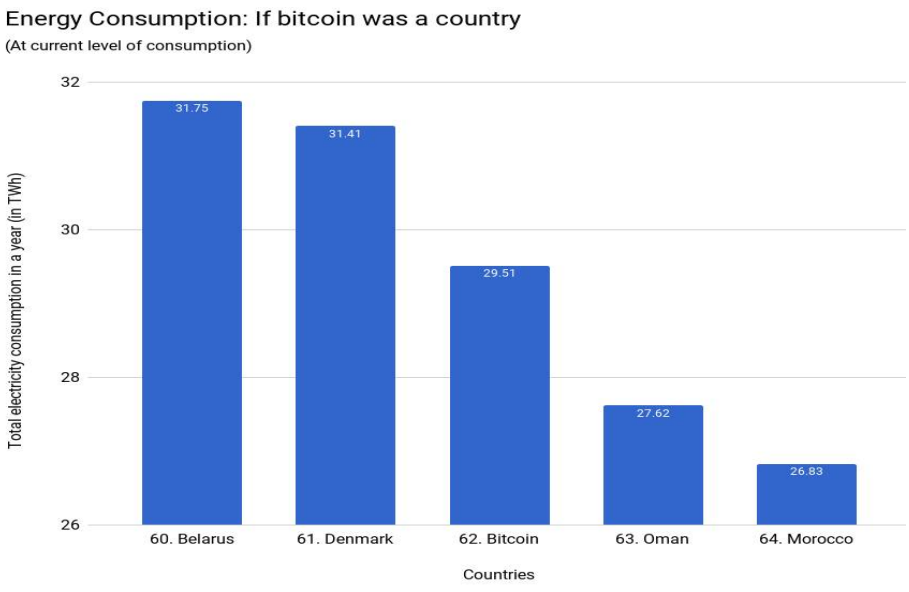
Ten Interesting Things

WEEKLIES | **January 25, 2018**

At Ambit, we spend a lot of time reading articles that cover a wide gamut of topics, including investment analysis, psychology, science, technology, philosophy, etc. We have been sharing our favourite reads with clients under our weekly 'Ten Interesting Things' product. Some of the most interesting topics covered in this week's iteration are related to 'India's missing middle class, 'Internet of fungus', and 'UK's first loneliness minister'.

1. **Fire, fury and the real trouble with Trump** [Financial Times] (https://goo.gl/AhU2hk)
2. **TV, retail, advertising and cascading collapses** [Source: ben-evans.com] (https://goo.gl/kd6UvE)
3. **Japan is ill prepared for coming labour shock** [Source: Financial Times] (https://goo.gl/DfPn8E)
4. **Loneliness is contributing to our increasingly tribal politics** [Financial Times] (https://goo.gl/17wCEB)
5. **Globish just doesn't cut it anymore** [Source: Financial Times] (https://goo.gl/rfWFzE)
6. **You say Paywalls are back? For the FT, they never went away** [Source: fastcompany.com] (https://goo.gl/e258wQ)
7. **Debunking myths about estrangement** [Source: NY times] (https://goo.gl/6ybhJK)
8. **Ashes: Is cricket the hardest sport to win away from home?** [Source: BBC] (https://goo.gl/Nnk3TS)
9. **The internet is filling up because Indians are sending millions of 'Good Morning' texts** [WSJ] (https://goo.gl/LQXAF3)
10. **What Madras taught me about going home** [Source: Livemint] (https://goo.gl/cs6DbM)

Bitcoin's energy consumption already surpasses that of entire countries like Oman and Morocco



Source: CIA World Fact Book, Money control

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1) **Fire, fury and the real trouble with Trump** [Financial Times] (https://goo.gl/AhU2hk)

Text for google: The discord revealed in Michael Wolf's expose in all too plausible

- Edward Luce of the FT piece discusses three books covering the span of Donald Trump's persona — entertaining and chilling at the same time.
- Michael Wolff's *"Fire and Fury"* paints a White House in which virtually no one has any respect left for the President and where the staff are in "a state of queasy sheepishness, if not constant incredulity". Both Reince Priebus, Trump's former White House chief of staff, and Steven Mnuchin, his Treasury secretary, are quoted as calling the president an "idiot". Axios, the email-based newsletter, revealed last week that Trump is cutting his office hours ever shorter. When asked whom he most trusted, "The answer is me," said Trump. "I talk to myself." Wolff discusses how Trump has a diabolical knack for divining other people's resentments. He often tries out different applause lines at rallies and sticks with the ones that resonate. Such market testing appears to work. He has an ability to identify with people who feel slighted. Wolff describes how on a tour of Atlantic City with foreign investors many years ago, Trump was asked to define "white trash". He replied: "They're people just like me, only they're poor." Trump converted their frustrations into electoral gold.
- Luce says *Trumpocracy* is a far more rewarding book than *Fire and Fury*. The significance of Trump's administration goes so much deeper than Wolff's "idiot and clown" account. Trump's fate will shape the future of liberal democracy. That is what makes it so alarming. As the author David Frum points out: "Democracy is a work in progress. So is democracy's undoing." All it takes is for good men, and women, to do nothing. Trump's inauguration committee raised $107mn — twice the previous record — with donations from financiers who had previously shunned Trump. Paul Singer, the "Never Trump" hedge fund billionaire, donated $1mn. In the first four months of 2017, the Trump International Hotel in Washington took in $4.1mn more in revenues than projected at a time when other hotels' occupancy rates were flat or declining. Meanwhile, senior Republican figures such as Paul Ryan, the speaker of the House of Representatives, now routinely sings Trump's praises. The party's gatekeepers have decided to swallow their doubts. "It is their public actions, despite their private qualms, that sustain Trumpocracy," writes Frum.
- Levitsky and Ziblatt's *How Democracies Die* rejects the exceptionalist account of US democracy. Their lens is comparative. The authors say America is not immune to the trends that have led to democracy's collapse in other parts of the world. "Our constitutional system, while older and more robust than any in history, is vulnerable to the same pathologies that have killed democracy elsewhere" they write. Since the turn of this century, according to the Stanford scholar Larry Diamond, no fewer than 25 countries have ceased to be democratic. In almost all cases this happened by stealth within an existing system that retained outwardly democratic trappings. The authors set out four tests for whether a democracy is in danger. The **first** is when an elected leader rejects the democratic rules of the game. Trump more than meets this test. The **second** test is whether the leader rejects the legitimacy of his opponents. Ditto. The **third** is whether he tolerates or encourages violence. During the campaign he encouraged supporters to beat up protesters and even defray their legal costs. The **final** one is whether the leader is willing to curtail civil liberties of opponents, including the media. Trump almost daily accuses the media of bias and threatens them with libel action. It took Trump's lawyers less than 48 hours to issue a "cease and desist" threat to Wolff's publishers.
- As these authors diligently show, democracy is based on norms rather than rules. The system is only as good as the people who uphold it. Plenty of Latin American democracies adopted the US constitution almost word for word. It offered them little protection against the depredations of strongmen. According to Wolff, Trump does not even understand the basics of the US Constitution. An aide who was asked to explain it to him stopped after the Fourth Amendment — Trump's mind had wandered elsewhere. The only people who hold real sway in his White

House are his "shamelessly grasping extended family," says Frum. That may be true. But American democracy's ultimate arbiters are those on Capitol Hill, in the federal bureaucracy, in the media and elsewhere who have the power to block or enable him. Whether Trump's White House heralds a new phase in American politics — or a grotesque aberration — is in the hands of those whose names we may not know. The secret sauce of democracy is the integrity of people.

2) **TV, retail, advertising and cascading collapses** [Source: ben-evans.com] (https://goo.gl/kd6UvE)

- Ben Evans of Andreessen Horowitz in this piece talks about the current trends that don't necessarily fit into mega tech narratives like machine learning, autonomous cars, etc. but might have almost as much impact in the next, say, five years. Ben says that there is a set of accelerating and interlocking changes happening in TV, advertising and retail that could lead to some interesting discontinuous and cascading effects. For instance, he says TV viewing is finally starting to unlock and move away from linear and cable bundles, especially in the USA. That ought, in due course, to have some effect on TV ad inventory and rates: some viewing will go to places without ads, or where ads are sold very differently, overall viewing might fall (though this seems unlikely), and viewing will be distributed in different ways - probably, as tends to happen with digital, the curve will get much steeper. The hits are bigger and the mid-market stuff that's only viewed because of where it is on the linear schedule will suffer. So, he says, TV ad inventory will probably look different.
- As ecommerce keeps growing, at some point we will start to see certain brick & mortar retailers disappear - it's common to say there are strong parallels with newspapers, in that they have a fixed cost base, falling revenue, and the wrong assets & skills. When internet reading or internet buying was 5%, it felt as though it might be additive to newspapers or retails - at 10 or 20%, as it is now, it becomes an existential problem. That is, at a certain point they stop being able to cut costs at the margin and start closing stores, or radically changing format etc. So, rhetorically (or apocalyptically) speaking, when Sears and Macy's go bust, how many malls do they take with them, and how many other retailers that might have been doing fine on their own will go or lose a lot of their footprint because of that? And, where were those retailers advertising? What was their TV budget? How much of this is self-reinforcing - the more you buy online, the more you buy online? Conversely, did Aeropostale's customer base go online to buy all the same kinds of clothes when the stores went bust, or buy different clothes, or buy different things? That is, do retail failures caused (partly) by ecommerce cause further ecommerce adoption and further failures?
- As buying goes online, buying patterns change. **Whenever you change the channel, buying patterns change** - people do not buy the same in malls as in department stores, nor in department stores as in small shops, and so people do not buy exactly the same things online as they do in supermarkets or malls. The channel shapes what is bought. For FMCG in particular the models of shelf space, eye level, end-caps and marketing support, etc. don't exist online - there are new mechanics for driving purchasing online. This probably ought to mean fewer brands, and different ones, which again flows to advertising and TV. Do you spend the same on fewer brands to stand out online, or spend more, or less? When you say 'hey Alexa, I need more soap', what brand do you get sent and why?
- Then there's machine learning, and especially image recognition. Ecommerce has always been good at retail as logistics but bad at retail as discovery. Now suppose one can connect a retailer to their Facebook or instagram feed and it can look at the clothes they're wearing in photos and make suggestions? Suppose you go on eBay and buy the last ten years' of Elle Decoration and drop it into Google Brain, and then wave your phone at your living room and ask what cushions or lamps you would like? Those magazines are effectively now all structured data, or will be - you can extract the objects from the images and names from the captions and work out what data about taste and association is

encoded in every editorial shoot. Five years ago this would have been science fiction, but now we know exactly how to go about building it. Computers are going to be able to analyse images and video the way they've been able to analyse text and numbers for 50 years, and indeed much better, with much more sophisticated pattern analysis. So, what does that do to how ecommerce can make suggestions? And what does that do to retail and advertising?

- There's a famous Jeff Bezos quote that 'your margin is my opportunity' - right now Amazon is building a billion dollar ad business in its own search results, but Ben suspects he also looks at the $500bn that's spent every year on advertising and the further $500bn that's spent on marketing and sees money that should be going to lower prices and same-day or 1-hour delivery. P&G spent 11% of revenue on advertising last year and plenty more on marketing. What will that look like in 10 years, where will it be spending it and how will people be buying?

3) **Japan is ill prepared for coming labour shock** [Source: Financial Times] (https://goo.gl/DfPn8E)
Text for google: Number of bankruptcies triggered by a shortage of staff doubled in 2016-17

- Japan's government statistics, showing a ratio of 1.55 jobs (including regular and non-regular) available for every applicant, suggest the tightest labour conditions since the mid-1970s. The number of foreign workers in Japan surpassed one million for the first time in 2016 as restaurants, retailers and hotels quietly break with tradition and lean on outsiders for numbers. Research suggests that the number of Japanese bankruptcies triggered by a shortage of staff doubled between 2016 and last year. Every dot of data implies fundamental change in the way the economy operates, with optimists seeing inexorable momentum towards wage increases. A harsher reading suggests the demographic shock will mount the biggest management challenge to Japanese company leadership since the collapse of the 1980s bubble.
- On the face of it, corporate Japan has indeed begun to contort itself to a new reality — unknown for more than a generation — where it simply cannot get the people it needs. Labour shortage has begun to make regular appearances as the explanation for apparently radical strategic decisions. The brewer Asahi plans to raise beer prices for the first time in a decade because of rising distribution costs; the convenience store chain Lawson will soon leave some of its Tokyo outlets unmanned in the early hours. Even more striking, since the middle of last year, has been the steady flow of large companies — from airlines to financial services groups — saying they will convert thousands of part-time workers into regular workers. It is an effort, set to become the norm, where companies battle to attract and retain staff in an era where labour — at least in theory — has something resembling a whip hand. Many more companies will effectively be obliged to do the same from April when a revision to labour laws gives temporary workers the right to seek permanent contracts if they have served more than five years.
- For many Japanese managements, the process will involve turning decades of rhetoric into action. When asked to explain their low prioritisation of shareholders, many have fallen back on the claim that they place a high value on all stakeholders, especially staff. Their survival may now depend on that being true. But beneath the surface, across the boardrooms of Japan Inc, academics and even a few chief executives speaking privately, there is profound unpreparedness for the slow motion blow about to fall. Until now, Japan's increasing "flexibility" towards foreign workers had offered an important safety valve for supply side pressures, but the current strategy of relying on foreign employment through the side door "will eventually hit a wall". The increasing scarcity of domestic labour supply prepared to slog hours of overtime and push only limply for higher wages is a hard obligation on companies to find new business models.
- The most frequent retort to this has been that Japanese managements must invest more in IT, in raising productivity and in the kind of capital expenditure that will ultimately automate and replace certain jobs forever. But this underestimates the inability of many managements to properly contemplate what that change means, let alone steer a successful course through it. Japan's many traditional

companies, have no experience doing this and the general resistance to changing intra-company structures is widespread. Weak per-head IT investment in the service sector — an expression of that traditional approach and a failure to spot the problem — has resulted in low-to-zero productivity growth.

4) **Loneliness is contributing to our increasingly tribal politics** [Financial Times] (https://goo.gl/17wCEB)

Text for google: Everyone laments polarization but what's often overlooked

- The increasing political polarisation is quite evident in the US and to a lesser degree in Brexit Britain. Interestingly, the people participating in this divisive culture, especially on social media, are signaling something to each other, namely: "You and I belong to the same tribe. We have a shared identity, and something to talk about." In other words, they are doing something that is usually considered positive: they are forging a new kind of community. Everyone rightly laments polarisation, but what's often overlooked is that it's creating a novel sense of belonging, and identity, in societies that were getting scarily atomised. Many people in western countries have been struggling to define who they are, and what tribe they belong to. Fifty years ago, most people found identity through their family, church, neighbourhood and (if male) their job and trade union. But these identities have steadily weakened. As the Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam has observed, Americans are increasingly "bowling alone".
- Take family: Living alone has gone from freakish exception to almost standard. In the US, 39% of adults are not currently married or cohabiting. At work, too, old bonds are dissipating: ever more people jump from one temporary job to another, and therefore don't have regular colleagues and this tendency will only grow with automation. Churches are emptying even in the US. As populations age, there are more and more people living alone with their television sets. Two-fifths of older Britons say TV is their main company. Now shops are starting to close, which reduces the chance of bumping into people. It's often said that the internet isolates us from each other but nowadays the most isolated individuals are often older people who haven't joined everyone else on social media. Policymakers increasingly worry about loneliness (the UK just appointed a minister for it), partly because there's growing evidence that it can kill: Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a psychologist at Brigham Young University, last year combined studies of more than 3 million people to show that social isolation was at least as deadly as obesity.
- In short, many Americans and Britons lost their tribes. But now politics is creating new ones. In the US, the tribal divide in political attitudes began to widen from 2004, according to the Pew Research Center. Then, in 2016, even many previously apolitical Americans embraced their tribal political identity. That year's US election drew about twice as much interest on Google as the three previous presidential elections. And politics has only become more tribal since. Trump, at least in terms of his support, was a fairly standard Republican candidate: more than 90% of self-described Republicans voted for him. Many of his supporters hoped that as a president he would try to unite the country. To quote David Frum, author of the new book Trumpocracy: "In 2016, there were voters who genuinely... believed that Donald Trump was a capable business leader, moderate on social issues, who cared about the troubles of working-class white America — and would do something to help." But as Trump's approval ratings plunged last year, his movement shrank from big tent to motivated base. He has become a tribal leader. Supporting him therefore gives you a clearer identity now than it did in 2016. Brexit, too, has become a more tribal affair. In 2016, it drew votes from many Brits who didn't have strong views on Europe. But now that Brexit has got complicated and hit trouble, it mobilises only a passionate base.
- Meanwhile, British Remainers and, separately, Corbynistas have formed tribes too. Their members include many millennials who didn't bother voting in 2016, when they still dismissed politics as a pensioner's hobby. Look at Facebook pages and Twitter accounts, the places where many people nowadays present their identity to the world: Remainers sport European flags and their new acronym

FBPE ("Follow Back Pro EU"), just as Trump supporters have American flags and MAGA ("Make America Great Again"). These people have found their tribes. They have solved the "bowling alone" problem.

- Online, each tribe inhabits its own filter bubble of partisan news. To blame this only on Facebook is unfair. If people wanted a range of views, they could install both rightwing and leftwing feeds on their Facebook pages. Most people choose not to, partly because they like living in their tribe. It makes them feel less lonely.

5) Globish just doesn't cut it anymore [Source: Financial Times] (https://goo.gl/rfWFzE)

Text for google: The world's most popular YouTuber is probably PewDiePie

- The world's most popular YouTuber is probably PewDiePie. Ostensibly, his videos offer his thoughts on video games, but they also provide a philosophy of life in perfect vernacular youth English: "Don't be a salad. Be the best goddamn broccoli you could ever be." His 59.3 million subscribers (or "Bros", as he calls them) have mostly stayed loyal even after Disney dropped him last year for posting anti-Semitic videos. He said he'd only been joking. PewDiePie lives in Brighton but — as the faint accent in his videos reveals — he is a Swede called Felix Kjellberg. Born in 1989, he represents the first global generation in which tens of millions of people from outside the English-speaking world speak perfect English. That shift is ominous for the US and the UK. Thanks to English, these countries have dominated the global conversation. Their entertainment, media, university and tech sectors bestraddle the world. But now the PewDiePie generation, machine translation, Brexit and Trump are combining to threaten their dominance.
- A few non-native speakers have always managed to sneak into the global English conversation. In music, for instance, think of PewDiePie's fellow Nordics Abba and Björk. But most ambitious foreigners were held back because they spoke not English, but Globish: a simple, dull, idiom-free, cripplingly accented version of English with a small vocabulary. So they rarely sounded as fun, clever or cool in English as native speakers. This had fateful consequences. "What is well articulated in English on the internet becomes 'truth,'" says Japanese writer Minae Mizumura in "The Fall of Language in the Age of English". Perfect English is not only heard more, but also taken more seriously than what's said in other languages, she argues. Note the mystical reverence among the global elite for The Economist, or the spread of Trump's jibe "fake news" among autocrats worldwide. But now, just as populists are trying to roll back globalisation, along comes the first global generation shaped by the internet, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of China. Emmanuel Macron, born in 1977, records a video in English called "Make the Planet Great Again", and it impacts the global conversation. Russian social-media trolls influence elections in English. India, for the first time ever, has a new generation of urbanites whose mother tongue is English. They no longer use such Hinglish formulations as "Head is paining".
- More and more universities around the world offer courses in English. The Netherlands sets the pace in Europe, followed by the Scandinavians. These countries are now attracting world-class foreign academics, and that's before the anticipated post-Brexit exodus from British universities. If Brexit and Trump hamper English-language talent industries, continental Europe should benefit. Amsterdam and Copenhagen are already effectively bilingual. Berlin and Paris aren't far behind. Next, the US and the UK will lose their dominance of media. Machine translation improves by the week. In a couple of years, a top-class newspaper like Die Zeit will produce its German edition, then press "translate" and get a very decent English version in an instant. Hire a few English-language subeditors to touch up the machine's phrasings, and suddenly you're competing with The New York Times. This is bad news for non-English languages and literatures. Mizumura predicts that in Germany, for instance, novelists and poets will soon start writing in English. This would mean a return to the era before 1800, when European writers often used a universal language. Dante, Descartes, Thomas Hobbes and even Luther, the father of German, were fluent in Latin, notes Mizumura.

- Everyone now piously preaches multilingualism, but it's not going to happen. About 1.5 billion people are learning English, roughly 10 times more than are learning French, Chinese, Spanish, German, Italian and Japanese put together, estimates the German linguist Ulrich Ammon. And the more people who speak English, the more useful English becomes. The PewDiePie generation won't let you learn their own languages anyway. Try going to Sweden and speaking bad Swedish. You'll be forced into English in seconds. From Spain to China, the aspirational classes want to upgrade from Globish to English. That should spark a boom in expat teaching jobs for native English speakers.

6) **You say Paywalls are back? For the FT, they never went away** [Source: fastcompany.com] (https://goo.gl/e258wQ)

- While most of the print companies are facing the constant perils and headwinds of digital advertising, the Financial Times exceeded 900,000 paying subscriptions, both print and digital–up from 780,000 in 2015. But for John Ridding, the FT's CEO, this announcement felt inevitable. "We've been using our subscription business for the better part of a decade," he says. "People thought we were a little crazy." Every year publishers flock to business trends like moths to flames. Most recently, the pivot d l'année was to social video, in large part to please Facebook's algorithm. This bet isn't panning out as planned, as Facebook tends to change its algorithm from time to time and throw media brands' best-laid plans off-kilter. Most recently came this week's news that Facebook is going to de-emphasize content from brand and Pages to focus on posts from friends and family. As such trends ultimately let publishers down, some media companies are going retro and looking toward the age-old business model of subscriptions. Conde Nast recently announced its plans to offer more metered paywalls for magazines including Wired and Vanity Fair; the New York Times recently lowered the number of free reads it allows every month in an attempt to bring in even more paying customers; even digital juggernaut Business Insider has begun implementing a paywall for select stories.
- According to Ridding, building a captive audience is what helped differentiate the FT from other, similar publications. Over the years, the media company has amassed a trove of user data to both hone coverage and direct product strategy, thanks to the information it can collect about digital subscribers. "For us, the whole digital strategy is rebuilding in digital what is happening in print," he says. "We want to recreate that brand loyalty and brand habit." The FT uses an algorithm which helps in retaining and growing subscribers. For example, a user who stays on the site for long periods of time and reads many different stories in full is more engaged than a reader who only visits the FT once in a while. The Wall Street Journal also uses a similarly data-driven system. It uses identifiable data, like cookies, to rank how likely someone who navigates to an article will purchase a subscription to the site. It should be said that both these examples have been in the making for years. Now more media companies are changing their models, finally perhaps recognizing the writing on the wall about digital advertising. Both the FT and Journal strategies, however, require a longsighted eye for the future–and certain finesse. Audience building and quality journalism, says Ridding, "requires years of experience."
- The biggest issue facing digital newsrooms these days is the ever-growing Google/Facebook duopoly. Current estimates place the two companies as controlling around 73% of the United States' digital advertising market share. The way these platforms operate, believes Ridding, creates "a flood of low-quality information [that make it] very hard to get traction." There's a deluge of news–fake news, poorly reported news, sensationalist news–that has been, sometimes quite successfully, competing against the voices of legacy players. This problem exists because of the digital advertising landscape. Things may be changing a bit. Facebook has been working on its own subscription platform for articles, which might help organizations like the Journal and FT remain viable on the platform. Similarly, Google has begun listening to publishers' needs, says Ridding, pointing out that the tech behemoth no longer requires media companies to make content free when a user accesses it from Google search results. He points to the fact that

Facebook isn't giving enough preliminary reader data to the publishers. "We have to understand the readers, we have to have the data on the readers," he says, arguing that the digital media landscape today is "not a publisher system, it's a Facebook-friendly system." More importantly, Ridding believes, Facebook's algorithm needs to stop de-ranking paywalled content like the FT's.

- Now, with Facebook's most recent changes to its News Feed, Ridding's stance is even more firm. Ridding said, "a sustainable solution to the challenges of the new information ecosystem requires further measures–in particular, a viable subscription model on platforms that enable publishers to build a direct relationship with readers and to manage the terms of access to their content." He went on, "Without that–as the large majority of all new online advertising spend continues to go to the search and social media platforms–quality content will no longer be a choice or an option. And that would be the worst outcome for all." Silver lining or not, change is on the horizon, and 2018 will be the year when media can no longer rely on short-term changes to stay afloat. With that, warns Ridding, "there will be consolidation, there will be casualties."

7) Debunking myths about estrangement [Source: NY times] (https://goo.gl/6ybhJK)

- In this article, the author talks about estrangement. How after years of discontent, some adults choose to stop talking to their parents or returning home for family gatherings, and parents may disapprove of a child so intensely that he or she is no longer welcome home. In the past five years, a clearer picture of estrangement has been emerging as more researchers have turned their attention to this kind of family rupture. Their findings challenge the deeply held notion that family relationships can't be dissolved and suggest that estrangement is not all that uncommon. Broadly speaking, estrangement is defined as one or more relatives intentionally choosing to end contact because of an ongoing negative relationship. "To the extent you are actively trying to distance yourself and maintain that distance, that makes you estranged," said Kristina Scharp, an assistant professor of communication studies at Utah State University in Logan. Estrangement is widely misunderstood, but as more and more people share their experiences publicly, some misconceptions are being overturned. Assuming that every relationship between a parent and child will last a lifetime is as simplistic as assuming every couple will never split up.
- There have been myths like estrangement happens suddenly. The reality is that estrangement is usually a long, drawn-out process rather than a single blowout. For instance, it's been three years since Nikolaus Maack, 47, has had contact with most of his family. But he started distancing himself from his parents and siblings a decade before. "I was staying away," said Mr. Maack, a civil servant in Ottawa. His father's temper had always kept him on edge, he said, and he felt that holiday meals were particularly uncomfortable and demeaning. Eventually, Mr. Maack stopped attending Christmas festivities altogether. Reached by email, Mr. Maack's father declined to be interviewed but insulted Mr. Maack and said he no longer considered him a son. In 2014, 8% of roughly 2,000 British adults said that they had cut off a family member, which translates to more than five million people, according to a nationally representative survey commissioned by Stand Alone, a charity that supports estranged people. And 19% of respondents reported that another relative or they themselves were no longer in contact with family.
- In a 2015 study, Dr. Agllias interviewed 25 Australian parents, each of whom had been cut off by at least one child. The reasons for the rupture fell into three main categories. In some cases, the son or daughter chose between the parent and someone or something else, such as a partner. In others, the adult child was punishing the parent for "perceived wrongdoing" or a difference in values. Most parents also flagged additional ongoing stressors like domestic violence, divorce and failing health. A woman once insisted to Dr. Agllias that she had not spoken to her son and his wife in seven years because she asked her daughter-in-law to bring a specific dessert to a family gathering, and the daughter-in-law had deliberately brought the same one she had baked. The mother-in-law saw it as

"a symbol of total disrespect," Dr. Agllias said, yet she revealed other factors that had undermined their relationship, including that she felt her son's wife sometimes kept the grandchildren from her and didn't properly take care of her son. The dessert, Dr. Agllias said, became a symbol of the "cumulative disrespect" she felt.

- In a study published in the journal Australian Social Work, 26 adults reported being estranged from parents for three main reasons: **abuse** (everything from belittling to physical or sexual abuse), **betrayal** (keeping secrets or sabotaging them) and **poor parenting** (being overly critical, shaming children or making them scapegoats). The three were not mutually exclusive, and often overlapped, said Dr. Agllias, a lecturer at the University of Newcastle in Australia. Most of the participants said that their estrangements followed childhoods in which they had already had poor connections with parents who were physically or emotionally unavailable.

8) **Ashes: Is cricket the hardest sport to win away from home?** [Source: BBC] (https://goo.gl/Nnk3TS)

- Has Test cricket become too predictable? Take England as an example. Their win-loss record at home since 2012 is 23-11 in their favour. Away from home it plummets to 23-7 in the opposition's favour. They have not lost an Ashes series at home since 2001. They have won outright only once in Australia since 1986-87. After England fell to a 4-0 loss in their latest venture down under - coming on the back of a 5-0 rout in 2013-14 - Test Match Special's Ed Smith surmised: "I don't think this series leaves you with much optimism about this format. I am concerned about how predictable a lot of the cricket has been." So has Test cricket's 'predictability' made it boring? And is cricket the hardest sport in which to win away from home? While it is true that home teams hold the advantage in Test cricket, for a variety of reasons, it's not a new phenomenon. The percentage of Test wins earned by visiting sides has not changed drastically over the years.
- There are many reasons for the home advantage, but one of the most obvious is to do with pitches. The pitches in each of the 10 Test-playing nations offer a different challenge for both batsmen and bowlers. In Australia and South Africa, the ball bounces more than it does anywhere else. Hence fast bowlers are king. In England, New Zealand and, perhaps surprisingly, India the ball swings away from the batsmen more - meaning bowlers of obvious skill are more desirable than out-and-out pacemen. In Asia and, in recent years, the West Indies, the ball grips and spins off the dry surface more. This magnifies the need for a top-class turner of the ball and batsmen with the skills to overcome that challenge. According to Graham Thorpe, who scored Test hundreds in England, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka and West Indies, "Learning to adapt is one of the biggest things, and understanding what tweaks you have to make in different countries."
- If playing on the world's different surfaces isn't challenging enough, a different ball manufacturer is used in Australia. In England, Tests are played with a Duke ball, while a Kookaburra is used in Australia. Statistics seem to back up the widely held view that the Duke is more bowler-friendly. When the English-produced Duke was used in domestic cricket in Australia, the average number of runs scored per wicket taken dropped from 34.6 to 28.9. The number of centuries scored per game also came down. "Certain balls do perform better in certain conditions," said Australian Glenn McGrath, who has taken more Test wickets than any other fast bowler. "I loved bowling with the Duke cricket ball - it felt smaller in the hand, had a bigger seam and would reverse swing a lot better. It was also harder than a Kookaburra so there were so many positives for the bowler." However, McGrath added: "You have to adapt to different conditions around the world. I have no issues with having to adapt to different balls."
- There's some justification for saying that cricket is one of the hardest sports for away teams when you take into account the different pitches, balls and climates which players encounter. It's also difficult from a more human perspective - England flew out to Australia on 28 October. Their final game on tour - including a Test series in New Zealand - ends in April. Logic would suggest visiting teams

would improve as they got used to the conditions, but that hasn't happened for England on their past two tours of Australia, where they have lost nine out of 10 Tests. In a Harvard University study of the Premier League in 2008, which looked at 5,000 matches involving 50 different referees between 1992 and 2006, researcher Ryan Boyko came up with the equation that for every extra 10,000 people in the crowd, the advantage for the home team increases by 0.1 goals. As with many questions in sport, it probably comes down to personal opinion but there is no doubt it is hard for English cricket teams to win in places like Australia and India.

9) **The internet is filling up because Indians are sending millions of 'Good Morning' texts** [WSJ] (https://goo.gl/LQXAF3)

- Google researchers in Silicon Valley were trying to figure out why so many smartphones were freezing up half a world away. One in three smartphone users in India run out of space on their phones daily. The answer? Two words. "Good Morning!" The glitch, Google discovered, was an overabundance of sun-dappled flowers, adorable toddlers, birds and sunsets sent along with a cheery message. Millions of Indians are getting online for the first time—and they are filling up the internet. Many like nothing better than to begin the day by sending greetings from their phones. Starting before sunrise and reaching a crescendo before 8 a.m., internet newbies post millions of good-morning images to friends, family and strangers. All that good cheer is driving a 10-fold increase in the number of Google searches for "Good Morning images" over the past five years. Pinterest, the San Francisco visual-search platform, added a new section to display images with quotes. It saw a nine-fold increase over the past year in the number of people in India downloading such pictures.
- Bonding with large groups through work, school, family and friend circles is important for Indians. This is one reason wedding celebrations often involve hundreds if not thousands of guests. That tendency has been given new fuel in the form of affordable smartphones and wireless broadband. Some complain all these greetings come too early, are too cheery and too likely to freeze their low-cost, low-memory phones. To deal with the annoying morning cheer, some leave message groups or refuse to download the images. Popular Indian comedy group "All India Bakchod" addressed the issue in an October skit. A bedraggled man plays the role of WhatsApp, driven to exhaustion by a demanding mother who orders him to deliver morning messages to friends and family who ignore the messenger.
- When Google researchers peeked into Indian consumers' phones, they found thousands of "good morning" images gumming up their storage. One in three smartphone users in India run out of space daily, according to a survey by data-storage firm Western Digital Corp., compared with one in 10 in the U.S. Google's solution: a new app called Files Go that highlights files for possible deletion—with a special feature to search out and delete all good-morning messages at once. The company used its giant image database and artificial-intelligence tools to train the app to weed out good-morning messages. The key to spotting them was looking for a certain size and type of image file, said Josh Woodward, the Google product manager in Mountain View, Calif., who led the effort. "We were trying to deconstruct what is the DNA of a good morning message for months," he said. "It's been a lot of hard work to get it right." Early versions were picking out photos of children wearing T-shirts with words on them.
- Google unveiled the app in December in New Delhi. The morning-message deleting function prompted the crowd of media and government officials to break out in applause. The app has more than 10 million downloads so far, with more users in India than any other country. It has cleared up on average more than 1 gigabyte of data per user, Google said.

10) **What Madras taught me about going home** [Source: Livemint] (https://goo.gl/cs6DbM)

- In this article, the author, Manu Joseph reveals an incident at The Hindu's literature festival where the cricket icon Krishnamachari Srikkanth said that he is

proud to be a Hindu. He said he is a "Hindu guy, Hindutva guy". And he said, "This is a Hindu country." He was having an informal conversation after learning the topic of an impending panel discussion—"Why is India's secular nationalism under attack?". "This is Hindustan," he said, "This is Hindustan. We are only letting Muslims and Christians live with us." Manu was surprised but the reason is not what you probably have in mind. Manu had never came across a Tamilian saying "Hindustan" before inspite of growing up in Chennai. Usually they say things with no malice. Then K. Srikkanth said, "I can scientifically prove in 15 minutes that India is a Hindu country." "I can prove it in 5 minutes actually," he said, gathering his thoughts. Then he said, "Or at least you will not be able to scientifically disprove it."

- The scientific proof never came. Manu's childhood was filled with such moments. Even nationalism never seemed morbid when you heard it in Chennai. It is more a comic lament than threat. Manu loves how even in its most stupid moments the city will invoke science. It is never some sacred book, or a quote, in Chennai it is usually science. "I will scientifically prove that…" There is a long list of things that can fill the blanks, and they are a parallel emotional history of the great loveable city. When Manu left Madras (now Chennai) in 1995, through its giant railway station, he was fleeing a dirty parched chaotic corrupt ugly nepotistic city for better prospects and hopefully sexual decadence, and since then refused to accept that he had any love for a mere place just because he had spent the first 20 years of his life there. People who spoke with great affection about their unremarkable hometowns, he thought, were only exhibiting the delirium of narcissism. But he is now developing an affection for Chennai as the allure of homelessness is fading. What is so wrong to belong to a place?
- He always thought something was wrong with that sort of thinking. He thought we can never be free if we belong. But that is a tiring sort of existence. The modern urban Indian is a cultural orphan, as a result he keeps finding false homes. In ideologies, faiths, moral convictions and cosy clubs and foreign cultures that do not care about him. Maybe we should just fall towards our real homes, the places that raised us. What the hometown has is time, our epic early histories. We love nothing more than ourselves and what we see in the hometown is ourselves. The Chennai of Manu's time is in turn an ancient way of the world. His new affection for his roots is, apart from narcissism, a result of a fatigue with a kind of modernity that requires you to be homeless. When you are homeless you are perpetually in the sway of dominant cultures, and he is sick of both the north Indian and Western ways. To be modern now is, at times, beginning to feel clownish. Also, the idea of "global" is more farcical than liberal. "Global" is a quality that exists only in relation to the West; "global" is what white people call that part of human culture that is distant and exotic but still comprehensible to them. This we know from "global literature", "global cinema", "global food" and other such inanities.
- We do not know what we are when we are global, we have a better grasp over ourselves when we see ourselves at home, as creations of what our hometowns taught us to love and hate, accept and reject. What may have Madras taught Manu? That melodrama is not a form of mediocrity. That an actor knows acting only if he can cry and laugh at the same time, everyone else is just making faces. That ultimately how you fight colonizers is not flinging grenades at them but by persisting with your traditions and tiring them out. That we should be secretive about important things. That at any given moment in the world, someone is a Brahmin, someone is not, and what the Brahmin loves is always called culture, and what the others love is called folk. Manu had once renounced the idea of home because he thought he had no use of it. It was an unfair place for a person with no social networks and he had prospered outside it. Also, he thought being attached to his hometown will make him a petty village romantic who confused self-absorption with heritage and conservation. But then, it now appears that he was never really too far from home. As the 18th century German writer Novalis wrote, "Where are we really going? Always home."

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