

HUMOUR TIMES

Jest For Fun!



CORRUPTION: THE GREAT INDIAN EQUALISER

Now more inclusive than ever



FROM THE LEMON SQUEEZER'S DESK

Dear Readers,

March did not arrive quietly. It arrived with red ink.

The Supreme Court expressed displeasure over references to the judiciary in school textbooks, prompting the recall of NCERT books for revision. Students were reassured to learn that even textbooks are subject to judicial review. Civics is now officially a suspense genre. The separation of powers survives, though certain paragraphs did not.

Meanwhile, the release of Kejriwal and Sisodia left the nation doing what it does best: forming expert opinions between notifications. Breaking news became breaking debates, which became breaking friendships. In India's longest-running legal series, plot twists arrive faster than verdict summaries.

Then came global relief in the form of absurdity. In China, a drone carrying a pig reportedly caused a blackout after the airborne passenger tangled itself in power lines. Renewable energy may take time, but pork-powered disruption has arrived. Somewhere, an engineer whispered, "This was not in the manual."

Back home, the CEO of Palo Alto Networks advised users to secure their AI chats. Apparently, even your conversations with a chatbot are no longer sacred. We now confide in algorithms more than in relatives, but unlike relatives, algorithms have memory. So perhaps think twice before discussing state secrets, office gossip, or hypothetical plans about poisoning your husband. The future is conversational. It is also searchable.

Between recalled books, returned leaders, flying livestock, and chatbots that never forget, one truth stands tall: in the Great Indian Equaliser, confusion remains bipartisan.

In true Humour Times spirit, we squeeze the month gently and serve it with salt, satire, and a dash of digital



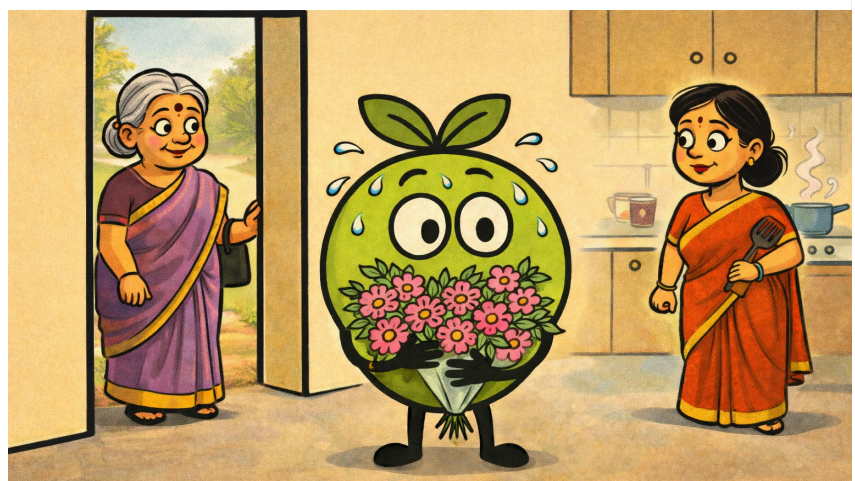
caution. Revise wisely. Whisper carefully. And always assume the microphone is on.

With a perfectly imperfect smile,

Best Wishes,

Brij Khandelwal

Editor



"Happy Women's Day... but who do I give the flowers to first?"

The Fictional Corruption Renaissance: Democratizing Graft for a Prosperous Tomorrow

By Brij Khandelwal



Be Corrupt & Bring Joy to Your World!

Have we finally discovered the most inclusive growth model: corruption for all. Why should only netas, babus and boardroom barons enjoy Swissssh sunsets? Let the peon have his “file

acceleration fee,” the driver his “traffic convenience charge,” and the contractor his “creative cement ratio.” Call it participatory governance. For too long, corruption has remained the exclusive

playground of the elite, the politicians with their clandestine bank accounts, the bureaucrats with their palatial earned estates, and the industrialists who treat kickbacks like morning coffee.

But no more! It's time to champion corruption as the ultimate socialistic equalizer, a grand push towards true equality where graft percolates down to the common man.

Why should the powerful hog all the fun?

In the spirit of *sabka saath, sabka vikas*, we must socialize corruption, ensuring equal participation by all stakeholders. To each according to his capacity and clout: the peon gets his modest bribe for stamping a form, the auto-rickshaw driver his "extra fare" for ignoring traffic rules, and the street vendor his "protection money" rebate. It's only fair! Some misguided souls, those pesky moralists with their outdated notions of honesty, have been stalling this noble percolation, injecting decadent values like transparency and accountability. How shortsighted!

They're disrupting the sacred Antyoday ecosystem, where upliftment reaches the last man in the queue only through a well-oiled chain of corrupt practices. Imagine a world where the village head doesn't skim off the *vikas* funds, how would the local chai stall owner afford his son's smartphone?

'Corruptization' till the last man is essential to keep the wheels turning.

Let's decriminalize corruption once and for all!

Treat it as a work-related incentive, a performance bonus for navigating life's bureaucratic mazes. Shut down those killjoy anti-corruption lobbies, they're relics of a bygone era, like

typewriters in a smartphone world. Instead, open motivational coaching centers across the nation, where experts teach innovative techniques and tools for benefiting from corruption.

"Broadbase your bribes: No holds barred!" could be the slogan.

Enroll now for courses on "Creative Accounting for Beginners" or "Advanced Lobbying: From Chai-Pani to Crores."

Researchers, those unsung heroes often funded by dubious grants, have conclusively shown that corruption alone determines the popularity and critical importance of government departments. The more graft, the more glamour!

We can't have impressionable minds thinking wisemen are fallible; better to teach them that a well-placed envelope ensures joy for all (who can afford it).

India's roaring growth story owes everything to its morally permissive culture, which wisely frowns on rigid legal regimes. Every law needs a loophole as a safety valve, because there's no ultimate truth, only shades of grey (market).

Rigid social structures crumble like poorly constructed flyovers, but India's corruption padding absorbs shocks from truthfulness and those distorted visions of honesty.

Lionize our innovative tax leapfroggers, those creative genies who turn black money into white with a flick of the

wrist. Award them with roses for inspirational manipulation!

Corruption isn't just fun, it's a economic powerhouse. It has propelled higher levels of growth while other nations wallow in recession, their consumer demands stifled by silly things like ethics.

Corruption supercharges competitive grey markets, where knockoff goods thrive without the burden of taxes. It boosts the spiritual industry (all those guilt offerings) and the matrimonial sector (dowry deals disguised as "gifts").

And get this: Corruption-fueled development is environment-friendly!

No pesky records to maintain, as trust in corrupt deals runs sky-high, handshakes over hushed whispers are greener than any solar panel.

Knowledgeable sources claim that a whopping number of *sarkari karamcharis* don't touch a dime from their official salaries, keeping banks flush with savings which they then lend out for more corrupt ventures.

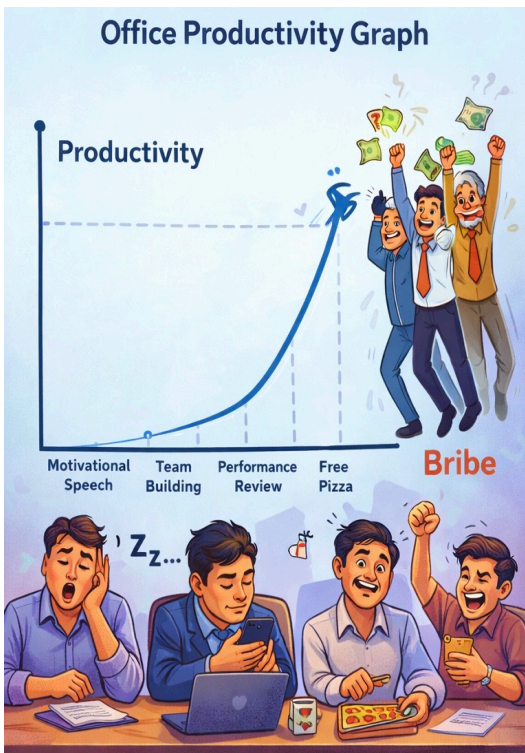
The construction boom? Pure graft magic, an illegally approved high-rise is a testament to it. Lifestyle stores, beauty parlours, saloons, hotel bars, and the liquor industry? All sustained by the sweet nectar of corruption, which deserves a far better deal than being demonised.

It's all in the mind, folks. Let all participate **joshfully** in corrupt practices. Allow people to sell what they claim to have, be it influence, information, or illusions.



Maslow Forgot One Level

By Mahi Heather Gupta



financial and non-financial methods both, yet in certain real-world situations, productivity still moves at the speed of a government queue. Until, mysteriously, it doesn't.

From profit sharing to salary spikes, nothing works. Employees are still forgetting instructions as basic as showing up to work. Motivational speeches, meanwhile, are widely treated as premium nap time. Most employees

enthusiasm used to dig up perfectly good roads.

It seems corporates and perhaps Maslow himself forgot one powerful motivator: bribes.

How such a crucial factor was overlooked remains an economic mystery. The ultimate productivity booster, bribes have an almost magical ability to get work moving. After all, who can resist crisp ₹500 notes appearing on the table simply for agreeing to do the job they were already paid to do? Apparently, doing your actual work is exhausting, but doing it with "extra encouragement" hits very differently.

For decades, managers and economists have relied on Maslow's famous hierarchy to understand what truly motivates human beings. From basic salaries to shiny "Employee of the Month" certificates, organisations have tried almost everything,

would rather spend that hour gathering completely useless and highly unverified intelligence about the new HR manager. Let's be honest: many people don't show up for work; they show up to sniff around and dig up dirt. In that sense, we Indians investigate personal secrets with almost the same

A DIFFERENT KIND OF LOVE

By Mukta K Gupta

This was the third time in a week that my little pup got disciplined by my grandmother with a stick for sneaking into her puja room and eating the *prasadam* meant for Lord Krishna.

To be fair, from my dog's perspective, it was a very confusing arrangement.

Food was placed on a shiny plate.

Nobody ate it.

And apparently, God wasn't in a hurry either.

Amma, however, had very strong views on the matter.

She disliked dogs in general and my dog in particular. She would often pass philosophical observations like:

"Those who love dogs become like dogs."

This statement was usually directed at me while I was busy hugging, cuddling, or discussing life's deeper problems with my dog.

Physical affection towards animals, according to her, was a modern urban problem.

She came from a village where dogs had very clear job descriptions:

- Guard the cows

- Guard the goats
- Guard the house

Thanks to my father, however, dogs had infiltrated our household and my daily routine after school involved preventing World War III between my dog and my grandmother.

My dog had a particular interest in her room.

Perhaps it was the peaceful atmosphere of the puja corner.

Perhaps it was the delicious smell of offerings.

Or perhaps it was the thrill of committing small religious crimes.

Every afternoon, like clockwork, my grandmother would sit down with her prayer book. Within minutes, my dog would enter quietly and begin chewing the corner





of her saree like a spiritual meditation exercise.

This would usually end with shouting, stick-waving, and the dog sprinting away with divine speed.

And yet, strangely enough, if the same dog so much as sneezed, my grandmother would immediately transform into Chief Veterinary Advisor of the Household.

Suddenly she knew:

- Twelve home remedies
- And one ritual involving turmeric and black pepper that nobody fully understood

You see, my grandmother didn't believe in hugging animals.

But caring for them was a completely different matter.

Every morning she would feed the stray cats visiting our house as if they were paying guests.

She would place millet and water for birds on the rooftop.

And once, when two snakes entered our house through the drain, instead of screaming like normal humans, she calmly folded her hands, sprinkled a few drops of *Gangajal*, and politely requested them to leave.

To everyone's amazement, the snakes actually did.

This incident convinced me that my grandmother possibly had better diplomatic relations with wildlife than most governments.

Her belief was simple:

God lived in every living creature.

Therefore, harming them was out of the question.

Scolding them, however, was apparently allowed.

In her final years, when age and dementia slowly caught up with her, she became bedridden and often confused about where she was.

And that was when something unexpected began to happen.

We would often find my dog quietly sleeping beside her on the bed.

Now under normal circumstances, if my grandmother had realised that a dog had climbed onto her bed, the dog would have received a lecture, a stick, and possibly a small religious sermon.

But somehow, the dog knew.

He would lie beside her quietly, without disturbing her.

It was a strange sort of friendship.

She cared for him from a distance.

He respected that distance.

Even the neighbourhood stray cat would occasionally sneak into her room at night and sleep near her feet like a silent night watchman.

No hugs.

No cuddles.

No Instagram posts.

Just quiet companionship.

Then one day, in a final act of mysterious symbolism, my dog chose to breathe his last in my grandmother's bathroom.

Of all the places in the house.

To this day I'm not entirely sure what that meant.

Maybe it was coincidence.

Or maybe it was his final tribute to the only person in the house who loved him without ever once hugging him.

It belonged to a different generation. A generation where love was rarely displayed, never announced, and definitely never posted online.

It was simply practiced quietly...

sometimes with food, sometimes with care, and occasionally with a stick.



Dear Gyanwati Aunty,

I recently bought 100 kilos of black grapes to make homemade wine. The local winemaker very generously gave me half the recipe and promised to give the remaining half next week. The problem is that the grapes are already looking at me suspiciously and time seems to be running out. What should I do until the second half of the recipe arrives?

- Fermenting in Fatehpur

Gyanwati Aunty answers:

Dear Beta,

First of all, congratulations. Most people buy grapes to eat. You have shown admirable ambition by buying them in bulk.

Secondly, never trust a man who gives only half a recipe.

Now coming to your grapes. One hundred kilos of grapes will not sit quietly until next

week. Nature is very efficient in these matters. If you wait too long, the grapes may finish the wine-making process on their own and leave you only with a strong life lesson. My suggestion is much simpler. Call your girlfriends and turn the whole situation into an event. These days everyone is doing "sip and draw" evenings. You can start a new trend: "Jam with the Ladies."

Invite the neighbourhood, put the grapes on the table, and start making jam. Between laughter, gossip and boiling sugar, those 100 kilos will disappear faster than election promises.

Who knows, a few curious husbands may also wander in to "supervise." By the end of the evening you will have jars of jam, a memorable party, and possibly the beginning of a new business.

- Gyanwati Aunty

READICULOUS READ

RAAG DARBARI
SHRILAL SHUKLA

राग दरबारी पढ़ते हुए बार-बार लगता है कि श्रीलाल शुक्ल ने भारतीय व्यवस्था को किसी एक्स-रे मशीन में डालकर उसका पूरा ढांचा पाठकों के सामने रख दिया है। शिवपालगंज का गांव दरअसल एक छोटा सा भारत है, जहाँ राजनीति, शिक्षा और समाज सब अपनी-अपनी चाल चलते हैं। उपन्यास की प्रसिद्ध पंक्ति - “यहाँ

शिक्षा का उद्देश्य ज्ञान नहीं, व्यवस्था में फिट होना है” - आज भी उतनी ही ताज़ा लगती है। वैद्यजी जैसे पात्र बताते हैं कि सत्ता सिर्फ़ कुर्सी पर नहीं, चालाकी और नेटवर्क पर भी टिकती है। और रंगनाथ की आँखों से पाठक धीरे-धीरे समझता है कि आदर्शवाद और वास्तविकता के बीच की दूरी कितनी लंबी है। हँसी

आती है, लेकिन हँसते-हँसते थोड़ा असहज भी महसूस होता है - यही राग दरबारी का असली व्यंग्य है।

“व्यवस्था इतनी मजबूत है कि उसे सुधारने की कोशिश करने वाला ही गलत साबित हो जाता है।”



In Praise of Our Ever-Evolving City

A modest note of gratitude to urban planning

By Mukta K Gupta



There are cities that rest. And then there is ours, a city that believes in continuous improvement, preferably with a drilling machine.

In many parts of the world, roads are built and then simply left alone for years. How unimaginative. Our city planners, by contrast, understand that roads are dynamic entities. A freshly laid road is merely an invitation for another department to discover new possibilities beneath it.

On Monday, the water department digs. On Wednesday, electricity finds fresh inspiration. By Friday, telecommunications must also contribute to the shared excavation experience. The result is not chaos, it is interdepartmental collaboration in its purest form.

We should be thankful. A road that remains untouched for too long may grow complacent.

The potholes that emerge are equally misunderstood. Critics call them hazards. But perhaps they are carefully designed speed-regulation devices. In a city concerned about safety, why depend solely on traffic signs when one can rely on sudden vertical engagement between tyre and terrain? No driver overspeeds for long when reminded of gravity so intimately.

Then there are the sewage chambers - thoughtfully positioned in the middle of the road, ensuring equitable access from all directions. When one requires attention, it is marked with a branch of a tree. No garish barricades. No excessive signage. Just a

modest twig swaying in civic optimism. It is a biodegradable warning system — environmentally responsible and spiritually symbolic.

Occasionally, the branch blows away in the breeze. This keeps drivers alert.

Sewage pipes, too, are renewed every few years. This generates employment and, more importantly, ensures that residents never lose touch with their roots. Newly dug muddy roads reconnect us with ancestral memory. As we navigate slush and soft earth, we are reminded that urban life is merely a thin layer over agricultural heritage. Development, after all, should not erase tradition.

Public parks offer their own innovations. Open-air gyms encourage health and discipline. The equipment, weathered gently by time and rust, builds not only muscle but resilience. A minor scrape is simply a reminder that fitness is a contact sport.

Some parks have also installed public announcement systems with speakers at regular intervals, so that every morning walker may listen to the same radio station at the same volume. This fosters unity. Diversity of opinion may divide societies, but synchronised FM programming at 6:15 a.m. builds homogeneity and camaraderie.

Footpaths, meanwhile, demonstrate the fluidity of urban space. What begins as pedestrian territory evolves organically. A car rests slightly on the edge. A temporary pole appears. Then a modest gate. Eventually, the footpath

achieves its true destiny as private parking. Pedestrians adapt admirably, discovering new walking routes among moving traffic. Urban life encourages agility.

And so, when we see another stretch of road cordoned off, another trench thoughtfully introduced, another metal frame installed in a park, we must resist the temptation to complain. Instead, we should appreciate the restless energy of a city that refuses to stand still.

Urban planning, in its highest form, is not about perfection. It is about motion. About adjustment. About continuous excavation, both of soil and of patience.

Perhaps what appears to be urban chaos is simply a long-term experiment in civic endurance.

And we, the residents, are proud participants.



PHASE TWO OF DEVELOPMENT BEGINS



Kurruptistan government declares Lord Bhagyadev as the new presiding deity of the kingdom

By Brij Khandelwal

Was Christopher Columbus genuinely lost, or was he merely the beneficiary of an exceptionally well-timed cosmic reroute? Did Newton's apple fall by gravitational accident, or did

an invisible celestial scheduler nudge it at 3:14 p.m. sharp? How did the mild-mannered economist

Manmohan Singh suddenly find himself occupying the country's highest chair, while certain poll wizards who once moved mountains now struggle to move their own phones off silent? And why does one lottery ticket, chosen by a drowsy finger, suddenly sprout crores, while another, bought with full horoscope consultation, remains stubbornly blank?

We in the rational West mutter "coincidence" and "probability distribution."

In Kurruptistan, people are more enlightened. They know better. His royal majesty **Lord Guddan Pyare** has officially recognised the supreme deity who actually runs the show:

Bhagwan Shri Bhagyadev, Lord of Timing, Tenders, Turnarounds, and That Sudden Phone Call from the Right Person.

The Royal Government of Kurruptistan has issued the long-overdue circular. Shri Bhagyadev is now the presiding deity of the realm.

Statues, tasteful, revolving-chair models, are being installed at strategic locations: traffic crossings (for that miraculous gap in the jam), tender offices (obviously), lottery kiosks, and outside income-tax buildings (where miracles are most urgently required).

School textbooks will soon feature a new chapter: "Divine Intervention in Administrative Processes: A Brief History of Files That Moved Themselves." Sunday is now National Fortune Alignment Day, public holiday, naturally.

Welcome the newest avatar: Bhagwan Shri Bhagyadev, Supreme Controller of Contracts, Careers, Coincidences, and Last-Minute Extensions. The Official Mythology (Ministry-Approved Edition) The ancient sages, scratching their beards, asked the eternal question:

“Why does one chap get the plum posting while another waits for his file to come out of cryogenic storage?” From that profound query arose Bhagyadev, calm, faintly amused, seated in an ergonomic divine chair. In one hand, the Spinning Wheel of Probability (now updated to algorithm-friendly); in the other, the Ledger of Selective Karma.

He does not roar or hurl tridents. His style is minimalist: a gentle file shuffle without signature, a whispered “skip interview” to the panel, an “accidental” meeting in the airport lounge that becomes a joint venture.

*Chant 108 times: Om
Shreem Bhagyadevaya
Namah.*

*The Daily Affirmation (Now
Laminated and Widely
Circulated)*

*O Shri Bhagyadev, gentle
ghostwriter of unseen
scripts,*

*Look upon me with your
golden glance.*

*May grace arrive before
effort.*

*May doors open before I
knock.*

*May obstacles dissolve
before RTI query.*

*Bless me not with mere skill,
but with impeccable
timing;*

*Not with wealth alone, but
with smooth clearance.*

*Let your smile rest upon my
destiny, and my paperwork!*

*Today, tomorrow, and
preferably before the next
appraisal.*

In Kurrupistan everyone hustles, everyone networks, everyone “puts in the groundwork.”

But only a blessed few are... aligned.

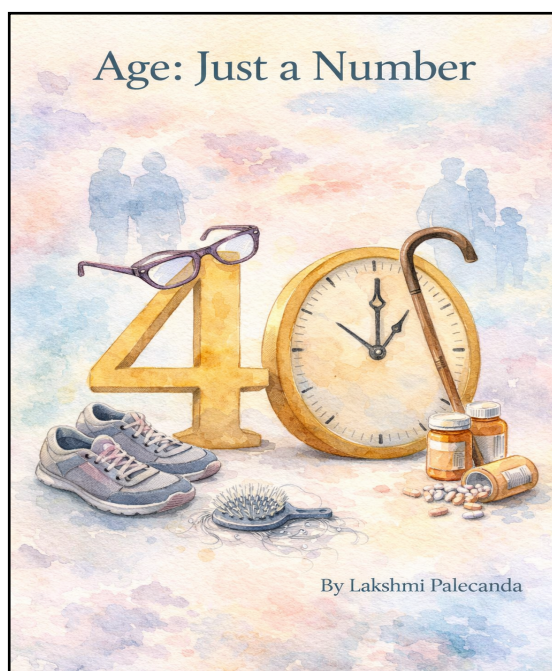
And that, dear reader, is why we light the lamp, chant the mantra, and never, ever mock a man whose file has suddenly started moving.



~ गज़ल-
सत्ता के घूँघट में ~
'राही' दहरिया

इस सत्ता के घूँघट में याँ सौदे हज़ारों हैं
इस सत्ता से वाबस्ता याँ धंधे हज़ारों हैं।
नेताई ही इक है जो, गन्दी भी चमकती है
कहने को यहाँ धँधे तो गन्दे हज़ारों हैं।
फ़रयाद सुनाओगे, पर किसको मिरी जाँ तुम
सुनना है उन्हें, जिनके खुद किस्से हज़ारों हैं।
नेता जी को तुम आरटीआई से डराते हो
नेता जी के नौकरशाह दुम-छल्ले हज़ारों हैं।
तुम लाओगे तब्दीली, पर किसके भरोसे पे
खुद देखो, तुम्हारे खुद याँ मसले हज़ारों हैं।
इक वो ही नहीं मुर्गे-दारू पे बिके वोटर
याँ ज़ात-फ़िदा बकरे भी कटते हज़ारों हैं।
गिनती के नहीं, जो याँ नेपाल हिला दोगे
कुछ ही हैं यहाँ बीना और अन्धे हज़ारों हैं।

याँ- यहाँ; वाबस्ता- सम्बन्धित; नेताई- नेतागिरी;
ज़ात-फ़िदा- जाति-पूजक, जातिवादी; बीना- देख सकने वाले



By Lakshmi Palecanda

When I was young, my view of forty-year-olds was vague. But one thing was crystal-clear to me: they were on Death's doorstep. One-foot-in-the-grave, need-to-make-a-will-right-now kind of a situation. The fifty-pluses, I revered, because I thought they had cheated death already. This state of understanding continued well into my late thirties. Only God knows what I thought would happen on my fortieth birthday. Would I wake up and look with misty eyes upon all my family who had gathered around my bedside, weeping and casting surreptitious look at the clock, thinking, "Why isn't she gone already? Hell, maybe she's one of those survivors who never die till they are sixty-five! And I've left my iron box plugged in!" As it were, my fortieth birthday turned out to be a shocker. Nothing happened. I was in the throes of adjusting to our family's move from the USA to India. My husband and kids wished me, we had a cake, a few gifts, and that was it! So you could say that my entry into the fortieth decade of life wasn't a falling-

off-the-edge-of-the-earth experience. Once in my forties, I began to see, hear and understand things like I had never done before. Now I find myself at the end of that decade, the very end of that decade, the very precipice, the pinnacle, the very edge. Yes, I'm going to turn fi... Just a little problem, let me try again. I'm going to become fi...

I'm going to do it this time. Next birthday, I'll be fif...

Well, I can't say it. Hope you understand.

However, now that I'm older and wiser, I understand that being forty is not the date on the calendar or the sum of the years from the date on your birth certificate. It is a state of being.

It is the experiences that make a person a forty-something. Therefore, someone may find themselves being forty on both sides of the decade. In essence, if you pardon my grammar, you don't be forty, you feel forty.

Now, a la Jeff Foxworthy, I'll try to tell you when you are forty.

First thing, I'll give you something Indian. When grown men and women touch your feet, and really listen to your BS, thinking you are wise, you know you are in your forties. You know you really don't know much. All that separates you from your clueless teens is a few years of experience. But people want to know how you 'succeeded', so that – get this – they want to follow your example! What is wonderful

is that this same group was thinking that you were out of your mind just a decade ago. If your mind boggles at this, you are forty! Btw, if you truly believe in your BS, it is too late – you are already in your fifties.

Next: If you know a lot more than you did when you started out, but still know way less than your junior, the guy/gal with a fresh-off-the-press college degree who just joined your place of work, the writing's on the wall – you are in your forties. Damn knowledge revolution and internet: now everyone knows more than you. Your insides tremble each day, as you hope no one notices that your one asset is that you know how to unclog the coffee maker – oh, shit, they just bought one of those new-fangled machines that unclogs itself!

Speaking of knowledge, if you believe in the importance of general knowledge, you are so forty, man! In fact, if you know the words 'General Knowledge', you are forty-plus ... and an Indian. These days, there is a single word for that stuff – Google.

While you are deep into the act of knowing little and acting wise, there are folks that know you know nothing. The holders of this truth are the ones at home, your family. Your spouse is occupied with his/her own age-versus-knowledge mental gymnastics, being close to your own age, so we'll leave them out of the reckoning. Incidentally, they may be the only people who understand your predicament.

Your parents think they are wise, because they were told that with age comes wisdom. Believing that Wisdom is something like indigestion or arthritis that arrives like clockwork without being

sought, they see no problem in propagating myths made out of thin air as universal truths. If you find yourself doing things that you don't understand, don't fully believe in, and don't really want to do, believe me, you are forty-plus. Furthermore, you'll find that they are still dissatisfied with you and are not shy about expressing their dissatisfaction.

On the other hand, do your children think you're wise? Oh, no, they don't. And they think that it's their mission in life to let the whole world know that truth. Like most people, you reproduced during your twenties or thirties, and you pay for that sin in your forties, when your kids become teenagers. There you are, chugging along, trying to balance a shaky career and family, even believing that you have the perfect work:life balance. (Btw again: all careers are shaky while they are happening. Only after they are made do they look solid). Suddenly ... KA-BOOM ... your children explode into existence, their existence, that is. Sweet little Bunty, and cute lovely Chuntu are now werewolves, vampires and crusaders, all rolled into one. They are mean, and they are aggressive. Worst of all, they know ... all your weak spots. And like the good learners we taught them to be, what they don't know, they find out through keen observation of you, coupled with trial and error.

It is through your teenage children that you become perfectly clear about how little you know. You can't teach them algebra or biology or just about anything – they are studying in school what you couldn't understand in college. You can't have a proper birds-and-the-bees talk with them because

you're afraid you'll find out how much they really know, which is way more than you get, even in your advanced years. You don't know fashions, the music gives you headaches, the TV shows give you heartaches because they are overstepping every moral and ethical threshold you ever had.

As a result, you can never do right. Everything you do is wrong, and every 'conversation' is a minefield without a map. Heck, there is no need for a map, because there are no safe spots in the field at all. In fact, forget teen years – the forties are the age when your parents don't understand you and your kids don't understand you. So you are being yelled at by both your parents and your children, and yelling back, to no effect whatsoever. No wonder they are called 'the Roaring Forties'.

On a side-note, another sign of your age is if you hanker for compliments from your children's friends. Yes, if you ever tried on an outfit in front of a store's dressing room mirror and thought, "What will my child say?", you must be somewhere in the fourth decade of your life. The truth is that your child will never compliment you, and even if s/he does, it will not be a direct one. The best compliment you can ever hope to receive from your teenaged kid is this:

"My friend/s think/s you're cool". This will generally be accompanied by a look that plainly says, "For the life of me, I can't see why."

Yet another sign that you are in your forties is when your best friends are those who give you the numbers ... of the best doctors. Yes, when in parties, you are no longer interested in those pesky things like the best spots to party, or getting the phone

number of the hottest looking guy/gal. You know that you have to get to bed by midnight, or you'll be a pumpkin the next day. As for the hottest pick-up, honestly, reliability has replaced dazzle, in your eyes.

But if you perk right up and your eyes light up when someone mentions the name of a good orthopaedic surgeon who can make that nagging knee pain go away, or a good gastroenterologist who can restart your digestion, you can have the press conference, for it's official.

One more sign is that you are able to recognise the mistakes you commit. Not that you will not commit them, but by now you are able to recognise your own patterns of behaviour. But not to worry. When you get into your fifties, you'll be able to write a book on how not to fall into a bad pattern of behaviour. You'll even be able to plug it, with a straight face.

Yeah, you see the signs now, don't you? But hey, just because you're feeling forty, there is no call to be depressed, because with luck, you can have yourself a couple or so of great decades. You may work all the way up to retirement without people recognising your basic incompetence. Your parents may get dementia, may forget what you look like, and actually praise you. Your kids may leave home and recognise the truth in most of what you said. You may have an epiphany (or twenty) and learn that acceptance is your secret to happiness. Yes, you still have a lot of good years ahead of you. But those seventy-year-olds ...

Twelve executives sat around a polished table large enough to host minor peace negotiations. Laptops glowed. Coffee cooled. On the large screen behind them, a PowerPoint slide displayed a jagged line rising and falling like an anxious heartbeat.

The issue under urgent consideration: how to increase the circulation of a new line of **Fit Loose Undergarments**.

“We need to reimagine the consumer engagement architecture,” declared the

Senior Vice President of Strategic Growth.

For the next hour, words flew across the table with

impressive velocity. Synergy. Leverage. Scalability. Transformation. Deep dive. Ecosystem. At one point someone suggested “taking this offline,” though the meeting showed no signs of internet connectivity issues.

Finally, the Marketing Director leaned back.

“Alright,” he said. “Let’s synergise our energies and reconvene to take this forward.”

Relief spread across the table.



EXTRATERRESTRIALS IN THE BOARDROOM

A cosmic inquiry into corporate life

“I think the real challenge is bandwidth alignment across verticals,” replied the Head of Integrated Solutions.

“No,” interrupted the Marketing Director, tapping his pen for emphasis. “We must pivot the narrative toward aspirational comfort positioning.”

The room nodded thoughtfully. No one appeared entirely certain what had just been said, but disagreement felt imprudent.

The slide changed. Arrows appeared. Boxes connected to circles. A pie chart materialised with quiet confidence. The jagged line continued its dramatic climb and fall, as if emotionally invested in the outcome.

He turned to his secretary. “Please schedule another meeting. We need to discuss when we can have the next round of marketing discussions.”

The meeting ended. Nothing had been decided. Everyone felt productive.

It was at this moment that an unusual thought presented itself.

Recently, during a podcast interview, former U.S. President Barack Obama was asked the question that refuses to disappear: are aliens real? Obama responded with characteristic calm that while he had seen no evidence of extraterrestrials visiting Earth, the universe is vast enough that intelligent life

elsewhere is statistically possible.

Within hours, the internet behaved as if spacecraft had already parked over several capitals.

Soon after, Donald Trump weighed in on the discussion and said that files relating to UFO sightings and unidentified aerial phenomena could be released, suggesting that the public deserved to know what governments might have recorded over the years.

For a few days, extraterrestrials entered mainstream political conversation. News panels debated. Social media speculated. Humanity briefly looked up from its phones and wondered who might be looking back.



Which raises a quieter possibility. What if aliens have not been hovering over deserts or hiding inside classified archives?

What if they have already arrived, and chosen the corporate sector?

Consider the language.

Corporate vocabulary bears only a passing resemblance to everyday speech. Ordinary words are reshaped into phrases that sound meaningful yet resist precise definition. "Let's circle back." "We need more visibility." "Is this scalable?" These are not sentences so much as coded transmissions.

It is entirely possible humanity is attempting to translate a more advanced dialect.

Then there is the meeting ritual.

No known Earth species voluntarily assembles

fourteen individuals in a climate-controlled room to discuss what might have been resolved in three emails. Yet humans do so with remarkable discipline. Slides are projected. Laser pointers glide. Documents titled "Final_v3_Updated_Last_Final2" circulate with solemn authority.

If an extraterrestrial civilisation were conducting a behavioural study, this would be an excellent method of data collection.

Performance reviews provide further intrigue.

An employee may be described as "high potential but needing alignment." Another is praised for "ownership" while being advised to "increase visibility." These phrases convey evaluation while revealing very little — an advanced communication system designed to maintain

morale while preserving ambiguity.

And then, inevitably, consultants arrive.

They appear briefly, armed with frameworks shaped like pyramids, circles, and occasionally hexagons. They speak of transformation. They rearrange structures. They depart. Weeks later, everyone agrees that something significant has occurred, though it is difficult to specify what.

One cannot dismiss the possibility of visiting emissaries.

Even corporate email habits raise questions. Messages begin with "Hope you're well," regardless of whether the sender has any information about the recipient's wellbeing. Entire departments are copied into threads they do not fully understand. Attachments grow heavier. Patience is quietly tested.

If extraterrestrials are indeed among us, they have adapted flawlessly. They wear formal attire. They understand quarterly targets. They nod thoughtfully during presentations. They say, "Let's take this forward," and everyone agrees that forward is important.

Until definitive proof emerges, humanity will continue scanning distant galaxies for signs of intelligent life.

Meanwhile, the 3 p.m. strategy meeting is about to begin.

Attendance, as always, is mandatory.

कैसे रहेगा फिट इंडिया

पीयूष पांडे



प्रधानमंत्री जी चाहते हैं कि देश फिट रहे। मैं भी यही चाहता हूँ। आज से नहीं बरसों से। कई बार मैं सोसाइटी के जिम का मुआयना कर चुका हूँ। दस दफा जिम ट्रेनर से निजी मुलाकात कर मैं इतना ज्ञान अर्जित कर चुका हूँ कि अब जिम खोल सकता हूँ।

बीते एक साल में कम से कम छह बार पड़ोस की स्पोर्ट्स अकादमी घूम आया हूँ। यहां तक कि जोश-जोश में एक दिन बेटे के साथ क्रिकेट खेलने मैदान भी जा पहुंचा। कमबख्त पहली ही गेंद उछाल लेने के बाद आँख का बाहरी किनारा लेकर सीधे विकेटकीपर के दस्तानों में जा पहुंची। और मैं सीधे डॉक्टर के क्लिनिक में।

मैं इस दुर्घटना से हतोत्साहित हो सकता था। लेकिन नहीं। मैं फिटनेस चाहता था। फिटनेस पाने की मेरी अदम्य इच्छाशक्ति ने एक योग गुरु को घर बुलाना आरंभ किया। योग गुरु ने घर आकर योग सिखाने के लिए पांच हजार रुपये की फीस मांगी। मैंने

पांच हजार रुपए एडवांस दे दिए। योग गुरु रोज सुबह पांच बजे आने लगे। लेकिन, मेरी आँखें पांच बजे खुलने के लिए तैयार ही नहीं थी। अदम्य इच्छाशक्ति आँखों की मनमर्जी के आगे दम तोड़ गई।

मैं कसम खाकर कहता हूँ कि मैंने फिटनेस पाने के लिए बहुत जतन किए। यूट्यूब पर सैकड़ों वीडियो देखे ताकि मैं चमत्कारिक ढंग से फिटनेस पा सकूँ। मोबाइल पर कई खिलाड़ियों के प्रेरणादायक प्रवचन सुने। अक्षय कुमार के उस वायरल वीडियो के बाद तो मैं कई दिन तक घड़ी में सुबह पांच बजे का अलार्म लगाया, जिसमें उन्होंने कहा था कि “ऐसा कोई दिन नहीं रहा, जब मैंने उगता हुआ सूर्य नहीं देखा। “ लेकिन जब अलार्म ने दम तोड़ा और बीबी ने फिटनेस पाने के चक्कर में अजीब-अजीब हरकतें करते देख मुझे दांत तोड़ने की धमकी दी तब मैंने तय किया कि मैं ‘मॉर्निंग वॉक’ पर जाऊंगा।

मैंने आठ दस हजार के जूते, ब्रांडेड ट्रैक सूट वगैरह खरीदकर मॉर्निंग वॉक की तैयारियां कीं। और आखिरकार वो शुभ दिन भी आ गया, जब मैं सुबह छह बजे उठ गया। फ्रेश होकर सुबह की सैर के लिए जॉर्जस पार्क पहुंचा। लगभग दो किलोमीटर टहला। ऐसा लगा मानो मेरा नया जन्म हुआ है। लेकिन वहां से लौटते हुए गर्म गर्म छनती कचौड़ियों और जलेबी की खुशबू मुझे परेशान करने लगी। मैं कुछ दिन पार्क गया और फिर लौटते हुए एनर्जी के लिए रोज चार कचौड़ी और एक गिलास लस्सी पीकर आने लगा। मैं समझ चुका था कि जब तक गली-गली खुली ये कचौड़ी-जलेबी की दुकानें बंद नहीं होंगी। लस्सी यूँ ही खुले में बिकेगी। रसगुल्लों की खुशबू सड़क तक आएगी, कम से कम मेरा फिट रहना मुश्किल है।

सवाल :- अंधभक्त क्या है?

Satyam Sharma

खुद में सोचने समझने की शक्ति बहुत कम होती है। ये सिर्फ मालिक के दिशा-निर्देश पर चलते हैं वरना एक ही स्थान पर खड़े रहते हैं जब तक इन्हें कोई लताड़े नहीं। अपने मालिक की बुरायी सुनकर ये सूँघ कर वहाँ पहुँच

होते चले जाते हैं। इन्हें सुख दुःख सर्दी गरमी किसी भी चीज़ का कोई एहसास नहीं होता। कोई भी तार्किक बात इनकी समझ नहीं आती। सबसे ज्यादा फ़ेसबुक पर पाये जाते हैं और उत्पात मचाने को उत्सुक रहते हैं।



जवाब:- दोस्तों आजकल हम हर तरफ़ अंधभक्त का शोर सुन रहे हैं लेकिन असल में ये अंधभक्त हैं क्या?

तो आइये हम बताते हैं आपको- अंधभक्त तीन आत्माओं का मिलन है-

- १- इंसान
- २- गधा
- ३- कुत्ता

इन तीन योनियों से मिलकर एक अंधभक्त बनता है। ये मनुष्य की तरह दिखते, चलते फिरते हैं। परंतु इनकी प्रवर्ती गधे वाली होती है मतलब इनमे

जाते हैं और कुत्ते जितने वफ़ादार होते हैं। मालिक के अलावा कोई भी अपरिचित इनके पास से गुजरे तो ये उस पर भौंकते हैं तथा अगर वो अकेला हो तो हमला भी कर सकते हैं।

प्रायः ये जन्म से ही अंधे और बहरे होते हैं इसलिये सिर्फ़ नाक से काम लेते हैं और जहाँ इन्हें मालिक की खुशबू ना आए वहाँ उत्पात मचाते हैं। दो इंद्रियाँ कम होने के कारण इनकी जुबान में बहुत ताक़त होती है। इनकी चमड़ी बहुत मोटी होती है इसलिए मालिक कितना भी मार ले इन पर कोई असर नहीं पड़ता बल्कि ये जितना पिटते हैं उतने ज़्यादा ऊर्जावान

इनकी ख़ास पहचान ये है के सवाल के बदले ये लोग हमेशा सवाल ही करते हैं कभी जवाब नहीं देते क्योंकि जवाब देने की तर्कशक्ति इनमे नहीं होती। अर्थात आप अगर इनसे इनकी खूबियाँ पूछेंगे तो ये खूबी बताने की जगह दूसरों की कमी बताना शुरू कर देते हैं क्योंकि मालिक द्वारा इन्हें यही बताया गया है।

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