
CHAPTER 9 - THE CONDITION OF BEING

CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES

Most High, all-powerful, good lord,
to you all praise, glory, honor, and all blessing.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no one is worthy to mention your name.

Praise you, my lord, with all your creatures,
especially Brother Sun, who gives us light.
Beautiful, radiant, a great splendor;
he bears your likeness, Most High One.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon
and the stars of heaven you formed,
clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be you, my lord, through Brother
Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which you
are sustenance to your creatures.

Praised be you, my lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious
and chaste.

Praised be you, my lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night,
beautiful, playful, robust and strong.

Praised be you, my lord, through our Sister
Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us, producing varied
fruits
with colored flowers, herbs and greens.

Praised be you, my lord, through those who
give pardon
for your love and bear infirmity and
tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by you, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my lord, through our Sister
Bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.

Woe to those who die out of relationship
with their fellow beings and woe
to those poor souls who have not affirmed
Life.

Blessed are those whom death finds in your
most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.
Praise and bless my Lord, give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.

- Francis of Assisi

NASRUDDIN AND THE HORSEMAN

On his way home from his journey Mullha Nasruddin walked alone on a long deserted road. The dark of night began to fall on the land around him casting shadows under the fading red sky. Nasruddin was struck by the beauty, and depth of mystery. But then his eyes, wandering the enchanted landscape in the fading light, spied a troop of horsemen coming his way.

Nasruddin's imagination began to work games with his fear. Perhaps they would rob him or force him into the army. He quickly jumped over a wall at the side of the road and hid behind it. His heart pounded as the sound of the horses drew near.

The travelers, innocent of all that Nasruddin imagined, had seen him and were curious. They made their way toward him, and when they came upon him lying motionless, one reached toward him with pity and said, "Can we help you — are you ill? Why are you here lying on the ground like that?"

Nasruddin looked up and understood, "It is more complicated than you might assume. You see, I am here because of you; and you, you are here because of me."

THE CONDITION OF BEING

THE GIVING

The teachings of our brother and sister trees instruct us on our true condition of being. Trees rise up by rooting deeply in solid ground. They shelter and feed the nesting ones. They shade the weary; protect the frail from mighty winds; nourish the soil with their leaves, hold it safe from rushing waters or erosion, and provide needed oxygen for other creatures. In the rain forest one tree can harbor a whole species of insects. A tree does only two things, branch to light, root to water. Yet, out of its essence everything is accomplished.

THE RECEIVING

What tree can grow without soil and minerals? Or continue to live without light and water? Or send forth its seeds without the aid of wind and bird, squirrel and insect? What tree can hide itself from the cycles of growth and diminishment? Trees in their death provide shelter, heat, light, and fire.

THE CONDITION OF BEING

Trees appear solitary and individual, rising to the sky, standing unto themselves, yet their lives reflect unspeakable union, cooperation, an interrelationship of being, a co-arising with their companions in the world. In the fourth order we recognize this true condition of being, and the healing properties of right relationship. We are dancers in the wind, servants and upholders of life who are ourselves upheld

by our fellow creatures. Trees remind us that those who live in their true spacious nature uplift, uphold and love their companions on the way.

THE IMPORTANT DISTINCTION BETWEEN INTERDEPENDENCE AND CODEPENDENCE

Interdependence is very different from codependence, which is an addictive hypervigilant need to control others so they are happy or behaving the way you desire so as to assist you in feeling safe and bring on a false sense of self of wellbeing and superiority. The 13th century Sufi mystic, Ibn 'Ata' Illah, reminds us, "It may well be that you are in a bad state - but to keep company with someone worse than you would allow you to see good in yourself."ⁱ

Codependent help is characterized by power over dynamic with three essential roles and dynamics - the victim, the rescuer, and the abuser. If you play one of these roles you will eventually play all three. Codependence is judgmental, guilt ridden, shaming, lacking in all respect, with either too rigid or no boundaries, and is a death knell to true relationship and community.

Many of us were taught the skills of co-dependence and confuse its rescuing, enabling and savior behaviors with love. We simply have to do the difficult emotional inner work with our fear and control issues; as well as work in the development of the skills required to express healthy boundaries, respect and freedom as we offer to and receive support from others.

Companions of the path take this very seriously because codependence reinforces the false self and ego driven needs by doing good deeds on others to reinforce the ego. This is the exact opposite of true presence. It fosters lack of surrender and trust in the divine, feeds on and reinforces fear, is involved with power plays, and counterfeits for genuine compassion and love.

Interdependence offers us a healthy model of compassion and relationship, empowering both the giver and receiver of support in the great round of life.

It is characterized by healthy boundaries, choice, self-responsibility, respect for the other's strengths and vulnerabilities, the ability to reflect accurately one's own feelings, the ability to work through feelings of fear, powerlessness and shame, and the ability to truly listen to the other.

Interdependence is the economy of mutuality and respect. It's a gift economy where everyone brings their gift to share in the full mix of life. Real joy and real camaraderie develop here. Consider the tree.

COMING INTO SILENCE

In your mind's eye see a circle around you. It is the complete circle of life. As you sit within this circle, offer a prayer of thanksgiving to the Spirit of Life and ask that this prayer be blessed.

Ask that all who pray this prayer and all who are prayed for in this prayer be blessed with guidance, protection and assistance.

Extend your hand upward toward the heavens, downward toward the earth, and to each of the four directions, north, east, south, and west. Invite the wisdom from each direction into this prayer.

Contemplate the elements - earth, air, fire, water and light; and give thanks for all they give you. Invite the elements into this prayer.

Contemplate all beings – the green and growing, the four legged, the ones who swim, the ones who fly, the ones who crawl. Invite them into this prayer praying for their wellbeing.

Contemplate the ancestors, pray for their healing and wellbeing. Invite the wisdom of the ancestors into this prayer.

Contemplate the ancestors of all cultures and traditions who have carried and passed on the holy wisdom through the generations. Pray for their wellbeing, thank them and invite them to this prayer.

Contemplate this multidimensional circle that surrounds you. Experience its richness, its sounds, and its vitality. Enter the silence and listen for the concerns of these beings, pray for their concerns. Listen to the wisdom of these beings. This wisdom is a gift for you. Sit quietly with it. Close by uniting with these companions in the Simple Prayer and humming, allowing yourself to enter the silence.

Great silence, may we hear you this day.

Great humming sound, may we feel you this day.

Great seed and hidden source, illuminate our hearts and way today.

May we honor ourselves, as children of the unseen source.

May we walk in deep peace and know all creation, as our deepest relations.

May we honor all creation, as the manifestation of the unseen source.

May we live in loving kindness and simplicity.

May we live in holy freedom, responsibility and obedience

To that seed and hidden source.

Great silence, may we hear you this day.

Great humming sound, may we feel you this day.

Great seed and hidden source, illuminate our hearts and way today.

SOUND

As you hum throughout the day, be aware of the humming life of your companions in this world.

CONTEMPLATIONS

Tugging at a Single Thing

When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world. - John Muir

Losing Fear

Who sees all beings in his own Self, and his own Self in all beings, loses all fear. - Isa Upanishad

Compassion

The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another. - Thomas Merton

Understand Well

We should understand well that all things are the work of the Great Spirit. We should know that He is within all things: the trees, the grasses, the rivers, the mountains, and all the four legged animals, and the winged peoples....All these holy peoples and holy things are now hearing what I say! O Wakan-Tanka, I shall offer up my body and soul that my people may live!...We know that we are related and are one with all things of the heavens and the earth. We all wish to live and increase in a holy manner.ⁱⁱ - Black Elk

STORY

- Tell a story of a time when you were aware of healthily being supported or giving support by/to others, or your environment. What were the elements that made that support significant?
- Tell a story of a time when support made you weaker. What were the elements that made that support less than helpful?

BUDDHIST BLESSING

Just as the soft rains fill the streams,
pour into the rivers and join together in the oceans,
so may the power of every moment of your goodness
flow forth to awaken and heal all beings,
Those here now, those gone before, those yet to come.

May all beings from the least to the greatest, be freed from suffering.
May all beings be blessed in this condition of relationship.
May all beings from the recently born to the most ancient of days, abide in deep peace.

ⁱ Ibn 'Ata' Illah. Translation by Victor Danner and Wheeler Thackston. *Ibn 'Ata' Illah the Book of Wisdom/Kwaja Abdullah Ansari Intimate Conversations (One Volume)*. Paulist Press. Boston. 1978

ⁱⁱ Neihardt, John G. *Black Elk Speaks*, New Edition (Paperback) Bison Books; 3rd edition, Lincoln, NE 2004.