

SPARROWS GONE MISSING

It is unfortunate that one time best friends of the humans, the household sparrows have gone missing especially in urban dwelling sites thus giving a setback to ecology of the region as hardly one finds this species of bird in Jammu city or in its outskirts. This is a big question that where these chirping little creatures have gone as there are no instances of any special things challenging their existence in the city. The experts which themselves are not very clear often blame loss of habitat for the extinction of these small creatures from Jammu as new buildings lack nesting provisions but this could not be the exact reason as still there are quite a good number of trees in Jammu where these could live and flourish in their families. Though no proof is yet evolved but several people claim that mobile towers forced these avian family members to leave cities and move out to forests but the assertion is just a vague idea as no scientific proof is there to support this idea as well. It's important to save sparrows by installing nest boxes, bird feeders, planting native plants and reducing use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. This seems an easy way out but in reality it is very difficult thing as people don't have time to talk to their own children these days. Use of heavy doses of pesticides in kitchen gardens and fields resulted in the decline of invertebrate fauna. Small insects play a very important role in the survival of newborn sparrows. Thus this fact can be attributed to end of house sparrows in the city areas. There is still a big hope that these small chirping birds will come back soon but for this residents have to take some small initiatives like making provisions for nests in the houses, stop use of dangerous pesticides and providing food to the birds as and when possible. These small steps can prove very useful or else the days are not far when the remaining bird species will also disappear from the scene.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Dissent is not so bad

Does Advaita Vedanta allow for dissent within its philosophical paradigm?

Advaita Vedanta has a lot of space for debate, but it has no space for violence or non-acceptance of others' points of view. Through debate, you come to deeper realisations. If you pose a counterpoint to my view, I would not reject it outright. We will investigate it together. We will have a healthy debate. Vedanta says, explore it within yourself and finally, you will come to realise what the truth of the whole thing is.

But are we not told that there is only one truth? Then how can there be room for many points of view?

The physicality of truth can be very different, which we call perception. If four people are sitting in a room, they could have different perceptions of the same thing. There are many perceptions of the same reality. People fight over individual perceptions. Yes, there is one reality, but perceptions of that reality by people can be different. The problem arises when I am not ready to accept your perception and say that 'only my perception is the right perception.' That's where we lose it. That's when humanity gets into the 'zone of suffering.'

According to Indie wisdom traditions, you can have any perception and I respect that. That is one of the reasons why Sanatana Dharma continues to be relevant. You can be a believer of any perception that you feel is right for you. However, don't impose it on anybody and be respectful of others' perceptions, too. With that, we can live in a harmonious relationship. That is the foundation of Indie culture. But, we are challenging it and we are suffering because of that.

You experience all the suffering, yet the heart does not contract; it keeps opening. You experience a range of emotions; you become a witness and don't become a slave of your emotions.

Where does God figure in all of this?

Different people interpret God mechanics differently. If you feel God is out there, one Being controlling all that is happening, then you are in a different mindset. God, as the Buddha said, is the law.

Since you cannot relate to law, you give it a figure. We live in the world of touch and feel, perceptions, the five senses.

As a layman, I can't relate to anything that is not within the five senses. If anyone tells me there is divinity which is the dharma, law, I can't understand it. I only know the dharma that earth has gravity, because my mind can't comprehend it. I create a figure, to be able to relate with something that is higher than me and that lies beyond my five senses. Ramakrishna would ask you, 'Do you believe in the formless god or god with form?' If you say 'formless god,' he would say, if you want to walk the path, start by relating to god with form, because you live in the dual world of Dvaita, you can't connect right now with Advaita.

Sonal Srivastava

Just think of any negativity that comes at you as a raindrop falling into the ocean of your bliss.

-Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

EDITORIAL

Anything to oppose Modi

■ MANMOHAN DHAR

With UP and Punjab elections due in 2022, opposition has geared up its campaign of opportunist politics. In fact, it is not a new thing for them. They have been doing it since 2014. To be more precise, even before that when Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat. So, not a big deal. Opportunist politics is something that holds the centre stage whenever there is something big going to take place. Be it the elections to the State assembly, or that at the centre. Be it the defence programmes, infrastructural development, Health and other related programmes, Education or for that matter the issues relating to the Agriculture and the farmers. We can easily summarize some developmental programmes undertaken by the Government for building a new India, and how the opposition, just to oppose Narendra Modi and somehow throw him out of power, tried to sabotage and damage the country's development through their nefarious designs and venomous political opportunism. When Modi wanted to give a new dimension to the Country's Ariel security and the overall face lifting of the Indian Air force, a big hue and cry was raised by the opposition when the Rafael fighter aircraft deal with France in 2015 was announced. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the landmark defence deal with France to buy 36 Rafael fighter jets to refurbish Indian air force, and opposition wasted no time to grab the opportunity to mount pressure on the Government for making, as per their own assessment, a dubious deal. Every countryman knows that the new deal of Rafael was a genuine deal and there was nothing that could be a reason for pointing finger towards the centre for making this deal. On December 14, 2018 the Supreme Court too upheld the Rafael deal, stating that no irregularities or corruption have been found. But, to the utter disappointment of the Nation, the Opportunist Opposition even ridiculed the Supreme Court for giving a clean chit to this defence deal. Some shameless politicians who are a novice to the Indian politics, notwithstanding the sanctity of the post of a Prime Minister, called the PM a thief. How much more can one stoop low? Embodiment of utter hatred that is what they are. And then during the West Bengal elections there was yet another slogan, 'Khela Hobo'. This ambiguous slogan was created by none other than Didi of Bengal Mamata Banerjee. Well, they say it was purely a political slogan to challenge the BJP in the state of West Bengal. But, the story seemed to be something else. Khela Hobo was not a political challenge to the BJP or any other political party in the fray, instead it looked like a warning to the people of West Bengal that if they dare vote against TMC, they will have to face the consequences. And actually that is what happened during the whole election process in West Bengal. Post-poll violence took an ugly shape and dozens of BJP Workers got killed. It was the most horrible and dirtiest aftermath of any electioneering history of India. What can one make out of all this other than the fear and frustration of Mamata Banerjee and TMC on account of increasing popularity of Modi and BJP in West Bengal.

Religion card is yet another opportunist invasion on the Government masterminded by the Opposition to play the vote bank politics in the Country. All National level political Parties were hand and glove with every small and big party even at the regional level to create a ruckus with a hidden agenda of destabilizing the Government and ridiculing the decisions made by Modi towards the upliftment and progress of all sections of the society at par. Who

can ever forget the scar that was left on the face of the society at Shaheen Bagh. Where people from all political parties left no stone unturned in keeping the issue boiling simply to make the Central Govt bow down and succumb to the undue pressure that was created by fanatics and pseudo seculars. Vote bank politics has become every political party's cup of tea. It is this political weapon which they think is going to take them through in 2022 State elections and 2024 general elections. But, all these political opponents need to understand that they have to deal with a much prudent and politically well versed voter and cheap means of appeasement are bound to lead them to an unprecedented political setback. Instigating different sections of the society on religious basis, for these political opportunists, is going to boomerang and the lesson has to be learnt before it is too late for them and they are left with nothing but extinction on the National arena. Who can forget the statements made by some leaders of very big political parties regarding the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. Some even questioned the very existence of Bhagwan Ram. All these misadventures proved futile and they could gather nothing but the mass opposition for uttering such baseless and false contentions and hurting the sentiments of majority community at large. Likewise, there was a huge attempt to disrupt the peace when Modi announced the demonetization of all Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 banknotes of the Mahatma Gandhi Series on 8th Nov, 2016. No chance was literally left to defame Narendra Modi and his Government. But, thanks to the strong resolve of a very great and world class statesman in Modi, that the storm passed peacefully and the people of the country recognised, acknowledged and accepted the need for demonetization. Despite of the fact that the whole opposition was left isolated and literally seceded, they continued their undemocratic, irrational, unprincipled and vicious campaign against this political giant. There can be hundreds of such examples where one can infer the malafide and nefarious designs of the opposition to destabilize the Modi Government and mutilate the new progressive image of the Country on the Global level. These shameless politicians even went begging the neighboring countries to help and support them in throwing Modi out. This can be nothing but political bankruptcy and a dangerous urge to grab power from the back door. Because they know it very well, in fact they can read the writing on the wall very clearly that their political career has been sealed by Modi and they have to starve politically for rest of their life. And, lately when the Government passed the farmers' bill in the Parliament, for the betterment of the farmers, opposition with the help of some Anti national forces and some so called International celebrities who know nothing about Agriculture and farmers and even through the illegal in flow of Hawala money tried to misguide, mislead and instigate some so called farmers' bodies to create a state of unrest in the country. There were timely assurances from the Agriculture minister and other Government authorities to the farmers that Government is committed to safeguard the interests of the Indian farmer. But all in vain, the opposition was up to something else. And, that is only and only Modi hatred. Modi who acted like a real well wisher of farmers came forward and to end the state of chaos in the country, announced repeal of the farm laws. And, this is what is making them wild, rough, unmanaged, untamed, uncivilized, provocative, trackless, unpopular, ill tempered, and politically violent. That is why they are behaving like unruly goons to go to any extent and to do, 'Anything to oppose Modi.'

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