

New Year 2016

Without doubt, my favourite word for 2015 is "wisecrack". Though I have been familiar with this concept most of my life, it was only in the last year or so that I began to become aware of how profound and nuanced a concept it was.

"Wisdom" is not elitist or exclusive like "educated", "intellectual", or even "intelligent". Being educated usually implies that you have had the resources and opportunity to attend school and university, and being an intellectual ordinarily suggests that you subsequently had the time and leisure for brainy pursuits. Intelligence, though more an ability than an acquisition or activity, has implicit the assumption of "training". Of course, we occasionally refer to untrained or native intelligence, but invariably in a patronising manner.

Being wise, on the other hand, does not presume resources, opportunity, or even leisure. It presumes nothing else but having wisdom (and perhaps a white beard at least in the male version). For, unlike education, which is accessed institutionally, intellect which is cultivated, or intelligence that is genetically passed on, wisdom is acquired through the experience of living - something that everyone has access to.

It indicates how best to adjust to our own circumstances and reality, and how to find the correct balance between past practices and new thinking, between our individual convictions and popular thinking, and between what is actual and what could be possible. And unlike academic thesis which have to be proved, disproved, or updated through debates, empirical surveys or laboratory experiments, wisdom is something that is being perpetually tested in real-time, just by the act of living, and is being reaffirmed, updated or repudiated through the experience of life.

But so much for wisdom.

The concept of crack, in wisecrack, is equally nuanced. To my mind, it stands both for crack as in “cracking a joke” and crack as in being “cracked” or not quite sane. Again, both fascinating concepts.

It is generally recognised that many disciplines have an inherent connection with many human activities. The link between chemistry and cooking is widely acknowledged. More recently, the link between mathematics and music has also been recognised. I would, in the same spirit, like to suggest a third link, that of wisdom with humour. I believe that much of humour (at least the funny type) contains much wisdom. And I also believe that jokes (along with poetry) are one of the best ways of sharing wise ideas.

Let us see whether the memes that are reproduced in the accompanying card will persuade you of the connection between wisdom and humour, and also demonstrate the very thin dividing line between sanity and insanity, when wisecracks are flying about.

*And if you do enjoy these set of wisecracks, I want to inform you that some of us are launching an occasional (sporadic) pamphlet called *Wisecracks* that will appear with assured irregularity in 2016 and will share the best of nutty humorous wisdom. We will be happy to put you on our electronic mailing list, if you indicate interest.*

My apologies for a longish message and even a longer attachment. May 2016 be the best year ever for you, for humanity, and for all living creatures.

Shekhar Singh

*Here's wishing everyone
everywhere a happy new year
and all the best for 2016*



*Let us nurture all living things and protect and care
for each other in the coming year*

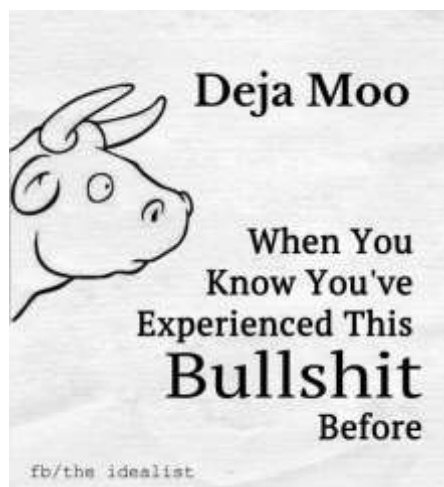
Shekhar Singh

Wisecracks of the year: 2015

The surest way for many public functionaries to commit suicide is to climb up their egos and jump down to their IQ levels.



The experience with "new" governments nationally and in Delhi has, in 2015, given birth to the expression:



Wisecracks recommended by our animal friends....



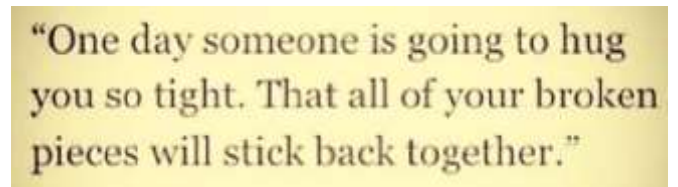
That moment you realize you've been using your data instead of free wifi



Some of the lessons learned in 2015



Considering..



Lessons of 2015 contd...

Never be ashamed of a scar.
It simply means you were
stronger than whatever tried
to hurt you.

“Many people die at twenty five
and aren't buried until they are
seventy five.”

- Benjamin Franklin.

You can't make everyone happy.
You are not a pizza.

fb/The idealist

“Never make fun of someone
who speaks broken English.
It means they know another
language.”

H. Jackson Brown Jr. , fb/The idealist

THE ABILITY TO SPEAK SEVERAL LANGUAGES
IS AN ASSET BUT THE ABILITY TO KEEP
YOUR MOUTH SHUT IN ANY
LANGUAGE IS PRICELESS



fb/THE IDEALIST

Sometimes people put up
walls... not to keep others out,
but to see who cares enough to
break them down.

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Lessons learnt....

A WISE MAN MAKES HIS OWN DECISIONS; AN IGNORANT MAN FOLLOWS PUBLIC OPINION.

- Chinese Proverb

"A lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right & evil doesn't become good, just because it's accepted by a majority."



"The problem with the world is that the intelligent people are full of doubts while the stupid ones are full of confidence."

-Charles Bukowski

The mind is like a parachute. It doesn't work unless it's open.

- Frank Zappa



www.EncouragingMinds.net

People who shine from within don't need the spotlight.

www.EncouragingMinds.net

More lessons learnt...

2015 has also been, for many of us, a year when we have tried to study the functioning of the right to information (RTI) law in India. Some of our latest reports can be accessed at:

http://transparencyadvisorygroup.org/uploads/Empowerment_through_Information_-_Volume_-_I.pdf

http://transparencyadvisorygroup.org/uploads/Empowerment_through_Information_-_Volume_II.pdf

<http://www.rti-assessment.com/raag--ces--rti-study-2011-13.html>

Our findings suggested that a large proportion of the information that should have been made public was being blocked by the government and the information commissions for no seemingly good reason.

Why public servants and information commissioners routinely block disclosure of even the most non-descript information could perhaps be understood by this description of a laboratory experiment reportedly conducted in a respected but unnamed laboratory.

Put eight monkeys in a room. In the middle of the room is a ladder, leading to a bunch of bananas hanging from a hook on the ceiling. Each time a monkey tries to climb the ladder, all the monkeys are sprayed with ice water, which makes them miserable.

Soon enough, whenever a monkey attempts to climb the ladder, all of the other monkeys, not wanting to be sprayed, set upon him and beat him up. Soon, none of the eight monkeys ever attempts to climb the ladder. One of the original monkeys is then removed, and a new monkey is put in the room.

Seeing the bananas and the ladder, he wonders why none of the other monkeys are doing the obvious, but, undaunted, he immediately begins to climb the ladder. All the other monkeys fall upon him and beat him silly. He has no idea why. However, he no longer attempts to climb the ladder.

A second original monkey is removed and replaced. The newcomer again attempts to climb the ladder, but all the other monkeys hammer the crap out of him. This includes the previous new monkey, who, grateful that he's not on the receiving end this time, participates in the beating because all the other monkeys are doing it. However, he has no idea why he's attacking the new monkey.

One by one, all the original monkeys are replaced. Eight new monkeys are now in the room. None of them have ever been sprayed by ice water. None of them attempt to climb the ladder. All of them will enthusiastically beat up any new monkey who tries, without having any idea why.

Nevertheless, no monkey ever again approaches the ladder. Why not? Because that's the way they've always done it and that's the way it's always been around here.

And that's how government practices and attitudes persevere, never mind what...

And the resolutions for 2016



Otherwise.....



FOLLOW
YOUR HEART
BUT TAKE
YOUR BRAIN
WITH YOU.

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Let us think out of the box.....



“In my next life I want to live my life backwards. You start out dead and get that out of the way. Then you wake up in an old people's home feeling better every day. You get kicked out for being too healthy, go collect your pension, and then when you start work, you get a gold watch and a party on your first day. You work for 40 years until you're young enough to enjoy your retirement. You party, drink alcohol, and are generally promiscuous, then you are ready for high school. You then go to primary school, you become a kid, you play. You have no responsibilities, you become a baby until you are born. And then you spend your last 9 months floating in luxurious spa-like conditions with central heating and room service on tap, larger quarters every day and then Voila! You finish off as an orgasm!”

— **Woody Allen**

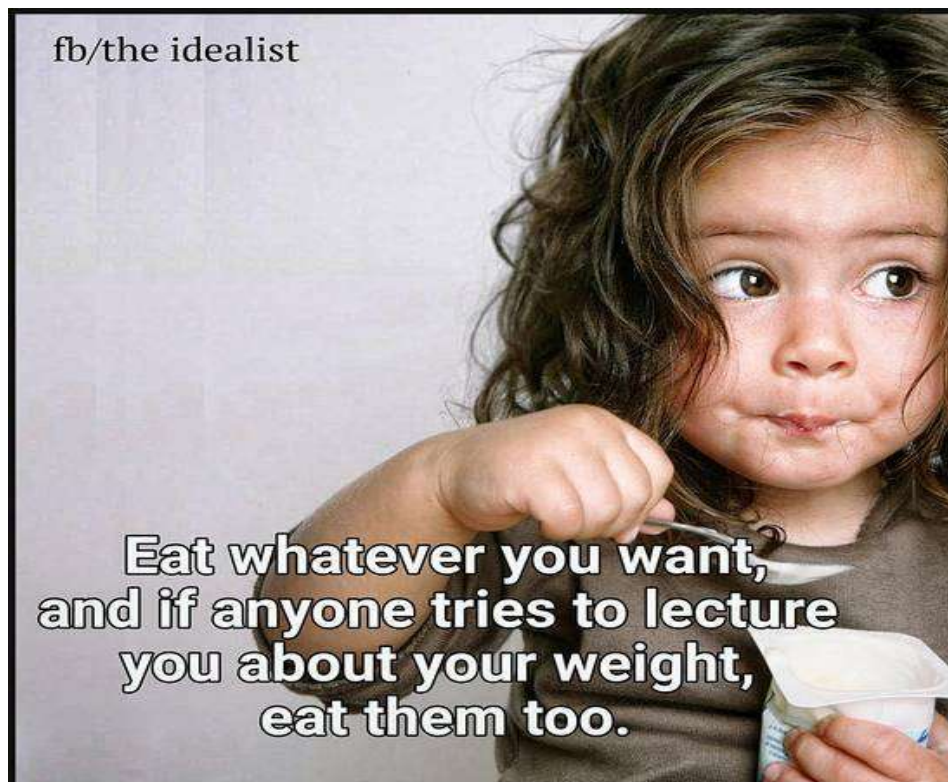
And this resolution has been added at the insistence of our canine companion Flip Flop "Ghodi" (photo below)



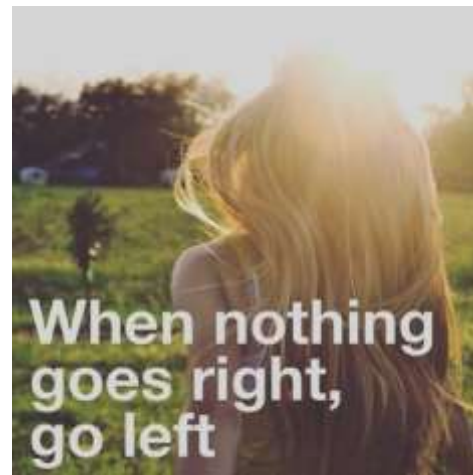
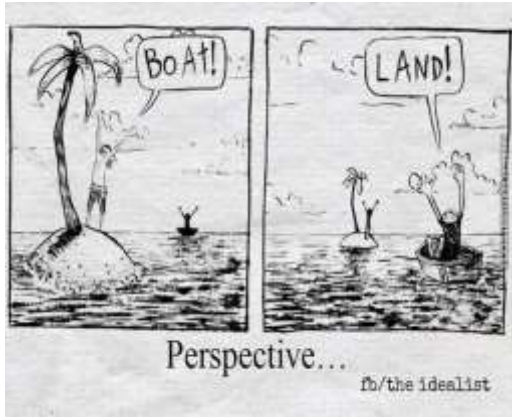
who is being forced to go on a diet in 2016

Never, NEVER, irrationally deprive yourself of food.....

0.



So how you approach 2016 mainly depends on the perspective you adopt...



But perhaps the most provocative thought of all...

