

# RFK Jr could act as a disrupter in the US prez polls



Robert F. Kennedy Jr's chances of winning the White House are slimmer than his neckties – but he does hold significant power to disrupt the upcoming election. Kennedy's sartorial accessory of choice – a super-skinny tie, which he pairs with a classic button-down shirt and blazer – is a not-so-subtle ode to the preppy, iconic style of his uncle, former president John F. Kennedy. For Kennedy, the third-party candidate poised to play spoiler in the 2024

presidential election, it's a fitting tribute to the campaign he's running: one sewn in nostalgia, dyed in old-school Americana, finished off with a heavy dose of his last name – and always, always, controversial. So it's only mildly ironic that most of Kennedy's own family have disavowed his candidacy. Take, for instance, the now infamous, and much-maligned, 2024 Super Bowl ad that superimposed Kennedy's image

over a vintage 1960s John F. Kennedy presidential election ad, replete with the jingle: "Kennedy! Kennedy! Kennedy!" RFK Jr was attacked by a cousin on X for exploiting his uncle's lineage, and forced to apologise for any "pain" he caused his family.

Since then, a total of six of Kennedy's siblings have endorsed the sitting president, Joe Biden. Jack Schlossberg, the grandson of former president Kennedy, doesn't mince words in disparaging his cousin. He is, in Schlossberg's estimation, "a prick".

**Kennedy's anti-establishment traits**  
Kennedy may have the same elegant New England pedigree as his late father, a former senator, and his late uncle: a Harvard degree, keys to the Kennedy compound on Cape Cod, and a closet full of Brooks Brothers suits. But the younger Kennedy is anything but an establishment politician.

If his COVID-conspiracy spouting and anti-vaxxer reputation didn't already prove it, then his choice of vice presidential running mate should. That's Nicole Shanahan, the billionaire ex-wife of Google co-founder Sergey Brin, whose views are just unorthodox as Kennedy's.

The "driving force" (and purse) behind the US\$7 million (£5.5 million) Super Bowl ad, Shanahan has made waves for calling in vitro fertilisation "one of the biggest lies being told about women's health," and for claiming that vaccines cause widespread harm.

The controversies are on-brand for Kennedy.

Recently, he announced that a para-

sitic worm ate part of his brain (it's dead now apparently). He's been interviewed on Infowars, the alt-right media outlet whose leader, Alex Jones, was ordered to pay roughly \$1 billion for denying the legitimacy of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre. He has also been praised by Trump devotees Steven Bannon and Roger Stone.

**To the left or to the right?**  
None of this is to say Kennedy's campaign is trivial. For anyone convinced that Kennedy's ventures into fringe world will certainly prevent him from determining the next leader of the free world, consider the statistics.

According to a recent poll by the New York Times, Kennedy picks up almost 10% of likely voters in six key battleground states. That's nearly a quarter of the percentage of voters who intend to support Joe Biden (36%) and Donald Trump (42%) in the same states.

Kennedy appears more likely to take support from Trump than Biden, but only marginally. In the poll in the battleground states, about 8% of Trump voters and 7% of Biden voters said they preferred Kennedy. About 32% of Kennedy's supporters said they had voted for Biden in 2020, while 24% voted for Trump.

A disproportionate number of young voters in these states support Kennedy. The majority of his support comes from disaffected voters who tend to back Democrats.

In an election dubbed the "rematch from hell" and in which approximately half of the electorate would replace both Biden and Trump as choices if they

could, Kennedy's current numbers might actually be underestimated. It's why both the White House and Mar-a-Lago are perhaps more nervous than they're letting on.

**Enter the debates?**

Whether Kennedy is allowed to enter the televised debates could be a game changer. He has expressed confidence that he'll be on stage, but the reality is not certain. Under the rules of the CNN face-off scheduled for June 27, he'd need to up his support in the polls to at least 15% nationally and ensure that his name is on enough state ballots to be eligible to reach 270 electoral votes, the minimum required to clinch the Oval Office (he's now at roughly one-third of that threshold).

But the bigger question is what version of presidential candidate Kennedy wants to be – the flame-throwing populist, experts-are-out-to-get-you conspiracy theorist that courts Maga Republicans, or the anti-monopoly, union-friendly, tree-hugging Democrat that appeals to the progressive left.

Kennedy recently urged Biden to take a "no spoiler pledge" in which Biden would exit the race if he fared worse than him in a head-to-head poll against Trump. According to Kennedy, Trump "is not a spoiler because he can actually win". The comment is as illogical as many of Kennedy's conspiracy theories.

Skinny ties went out of vogue in the 1960s. But as Kennedy proves, a lack of common sense is a trend that never dies.



Like his father RF Kennedy (centre) and uncle JF Kennedy before him, RF Kennedy Junior is a Democrat

# Cockroaches can teach us plenty about eating well



You may have more in common with cockroaches than you realise. In an experiment, researchers first manipulated cockroach diets so they were either being fed exclusively a high protein, high carbohydrate, or a near-balanced food – putting them in different states of nutritional imbalance.

Then they were given access to all three foods, enabling them to mix whatever diet they wished.

Amazingly, all three groups of cockroaches selected just the right combination of the three foods to rebalance their diets, and then continued to eat according to that ratio. What this tells us is that cockroaches – and the 40 or so other animal species the researchers have studied – have not just a single appetite, they have appetites that make them hungry for specific nutrients depending on what they need at a given time. And interestingly, humans have these nutrient-specific appetites too.

It's insights like this gleaned from the natural world that are helping us better understand why we overeat and how imbalances in our modern food system are contributing to the problem.

A 'food system' is an immensely complex set of interacting factors that surround every food and meal that we eat.

Broadly speaking, food systems can be partitioned into those factors that influence what we eat – such as the availability, tastiness and affordability of different foods – and those factors that are influenced by what we eat – such as the economic and environmental consequences of our dietary choices.

One of the greatest challenges we're facing globally is that the factors that influence what we eat are configured in such a way that some outcomes are optimised at the expense of others. The production and marketing of foods, as well as the policies regulating these, are optimised for economic benefit, often at a cost to the environment and public health.

**Rebalancing the food system:** We need to find a way to rebalance the food system. And to do that, researchers are turning to what we might learn from how other species navigate the complexity of natural food systems – ecosystems – and how these findings apply to our own species.

For example, in their research on our closest living cousins in the wild – other primate species – they found that owing to natural ecological fluctuations (such as the changing seasons) primates are regularly stuck in imbalanced food environ-

ments that prevent them from eating a balanced diet. In such circumstances, most primates prioritise their intake of protein more strongly than the two other macronutrients we need – fat and carbohydrates.

In other words, their appetites regulate their intake of protein more strongly than fat and carbohydrates, and as a result on low protein diets they will overeat fat and carbohydrates, and on high protein diets they will undereat fat and carbohydrates.

Humans also show protein prioritisation, so we're no different to other primate species in that respect.

**The problem of overconsumption:** What has changed to drive the nutritional predicament we're in today is the environment we find ourselves in.

Protein has been diluted in our food system, leading to the epidemic of overconsumption that's plaguing the planet and the health of our species.

According to The Australian Dietary Guidelines, we should be getting between 15 and 25 percent of our energy intake from protein, between 45 to 65 percent from carbohydrates and between 20 to 35 percent from fats.

This allows us to identify at a glance whether the composition of our diet, or a particular food or meal is balanced nutritionally with respect to these recommendations. And allows us to identify which categories of foods are responsible for the protein dilution in our food system.

What research has shown is that it's ultra processed foods that are the culprit for diluting the protein concentration in our diets in the Australian and the global food system. Ultra processed foods are foods that originate not from a forest or from a field but from a factory.

They have their roots in industrial manufacture, not in agriculture or in harvesting from the wild. They are designed by food engineers not to nourish human bodies or protect the environment, but to nourish and protect the financial returns for shareholders.

Unfortunately, from an affordability perspective what research has shown is

that low income groups are associated with low protein diets and hence, spontaneous excess energy intake.

They're also more likely to be gravitating towards these ultra processed foods.

The reason for that is that when you compare the relative cost of the different macronutrients in the foods that we eat, protein is the expensive one.

Avoiding obesity then becomes a socio-economic challenge, with people on lower incomes forced away from the recommended protein intake and towards overeating of fats and carbohydrates.

**Processed foods linked to higher emissions:** Understanding that we prioritise protein is also important when considering the environmental impacts of the diets that we eat. High protein foods are associated with high greenhouse gas emissions, so you might assume that we should be reducing the density of protein in our diets in order to also reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

But this assumes that our energy intake remains constant as the proportion of protein in our diet decreases, which we know is not true. It is our protein intake which remains more constant, so as we dilute the proportion of protein in our diet, our energy intake increases.

If we reanalyse the data in those terms, we find that reducing protein in the diet will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but only if high protein foods are replaced by real plant-derived foods, such as vegetables, grains, fruits and pulses.

If high protein foods are replaced by ultra processed foods, environmental damage is not reduced, and can even be worse. One reason for this is the energy used in the industrial production of ultra processed foods. Another reason is their low protein content leads to overconsumption – and the production of each additional calorie eaten produces greenhouse gases.

Real foods that are low in protein, such as vegetables and grains, are not overeaten in the same way, because they contain gut-filling fibre.

## Dr Vinay Mishra's corner...

Q. I'm a 34 year old married man. I married my uncle's daughter. I have 2 male kids. I want to have more children. How can I convince my wife for more babies? MF



A: To become parents should be a joint decision approach the conversation about wanting more children with your wife, start by understanding her perspective. Consider her physical and emotional well-being, her experience with the current family dynamics, and her views on expanding the family. Pregnancy and raising children are significant undertakings, and it's important to recognize the impact on her. At times it could be taxing for a female body to give birth and nurture a baby. It's essential to listen to her response carefully and with an open mind. Understand that she may have concerns or reservations, such as the impact on her health, the family's finances, or the time and energy required to raise more children. Address these concerns thoughtfully and discuss practical solutions together. Consider discussing the potential benefits and challenges of having more children, focusing on aspects like the joy of a larger family, the sibling relationships, and how it aligns with your shared vision for the future. Make sure to talk about the practical aspects, such as financial stability and the support system you would need.

Remember that this is a joint decision. Your wife's comfort and enthusiasm about expanding the family are crucial. Be prepared for ongoing conversations and give her time to think and express her thoughts. It's important to ensure that both of you are on the same page and are willing to move forward together.

Ultimately, the goal is to reach a decision that reflects both of your desires and respects each other's needs and well-being. This might involve compromise and patience, but approaching the conversation with empathy and openness will help you navigate it successfully.

# Chetan's 400 Days combines romance, humour, family drama and mystery

by Prakash Shrivastava; Title: 400 Days; Author: Chetan Bhagat

The release of Chetan Bhagat's books is always marked by frenzy. The hype of the release, the excitement amongst the readers, the buzz in the blogging and booktubing world – all of a sudden, there is a new lease of energy in bookish circles.

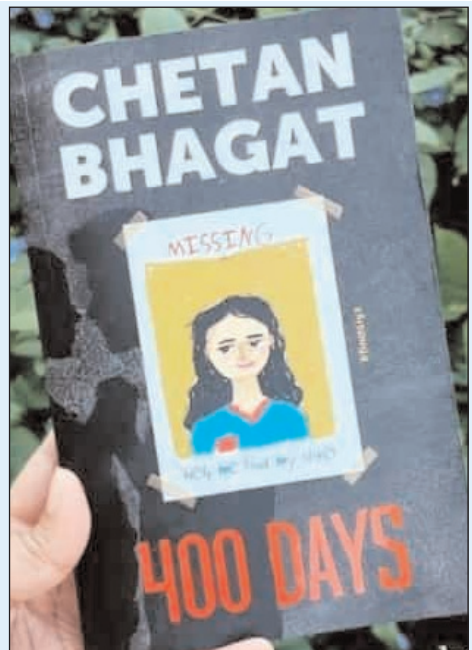
Chetan Bhagat might not be the favorite of critics, he certainly is the favorite of the industry. For who doesn't like an author whose books sell like hotcakes? And when there is demand for his books, there is demand for its reviews as well.

So, falling in line with the expectation of our readers, I too bought myself a copy and quickly sat down to read it.

Chetan's 400 Days is much like the other recent books by the author. Expect a book that is an effortless read; one that can be easily read in a sitting or two. Expect a medium-length read (350 pages approx.) that combines romance, humour, family drama, and mystery in equal doses.

The question that everyone wants to ask is if this book is different?

For me what 'spelled different' in Chetan's recent writing career were 2 books – 1) One Indian Girl – because it was written from a woman's perspective



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and 2) The Girl in Room 105 – because it saw Chetan venturing into a different genre.

To be honest, between the three books – The Girl in Room 105, One Arranged

Murder, and 400 Days, the latest turned out to be my favourite.

The language is simple and beginner-friendly and as such, it is a book that can be picked up by all levels of readers. Even those beginning to read English will be able to read and enjoy the book.

**The storyline:** Keshav and Sourabh are amateur detectives who run a part-time detective agency.

While Sourabh is employed in a computer security company, Keshav is preparing for the UPSC exams. These are the same characters with whom the readers were acquainted in Chetan's previous books The Girl in Room 105 and One Arranged Murder.

There isn't much happening in both their lives. But all that changes upon the entry of Alia Arora, who is Keshav's neighbor, an ex-model, and a mother of two. With her hazel green eyes, a head full of luscious brown curls, she is what one would call 'drop-dead gorgeous'.

Though Keshav simply can't take his eyes off her face, she comes to Keshav with a high-profile case (and trust me, this play of words is not my invention!)

Nine months ago, Alia's daughter Siya, just shy of celebrating her thirteenth birthday, was taken away from her grand-

parents' home in the dead of the night. The Aroras and the police tried their level best to find Siya, but sadly that wasn't meant to be.

After no development for weeks on end, the police decided to file the case as cold and even the Aroras gave up hope. Except for one person. Her mother Alia had never stopped looking, and now she wants Keshav to take up the case.

**Will Siya ever be found?:** Can Keshav and Sourabh solve this kidnapping? Will Keshav move past his attraction for Alia? How good or bad are the characters?

The characters are mediocre at best. Apart from Keshav and Sourabh, whom we are already invested in because of the previous two books, there is no one else who leaves a lasting impression on the reader. Alia has been given a lot of attention and importance in the story. But to me, her character felt inadequate and shallow.

The plot is pretty much non-existent. It is quite linear, and a huge part of the book is predictable. There are not enough plot twists to hook the reader.

**The writing style:** The writing makes good use of sarcasm and humour. This is the part that I enjoyed the most, where the comic elements lent the book a light-

hearted vibe.

There was simply no need for romance. It was shallow and cliché, not to mention unrealistic. Why does it feel that Chetan has invented a formula and is going to continue with it in his future books too?

**A mystery that hardly existed:** Technically, the book cannot be called a mystery. There is a generous dose of drama, romance, and comedy that has been given much more importance and space than the mystery element.

There are no edge-of-the-seat thriller vibes either. At no point in time, the reader feels in grip of the mystery. And while the reader does feel inclined to turn those pages, it isn't because of the mystery quotient.

Call it coincidence or luck, the very book I finished reading before 400 days was Seven Days by Alex Lake. Incidentally, the latter's plotline was eerily similar to that of 400 days. While Seven Days didn't have that amount of drama, it surely came with a generous amount of mystery and thrill.

In the end, 400 days is yet another one-time read delivered by the author. Though effortless to read, it does not offer anything unique to the reader.