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## A child without the pronouns

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### Is this the big piece of wisdom?

She is all of two years old. She started speaking pretty late but now that she does, she is unstoppable. We named her Taneesha but she prefers to call herself by the shortened version — Tanna. “Tanna will go with Papa,” “Papa... pick up Tanna”. It’s always Tanna this and Tanna that. Her constant babble enthrals us and energises us, making us want more and more.

Suddenly I realise that a great part of the charm of her speech is that — she knows no pronouns. “Tanna will go with Papa” is a lot more appealing than “I will go..”. It may sound naïve to a learned psychologist, but to me it is like the Buddha’s awakening. Putting in names instead of pronouns colours the sentences, makes them more alive. And maybe takes away a bit of the ego which is associated with “I” — a bit of separation associated with “You”.

So my mind turns to more serious thoughts. Was the invention of pronouns the beginning of the human ego? Speaking is, they say, acting verbally. Action is just effecting what we speak. So could speaking of “I” and “You” have started the conflicts which resulted in real actions? And could the notions of first, second and third persons in grammar could have been the beginning of division of society?

In the Bhagwad Gita, Krishna says the wise man acts as if it is some other person who is acting, and he himself is just a witness ( *drishta* ). What better way to implement this sagacious principle than eliminating pronouns? When I say “Ravi is hurt” it does not hurt as much as “I am hurt”. Detachment begins the moment you do away with pronouns.

Is this why children are the closest to God? Saptarishi had asked for the boon of always staying five years of age. Were they afraid of pronouns? Is it the great “Da Vinci Code” which all philosophers are hiding behind all the verbose, evasive answers?

I explain my “theory” to my wife and propose that we experiment with it. “Asham will go shopping with Ravi. How does that sound?” I ask, offering a subtle bribe.

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