Was it a dream? A photograph of you and I.

It was a long time ago that there was one fine summer evening, about fifteen years back. I and my brother were playing cricket on the terrace. We played 10-10 wicket matches, and I seldom got a chance to play as India, I am the younger one. And I preferred Australia for that. So it was this fine summer evening that we were still fighting over a petty LBW. No matter who was bowling, my brother was the first, second and the third umpire along with the whole Indian Cricket team, and the commentator too. I liked to bat more and bowl less, though on that field, the situation was always the opposite. I always had to bowl more and bat less, rather fight for the bat. So we were fighting as usual when my father came on his scooter and parked it on the terrace near the solar geyser, the place it had always been parked. But that day, he had a little wooden apple crate with him, placed carefully in between his legs, where otherwise one of us would get to stand while going to school. That apple crate did not have any apples, but rags of cloth and a little woolen ball coiled up inside in once corner of that little box. It looked like a tiny cat. It was a 15 days old orphan leopard cub whose mother and other new born brothers had died. It was a survivor, it had to be. Such an evening never happened again.

I was quite young that time, and I don’t much remember what time I got to spend with him, but one thing is for sure, he had a room all for itself, and a little house in that room too. We still slept with parents. And he was fed with milk in a bottle, like babies while we had started to drink in glasses. There isn’t much to my memory except for a few incidents which I think I would not forget, nor tell here. He grew quickly in size and had to be sent to a place where he’d be taken better care of, a vegetarian house could feed his growing appetite of meat for long, and that too cooked. So it was this last day he spent interacting with the world on camera, much, much more shyly than his natural self, except for a few instants with his companion. He loved kids, liked to play, only that other kids would start crying the moment they saw him approaching (In the video he makes a run once, towards a kid). You’ve all seen human babies cry for milk, probably puppies too, I’ve seen a leopard cry for milk and hold the bottle like any human baby would.

It was after two years the later part of this video was taken, and he remembered us, even after a long long time.

And there is one thing, that he could teach anybody, speaking for a very diverse family, the wild life.

They are not humans, they remember things, relations, families, loyalty and love, and give it back no matter how much time passes in between. They, are our true brothers, under the sun.

*P.S. The video is the result of one day fiddling with Adobe Premiere and Encore on the video extracted from a dying Video Cassette, and I know if I had given it more time it could have been better. Maybe I’ll work on it in a while and share, but at present, it’s not the video, but the voice of dying animal life we should be concerned about.*