

Sriram: [00:00:00] Hello, everyone. Welcome to a special end-of-year episode of Aarthi and Sriram's Good Time Show. We have something very fun and unique. Hopefully, you're all curled up-

Aarthi: Feeling Christmasy. [chuckles]

Sriram: -feeling Christmasy, cozy somewhere, you're watching one of the two movies which are acceptable for this time of year, Die Hard or Love Actually.

Aarthi: Why are we doing this hat thing?

Sriram: I think it looks good. We had to get in the spirit. [00:00:30] We want to get in the spirit so I order these off Amazon, but I got it instantly delivered.

Aarthi: [laughs]

Sriram: All right, we have something fun for you today, which is we are going to go over some of our favorite moments, episodes, TV shows, books, movies, and some of the fun things for this year.

Aarthi: Yes. This is our first year of doing this on video. We started this show almost exactly two years ago. When we started, one of the reasons [00:01:00] we really thought that this was going to be easy was there was no video involved. We were doing this on live audio. We didn't have to get dressed like this-

Sriram: No hats.

Aarthi: -no hats. We just thought it was easy to do and so we were always afraid of doing it on video. This year we were like, "Why not?" I think we've gotten enough confidence to just do this. The first few episodes were so unnerving. I don't know how you felt, Sriram, but you're professional, you're always on stage, and you love doing that thing. I'm always the more introverted [00:01:30] person in the family and so it was kind of unnerving to be on video, on camera, facing everyone here but you've all been so good. We've been looking at the show since we did this on YouTube like six, seven months ago. I'm a metrics person, the numbers look so nice- [chuckles]

Sriram: Aarthi does look at the numbers every single morning.

Aarthi: -and the comments are so nice so thank you. Thanks for just bearing with us and watching our show, giving us feedback, leaving all those comments, just saying [00:02:00] nice things about us everywhere. We really, really appreciate it. You have no idea.

Sriram: We took a break from the old audio-only version of the show at the beginning of year because we had a baby. When we restarted this on video, we weren't sure whether it was going to work, we weren't sure whether our audience would come with us, but we've just been blown away. To Aarthi's point, the first few episodes were crazy. We didn't have the tech figured out, you have all these things [00:02:30] going through your

head of like, are the lights okay? Are the guests okay? We can see them and you're trying to read them but we got settled in.

We are going to go through some of our favorite moments in a little bit, but I want to say a huge thank you to all of our guests who took a chance on us, who showed up late at night, who had technical--

Aarthi: Especially when we had these live shows and they were just like, I wouldn't say janky, but we didn't quite figure out everything, and everyone just showed up. [00:03:00] Thank you.

Sriram: Also, to everybody who listens, watches, sends us comments, DMs on Instagram and Twitter, and emails, keep them coming. We love it all. Okay. We are going to make some lists on this episode some of our favorite things of the year. Let's start off with maybe some episodes. Let's talk, what were some of your favorite episodes?

Aarthi: Let's see. I think all the Marc episodes [00:03:30] were pretty much high up there for me. You know, we're--

Sriram: This is Marc Andreessen.

Aarthi: This is Marc Andreessen.

Sriram: This was because he was drinking whiskey on the show?

Aarthi: Maybe. Marc is one of those people who, it's a privilege to be able to sit down with him. He's spent multiple hours with us through the last few months just doing the show with us. I think the first ever episode we did on video was with Marc and Steven Sinofsky. I think we talked then, one of the favorite clips, and it's this clip that's just like, [00:04:00] I think it's the best-done clip metrics-wise, is the one on what is an idea maze and what is his advice for founders. Marc, maybe he talked about the current thing, he talked about wokeness, all of that stuff, but really, my favorite parts were about founder advice, especially founder advice going into the downturn, market crash, what happens now.

I think the most recent one where he talked about Asian cultures, [00:04:30] recommended *The Courage To Be Disliked*, the book and how to basically do your thing, like defy rules, defy the norms, and be able to be a founder and build your thing even when it's not fashionable. Those are full of grit. I love those episodes. They're my personal favorite, but we also had some great guests. Who is your favorite other guest?

Sriram: I guess, just to finish up on Marc, first, what's interesting about interviewing Marc is he'll always ask us, [00:05:00] "Hey, what do you want to talk about?" He comes really prepared. He comes really prepared. He has all these things he wants to say. When you get him going, he talks in these very complete structured paragraphs, and sometimes engineers just [unintelligible 00:05:10]. Tyler Cohen has an interesting

phrase where he says, "A great podcast is unfolding of dramatic tension between the host and the guests." With Marc, every once in a while, if you interject and if you get in the right thing, he's going to take off on the direction. It doesn't always work but--

Aarthi: He's the only guy you don't have to listen to it at [00:05:30] 1.5X or 2X speed because he talks so fast. He thinks really fast and is able to deliver all of those thoughts at that speed.

Sriram: In complete paragraphs. It's insane. I'm going to say next up is AR Rahman for many reasons. First off, and I think this is really an Aarthi episode in so many ways because I think she made it happen.

Aarthi: What we mean by that is each of us, we get to quarterback episodes, like behind the scenes, this is how we do it, where Sriram [00:06:00] has Sriram episodes and I have Aarthi episodes. We pick up the task of organizing, scheduling, preparing, writing our preparation doc, working with the guest, figuring out the structure, all of that. It's very hard for both of us to do it for all episodes all the time, so we each take turns. The Rahman one was my episode. I think, first of all, the introduction came from Shankar, who is many years my senior [00:06:30] in college, and we kept in touch. He's in the interview too, if you've seen it. AR Rahman, who is he?

Sriram: AR Rahman for anybody who has remote ties to India, or even otherwise, he's a legend. He is probably one of the most well-known successful music composers, well-known for making some of the most resonant, inspiring music in movies, and otherwise for over 30 years now. For folks in the US, [00:07:00] you might know him for winning the Oscar for working on *Slumdog Millionaire* and a bunch of other movies. In India, he's really an icon. This is really a childhood idol of ours. This is somebody who was the soundtrack to our childhood. This is somebody who has hundreds of millions of fans. This is somebody, one of the few guests, our parents were impressed by when we got him. It's really hard not to get starstruck when you're with him.

There was a whole process. This was a long time in the making, over a year. Aarthi managed to get this happen, and shout out to Shankar who helped us get it. [00:07:30] We really want to go all out for this episode so we hired a crew. AR Rahman was in Oakland doing a concert, so we went out to the hotel he was staying at, took over a room. When he walked in, we were just starstruck. It was like watching somebody who's a childhood idol just in person, but he came to play.

Aarthi: He came to play. He was very humble, very grounded, just walked into the hotel room, sat down next to us, and Sriram and I were just speechless, which [00:08:00] does not happen often for Sriram. He's the Mozart of Madras, and that's the city we grew up in. This is a really, really big deal. We all grew up listening to his music every single day. I think this year my Spotify number one artist is Rahman. You can't overstate how important this interview was and how important it was for us to not mess it up because I think there was a lot of just responsibility from our friends, family to just make this successful, and it was.

He was very kind, [00:08:30] gave, I think, over two hours of his time. He was late for another dinner and he just continued to sit with us and just talk. He talked about-- We had, I think, a lot of comments captured just doing the episode. We covered different aspect or different side of Rahman. We are not deep into- we're not musicians and so instead of just covering movies, music, just that alone, we also asked him about technology. He had taken an AI course and we talked about that. [00:09:00] We talked about his interest in music gadgets and technologies there. I think we also talked about VR and his movie. It was a very different kind of interview. We also talked a lot about his spirituality, parenting, his advice to us because we are new parents relatively, and all of that. I love that episode. It's just one of those bucket list interviews that I'm really grateful that [00:09:30] just came together and it came together so well.

Sriram: It's also very important because I think it's the first time we had such a famous guest come together on video. Everything worked out. We spent the whole day. We went out there. We had a crew. Everything was just perfect. People seemed to love it. During the episode, we could really connect to him on a human level. One of my favorite moments is he could really tell me that I had done our homework and we had watched every single thing he'd ever [00:10:00] done and I could see it [unintelligible 00:10:01]. That was a sort of a personal life highlight among other things. Okay, next episode.

Aarthi: Other episode. You go.

Sriram: Okay. Well, I would say Indra Nooyi the former CEO of Pepsi was another highlight. Again, that's another Aarthi episode in some ways because Aarthi really made it happen, but Indra is really special because, one, she comes from the same city as us, so there was a lot of upbringing and social ties, we could really connect. [00:10:30] Before we went live, we would just banter and tumble and we would gossip and she's so fun but once the camera's on she's just so polished and such a fantastic communicator.

If you haven't seen the episode or if you don't know who she is, I highly commend just watching 10 minutes of it and you will see how effective-

Aarthi: Articulate she is.

Sriram: -as a communicator, knows what she's saying, is incredibly confident, somebody who's lived through a lot of life, and just inspiring. That was, again, [00:11:00] another life highlight.

Aarthi: She's also, as we think about how to speak better, especially on this show, how to communicate effectively, we look up to people like Indra because she's really mastered it. You can tell that part of her success, obviously, she works incredibly hard, she deserves all the success and more, but part of it I think also comes from her ability to just very quickly, effectively communicate things, and have gravitas. She's just got enormous gravitas when speaking [00:11:30] even the most mundane things. I think there's just a lot to go learn from her.

Other favorite episodes of mine? I really liked Balaji, Balaji Srinivasan.

Sriram: For three hours.

Aarthi: For three hours. He talked about *The Network State*, which is this new book. We talked about a lot of other things too. I think for me, we did that-- When did we do that? That was sometime July, August?

Sriram: It was very early in our episodes and [00:12:00] so set to see Balaji who lives in an undisclosed location. He was doing this in the middle of the night with us. I would say, after three hours I was getting hungry. We could have probably gone like seven hours, eight hours like Lex Fridman did. One of my favorite things about this episode is Balaji's, obviously, a genius and he's somebody where you set him off on a theme and he's going to go both breadth-first and depth-first.

One of the fun things I like with Balaji [00:12:30] is you can take him off of his usual script. We had fun. We talked about, I think, his family. We talked about other things he likes to do because it is so not the thing that he usually talks about so we get to see a much more human, warm, fuzzy side of Balaji and that was fun. Again, it's one of the episodes we really seem to connect with people. I think there's an interesting challenge in the podcast where you have a guest to, a lot of people have heard from multiple times in very different format, and you want to try and get something new from them-

Aarthi: New and the difference they will say.

Sriram: [00:13:00] -while also giving them something that everybody wants to come to here. We go to a Marvel movie you're not going for a French artistic movie. You're coming to see superheroes do fun stuff. With Balaji, you had to do both. You had to do that, but you also get something new. I think we, hopefully, got something new. That was another fun episode.

Aarthi: I think in a similar way, Tanmay Bhat was like that for us?

Sriram: Yes. That was a fun one.

Aarthi: Tanmay, we've been friends with Tanmay for a while, and Tanmay doesn't do a ton of interviews now, but I think he's [00:13:30] very much like a public figure personality. We wanted to get this other side of Tanmay. He's funny, but also really warm. He talked about just how he perceives- there were things like how to tell a joke and he breaks it down for you, or when did he think he had made it, like cross that boundary of being this local celebrity within his town, within Mumbai to like everybody now knows just growing up with YouTube [00:14:00] and putting out his comedy over there.

I think all of that was just really, really good. Tanmay, again, one of those folks where it gives you this really warm fuzzy feeling because he, again, is a really good communicator, just effectively comes across, brings out his point on like how to be funny in a really interesting way.

Sriram: The thing about Tanmay, which is interesting and this comes across in the episode, is Tanmay is one of India's leading comedians and [00:14:30] he's so used to being funny, he's so used to being on and a showman but if you watch the episode, you can see one of his real superpowers is to deconstruct people and deconstruct emotions and situations. We do get into that part of the episode, where are deconstructing the nature of comedy, deconstructing the nature of what makes something work with an audience, just incredibly sharp, fun episode.

One last episode I want to point out is the one with Brian Armstrong. Brian, I think was our second episode, our third episode and he was in a hotel room. He had a glass of [00:15:00] wine, and he just really opened up. He opened up about everything that happened at Coinbase. He opened up about at one time how we wanted to quit and do something else. He opened up about how he's grown as a founder. Often when you're talking to somebody in roles of power who has an organization or an institution behind them, they are so controlled and they have these lanes that they want to stay in, and I respect that. I've been there. We've all been there, but Brian was so open, so candid, [00:15:30] just really, really wanted to share things.

Aarthi: I think at some point I had even asked him, do you think Coinbase should have gone public or do you ever think that was a mistake? Most founders it's a tough question to ask them, especially in a market that's not doing well. They've just gone through a bunch of stuff. He was just so candid about it. He thought about, he actually articulated it as like, "Yes, there's the case for whether we should have gone public," [00:16:00] and he just laid it all out. If you haven't watched that episode, it's one of our favorite episodes on how good founders are, how to be a good founder. I think there's a lot to just go learn from Brian there. I know you like this one episode a lot by Andreas Kling.

Sriram: Yes. This maybe my personal favorite of the year on certain dimensions. Andreas Kling is a solo developer/founder of an operating system called SerenityOS. He, basically, is almost [00:16:30] a one-man show writing an entire operating system from scratch. That's not what makes him interesting or that's, alone, not what makes him interesting. He has a fascinating story, which is very open about where he struggled with addiction, went through a very dark time, and used his recovery process, tied it to what he was building in just a really inspiring way.

This just kind of speaks to me because he may not be one of our more famous guests, he will be, I think, because people recognize the sheer skill and brilliance, but he was so open [00:17:00], so vulnerable, and just got him nerded out. It's just one of these things that I look back upon and I go, "Okay, I'm so happy we did that and we got that conversation done," just really, really happy that it was highly recommended. All right, so those are the episodes. Let's move on to some of this stuff.

Aarthi: I wanted to ask you this, and I know this was not a part of our preparation, what were your personal highlights from this year for just you as such?

Sriram: Now, guys, there's so many.

Aarthi: [00:17:30] Personal, professional, outside, it doesn't matter.

Sriram: Oh, well, of course, we had our second kid, which has to be there at the top of the list.

Aarthi: He was born right after the new year in January, and now he's 11 months old, which is unbelievable.

Sriram: That was crazy. Having two kids, seeing them interact, seeing us change and adapt to having two kids in what is a really interesting year that's been quite experience. I would say then [00:18:00] Starting to work full-time on crypto was probably one of the best things I've done. I'm ordered to work on the crypto side of Andreessen Horowitz, and that has been amazing, working with some amazing founders, technologists, team members. That's been a blast.

I think the third part is really this on multiple levels because we've always wanted work on a project together and we couldn't really figure it out. We had the audio words in, and I think, in some ways, the break helped us because we were like, "Okay. That was great. How do we take it further? How do [00:18:30] we make it bigger?" This has already opened up so many different avenues, but mostly it's a creative outlet, something you get to do outside of kids and outside of-

Aarthi: Day jobs as such.

Sriram: -your day job. It really aligns to our day job and aligns to what we want to do. It's also an excuse to meet fun people.

Aarthi: The number of people who've come to us, either on the streets, which is bizarre. It tells you also about the San Francisco founders culture, but also just outside, like I think in the airports, [00:19:00] online, just people reach out and be like, "I know you're from the show."

We would do Zoom calls with other founders and just people even not even in tech and they'd be like, "We know you from the show," kind of thing. It's so fun because for us, we don't see this as a job. We kind of see this as like an outlet creative outlet for us. It's a project that we love doing. It's about one show a week, so about four hours-ish of shows a month, and it's amazing [00:19:30] how much we enjoy the whole process.

Sriram: Also, it scratches this founder, creator, rich which is super fun. Okay, next segment. Maybe one from each favorite movie of the year.

Aarthi: One from each. Okay, you go.

Sriram: Well, this maybe one both of our list, I think.

Aarthi: Go for it. It's fine.

Sriram: I'm going to go *Top Gun: Maverick*, which might be an obvious choice. I'm going to go ahead for a few reasons. First of all, I think it's signified movies being back. This is a [00:20:00] movie you had to see on the big screen. It was an amazing experience you got to see it on opening weekend in IMAX. I would say it was movie in all caps, M-O-V-I-E, huge cinematic experience, huge technical breakthrough. I can't think of a more perfect movie in terms of striking the notes of technical excellence, the shots in the plane, the sound engineering, all of it. You can really see they push the boundaries, really pushing the boundaries [00:20:30] on just nostalgia but not overdone. Honestly, one of the ways we can evaluate movies is when we come back, you want to watch it again, you want to talk about it [crosstalk]

Aarthi: We actually did. We went-- [laughs]

Sriram: We actually did and we went back the very next day, again, two days in a row.

Aarthi: Which is really hard with two small kids, for folks who have kids, finding a sitter or childcare two continuous nights is a big deal, but we made it happen and we actually went.

Sriram: It was crazy. Even to this day, there are times when I watched the third act, or [00:21:00] Tom Cruise flying the course by himself again and again, it's just brilliant. It's just totally brilliant, I think just a testament to movie making and Tom Cruise being a freaking movie star. That's mine.

Aarthi: My, I think, top and obviously, I think one other favorite of mine to go see it in the theater is *PS1*, which is *Ponniyin Selvan 1*. For folks who know, you already know this is Kalki's book that became a movie after. This is a big historic attempt [00:21:30] by Mani Ratnam and our favorite AR Rahman to bring this whole world in. It's part true story, part mythical story of the times of Cholan, Raja Raja Cholan, and him coming into power. This is first movie. I think there's going to be the next movie next year. I'd read the book, the first book, as a teenager, and then the rest of the books through college. It had left a deep impression in me on, [00:22:00] man, wouldn't it be nice to see this as a movie?

I think a lot of people grew up at the same time as me having this very similar vision and to go see it in the big screens. I remember telling Sriram, this is my Marvel movie of the year because it was so epic. It was just big budget, really well done, A-list actors, movie stars, just like this real star power movie. The first song shows up. Also, the interesting thing [00:22:30] is it stayed pretty close to the book, which is awesome because most times they're just adapted and it doesn't resemble the book much. It kind of deviates away, but so much fun. It was so great. I love the movie. It was really enjoyable to watch. That is, I think, one of my favorite movies of the year. I think there are two others.

Sriram: Honorable mentions.

Aarthi: Honorable mentions. *Bullet Train* was one, I think.

Sriram: Oh, that's a surprise.

Aarthi: Yes, I think Bullet Train, we didn't think it was [00:23:00] going to be the movie that it ended up being when we started watching it. I guess it's one way to put it. It was this very fun Japanese movie meets Tarantino, I guess.

Sriram: Dream comic book.

Aarthi: Yes, exactly. It just felt really fun and really lightweight. We really enjoyed it. I think the most recent one we saw was *Tár*.

Sriram: Yes, *Tár* was spectacular. I do think *Star* and *Top Gun: Maverick* have one interesting theme in common, which I think they're both about [00:23:30] excellence. *Top Gun: Maverick*, and there's been a lot made about *Top Gun* and space and the culture wars. I do think at one end it was like, "Hey, a bunch of people who are just really, really good at what they're doing, pushing boundaries. *Tár* incredibly different genre. I think Cate Blanchett is up there with Michelle Yeoh for winning an Academy Award for best actress. Tar, again, [00:24:00] we watched it last a few days ago. We've been talking about it.

Aarthi: I think the first scene opened up and we were, "I'm not sure." We don't really understand that whole world of opera music and concert performances and stuff really well so when it started out we were like, "I don't know. This might not be for us. This might be too foolproof for us." Then first scene breaks out, second scene breaks out, and we are like, "This is really good."

Sriram: They really bring it very [00:24:30] quickly. Even if we watched *Tár*, we'd all discuss it, and we've been discussing it quite a bit. One more movie, I think, *Everything Everywhere All At Once*.

Aarthi: Oh, my God. Yes.

Sriram: It is really hard to talk about the multiverse or multiple timelines or simulations in any way without sounding like you're repeating yourself without sounding derivative. This is a theme which has been done in a million movies. Even this year there were two movies, this and Dr. Strange, which was tackled in billions of books, but [00:25:00] I think the movie makers here and the movie was just so well done, so imaginative, both in terms of pushing the sci-fi version, but also making it very grounded in a human level. Again, I think this is going to win a bunch of awards. It's really up there as one of the movies of the year, a real true highlight.

Aarthi: Yes, I agree.

Sriram: Okay. All right, one book each of the year.

Aarthi: One book each. This is not a book that released this year, but it made an impression on [00:25:30] me, is the Walter Isaacson's book on Leonardo da Vinci. It's a pretty big book. I've been reading it through or listening to it, through Audible, through my runs, I love it. A lot of it you don't really know what exactly da Vinci was thinking.

Obviously, there's like a whole diary of notes and stuff, but just how incredibly creative he was.

Not to say the obvious, just being able to do, be really [00:26:00] good at multiple professions at the same time and coming out of nothing, coming out of basic poverty as such and being able to-- Not a legitimate son and coming out of that world to just kind of being the A-lister, the star player in the art scene is just phenomenal. It's like this slow rise of who is this guy da Vinci and how is he so prolific and just people commissioning [00:26:30] him for different works of art.

If you haven't read the book it's worth a read. I thought it was really inspiring. I like books like these which are slow-moving biographies of famous people because you like get into their world and understand their motivations a little bit. I thought that was great. What's your pick? You've read a lot more books than I have.

Sriram: Well, I have a whole system, which I stack books around my table and just going to grab one. I'm going to pick one. There's a funny story. I think we were in the [00:27:00] theaters for *Top Gun: Maverick*, and there was a trailer which played for Christopher Nolan's upcoming movie on Robert Oppenheimer who's the father of the atomic bomb. I Googled it later. I found it was based on a book called *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* by Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin. I heard of it but never read it, and read it, and it was amazing. I think it's amazing on a few levels. All of us had heard of Oppenheimer. He's such a fascinating person. He's [00:27:30] flawed, he's brilliant, he's difficult to work with, but when called upon delivered greatness, and then has a tragic betrayal and story after the atomic bomb. It's just a fascinating story. It's very well told.

I think I highly recommend that. It actually set me on a path just getting a lot more about the history of nuclear energy, atomic weapons. I highly recommend also *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* by Richard Rhodes, which is also a classic [unintelligible 00:27:59]. [00:28:00] The Robert Oppenheimer book is fantastic because of the human drama between him, General Groves, and I think soon-to-be a fantastic Christopher Nolan movie. I'm going to pick that as my one big book of the year.

Aarthi: I think there are other books too. You've probably read like, I'm not even making this up, like a hundred books this year. Sriram's a prolific reader. I think some other books that I really like, *Build* by Tony Faddle [crosstalk]

Sriram: Oh, that was a great book.

Aarthi: I really enjoyed [00:28:30] it. I also really liked Michael Dell's *Play Nice But Win*, a fantastic book, all through his childhood and making of Dell computers. That I thought was fantastic. Steven Sinofsky actually has a great tweet thread on the top books that he'd enjoyed reading [crosstalk]

Sriram: He had a book himself on Substack which we talked about in our previous episode.

Aarthi: He had a book himself. Yes, *Hardcore Software*, which if you are anywhere in that world of old school, early stage Microsoft, great [00:29:00] great book and series. I think he's just finished the last chapter but really fantastic there. I think that was really good. I really liked *Who Is Michael Ovitz?*

Sriram: Oh, that is a great book.

Aarthi: Yes, I only read it this year, and that entire world of being an agent and just entering that entire world. How do you structure a deal and work with talents, like different talents, I think was just fantastic for me to read. I'm trying to think. There were a bunch of other books [00:29:30] that I'd really enjoyed this year.

Sriram: I think I'm going to pick a couple of other also fiction books, which I think made an impression on me. A recent one, again, this is the bestseller, a lot of people might have read it, *Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid. It has so much going for it. It's a mystery. It really gets into old Hollywood glamor, which is the time and era, which I love. It has a very satisfying ending.

Aarthi: No, stop.

Sriram: Yes. Well, it's not a spoiler really. It is really well done. Really well, [00:30:00] architecture crafted. [crosstalk]

Aarthi: You also read the Marilyn Monroe book this year.

Sriram: That was great, multiple Marilyn Monroe books.

Aarthi: Marilyn Monroe books, yes. That sounds pretty good.

Sriram: One last book, I think is, again, another well-known book on the fiction side, is *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles. Aarthi and I always love the idea of the American Road trip. This is the quintessential road trip book. This one's really a spoiler, a couple of young people sitting out on a road trip, getting lost, getting to adventures, and [00:30:30] discovering themselves in America along the way. Very well done. I think probably one of the books up there.

Aarthi: What were some of Marc and Jason's book recommendation that you've read? I think this year I read the *Courage To Be Disliked* which I thought was really interesting. Especially coming from Indian culture, I think it was a really interesting book to go read because you're so used to-- Now that we've been here for over a decade, you can see the dichotomy of the two different, like the Western and the Eastern culture [00:31:00] on family, community, all of that so I thought it was a really good book.

Sriram: I would say anybody who's been paying attention to Marc this year would probably want to be reading two books, one is the *Machiavellians* and the other *Ancient City*.

Aarthi: *Ancient City*, yes.

Sriram: If the authors were around, I would think that Marc has some secret deal to drive book sales for them but, no, I think they really help explain a lot of what's going on with the tech industry and culture more broadly. Highly recommend all of Burnham's work, especially *Machiavellians* and [00:31:30] *Ancient City*.

Okay. I have something in there which is our favorite in-person community moment. I put us in there because I really want to talk about what we did in Chennai and the event we did. A couple of months ago, Aarthi and I were in India, and at the last minute, we decided to say, "Hey, we'd like to do an event, a meet-up for people who watch, listen to our show. Honestly, we had no idea whether anybody would show up. It was also raining, just a torrential downpour, like only Southern India, [00:32:00] tends to have but it was amazing.

The venue capacity could have easily-- We could probably 3Xed it. We have hundreds of people show up, hundreds of people who couldn't make it because it was a last minute. It was just really touching for us t-- We love the comment, we love the emails, we love the notes, but to see people in person talk to us about the episodes, ask us advice, it really just emotionally really connected with us.

Aarthi: Yes. People who just -- I think it was an orange alert that day for [00:32:30] the cyclones and, people just brave the rains and just showed up. Chris, who helped organize host the whole thing, and his team of folks just did a phenomenal job. I think we did an episode just specifically covering that and a lot of people left comments naming their cities and asking us to do in-person meetups and we would love to do a few next year. We'll get back in touch once we figure out schedules, all of that stuff. At least, [00:33:00] San Francisco, I think we should do a meetup. We found it just incredibly invigorating, not just for people to come in and for us to meet them, but for people to start seeing people interact with each other. That I think was just really fun for me.

It almost felt like my YC days where you had founders just engaging and chatting with each other. Being a startup founder is such a lonely, lonely job that anything we can do to make it feel a more of a [00:33:30] community, I think, goes a long way. We hope to do more of these and just do more in-person meetups.

Sriram: If you're seeing this, if you allow for us to do a meetup in your city or if you are allowed to help with one wherever you happen to be, just send a comment, send us a DM. That's something we'd love to do much more often in 2023. Not just here in Silicon Valley, we want to do that, but also all over the world. Okay. Most, I would say, prep talk, it says, "Defining incidents, the technology world, [00:34:00] for this year."

Aarthi: [laughs] Oh, man, I totally missed that.

Sriram: There's a few. Let me start with one.

Aarthi: Okay.

Sriram: I would say that the move from Ethereum, from proof-of-work to proof-of-stake is really up there on multiple levels. First of all, it just worked. You could barely notice it. One moment you were running on proof-of-work and you hold the miners and next moment you were not. This is a project which [00:34:30] was years in the work, brought together so much mathematical, scientific theory, huge tech software development engineering process across a disparate distributed set of people who often hadn't met each other, all brought together. This is really a very, very unique, I would say, underappreciated achievements, for at least the world of crypto, which I think is going to be [unintelligible 00:34:58] momentous for, but just [00:35:00] like building technology and pushing it forward. That would be one of my top picks of 2022. It could for 2023 and beyond also because I think it's so amazing.

Aarthi: I think in a similar way we spoke to both Imad and Alex Wang and both of them we'd covered-- Oh, we forgot to talk about Palmer Luckey's episode too. We spoke to a few of these leaders in AI as such, and I think the trend of especially with ChatGPT, I think it's like [00:35:30] such a big moment. What OpenAI has been building in ChatGPT is only GPT-3.5 and they're going to roll out GPT-4 soon. I can't wait to see what that's going to look like but the whole, like this year, was dominated in AI in the world of like prompts and LLMs prompt engineering work, incredible artwork, creativity.

ChatGPT being out there and people just trying out really interesting prompts, what this means for future of schooling, [00:36:00] of teaching writing essays, there are all these questions out there and so I think we are basically ending the year with a lot of promise and I can't wait to see what next year is going to look like for the world of AI. I think ChatGPT and [unintelligible 00:36:17] Stable Diffusion all of these just launching this year or rolling out this year and being really well-known, almost getting into this world of [00:36:30] people outside of the tech world, knowing what these are and what they can do, I think has been such an interesting phenomenon to just observe. It's early, but it looks very promising.

Sriram: Yes, and I think the ChatGPt especially what has been, and Stable Diffusion and Dall-E, which came out earlier in the year, seems to have so much happened. I would say it just has captured people's imagination in ways which I think back, I think about the iPhone, I think about Ajax, there's really a few times when people have gone like, "Oh this is cool. I want to play with it. Also, [00:37:00] see what's possible and are just energized in a very unique way. It's only happened a few times and I think that's it.

Aarthi: I think we are going to do more episodes around this and invite some interesting people in the world of AI to come share what they've learned and what they're building on our show. It's something I'm really excited about.

Sriram: Yes. It's going to be super familiar, some fun guests there and there. I'm going to pick one last moment and I'm going to say--

Aarthi: You wonder what it can be.

Sriram: It's going to be Elon buying Twitter and there are many reasons I think this is one of [00:37:30] defining moments of the year but for me, I'm going to go with this, which it's sort of been the world of stasis in the world of social media and tech for quite a while on multiple levels. It seemed like the world caught itself into a few large social media companies and you had a sense of how they competed, what each of those roles were.

You also, I think, had a sort of agreed upon way of how tech companies should be run, how managers should work, and I think what this has done, it has totally shaken [00:38:00] everything up. You want to call it shaking or expanding the Overton window. You want to call it like just showing people a different way is possible. Now I think people see that, "Oh, wait, the world of social media can change, will change. I think a lot of founders and CEOs are seeing that there's a different way of running the companies that is possible."

It is very early to predict how all of this turns out, but things have been shaken up and it's going to be very interesting to see where all this winds up going in next year, 2024.

Aarthi: [00:38:30] Yes, I think so too. We'd both worked in different social media companies and I think for the first time we are like, people are sitting up and taking notice because, like you said, I think it's just like stagnated a little bit. We don't know what this is going to look like, what the future is going to look like.

I think Elon buying Twitter, Elon with no experience building social media companies, obviously, has clearly done a lot of important interesting work in software before and hardware landing [00:39:00] rockets, I think Mark Andreessen says, "He can land rockets on his butt" [laughs] and so it'll be interesting to see what happens here. If anything changes in the world of Twitter specifically, but the world of social media overall.

Sriram: Yes. It's not going to be boring for sure with Elon now run. Okay. One last thing, which is one thing in the world of technology or business or the world of work that you're looking for in 2023?

Aarthi: [00:39:30] I think we covered AI. I'm really excited to see what happens there, especially around like, what are some of the startups building interesting AI applications, I think is going to be really fun. I think similarly in the world of crypto. Now that we've had that wave of this buzzy celebrity-focused, that crowd come in, see this dip, and then churn, a bunch of them churn, now I think there are people who are there are [00:40:00] hardcore builders building some really interesting crypto projects. I want to see what comes out of that next year.

Sriram: Yes. I'm going to probably steal that. Just I think there are so many amazing technologies building crypto some which are public, some of which are not public and I think 2023 is going to be a theme of building things. We are going to see some very interesting technology of progress, for example, in crypto, making things faster, cheaper, safer, [00:40:30] more privacy aware, a lot of fun things in the works. I think it's just

going to be world of just you're of nerdy good technological progress. [unintelligible 00:40:39] just really excited for that.

Aarthi: Yes, I'm excited about that. What are the tech trends are you thinking of? I think outside of the pure crypto world itself, I think getting that next set of normal users excited about crypto as such, not so much because of using crypto as a different technology, [00:41:00] but building tools around on-ramp and off-ramp. I love the very boring infrastructure projects, I love like B2B enterprise tools, all of that stuff but I think world of Fintech meeting crypto I think is going to be really interesting because for us practical problems or money movement and money transfer and we sent money back to our folks in India and stuff, for years this has been like not an easy solution and just solving some very specific problems around [00:41:30] the Fintech as such, I think, it's going to be interesting.

Sriram: I agree. Vitalik has a great post, I think, on the things he expect for 2023 and financial applications are at the top.

Aarthi: What about social media world of creators?

Sriram: 2020 was an interesting year for that. I would say, one, I think we saw what parts of creator economy have some real meat behind them in terms of application you can build. I think you also saw some people who are [00:42:00] really not into crypto and who would wind up leaving. In the long-term very, very, very bullish on the idea of like creators and communities and the authentic ties that they have. In fact, part of what we do is all about that. I think we are going to see more of this. You're going to see different kinds of platforms. You're going to see different ways for creators to wind up connecting. You probably want to see creators wanting to control or have direct connections to their communities.

I think with all the events of this year, creators are realizing [00:42:30] that, "Hey, we can always be attached to one platform." You need be on different platforms. You need to have people's email addresses or phone numbers or whatever the case may be. I don't think you'll see creators who want to have those data connections without middlemen, which actually is very good for crypto.

Aarthi: Yes. I think one trend, I'm curious to see where this goes, in the beginning of this year, it was very fashionable for people to talk about future of work and remote work and [00:43:00] lots of people started out being like, "Remote is the future there's no going back." Now somehow it's become this controversial decision where now a lot of people are stepping up and saying, "Well, if you're a small company you really have to be in person. You shouldn't be remote. I would actually be very suspicious of small companies coming to do fully working remotely as such." Now, it's become fashionable to say that I think Elon, Twitter too, is like, "Oh, we should all like meet in person and build stuff in person."

[00:43:30] I am curious to see what that trend looks like on remote work and what the future of remote actually looks like for technology because I do think there are some

advantages to remote. People can be wherever they are. As long as you have a laptop, an internet connection, you can like show up and do the work. It saves commute. It saves travel time.

I think when I was working at Meta, sometimes it would be like two hours each way to commute. [00:44:00] On good days when you had like proper working internet, you could get some work done on the buses and back but when the pandemic hit, you realize like, "Oh, my God. You're getting all this time back." You now have four hours of time that you can actually productively use and so I'm curious. I think for me there were like some advantages to going fully remote, but I do see, when I work with early-stage founders, how interesting and important it is to meet together. I miss the [00:44:30] idea of brainstorming and whiteboarding together in a room and just coming up with ideas. I think there is this level of energy that I really miss that we don't have in person.

I don't know. What do you think about future work?

Sriram: Oh, I think there's going to be a schism there. I do think there are a set of companies, people who will really lean into being back in person. They're going to do really well for certain stages. I think it's maybe also with generational thing where there's a whole generation which is now, they totally used remote work and it doesn't want to come back. [00:45:00] I think a few things. One, I think for early stages, you're going to see people kind of come back to in-person experiences, the whiteboard experience, but two, I do think you're going to see on the other end of the barbell, if you will, people really push what it means to build remote organizations. For example, we talk about proof-of-stake, you can't get more decentralized, more remote than what [unintelligible 00:45:20] has managed to do.

Amazing feats of technological achievement are possible whether we have the infrastructure, socially, technologically to make it happen available. It's actually [00:45:30] [unintelligible 00:45:30] fund more, these things here, but I do think we are going to see a barbell between the incredibly intense in-person approach and the remote work approach part. Well, those will be fun crypto, AI, and then--

Aarthi: Crypto, AI, remote work, future work, creator tools, and creators and communities coming together, I think those are really good trends to go keep an eye on.

Sriram: I like it. We love to hear from all of you, [00:46:00] wherever you are, some of your favorite episodes, moments, books, movies.

Aarthi: Also, like your personal moments like what's been interesting for you, what's happened in your lives? We read every comment, every tweet. We actually do, even if it is incredibly critical, we actually take everything to heart and take it seriously. Please leave a comment. If there are interesting moments that you think we had missed, please point it out. Sriram actually has more stuff in there. I'm [00:46:30] just seeing the doc and it says favorite sports moment, [laughs] favorite TV shows. [laughs]

I think we missed a whole bunch there, but we would love to hear from you on what was exciting for you. What did you like in our shows? That would be really fun for us. It's a

little bit of an ego boost. [chuckles] We'd love to hear what you liked and if there's anything that you'd like to see us do next year, specific guests you want to see, topics you think we should go cover **[00:47:00]** let us know. We just love to hear from you.

Sriram: I agree. Most of all, hope you had an amazing year. Hope you have an amazing holiday and Merry Christmas or whatever it is you're doing.

Aarthi: Happy holidays.

Sriram: Happy holidays and we'll be back next week with a fun episode, but till then, have a great holiday.

Aarthi: See you.