

THE SUNBIRD & FREE WILL

In early May, a pair of olive-backed sunbirds (Singapore's most human-friendly bird) built a nest on a branch of dried-up potted pomegranate right in front of our house door. At first, the sunbirds kept flying away and returning in turn, each time bringing a piece of dry plant fibre, moss, spider's web and colourful shiny strings.

After about two weeks, the nest looked like a pear with an elongated pendulous upper half, but soon looked straggly and messy on the outside, decorated with dead leaves, seed cases and strings. The lively female laid two greenish-blue eggs with dark brown spots and lines, and sat incubating them, resting its tiny head on the small opening halfway on the nest. Often enough, it would not fly away even when we walked by within arm's reach.

At first, I watched with admiration at the bird's industry, bringing in only a tiny piece of building material each time; how the nest slowly took shape. And how brave, even audacious, it was, building its nest right before the door of our corner flat.

The more I looked, the more I saw that the bird had no choice but to make its nest this time of the year (April-August). It had no choice but to build that very same type of nest, and to lay two eggs, and to hatch them. And the hatchlings had no choice but to grow into sunbirds, and to repeat the whole cycle all over again.

Humans, too, are caught up in bird-like cycles. We had no choice but to be born. As kids, we had no choice but to play kid's games. Often enough we go on playing these games all our lives, even as CEOs, prime ministers, presidents, and dictators.

Greed, hate and delusion are the stuff of kids' games. Our greed limits our choices; our hate stunts our growth; our delusion makes us what we are not.

We have no choice but to follow the religion we have chosen; to follow the teacher we admire; to practise the teaching we practise; to join the group that we like. We have no choice but to live the life we have chosen.

We have become like rats in a maze: we just keep moving on and turning around corners. We have no choice but to keep on moving and turning around corners. Occasionally, we find a wheel, and we think it's fun running inside it. And then we are back in the maze, running, turning corners.

Can we ever get out of such cycles? Not if we are living in our past, ruled by our past. Even our future is shaped by our past. There is no present for us. When we lose touch with the present, we are swept away in the floods of the past and nose-dragged by the future.

The past is dead, leave it buried. I forgive myself for all the things I have done that I should not have done. I forgive myself for all the things I have not done that I should have done. I accept myself just as I am: I open the doors of my heart to me.

I forgive those who have caused me pain; for, the reality is that they are in greater pain than me. I forgive those who are hurting me now; for, I have not yet seen my own happiness deep within myself.

I show all my lovingkindness to these pains. I accept them unconditionally. Having accepted them, I set them free; I let go of them all. These pains I feel are not really mine; I do not own them; I do not want them; I am letting them go.

For, they are telling me I can be a much better, happier and free person. Let me now happily live this moment.

Let me be like the sunbird, patiently sitting on her eggs till they hatch. While writing this reflection, I noticed that a few green leaves are sprouting on the dried-up pomegranate.

Piya Tan ©2009

Photo of sunbird outside my house:

http://dharmafarer.googlepages.com/Sunbird_May09.JPG/Sunbird_May09-full:init..JPG