

## Let US Live a Shared Life

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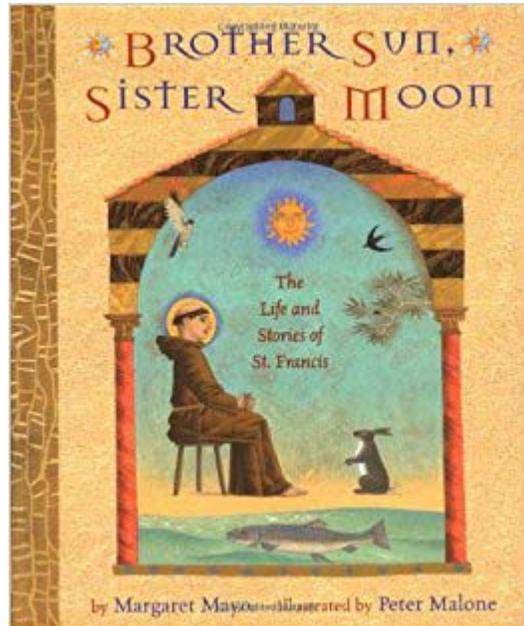
A poem by my friend Mr. Natvarlal Hedao has inspired me for the title of this article. Mr Hedao, an eminent environmentalist, has published the poem in his poetry book entitled 'Vana Vandana' meaning respectful salutation to the forest. The words of the title are in the first stanza of his poem, which says,

"You are my support, I am your support  
Let us live a shared life helping each other."

In the whole poem the environmentalist calls everyone - human beings, animals, birds, rivers, trees, mines, forests, in short every animate and inanimate being - to put faith and trust in each other and live supporting one another.

I see a noble concept in the call to live a shared life. In the word 'sharing' has the idea of equality and friendship. It has the honour and respect for each other. If we honour this noble idea not only towards one another but towards the whole creation then, it will reveal itself in our thoughts and actions.

These noble ideas are personified in a great saint: St. Francis Assisi. The 12th century saint is well known for his love and the feeling of equality with the whole creation. He considers not only all men and women but also all animate and inanimate beings as his brothers and sisters. He considers every being as his brother and sister and respects them accordingly.



St. Francis Assisi has written a very famous and popular poem entitled "Brother Sun and Sister Moon." I have translated and published it in Gujarati.

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 Sister Moon and the stars, In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

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 Sister Water, So useful, humble, precious and pure.

Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire, through whom You light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

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."



St. Francis says that in the by gone days he has hardly seen many things like the Sun, the Moon. But after experiencing the great love of the Creator and interior knowledge everything came to his attention one after another. For, he realized that, as he is a beloved creation of God so also every animal and animate being is created by the same loving God. All things in the universe are created by the one and the God, the Father. So every being is a brother or a sister to all other beings. It is with this outlook or vision St. Francis intimately expresses his love and relationship with all animate and inanimate beings.

Living a shared life with all animate and inanimate beings a person can learn a lot from the whole creation. Human beings may be considered as the supreme creation of God. For, human beings are the only rational, intellectual creation. Still, we human beings can learn many lessons both from the animate and inanimate beings. Examine the existence of small and big plants and trees in the gardens and in jungles. They don't quarrel about anything with 'mine' and 'thine'

attitude. They don't think in terms of mine and thine, but grow wherever their seeds have fallen making place for one another and sharing same land, sun-rays, air, etc. Plants and trees have the right to grow and develop anywhere. There is no competition among them.

But we see a lot of discrimination among us, human beings! We make differences between the poor and the rich! There are differences among the followers of different religions. We also distinguish and discriminate in the name of caste and race. Families and clans are discriminated as high or low! Among all these differences and discriminations we are called to a shared living to be supportive and complementary to one another. We are called to find unity in diversity, love and amity among us all.

Equality and peace are called for wherever we have created division and disunity abandoning our selfishness and greed. Let us live a shared life bringing peace wherever there are conflicts and war. There is true humanity in shared living. We can all learn important lessons from such things like the natural creation. For, the sun shines on all without any discrimination. So also the moon and the stars. The rain too showers on all without discrimination. The beautiful things of the nature can be enjoyed by one and all. The rose spreads its fragrance for all in its vicinity.

When there are unity and amity among all the people then people are able to live sharing their lives with all animate and inanimate beings. Then we are able to live with love and equanimity with all beings. There is liberation for all people in shared living. We can experience the dignity and nobility of our existence. Peace and happiness will prevail everywhere. It is the glory of humanity.

These are our goals and ideals. They need not to be considered utopian and be discouraged by difficult situation. For, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin says, "It is our duty as men and women to proceed as though the limits of our abilities do not exist. We are collaborators in creation." (Words 969)

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