

Dear friends, Hope you all had a great weekend, and if you are in the US, a great thanksgiving. The last time I wrote "Random Thoughts" was almost six months ago, just before our son was born. The past six months have been the most exciting, exhilarating as well as the most exhausting time of our lives. Prashant is growing every day, in every way. Our life is really centered around him. I have long since given up trying to plan anything, instead just do things day to day as time permits. I am learning to focus just on the moment. As they say, life is a marathon and not a sprint.

I do miss very much the company of friends. I hope you all will stay in touch at least by email!
Sankar

PS: I write more about life on my blog. I have also posted pictures on flickr. You can reach both through nature-lover.net. To see Prashant pictures you have to be a member of flickr (free sign-up) and I have to add you as a friend.

Random Thoughts (110)

1. (6/10) If in sports and other high intensity situations the best way is to "Just do it" then when it comes to meditation or mental stability the motto should be "Just be it." In both

situations thinking simply gets in the way.

2. (6/28) If you have been reading these messages during the past six years you will recall how I lamented the madness that was taking over the country during the years after Obama took over -- the hatred and the anger mostly because of the fact that a black man was now President, the refusal to do anything about gun violence even after dozens of little children were murdered. The events of the past week seem to be a sort of an answer to the question "when and how will this madness end?" It may not be ending anytime soon but it surely is on its way out. The Republican party after realizing how self-destructive its strategy of fanning the flames of anti-Obama anger is now trying to move to the center. After the heroic and very Christian act of forgiveness on the part of the Charleston victims' families people seem to have realized that this has gone too far.

3. (7/9) My life can be summed up in a single tweet but to understand it you will need to spend all of yours with me: Every moment is a problem that I enjoy solving through meditation.

4. (7/12) Whenever I hold Prashant in my arms I feel like I am in a dream world. Not only

because he is my son but also from the sheer admiration for the miracle of life. I wonder what he is going through. It is clear from his bright inquisitive eyes that he is taking in everything that he sees in the world. Especially when I walk him outside. What does he make of the trees, the flowers, the birds chirping and the sun shining? How much of it he is able to see clearly? What is going through his mind when he looks at them? Our world is also full of many man-made wonders, much of which did not even exist when I was his age. What does he make of the flickering images on the television or the computer, the automobiles on the road and the water flowing out of a tap?

5. (8/5) For many years I have been, for whatever reason, trying to understand the perspective of "heartland" Americans. Kansas, in particular, used to be more moderate and produced Dwight Eisenhower among others. As the author of the article below -- a native Kansan now with the NY Times-- writes, some of our views of them are caricatures. This is a matter of fact report on the mindset of conservative Kansan legislators and while painting them with a human touch it shows ultimately that they have been misled by foolish, almost suicidal policies on the economic

front. I would argue on the social and cultural front, as well.



6. (8/22) Is it just me or does Donald Trump sound like one of the Austin Powers characters of Mike Myers?

7. (9/7) There have been many explanations for the meteoric rise of the entertaining Mr. Trump. I like the following the best: The propaganda from the right wing moneyed interests has been able to use the fog of distorted information to confuse the average white Republican citizenry. They have been able to turn them against their own interests by throwing smoke screens and directing their anger at "those people," meaning the minorities and the liberals who side with them. Now here comes a master of propaganda and mass media who does not care about truth but is able to win people over

with his bombastic style and swagger. Why would people want to now go back to believing in facts?

(Added 10/26) Perhaps another reason for his rise is that he projects a certain swagger that people of a certain inclination like. I think a lot of dictators come to power because they project a certain strength and people identify with them and feel like they are strong too because they are part of the same team.

8. (9/12) I was reading comments on the A Word a Day website. Someone quoted this from Don Quixote: "“When life itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies? Perhaps to be too practical is madness. To surrender dreams - - this may be madness; and madness of all: to see life as it is, and not as it should be.” At first it came as directly contradicting the Buddhist (and some other traditions as well) teaching to see life as it is. But upon a bit of reflection it occurs to me that we are not always ready to see life as it is. Some of us need to chase after our dreams a little bit before we understand what is true.

9. (10/4) We have so many expectations for our children. When I look at Prashant I sometimes hope that he will be a force for good in the world. Sometimes I hope that he will learn both of our traditions well. Sometimes I wish for him to

be good at sports. But those are all just idle thoughts, mere fantasies. When I think about it, I realize that I have no right to expect anything from him. He didn't ask to be brought in to this world. We made a decision to give birth to him. He is God's gift to us. All we should think about is how can we care for him the best we can, and how can we make him happy. So it has been my prayer and hope since even before he was born that he should be healthy and happy. Maybe I will add to it a pet desire for him to be tall as well. Six feet would be good. I have heard that tall men have better opportunities in life and that generally things are easier for them.

10. (10/26) I collect a lot of brownie points but never cash them. Now that I have a baby maybe it is time :-)

11. (11/25) The more I care for Prashant and the more I hold him in my arms the more I want to be there for him as he grows up, in this uncertain world. I worry about what will happen if I am not there for him. In order to face this fear I need to dig deep into my spiritual practice. What I can do right now is to simply enjoy every moment I have with him and be the best father and man that I can be. I also know I have the support and love of many in this process and Prashant will receive the same. I am grateful for having Nicole as my partner and his mother. I am grateful for our parents and siblings and their families for the love and caring that they have been showering upon us

during this time. I am grateful for all the extended family and friends, especially those of the Sangha family of followers of Thich Nhat Hanh. I am grateful for all the wonderful people in the world working selflessly every day to make this world a better place. I am also grateful to the native Americans and African American slaves whose spirit and sacrifice has played a big part in making this land into what it is today.

Be humble for you are made of Earth. Be noble for you are made of stars. -Serbian proverb