

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 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.

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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 counterview 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.

Isn't it the duty of spiritual masters of various traditions to help people become aware that there are many perceptions of reality, even within their own tradition?

In today's scenario, we need sarva dharma samvad, interfaith dialogues. People from different viewpoints come together and talk to each other. We are also a democratic country. If there is constant interfaith dialogue, it will percolate to the followers of spiritual masters. They will be well-informed, and choose their political leaders wisely. Indie traditional wisdom and knowledge, needs to percolate down to all citizens and not remain the preserve of the elite. If we don't do it, we are not doing our job properly. We are not evolving as collective humanity.

Many people prefer to say that they are spiritual but not religious. In which case, is religion still relevant?

Wherever you create organised religion, you will create suffering and war.

Sonal Srivastava

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 undertook 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 Hobe'. 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 Hobe 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 secluded, 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.'

A strive for inclusive education

■ ER PRABHAT KISHORE

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the importance of creating enabling mechanisms for providing Children With Special Needs (CWSN) or Divyang, the same opportunities of obtaining quality education as any other child. UN convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, 2006 accentuates the need of effective access to free and compulsory primary and secondary education for children with disabilities. The National Curriculum Framework on school education (NCF-2005) recommends for making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with disabilities in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas.

The Right of Children to free and compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 provides for children's right to an education of equitable quality based on principles of equity and non-discrimination. It mandates inclusion of children with special needs (CWSN). The amendment of RTE Act (in June 2012) has included the children with multiple disabilities and severe disability with the right to opt for Home Based Education (HBE). Given the shift in the approach to development of school education from input based to outcome based central sector interventions as envisaged in the document entitled, India : Three Year Action Agenda, 2017-18 to 2019-20 (NITI Aayog, 2017), a "paradigm shift" is envisaged in the approach to central sector spending on school education. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for Education states that "By 2030, ensure equal access to all levels of education & vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities". The "Samagra Shiksha", a centrally sponsored educational scheme, aims to look at education of all children including children with special needs (CWSN), studying in Government, local body and Government-aided schools, in a continuum from pre nursery to class XII. The scheme covers all children with special needs with one or more out of 21 disabilities as mentioned in schedule of The Right of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, namely :- (1) Locomotor Disability, (2) Leprosy Cured person, (3) Cerebral Palsy, (4) Dwarfism, (5) Muscular Dystrophy, (6) Acid Attack victims, (7) Blindness, (8) Low-vision, (9) Hearing Impairment (Deaf), (10) Hard of Hearing, (11) Speech and Language Disability, (12) Intellectual Disability, (13) Specific Learning Disabilities, (14) Autism Spectrum Disorder, (15) Mental Illness, (16) Chronic Neurological conditions, (17) Multiple Sclerosis, (18) Parkinson's disease, (19) Haemophilia, (20) Thalassemia, (21) Sickle Cell Disease, and Multiple Disabilities. The scheme stresses on working in convergence with all the line Departments/Ministries and intends to provide relevant holistic support for effective and appropriate services. Objectives of scheme-

- (1) Identification of children with disabilities at the school level and assessment of her/his educational needs,
- (2) Provision of aids and appliances, assistive devices, to the children with special needs as per requirement,
- (3) Removal of architectural barriers in schools so that students with disability have access to classrooms, laboratories, libraries and toilets in the school,
- (4) Supplying appropriate teaching learning materials, medical facilities, vocational training support, guidance & counselling services and therapeutic services to children with special needs as per his/her requirement in convergence with line departments.
- (5) Sensitisation & training of General school teachers to teach and involve children with special needs in the general classroom.

YOUR COLUMN

Need to change system

Dear Editor,

In India, COVID crisis has exposed the poor and fragile standards of education system across the country. Persistent prolongation in the closure of educational institutions national wide has left the parents with no other option but to either teache their children themselves or to leave them study on their own. I spoke to several parents enquiring

about how they have dealt with online education during lockdown restrictions and came to know that it was a really a shock for parents.

Most parents are utterly disappointed with the curriculum and teaching methodology because children lack knowledge of even most basic concepts. Rather than developing/generating students learning abilities and intellectual skills, the ongoing education system has ingrained simplified concepts and easy learning just to prepare children for board exams and higher education. It is a matter of grave concern because if children are taught like this, they will not develop analytical skills and instead be trained to work like machines.

Career prospects as a Cartoonist

■ VIJAY GARG

Cartoonists are a professional who expresses their thoughts, feelings and ideas through cartoons, drawings, and sketches. Their work combines writing and drawing to convey humour about current events, recent trends and even everyday life situations.

They may create single pane drawings, like commenting on an issue or event or publish a serial cartoon, which follows a character over a period of time. Cartoonists' work may appear in newspapers or magazines, graphic novels, Internet publications and computer games as well. Cartoonists' work comprises such as to draw freehand, using a pencil to sketch their creation.

The next step is to go over the drawing in ink, erasing the pencil marks; preferring to use computer drawing software. A Cartoonist's job is not limited to newspapers, magazines and other print publications. They also work in the television and film industries.

They draw animated cartoons, prepare model drawings, and sketches of characters, and draw special effects for animation projects. Cartoonists are more specialized than illustrators because they only deal with animated characters, subject material, and special effects. Illustrators may have dozens of specialties.

Eligibility: The minimum requirement to become eligible for Cartoonist courses is Bachelors Degree in Fines Arts.

Cartoonists should be able to draw from the personal perspectives to create cartoons that amuse, educate, or entertain readers.

They need to know that how to develop animated narrated sequences; interpret news in the form of cartoons in the political arena and develop ideas from context.

They should also be able to confer with editor or publisher's representative on ideas; sketch rough drafts and submit to the editor for approval; participate in the storyboard, typesetting and editing process of animation.

Cartoonists should be able to assist in story development, directing, cinematography and editing; make changes to drawings as necessary. They should also be able to utilize computer software or hand render drawings in accordance with preference; develop and draw comic strips on a regular basis for national or local publications.

After completing class 12, preferably one of the fine arts subjects, aspiring Cartoonist can join Bachelor's degree in fine art, illustration, painting, or animation.

The degree program should include courses such as drawing, painting, illustration, anatomy, computer graphics, and photography to name a few.

After getting Bachelor's degree one can join some reputed organisation to get on job experience or go for Master's Degree in the related field to enhance In addition to a degree, most employers prefer candidates with a minimum of 2 years' experience in the industry for intermediate positions. An advanced degree is required for upper-level positions or at least 5-7 years' professional experience in the industry. Graduation Courses include B.A. (Fine Arts) or B.F.A. (Animation) while Master's Courses include M.A. (Fine Arts and Painting) or M.A. (Fine Arts). Various institutes offering courses for Cartoonist include Indian Institute of Cartoonists Bangalore, National Institute of Design (NID) Ahmadabad, Academy of Animation and Gaming New Delhi etc.

Cartoonist job includes developing ideas and converting those ideas into Cartoons, Comic Strips, or Animations as per the requirement of their employers or clients.

They are also supposed to develop and create cartoon by reading the material provided to them by their clients.

Cartoonist job also includes amending Cartoons, Comic Strip, or Animation as required by their clients.

They also prepare sketches and model drawings of characters, providing details from memory, live models, manufactured products, or reference material. Cartoonist work profile also includes developing colour patterns and moods and paints background layouts to dramatize action for animated cartoon scenes.

Cartoonists are usually self-employed and must devote a significant amount of time to building their following and promoting their work.

They may maintain a website where they respond to fan comments and offer cartoon-related merchandise such as t-shirts, mugs or greeting cards, as well as books featuring their most popular characters or comic strips. Cartoonists also seek out potential new clients either in the media or with advertisers looking for a cartoon character.

Conferring with clients to incorporate their ideas into the artwork is essential to maintaining good client relationships and can lead to referrals for additional work.

Freelancers have the option to work from homes anywhere in the world, so long as they have access to an internet connection. In India, most cartoonists are based in Mumbai and they work as freelancers.

They can also work as political cartoonists or comic cartoonists in any newspaper or magazine or can seek employment opportunities in animation houses. Nowadays, almost every newspaper reserves some space for cartoons. The salary a Cartoonist depends a lot on a number of factors such as what you are making the cartoon for. And if it is likely to get reproduced in a large number of areas, the earnings can be considerable. However, the remuneration of a cartoonist depends on the organization he/she is working for. A Cartoonist can start his/her career with a salary between Rs 20,000 to Rs 30,000 per month. With experience and proficiency, one can expect higher pay packages.

Mool Raj.