

# LET US LIVE SHARING

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This title 'Let Us Live Sharing' is taken from my friend, poet Natvar Hedao. He has an anthology called "Van-Vandana" in Gujarati. In it he has a poem called "Song of Shared Forest System". The first stanza of the poem goes

"You are my support, I am your support  
Let us live sharing and supporting each other." (p.139)

The whole poem is a call to people and animals, birds and forests, rivers and trees, mines and hills to live supporting each other. This call is extended to every living and existing being.

In the call to shared living I see a noble idea. Shared life has the idea of partnership and mutual support. There is also the feeling of equality and friendship as well as mutual respect and honour. If every person, that is, all of us, keep this feeling not only towards each other but towards the entire creation then this noble feeling will be soon in our thoughts and in our behavior.

All these feelings have personified in a saint, St. Francis of Assisi. This 12th century saint is known much for his love and oneness with the whole creation. He considered as his brothers and sisters not only all men and women but also everything in the entire creation! He respected and loved everything as everything was for him equal to his brothers and sisters. He has written a famous poem entitled Brother Sun and Sister Moon. Here it is:

*"Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,  
especially Sir Brother Sun,  
Who is the day through whom You give us light.  
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,  
Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,  
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,  
by which You cherish all that You have made.  
Praised be You my Lord through our Sister,  
Mother Earth who sustains and governs us,  
producing varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.*

*Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon  
for love of You and bear sickness and trial.  
Blessed are they She finds doing Your Will.”*

St. Francis Assisi says that earlier he had hardly noticed the things like the sun and the moon. But after experiencing the infinite love of the Creator every created thing came to his attention. He began to understand that he himself is the creation of the most loving God. Similarly every animate and inanimate being is also the loving creation of the infinite loving God. One and only Creator God has created everything. Hence everything becomes his own brother or sister. From this viewpoint St. Francis calls the sun and the wind his own brothers as well as the moon and the air his own sisters. This way he experiences intimacy with every animate and inanimate being.

In shared living we people get to know a lot about everything around us both living non-living creation. We may say that man is God's supreme creation. We may say also that man is the only intellectual being. Still we can learn much from other animals and all living beings. Even from inanimate beings we can learn precious lessons. Examine the trees and other small and big plants growing up in our garden or in the jungle. They do not think in terms of 'mine' and 'thine'. The trees and all sorts of plants grow up wherever they want to grow and develop. There is no competition or obstruction to one another.

But we see much distinction and discrimination among people. Differences are kept between the rich and the poor. Differences are made between the followers of different religions. We also keep differences in the name of caste and creed. We distinguish in the name of high and low castes, castes and outcastes; birth and race! With all these distinctions we need to become complementary to each other to live a shared life. We need to seek unity in diversity. Let us find oneness in diversity.

Man's selfishness has created a lot of discrimination. We need to establish equality of all people as human beings. Establishing true humanity is possible only through bringing peace where there is war and mutual understanding where there are quarrels. In all these things man can learn a lot from the nature from the entire creation. Sun gives light to all without making any discrimination. We all share equally the moon light. The rain comes down on all without any discrimination. We can all enjoy the beauty of nature. The rose spreads its fragrances for all around it without making any sort of discrimination.

When there are peace, unity and mutual understanding between different persons then shared living is possible. They can also cultivate mutual feelings and appreciation

among all living beings and even inanimate objects. This feeling of equality among the entire creation is possible. Man's nobility is manifested in shared living; and everyone's needs are taken care of. In such shared living we see humanness and human dignity. In such situation there is happiness, peace and nobility.

There is no need to think that such goals and ideals are beyond our reach; and get discouraged. In this context Teilhard de Chardin's words are worth recalling. He says, "As men and women it is our duty to go ahead thinking that there is no limit to our abilities and possibilities; because we are co-creators and sharers of the creation." (This is a chapter translated from my latest book on Environment.)

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