

Just as nothing can be done to rid human beings from their religious beliefs, racism appears to be as inextricable. Where my wife and I live we are visited by many small, wild animals. In a large bush next to the house lives a family of mongooses and they often run up and down on our stoep. Every year some youngsters are born, all very investigative, at times they check out the inside of our house but after a while the young ones disappear, next year there will be new ones. Population control works.

Then we get a family of Francolin pheasants parading on the stoep which is a painted concrete affair and like many other small birds seem to like striding up and down at speed, unhampered by bush and grass. The pheasants at times play with the young mongooses who will creep up to them in the bush and fake an attack. The birds yell and clout the youngster with a powerful wing and then continue picking and pecking. Many other birds come by, tiny ones that seem to live inside the bush, at times, an albatross and lots of gulls, all sailing splendidly. From my farming years I had learned that all these wild animals got on well with each other despite their differences, territorial imperative did not seem to play an important role. Predators take their toll but all the animal people seemed to know that inescapable law. For me there is no doubt that all animals are tolerant towards each other but the species stick together, like likes like and different is equitably accepted.

I think I know why humans can't adopt the tolerant behaviour of animal people. First, animals never invented religion, had there been a necessity for such a notion they are perfectly capable of inventing lots of lovely gods. But, "What for?" they would have asked had we been smart enough to talk with them. Humans have prepared for thousands of years replies to that 'What for' and all those replies resume into one vast idea; Intolerance! The basic ingredient for racism.

I come from a country that has long had a reputation for tolerance, Holland, where Erasmus and Spinoza had tried to start to establish that train of thought. Don't you believe it, when I was a child I knew of at least 4 different protestant churches and of course their communal enemy, the 'Roman Papists'. Intolerance is too tame a word to describe the sentiments of these different clans.

Just now I went outside to greet a francolin pheasant acquaintance. He limps because hammered by a car, I think, femoral joint bugged and now he is always alone for the 2 years that we now one another. When other francolin people pitch up he fights with them. I wouldn't mind limping if I could fly like him but that does not seem to be his opinion. He is bad tempered because of his disability and he doesn't fight with me because I give him oats sometimes and I'm bigger. Does a disability cause aggressiveness, racism?

One thing is certain, intolerance feeds racism and religions feed intolerance. The importance of religious beliefs in human societies is colossal and that is a first vast difference between human and animal behaviour. However, there is another unique factor that sets us apart from the animal world and until I find a better definition, I'll call it Permanent Sex. For animals that reproduce sexually the sexual act does not last long, the upbringing of the result of that act takes longer dependent on the species but for all animals sex is a part time occurrence to produce a descendance. Not so for humans. The evolutionary changes that took place during the millions of years when from apes we turned into humans did not modify our animal sexual