

Dear friends,

Hope you are all well. Hope your holidays were full of peace and joy and may the new year bring more peace and joy to you and your family.

How time has flown. Life for me has changed so much in the past few months. A lot has happened in a short time period. The last “random thoughts” I wrote just a few days before my wedding in New Jersey. After that there was the wedding in DC and a short trip to Cape May, NJ. Fall classes followed and as soon as the work of a hectic semester was done we were off on our late honeymoon to India. After a whirlwind tour we got back last week. But all went well and we got some good rest the past few days.

The main change is that these days I spend less time day-dreaming or thinking about random stuff. (So you can expect less frequent “random thoughts” :-). Most of my time is spent in thinking about what needs to be done at the moment. Also I have a completely new perspective on life as a married man. Somehow that seems to have given me a better understanding of people. Even during the trip to India, though sometimes Nicole got a bit tired of my complaints, overall I found more things to like than on previous trips. In particular I had a newfound appreciation for the commitment people show to their family and community. I will miss India for a while.

I am attaching a powerpoint description of the trip with pictures. Many more pictures are posted on flickr.com/sankarx. I felt that many things in India are changing for the better. While there is still much inequality in terms of wealth and living standards, more people seem to be able to reach for a better life. Things change very slowly in India, and it is always chaotic, but changing it is nevertheless. One still has to be patient, something I find more difficult after being in the US. I do admire the patience of fellow Indians though they shouldn't have to be so patient in the first place. Indians, like Americans, are at the core a good-hearted people, though you wouldn't be able to tell it from the way we jostle each other at bus stops and railway stations and everywhere else.

Well, I will stop there for now. Hope you enjoy reading this email. Please do keep in touch! Hope to see you all very soon at a party or some other event. I miss all of you.  
Sankar

PS: If you receive this for first time, “Random Thoughts” is an occasional email letter I send to my friends. More at [nature-lover.net/writings](http://nature-lover.net/writings)

Random thoughts (83)  
1/15/2011

1. For better or worse, I read books only when I am too lazy to think.
2. There has been a systematic campaign of destruction of progressive causes in the past two decades. Perhaps certain corporate types got scared of all the progress made during the sixties and the successful campaigns against exploitative practices. Combining demagoguery with character assassination and slick advertising campaigns they have managed to distort, demonize

and marginalize one good cause after another: ACORN, Climate Change... unfortunately it is the American middle class that is being brainwashed and pummeled by stagnating wages, unemployment, childhood obesity and on and on. Of course, if you ask so called conservatives they will blame all of it on Liberals and immigrants.

3. American TV seems to be dominated by cops, docs and lawyers.

4. Speaking of the environment, here is an uplifting story:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2009/jul/23/1>

William Kamkwamba of Malawi didn't let famine stop his goal of getting an education, and using scrap, he built windmills to bring irrigation and power to his village. Kamkwamba grew up as a poor farmer, growing maize. In 2001, crop failures set off a horrible famine, and his family ate only one meal a day. He went to a local library and began to read books, especially ones about physics. One of the books he read explained how windmills could be used to generate electricity and pump water. At only 14, he decided to build a windmill himself and the rest is history. Africans, like Kamkwamba, are solving their own problems. To read more, check out the [blog Afrigadget](#), which covers stories like this everyday.

5. Nicole and I attended the 10/10/10 global climate action day rally. Beautiful day. Small but spirited crowd. Lennox Yearwood fired people up. James Hansen, Joe Romm et al spoke of urgency of climate change action. Also heard about the million letter march –<http://www.millionlettermarch.org>. But I didn't like criticism of Obama – need to put pressure on Republicans and also fight back against climate deniers before going after Obama. The problem with progressives is that we don't have a unified agenda. While democrats were headed towards disaster, each of us was fighting for our own cause. Unfortunately, now it is difficult for all of us with the Republicans in control. On the other hand, you could say that nothing could have stopped the “shellacking” – I am not sure about that, though.

6. (10/26/10) Keeping fingers crossed for election. Foxnews continuing character assassination of Obama. But I do understand why people flock to it –rural and southern people feel they have no place in melting pot, liberal America. I can see it in their eyes when I go to places like West Virginia and the Eastern Shore.

7. See this article by the now famous economist, Nouriel Roubini. He predicted the financial meltdown and here talks about another looming crisis (thanks to my friend Amir for forwarding):  
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/dd140d16-e2c2-11df-8a58-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1BAgt1Mdg>

8. It takes some skill to disagree without being disagreeable: Some who do it are Jon Stewart, Obama, Nick Clegg (watched him on question hour—sarcasm but still humorous).

9. Midterm election a tragedy for democracy. Hope in 2012 Americans would be sensible enough to reelect Obama.

10. I spent a lot of time volunteering for midterm election. I didn't dwell on it, and turned my focus to work right away. But the disappointment lingered in the back of the mind for several days. I realize that it is only politics. Once I meditate a little bit and see the true nature of things, I could put politics in perspective. Much as I try to be mindful, it is easy to get caught in the whole game of “whose side is winning.” One gets attached to results in general, rationalizing it with the thought that we are on the

side of truth and goodness. Maybe it will all be for the good. Need to see the good in all, even the so called conservatives, as Obama tries to do.

11. Blue states leading in new economy:

Washington State joins Massachusetts, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey in the top five states at the forefront of the nation's movement toward a global, innovation-based new economy, according to [report](#) released by ITIF and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. Regionally, the New Economy has taken the strongest hold in the Northeast, mid-Atlantic, Mountain West and Pacific regions; 13 of the top 20 states are in these four regions. In contrast, 18 of the 20 lowest-ranking states are in the Midwest, Great Plains and the South. The bottom 25 states ALL voted strongly Republican in the midterm elections.

12. Football as uniter: Why do I still watch it? While I cringe at the commercialism and violence, on balance it does have many qualities that I like. People value what is best, what you do, not the sound of your name or your face. It reflects in many ways America itself. Speaking of which, what are the common threads of values, attitudes, etc., that run amongst all Americans? I am thinking of making a compilation. Serious!! Maybe someone has written a book about it. I don't mean the many "Only in America" jokes!

13. Obama Presidency has become a balancing act. He has become the mediator between the two extremes. His main opponent in the midterm election was certain corporate interests. Republicans are simply carrying water for them.

14. Recently I went to the Laundromat. It occurred to me that Seinfeld never went there. Nor did I ever see him cooking during the entire 9 year run of the series.