We like to think that we are unique. That all sheep think alike and cows have no personality. We think we are the only people who dream of reaching the stars and falling in love. But we think the same way as cockroaches and mice, cats and camels and have personalities that resemble animals.

Just as habitats are shaped by the necessity of the food web – too many predators and they will wreak havoc; too many prey creatures and there will be overpopulation and a collapse of the jungle – people also modulate their behaviour to keep the human jungle alive and stable. The ratio between predators and prey in animals mirrors the ratio in our own society.

People with large animal-personalities cannot be supported in large numbers as their bulky personalities put a stress on the social environment, so smaller human-personalities like mice, otters, beavers, and sheep tend to dominate the concrete jungle. It is when the ratio goes out of sync that crime, starvation, dictatorships, disease and wars occur.

All behaviour, whether animal or human, revolves round the four Fs: Feeding, Fighting, Fleeing and Sex.

Feeding: All animals and humans work towards being fed and having the security of being fed regularly. This translates into careers, striving for mates and homes etc. The type of animal personality that a human has, leads him into his career. Bird personalities prefer jobs that provide a great deal of freedom, while sheep personalities flourish under the direction of a strong dog personality. Canine personalities instinctively work well with others while bear personas chafe under the direction of authority.

Fighting: Means the way in which a person controls their environment. Carnivorous personalities are assertive and adventurous, while herbivorous personalities tend to be passive and cautious. This does not mean that a vegetarian cannot have a carnivorous personality. In fact they often do.

Fleeing: This is how people protect themselves from each other. Herd animal personalities find refuge in the company of family; wolves prefer tightly knit social groups, and mice personalities keep low profiles.

Sex: Describes the ways we seek mates. From the brutal strength display of the wild elk to the seductive display of peacocks, all creatures strive to exert control over their reproductive choices. An animal's mating habits also means how someone conducts their sexual relationships. Some animal species are monogamous while others have a variety of mates. Some (beaver) personalities mate for life, while tiger personalities are solitary and rarely monogamous. From the subtle and coy techniques of the rabbit personality to the aggressive displays of the lion, every species employs a unique mating strategy. Young girls walk by pretending not to notice the watching boys displaying their own mating behaviour, some of whom adopt masculine stances lounging around with their legs apart, or calling aggressively to the females, while others feign disinterest and use subtle body language to stake their claims. All animals do the same.

People change their personalities to adapt to situations for survival. A prickly warthog person would be in danger in a prison full of crocodiles and lions so he would adapt to the more gregarious personality of a herbivore, he could seek the protection of the herd to survive.

We all do the same thing. Aging silverback gorillas can no longer compete physically or sexually with the upcoming group of younger males, so in a biological panic, their personalities trigger them to make one last fling. In humans, this manifests itself when middle-aged men suddenly feel the urge to display their wealth, begin workout routines and ignore their wives.

Friendships often develop between prey and predator types. The meek mouse might even strike up a friendship with a powerful lion, since lions are disinclined to waste energy chasing elusive, low-calorie prey. These friendships can be quite enduring. In exchange for companionship and loyalty, the predator provides resources and protection for the rabbit. But if the pairing is wrong – a cat and a fox for instance, then it does not work. A marriage between a cat and a mouse would be very bumpy.

Research printed in the New Scientists has gone one step further. Not only do we have the same primal instincts as animals but they have abilities that have hitherto been considered only belonging to humans.

1. Culture according to the article Culture shock (24 March 2001) .

Art, theatre, literature, music, religion, architecture and cuisine - these are the things we generally associate with culture. But culture basically just means a particular group's characteristic ways of living, learned from one another and passed down the generations. Every monkey species undoubtedly has practices that are unique to groups, such as a certain way of

greeting each other or obtaining food. So do elephants and turtles and whales.

In fact, convincing examples of animal cultures are found in cetaceans. Killer whales, for example, fall into two distinct groups, residents and transients. Although both live in the same waters and interbreed, they have very different social structures and lifestyles, distinct ways of communicating, different tastes in food and characteristic hunting techniques - all of which parents teach to offspring.

2. Mind reading according to Liar! Liar! (14 February 1998) .

Perhaps the surest sign that an individual has insight into the mind of another is the ability to deceive. To outwit someone you must understand their desires, intentions and motives - exactly the same ability that underpins the "theory of mind". This ability to attribute mental states to others was once thought unique to humans, emerging around the fifth year of life. Experiments in the 1990s show that apes and monkeys understand deception. So do butterflies and caterpillars.

3. Tool use according to the article Look, no hands (17 August 2002) .

Chimpanzees use rocks to crack nuts, others fish for termites with blades of grass and gorillas gauge the depth of water with the equivalent of a dipstick. The smartest is the New Caledonian crow. To extract tasty insects from crevices, they craft a selection of hooks and long, barbed tapers called stepped-cut tools, made by intricately cutting a pandanus leaf with their beaks. What's more, experiments in the lab suggest that they understand the function of tools and deploy creativity and planning to construct them.

4. Morality according to the article Virtuous nature (13 July 2002) .

A classic study in 1964 found that hungry rhesus monkeys would not take food they had been offered if doing so meant that another monkey received an electric shock. The same is true of rats. Does this indicate nascent morality? Scientists now have come to the conclusion that humans are not the only moral species. Morality is common in social mammals and that during

play they learn the rights and wrongs of social interaction, the "moral norms that can then be extended to other situations such as sharing food, defending resources, grooming and giving care".

5. Emotions: according to the article Do animals have emotions? (23 May 2007).

Emotions allow us to bond with others, regulate our social interactions and make it possible to behave flexibly in different situations. We are not the only animals that need to do these things, so why should we be the only ones with emotions?

Elephants caring for a crippled herd member seem to show empathy. A funeral ritual performed by magpies shows grief. Rival animals fight. Divers who freed a humpback whale caught in a crab line describe its reaction as one of gratitude. Then there's the excited dance chimps perform when faced with a waterfall. It is obvious to all that all animals have the same emotions as humans.

6. Personality: Does one dog have the same personality as another? They do not. Neither do sheep or cows. Nor do tigers. Not even hens. In humans we call the difference in degrees of boldness or caution as personality traits. From cowardly spiders and reckless salamanders to aggressive songbirds and fearless fish, we discover that no two are alike. I am sure that transparent jellyfish and oysters also differ in their attitudes towards the world.

So how are we different?

Maneka Gandhi