

The Honeybee and the Fly

By Fabian Oliver

I recently watched an inspirational video titled "The mindset behind successful relationships" by the great Hindu teacher Radhanath Swami. In the video he creates an analogy between two types of mindsets which can be taught by the practice of honeybee and the fly. Although both these insects are life-giving majestic creations of God, they can teach two different mindsets of life.

The Honeybee

According to Wikipedia, "nectar is a sugar-rich liquid produced by plants in glands called nectaries." Nectar could be described as the essence of the flower. Thus, Radhanath Swami notes that the honeybee flies from flower to flower seeking to extract the nectar without harming the flower. "The mindset of the honeybee is to seek the essence of each flower. Even in a place filled with rotting garbage, rather than giving its attention to all the filth, the honeybee keeps its focus on finding nectar."

The practice of searching for only nectar can teach us a valuable lesson. He suggests that it demonstrates the art of focussing on the positives. Like the honeybee, we can become people who choose to see the good qualities in every person and carefully work through the negatives. The nectar of the person represents their God-given beauty, goodness and virtue. Hopefully, in our day to day relationships with friends, partners and family members, the good always outweighs the bad. There are always things to complain about and there are always faults we can pick out in each person. If we dwell on the faults, we will never experience the sweetness of the person's nectar. I am reminded of Mother Teresa's belief that if we constantly judge others, we won't have time to love them. Very recently, I attended a leadership conference and was moved by an activity in which each person had to say what they love and appreciate about each person in the room. I kept thinking that more of such interventions are needed.

The Fly

Swami says that “on an otherwise healthy body the fly will focus on sucking an infectious scab.” Even in the presence of beautiful roses and clean environments, the fly keeps its focus on the dirt. This demonstrates the mentality of focusing on the negatives. For many of us the cup will always be half empty instead of half full. We have become experts in seeing the faults of others without appreciating any good. In all relationships, if we enter the habit of only seeing the faults, we fail to see the persons true self. Have you ever felt that when you converse with certain people, there is a great sense of being under attack throughout the conversation? Such conversations are usually orchestrated by the fly-mentality.

Foundation of self-love

If we look closely at Jesus’ commandment to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12: 31), the passage assumes you already love yourself. Perhaps our struggle to accept and see the good in others is proof of a deeper struggle to accept ourselves? We are not the sum of our ego, pride and brokenness. We are who we truly are in God. If God loves and chooses us in the midst of our imperfections, then how can we not love ourselves and those around us? Self-love is the foundation and ability to accept the goodness of others. Swami concludes his sharing by suggesting that the practice of trying to bring the best out of each other allows us to recognize the positive qualities in our self. The apostle Paul teaches us that we must always speak words which edify instead of words that destroy (Ephesians 4:29).

“Honeybee mentality or fly mentality, the choice is yours”