

THE “DAYLINGS” AND THE “NIGHTLINGS”

Intent of the Story

- ✓ *Human knowledge at all levels – religious, scientific, political, social, etc. is limited and fragmented.*
- ✓ *Our thinking is conditioned to our perceptions, to our feelings, to the culture we belong to, to the education we received, to our personal life experiences, to the language we express ourselves, and to a host of other factors*
- ✓ *Cultures differ; no culture is better or worse than another. As individual persons are unique, so cultures too are unique*
- ✓ *We have to live in peace and concord with all peoples, all religions, ideologies, and cultures..*
- ✓

THE STORY.

Countless ages ago, adrift in outer space there was a planet. It was inhabited by two intelligent and loving human races called the “Daylings” and the “Nightlines”. They were different from each other, yet complementary.

The Daylings lived a conscious and active life only during the day. A little before sunset, they were beset by an over-powering drowsiness, and by the time the sun dipped below the horizon they fell into a deep stupefying sleep that blotted out the consciousness. Sleeping, they were as good as dead!

Moments after sunrise, just as soon as the magic touch of sunlight kissed their foreheads,. The Daylings peacefully awoke to consciousness and started life again. Life seemed to them to go on without intermission. It was the illusion of just one, never-ending, bright sunny day!

The Nightlings by contrast, lived a conscious life only at night. Just before sunrise they fell asleep. Soon after sunset they awoke again to consciousness. For them life was the illusion of one, endless dark night!

As years rolled by, both races got quite used to their respective modes of existence. Both of them were intelligent and industrious. Both were neck-deep in love with nature. The Nightlings were enthralled by the majesty and beauty of the heavens. They turned out to be great astronomers. They wrote learned treatises on the heavenly bodies and outer space. They loved the earth too with the moon shining benignly on it, and the mountain tops lost in the chiaroscuro of lights and shadows. They wrote sublime poems in praise of the stars, the moon, the glimmering waters of the ocean and the dark forests

The Daylings were very fond of light, of the mid-day brightness. They were in love with the many-colored splendors of flower-petals and butterfly wings. The Daylings wrote scholarly books on the sun, on the light, on heat and on color. In verse and song, they

lauded the sun-kissed beauty of fruits, flowers and ferns and the glory of the summer skies.

One day the Daylings discovered the scientific and poetic works of the Nightlings. Avidly they read them. They were greatly puzzled. Those works made no sense to them. In utter dismay they exclaimed: "What's all this? Stars? Constellations? Galaxies? Moon? Light? Silvery streams? Shadowy landscapes?"

Try as they might, they couldn't make any sense of stars or constellations or galaxies in the sky! Nor could they see on the surface of the earth the rippling silhouette of dark lakes, or moonlit mountains overlooking shadowy valleys!.

Failing, in spite of their best efforts, to understand what the Nightlings meant to convey in their books, the Daylings said to themselves: "These people are visionaries, dream merchants, cheats, men who have taken leave of their senses!"

The Nightlings too, came across the writings of the Daylings. They said: "What fabricators and deceivers these fellows are!. Sun? Brilliance? Heat? Warmth? Myriads of colors? Puh! All these things are hallucinations, purely fairy tales, ravings of diseased minds, sheer nonsense!"

Then the Daylings and Nightlings started writing lengthy critiques on each other's works challenging and refuting each other's perceptions, conclusions and evaluations. They became suspicious of each other; then carping and accusing; finally, abusing and insulting. Anger grew, and finally it turned into enmity.

They stood against each other and cried out: "These people are dangerous: They want to falsify our beliefs and distort our perceptions. They would like to subvert our value-system and destroy our culture and undermine our civilization."

War broke out between them. It was a weird kind of war, a silent and cold-blooded war, by far more destructive than the clash of swords or the exchange of gunfire. During the day, the Daylings strangled the Nightlings to death in their sleeping condition. At night the Nightlings followed suit and choked the Daylings to death.

Slowly, life ebbed away in that strange planet.. Even today, that depopulated earth keeps rotating endlessly in its orbit in endless days and nights of ominous silence.

Reflection and Discussion.

Note for the Moderator:

To conduct a reflection and discussion on this allegory you may follow any of the two methods suggested below:

First Method for Holding a Reflection and a Discussion on the story.

Directed Questions.

Ask the participants to reply in writing to all or to some of the following questions:

1. Whom, do the Daylings and the Nightlings of the story stand for in real life?
2. Why did they see and perceive our world and nature in different ways?
3. What were the consequences of their having different perceptions of reality?
4. Were they liars and cheats when they wrote their beautiful poems and their learned scientific treatises? Why?
5. Why were the Daylings and the Nightlings unable to accept each others' writings and discoveries?
6. Were the Daylings and the Nightlings right or mistaken in judging or misjudging each others' woks? Why?
7. Were they in good or in bad conscience when the accused each other of lying and of wanting to destroy each otter's culture and traditions? Why?
8. By not being able, or unwilling to understand each other, what did finally happen to them and to their planet?
9. Can you explain why there are so many arguments, fights and wars between individual persons, families, nations, among different religions and even in between different religious affiliations within the same religion?
10. What are in our world the consequences of such arguments, accusations, wars and strife?
11. How could such fights be avoided?
12. Can "absolute and unchangeable" statements about man, the world and God be held? Why? How?
13. Are such vast different views of reality- of man, of the world and of God - necessarily contradictory? Why? If not, what are they?
14. What do we mean by saying that our world is pluralistic?
15. Can there be peace in a pluralistic world? How?
16. Can our knowledge of God, of man and of the world be improved and enriched? How?
17. What's the difference between polemics and dialogue? Which of the two will be more helpful towards mutual acceptance ad understanding?

Second Method for holding a Reflection and Discussion on the story.

Personal Interpretation of the Story.

- ✓ After the presentation of the story, request the participants to write down their interpretation of the story and mention the ideas and feelings that the story aroused in them.
- ✓ After that, initiate a sharing-cum-discussion of their interpretations, main ideas and feelings.
- ✓ Some of the thoughts given below may help you for the discussion.

Thoughts Useful for a Discussion

1. Our perceptions of reality are conditioned by the circumstances of time, place, milieu, cultural set-up and religious affiliation we belong to.
2. The mental “frame work” inherited from our family and culture limits our perceptions
3. The very “intellectual tools” we have inherited from our forefathers distort, color, even vitiate our perceptions.
4. We should always question our perceptions and be critical of them. All of them are partial and colored glimpses of reality.
5. We come to know things, the world, and the truth by bits. Each perception is like a little chip of a mosaic that has to be placed together to construct a total picture of 'our' world, not necessary of the real world.
6. Our grasp of reality is an ongoing process, a never ending process.
7. Philosophies, religions, ideologies of all kinds, of necessity, cannot claim to exhaust the reality of truth.
8. Our minds are not capable of exhausting the reality of God and the world.
9. In our honest search for truth, we have to be satisfied with a progressive, provisional and never ending process - knowing pretty well that we shall never attain 100% knowledge of the whole truth or reality.
10. Whatever we see, hear, smell, touch and taste is only a small part of reality.
11. The Daylings and the Nightlings were 100% correct on what they said and wrote, yet they had grasped only 50% of reality. The Daylings, knew nothing of the night, and the Nightlings of the day.
12. The perceptions and knowledge of peoples living in different cultures and traditions are complementary, not necessarily contradictory.
13. We should not suspect others of falsehood; much less accuse them of it, because they see things in a different way than ours.
14. By denying others perceptions, thinking and theories we cut ourselves from any advancement in knowledge. .
15. We have not to reject others' statements because they look different or opposite to ours. We have to try to see them as they see them from their perspective and view point.
16. Seemingly opposite statements are not necessarily contradictory.
17. The statements, for instance, "God is all justice" "God is all forgiveness" aren't contradictory, because truly God is both, all justice and all forgiveness!
18. Contradictory statements are those that exclude each other; they would be for instance. "God is only Justice" and "God is only forgiveness".
19. Peoples of different religious traditions have different, not necessarily contradictory ideas of God.
20. All men try to express in a human limited and imperfect way what they perceived and felt of God and reality.
21. People who indulge in heated and carping controversies about man, the world and God, do not have a conscious ill-will, but only an opacity and blindness of mind to others perceptions.
22. We have to hold firm to our perceptions and beliefs, yet we should not spurn those who think differently from us.

23. All men are prone to conceptualize their perceptions, make judgments and build systems of philosophy and theology.
24. All of those systems of thought although different, are logical, indeed, within the premises and assumptions of their cultural environment.
25. All statements about God made by any religion - even our Catholic dogmas - are only approximations to the reality of God.
26. There has been and there has to be a development of dogma in any true religion.
27. Through dialogue, people from different religious traditions should strive to understand each other and come to a more comprehensive knowledge of God.
28. We have to keep in mind that God is greater than our human perceptions and conceptualizations. After all God is a "mystery".
29. Since, willy nilly, we live in a pluralistic society, we have to agree to disagree with others to live in peace and mutual acceptance
30. Love for one's beliefs and culture should not make us think that we are superior, that we have all the truth, and that others are ignorant.
31. There is a need for sharing, dialogue, openness of mind and willingness to change our views and perceptions in order to come closer to the truth.
32. We, humans, often are mistaken. We easily jump from beliefs, opinions, theories and hypothesis to facts.
33. Our quarrels, fights and bickering are over perceptions, not over facts which in their totality are for ever eluding us.
34. Any culture and belief system that gives meaning to a civilization has some true values. It possesses a partial grasp of the truth, not the whole truth.
35. We cannot compare our culture against any other, or our civilization against another. We cannot decide which is best. They are different. It's only through dialogue that we shall be able to build a better one.

APPENDIX.

Additional Materials for Discussion

1. Against the background of the story of "Dream or Realty" and of the prevailing violent situation in our world, try to clarify what do you understand by the following terms or mindsets?

Unicity, unity, pluralism, absolutism, relativism, revivalism, traditionalism, fundamentalism, skepticism, and syncretism as applied to religious, philosophical, political and scientific theories, hypothesis, ideologies and beliefs. .

2. How much will each of these various mind- sets foster or hinder peace and mutual concord among the peoples of the world?

3. What are the attitudes of mind and heart necessary for a peacefully and progressive advance towards the knowledge of the truth; be it religious, scientific, sociological, anthropological, whatever

4. **Explain the following maxims and statements.:**
 - All statements about God and reality are only approximate and liable to improvement.
 - Our puny minds can only apprehend part of reality, not the whole of it.
 - Our knowledge is conditioned to our perceptions, assumptions and expectations.
 - There is nothing in our mind that has not been first in our senses.
 - God is the resolution of opposites
 - Someone said: “An unexamined life is not worth living”.
 - We can grasp only that much of truth that our emotional sifter allows it through.
 - We should be for ever questioners, not passive receivers of the truth.
 - An unexamined, non-critically evaluated belief may not be a truth, but a prejudice.