

LOOKING AT NATURE

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I enjoy the opportunity to be immersed with nature during my stay in India International Centre, Delhi. Recuperating over the last several weeks, I wake up to look out of my window, even as the sun is also coming to see the world. I observe the dance of nature in the trees, birds, monkeys, cats, small butterflies and insects.

Sometimes, I get lost in the wonders of nature. I listen to birds chirping and insects' stridulation, tree leaves dancing in the breeze, butterflies fluttering over flowers. I enjoy the moment, and sometimes I get lost in them, wondering what these creatures and many more in the nature, feel. I know all beautiful things are not necessarily beautiful always. There also exist ugly and dangerous insects and animal, although I don't see them in the compound. Like us humans, they must also have varied emotions. I occasionally see beautiful love displayed by monkeys to their babies and some bully males showing hatred and anger.

Sometimes, I share some precious moments with them. A baby bird had once fallen off from the nest. The nest was too high for me to put the baby back. The bird had not yet learnt to fly. There were predators all around and so I was not comfortable leaving the bird in the park. I brought the bird into my room. I tried feeding and taking care of it. But the bird was not very happy... So, two mornings later, I left the bird back in the garden. Even as I was watching, I found the bird had flown away... or had it? I could not find it where I had left it a few moments ago.

The play of nature before me reminds me of the *Bhava -Chakra* – Wheel of Life, a symbolic representation of the cycle samsara, existence, a Buddhist belief in the continuous cycle of birth, life and death. The wheel of life painting is found at the entrance of Buddhist temples especially in Tibet and perhaps in China.

I get to hear from within myself two words – devas and asuras, celestial ones and not so celestial ones. Devas are the celestial ones, asuras are also kind of celestial but not completely so. The realm of devas, gods, is the highest realm and is depicted at the top of the wheel of life. Devas have wealth, power and happiness. They lead such a pleasurable life that they do not recognize the truth of suffering and, hence, lack the motivation to seek liberation from the wheel. The realm of asuras, demi-gods, is very competitive and has all the resources. These two beings are depicted as fighting all the time with all sorts of weapons, like swords, spears, bow and arrow, for the fruit of a particular tree. Devas always appear peaceful but within the appearance of peacefulness, what is hidden we do not know. That is one way of looking at nature.

The second way of looking at nature is to find what lies behind it. There is some kind of real nature of nature, a hidden nature within the beautiful things, such as beautiful trees, beautiful flowers and beautiful sounds. And similarly, behind the not so beautiful creatures, like pythons, scorpion and pigs. Although I don't see them in this compound, but there are there in the nature.

The third way of looking at the nature around us is within human nature. There are aspect of all the natures. There are attitudes like loving kindness, hatred, and 'I don't care' attitude in human nature. But the realm of *manushyas*, humans, is marked by curiosity and passion. And liberation from the wheel of life is possible only from this realm.