to encourage independent thinking

TheThinkClub

Published Quarterly

Volume 23.3 Summer 2019

NOTHING CHANGES IN THIS TOWN



Two Nations Divided by Democracy
Media's Neglect of India's General Election
It's the Best of Times But It Can Get Worse
Book Review: Originals and Avarana



www.TheThinkClub.com

EDITORIAL

Nothing Happens in This Town

That's very true. Nothing has changed in this town called



America since World War II despite sanctions, threats, wars, embargoes, negotiations, bickering, investigations, or regime changes. The status quo remains and we return to the

same place where we started from.

Take North Korea for instance. I have been keenly watching US-North Korea relationship since 1985. North Korea has been developing nuclear weapons and missiles all those years. The United States has pursued a variety of policy responses to the proliferation challenge posed by North Korea including war threats, sanctions and negotiations. Nothing changed.



Iran has been a thorn by USA's side for the last 40 years (since 1979). USA threatened Iran, sent warships, placed

sanctions against them. They are still bickering. The former keeps on testing missiles and enriching plutonium. Nothing changed.

China keeps on challenging USA militarily and economically. USA has been warning China; putting tariff on their exports and has been sending warships into the China Sea. China keeps increasing its influence in Asia. They are about to match USA in arms and in space capabilities. They may overtake USA as the biggest

economic power in the coming decade. Nothing changed except the rise of China.

Both Russia (then the USSR) and USA fought wars against Afghanistan. USA is in the fourteenth year of war against the Taliban. They have bombed them, threatened them and have spent trillions of dollars in that god forsaken country. Taliban is still alive. USA soldiers are still being slaughtered there. Nothing changed.

USA has been negotiating peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians since the birth of Israel in 1948 (71 years ago). Israelis are still killing the Palestinians and the latter is still demanding a homeland. Nothing changed.

USA toppled Saddam Hussain in 2003 on the false pretense of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). After spending trillions of dollars there and rebuilding Iraq while neglecting our own country, the killing is still going on in Iraq involving the Kurds, the Sunnis and Shias. Other than spending trillions of dollars we lost thousands of young lives and crippled our youth mentally and physically. Despite all that nothing changed.

We have been trying to change regimes in Cuba and Venezuela for decades. All we got in return is defeat in Bay of Pigs and recent embarrassment in Venezuela. Nothing changed. Back home, our elected members have been fighting each other in the name of health insurance reform, immigration policy, education reform, infrastructure improvement, and ways to save school children from random shooting. Nothing happens. Nothing changed.

All we do is get excited and increase our blood pressure watching and listening to the rhetoric of our politician and media gurus. We believe in what they say and quarrel about whether to praise Trump or burry him. In the meantime nothing changes. If we want real change, we should get the rascals out from Washington. Get rid of partisanship. Write to your Senators and Congressman to do real job for which you elected them. Be an independent thinker. May be that will bring the real change. Are you listening?

You cannot
right the wrongs
of
this world. It doesn't work
that way. Nothing
changes"
-George Carlin

Commentary

Neglect of Indian General Election – I am Mad As Hell

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

If you live in America and depend on TV channels for news, you probably don't know that India and Indians are having the greatest show on Earth right now. India had had this show, also known as 'general election,' sixteen times before the current one. Every time there was an orderly change of power (whenever the ruling party lost) without any coup or disturbance. It won't be a euphuism to say that democracy is embedded in the Indian blood.

Having said that, more than 700 million Indians are currently voting to send 543 (total of 545 as two are nominated by Anglo-Indian community) Members of Parliament (MPs), who will choose a Prime Minister to lead the administration of the country. India, the largest democracy in the world with the largest diversity human race has ever known is an oasis in the strife-ridden region of Asia in that part of the world. It can truly be said to be a "shining city upon a hill." (Courtesy Ronald Reagan)

It's a shame that the American media is again neglecting India's exercise in democracy while spending all its time covering the news about Afghanistan, Israel and Trump's impeachment possibilities. I call this the dumbing of America and this is done purposely as another act of social engineering.

Some argue that the media cater to people's interest. It ain't so. Media have a responsibility to educate its audience and readers. While growing up in India, I knew who then Cassius Clay was. I remember the great presidential contest of 1960



between Richard M Nixon and John F Kennedy – all because the press in India provided me the coverage. In a sense, they educated me. I am pretty sure that people in the land of Lincoln, who famously said, "Government of the people, for the people and by the people," would like to know about the general election in world's largest democracy.

Please take some time and write to all TV channels and ask them to cover the Indian general election. If not, at least go to your windows and shout, "I am mad as hell and I can't take it anymore." (Character Howard Beale in 1976 movie Network)

Humor

FAUTE DE MIEUX BY MUSAFIR



a barber may be earning 50 cents for a haircut which would cost fifteen dollars plus tip in this country. So don't you think our productivity is inflated?" I retorted.

Teo started murmuring something unintelligible. I didn't press him any further on this topic to save him humiliation in front of his wife.

"Come on who are you trying to fool? I work for a bank. I deal with these topics day in and day out. I can say that you are full of you know what. If our dollar were really overvalued, why would China and the rest of the world buy our debt?" Mr. Tu Morrow fielded this challenge to me with his eyes closed and face lifted as if he expected a kiss from me instead of an answer.

"Listen Mr. Yesterday"

"I am not Mr. Yesterday. My name is Mr. Tu Morrow and you may call me Tu."

"OK Tu, if someone is stupid enough to buy our debt, they deserve whatever the outcome," I concluded.

"To what level we shall devalue the dollar?" asked Teo's wife, Allegra

who seemed more sensible than her hubby.

"To a level no country can export their cheap goods and services to America," I answered her.

"Then manufacturing becomes profitable again here," remarked Tyrion's wife, Nivea.

"You got that right. You ladies are smarter than your husbands who are hollow and flatty," I tried to boost her confidence.

"Well, they are here because of Faute de mieux," Nivea winked as she made that remark.

All the men in the party shouted in a chorus, "Yes we do," to show that they were hibrowed.



By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

“It’s the Best of Times, But It Can Get Worse’

As if apocalyptic earth quakes, volcano eruptions, strong solar flares, giant meteorites hitting the earth were not enough cataclysmal events to annihilate us, I just discovered one more to scare us out of our wits. It's called Earth's Magnetic Field Flip.

Earth's magnetic field flip is another name for earth's magnetic pole reversal. Should that occur, north will become south and vice versa. This phenomenon may also be called a geomagnetic apocalypse in which satellites will start falling from the sky, and life on Earth will cease to exist as we know it.

According to the geologists, this event has occurred 200,000 times in the last 20 million years of earth's history. The last reversal happened about 780,000 years ago. Unfortunately, this reversal can be very chaotic as it takes place gradually resulting into formation of more than two magnetic poles during the transition. This means we'll not be adequately protected from damaging solar and cosmic radiations during the transition.

It will create a lot of confusion for the survivors. Antarctica will become North and Canada will become South. Another consequence could be that earth may collide with heavenly objects because earth's magnetic field will become weaker for a long time. Earth may also be frequently hit by high-energy particles flying around in space.

The next magnetic flip may already have started since the geomagnetic field has been decaying for the last 3,000 years (according to the European Centre for Research and Teaching of Environmental Geosciences aka CERGE). Fortunately, a flip doesn't happen overnight. Instead, it takes anywhere from a century to 20,000 years to complete.

Of course, God has enough tools in His arsenal to remind us of our mortality and make us grateful for what He has already bestowed upon us. We are here during a blessed time, so enjoy while it lasts.

BOOK REVIEW

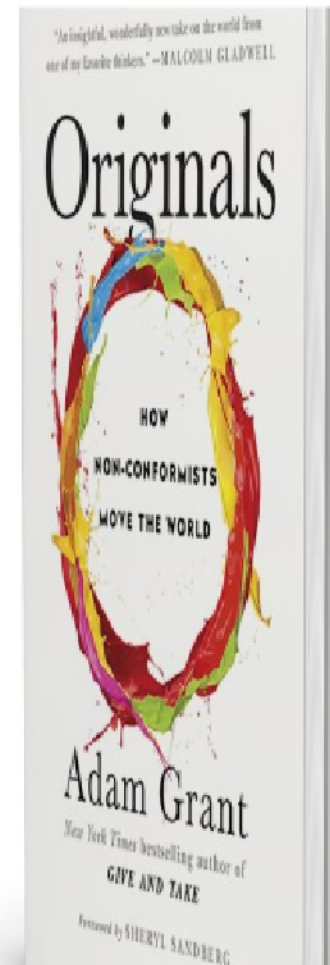
Original – How Non-Conformists Move the World

Author: Adam Grant

Penguin Books (Paperback, 254 pages)

Adam Grant's "Original – How Non-Conformists Move the World" is a book for independent thinkers. The book is an interesting read from the beginning to the end inasmuch as Grant supports his premises with unique examples. His case studies include Warby Parker who dared to sell eye glasses at much lower prices than the established optic shops. Grant identifies 30 action steps that people in all walks of life can take to be successful.

Grant emphasizes the importance of innovating thinking as opposed to conventional thinking using interesting terminologies such as 'false negative' which means presuming failure of an action while it (action) may ultimately succeed. Grant stresses originality that stems from viewing a familiar world or situation in an unfamiliar way. Grant makes the argument that to be an original propelling the world forward, risk-taking is inevitable but not to the same degree most of us would imagine.



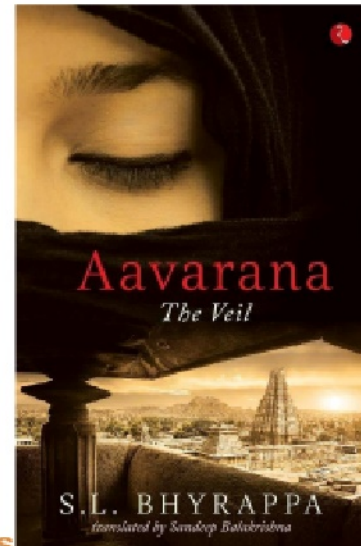
I found that the anecdotes presented in 'Original' to be too lengthy which reduces the clarity of the messages Grant wants to convey. After reading Malcolm Gladwell's books, especially Outliers, Grant's presentation looks less effective and more cumbersome, nevertheless, Originals is a great book that encourages changing the way we live and think. –

BOOK REVIEW

Avarna - The Veil

Author: S L Vyrappa

Published by Rupa (389 pages)



Aavarana – The Veil is a very provocative novel by the famous Kannada writer, S.L. Bhyrappa. Avarana, the veil is referred here as hiding the truth. The entire novel depicts a forceful struggle between hiding the truth for political correctness and creativity vs. presenting the truth as it is. What should a writer or an artist choose?

In this novel, Bhyrappa has shown courage to remove the veil from inhuman Islamic practices which may not go over well with intellectuals and politicians who try to put a veil over those practices in the name of secularism and inclusiveness.

The story in Aavarana revolves around its protagonist, Lakshmi who was renamed Razia after her conversion to Islam as a precondition to marrying Amir who is a Muslim. Razia is forced to eat beef and follow orthodox Muslim practices by Amir's parents. Amir, who came across as a liberal and secular person first, wants Razia to follow his parents' wishes. Eventually she returns to her ancestral village and to her Hindu cultural roots following estrangement with Amir (who remarries without divorcing her). Razia reads the writings of her father's excerpts and realizes the historical atrocities of Muslims towards the Hindus. She refuses to work on a government sponsored program that intends to hide those facts.

This was my first introduction to Bhyrappa's style. I was deeply impressed by his art of storytelling and the ability to vividly describe situations. I can equate his style to two greatest novelists that I have come across, Premchand (Hindi) and Charles Dickens (English).

However, while Bhyrappa has exposed the fact about Islamic rulers being iconoclastic (the breaking of Hindu temples and idols), he has mentioned nothing positive about their contribution to India such as iconic architectural structures, literature or intellect (Sufis for example). His depiction of the Muslim life in India is entirely negative. All the Muslim characters in the novel are conservative and closed-minded.

The novel's English translation is lucid and pleasing to read. Overall, Bhyrappa is convincing in his argument that an artist should not hide truth in search of beauty. –Reviewed by 'Musafir'

ESSAY

Two Nations Divided by Democracy

Although I am not in favor of impeaching president Trump nor is there any possibility of his impeachment, he would have certainly been removed from the office by now under the British parliamentary system. Though both UK and USA are democracies, yet they have wide fundamental differences as the latter follows a presidential form of government. In the presidential system, once elected, the incumbent escapes the public grilling and day to day accountability as happens in a Parliamentary System.

The House of Commons is an arena where the strength or the weakness of a leader gets quickly exposed with many a stalwart having had to resign on the floor of the house.

The list of Prime Ministers who had to resign despite having a majority in the house, is a fairly lengthy one, indicating the strength of a parliamentary democracy. Tony Blair despite winning three consecutive elections for the Labor Party faced criticism for his support to the US for the invasion of Iraq. In the face of mounting criticism, he had to resign midway through his third term, while President George W Bush went on to complete his second term virtually unscathed.

Following Mr. Blair, David Cameron resigned because the British people voted for Brexit despite his opposition to it. Cameron said, "The will of the British people is an instruction that must be delivered."

While almost a dozen of British prime ministers had to resign because they lost no-confidence motion in the parliament including the stalwart like Benjamin Disraeli, in contrast, except in case of Richard Nixon, there have been virtually no resignations from the top office. Nixon had to go for criminal obstruction of justice in the Watergate affair, several of his staffers having been already jailed.

Bill Clinton went on to serve two full terms despite being only the second U.S president to be ever impeached. He went on to complete his second term despite the impeachment. He won't have survived the House of Commons, had he been in UK, facing a similar situation.

Despite serious foreign policy issues, Jimmy Carter went on to complete his first term, albeit with difficulty and failed to get reelected. US Presidents thus have a certain degree of insularity.

A strong political party system with emphasis on discussion and debate and even occasional dissent, has been the strength of the House of Commons in Britain.



It is difficult to say which system is better. The British parliamentary system threatens the stability of the government without giving a chance to the prime minister to show the long-term benefits of his or her policies. At the same token, a misguided president may paralyze a nation without much fear of removal from the office causing dire consequences to the nation.



Current Affairs

How to

Brainwash People and Paralyze A Nation

The Democrats had hoped special counsel Robert Mueller would identify illicit Trump ties to Russia, plus presidential obstruction of justice. "But after 675 days of investigation, more than 2,800 subpoenas, nearly 500 executed search warrants and some 500 witness interviews and after spending approximately 30 million dollars, Mueller's team of lawyers and FBI agents did not establish that members of the Trump Campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government."

Yes, the Russians tried to lure Mr. Trump and his campaign team, but no one took the Russian bait.

The probe weakened Mr. Trump's foreign policy as China, North Korea, Iran and, Russia factored into their relations with us the possibility that Trump might not stay long in the Oval Office.

Let's not forget the false dossier and how Mrs. Clinton's campaign actually did work with Russians, through FusionGPS and British agent Christopher Steele, to create a fictional scenario about Trump being compromised. Both liberal media and radical Democrats bought into Mrs. Clinton's Big Lie and built a house of cards on smoke and mirrors.

I voted for Mr. Trump because our nation needed him at the time to clear the smoke from political correctness, create manufacturing jobs, punish ISIS and stop illegal immigrants from pouring in as vote banks of radical Democrats. I live in the present. Our country may need a different kind of candidate in 2020 to solve new problems. For now, give our elected president the room to breathe and complete his campaign promises.

By: Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

The Mueller report concluded yesterday (March 24, 2019) that neither Donald Trump nor anyone from his presidential campaign team conspired or coordinated with Russia to influence the 2016 presidential election. The liberal media have been spreading all kinds of possible fake news (really) and been attempting to brainwash people insatiably and continuously to the contrary. If there is no liberal media reckoning for what they did, we can justify freeway robbery as its moral equivalent.

The radical Democrats put all their energy behind declaring Trump guilty of colluding with Russia and in planning for Trump's impeachment instead of running the country, the task for which they were elected. If people don't make them accountable for paralyzing a nation in the upcoming elections, shame on us.

Vis-a-vis



I Am for A Single-payer Health Insurance

By: Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

According to my understanding a single-payer health insurance system is the best for most Americans. My view is not based on any kind of bias or political agenda. You may differ from my point of view. If so, I am open to an honest discussion on the subject. Here is what I found.

At the outset, we must be clear about what does a Single-payer health insurance (aka "Medicare for All") mean. It is a health insurance system that is financed by taxes and is managed by one entity, such as our government. This also means that a U.S. resident will not incur extra costs when seeking out essential care. It will also cover vision and dental expenditures.

According to my findings, "Medicare for All" will reduce health care spending. Of course, we'll be paying additional taxes (nothing is free), but most of us will not pay more than what we are paying now. Take my case. My wife and I jointly pay more than \$12,000 per year in premium for health, dental and vision coverage. We are retired. We are on Medicare and collect Social Security. Still Social Security takes a big chunk of money from our benefits to cover our basic medical benefits. We have taken supplemental insurance for health and prescription drugs. We also have to pay additional premiums for dental and vision that hardly cover half the cost.

Looking at the above, we'll (my wife and I) be better off paying an additional tax of \$12,000 per year which will come to us with peace of mind.

"Medicare for All" will reduce the ballooning health care cost inasmuch as it will drastically reduce the administrative cost by billions of dollars. It will also eliminate the burden of paying emergency room (ER) costs that the taxpayers have to bear for uninsured folks. In the USA, 86 million people, are underinsured. Additionally, millions belonging to the middle class have insurance but they are unable to access medical care because their deductibles or copays are prohibitively high. One of my close friends was in this dilemma for years.

Another major saving will come from the government negotiating down prescription-drug prices, which would save billions. Prescription-drug prices in the U.S. are about twice as high as in other advanced economies. Under "Medicare for All" these prices will fall.

"People can stop worrying about medical bills and having to choose between their health and medical debt which is a major problem in America today. In 2017, a Bankrate survey found that 25 percent of Americans or someone in their family, have foregone medical treatment due to the cost. This included 31 percent of millennials, 25 percent GenX and 23 percent in the Boomer category" (Source: the Physicians for a National Health Program). Add it all up and "Medicare for All" starts making more sense.

I must admit that there are caveats in "Medicare for All" option. Pressuring drug makers in reducing cost of drugs will be demotivating for them to do research and find new cures for the diseases.

The government administered programs have a history of mismanagement. This may add to additional bureaucracy and tax increases every year. Eventually the system may go bankrupt similar to the sword hanging over present Medicare and Social Security systems. To save the system the Congress may pass laws to limit the benefits and the choices of providers.

I recommend the option for private insurance for those who don't want to participate in "Medicare for All". That should make everyone happy.

Health Talk



The Use and Abuse of Opioids Worldwide

By Dr. Niru Prasad, MD

Opioids are the class of drugs either derived from or chemically similar to opium poppy seeds derived from a flowering plant.

The opioid epidemic is a world wide deep national and international epidemic killing almost 100 Americans each day, more than the automobile accidents.

What is opium?

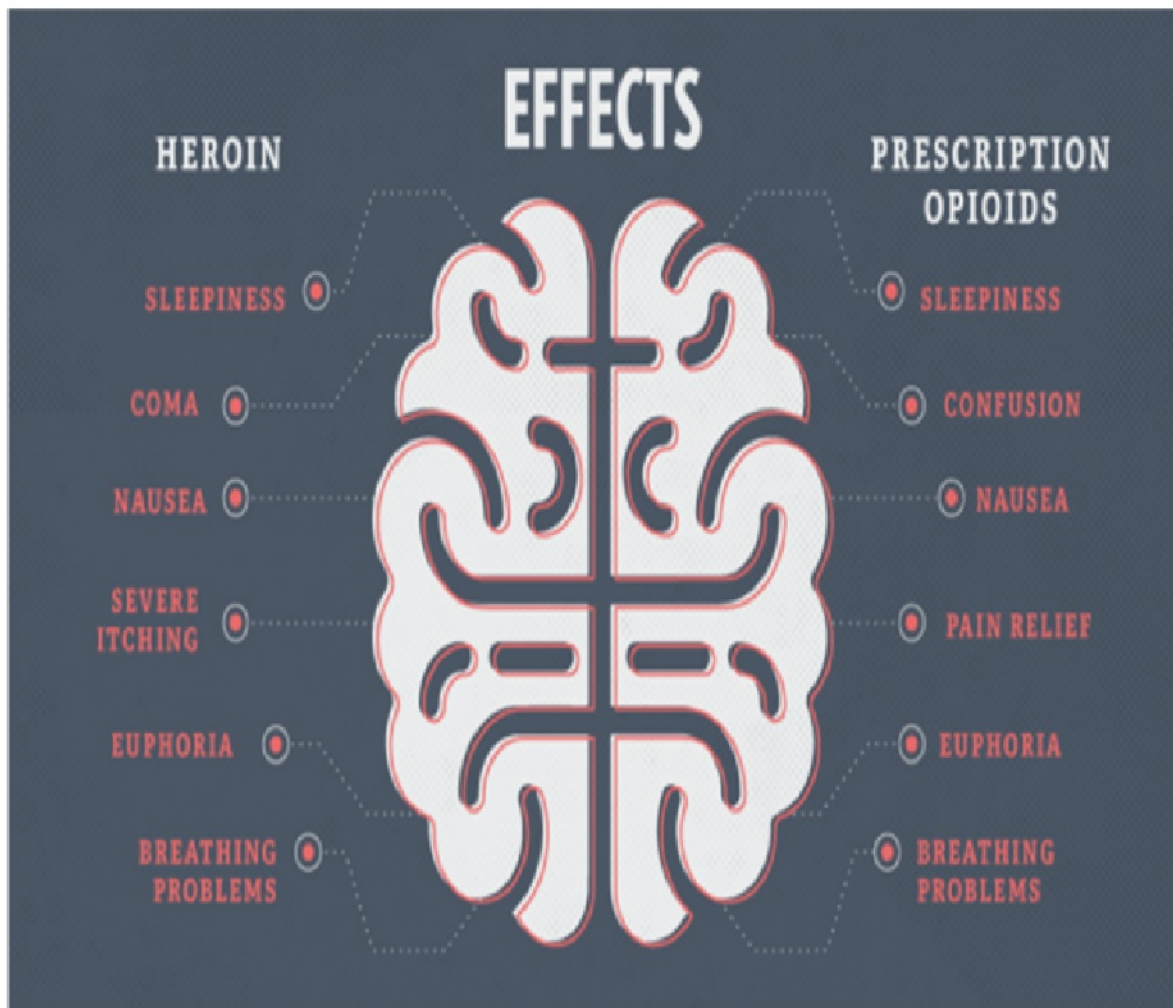
The seeds of so called poppy seeds are derived from a beautiful hardy flower *papaver somniferum* 4 feet high in multi-color, grows in temperate climates, needs no fertilizer, attracts few pests, and resemble weeds. The bloom of flower lasts only for a few days and petals fall leaving greenish grey pods. The seeds in pods have no psychogenic effect, however, once the seeds are crushed and dissolved with water while taken orally in different forms, the calming effect and euphoria are produced.

What are opioids?

Opioids are a class of drugs either derived from or chemically similar to compounds found in opium seeds. The opioid group includes: legal prescription pain killer like oxycodone, morphine, codeine, fentanyl and more. Sadly, heroin which is illegal is also an opioid. The prescription drug can be taken orally, as a film patch that dissolves in mouth for immediate effect or may be given intra muscular or intra venous for anesthesia. The misuse of drugs by addicted person includes crushed pills as nasal inhalation, or self-injections for a relaxed euphoria and laughter.

What is heroin?

Heroin is sold as an off white or brown powder and can be taken as snorting, nasal inhalation, injected into the vein or inhaled. Prior to inhaling, the powder are generally placed in aluminum foil and burnt over a spoon so the vapors can be inhaled faster.



How do you recognize symptoms of opioid abuse?

The signs and symptoms of opioids use and abuse include: feeling of euphoria, relaxation, nausea, and mental confusion. Opioids work by binding to opioid receptors in the brain reducing the perception of pain, and stimulating the brain's reward's center. Opioids also quickly builds up physical dependence and addictions in individuals if taken frequently.

The world wise epidemics of opioid addictions, signs and symptom of substance abuse include general changes in mood and behavior, drowsiness and depressions and disorientation among the users. Drug paraphernalia among teenagers and young individuals can easily be seen in and around the victim's bedroom or living spaces. Furthermore, presence of drug vials, needles, rubber tubing's and bunt or bent spoons are very suspicious. If taken in higher doses one develops rapid heart rate, difficulty breathing, pin point pupils and loss of consciousness.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (**1-877-643-2644**) recommends the following on preventing your children and adolescent drug abuse.

The preventative principles include helping patients, parents, educators, and community leaders to plan for and deliver prevention plans at, schools, with teachers the students and social services.

The potential impact of specific risks and protective factors changes with age and circumstances. The risk factor within family have more impact on young kids while adolescents are more influenced by their peer pressure.

How to prevent opioid abuse?

An early intervention with risk factor (aggressive behavior and poor self-control) are often a greater impact on child than a later intervention.

The risk and protective factors affect all ages, however, they might have a different effect according to their age, gender, ethnicity, culture and environment.

The prevention programs should address the type of drug used alone or in combination with alcohol, smoking, abuse of prescription and nonprescription narcotics and more.

The family based plans enhance family involvement, parenting skills, and help from substance abuse clinics.

Furthermore, these prevention programs are more effective when they involve interactive skills such as peer discussion group parent role and more.



In Praise of Splurging

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Recently a friend of mine sent me a message on WhatsApp. It read something like the following:

"A cyclist is a disaster for the country's economy because he does not buy the car and does not take car loan; does not buy car insurance; does not buy Fuel; does not send his car for servicing & repairs; does not use paid parking; does not become Obese. So, he does not have to buy drugs and he does not have to go to hospital and doctors. He does not add anything to country's GDP."

Though it was supposed to be a slapstick, it made me think deeper about splurging both by individuals and nations at large. While growing up, our generation was told, "You spend as little as you need to, and then save everything else." So, we hated spending money and thought that it was unwise or maybe immoral to do so.

Now I realize that the economy of a nation only grows when people spend their wealth. In plain terms spending is the key to economic growth. Personal consumption drives almost 71% of economic output of the United States, the most affluent major economy in the world in terms of gross domestic product (GDP). More people spend, more employment they create in terms of manufacturing and service jobs.

This works on personal level too. Our spending creates wealth. Well-to-do people tend to hire outside help with gardening, repair, cleaning and sundry other work. Thus they provide more opportunities for others to earn money. That is one reason why crime is not as prevalent in affluent neighborhoods as it is in poor neighborhoods where the needy have to steal or rob due to lack of any opportunity to earn money.

You don't want to come to the end with \$3 million saved, but having sacrificed your whole life along the way. Many of my acquaintances amassed a vast saving by sacrificing any material or epicurean experiences of life. They were brain washed by the old school that saving money is a virtue. Now most of them are old and effete. They didn't enjoy their wealth and can't carry the same with them after death.

However, that's my opinion. It is an individual choice between being an ascetic and leading an aesthete lifestyle. But if you are one who is interested in the greater good of the society— then maybe you should think about splurging.

World View: / Why the Fizzled Overthrow of Maduro Reminds Us of Bay of Pigs? By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

America's failed support to uprising in its backyard (Venezuela) last week reminds us of another American debacle 53 years ago this month known as Bay of Pigs. Unfortunately, the U.S. hasn't learned the lesson from its failures not to raise expectation and then at the last moment taking away the support. Why is not the United States, with all its might, able to do anything about the thorns by its side, viz., Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua? Maybe, the United States is afraid of 25,000 Cuban troops on top of the Russian troops that were sent to Caracas in March 2019 to support Maduro.

We were late in taking action against Cuba and North Korea and we let them grow as threats to our security. Seems like history is repeating itself in Venezuela. America's weakness is evident from the following exchange. President Trump asked Putin to get out of Venezuela. Putin did not consider worth his time replying to his orders. Instead his Foreign Minister shouted back that the U.S. should get out of Syria first. The fact is that the United States is afraid of confronting Russia in its own backyard.

Just like the U.S. has interest in oil fields in the Middle East, Russia has interest in lucrative gas fields off the coast of Venezuela through its state-owned oil giant, Rosneft. On top of that Moscow has also earned \$11.4 billion selling military equipment to Caracas, and currently exports about \$70-\$80 million worth of non-military goods to the southern country. Not only that, two Russian factories -- one that will make Kalashnikov assault rifles and another that will make ammunition for them -- are currently under construction in Venezuela.

The same is true of Cuba and Nicaragua. The Russian strategy is to confront the U.S. which is grounded in the Kremlin's idea of a new world in which the U.S. doesn't have the absolute power anywhere in the world. The U.S. has a reputation as a late comer to the game and being an unreliable partner. Thus, it is not able to exert its influence even its own backyard. That seems to be the answer to the puzzle.



**Hello Mr. Trump
By A K Lal**

**Hello Mr. Trump!
Yes, you are bold.
You left your foes,
Out in the cold**

**Won party's nomination,
Though many disliked,
Got to the White House.
Going against the tide.**

**Hillary told ya 'deplorable.'
Wanted you dumped away,
But I find you adorable,
In a nasty sort of way.**

**Did Russians help you
win?**

**This couldn't be a sin!
It happens world over,
It's taken all in vain.**

**Keep building the wall,
Let some goodwill fall,
Glad to see ya at top,
As your nation's cop.**

Don't Listen to Health Tips on Social Media

Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



I am sick of health advices on social media Thanks to Facebook and WhatsApp, everyone and his uncle is sending me unsolicited advice every minute. The constant health tips that I receive on Facebook and WhatsApp are really wearing me down. Just this morning I received this great news from my long lost cousin on WhatsApp:

"VERY URGENT AND IMPORTANT NEWS! Please make it a point of FORWARDING this

IMPORTANT NEWS after Reading like I am doing RIHT NOW. Medicine for all kinds of **CANCER** has been **FOUND!!** You can get it from Wangdyu, Bhutan. **AGAIN PLEASE DON'T DELETE THIS** without **FORWARDING.**"

Another health tip suggested that I should eat belleric myrobalan and the oily sap of the guggul for breakfast. I should add boswellia acid to my lunch and should eat Goto Kola with dinner to prevent aging related diseases such as heart attacks, memory loss and Alzheimer's disease. The warriors of Afghanistan and the indigenous of Indonesia have been taking these herbs for ages. Those warriors never quit regardless of their age.

Personally, I think that those tips are ridiculous. My most favorite health tips come from Dr. Fu Kim Wong. According to Dr. Wong, "save the parts of your body which are still working." Don't do wasteful cardio-vascular exercises. Like any machinery and equipment, our heart also has a limited life. Our heart is only good for so many beats. Don't waste those beats on exercise. Everything wears out eventually. Speeding up heart will not make you live longer. It's like saying you extend life of a car by driving faster. Want to live longer? Take a nap. Similarly, sit-ups are bad for you. Think about it. When you exercise your muscles, they get bigger. You should only be doing sit-ups if you want bigger stomach.

Another tip, don't do swimming for exercise. You can do it as a hobby. If swimming were good for your figure, explain whale to me.

For



those who enjoy alcohol, do not quit. No, not at all. Wine is made from fruit. Brandy is distilled wine. That means they take water out of fruity bit so you get even more of goodness of fruits that way. Beer also is made from grain. We all know that grain is good for us.



Don't get in the trap of worrying about your body mass ratio. That gives rise to obsessive compulsive Disorder (OCD). If God has given us body, we will have mass.

Don't listen to folks who ask you to avoid fried food. These days food is mostly fried in vegetable oil. How could getting more vegetable be bad for you?

In the end here is a sweetener, eat more chocolate. Chocolate is cocoa bean –another vegetable. Eat more chocolate and feel good. You want to get in shape? Hey round is a shape too!



Can you answer these pop quizziez? Answers in the next issue.

Which actor plays the superhero "Thor?"

Chris Hemsworth
Chris Evans
Liam Hemsworth
Chris Pratt

Which movie was the top earner in 2017?

The Fate of the Furious
Beauty and the Beast
Wonder Woman
Star Wars: The Last Jedi

Which American TV follows the lives of Jay Pritchett and his family?

Arrested Development
It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia
Modern Family
Family Guy

Which actor made his debut as James Bond in the film Casino Royale?

Daniel Craig
Pierce Brosnan
Sean Connery
Mads Mikkelsen

What is the name of the first Harry Potter book?

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
Harry Potter and the Marauder's Map



Road Less Traveled

A Short Story by Anil Shrivastava
'Musafir'

Just because someone drives a Porsche doesn't necessarily mean that he deserves one. Chirkut was my school buddy (in ancient times) who was going to bring peace to the world in the sixties. Now he worships money. So, he invited me to his house in a new neighborhood – one of those high security gated communities. As I was patted by the guard, I was preparing myself for a strip search. Fortunately that didn't happen.

"Imported Italian granite," Chirkut bragged as he ran his hand over his bar. "From the same mine as Mussolini's mausoleum," he further added.

Chirkut now talks in monotones that makes even Siri more interesting to talk to. I also noticed that Chirkut has now acquired a British accent. I remembered, back in the old country his parents couldn't speak English, let alone the British accent.

I asked him where the accent came from. "I dated a British chic for seven years before we parted our ways," replied Chirkut.

"Found my bathtub in an old palace in France," Chirkut said proudly as he licked an olive like lollipop.

"So, do you still live in that old Pulty home?" Chirkut asked me as he clinked ice cubes into the glasses.

"Yes, I still live on the road less traveled and still under construction," I answered.

Chirkut pressed a button and the curtains automatically opened to a panoramic view. "My nearest neighbor lives a mile down the road from me," Chirkut said.

"Well in my neighborhood the houses are so close together that I can count my neighbors' nose hairs," I replied.

"Clearing his throat Chirkut said, "I'd love to see your pathetic neighborhood."

"I am very good at direction, but buddy you cannot get there from here anymore."

Slowly, licking his lacquered lips, Chirkut said, "Yes we have come too far apart in our thinking and lifestyle."

Ultimately, he grabbed my arm and headed me to his driveway.

Two roads diverged. I glanced back over my shoulder. Chirkut blew me a kiss.

The Indian General Election 2019

If you have been living in the dungeon of cable and network crap, you, probably, don't know that the people of India elected a new parliament on May 23, 2019 for the seventeenth time since India became a democratic republic on January 26, 1950 (not to be confused with Indian independence on August 15, 1947). Narendra Modi's party, BJP (India's People's Party) won the majority for a second consecutive term for another five years. Thus Narendra Modi will retain his position as the prime minister of India since he is the undisputed leader of his party.

Held in seven phases from 11 April to 19 May, 2019 Lok Sabha (lower house) elections saw a galaxy of opposition leaders shed their personal differences to take on Modi. It was probably for the first time that an entire election was fought either in support of or against one man – Narendra Damodardas Modi.

The election was a referendum on Mr. Modi's policy of strong India. BJP (Mr. Modi's party) will attempt to fulfil everything it promised in the party manifesto, including the contentious National Register of Citizens (NRC). Though the opposition, especially West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, has been most vocal against the implementation of the NRC in the states, the BJP will remain undaunted in its goal of identifying illegal immigrants from Bangladesh across the country.

The referendum bears bad news for the Congress Party (liberal and socialist) of India led by Rahul Gandhi, the great grandson of India's first prime minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru and Rahul Gandhi's Italian mother, Sonia Gandhi. The Congress party ruled India for 49 years directly or by proxy. The Congress Party favors illegal immigrants and wants to treat them as Indian citizens with the right to vote as they (illegal immigrants) constitute Congress Party's vote bank.

The Modi government has achieved tremendous success to curb terrorism in the last five years. Thus, there will be no change in the security policy with regard to Kashmir and Left Wing Extremism. On the other hand, the government might come down even more heavily on terrorists. With 2016 surgical strikes and the 2019 Balakot air strike against terrorist camps in Pakistan, PM Modi proved that he was not averse to taking tough decisions when it came to national security.

Mr. Modi and his BJP party will do everything within their power to scrap Article 370 of the Constitution and Article 35A, which give the state of Jammu and Kashmir (the only Muslim majority state of India) an autonomous status and prohibits citizens from other parts of India to settle there while there is no accountability for murdering and snatching properties of their Hindu citizens who have moved to another parts of India as refugees in their own country.

Under BJP-led government military buildup will continue to ensure that India's military strength keeps increasing. New defense deals will be struck as India is still looking to meet the fast depleting numbers of fighter squadrons in the Air Force. Modern and more effective assault rifles for the Army and other equipment needed to guard the borders with Pakistan and China will be procured during Modi's second term.

Hindu hardliners who support the BJP have the Ram Mandir as their demand. The BJP might do everything possible to make the temple a reality by 2024. Lord Rama was Hindu's equivalent of Jesus. The Muslim rulers destroyed his temple and made a mosque in its place. The Hindus want their holy place back but previous governments and the Supreme Court of India have always deferred the decision due to the fear of Muslim retaliation.

A full majority might help the government implement the BJP's push to make triple talaq by the Muslim men a criminal offence. Though passed in the Lok Sabha on multiple occasions, the Bill got stalled in the upper house due to the opposition. Many Muslim women have been sympathetic to the BJP for this very reason and have indicated a favorable inclination towards the BJP. The BJP will, therefore, try to maintain its goal of getting the Bill turned into a law.

Modi will learn from some failed moves such as demonetization and hefty promises of creating smart cities and eradicating all the ills of interstate trade through GST tax reform. The government this time will most likely, will try to steer clear from such policies.

Though India's economy is the fastest growing in the world, the mounting unemployment and poverty in villages is a blemish on India. Mr. Modi will have to solve this dual problem otherwise people may get disillusioned with him.

How does this impact Indo-US relationship? Indo-American bilateral ties will be stronger. The objectives of both countries today are challenged primarily by China. Beijing threatens US hegemony both regionally within Asia and globally, and it threatens India's security and influence along their common borders, in India's near and extended neighborhood, and across Asia at large.

Trump's administration has always favored India over Pakistan and worked hard to declare Masood Azhar a terrorist. They will work more intensely against a common enemy, radical Islam.

