

Dear friends, Hope you are enjoying the languid last days of summer. We spent a very pleasant week in Puerto Rico but otherwise it has been mostly work, mixed in with generous amounts of watching sports of all kinds. I am lucky that I really enjoy what I do. Otherwise it would be difficult to toil away like this, although I hope to get some good results soon. It also helps to spend time with nature and in meditation.

In this random thoughts email I write about Puerto Rico, Golf, politics and social change and finally about meditation. Hope you enjoy reading it and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours, Sankar

P.S: I have posted pictures from our trip to Puerto Rico and other summer activities at <http://flickr.com/sankarx> (Click on "Sets" for easier viewing). I have also written about that trip and my walks in my blog. You can read it at <http://nature-lover.net/leafy-streets>

Random Thoughts (96)
8/21/2013

1. (7/15) In a way being in Puerto Rico felt at times like coming back to my home. At times the tropical plants and the air brought me back memories of my childhood so strongly that I had to remind myself I was thousands of miles from Kerala. The streets, the buildings, even the people reminded me very strongly of Kerala. I hope you get a bit of an idea about that from the pictures. We all came from this mother earth, and just as memories of our mother's womb and bosom are buried deep in our subconscious, memories of the soil where we grew up are buried deep within us. Perhaps as we get older, the longings for the motherland grow stronger.
2. (7/16) Vacations are like a stop to catch a breath of fresh air while running in the race of life.
3. (7/21) I have written about my interest in Golf before (see "Of Cats and Men" <http://nature-lover.net/writings/stories/cats.doc>). I usually watch the major championships. This year Shiv Kapur from India made a little splash on the first nine holes of the British Open, only to collapse afterwards. But Tiger Woods is in contention. Nicole is not very fond of Woods ever since the scandals broke out. I do feel a bit guilty about rooting for him, as I do about watching a game played mainly by the elite, on courses that are most of the time harmful to the environment. But for many reasons I like watching Tiger play as well as the game of golf. I think Woods is one of those gifted people who elevate the game and we are usually more forgiving of people that are so sublimely talented. And he is doing some good with his foundation. Also, I heard Arnold Palmer mention that golf courses must be made more environmentally friendly. I have also decided never to go to a golf game in person, unless the course is maintained in a sustainable earth friendly way. But the game itself is a beautiful thing, I think, and at the least they have trees and grass

instead of concrete, as they do in NASCAR. Speaking of which, I enjoy driving fast and watching car races. But both are terrible for the environment (unless you are driving a Tesla roadster powered by clean energy, maybe?). So I will forgo that pleasure for now :-)

4. (7/22) Regressive laws on voting, guns and women's rights. Denial and blockade of climate change action. Obstruction of everything in Congress that would help the poor and middle class. Is there a silver lining to all this? I could think of one: The intolerant and ignorant minority that is pushing all this cannot hide their nastiness anymore. It is out in broad daylight and hopefully people will push back in a big way at the polls.

5. (8/17) During the first two years of Obama I was worried about all the hatred and obstruction. Today it seems that is coming from both sides. There are many liberals who don't trust Obama. That was true even before but now with the NSA leaks and Guantanamo force-feeding it has gotten louder. As much as it annoys me, because I still admire and trust Obama, I am beginning to think that it is all for the good. We have a historic opportunity to rein in the powers of the military-industrial-intelligence complex. There is bipartisan anger and a President who is willing to listen, even prod Congress into action. Another area where both the right and the left can agree on is climate change. Lately, GOP voices have started talking about the need to do something. Tea party activists in Texas and Georgia have worked together against Keystone XL and to get utilities to adopt more solar and wind. Evangelicals want Christians to think of fighting climate change as a moral obligation...Change is turbulent and chaotic, but it is happening and it is for the good...

6. (8/18) I love thinking, computing and figuring things out...

7. What is the connection between democracy and women's empowerment? The link between the latter and health of children as well as other social welfare aspects is well established. It seems to me, where women are suppressed, democracy doesn't thrive. Could it be, a few powerful men start dictating policy in such societies?

8. I believe in revolutions that are organic and starting at the grass roots. I don't believe in tearing things down. I believe in working with all stakeholders to effect change. Where dialogue fails, I believe in non-violent action. I think we can achieve more by appealing to the best in human beings. As MLK jr said, only light can remove darkness.

9. Problem with fundamentalists of any religion or ideology: they think they are the purest, because they follow the teachings of their religion or their principles more rigorously. They cannot accept that other people may also have the wisdom and knowledge to know the truth, and they refuse to forgive those that they consider less pure. Because forgiving doesn't mean thinking "oh, he is a sinner, I will pray for

him" but rather knowing that in God's eyes all are the same.

10. (8/21) Today I finished the two-day purification/rededication rituals that we go through every year in our family. We do a lot of chanting, prayer, meditation and ritual offerings to our ancestors both spiritual and temporal. Yesterday I chanted a mantra to remove anger and desire 1008 times. Today I chanted the Gayatri mantra 308 times (1008 would have taken me 3 hours or more :-). Both days I felt very peaceful afterwards. I have been negligent in my practice lately, resulting in the mind being not as calm as it should be. So it gives great relief and a feeling of fulfillment to do more meditation. Yet as I have mentioned before in rt93, one should not get too attached to joy, even one that comes from satisfaction of attaining peacefulness. On the other hand, I don't recall there being too much anti-joy teachings in Buddhism or Hinduism. I think being attached to something is different from having something or using something. One needs the body and mind to be in good condition in order to be a loving, useful member of society. The problem comes when we get attached to the body and mind being in good condition. So I am going to allow myself this satisfaction and state of peace and bliss, knowing fully well that it is simply a necessity and not an end in itself.