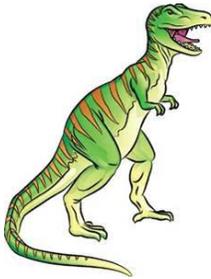


Commentary

Not My father's Dinosaur

By Anil Shrivastava "Musafir"

For the first 26 six years of my life I didn't know that dinosaurs existed. I never saw any pictures or heard any mention of Dinosaurs while growing up in India. Dinosaur were never introduced to me by my parents, teachers, siblings, friends, or acquaintances. After coming to the U.S. in the early seventies I was shocked to find an inordinate allusion to dinosaurs everywhere. I couldn't believe that I was kept in dark all those years about these creatures that roamed on our planet 320 million years ago.



Our children started learning about dinosaurs in nursery schools. They used to bring coloring papers home to introduce us to Brontosaurus, Albertosaurus Tyrannosaurus, and stegosaurus. We bought various replicas of dinosaurs from toy stores for our children's 'show and tell' at school. Soon they started watching dinosaurs on television. We also joined them in watching shows like 'The Flintstones' and actually fell in love with adorable Dino. We liked Dino, especially, for assuming an uncomplicated name.

When our children grew older, they were introduced to Sesame Street which had several dinosaur characters such as Elmo and Big Bird. They were also advised to read Elmo's book to learn about the traits

of dinosaurs. We were learning along with them something that was inconspicuously missing in our education. We were making up for the lost time.

A few years later my father visited us from India and wondered why there were so much emphasis on dinosaurs in this country. I lamented about the poor education we received in India where dinosaurs were kept out of the spotlight. My father replied, "Dinosaurs are fictional; that's why," he continued, "If they were true, Shakespeare would have mentioned them in his plays.

"But Dinos were discovered in in 1824, by William Buckland. Before that they were unknown to the world."

My father was unyielding. According to him, Shakespeare mentioned every animal in his plays that ever existed on earth such as dog, bear, horse, lark, cat, ewe, ram, ape and all the rest.

"How about elephant? Did Shakespeare ever mention an elephant," I questioned.

"Yes, it was mentioned by Antonio in Twelfth Night," my father contradicted me.

"Well, I am pretty sure that Shakespeare never mentioned a rhino in his play," I tried to outwit him.

"Not so. He mentioned rhino in Macbeth," he replied.

That was then. Dinosaurs are now getting popular in India too. There is a rush of finding dinosaur relics in the Indian state of Gujarat, home state of prime mister, Modi. They have been named Rajasaurus, (King of dinosaurs) and Majungasaurus. They roamed there 65 million years ago, the same time they became extinct in North America. No wonder, India follows everything that trends in America a little late.

Now I am a grandfather. Unlike my father, I don't question my grandson's admiration for dinosaurs though their existence is dubious to me. During our last visit, he wanted us to buy him a dinosaur toy. We bought him one without caring about what my father or Shakespeare would say.



I think that I may have found the right answer to the age old question of why the chicken crossed the road. The chicken was in “danger of violent death” and her life on this side of the road was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”
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