

Japan has appointed Tetsushi Sakamoto as the “Minister of Loneliness” to try and reduce loneliness and social isolation among Japanese people and to stem the tide of rising suicide rates in the wake of lockdown measures. Tetsushi Sakamoto also oversees the issue of declining fertility and low dynamism in the Japanese society.

The pandemic lockdown measures have further deepened the crisis, particularly for the older people and the small children.

Loneliness broods unhappiness. Rare are those virtuous sages who derive delight in loneliness. But, then, they also come down in the society and form congregations to share the visionary gems they claim to have discovered during the lonely ruminations. In Tibet, a particular retreat for the monks and nuns are highly regarded. It is a three year and three fortnight retreat. In these 1125 days, they have to maintain minimum contact with the outside world and have to live in small caves or cubicles.

Ours is a lonely planet. We have been looking into the sky and amidst stars to find co-inhabitants of the universe. Till now, we have been unsuccessful. Our forefathers postulated about the heavens and the hells, the gods and the nagas, then even hierarchy of the unseen world to cater to our urge to be gregarious. The latest Mars mission of NASA, Perseverance rovers will attempt to trace the signs of any life on the planet. We are not going to be satisfied with finding merely the signs of life. Our quest will continue to seek out the intelligent alien civilization. Based upon the famous Frank Drake’s thesis on seven factors to find intelligent life, the scientists have calculated and published the research paper claiming that 36 intelligence civilizations may exist right now in the Milky Way galaxy. Tom Westby and Christopher Conselice, in their paper, “*The Astrobiological Copernican Weak and Strong Limits for Intelligent Life*” (*The Astrophysical Journal*, Vol. 896, No.1, June 2020) assuming for the Astrobiological Copernican Strong Condition — that intelligent life *must form* between 4.5 billion and 5.5 billion years after an Earth-like planet forms in an Earth-like orbit around a Sun-like star, have, though underestimated. If this strong condition is relaxed a bit, thousands of civilizations are possible in our own Milky Way galaxy alone.

Mankind is not going to remain cocooned in the lonely home. Exploration is part of our ontological drive. Thus, it becomes of paramount significance to channelize this urge towards meaningful life. Japan has realized how loneliness when left unattended can drag down any dynamic society. India found the solution of driving loneliness towards spiritual goal. But, with the burgeoning population, we are facing challenges that complicates the crisis. Shaila Verghese and Manoj Verghese, in their paper have discussed the case studies of the street children, of their abuse, of their mental maladjustment, of their loneliness. Dipankar Das *et al.* has then contributed a paper on measuring Happiness among teachers in West Bengal educational institutions.

We are publishing a book review on a voluminous commentary on *Hanuman Chalisa* by Pawan Kumar Mishra. The book is an interesting read and a guide to the seekers fatigued by loneliness.

Let us build the bridges of thoughts and understanding and drive this urge to find new territories, new companions in the physical as well as mental space.

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