



How I Wonder What You Are

February 2021

An Invitation to Sensory Observation

'You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear'
- Sherlock Holmes, A Scandal in Bohemia

Hi everyone

As I come to the end of February, what do I wish to invite you into?
I wish to reactivate a practice that I have slipped on, and extend this invitation to you as well.

The study of Biomimicry taught me the beauty of observation, using all our five senses, when engaging with the natural world. Since there is almost nothing in nature that is designed (be it shape, structure, process, sensory details like smell, taste, touch, sight, sound) without a function, the whole exercise I invite you into, can be real fun and a revelatory one.

We might see brilliant iridescent colors in butterflies; feel the slimy substance that a snail leaves behind; hear a particular bird call only in the middle of the day; or smell something foul and repelling; or notice a particular shape or pattern, and each of these are there/happen, because they fulfil a certain function for that form of life.

So I invite us, to become a mini Sherlock Holmes of the natural world, for the month of March.

Whether it is a tiny plant we have at home; or we have a dog/cat as pets; or we see flowers, birds and butterflies on our walks; or we pass several trees on our drive to work; or just wish to observe another human or our own selves (remember, we are very much a part of the natural world); or whether you live on the beach/next to a jungle - the scale of the natural world doesn't matter, neither does the amount of time we have on hand.

When we choose to **observe** for a minute or for an hour, let us do so with as many senses as possible, like how Mr. Holmes would do, and then allow the questions to automatically rise from this act. Such questions are very interesting and can open the door to several discoveries, because they are an outcome of the presence we brought into the observation...

Why does this leaf have such a rough texture?
Why does this flower have no smell at all?
Why does this bird have such a short beak?

You get the gist.

The different ways in which I have done it, and can offer as pointers:

- Spend a brief period observing just shapes/sizes.
- Spend time observing and identifying common patterns.
- Spend time making a mental note of the different shapes of beaks in birds.
- Spend time observing only the barks of trees in your neighborhood (color/shape/texture)
- Spend time listening only to the sounds of the morning, afternoon, evening, night time..

I am very keen to know, anytime during the practice, what this brought up for you, what did you see before that you now have started to observe, how has that led you into new worlds, and above all, how using as many senses as possible, in observing and questioning, teach you?

I look forward to your sharing, even as I restart this practice more consciously in my new neighborhood.

Your ways of observing, can add to my learning.

Happy Nature Observation Practice!
Have fun
Anjan



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