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[Hibernation](#) 

Date: Sunday, 28 Dec 2008 12:23

It has been consistently -4°C at night, and +2°C during the day for the past week, and heaters run full blast. Staying holed up, it feels like the winter frost is closing in on us. Going outside for a short walk is like putting your facial skin through stress test. We did an evening ago, and it was torturous. The wind does not wait to cut through your derma. Yet, I see a few souls out on the street, jogging their own selves—their dogs in tow. For owners, their pets' nature call must feel like a bitch.

Yes, it is that time of the year when holidays are long, and you have absolutely nothing to do—weather forbidding. So, much like the rest of our neighborhood, we are in a state of hibernation.

It is that time of the year when *Winnie the Pooh* feels like the best thing to watch on TV. Both my little girls seem to enjoy it immensely. So, what the hell, we take our grown-up caps off to join them exploring the wonders of hundred acre wood. And when there's a break on *Playhouse Disney*, we sift through our tiny collection of old home videos to see what we find.

Last night, we found an interesting one: our Ostrich ride, at [Ostrich farm in Port Dickson](#). Besides splitting ourselves in the guts as to why on earth did we do such a thing—not to mention the inordinate amount of embarrassment it caused us—it was hilariously wild fun. And no, we will never ride those again. Ever.

Author: "Chyetanya Kunte" *Tags:* "Holland, Musings, Self"

[On resistance to change](#) 

Date: Saturday, 27 Dec 2008 18:02

[Ivan Krstić](#): “Change in how we learn, how we create, how we communicate — change that, if tended to carefully, can ultimately be for better rather than for worse. But here's the thing about change: someone always gets left behind. And they don't usually take to it kindly.”

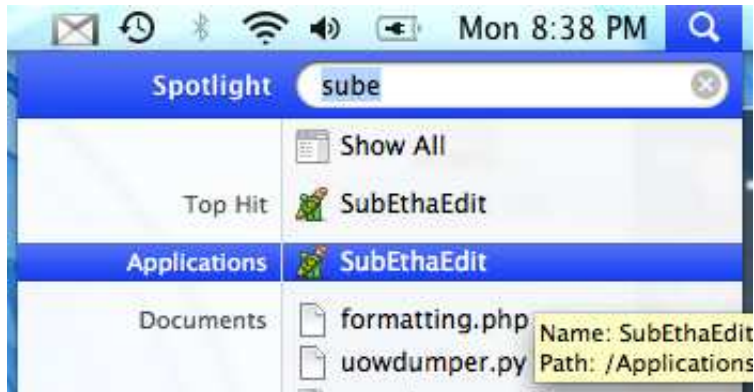
Author: "Chyetanya Kunte" *Tags:* "Asides, Quotes"

[Spotlight](#) 

Date: Monday, 22 Dec 2008 21:10

When you carry a ton of reference stuff on your hard drive, you need a good tool that can comb through your stuff, and give you what you need. Near instantaneous speed, as bonus, would be just lovely.



[Spotlight](#) is the first search tool I have known in my desktop experience that does what I want, and more. Google Desktop Search, Windows Desktop Search, or Copernic Desktop Search come a distant second.

With a subtle and intuitive interface, Spotlight delights me when I try finding documents, and Applications alike, and launch them right from the list of results. Besides this, it has significantly reduced my clutter of Applications on the [Dock](#).

It would be fair to say that ⌘ Space has become my new start key.

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Mac, OS"



[Bangladesh Genocide Archive](#) 

Date: Saturday, 20 Dec 2008 22:08

[Bangladesh Genocide Archive](#) is “an online archive of chronology of events, documentations, audio, video, images, media reports and eyewitness accounts of the 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh in the hands of Pakistan army.” I have no words for this =([\[via.\]](#)

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Asides"



[Victims](#) 

Date: Thursday, 18 Dec 2008 20:20

[Indiatime](#): “Is it just me or does everyone looking at these headlines get a feeling that it looks like Indian militants stormed some Pakistani city and murdered 200+ innocent people?” My thoughts exactly.

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Asides, India, News"



[Crisis coverage self-regulation](#) 

Date: Thursday, 18 Dec 2008 19:58

A month after that heinous coverage, broadcasters accept [protocol for emergencies](#). More links [on Google News](#) India about this.

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Asides, India, News, media, television"



[Search focus](#) 

Date: Tuesday, 16 Dec 2008 11:59

Whenever I need to look some old post up on this ([WordPress](#) powered) blog, I do one of the following two things—depending upon how restless I am.

1. If I am really in a hurry, and think I could find something using just one keyword, then I head to the address bar: `http://ckunte.com/?s=keyword`
2. If I need to use more than a couple of keywords, then I prefer to type it in the form on my [archives](#) page—instead of constructing the URL like `http://ckunte.com/?s=keyword1+keyword2`.

My search form code looks like the following (Note the form name `srch`, and the input name `s` here):

1. `<form method="get" name="srch" action="<?php bloginfo('home'); ?>/">`
2. `<div style="margin:10px 0">`
3. `<label style="display:inline"><?php _e('Search ’ '); ?></label>`
4. `<input type="text" size="27" value="<?php the_search_query(); ?>" name="s" id="s" />`
5. `<input alt="" style="display:none" type="submit" value="search" />`
6. `</div>`
7. `</form>`
8. Download this example: [inputfiles/searchfocus-form.txt](#)

To avoid repeating the above in various templates, I keep a copy of above in a file named `searchform.php`, and call it inside any page (template), where I want the search bar to show up.¹

```
<?php include(TEMPLATEPATH . '/searchform.php'); ?>
```

Focus: Until today, my [archives](#) page required yet another click to get into the search form—before I could type my keywords. Thanks to some help from [a nice article in the Smashing Magazine](#), I changed it today.

To bring the search form into focus, I needed to modify my `<body>` tag. But since this modification is needed only on pages that show the search bar, I decided to amend my `<body>` tag in my `header.php` template file as below:

1. `<?php if (is_page('archives') || is_search() || is_404()) { ?>`
2. `<body>`

3. <?php } else { ?>
4. <body>
5. <?php } ?>
- 6.
7. Download this example: </inputfiles/searchfocus-bodytag.txt>

It saves me a click², but it's worth it.

1. Typical page candidates are: the Archives page, Search results page, and the 404 page.
2. On browsers other than Firefox, or Chrome. In Firefox, I tend to use the [site search](#); and in Chrome, I type `ckunte.com` and then press tab in the address bar.

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Themes, Usability, wordpress"



[Information business](#) 

Date: Monday, 15 Dec 2008 20:59

[The New Yorker](#): "Many argue that if newspapers had understood they were in the information business, rather than the print business, they would have adapted more quickly and more successfully to the Net."

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Asides, News"



[MarsEdit](#) 

Date: Sunday, 14 Dec 2008 18:50

Shortly after I bought [the Macbook](#) early this year, I bought a couple of extraordinary Mac software. One was [SubEthaEdit](#)—for stroking my weekend coding tendencies. (SubEthaEdit is an amazing, *amazing* editor that allows you to collaborate—on documents, files—in realtime!) The other was [MarsEdit](#).



It's got everything that a blogger or a publisher needs, and more. Here are a few things I like in particular:

1. Pixel perfect clean chiseled interface.
2. Visible HTML markup in the editor—a must have for me.
3. Stunning offline post-preview.
4. Slug field—to shorten or customize URL address.
5. Tags, and Excerpt fields.
6. Option to add multiple ping services.
7. Ability to add new category.
8. Ability to insert Media from its simple, yet powerful [media manager](#).
9. Ability to add or customize text markup shortcuts.
10. And last but not the least, a built-in search bar!

It took me a while, like any other software, to get used to it. Today, I am completely hooked. (It's not free, but I would be lying to you if I said it wasn't worth its price.) This post is a special thank you to its developers: [Daniel Jalkut](#) (current), and [Brent Simmons](#) (former).

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Mac, OS, Software"



[Herod](#)

Date: Sunday, 14 Dec 2008 14:25

National Geographic profiles [the holy land's visionary builder](#).

Author: "Chyetanya" Tags: "Asides, Technology, architecture, engine..."



[21](#)

Date: Saturday, 13 Dec 2008 12:20



A math professor puts together a team of gifted students, who in turn use the theory of probability, in realtime at the tables in Vegas, to make big bucks. Inspired by the true story of the [MIT Blackjack team](#), [21](#) manages to convey two things:

1. That there's no such thing as luck. Everything fits to an equation, and it's just a matter of finding the right fit, and then putting it to work. ([Freakonomics](#) fans would agree.)
2. With gambling, the probability that you might end up in a situation far worse than you were to begin with is higher than generally perceived.

What I think of the film? Well, let's just say [Ocean's Eleven](#) feels like a cheap thrill compared to 21. We enjoyed watching it last night—not so much for its cinematography, but for an idea mortals have less clue about, and because of the fact that this is inspired by true events.

Author: "Chyetanya" Tags: "Films"



[On fair trial](#)

Date: Friday, 12 Dec 2008 12:22

I, for one, fully agree with his clarity of thought when [Nitin says](#) "America's greatest mistake after 9/11 was Guantanamo Bay. India should not make the same mistake." This is indeed the time to show how the real democracy works; and why you should have one too.

Author: "Chyetanya" Tags: "Asides, India"

[VIV](#)

Date: Tuesday, 09 Dec 2008 05:43

While higher harmonics of [vortex induced vibrations](#) continue to be thorns in offshore engineers' flesh, its destructive power is now being put to good use—to generate clean energy. A couple of stories from [The Telegraph](#), and [Wired](#) highlight this.

Update: We ponder about this over post-lunch coffee. A couple of foreseen snags this technology could hit:

- [Marine fouling](#) — As is the case with offshore structures. Maintenance of smooth surfaces is a humongous task, especially if the farm is in square kilometers.
- Location specific—requires constant (sea) current flow.

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Offshore, Technology"

[Best of 2008](#)

Date: Monday, 08 Dec 2008 21:21

If there's one site/service that I believe tells the real story of contemporary popular music, it is [Last.fm](#). Why? Because unlike the superficial number of requests that radio and music television channels get, real people just [scrobble](#) their favorites up. Still, [electropop tops](#)? I think I'm [getting old](#).

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Asides, Music"

[Moron of the week: Shobhaa Dé](#)

Date: Monday, 08 Dec 2008 20:34

It is sometimes better to let people assume that you're a moron, than to [open your mouth](#) and dismiss all doubts about it.

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Asides, media, television"

[Sinterklaas](#)

Date: Sunday, 07 Dec 2008 11:12

As dads and mums of children—between the age group of four and eight, we gathered for a company sponsored [Sinterklaas](#)¹ party last weekend. A couple of pictures from the event.



I am told² that the kids enjoyed singing with the bearded old man, and laughed at the antics of his low-IQ helpers—better known as [Piets](#).



1. Celebrating the arrival of Sinterklaas is a special Dutch tradition.
2. The party was kids-only, and so we promptly dropped them off in the morning.

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "Holland, Kiddy stuff"



[Irresponsible](#)

Date: Saturday, 06 Dec 2008 10:23

Instead of apologizing, and introspecting on how to improve, [this is the kind of crap](#) we get in response to **shoddy journalism**.

Radhika Sahasranaman rips the guts of that response on a 3000 strong, and growing [Facebook group](#), whose title couldn't have sent signals any clearer:

[NDTV's response](#) is in itself a giveaway of misplaced notions: "In the absence of any instructions on site and in the absence of any such framework we broke NO rules" ("convenient transference of responsibility" or what?); and the entire argument, she concludes, amounts to "which television journalist tops the charts or falls to the bottom" (is that how they keep score?). It is important that we don't shoot the messenger but when the messenger loses the message, there is something to be done. Which is why, for once, I will take Barkha's advice. Use the remote control when emote control doesn't work.

— *Radhika Sahasranaman*

Do read her entire post. (Sign-up on Facebook just to read this—if nothing; I guarantee it's worth it.) She conveys it with such clarity, that I kept [reading it](#) over and over.

Here's another:

TV news would no doubt argue that most other critiques of 26/11 coverage have been answered, too. Shoving mikes in front of distressed people? They wanted to share. Too close to the theatre of operation? If someone told us we would have moved away. And just in case anyone still has doubts, Narayana Murthy and Suketu Mehta, among many others, rated 26/11 coverage as first class.

Maybe the Government goofed up not laying down rules of coverage. Does that end all questions on journalistic responsibility? Think about it. If journalists, especially senior editors, say they need the government to tell them how to do their business, they are opening a door many politicians would love to never shut again.

— [Saubhik Chakrabarti on Indian Express](#)

The choice could not have been simpler: you either kick the idiocy, and if that does not work, then kick the idiot out.

Update: Oh, by the way, there *is* a framework ([Self-Regulation Guidelines for the Broadcasting Sector \[pdf\]](#)) for anyone who cares—and has been in existence for more than a year.

Update 2: [NSG says media got in the way, wants guidelines](#).

Update 3: Presstalk: [In the name of fair and balanced](#).

Update 4: [The Hoot](#): "Those who argue that viewers can use the remote to not watch what they find

unethical or irresponsible should note that many in India did, people went to offices and went to vote but the TV all the same managed to give important information to the backers of the terrorists who were glued to their screens. The remote is not the solution to such irresponsibility.”

[Harini Calamur](#): “Week 1 - Post 26/11 - Quo Vadis News Media?”

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "India, media, television"



[Vote](#)

Date: Friday, 05 Dec 2008 21:10

I am 36, and I have never voted in my life. I feel ashamed of this fact today—more than I ever did before.

The race to earn a living as soon as I graduated took precedence over everything else, including registering myself to vote. Being a working bachelor, during my early years as a voter, with no real residence for more than a couple of years in a place didn't help. And even at times when I felt something about my civic duty, inertia combined with my innate refusal to take the necessary pain to register myself as a voter in the areas I lived, was overpowering.

For over six years, [I lived in Malaysia](#). And I never once thought about my civic responsibilities as a Indian citizen with the Indian High Commission there. I felt nothing when Andrew, my Australian colleague and cubicle buddy, took a couple of hours off from work to register his vote at the Australian embassy.

And then there were many occasions when my parents went to vote in the area of our permanent residency (in India), and returned without voting after being informed that someone had already voted on their behalf¹ On numerous occasions, during every election, my parents informed me that my electoral vote had apparently been cast by someone else! And I never flinched, never bothered to lodge a protest.

Yes, I have been one of those ‘*Chalta hain*’ people. It is such callous attitude of the likes of me that has resulted in the kind of leadership my country, India, has. A machinery, which has run out of grease. I want to help put that grease back in—even if tars my hands.

My wife and I are going to check with the Indian embassy here in The Hague on the best way to go about exercising our electoral right, and our duties towards our country.

1. This has often happened when they would go later in the day. They now ensure that they are one of the first to queue outside and vote early on the day of elections.

Author: "Chyetanya" *Tags:* "India, Self, desipundit"







[The fabric](#)

Date: Sunday, 30 Nov 2008 01:29

Last week, my eight year old daughter brought home [a book](#) to read from her school library. A comic book illustrating—you will not guess this—French Revolution! And it was fascinating as I read it from cover to

illustrating—you will not guess this—French Revolution! And it was fascinating as I read it from cover to cover. I mean I have learnt about the [French revolution](#) as part of my high-school history academic curriculum. But not like this.

Who'd want to be a peasant?



POOR. Peasants are forced to pay taxes, while rich nobles and bishops pay nothing. If the peasants protest, the army is sent to kill them.

MISERABLE. Peasants share tiny mud huts with their animals. Most have only one set of clothes and wooden shoes. Terrible plagues wipe out family and friends.

HUNGRY. In winter, peasants can get so hungry they have to eat acorns, roots, grass and tree bark.

PICKED ON. Landlords kick peasants out of their homes. Tax collectors beat them up. Peasants can't even trap the rabbits that nibble their crops!



And just from these graphic images—for the first time really—I realized how the fabric of their society, and eventually, their living conditions eroded to such an extent that life and existence for peasants, and ordinary
<http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:...>

people became indistinguishable from the animals they domesticated. So heavily burdened, and trodden by their King, and by their Government that revolt was a natural reaction. The rest, of course as you know, is history.

But France is one-fifth the size of India, and much too small—population wise. So a nation-wide revolt like it happened in France, or that happening in Thailand today just does not scale the geographic dimensions of this vast country.¹

A growing number of sporadic incidences are keeping the pulse of a revolt alive—and only growing stronger with the Administration's drag. Different causes, similar anger and distrust—as the fabric of our civic society erodes rapidly in time.

- The divisive politics—using religion, cast, state, and God knows new things to come at this rate.
- The red tape, and [corruption](#).
- Failing infrastructure, and serious lack of civic amenities.
- A general failure of civic bodies—Police, dysfunctional hospitals, [Corrupt municipalities](#), Super-slow judiciary, all breeding mistrust amongst the citizen they've vowed to help and protect.
- The ever [growing intolerance](#) to anything unconventional—arts, media, ideas, and philosophies.
- The ever growing difference between the rich and the poor.
- The loss of morality and mistrust amongst and between its citizen.

Not to be done with, we now constantly face [terrorism](#), [natural disasters](#), and this year — [the economic crisis](#). And we still continue to stand. That's resilience.

On top of that the [blabbering media](#)—spewing out anything that it comes across as news, without a sense of responsibility. The media ought to be a vital thread that connects us, and keep us abreast of our Country's health; keep its system in check by informing its citizens to act. Throughout the Indian freedom struggle, [the newspaper](#) has held its head high. Never in history have I noticed so much of pimping news, hogging the light just to get some ratings up—as I have seen in recent times. Utter puke quality **journalism** on TV. But that's a small part of the entire rotting system.

You can't take them all. You need to go at it one by one, inch by inch, day after day, and year after year. In a country whose large population lives hand to mouth, struggles to survive everyday, I don't know how this will happen. But whoever said uprooting an oak and replanting it so it grows again was easy?

The best place to start this process, in my opinion, is our neighborhood. I believe that unless you fix your own problems first, you can never be able to take on others'.

Find out what's ailing the system. What's hurting you and your neighbors the most. Take it from there. It is probably the drinking water problem, improper sanitation, civic amenities, filthy neighborhood, or security in the area—just to throw some ideas.

Have a plan of action, and get the neighborhood involved in social service on rotation with assigned duties.

Every weekend, instead of watching television, meet-up and discuss problems, and throw your ideas to

others. Keep in mind that no ideas are considered foolish, or stupid. Anyone even remotely saying it should be severely shunned. Respect for people at all costs is the only way to win trust. (I know it's hard; I am a poor example myself. But I've seen it work. And when it works, it works like a magic potion—rejuvenating people to do more.)

Young people with better education and special skills can help the society and system in a multitude of ways (Just a few ideas that come to mind.)

- If you're a doctor, be kind to your neighbors; don't refuse treatment to the poor just because they cannot afford it.
- If you're an engineer, help your neighbors with good suggestions on problems they seek.
- If you're a lawyer, help your neighbors with legal stuff.
- If you're good in IT, help your post office, your local library, even your ailing municipality become efficient, and help them setup a quick response system. Help them setup online services—particularly in small towns and cities. Help people learn how to use online services and save time.

I'm sure the initial help—you provide to your community—will help you back in the long run.

Any skills that we collectively have can have a great impact on small groups of people around us. Not only will you earn trust and friends, you will gain respect. Isn't that the greatest currency in this world?

It is not hard to find like-minded people within our street, our apartment buildings, and our societies. If you're savvy enough, you can even just meet virtually. Say every Saturday 11:00pm over Google Talk, Yahoo! Mail, IRC Chat or whatever. And keep those new ideas rolling in.

God, I wish we had internet back then. There are phenomenal number of tools today that allow you to rebuild and strengthen your fabric of society. There's so much to do. All you need is the will do good. And when we begin to take care of ourselves, we can also lend a hand to people on the other side of the street. Other city. Other state. And eventually, we would have good responsible, uncorrupted leaders—who would have demonstrated extraordinary social service skills. They'd become our natural leaders. Not just talking politicians.

It is 2:00AM in the morning as I type this. And I am sure when you read this, you will spill your coffee in all likelihood at the gross simplification of it all. Not to mention thinking that I've *completely* gone off my rocker. Nevertheless think about it. And see if it makes it beyond just a hearty laugh.

1. Even the most determined revolution of 1857 didn't go according to plan.

Author: "Chyetanya" Tags: "India, desipundit"



Shoddy journalism 

Date: Thursday, 27 Nov 2008 20:39

Appalling **journalism**. Absolute blasphemy! As I watch the news from home, I am dumbfounded to see Barkha Dutt of NDTV break every rule of ethical **journalism** in reporting the [Mumbai mayhem](#). Take a

couple of instances for example:

- In one instance she asks a husband about his wife being stuck, or held as a hostage. The poor guy adds in the end about where she was last hiding. Aired! My dear friends with AK-47s, our national news is helping you. Go get those still in. And be sure to thank NDTV for not censoring this bit of information.
- In another instance, a General sort of suggests that there were no hostages in Oberoi Trident. (Clever.) Then, our heroine of revelations calls the head of Oberoi, and the idiot confirms a possibility of 100 or more people still in the building. Hello! Guys with guns, you've got more goats to slay. But before you do, you've got to love NDTV and more precisely Ms. Dutt. She's your official intelligence from Ground zero.

You do not need to be a journalist to understand the basic premise of ethics, which starts with protecting victims first; and that is done by avoiding key information from being aired publicly—such as but not limited to revealing the number of possible people still in, the hideouts of hostages and people stuck in buildings.

Imagine you're one of those sorry souls holed-up in one of those bathrooms, or kitchens. A journalist pulls your kin outside and asks about your last contact on national television, and other prying details. In a bout of emotion, if they happen to reveal more details, you are sure going to hell. Remember these are hotels, where in all likelihood, every room has a television. All a terrorist needs to do is listen to Ms. Barkha Dutt's latest achievement of extracting information from your relative, based on your last phone-call or SMS. And you're shafted—courtesy NDTV.¹

If the terrorists don't manage to shove you in to your private hell, the journalists on national television will certainly help you get there. One of the [criticisms](#) about Barkha Dutt on Wikipedia reads thus:

During the Kargil conflict, Indian Army sources repeatedly complained to her channel that she was giving away locations in her broadcasts, thus causing Indian casualties.

Looks like the idiot journalist has not learnt anything since then. I join a number of bloggers pleading her to shut the f.. up.

Update: In fact, I am willing to believe that Hemant Karkare died because these channels showed him prepare (wear helmet, wear bullet-proof vest.) in excruciating detail live on television. And they in turn targeted him where he was unprotected. The brave officer succumbed to bullets in the neck.

Update 2 [28.Nov.2300hrs]: Better sense appears to have prevailed in the latter half of today—either willfully, or by Government coercion², and Live broadcasts are now being limited to non-action zones. Telecast of action troops and strategy is now not being aired live. Thank goodness for that.

Update 3 [30.Nov.1900hrs]: DNA India reports about a [UK couple ask media to report carefully](#):

The terrorists were watching CNN and they came down from where they were in a lift after hearing about us on TV.

— [Lynne Shaw](#) in an interview.

1. Oh, they have a lame excuse pronouncing that the television connections in the hotel has been cut, and therefore it is okay to broadcast. Like hell!
2. I'm thinking [coercion](#), since Government has just [denied renewing CNN's rights to air](#) video today; must've have surely worked as a rude warning to the Indian domestic channels.

Author: "Chyetanya" Tags: "India, Moods and Blues, media, ndtv, tel..."



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