

# The THINK Club<sup>©</sup>

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## Wither the Republican Party?

*New Technology and  
Environment*



*Remembering The Old Coffee House*

*Book Review: Happy Go Lucky  
By: David Sedaris*



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# EDITORIAL

## *We Are Better Off Being A Divided Nation by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'*

I have two close friends with opposite views. One labels himself a rightist and the other a leftist. They don't seem to agree on any political or economic issues. My rightist friend cares more about efficiency, and the leftist cares more about equality. My rightist friend is more religious and the leftist is secular. To my mind, what separates them is mere emotion, not logic. For example, my leftist friend is critical of market outcomes no matter how good market outcomes be. On the contrary, my rightist friend believes that good market outcomes only come from laissez-faire.

Surprisingly, both my friends are very intelligent and highly educated. Still, their minds think differently. We perceive the same reality in different ways and form different notions depending on how our minds perceive them.

In our engineering school, we were required to take one class on humanity. I chose philosophy. There I learned that the world is not what it seems. There are stars always in the sky, but the light of the sun makes them disappear during the day. Similarly, animals don't see what we see depending

upon the structure of their lenses and how their nervous system processes the same image. Our perception is not the only perception.

Every generation is asked to believe that our nation is deeply divided never like before., This is not true. People's thoughts and perceptions of the same reality have always been divided. In that context, America has always been divided. In her 244-year history, the U.S. has endured deep divisions between its political parties, and over industrialization, the Civil War, immigration in the late 1800s, women's suffrage, whether to enter the first and second world wars, civil rights and anti-war protests in the 1960s, gay rights, abortion rights, and numerous other battles.

There are advantages to having different points of view (POV). The most obvious advantage is that using multiple POVs allows us to see the world from more than one set of eyes. We don't want to become a totally homogeneous nation all having to have uniform views. We don't want to become another Russia, China, or North Kora. We are better off the way we are.



# Commentary

## Picnic in Schloss Elmau by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’



women and children and the old and sick die in droves. This is what is happening in Ukraine. It was a beautiful country that now lies in ruins. Thanks to the Western (especially American) ambition for dominance and hegemony. They are fueling a losing war through their puppet, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the president of Ukraine.

History – which talks a lot about wars – is full of lies because it is written by the victors. Born in a British colony during the Second World War, I heard how bad the Germans and the Japanese were. It took me a while to learn the war crimes the Allied powers committed. I am yet to meet an American who recognizes the shameful atrocity Hiroshima represented.

Russian tanks waited at Ukraine’s border for months before invading Ukraine asking for assurance from Zelenskyy and the U.S.A that Ukraine will not join NATO. Imagine Canada and Mexico allowing Russian warheads on their land. However, the request was denied by both Zelenskyy and the U.S.A. Unreason prevailed and the war and killing started.

We live now in a world tightly cuffed by trade and communication. I have read that “the minuscule flap of a butterfly wing in Brazil can cause a massive tornado in Texas.” Since Russia is, the energy supplier to many nations, energy prices have skyrocketed which in turn is raising all prices, particularly the prices of food and consumables that ordinary people mostly need. The Russian economy is prospering despite American sanctions as the rest of the world is buying oil and gas from Russia.

As the war began, MasterCard and Visa, whose credit cards run everywhere, suspended Russian users. No effect, because the Russians had already moved the payment to a Russian agency, which now has a Russian card to boot, Mir. This is the trend. Bigger countries will recede from world trade to safe self-dependence. The real reason for worldwide commerce is that ordinary people pay less for goods produced cheaply in Malaysia or Madagascar rather than in Italy or England. The first thing the war will do is disrupt or break the supply chain; the next thing, it will raise the price of the commonest goods that common people use. Their life will get harder.

In the meantime, the leaders of the free world are having a picnic in Schloss Elmau in Germany at taxpayers’ expense where they plan to discuss Ukrainian War. They could have conducted this meeting through Zoom as most taxpayers do. The taxpayers deserve accountability.

# HUMOR

## Joe Biden's Losing Strategy

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



With an eye toward losing both the Senate and the House of Representatives in the upcoming mid-term election, Mr. Biden is looking for candidates who share the same passion as himself for losing elections.

“We are looking for candidates who are enthusiastic about looking for losing with big margins under the able leadership of President Biden,” declared Chuck Schumer, the majority Senate leader.

Schumer declared that the president would prefer candidates who are transgender, or bisexual. On top of that, they should also have past criminal records. All candidates must have the ability to organize mobs to initiate riots, kill police, and harass justices, and the Republican office-holders. “Unlike the Republican strategy to win seats, the Democratic candidates must have a track record of losing elections,” said Kraine Jean-Pierre, Biden’s Press Secretary who is a lesbian.

Contrary to the popular belief, our President is not losing it at all. He remembered the name of FOX correspondent, Peter Doocy and called him

“Son of A Bitch.” That proves that his cognitive ability is intact.

On top of that he has many past achievements to brag for. As Vice President, Biden oversaw the Iraq policy with Barack Obama, helped counteract the 2008 recession with Obama, instated the Affordable Care Act with Obama, dealt with the United States’s debt ceiling crisis in

2011 with Obama, cut taxes for low and middle classes while raising taxes on the wealthy with Obama, supported same-sex marriage with Obama and addressed rape and sexual assault with Obama. Recently, he poured billions of taxpayers’ dollars to fund the war in Ukraine resulting in the destruction of Ukraine and the massacre of its people.

Meanwhile, the reports coming from various sources reveal that celebrities such as Madonna, Amy Schumer, Jerry Springer, Katy Perry, Joanne Marie Conte, and Donna Price have shown great interest in running for office and losing to help President Biden in fulfilling his goal.



## Wither the Republican Party?

by Anil Shrivastava “Musafir”



The Republican party is split between two factions. One believes in the basic ideologies of the Grand Old Party which consists of belief in smaller government, fiscal conservatism, strong national defense, individual liberties and

responsibilities and tolerance, inclusiveness, and optimism. The other faction consists of those whom Hillary Clinton referred to as the deplorables. They are the far-right-extremists who think that true American patriots have to resort to violence to save

the country. They are the ones who led the January 6, 2021 incursion into the Capitol. President Trump is their assumed leader. The far-right extremism did not work its way to the heart of the Republican Party until the nomination and 2016 election of Trump.

Many moderate Republicans are pondering to run as independents. Though Liz Cheney, hasn't indicated that she plans to take an independent route yet if her standing among GOP voters worsens or if party leaders continue to push her aside, the pressure to leave the party and run as an independent may be her only option. According to Gallup, the share of Americans who identify as independents has surged. Fed up with the current two-party system, Americans are looking for a third option. The moderate Republicans taking the independent route may form a third party which will provide a good alternative for those who are tired of the two-party system.

The stress and strain of this conflict is very obvious inasmuch as the Republicans who

once were sure to flip both the houses in 2022 mid-term elections are now doubtful about even getting a majority in the House of Representatives having already given up hope for flipping the Senate. Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, in an interview with Sean Hannity on Fox News, said the fact that Mr. Trump and Mr. McConnell were "now at each other's throats" was imperiling the political outlook for Republicans. "I'm more worried about 2022 than I've ever been," Mr. Graham said.

There is another possibility. According to the latest report, Trump's grip on the Republican party is weakening and he may consider to split from the Republican party and form a party of his own. This is a distinct possibility as a Suffolk University/USA Today poll found that 46 percent of Trump voters would leave the party in favor of a Trump-created third party. If that happens, the Republican party may be saved. That may be a good riddance, after all.



## Happy-Go-Lucky

**Author:** David Sedaris

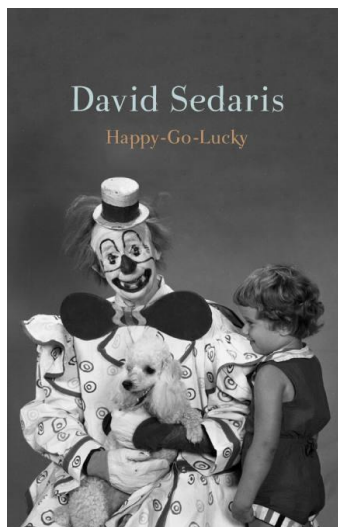
**Publisher:** First published by Little Brown and Company in 2022 (272 pages)

Happy-Go-Lucky written by David Sedaris is a collection of 18 different essays. Most of these essays were already published in The New Yorker and that's how I got the familiarity with his name. I must admit, however, that I never got to read anyone of his essays before.

Sedaris covers a variety of topics in this book; from gun safety lessons to interactions with family members, learning French, telling jokes, and dealing with his father's passing. Some of the essays recall events that happened many years ago, while others focus on more recent pandemic times. There isn't generally much connection between essays, and really it seems like they could be read in any order.

His anecdotal stories, reminiscing about his life and family, will simply touch the heart of every reader. He has the capacity to speak about the unspeakable, and he makes it tolerable and funny. He allows the reader to laugh at ideas that are not funny at first, the pandemic, dying, and lying, and

as he explores those topics. He makes even the most difficult ideas to discuss, palatable. Even his simplest stories have secondary subtle inferences that take us deeper into ideas about the way we live and interact.



Sedaris' writing style is a combination of conversational, matter-of-fact, and witty. He examines his relationship with Hugh, his partner of decades, with his sisters and his friends, and then with his father and mother, and the reader can't help but be reminded of their

own similar moments of joy or despair with their friends and family.

It is an enjoyable read as his essays are windows into his thoughts as he lives his life; often dealing with issues that many people will be familiar with, but likely from a different perspective than most people have. Overall, I liked the book; although I didn't feel anything extraordinary about it. -

**Reviewed by Musafir**

# ESSAY

## **Feeling Good Is Not Bad** *by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'*



Feeling good is not bad as this enables us the freedom to feel the pleasure of emotion, spirit, and contentment in our brief and potent life. I am recovering from major surgery. This helps me in healing myself physically and mentally. Thus, I become less willing to accept powerlessness, resignation, despair, self-effacement, depression, and self-denial.

On top of a tough recovery, I was also living in an age of immense interlocking crises, from climate to pandemics to wars. It almost felt impossible that happiness and satisfaction would ever be a part of my remaining life until I met some wonderful people who showed me the light at the end of the tunnel.



I met Sharron (not the real name) who was a home-health-care nurse during the first eight weeks of my recovery. Sharron was always cheerful and asked me to think positively. She told me to enjoy the present and the future which, according to her, was going to be brighter. I asked Sharron about her personal life. She was divorced from an abusive husband and was taking care of her autistic teen-aged son all by herself. She couldn't work a full-time job due to the condition of her child. Because she worked limited hours as a home health nurse, she just made barely enough money to take care of the household but she never pitied her circumstances and held her head high.

And here I was who went to the best hospital for my surgery and could afford home-health care, feeling eager for recovery and feeling pessimistic. Many of us, like me, are in a pattern of behaviors and practices that do not enhance our future, and it is past time to alter our entire thinking and environment. I can afford to have enough money to take care of myself and my wife, so I immigrated to America. I struggled for jobs here and finished my master's while taking care of my wife and two children on a shoestring. Though I was lucky to have a job, I was always under the threat of layoff adding to my anxiety and I also know that many of us experience flashes of joy throughout our lives, and if we are lucky, we get brief periods of respite, vacation, or retirement. But overall, we are not content. In all, we are not satisfied with what we experience and

worry about climate change, the polarization of America, the war in Ukraine, America's foreign policy, Biden or Trump winning in 2024 again, biased news on cable channels, abortion, transgenders competing with regular girls in sports, border crisis, possible invasion of China into Taiwan and chaos in Iraq and Sri Lanka. During all that, I never thought about folks like Sharron who are less resourceful than us.

I now notice and feel with guilt authentic contentment in people who have committed deeply to their own spiritual happiness, which gives them a long view of life and a grounding of peace in what is. I have witnessed happiness that seemed both performative and authentic in communities of the Nordic nations that seem to be quite happy with their plight.

I also remembered that my life has not always been comfortable. I struggled with anxiety attacks during my youth. I didn't insecurity. I survived through all that. Now that I am reaping the benefit of my golden years. I am reminded of Swamy Vivekanand's words:

"Comfort is no test of truth. Truth is often far from being comfortable."

accumulate. As a general state of affairs, we choose to suffer unnecessarily. In the end, we become what we practice. Feeling good is not bad at all.

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## India Rises above Caste Barrier by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



On July 2, 2022, something unique happened in India. Droupadi Murmu got elected as the 15th President of India. Her elevation to the position of the country's head of state is hailed as a historic moment. This is primarily because Murmu is India's first tribal President. Murmu won the election by receiving 64.03 percent of the total votes polled.

Murmu's election as president brings a ray of hope among the tribals of India. It is, indeed, historic in the discourse of India's social justice politics as India not only has never had a president from the tribal community before. Murmu's inspirational journey from her humble origins as a tribal leader to the presidency is an undeniable testimony of India's democratic credentials.

The Indians, especially the tribal community and so-called backward class are celebrating the moment as a harbinger of a

new India. Her background and her previous efforts to protect tribal land rights during her stint as Jharkhand (a state in India) governor raise the expectations that as president she will boost the focus on the marginalization and the unprivileged community in the country and will ensure greater protection of these vulnerable sections of the society.

"In India, the president is the head of the state and is indirectly elected by the electoral college which is constituted of the members of the Parliament and members of all legislative assemblies. The Constitution lays down that the President should act as per the aid and advice of the prime minister and the Council of Ministers. However, that doesn't entail that the office of the President of India is entirely titular in nature. There are certain conditions under which the President of India can perform the indispensable function of providing a stable democratic government and

preserving the sanctity of the Constitution. For instance, in case no party is able to get an absolute parliamentary majority in the national elections or the ruling party has lost its majority, the president has the power to decide which party forms the government.

Another crucial discretionary power of the President of India is to ratify the bills passed by the Parliament. In case the president has reservations about the bill, she can send it back (except Money Bill) to the Council of Ministers with her recommendations. In case the president has reservations about

the bill, she can exercise the discretionary power of Veto by not taking any action on the bill—neither sign it nor send it back to the Council of Ministers for reconsideration. In that case, the bill remains pending till the end of the President’s tenure. “ (Observer Research Foundation, Ghosh Ambar Kumar, July 25, 2022)

The sanctity of the office of the president lies in remaining above partisan politics and offering stability to national unity. India seems to accomplish that by choosing Murmu as the supreme commander of the country.

**I Can't Wait Anymore  
Ashokkumar Lal**

Vision is weak, hearing is bad,  
Steps are wobbly not steadfast,  
Spirit is low and mood very sad,  
That's I feel since old age I had.

Kids mock me, I don't like dog,  
Noise stirs me, don't like horde,  
Often weary and remain bored,  
Sunshine no more, see only smog.

Twilight leads to sleepless night,  
Full of nightmare, I flee and fright,  
Since morning I wait for the night,  
During the night I wait for the light.

Nothing remains no joy anymore.  
My life is spent nothing to look for,  
I had my share of joy, glee galore,  
Good bye dear, now I am aboard.

# Health Talk

## Depression in Men By Dr. Niru Prasad

Depression in Men By Niru Prasad Our life is full of good times and bad times, happiness and sorrow. If we are feeling “down” or “under the weather” for more than a few weeks, or are having difficulty functioning in our daily lives, we might be experiencing a serious illness called clinical depression. The good news is that clinical depression (which is a chemical imbalance in the body) is highly treatable if the diagnosis is made early enough. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, about six million American men suffer from depression every year, however men are far less likely than women to seek help not only for mental health problems but also for depression in particular. Researchers, clinicians, and psychologists are investigating the fact that traditional signs of depression (sadness, worthlessness, excessive guilt) may not represent many men’s experiences of a depressive period. It is possible that men may instead experience their depression in terms of increased fatigue, irritability, anger, hostility and abusive behavior, sleeplessness, and lack of interest in work. Untreated depression in males can result in personal, family, and financial problems. According to NIMH, the suicide rate is higher in depressed men than in women of all ages. Signs of depression in males include Feeling depressed, irritable, or exhibiting angry behavior every day. Losing interest in pleasurable activities. Acting reckless, engaging in violent behaviors, talking about separation or divorce. Eating disorders. Abusing Alcohol or drugs. While depression also hits women of all ages, they usually cry, talk more, and confide in others about their problems. In contrast, men keep their feelings to themselves. In fact, it is estimated that one million more men suffer from depression, however, instead of recognizing this fact they indulge in alcohol or drugs, gambling, etc. Or they might become workaholics to hide their feelings.

Depression in males has been linked to poverty, loss of job or spouse, or even medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, etc. New trends in treatment modalities of clinical depression For decades, scientists believed the main cause of depression was due to low levels of neurotransmitting serotonin and norepihephine in the brain. Hence, certain medications like Zoloft and Prozac, which are the most commonly prescribed antidepressants, help to boost the serotonin level in the brain as neurotransmitters, hence elevating the mood. Newer research, however, focuses on nerve cells because hyperactive stress responses, brought on by genetic predisposition, prolonged exposure to stress. A single traumatic event can cause permanent damage to the nerve cells leading to serious consequences. These discoveries have opened up broad new possibilities for treatments. Scientists are developing medications that block the production of excess stress chemicals aiming to reduce damage to otherwise healthy nerve cells. They are also looking at hormonal therapy for treatment of major and minor depression. Canadian scientists have had success with deep brain stimulation – a procedure where thin electrodes are implanted in mood regulating part of the brain. Researchers at NIMH are experimenting with the intravenous injection of “ketamine,” an animal tranquilizer, for quick and longlasting treatment of depression in human beings. However, due to hallucinogenic effect of the drug, these are only experimental. The most effective remedy for treatment of depression is still a combination of psychotherapy, psychological help, and medication. General treatment for depression in males of all ages

1. Remain active: exercise, do yoga, meditate.
2. Eat a well-balanced diet.
3. Avoid alcohol and drugs.
4. Do not bottle up your emotions; share your feelings with others.
5. Relax.
6. Get periodic health check-

ups with your physician. 7. Share your sad feelings with family and friends. 8. Ask for psychological help and seek counseling if symptoms persist. Lastly, remember the fact that it is your responsibility to be at the top of your game. Taking care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally will definitely help you lead a happy life without depression.

Summer 2007 The Think Club 15 Continued from Page 16 Ray the Ancient Runner without disrupting the makeshift domestic tranquility. He was left to his wit and craftiness to squeeze in the training he desired and needed and weekend races were entirely excluded. He ultimately violated the truce, committed the unforgivable, was attacked and dragged into open warfare. When Ray would appear in his running gear his wife would immediately leave the house and instruct Ray to "watch the baby." In this manner Ray was contained and unable to run.

He ultimately had a brilliant idea and plan that would allow him to watch the baby, get in a good 10 mile workout, without alerting his wife that he was indulging in the forbidden activity. Unfortunately for

Ray this was the year before baby joggers. If so simple and effective a device had been available Ray's marriage and a considerable portion of Ray's scalp would have been spared. His plan was sheer genius and the product of his brilliant mind. Ray would appear in running attire and loudly announce his desire for a "quick 10 mile workout." His wife would react predictably by grabbing the car keys, informing Ray that he was to care for the baby, and leave the house to complete some unnamed mission. Ray knew at this point he had a one-two hour window during which his wife would be gone and he was left to his own devices. With his wife safely over the horizon he would spring into action.

He would open the nursery window, pull the crib over to the window, and position his stopwatch next to the sleeping child. His brainstorm would then work thusly: Ray had a reliable one-mile loop around the neighborhood. He could run the measured mile,

stick his head in the open nursery room window, check his lap time and the condition of the baby in one quick easy motion. He could then run the second lap of his ten lap workout assured that the baby was asleep and safe. The scheme worked perfectly. His wife was happy, the baby was happy and Ray was happy. Ray had a quick 10-mile workout, the baby had a nice nap with lots of fresh air provided by the open nursery window and when Ray's wife arrived home she was pleased that Ray had done his domestic duty. All this was accomplished in one hour. The running group was very pleased with Ray and the arrangement. It was the subject of much discussion during our lunchtime runs. One day however as they say, "the best laid plans of mice and men..." this arrangement came apart and poor Ray suffered horribly. Ray appeared one Monday at noon for the group run with a terrible laceration on his head. His head looked a little lopsided with the hair shaved in one hemisphere, the scalp discolored by bruising and antiseptis, and a nasty looking laceration that had been closed with innumerable stitches. Our group run started in silence as Ray began his tale of running, intrigue, miscalculation, disaster and assassination. He had arisen on Saturday, donned his running garb and announced his plan to run a quick 10-mile workout. His wife left the house immediately. Ray then opened the window, positioned the sleeping infant and stopwatch next to the window and started his workout. The first mile went well. Ray stuck his head in the window, the baby was sleeping soundly and he had completed the first mile at a respectable six minutes. The second mile ended the same, head in the window, check the baby, check the watch, everything fine, fast and according to plan. Thus ended mile four, mile five, mile six and mile seven. Disaster struck, literally, at the end of mile eight. Ray rounded the last corner and approached the house hoping to be holding th





## Costco Is Open for Free Lunch Again Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



Do you know that COSTCO is open for free lunch again? With more and more Americans getting vaccinated, the country is starting to look ahead to a new normal. Costco is offering freeloaders to sample free snacks that can be turned into a

fabulous gourmet lunch with some skills. If you feel that you didn't have a complete fulfilling lunch by sampling the goodies, you are not doing it right.

I usually take several samples of mash potatoes, humus, Oscar Myers' bacon, salami and white fish (Michigan's specialty), bruschetta, an assortment of cheeses, and

cambozola as those items meet my dietary requirements. It's possible that all those things may not be available every day, but you can still design a gourmet treat for yourself with four or five items only. After all, you are having a free lunch. And don't forget the desserts. I usually prefer Lindor chocolate truffles and red-velvet mini-cakes. In the worst case, you can still sample cheesecake. Not bad!

Costco doesn't set a limit on how many rounds one can make to free food stalls. You can visit the samples as many times as your stomach desires. Though Costco management gladly allows customers to eat free samples as many times as they prefer, it becomes embarrassing for a self-respecting person like me to look like a free-loader. I have a solution for that too.

case you want to beat the lunch rush, my experience tells me that 3 pm or 4 pm is a good time to sample food.

Many times, I take my bachelor friends from India who are here on an H1B visa to Costco for matchmaking and obtaining a Green Card. Plenty of American-born Indian girls frequent Costco. It provides a good place for them to have a cost-free lunch

By this time everyone owns free facemasks. That's my preferred way to avoid embarrassment. I use a different facemask every time I make a new round along the free sample stands. That way, the food stall attendants, probably, don't recognize me.

Here are the best times to go to Costco for sampling free treats. Usually, Mondays and Tuesdays are the best days to score the most free food. Shoppers usually fill in their carts on Saturdays and Sundays, so there is less competition for free food samples on Mondays and Tuesdays. Should you go on a weekend, the best time to go is before 10 am or 11 am before the weekend rush hits. If you are a late riser like me, the best time to go is between 1 pm and 2 pm because all consignments are in by that time giving you more options to choose from. In

date and a road to stay in America for good. Costco doesn't mind that. More customers generate more sales for them, anyway.

Working around all those tempting food is a good inflation beater. Don't believe me? Try grocery shopping, if you are not a Costco freeloader. You may thank me later for this great consumer advice. Bye for now!



## NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### ANIL SHRIVASTAVA 'MUSAFIR'

What is a Metaverse?

The metaverse is a computer-generated parallel world where people in form of Avatars (computer-generated images of themselves) act and interact with other Avatars in a computer-generated environment. In other words, it's a virtual world. The term was first coined by Neal Stephenson in his novel Snow Crash. In the book, the Metaverse is described as a three-dimensional virtual world where people can interact with each other and with computer-generated characters.

In this virtual world, people through their Avatars can talk to new people, play games with friends and strangers, drive cars or



bikes around town, attend concerts, and much more.

A metaverse also has its own rules, its own physics, and even its own currency called bits, coin, or token.

Metaverse is catching up. There are different metaverses created by different techies. I tried one called

“Decentraland.” If curious, you may like to visit <https://play.decentraland.org/>

What is a Blockchain?

Blockchain is a shared ledger that records transactions and tracks assets in a business

network. Blockchain stores information in batches called blocks. These blocks are linked together in a sequential way to form a continuous line- a chain of blocks. That's why it is called a blockchain.

Blockchains are mostly used with cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

What is Bitcoin mining?

Bitcoin (or any other cryptocurrency) mining is the process of verifying new transactions to the Bitcoin digital currency system, as well as the process by which new bitcoin enter into circulation. As you can guess, Bitcoin mining is, of course, purely metaphorical. Bitcoin mining is done to record current bitcoin transactions in blocks, which are then added to a blockchain, or the record of past transactions.

Why Is Cryptocurrency mining bad for the environment?

Cryptocurrencies are so devastating to the environment that Elon Musk stopped trading in Bitcoin. As a result, the value of Bitcoin crashed from an all-time high of \$64,000 to \$22,000 now. According to the Cambridge Bitcoin Electricity Consumption Index, bitcoin-mining operations worldwide now use energy at the rate of nearly a hundred and twenty terawatt-hours per year. This is about the annual domestic electricity consumption of the entire nation of Sweden. A single bitcoin transaction uses the same amount of power that the average American household consumes in a month.

Why Is EV (electrical vehicle) bad for the environment?

Widespread adoption of electric vehicles nationwide will likely increase air pollution compared with new internal combustion vehicles which are very clean and efficient now. The energy required to run an EV comes from power generated by natural gas, fossil fuels, and coal. Even with large increases in wind and solar generation, the EIA projects that the nation's electric generating mix will be just 30% renewable by 2030. On top of that, the wires and charging stations needed to charge all those electric vehicles will put a strain on power generating systems and eventually will raise electric rates.

That's just one part of the equation. The real culprits are batteries that run EVs. This happens because these batteries are made of rare earth elements (REE) like lithium, nickel, cobalt, or graphite that only exist beneath the surface of the Earth and therefore depend on mining activities with very polluting processes. In the conventional car industry, according to a study from the international council of clean transportation (ICCT), 99% of lead-acid batteries (the ones running in fossil fuel-powered cars) are recycled in the US. This is not the case for lithium-ion batteries that have a very specific mix of chemical components and little quantities of lithium, which doesn't make them an appealing market opportunity. The EV batteries are either incinerated or dumped in landfills which don't make electric vehicles greener at all.

I am not saying that EVs will never take off, but right now is not the right time to adopt EVs.

## The Old Coffee House

### Anil Shrivastava ' Musafir'



I like cafes, not like Starbucks where people do job interviews, talk business, or are working on computers with headphones on. I like the kind we used to frequent while in school to get a break from studies where friends used to meet and talk for no other reason than they liked to talk or the kind Hemingway used to frequent in the movie, “Midnight in Paris.”

I liked the vibrant ambiance of the old cafe where the people were lively despite being incongruous. Even the waiters recognized us and received us with amused tolerance and patience despite our slow ordering and perpetual penury. That association prompted me to explore coffee house places I visited.

I know of no better way to know a person than to talk. I suppose two people can look at each other and get a laugh. I still go to cafes to meet my friends. We often talk trivial things such as about days gone by, youth, and even women.

The other point is less personal but no less important. We talk of politics, the economy, and missed opportunities. In the end, we agree to disagree but we always leave on the other an imprint of our different takes. That difference is like a catalyst of change; it has the potential to change the other’s view, a little or a lot. In all, it is the key recurrent source of exposure to a new idea.

Many times, we reject the other’s view cavalierly, without giving it further thought. Occasionally, however, the new idea stays, germinates, and kicks off a new way of thinking. So, I like to talk, just talk, nothing useful or practical, perhaps something shallow and frivolous, which still helps me connect and learn.

Talking of our school café, it was different compared to the sparkling new coffee houses that we visit now. That had the old-world charm of a crowded smoke-filled atmosphere. The stairwell had cracks, the chairs were often askew and tables were in varying states of disrepair, but the ambiance was cozy where people talked, animated, and fought over political stands and literary opinions, waved their hands, and raised their voices- a strange affability that I still carry with me. That cafe was different, but I felt at home there.



# Our Stay in Panama

Rajendra Srivastava

(Mr. Rajendra Srivastava is a retired senior executive of the State Bank of India. He writes from Mumbai, India)

I had the opportunity to stay in Panama, Panama City to be exact, for four years from 1980 to 1984. I was on posted there through my bank. Since Panama is a free trade zone, it's a hub of 120 international banks that finance international trade. I was surprised to find that Panama City and the adjoining areas had close to 200

Indian families. We used to meet them at parties sometimes arranged by the Indian ambassador to Panama.

We all know that Panama Canal is the main attraction of Panama. The canal is designated as one of the 8 wonders of the world by the Society of Civil Engineers. Connecting the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans, it is 82 Km long and saves 1,200 km of a sea voyage that had to go around Cape Horn (the southern tip of South America) before 1916 AD. Over 15,000 ships pass thru Panama Canal every year.

Panama's economy, unlike other mid-American countries, is robust having a per

capita income of 25,000 American dollars per annum. Panama's population is 4.4 million (in 2022). It earns most of its income from the service sector mainly from

banking, commerce, insurance, and tourism. It is also an exporter of bananas, coffee, sugar, and shrimp.

Panama is the epitome of Spanish culture. It was a part of the Spanish

Empire for over 300 years between 1531 and 1821. It gained its independence from Spain in 1821 and from Columbia in 1903. Of course, Spanish is the national language there.

We really enjoyed our stay in Panama. My wife, Ruchi joined as an algebra tutor in St Mary School, and our three children studied in the same school. We sold Indian snacks during school functions and donated the proceeds to St Mary School. We'll always relish the memories of Panama.



## Olivia Newton-John



Olivia Newton-John, a singer I admired since 1974, died on August 8, 2022, after a courageous fight with cancer at the age of 73. She came to the USA in the same year as I. She was almost my age.

I first watched her on Merv Griffin's show where she sang, "If you love me let me know, if you don't let me go." Apart from looking simple and shy, she had a scintillating voice. I became her fan right then. There are good singers and there are great ones. A good singer can carry a tune, and might even make it as a professional. A great singer is someone who can make feel love or hope or loss or anger that the person is conveying. Olivia Newton-John was one of them.

I don't know much about music, but I can tell a great piece when I hear one. In the case of Olivia Newton-John, all her songs were great without any exception. And who can forget her performance in the musical "Grease." I don't know anyone who hasn't watched the movie at least twice. Many folks have watched the Newton-Travolta starred magnum-opus twenty times. Newton-John plays Sandy, an innocent Australian ex-pat who moves to the same school as her summer fling Danny (played by John Travolta). Together they give thrilling performances with her ability as a musical storyteller, able to express so much simply through the sound of her voice. The film's centerpiece was her song, "Hopelessly Devoted to You".

Her songs, "Honestly I Love you, Have You Never Been Mellow, Don' Stop Believin, "Magic," "You Are the One I Want," "Please Mr. Please," "Xanadu," "Let Me Be There," will resonate in my ears as long as I live.

As the world reflects on her death, she will be remembered in many ways: she was a wife, a mother, an advocate for breast cancer charities and environmental causes, a much-loved actor, and one of the 20th century's best-selling recording artists. Let's hope, though, that her legacy simply as a vocalist also never vanishes from memory: Olivia Newton-John was a one-of-a-kind singer, and she shone her voice's great light on everything she lent it to. **-Anil Shrivastava**

'Musafir' <https://youtu.be/Jcp1ELz81w8>