

29th January 2019

Here's wishing all of you a very happy new year, somewhat belatedly.

I also attach a letter that I have specially drafted for all of you. The good news is that I only write such letters once in three years – the last one was in January 2016.

The bad news is that it is rather long – 43 pages.

But I think this is due to the fact that I have such a wide variety of friends, with such diverse interests, that to speak to all of them I have to speak about many things.

Or, perhaps, it's just that I am prone to writing at great length, just as I am prone to talking too much.

This reminds me of my late departed friend, SR Sankaran, who once introduced me, to an audience I was about to lecture to, with the words: "this is Shekhar Singh. He needs no introduction, but he needs a conclusion."

Shekhar Singh

C 17A Munirka
New Delhi 110067, India
January 2019

Dear friend,

This year I decided to emulate those of my friends who write an annual letter describing all that they and their family have been up to during the past year. Apart from being mostly very interesting reading, you also get a sense of their lives even if you have been out of touch with them.

However, even before I started, I realised that I was not comfortable describing the lives and activities of my wife Uma, daughter Misha, and the dogs Spin and Ghorí (Spin has since moved on to heaven). I did not have the confidence that my interpretation of events, or my ability to describe them, would meet with their approval. So the letter immediately got reduced to describing just what I had been up to.

But then the second problem arose. If I were to describe what I had done during the past year, then it would be a very short letter. Most of 2018 I spent in my sitting room, veranda, or bedroom - writing, reading, watching TV, or surfing the net. These were interspersed with occasional walks, and visits by friends. I hardly moved out of the house and only once out of Delhi, to spend a month (August) with my daughter in London.

While in London, I spent most weekdays in the British Library, poring over old crumbling files of the British government in India. It was fascinating stuff but hardly appropriate for an annual letter to my friends.

On weekends, Misha, Partha (Misha's husband), and I sampled the various Oriental and Indian restaurants in London. All this interspersed with occasional walks.

That is the sum-total of what I did in 2018.

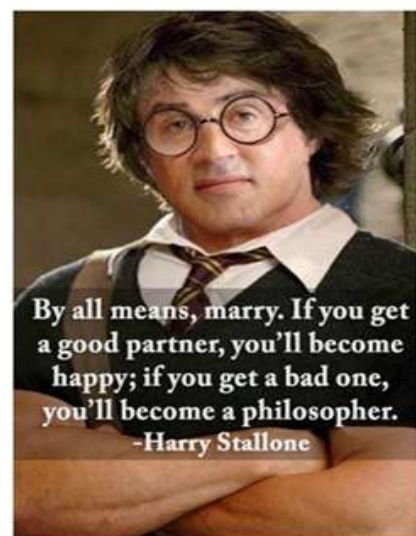
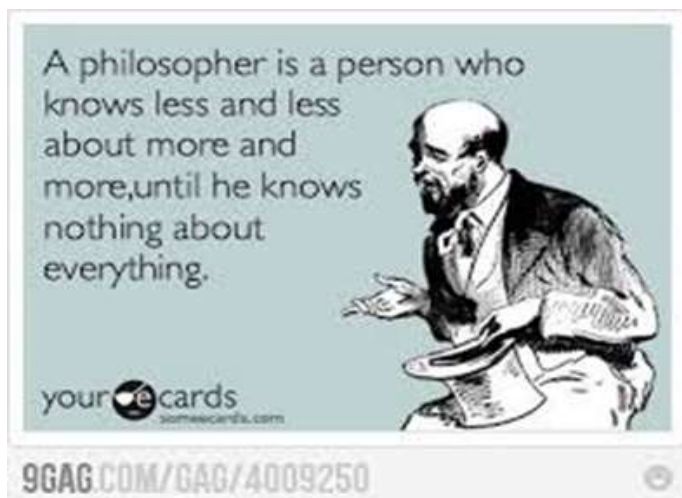
As I didn't want my friends realising how boring I was, after much reflection I decided to make the letter a monologue on the various issues and events that preoccupied me during the last three years (2016- 2018), this being the period since my last letter of January 2016.

I also thought that I would stick to my penchant of communicating serious ideas through wisecracks. Therefore, the inevitable prose of this letter is interspersed with cartoons, photographs, memes, and jokes .

Wisecracks and Crackpots

A wisecrack, as the name suggests, is wisdom disguised as humour. This is my favourite form of wisdom.

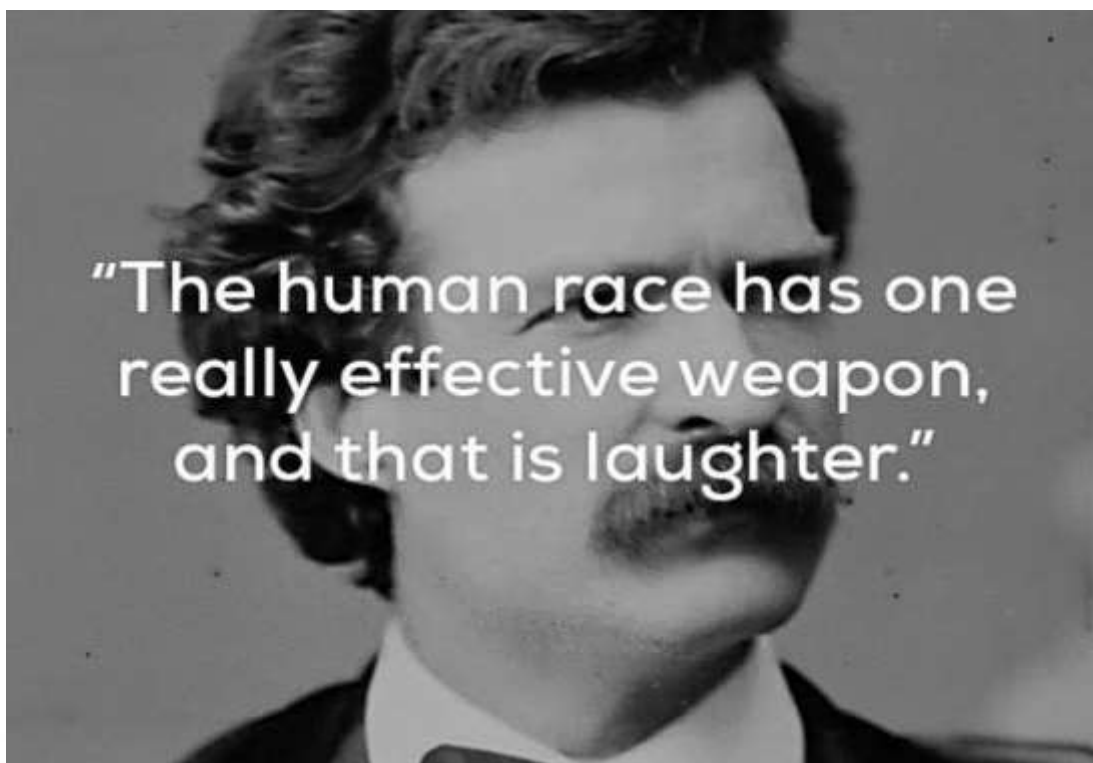
I have been studying and teaching philosophy for nearly fifty years, and always been unhappy with the manner in which philosophical ideas were sought to be communicated: through very abstruse prose (a la Kant and Hegel). It was Bertrand Russel, I think, who said that the greatest advantage Kant had as a philosopher was that he did not have to spend half his life trying to understand Kant!



[NOTE: I took to philosophy much before I met my wife]

For a long time I believed that poetry was the best way of communicating philosophical ideas. Eliot was a favourite. But that was before I began to understand the power of wisecracks.

Around that time, a friend recommended that I read Plato and a Platypus Walk Into a Bar: Understanding Philosophy Through Jokes, by Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein. This excellent book, along with Heidegger and a Hippo Walk Through Those Pearly Gates: Using Philosophy (and Jokes!) to Explore Life, Death, the Afterlife, and Everything in Between, by the same authors, convinced me that humour was the best medium for philosophical discussions. Consequently, I am now working at producing a book where philosophical ideas are shared through jokes!



Sometimes a JOKE
is not intended
to make you laugh
it is intended
to make you think



Unfortunately, in India there is a growing intolerance towards humour, as there is towards minorities, other nationalities and races, even free thought and speech. Perhaps the riskiest occupation in India today is to be a (professional or amateur) comedian. People are being regularly arrested, under the Indian Penal Code, for joking about politicians, religious leaders, and even government functionaries.

IT'S CALLED A JOKE!

*We used to tell
them before people
became offended
by everything*

The sections invoked are 153A of the Indian Penal Code, which makes promotion of disharmony, enmity or feelings of hatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities punishable. Also, section 295A, which makes punishable deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage the religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or the religious beliefs.

A couple of years back there was even a petition in the Supreme Court of India, praying for a ban on all sardarji jokes! Though the Supreme Court threw out the case, perhaps it is just a foretaste of things to come.

Fortunately, one can still crack jokes at one's own expense, without anyone objecting. However, it might not be long before the next generation gets a court order banning such humour because it ridicules their heritage!!

In this atmosphere of comic persecution, funny discrimination, and laughable oppression, I did consider making this letter more prosaic. But humorous intolerance must be vigorously challenged, otherwise life would become intolerably boring.

Sadly, it is not only jokes and wisecracks that are under attack, even crackpots are socially ostracised, frowned upon, and belittled. Society demands conformity, and rejects all the oddballs. Yet, perhaps the crackpots and oddballs have something unique and far more valuable to offer, than the run-of-the-mill characters.

Fables of our Time

Once upon a time there lived a potter in a beautiful village near a river. Every morning he walked to the river, carrying two pots on each end of a stick that he balanced on his shoulder. At the river he filled both the pots with water and carried them back to his house.

As it happened, one of the pots he carried was cracked and so, by the time he reached home, much of the water that he had filled in it would leak out. This pot was a thinking and speaking pot (as often happens in such fables), and felt very bad that all the effort of the potter came to nought because of its infirmity. One particularly hot day, when the potter had toiled hard to carry the pots back to his home, this pot could keep quiet no longer and broke down and told the potter how ashamed it was that it was cracked and therefore could not retain water till it got home. He pleaded with the potter to get a new pot in its place.

However, the potter smiled and stroked the pot and said to him - it is true that the water drips out of you and most of it is lost by the time we get home. But what you have not noticed is that on your side of the path there are beautiful flowers that have come up and hundreds of butterflies and birds throng there. So, though the one pot brings water to my home, you bring joy to the whole world.

I find it amusing
that we're all
pretending to be
NORMAL
when we could be
**INSANELY
INTERESTING**
instead.

Atlas



**Being a little weird is just
a natural side-effect of
being awesome.**

~ Sue Fitzmaurice



fb/the idealist

*Life is all about finding
people who are your
kind of crazy.*

**I hate small talk.
I wanna talk about atoms, death,
aliens, sex, magic, intellect, the
meaning of life, faraway galaxies,
music that makes you feel different,
memories, the lies you've told, your
flaws, your favorite scents, your
childhood, what keeps you up at
night, your insecurities and fears.
I like people with depth, who speak
with emotion from a twisted mind.**

Racial, religious, or sexual Discrimination

“What a sad era when it is easier to smash an atom than a prejudice.” –Albert Einstein

The good news is that the Indian Supreme Court has finally decriminalised the LGBT community. They revised their own earlier order striking down an earlier enlightened and progressive Delhi High Court order, passed some years back.

However, religious discrimination is getting stronger by the day, with bigots emerging from the woodwork. The one thing that the last four years has demonstrated, like never before, is that the Indian society and the bureaucracy have a huge number of religious bigots who bide their time and disguise their bigotry, waiting for a sympathetic political regime to come to power.

Unfortunately, social bigotry is a close relative of cultural bigotry. Therefore, it is not just members of minority religions or marginalised groups that face the wrath of the bigots, even those who belong to minority lifestyles, or wish to exercise their individual rights in a manner that is counter conservative, are targeted.

The sad part is that this is becoming a global phenomenon. Racial discrimination seems rampant in the United Kingdom, in much of Europe, and in the United States of America. Given the fact that democratic regimes all over the world, and especially in India, have become slaves of populism, the future seems grim.



'Why didn't you stop at that red light?'

'It's 2018, officer. I don't see color.'



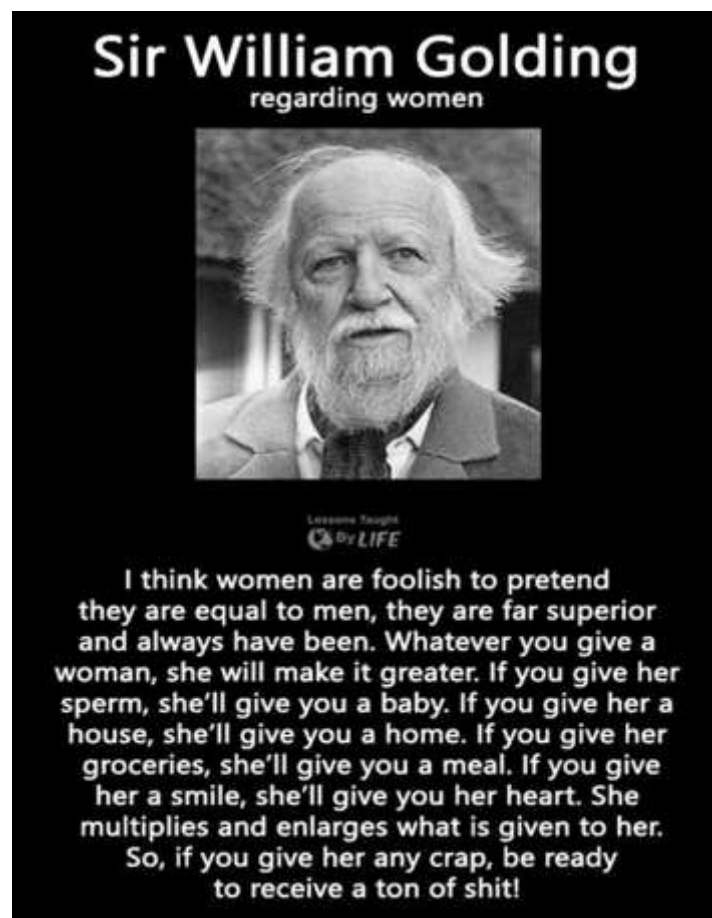
Though I can take on the government and various bigoted groups, when it comes to challenging the ultra neo-feminists, my courage fails me.

Therefore, all I am willing to do is share a story with you, and leave you with this cartoon and a "gender appropriate" message on the next page!.



A committed American feminist had been working long and hard with a rural community in Afghanistan, persuading them to abandon sexual discrimination against women. Among other things, she managed to convince them to give up the age-old habit of women walking five steps behind the men, when outside the home, in fields or streets.

Unfortunately, war broke out and she had to leave Afghanistan. When, finally, peace returned, she hurried back to Afghanistan to start again from where she had left off. However, she was heart-broken to see that the women were again walking behind the men, and now nearly twenty steps. She could not contain herself and confronted a group of male-trailing women, whom she had known earlier, and demanded an explanation on why they had reverted to their earlier, subservient, walking arrangements. They smiled at her and whispered: "unexploded land mines!"



Apathy and Violence

India is, if anything, a land of paradoxes. On the one hand there is a high and growing intolerance about minority identities, cultures and lifestyles, but at the same time there is a mind-numbing tolerance towards government and institutional corruption, inefficiency and apathy. Millions of children go to bed hungry every day. Countless aged people die of starvation and exposure, without health care or shelter. And yet we do not seem to care.

In July 2018, three sisters (eight, four and two years old) were found dead of starvation in their home in Delhi. The doctor who did the post mortem confirmed that no traces of fat were found on the bodies of the three girls. "Postmortem report shows their stomachs were absolutely empty. Looks like they haven't eaten in many days. It's a case of gross malnutrition.", she said.

There was great hue and cry for a few days, but nothing after that. Three children starved to death in the capital of India, yet nothing has been done to ensure that this does not happen again, or indeed is not happening right now, as we read this. And not just happening in Delhi, but all over the country.

When, some years back, Nirbhaya was raped and killed, there was a social uproar and the laws relating to sexual violence were changed and



significantly strengthened. But when three children die after prolonged starvation: nothing.

This well-known photograph has always haunted me:



How can this still be happening? And yet we criminalise those who raise their voices against such injustice. Is not social unrest inevitable under these conditions? Should we not criminalise those who do not care?

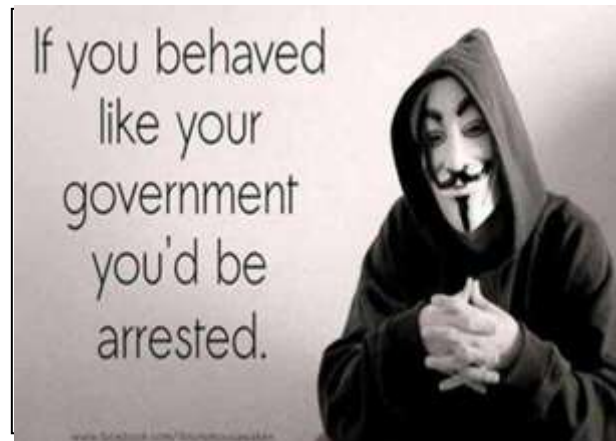
And then there are the Rohingyas. Chased away from their own homes with nowhere to go. The other day national newspapers



reported that the Government of India has decided to "take back the group of refugees consisting of 15 adults and 16 children including a six-month-old baby, who had been stuck in no man's land between the two countries..."

As my daughter said to me on the phone: would you believe that in a country of 1.2 billion people there is no place to give refuge to 16 children! Surely if these children had been so abandoned by an individual, that individual would have been behind bars. But because it's a government...

India is the largest democracy in the world, and yet our elected representatives feel no sense of responsibility for the devastation and mass suffering around them. Grandiose schemes

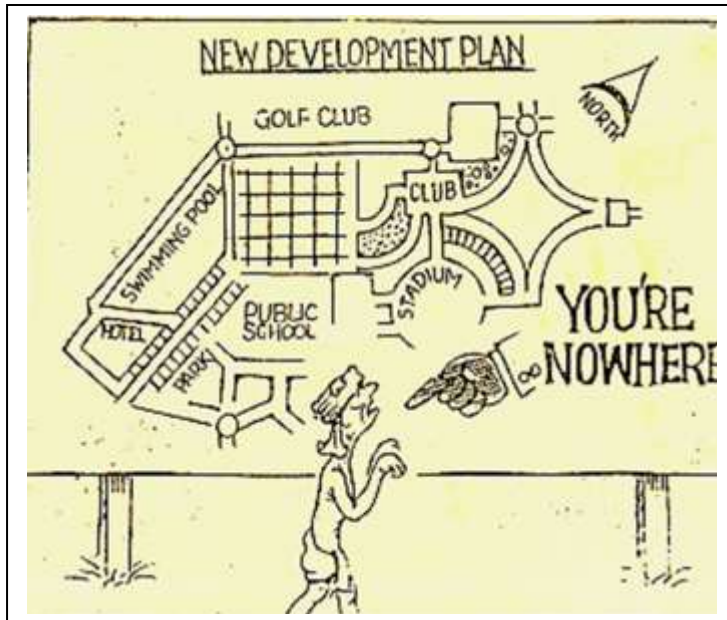


are sanctioned for gigantic statues and adventurous space voyages, but the starving masses are left to fend for themselves.

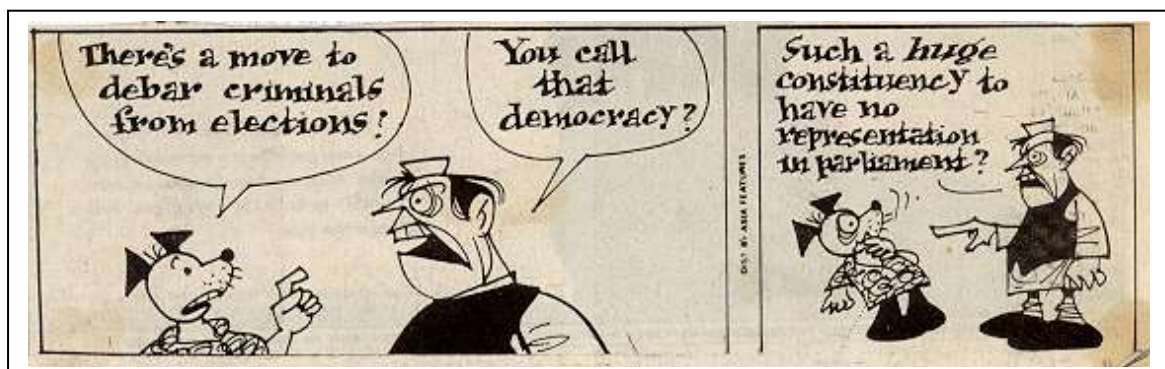
We are so tolerant of institutional apathy, but so intolerant of anyone who protests, criticises, or even exposes this apathy. We charge them with sedition and prosecute, persecute, and even imprison them.

Our parliamentarians and legislators, who are ready to protest and fight over all sorts of trivial issues, and ever ready to

claim special status and privileges because they represent the people of India. But how can they hold forth with impunity when a large number of those very people of India, including the children of India, are dying of starvation??



The time has clearly come for all good people, of whom there are many, to join hands and start demanding justice, compassion, transparency and accountability from our government and from all public institutions and formations.



An unfortunate, and to my mind illegitimate, distinction is made between physical violence and other forms of torture and oppression. Perhaps this is at least partly a consequence Gandhiji's non-violent movement, which was entirely appropriate and effective in its context. It was also perhaps the only way to take on a heavily militarised colonial power without widespread bloodshed. It had the additional advantage of consolidating world sympathy for the efforts of the people of India to free themselves from an oppressive aggressor.

But the reality today is different.

Unquestionably, physical violence must be universally condemned. Apart from the pain and suffering it causes, it also brutalises society, hardening both the perpetrator and the victim.

A senior police-officer once told me that police brutality, especially "third degree" in the confines of police stations, has led criminal

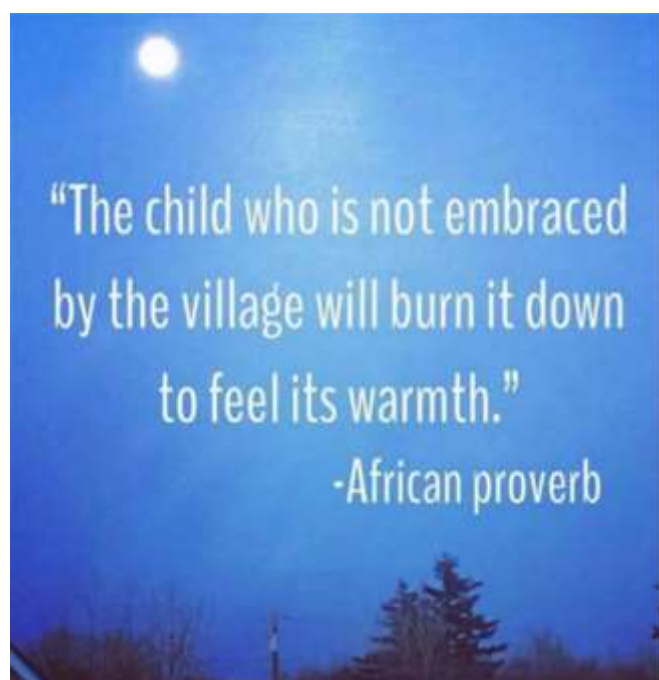


gangs to subject new recruits to regular beatings and torture, so that if caught they can withstand police third degree.

But, similarly, the cruelty and apathy of starvation, neglect, and death, even if not the result of a direct physical assault, also

brutalises society. It brutalises the victims and also brutalises those who watch others, especially their loved ones, being so brutalised. And society, in general, if forced to be a silent spectator, develops a protective apathy.

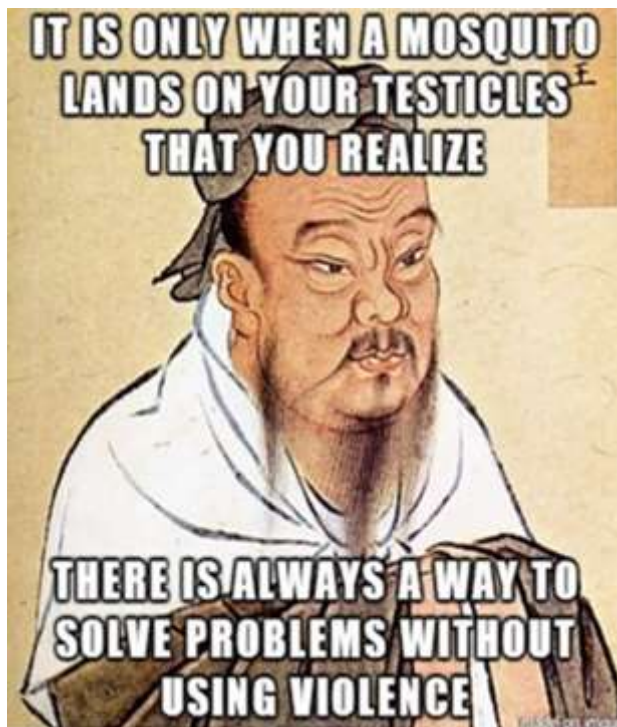
So what then. As a start, laws relating to physical violence must be extended to all sorts of violence. There is no reason why an employer who beats up an employee can be criminally prosecuted and imprisoned, but one who does not pay his employee in time, or pays the employee less



than the legally mandated wages, can only be prosecuted in a civil court. And a bureaucrat, who neglects his responsibilities and allows people to be bereft of their basic needs and rights, usually gets away scot free.

Rather than promising job reservations to the economically weaker segments of society, as the current government has done, it would be better if all those below the poverty line, if they were forced to starve, or be shelter less, or without medical care and other such basic needs, would attract a criminal liability for those who were responsible to ensure that this did not happen. Not as good as genuine empathy, but it could be effective.

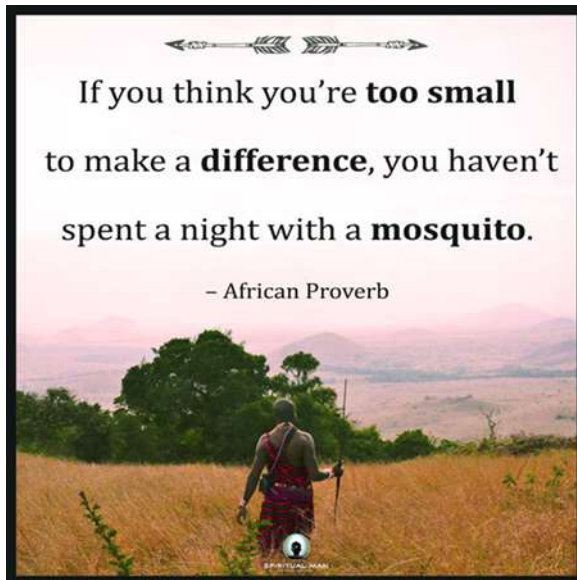
Another type of violence towards which there is a surprising level of tolerance, is domestic violence, especially towards women. Some years back a national English daily published the results of a survey that they had carried out about domestic violence.



Surprisingly, over 50% of the women surveyed reportedly felt that it was alright for husbands to occasionally hit their wives!

Fortunately, we have a strong law against domestic violence, but what is needed is a change in the attitude of women, who need to become far more intolerant of it. And, of course, what is even more desperately needed is for men to realise that there are

other ways of resolving disputes than raising their hand. Perhaps the message above might help them think this through.



Animal rights

But why only human rights (or rights of dogs, cats, and Indian cows), what about other animals...

My friends, most of whom are liberals, would be shocked by this – but I fully support the ongoing movement against cow slaughter. However, to me it is only acceptable if it is extended to all animals – and their torture and slaughter is banned, not only by law, but also through popular social demand (lesson of Sabarimala).



We rightly protest against paternalistic behaviour towards women, the oppression of minorities, and discrimination based on caste, race, gender, or even age. It is also widely recognised that what all such oppressors have in common is that they misuse their power to exploit others.

Unfortunately, many of the good people who sincerely reject and even fight against the use of such repressive power among human beings, continue to be indifferent when human beings use their repressive power to torture, exploit, and kill other living creatures.

I think the time has come for all of us to recognise and admit that other living creatures also have a right to live in comfort and dignity. Besides, many of them are also cute & lovable, and feel physical & emotional pain just like humans do.

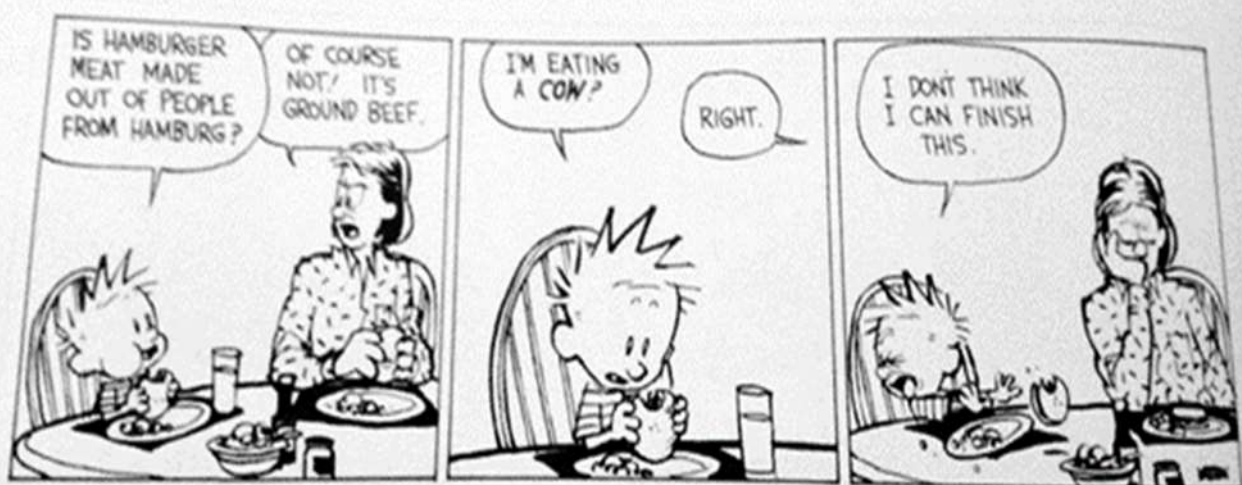
Sleeping baby donkeys

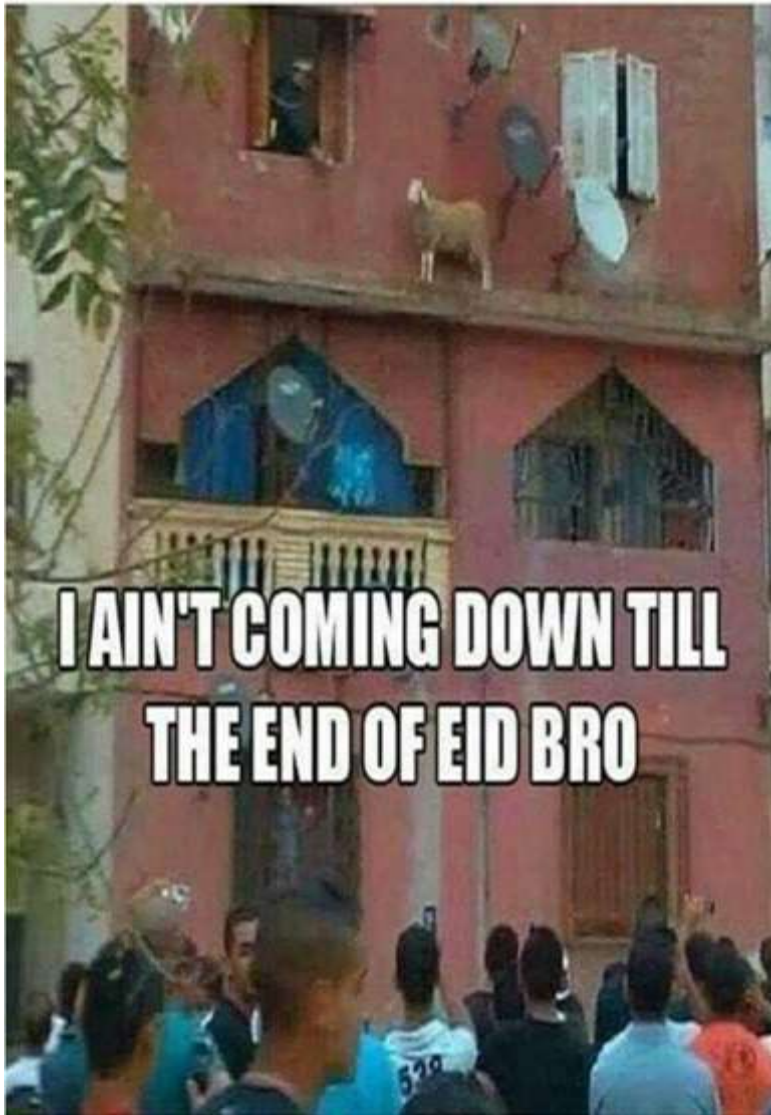


Blissfully unaware of what awaits them...and a very
awake monkey wondering at the heartlessness of
humankind

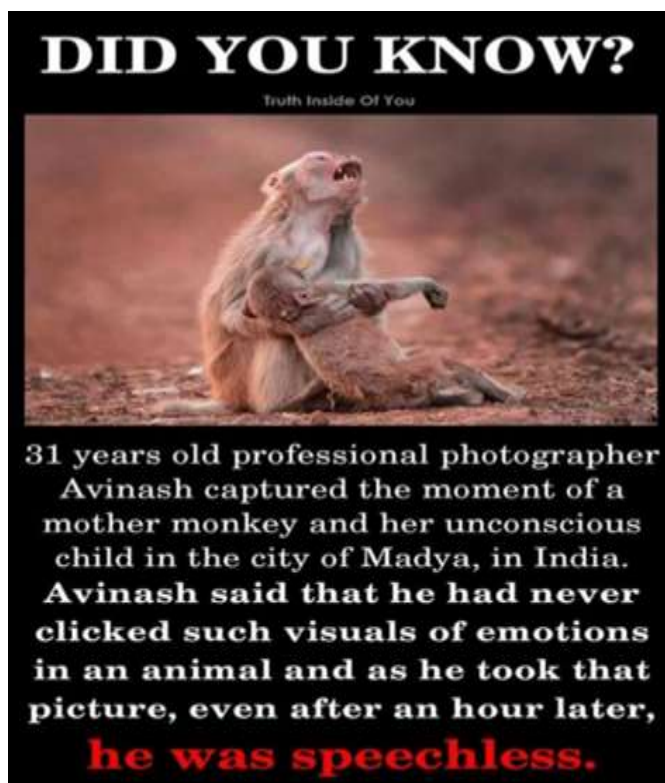


Solidarity : two captive and enslaved elephants
reaching out to each other

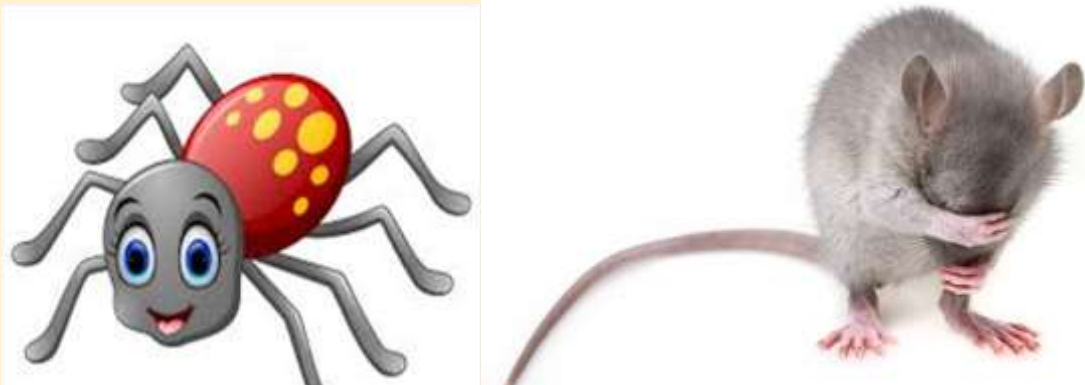




This one is praying
for human
compassion:
a hopeless quest???



What if the spider, or mouse, that you killed in your house had spent their entire lives thinking that you were their roommate, and could not believe that you would kill them?



Mimesis

My daughter
wouldn't hurt a spider
That had nested
Between her bicycle handles
For two weeks
She waited
Until it left of its own accord

If you tear down the web I said
It will simply know
This isn't a place to call home
And you'd get to go biking

She said that's how others
Become refugees isn't it?

Paul Clammer posted this poem by Palestinian poet Fady Joudah on Twitter on the oc... See more

Do the right thing
when no one is looking,
it's called integrity.



The Environment

Though there are many things that are improving in India (literacy rate, GDP, size of our economy, the size of our military, and the proliferation of technology, to name a few), but the natural environment is not one of them. The air, in our cities and industrial belts, is almost unbreathable – the capital Delhi being declared the city with the most polluted air in the world. Water continues to be polluted all over the country, causing disease and death. We poison our food with chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Our forests are fast degrading, as are other ecologically sensitive habitats, including wetlands, grasslands, the coasts and oceans, and, of course, our wildlife is being decimated.

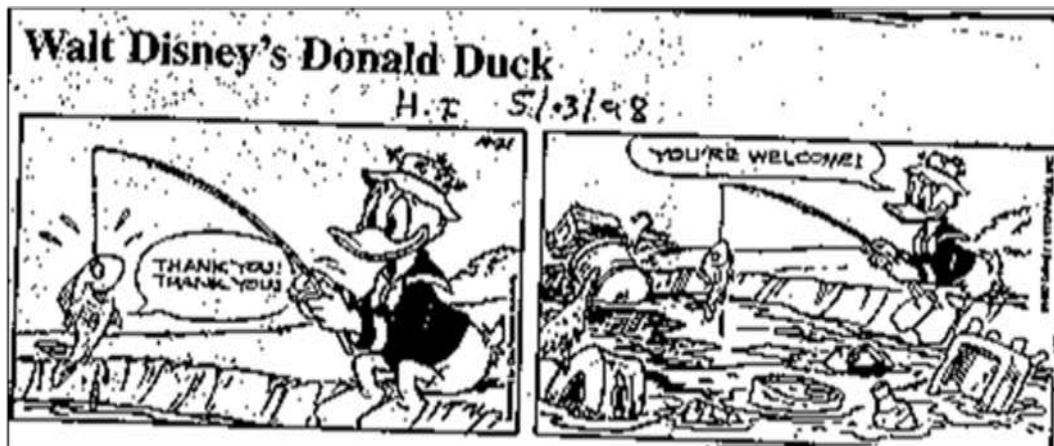
A couple of years back I had contributed a chapter on India to a volume titled Evaluation for Agenda 2030, where I had argued that the major reason why we have such rampant destruction of the environment is because of our weak evaluation and regulation regimes. Those interested can download a copy of the book, free of charge, from file:///C:/000A%20PUBLICATIONS/IDEAS-web-REV_08Dec%20-%20full%20book.pdf



Imagine if trees give Wifi.
We'd all be planting like crazy.



Its a pity that they just give
the oxygen we breathe



Transparency

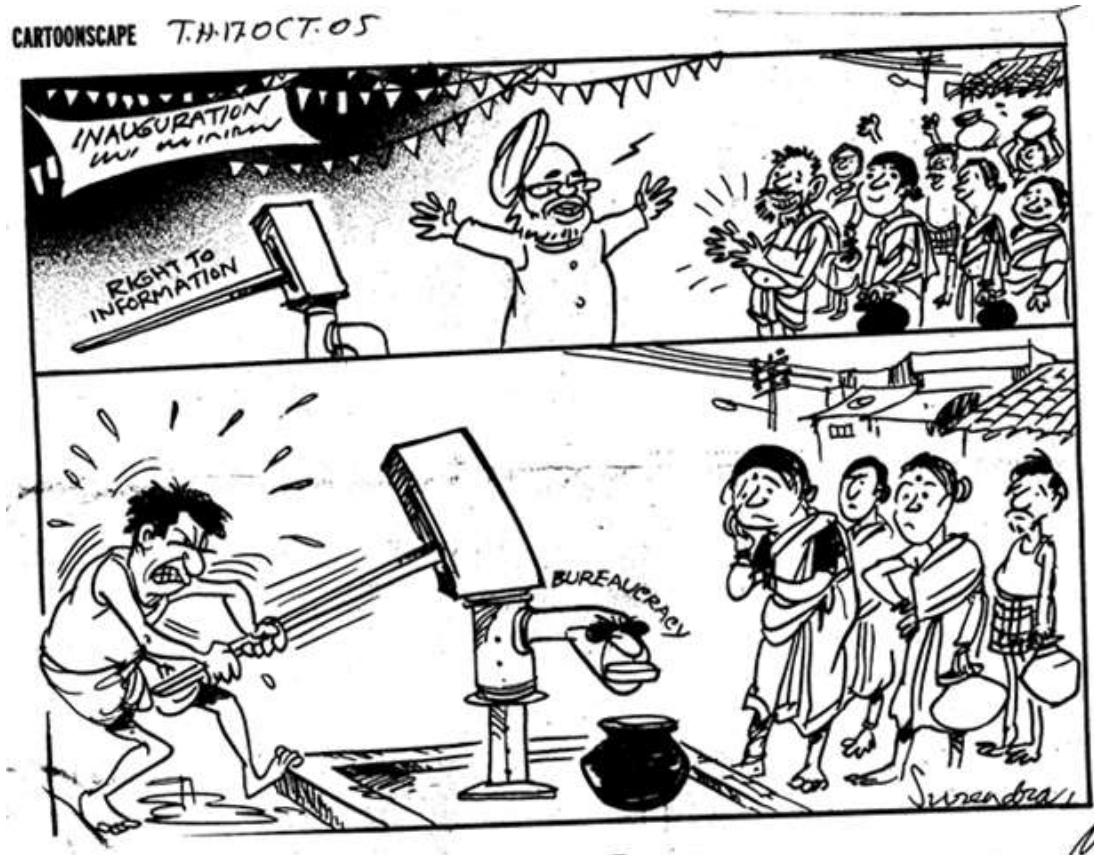
Another thing that all governments, but especially the present one, are intolerant of is openness or transparency about government functioning and decisions. Though India has a right to information law, which came into effect in 2005 and has been adjudged as one of the strongest transparency laws in the world, getting information from the government is still an uphill task. And getting them to act on wrongdoings that get exposed as a result of access to information, is still a rarity.

In 2016-17 I was part of a team which did a comprehensive survey of the adjudication process around the right to information act in India. I will not bore you with the findings here (they are not funny), but suffice it to say that the functioning of the appellate system, especially the first appeals within the government, and the second appeals with the independent information commissions, leaves much to be desired (copy of report available at <http://snsindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Adjudicating-the-RTI-Act-2nd-edition-2017.pdf>).

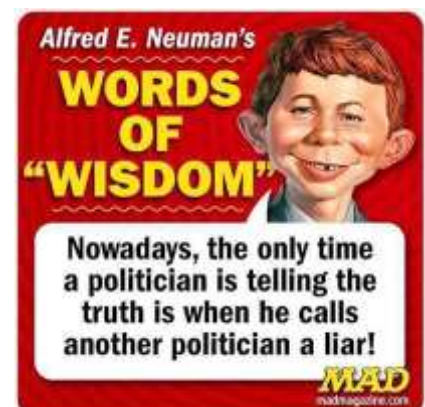
I was also on an Open Society Foundation fellowship during that period, which partly supported the work on the appellate mechanisms and also allowed me to study whether the government was learning any lessons from the patterns of use of the RTI act, and whether they were making any systemic correctives to prevent recurrence of the wrongdoings revealed through the RTI Act. The short and long answer was: No.

My findings suggest that there is a serious conflict of interest, as the civil servants tasked to give out information, are mostly those least inclined to be transparent. The appellate authorities are also mostly serving or former civil servants, and therefore there persists a conspiracy of silence.

I reproduce below a cartoon that appeared in The Hindu around the time the RTI Act became operative in 2005. It has proved to be very prophetic!



Bureaucratic reticence and political duplicity has given birth to a generation of Oliver Twists of modern India...

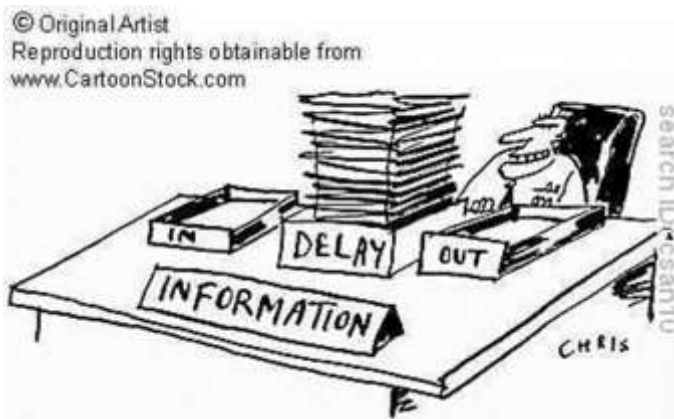


...but the implications for our nation are far more serious



Given the legendary delays in hearing and disposing appeals by the information commissions – I recently received a notice for a hearing ten years after I had filed the

appeal with the West Bengal information commission – the story is that in the information commissions they follow a three-tray system instead of the usual in-out trays!!

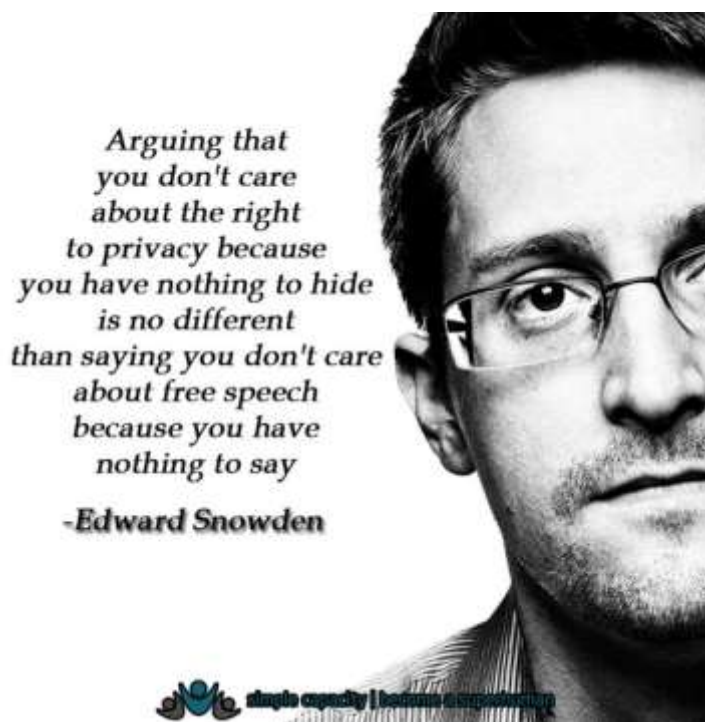


The need of the day - expand "Right to know" to "Right to Know Right now"

Apart from the hesitation to share information, and the long delays in processing appeals, two other issues are currently plaguing the RTI movement.

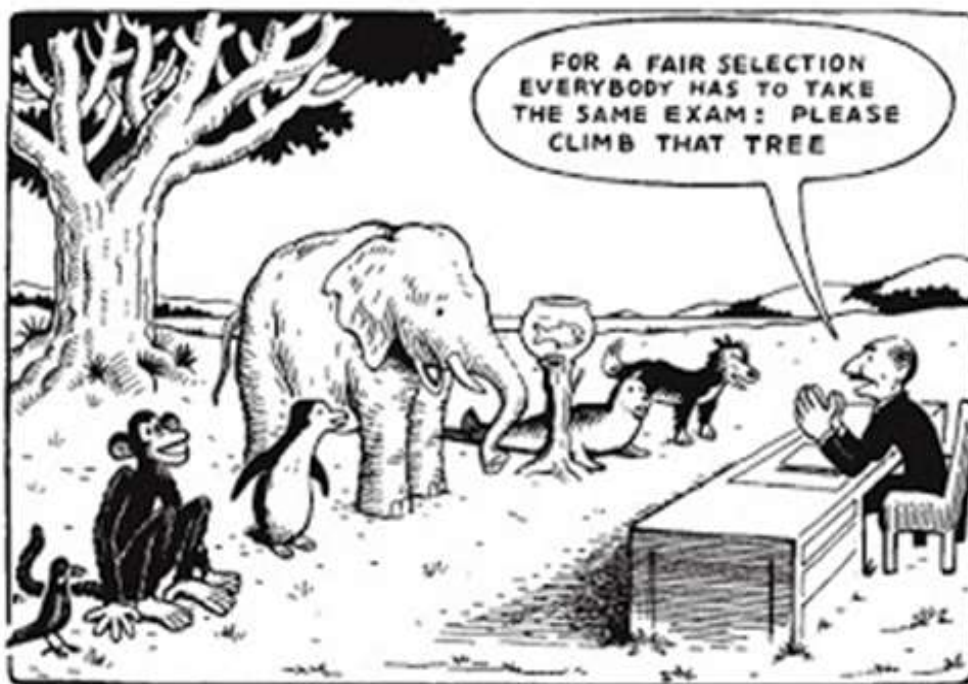
First, there is the tendency of the government, while resisting sharing information, to inappropriately collect and disseminate information about the public, with no regard to their privacy or wellbeing. Though there is much talk, there is still no appropriate data protection or privacy law in sight. What is required is a law that respects the public's right to information while outlawing unjustified surveillance, unwarranted invasion of privacy, and

unauthorised sharing of people's information with corporations and other vested interests.



The second is the secretive and inappropriate process of appointing information commissioners. The RTI act lays down that information commissioners must be "persons of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media or administration and governance".

However, despite this, currently all the six information commissioners and the Chief Information Commissioner in the Central Information Commission are retired bureaucrats. It seems that to the search and selection committees, only retired bureaucrats are eminent, and have wide knowledge and experience on all matters!!



...AND THE MONKEY ALWAYS WINS

This matter is now before the Supreme Court, and one hopes that justice will prevail and there will be no more monkey business.

Our best friend

I have been a dog lover all my life and, fortunately, almost always had a canine companion. Therefore, this document would not be complete without a section on dogs. Arguably I have overdone it, but then who can say no to a dog...



The most loyal friend



you'll ever have

But...



I will care for you



Just as you care
for me, sometimes
even over your
own daughter...



...Or even when you are down and out



And I will always remember you...forever.

When Hachiko's master died in
The Tokyo University in 1925,
Hachiko didn't know about it.
As always he came to the train
station to meet his master, and
waited for him for the next
9 years.



**This scene makes me
cry everytime! 😭**



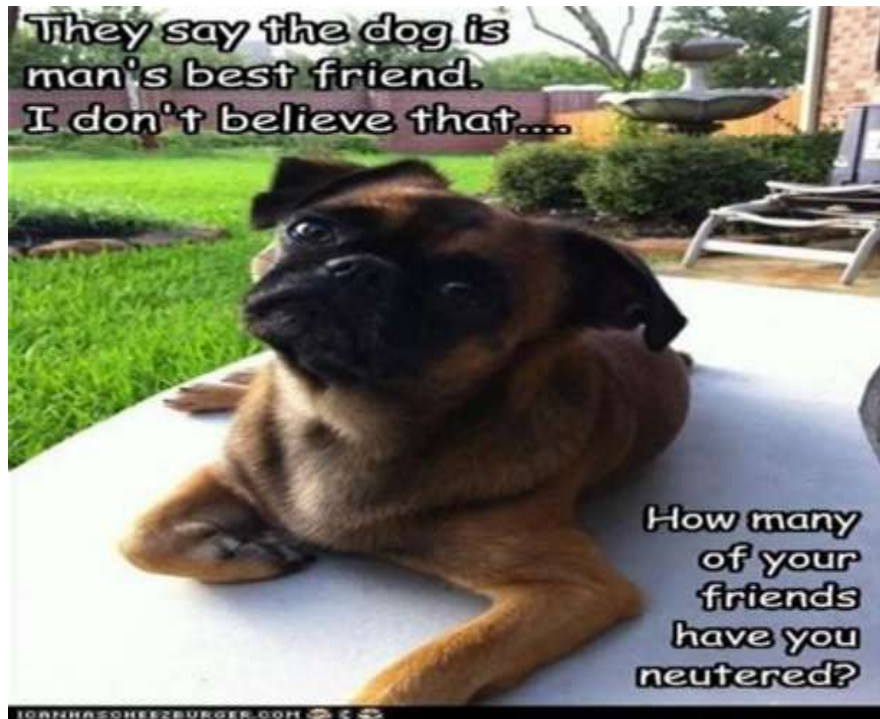
You don't have to wait anymore.



He's not coming back.



Though sometimes you humans are cruel...



If Jealousy had a face



But i don't complain...

**It's hard to feel sad
and hungry and**



**yet not be able to
say a Word 💔**

For mostly I have a wonderful life

Just lookin' for a barking spot



...helping myself to goodies...

Playing hide and seek...



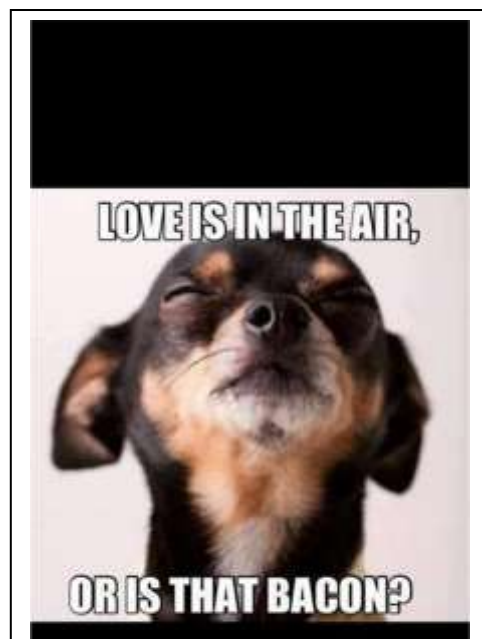
When you're in backseat desperately trying to be part of the frontseat conversation.



When your dog photobombs your special day 😂



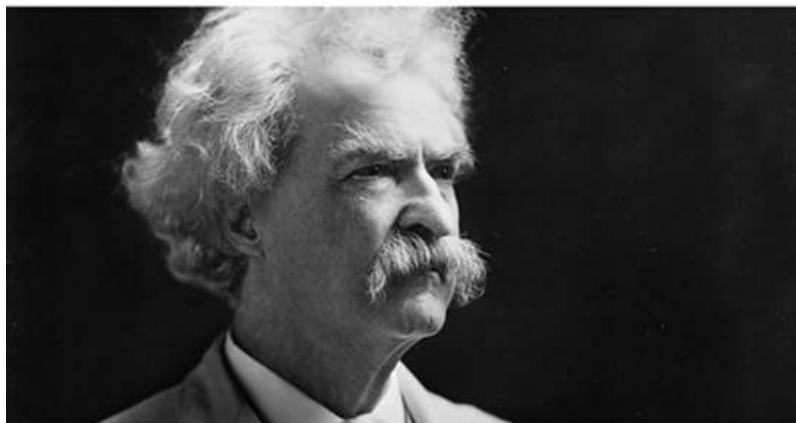
Being a part of everything...



...and working so hard, always being helpful.



"If there are no dogs in Heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went."



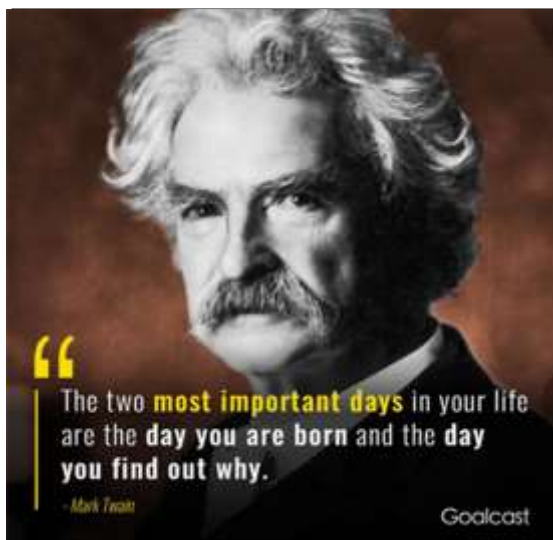
~Mark Twain

Finally, learning to grow old

Old age is creeping up on me and suddenly I feel a need to rethink my life and values, and to reinvent myself as a person: in the last lap of my life, what sort of a person should I be, what should I be doing, what values must I adopt? It is almost as if, now that I am older, I must be wiser.

The good news is that advancing years have brought about a corresponding freedom from many driving forces that enslave us in our youth: very much like Cephalus' famous observation to Socrates, as reported in Plato's *Republic*.

I no longer feel driven to prove myself to the world, nor to impress those awesome people I so agonised over in my younger days. Fame no longer interests me and I have little use for money.



But, alas, I am not sure if this wisdom finally dawning, or just sour grapes!

And so, like so many other people around the world, I desperately want to find out why I was born, what was my purpose, did I have a purpose at all, if so, did I - or will I - fulfil it, what should I regret, and what should I rejoice?

Therefore, as so inimitably put by Mark Twain, I wait for the other shoe to drop...

I have always been, and continue to be, physically lazy. I like to think that this is because I am so active mentally, but nevertheless as a diabetic it is important to exercise, and yet exercising is the bane of my life.

There was a time I loved to walk, but Delhi is too crowded, too hot in the summer, and the air too polluted in the winter. I await inspiration!

Fortunately, computers, internet, Netflix, Amazon prime and other such sources of entertainment have become available in time for my old age. I can spend hours watching films, surfing the net, and educating myself painlessly through Ted Talks.

I am an unapologetic techno freak. Apart from computers and the internet, mobile phones also fascinate me, especially the impact they have had in India.

Estimates suggest that there are over a billion mobile-phone connections in India, and nearly 500 million users of Internet. Considering nearly 30% of the current population is in the age group of 0 - 14 years, most of whom are unlikely to own a mobile phone, it seems that there is a mobile phone connection for each of the remaining Indians, with some to spare.

There are many advantages of this mass proliferation of a communication technology. To my mind, allowing families to

Research has shown that laughing for 2 minutes is just as healthy as a 20 minute jog.

So now I'm sitting in the park laughing at all the joggers.

**Finally the 4th Monkey.
He is the sum of the first three**



**He Sees nobody,
He Hears nobody and
He Talks to nobody.**

keep in touch with each other, in an affordable manner, is a real boon. This is especially so when they are scattered all over the country, many being migrant labour seeking jobs in cities and towns. The mobile phone is progressively replacing the post card which the poor used for generations.

The ability to communicate by mobile phone, and through the social media, has also strengthened the ties within communities. It has vastly facilitated community and group protests and action, though sometimes this might be a nuisance to the government. Also, thousands of crimes and wrongdoings are being captured by onlookers on their phone cameras, proving a great boon to the police.



Output at both ends!!



Message in a bottle. 21st century version.



Where there is no electric connection



I am also a great fan of the Delhi metro, which last year started touching Munirka, where I live. It is clean, efficient and comfortable. But it has also taught me another great quality that Indians have: respect for old age. I have travelled on the metro perhaps twenty to thirty times when all the seats were occupied. But every time I have, almost immediately, been offered a seat.

My experience in London, where I have travelled extensively on the tube, with the same resplendent grey hair and beard, was just the opposite. Almost never was I offered a seat, not even the ones reserved for senior citizens.

Three cheers for the Indians. The only adverse observation I have is that so far, those who vacate their seats for me are invariably dressed as if they belong to the middle class. Though many of the poor classes are also there, they do not seem to be inclined. Perhaps they think that we upper classes have already too many advantages, and how right they are.

It is also amusing that occasionally when my wife accompanies me, she rarely gets offered a seat, even though she is also a senior citizen. I suspect that is because she looks very young – nice to see that youthful looks have some disadvantages too!

I love music and always have. Back in the 1960s I was part of a beat group, among the first in Delhi, called "The Mixed Ups". I

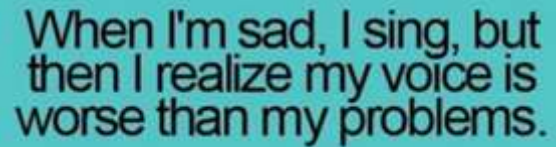
played rhythm guitar, somewhat indifferently, but sadly could not sing at all.

I still can't, though I desperately wish I could, especially because I am married to a talented and accomplished singer.

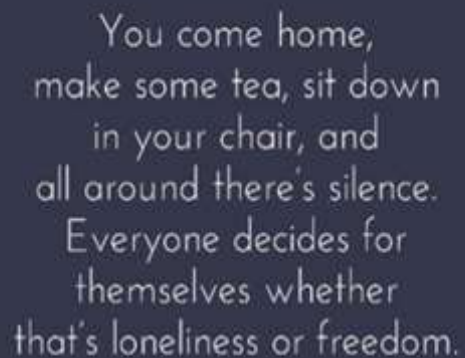
So, three cheers for *Spotify*, and other sources of endless music, that keep me amused through the day and sometimes late into the night, as I work, read, or surf the net.

I have been lucky and have had many good friends, some of whom are still friends, while others have drifted away or passed on. But old age seems to bring with it a strange need to be alone and to reflect on what one has seen, experienced, felt, and learned. Therefore, I find myself in an amusing phase of my life when, after having spent most of my life in constant interaction with hundreds of people, I now spend most of my time by myself.

But this almost masochistic enjoyment of solitude brings with it a nagging thought that it can only be justified if at the end of it I have something profound to share with my friends. So I turn to wisecracks – and hope that they entertain you, even if they do not enlighten you...



When I'm sad, I sing, but
then I realize my voice is
worse than my problems.



You come home,
make some tea, sit down
in your chair, and
all around there's silence.
Everyone decides for
themselves whether
that's loneliness or freedom.



SimpleReminders.com

If you want
to feel rich
just count all
the things you
have that money
cannot buy.

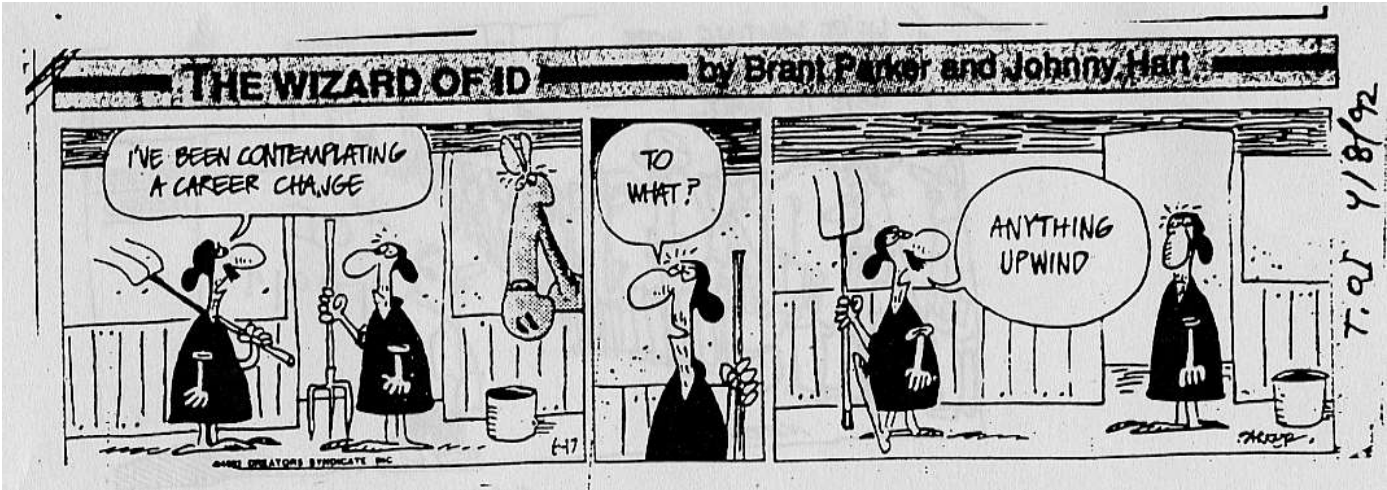
Happiness is a state of mind.



Respect old people.
They graduated high school
without google
or Wikipedia!



And two faces of perceptual relativism: the seeming fact that the perception of something appearing to be an improvement is invariably in relationship to one's present reality.



Nature teaches us that there is always hope. So I end this letter with a hopeful note that whether you are knocked over...

Fell years ago,



But didn't give up 🌱

...or devastated



You can always blossom forth again.

Shekhar Singh