

Listen, nature is talking to us

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Four years ago, we read about freak incidents where crustaceans, fish and other marine animals landed in abundance on our shores and those of our neighbours.

To most these signalled some sort of blessing from heaven. Little did they know that they were actually signs of impending disaster. In this case, it was the tsunami of December 2004, which hit not only Aceh, but a dozen other countries.

There had also been reports of animals behaving strangely just before the tsunami. But humans, the so-called paragons of the animal kingdom, were not alert to these signals.

Elephants in Thailand moved to higher ground, animals on Andaman island escaped being overwhelmed by the deadly waves; so too those in the open flatlands of Sri Lanka.

All these were in contrast to the hundreds of thousands of humans who perished because they were caught unaware by the disaster. We either misread the signs or ignored them as being irrelevant and carried on business as usual. For this, we paid a high price.

It was not surprising then to read yet again about similar occurrences and responses, this time in Sichuan, China. A few days before the massive earthquake, frogs appeared in large numbers close to the tragic spot.

Some in fact interpreted this as a good omen for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The warning signs of nature were again ignored and thousands of human lives have been lost and many more have become victims of the situation, whereas virtually all the animals are said to have been unharmed.

We seem to have lost our capacity to survive in this world, losing our connection with our immediate surroundings.

We are overwhelmed by marvels of connectivity, electronic or otherwise, causing our world to shrink to a global village, but we have failed to establish any meaningful connection with signals being emitted by Mother Nature.

We seem to have lost the ability to fathom why Mother Nature is reacting the way she does. For example, the frequent floods nowadays, or why there are longer and nastier periods of drought.

We have taken for granted that everything can be solved by advances in technology without fundamentally changing our lifestyle. In fact, we are increasingly dependent on "smart" technology to comfort and save us.

Thus, we talk of an artificial early warning system as though these are fool-proof. Millions of dollars are invested on such systems when nature has already "perfected" such a system for us.

But we refuse to acknowledge these, condemning them as "primitive" and "unsophisticated", unfit for this brave new world of unrivalled science and technology.

We refuse to acknowledge that nature and also its inherent wisdom have long been the source of inspiration for humankind since time immemorial.

That the survival of the human species today is due to the fact that we have been inspired by nature is ignored.

That we took lessons from it, and symbiotically adapted our ways with it is quickly forgotten while the new sciences and emerging technologies are about conquering and exploitation.

As the human species grows more arrogant, they continue to negate the role of nature to their detriment.

This will mark the beginning of the demise of the human race as we know it. *Homo sapiens* (meaning the "wise ones") have yet to wise up and re-learn what they have inadvertently lost, perhaps with the help of science and technology.

For now, however, the lesson is that the sophistication and wisdom afforded by Mother Nature is something that no science and technology can match.

And when that happens, there will be no human-made counter force that can cope with it.

It is best that we be humble and re-learn the ways of our forebears and re-connect with Mother Nature, if we are humble enough.

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