

## Crossword Puzzle Day

Sharpen your pencils and your minds, all in one go, on this glorious National Crossword Puzzle Day! These amazing word twisters allow you to expand your vocabulary and problem solving skills, all in one go. There's nothing like a crossword to start the day with your morning coffee, something to get the old gears going, before you head into work for another grueling day. Solving those mind-teasers (they're like brain workouts) that offer a fun challenge, keep the mental gears oiled and gears turning.

## #ART EXHIBITION

### ART WITH A HEART

The Jayshree Perival Group of Schools recently organized a 3-day Art exhibition at ITC Rajputana. The students depicted various social issues through evocative art works.



**Tusharika Singh**  
Freelance writer and city blogger

In a celebration of creativity and imagination, students from the Jayshree Perival Group of Schools recently organized the 'Art with a Heart' exhibition at ITC Rajputana. The event, inaugurated by Venuu Gupta, Chairman, RERA, brought forth a vibrant showcase of over 350 art pieces crafted by students from classes 1 to 12.

Art enthusiasts, parents, and guests were greeted with a diverse range of exhibits, each telling a unique story and reflecting the students' perspectives on life, society, and culture. The exhibition featured an array of thought-provoking artworks, including Aanya Singh's 'Fearless', inspired by Japanese dragon paintings, symbolizing rebirth and power. Singh expressed, "The dragon inspires me to be myself, live my life in a free and fearless way."

Another impactful piece by Diya depicted rural women seeking help, with a hand emerging from a well, symbolizing limitless opportunities and liberation possibilities outside the societal norms. 'Book', another powerful artwork, aimed to spread the message of zero hunger, highlighting the inescapable access to food and the tendency to opt for junk food over nutritious options. The piece 'Consumption' created using old vintage books and tea cups, delved into the stresses of life, increased caffeine intake, and society's busyness.



# It's Quite Certain Who'll Win Bangladesh Elections!

As Riaz writes that none of the 29 parties that have joined the electoral fray has the "wherewithal" to confront the incumbent AL. Some of the poll-ready parties have sprung up quite recently at the prodding of the power centre. The BNP is evidently the only opposition party with the requisite heft and sprawl to take on the party in power. But it has been so badly mauled by the police and AL activists in the past few months that it is hardly in a condition to join the battle in the electoral arena. Its leader and former prime minister, Khaleda Zia, is under house arrest since 2018. At present, most of its leaders and thousands of its active workers are in prison. The mass arrest was triggered by a BNP protest in late October that turned into street violence. Like India, Bangladesh too, has robust anti-terror laws, which, if left in the hands of a state prone to weaponise the law against its political adversary, can leave it crippled for the entire election season.



**Sumit Mitra**  
The author is a veteran journalist

The general election due to be held in neighbouring Bangladesh, a nation of 170 million people, is drawing international headlines for an unexpected reason, that its outcome being almost fore-told. The January 7, 2024 election, like the past two in 2014 and 2018, is bereft of surprises, competition being gagged by government agencies and ruling party goons, with Sheikh Hasina, 76, the Awami League (AL) supreme, a sure winner for the fourth term. She is almost certain to make it yet again to the prime minister's office at Tejgaon in Dhaka City. That will also be a daughter's fitting tribute to her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of Bangladesh, who was assassinated half a century ago, in 1975. However, it is not Hasina's line-

age alone that has made her electoral hat trick a certainty. As Ali Riaz, a Bangladeshi academic at Illinois State University has written in *The Diplomat*, the US-based magazine, focused on the Asia Pacific region that the AL is the "blueprint for engineering an election". Its result, to put it starkly, will be manipulated by a sinister string of prior moves to cripple the opposition. Though 29 parties have been registered with the *Election Commission* to participate in the election, another 15 parties, including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which had been in power till Hasina began her rule in 2009, are boycotting the poll. It is a mirror-image of the 2014 election, from which all opposition parties kept out.



**Ali Riaz**

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## #REALPOLITICS

Bangladesh's march towards one-party rule began with the abolition of the 'caretaker government' system in 2011, which had effectively curbed the tendency of the incumbent government to tilt the electoral system to its favour. The US government and the European Union recently showed interest in ensuring the Bangladesh election to be free, fair and participatory as the West felt that the prolonged dilution of democratic rule in a populous and strategically located country in South Asia might tempt China to drag it into its own geo-strategic orbit without any popular resistance.



**Khaleda Zia**

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off, as a "basket case" to one on a rapid growth trajectory. Yet, as the British magazine wrote, Hasina "has assailed Bangladeshi democracy with impunity". The hefty publication charged that she has "cowed the press and captured the police, courts and judiciary". Outwardly, the situation in India does not bear comparison with Bangladesh as India retains most of the trappings of electoral democracy. But, with the state at liberty to unleash the power of the administration on the opposition, and the ruling party enjoying a virtual monopoly of corporate election funding, it is no wonder that the Congress, which is the only party with a national footprint after the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has become too puny to stand up and be counted. The BJP in India enjoys undoubted superiority over others, including the Congress, in manpower, resources and popularity. But a contest on any of these factors cannot be fair unless there is a level playing field. How can a popularity race be even without the contestants having equal access to media or equal opportunity to be funded by the citizenry? Despite both India and Bangladesh being symbols of growth in the post-covid world,

they are painfully similar in witnessing the eclipse of the lively multi-party democracy that had once been their hallmark. Pakistan, on the other hand, had no such luxury, living, as it did, under the domination of the army. If India and Bangladesh head towards becoming one-party states, in real sense, at least, it will be South Asia taking a leaf out of Africa, where it is entrenched. Everywhere there, the ruling party made use of asymmetric advantage to cause an unfair decimation of the opposition. In Zimbabwe, the political crisis following the refusal of President Robert Mugabe to hand over power to his elected successor, the Movement for Democratic Change, in 2008, is well-known. The Indian subcontinent is blessed with a large middle class and a big diaspora, so, news at home travels fast across the world. But the West will not intervene on ideological grounds as its hands are tied by the region's geopolitics and the China bugbear. It will, therefore, be the task of the sub-continent's own people to ensure that each nation is ready to accommodate the ruling party as well as the opposition. [rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com](mailto:rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com)



## #PHILOSOPHY

# Practical Life Lessons from Taoism

While Taoism can be paradoxical and abstract, it also offers daily life lessons

Taoism (also written Daoism) is a religion, philosophy, and set of practices that arose in ancient China. Established by the semi-legendary Lao Tzu, and the slightly better accounted for Zhuangzi, its various forms can lay claim to millions of followers around the world. Yet, many aspects of Taoism remain poorly understood. While most philosophies can become watered down as they are popularly dispersed, Taoism gets the worst of it. This ancient school of thought is often reduced to little more than "go with the flow, bro." It can even be treated as so abstract that there's nothing practical to be gleaned from it. Here, we'll go over four life lessons from Taoism that you can use everyday.



Before we begin, a word of warning about, well, words. As a philosophy, Taoism is extremely skeptical of language. The first line in the *Tao Te Ching* is, "The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name." As such, anything written here will be a little bit wrong because it is written. (Sorry about that.)

### The Way is right in front of you

As mentioned, philosophical Taoism can seem terribly abstract. The *Tao Te Ching* contains paradoxical and seemingly contradictory lines that can baffle even careful readers. It is easy to suppose that this is a philosophy for hermits living on mountains or, at the very least, those who can afford long sabbaticals from society.

Not so. Understanding how the world works is a key part of Taoism, and that requires engaging with it. Large parts of the *Tao Te Ching* are specifically concerned with how to govern societies in accordance with the Tao, something that is difficult to do if you've abandoned civilization. The Tao, in its purest form, is the unifying, all-pervasive essence of reality. Situations evolve following the Tao. The more you understand it, the more you can understand the cause-and-effect relationships that connect everything, as well as how your actions factor in.

### Be spontaneous

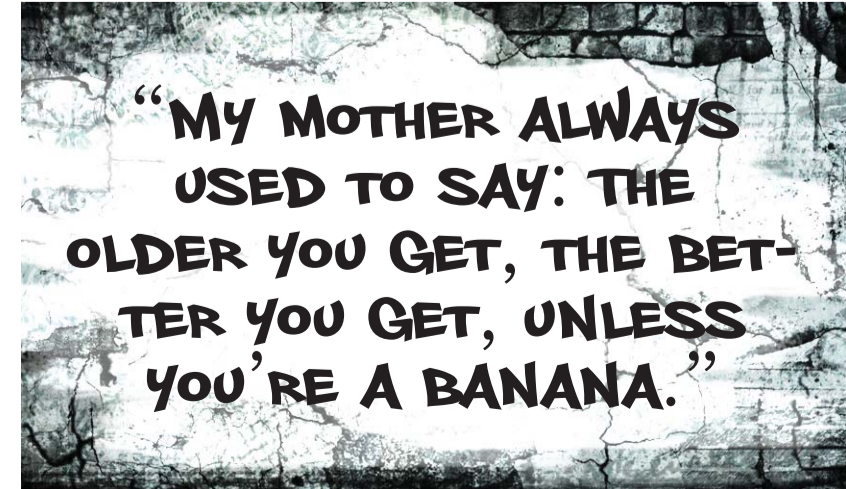
Zhuangzi, the second most important thinker in Taoism after Lao Tzu, explains that the path to "spontaneity" is to be found in rigorous practice and study.

Consider, Zhuangzi asks, the allegory of the butcher. The butcher has been working in his trade for decades and can now cut meat perfectly without thinking about it. In fact, he handles the meat with such skill that he has not had to sharpen his knife for years. How did he reach this level? Simple, he spent decades honing his craft. For Zhuangzi, "spontaneous" does not mean "random." It, instead, refers to how the butcher has come to understand his craft so well that he instinctively grasps what must be done. He can act without conscious effort and still finds himself following the Tao. This ability is not limited to sages or professionals. Most people are familiar with the sensation of not having to think about what they are doing as they practice their hob-

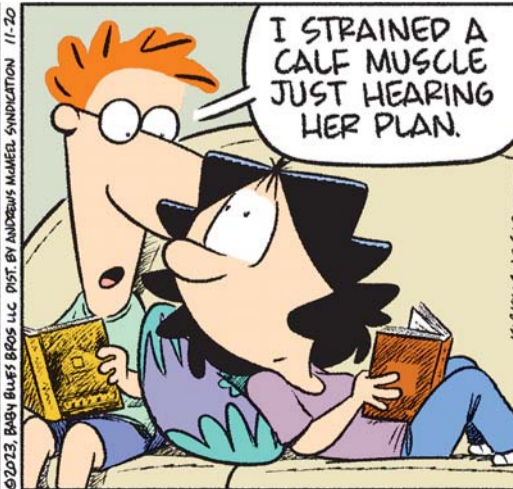
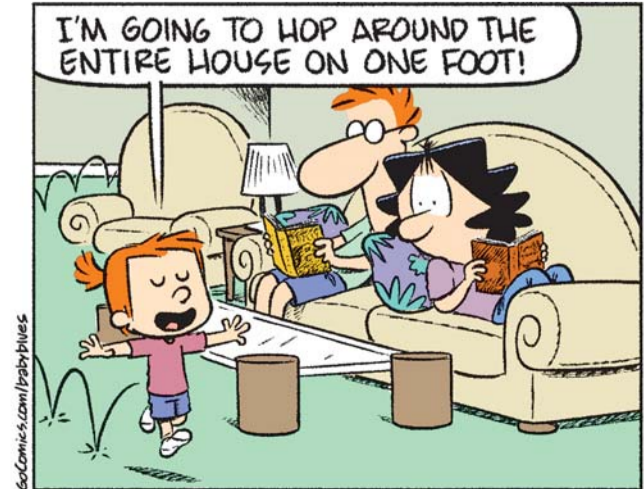
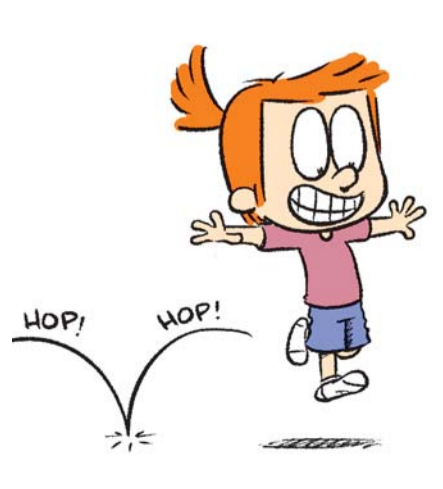


bies, play sports, or drive along a familiar road. Zhuangzi points to this as a source of joy and a way of enjoying even the most mundane parts of life. **Take a broad perspective** Many philosophies encourage people to see beyond themselves. Taoism agrees but adds that the human perspective is fairly limited. After all, if the Tao is everything, why would the human perspective have a monopoly on truth? Zhuangzi explains this again through allegory. Many of his stories take the point of views of animals and use the same language to tell stories about humans. In his famous butterfly dream, the Chinese philosopher dreams that he is a butterfly without any awareness that he is human. He flutters about from flower to flower until he awakens and realizes that he is in reality a man who dreamed himself to be a butterfly. The tale is meant to explore the subjectivity and elusiveness of reality. While other stories are more metaphorical obviously, the choice of using animal protagonists is deliberate. Zhuangzi is making the important point that breaking out of your limited perspective can provide new insights and a better understanding of the world around you. This idea can be viewed in contrast to Confucian beliefs, which firmly place humans in the centre of the material world. This strikes Taoist thinkers as misguided. Instead, Taoist thought provides a way to understand your place in a larger whole that goes far beyond human society.

## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



## ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

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