

Charu Saxena
saxenacharu@yahoo.com

Robins in January

When a friend of mine at the gym commented that one of the local golf courses had opened up, it set me wondering. Golf! In January? And then as I walked the one mile to the end of my street, I thought I caught a flash of red. Thinking it to be a cardinal, excitedly I looked up. As I matched the rust on its belly with its other features attempting to corroborate the evidence of my eyes, I had to conclude that it was a robin! I scratched my head. Are robins supposed to be out in the middle of January? Wasn't I just a few short years ago reading my children the story of Robin red-breast? Wasn't the robin supposed to be south right now, in a much warmer climate? Wasn't he supposed to arrive in spring? So, as I flippantly wished another fellow walker "Happy Spring!" I wondered if it had arrived already.

According to one aspect of Hindu philosophy, each day of *Brahma*, the *creator*, is divided into a thousand great ages, each great age, into four ages or *yugas*. According to this belief, we as humans are now in the fourth age, or the *Kaliyuga*. The first age was the golden age. In the next age, humans lost a quarter of their virtue. In the next, half. Now, in this last age, this *Kaliyuga*, we have destroyed three-quarters of it, and in a few hundred thousand years we shall all be destroyed and the cycle will begin once again, with a clean slate. According to this ancient doctrine, we have some time. But, do we?

Through ancient times, there has existed the concept of a cosmic balance. In the Hindu eternal cycle of births and rebirths that parallel the creation, destruction and recreation of the universe; In the earth and its waters and its air that support all us living things; In the coexistence and harmonic balance of all layers- organic and inorganic, each

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maintaining, or feeding the one above it, and the largest creature of all, a whale completing the circular nature of things as it feeds on the plankton towards the bottom.

So, where are we humans in this picture? Through fortuitous results (or rather, accidents,) of creation, mutation and evolution, we have gained the right to pass through all these layers. But until very recently, we used our pass, without affecting the basic nature of things, without disturbing the balance, keeping it preserved. Until very recently, we were very small in our ability to inflict damage on our cosmic cycle. But now, unable to stay content as ones thought to be created and destroyed, in one endless cycle after another, we are challenging ourselves to become the *Brahma* himself.

In this case, it would be good to remember that at the top of the Hindu mythological pyramid sits the trinity of gods, each really, a part manifestation of what is considered the ultimate truth, or *the Brahman*. In this trinity, *Brahma* is the creator. *Vishnu*, the preserver, and *Shiva*, the cosmic dancer and destroyer, but only, when he's forced to open his third eye. As long as they balance each other, our world keeps rotating harmoniously.

And now into this mix of thought, of mythology, ascends man or rather, us. Where must we put ourselves? Still far from becoming *the Brahman*, on whose head must we stand to reach it? Which god or gods must we replace with ourselves?

Shiva may no longer need his third eye, for still persevering, at least one thing we seem to have perfected: the capability to self-destruct. But unlike *Brahma*, we may be unable to recreate what we have dissolved, unless like *Vishnu* we also learn to preserve. In trying to reach the ultimate truth, *the Brahman*, we might become our own version of it.

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So, should the robin begin to weave his nest? In January? Hopefully, the robin knows. Maybe, it's just an ancient cycle, unrecorded by man, repeating itself. At least, I hope so, for all our sakes.