

Seeds

This is a story about seeds. The seeds of love, peace, joy, and beauty, as well as hate, war, sorrow, and ugliness that live in the ground of our unconsciousness and rise into awareness from time to time. These seeds grow and mature empowered by our attention and embrace or return to the depths weakened by a conscious decision to ignore and dis-empower them. They are a metaphor for how we are shaped and formed by others in our youth, then hopefully by our own conscious choices throughout the rest of our lives. Knowledge is power, and if not power than potential, so a clear vision and understanding of how this process can work is vital. That is our hope here.

Seeds take root in the dark confines of earth to stretch down and outward to provide nourishment and sustenance for the spark of life within. At the same time, seeds sprout upwards and burst forth to reach out to the sky and heavens thirst quenching rains and bright light and warmth of day. The new life rises up dancing in the breezes and swaying to follow the sun's journey across the sky while roots spread deeper and wider in a mirror image of the branches above.

Every aspect of each new life form is guided by precise calculations of infinite power, presence, and intelligence, even from the smallest of beginnings. Over time life rides the seasons from the thaw of winter's icy grip, to spring's burst of energy, on to the summer season of growth and maturation with the blossom and flowering of infinite and beautiful colors, shapes, and forms, until there is at last fruition, lastly leading to fall's season of harvest and thanksgiving for the gift of nature's glorious benevolence, abundance, and bounty.

Seeds are blown by the winds of fate or consumed by birds and other animals to be carried far away. These often tiny seeds may look much alike in their infancy, yet carry within them the potential to become a million different possibilities, whether it be a single blade of grass, a giant 2500 year old Sequoia tree, or anything in between. Many reach to great heights or spread over large areas, yet even the humble blade of grass has the exalted position of being the most abundant life form on earth.

The diversity, complexity, and wonder of seeds is even greater when we consider the soil, as many, many species of life can prosper in as many types of ground. It is the environment and nourishment that takes place that has the greatest effect. The nature of seeds has a great effect, but the nurturing can be even greater, for even tropical flowers and fruits can be grown in a desert if adequate shelter, moisture, and fertilizer are provided.

Besides the seeds of our plant friends, there are also the seeds of the heart and mind. Look around to our great cities with their schools, libraries, concert halls, and businesses, as all of these were once only ideas, seeds that were watered and fertilized within us, searching for light and nourishment until brought to flowering and fruition. The also great abundance and bounty of these seeds is harvested

daily as we go about our lives. Many have passed away like the gardens and forests of old, and many are yet to be realized as we bring them into manifestation.

Which of our seeds will grow, prosper, spread, and succeed? It is like the American Indian story of the wise old man telling his grand children of a battle between two great wolves locked in an epic struggle. The white wolf is all that is good and kind, the black wolf embodies darkness and evil. The children ask where are they fighting, and who will win? He answers the war is fought within our own hearts, and the one that wins is the one we feed.

This feeding goes on inside of each of us, but also all around us through family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and others, and through our media, communities, culture, and society. Here we have the choice to feed or ignore these seeds through our time, attention, and efforts. This has been going on for generations, and centuries past. Yet once again, we have a choice. A choice to accept what we are given, or to question, consider, and change what we will think, behave, and become.

Quite simply, there is a spirit, a life form and energy in each of these seeds. It is up to us to look and listen deeply to our spirit, heart, and soul to determine which are truly beneficial for all people and all life, and not just for ourselves, and our family and friends. The image of seeds is useful for many reasons, one being that it takes much of the emphasis off of individuals, of the people who have affected us deeply over the years positively or negatively. We may then take a blameless inventory of ourselves, as each of us, all of us, have these seeds to some degree, and so the potential for good or evil just the same.

The "good" or positive seeds we have been given must be protected and given fertile soil in which to live and thrive. These were given to us by our families and others as we grew and stretching out into the distant past and handed down to us through people, community, and culture.

Like seeds, if there is little good ground available our "seeds" may find a crack or crevice to take root and grow, even in very difficult situations, as life finds any nourishment it can to survive and thrive. And like a seed growing up through cracks in solid rock, our hearts and minds can crack open and let the love trapped within grow, blossom, and bear fruit. The frozen or stone clenched fist our heart may have become in some areas of life can also be quickened by the light and warmth of grace and love and once again open and reach out to others.

Life is diverse, tenacious, awesome, and abundant and so are we. The key is to find the wholesome seeds we need to nourish and also find the unwholesome seeds and come to understand them as well. Love is perhaps our most positive and precious seed, and so deserving of our greatest care and nurturing, for without it, it becomes a bitter, dark, cold, and lonely world, and life shrinks away and dies.

Peace is nurtured to escape the chaos and busyness of the world and provide a solid foundation for the peace of body and mind. Beauty in nature, in art, and in ourselves and others helps counteract the ugliness and cruelty all too present in the world. Joy keeps our hearts light and happy as we feed

happiness to help us smile, laugh, and play like we did as children. These are just a few of the many positive seeds we have available to us. For a closer look at the bigger picture of seeds in our store house, check out "Essential Principles" on Cowboy Dharma.com.

A word of caution is due as it is all too easy to treat any "negative" seeds as poisonous and try to rip them out by the roots and trash them. Rather please consider these alternative possibilities; fear is the big one, but it can alert us to many dangers and give us energy to deal with those threats. It is sometimes said we only have two choices; love or fear, and on some level that assertion may be true. We certainly prefer love, some would even say only love is real. But fear has a reality too, a felt presence we are wise to acknowledge and come to terms with that deserve illumination.

Anger may cause us to instantly fly into a rage, but why? Perhaps we are being used, abused, manipulated and controlled. Anger gives us intense energy to deal with these kinds of situations whether real or imagined. The trick is to not let it overwhelm us and flood our neural system with stress chemicals like cortisol that in excess leads to many physical and mental problems.

Envy tells us we want more from life, that there may be things that we could do or things we want to acquire to make our life more meaningful or otherwise better. Jealousy may be trying to tell us that an important relationship is in danger and deserves attention. Guilt and embarrassment tell us our behavior is suspect, that we may need to change what we are doing or make amends for what we have done.

The image here is of a poisonous, thorny, or in some other way dangerous plant that requires special care. So too with our negative thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and actions. Like a plant we may control how they are fed and watered, where we keep them, and work to keep them pruned back to a safe distance. Yet even poisonous plants have their uses, some very important and useful. Even simple onions that can be quite delicious for us are dangerous for horses and cattle.

We can't let the poisonous plants ruin us. Nuclear plants are good example, for there is great power, but also great danger and therefore risk for if we aren't careful there will be hell to pay. The other side of the nuclear question is all the more horrific. If you haven't seen pictures of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims on the internet you should take a look just to know what it is like.

The skin and muscle was burnt down to the bone and further in many cases. Yet many somehow survived. Many had to wait days and weeks for medical help, so flies and maggots infested their wounds. The radiation killed many thousands more but many lived for decades longer with bones showing on their legs, arms, chests, backs or skulls. A grim picture but one that may return a hundred or thousand fold if we aren't extremely careful.

The problem is often maintaining moderation. An obvious example is alcohol use, as a drink or two each day can lengthen our lives, yet over use can shorten or end it in tragic ways. Another is chemo therapy where we take enough poison to kill the cancer but stop short of killing the person. Same with the negative aspects of how we think, feel, react, and behave. Much of our immunity or susceptibility

to these influences is in our nature, as some seem physically or mentally resistant to the impact of life's difficulties while others become easily upset and overwhelmed in the same situations.

It is said that everything comes down to love or fear. Fears of not getting what we want, or of getting what we *don't* want. So begins our chase after happiness and flight from unhappiness. Yes, happiness is important, and *true* happiness means having all the things we need to be happy, such as love, peace, joy, beauty. Our founding fathers expressed this as our inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The problem is if we selfishly neglect others in this pursuit, or chose short term rewards, that hurt ourselves or others in the long haul.

Fears are many, and many necessary and valid. Yet we must be vigilant to watch for those that are unnecessary and invalid, so as not to react to small annoyances as if they were a case of life and death. These fears may creep in slowly and silently like a vine to strangle us and squeeze the life and love from our hearts and minds, or come like a flood or explosion in abuses, accidents, and tragedies. So we start to run. And keep running until we are often completely spent and broken, hitting bottoms, and tasting miseries. Personally I describe my job like running a marathon every day, 30,000 times so far.

How do we stop running from fear? How do we face the dragon that seems to have been chasing us all our lives? We may do what we tell our kids when facing the danger of crossing the street; stop, look, listen. Or what we tell our dogs when trouble comes; sit, stay, heel. The point is to stop. Eastern philosophy says to sit with it. This can be very hard as this dragon often has become all of the demons of the past rolled up into one gigantic, ugly, fire breathing monster.

Yet if we can manage the look this monster in the eye and stare it down, it usually will back down and back-off long enough to see it for what it really is. Now comes the years of hard work to dismantle, dissolve, and dispel it because we have been living under its spell for far too long. We have been enchanted by a voice in the back of our heads saying we're not good enough, we're a piece of crap, or a million other negative messages for years, and maybe decades, or generations into the past. Eckhart Tolle teaches that our ego fears that to be wrong is to suffer the pain of death, so may fights for its life

We must muster the courage to say NO! I will not live in fear, you will not take me, you will not take my family, my friends, my community, or my world! You will arise. Up from the earth through those seeds, through the lightening in your veins and the fire in your bones. Bursting out across the earth and sky filling your life and those around you with the brilliance of God's grace. Eventually that dragon and those demons will take their proper place in the backseat rather than the driver's seat. Yes, this is a bold venture considering the years of denial and dysfunction, but it become an adventure, one day, one step, one moment at a time.

I consider our nature is the card we get, and our nurturing is how we learn to play them. Our family of origin is usually the ground of our being, so carries the most weight, but many spend more time in schools, daycares, family businesses, and other places with other persons who can make a huge difference in our lives, especially if interactions are deeply felt. Even one incident can change a whole

life for the better or worse. For seeds and plants this would be if they were given a good dose of fertilizer that lasts for years, or conversely if burned, broken, or crushed they may never again return full health and functioning.

It may look like plants and seeds are in a deep sleep, but what they lack in quickness they more than make up for in size, strength, longevity and other factors. There is lightning in their veins just like ours, fire in their bones. This powerful energy bursts forth and blossoms in flowers and seed filled fruits, some plants making thousands of them each year, perhaps millions over a lifetime, which for some is over 5,000 years.

This awesome power and presence of the divine crawls up through the cracks in the sidewalk, grabs a foothold in most barren of deserts, emerges from the ice and snow in frozen landscapes, also teeming near some of the hottest places on earth near thermal vents in the depths of oceans. This self same power and presence is within each of us and all around, ready and willing to make itself manifest and thrive whenever and where-ever possible, bursting with life like a tree in a full bloom of flowers and fruits.

There are grasses and vines in my garden I didn't plant and have tried vigorously for years to get rid of. I gave up and enjoy them now, and simply keep them pruned back to avoid overtaking the others. Yet I have found they are beautiful too, some flowering through-out the year. In fact some although stubbornly coming back season after season, some are somewhat delicate, requiring sufficient water and shaded sunlight to do their best.

Much the same for our "vines," our uninvited, unwelcomed, and on first thought negative life forces, our "weeds". Yet like these vines, you can't seem to kill them, they just keep coming back and popping up where you least expect them. Better than to make friends with them, and find a way to enjoy them as is, and we may find there is also beauty and life there worth appreciating.

One of my teachers calls these our guests. Unwelcome gueasts, but guests none the less. We want to lock our windows and doors to keep them out, but this is "poor circulation," and just like poor circulation in the body, it will lead to illness and difficulties unless we release the flow. Besides, they will find a way in up from the basement, down from the attic, through cracks in the windows, or under the doors if we don't let them in.

Should we build fortifications at every opening, the weight of these dark forces can fester and grow, and perhaps at last take the whole house down. Better to make friends with them, invite them in when we feel ready, and take good care of them so they don't cause problems. Over time we will likely find they have valuable information to impart as noted above through anger, guilt, fears, and so forth.

Rumi explains the situation brilliantly in his poem the Guest House: "This being human is a guest house. Every morning a new arrival. A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor. Welcome and entertain them all! Even if they're a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture, still, treat each guest honorably. He may be clearing

you out for some new delight. The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in. Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond".

Whether sour and bitter, or sweet and delicious, these fruits and vegetables can be "cooked" in the light of our awareness until a nutritious and savory feast is provided to give us strength and energy to press on with our with our journey, our work, and our mission. This awareness is all important so we learn what the best seeds are, what are our poisons, and which is the wrong wolf. In the moment, the dark seeds, the poisons look inviting and satisfy, but don't be fooled. Over eating, drinking, drugging, sleeping, working, sexing, exercising, or a thousand other addictive behaviors will soothe us for a time, but over time come to control and defeat us.

We need to find the best seeds, and nurture them the best we can. The seeds that will propel us forward into thinking and doing that will build a better world for our family, our friends, and all life. We can live love, live joy, live bliss and compassion, and with a warm and giving heart. We can suffer too. We *need* to suffer. For it is through real suffering, and fully grieving what has been lost, and what is being lost, that we can find the true compassion we need to make the hard choices and do the hard work necessary to save our world.

Without suffering we wouldn't truly appreciate a full life. Without dark we couldn't really appreciate the light. I am speaking of not only a world-wide suffering, but also within our nation, our communities, our homes, and most of all our hearts. That is the only place where real change can begin, in our own personal roots, and the ground of our being. Each of us has a place at the table, at the feast, but also each of us has a responsibility to ourselves and each other.

Unfortunately many of our family, friends, and others are the walking wounded, and many crippled or killed by these dark forces suddenly, or slowly through dangerous and unhealthy behaviors. This isn't what we were made for. We were made to be the eyes and ears of the universe, the active intelligence with the powers to make beneficent changes, to make this a garden of Eden, a paradise. And we must be the heart of the universe, ready, willing, and able to love each other, all life, and our dear mother earth enough to save her from our errant ways. Will our paradise be lost or will we make the necessary changes before it's too late?

Personally I simply can't give up hope and faith in our intelligence and determination to make it through challenges. I agree with Martin Luther King who said "I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."

This is not the end of the story, for we write the story every new day we live. We can right the wrongs and muster the passion and purpose and the will and courage to do what is right for all people and all life. After India won independence the friction between its rival factions came to a boiling point and a

civil war broke out. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of that freedom was so saddened he went on a hunger strike promising not to eat again until peace was restored. The whole country submitted rather than let that one small and yet great man perish.

You can be that man, that woman, that child that starts a movement however big or small, and changes the world. We can each face the demons and dragons, the lions, tigers, and bears, the wolves, and make a difference. It won't be fast, easy, or painless, but it is much more than worth it, *you* are worth it. And yes, I dare say it, there may be little time for us to make the changes to save ourselves, our family, our friends, and all the family of life, our world.

Now is the time, you are the person, and wherever you are, that is the place. The place to become a good gardener and rule *your* world with justice and grace, to make *your* miracles and magic, to feel your pain and your joy, and live the rich full life you were intended for. You are heir to all the power, wisdom, intelligence, and beauty of the universe, and it is time to let it shine. Only you can do what is needed in your corner of the world. If you don't know what that is start looking. Looking with the eyes of love, and listening to that still small voice of love below, above, and behind all the noise and clamor of the world.

Humans have great power and potential to save ourselves and the world. When I think of all the great culinary, performing, literature, media, and visual works of art such as in symphonies, dance, novels, paintings, and other works, as well as great achievements in astronomy, geology, sociology, psychiatry, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and philosophy I am awestruck by the beauty and wisdom they provide. Perhaps we are all artists, however great or stifled.

All of these wonders were once seeds as well, ideas that were fed, watered, and in many ways nurtured in the fertile ground of the human imagination. And as it only takes a spark to start a whole blaze, so too the great and horrific deeds of man take root to sprout, grow, mature, blossom, flower, and eventually bear the fruits of our efforts, however glorious or bitter these fruits may be. Eastern wisdom reminds us that life has suffering, but suffering is not enough, and the beneficial seeds are our birthright as much as any other, as we all deserve to be happy and succeed despite darker influences.

Your trials and your triumphs got you where you are today and will lead you to your best and brightest tomorrows. You have learned so much. It is time to share your wisdom. To stop running. To stop looking for love and happiness in a TV show, plate of food, a smoke, a bottle, or any store. You have your story to tell. And if you think it is an all bad story or all sad story, please think again, and get help where you can. If you can't find safe help in family, friends, clergy, therapists, or others, there are twelve step meetings of all kinds available in most towns that often provide a wealth of wisdom and support for just a few bucks in the basket.

We might feel like a tree that has weathered great storms and droughts and whose ground has washed away until we have become diseased, broken, and fallen, and just waiting for the next fire or flood to finish us off. Yet we have legs and arms that can take us to new places and experiences. We may feel

planted where we are, and by what we grew up with, yet no matter how deep our roots may be, we can always plant new seeds, and create new life right where we are.

We *are* life, we are love, we are the beauty, power, and intelligence of the universe made manifest. The world needs all it can get, and humans in particular if we are not only to survive, but thrive as we should if we are good stewards of life here on mother earth. I wish you the best of luck and love finding and tending your own beautiful and magnificent garden. I hope you find the best ground in which to thrive, the best light sources for your energy and warmth, the best living waters for your nourishment, and yes, the best seeds to grow. Cowboy Dharma and company.

P.S. Misc. Notes

Although they can't move except by spreading their seeds or slowly creeping to better ground, plants do have great wisdom and are in many ways as sophisticated as animals in their responses to light, temperature, moisture, chemicals, gravity, infection, predators, injury, and touch, but on a much slower scale. They also have the abilities of learning, memory, computation, and problem solving much as we do.

Personally music is one my greatest inspirations as I so much love to play songs that stir my soul and rock my world. Nature is also a great inspiration for me and Mother nature the greatest artist of all. I believe, as did Michelangelo that "My soul can find no staircase to Heaven unless it be through Earth's loveliness." You can't beat nature for beauty, intelligence, and majesty. Humanity has done many incredibly beautiful, intelligent and majestic things too. But look how when we mimic nature in our creations it comes out so amazing.

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