

YouHUMAN

Humans have long raised the question,
 What makes us human and distinct?
 Walking on two, using tools with precision?
 Or is it reading and writing not by instinct?

Drawing and sculpting, building structures?
 Thinking in abstract, mathematical notions?
 Poetic writing, composing, singing to rapture?
 Social events, smiling and subtle emotions?

Intellectual feats, they are for certain,
 That only with “higher” centers of brain,
 Through tortuous training and with pain,
 Only humans have mastered, we proclaim.

But examples abound of performing tasks,
 By “lower” beings we dub “animals”,
 Distinctly “human” feats and crafts;
 Blunting then the boundaries of normals.

Walking on two legs and using forelimbs,
 These were primal in humans’ progress.
 But walking on two legs is to birds not foreign,
 Some animals do too, oft under duress.

Examples are many of animals honing tools,
 And here, pride of place belongs to ravens.
 Some birds crack nuts, by dropping stones,
 And chimps ‘fishing’ for termites is a given.

Examples exist of primates learning,
 Then passing skills to their offspring.
 Some were tricks taught on purpose,
 Some tricks and skills learned passively.

Birds chirp and sing, use alarm calls;
 Sometimes ‘speaking’ is done with howls.
 Other times speaking is a gesture or growl;
 All creatures use language their very own.

Sounds in very low pitch, which travel far,
 Some that cross oceans, as clicks and grunts;
 Or in very high pitch that we don’t hear,
 Language thus spoken we don’t understand.

Parrots 'speak' the language of homo sapiens;
 Sometimes in mimicry but true at times,
 In response do they reply in proper lines;
 Was thinking involved or 'bird brain' miming?

Drawing and painting, with brush in snout,
 Tricks these are, some elephants can tout.
 Many a smart pet, from hogs to hounds,
 Tricks they learn do leave us spellbound.

At least one horse was taught to count,
 Tapping with hoof fame this horse found,
 Answers to questions in proper amount;
 Or did handler slip hints of answers tacit?

But common sense prompts me to ask,
 Was processing done of notions abstract?
 Did this horse master this given task?
 Logical deductions then were struck?

Smiling and subtle expressions of emotion,
 These are classical arguments and notions,
 We humans consider that make us, "human",
 And help separate animals from us hominids.

Well, when tickled, both chimps and bonobos,
 Do make expressions that resemble closely,
 As facial expression of joy bona fide,
 Gestures that mimic laughter, though loosely.

Here below I will outline,
 Many a feature, behavior and attribute,
 Distinct traits that proclaim humanity.

Only we humans will go to great lengths,
 To make clothes to cloak and cover nudity;
 Such quality that humans display as strength,
 This awareness and the need for modesty.

Designing, weaving, stitching, marketing,
 Flaunting then, in all glory and insanity.
 Only humans go to these lengths to please,
 By wearing clothes, their ego and vanity.

Intellectual pursuits remain the domain,
 Proclaiming superiority of human brain.
 Reading and writing, constructing poems,
 Here on earth these only humans flaunt.

“Social animals” congregate and celebrate,
 And hunt and share within their family;
 Festivals and family social events elaborate,
 Only humans invent events to make merry.

Cozy homes, citadels and cities,
 Construction prowess of beings thus manifest,
 Examples like bee hives, termite mounds,
 Beaver dams, weaver bird’s nests.

But these are but products of instincts;
 Only humans draw plans, find materials sanctioned,
 Then construct buildings to live in or work;
 Structures by design in shape and function.

Making and using fire, only humans do,
 For own safety, cooking and lighting;
 In homes and buildings, just for comfort.
 Devices to control heating and cooling.

Technology, Ah! Technology,
 That we obsess with no apology.
 From locomotion to communication,
 Only humans are masters of innovation.

But,

Uniquely human are some deeds,
 Destructive acts, cruel and sadistic;
 Behavior that we cannot condone,
 Examples are many and these I loathe.

Fishing with hooks, then unhook and discard,
 Skin live animals, kill for furs, fins and tusks,
 Only we relish such acts of cruelty and disregard,
 Hard-pressed we’ll be to find another species.

Pairing for life is common in nature,
 Pairing and breaking up now the norm,
 In human societies now a common feature.
 This is another practice I distinctly disdain.

Suicide, always a trait of humans,
 Genocide, in killing fields of Cambodia,
 Or Nazi Europe's gas chambers.
 In these too humans are champions.

Create faiths and deities,
 Then fight wars and "Jihads",
 Invent new ways, to kill many,
 In "Holy" acts of suicides!
 Who else will learn to fly but not to land,
 Then fly into towers to kill thousands?

Mindless killing of masses in seconds,
 Innocent people in theaters, malls or rallies,
 By unloading rifles with dozens of rounds,
 On killing streets of our very own alleys.

Of all the traits that people carry,
 This gift for cruelty is uniquely ours.
 Apparent 'cruelty' that carnivores display,
 Is simply the nature's way at play.

Burning fossil fuels and killing forests,
 Keep warming our planet furious and fast;
 Melting ice thus makes Arctic accessible,
 Humans then move in with intent to drill?!

Climate change deniers here abound,
 If earth is warmed and can't turn around,
 Will they then savor their seminal role,
 In making Earth Venus' true clone?