



# Scouts Own

## *— Listen to the Rhythm of Trees*

by Rev. Dr. David Spence, Festilogist

### Opening

In the beginning, sound was heard throughout creation. First, the pulse; then, the beat; and finally, the harmony and rhythm.

Out of the creative sounds, came the element's creation: Earth - Air - Fire - Water - and Soul.

From the five realms of the universe, the world, in all sacredness and holiness, emerged.

At the centre, Seed is planted and there comes forth from creation, TREES. TREES of all kinds:

- different shapes and sizes
- different textures and temperaments
- arranged in a variety of groves, glades, and grottos
- each one with a unique fragrance and perfumed aroma
- each yielding fruit of its own kind.

### Listen to the Rhythm of Trees

The extreme diversity of trees is surpassed only by their intimate divinity discovered in religious traditions and spiritual practices, revealed in prayers, poems, and sacred teachings, and then affirmed for those who have ears to see and eyes to hear.

In *ABORIGINAL TRADITION*, the “cedar” is a tree which is one of four sacred medicines or herbs

(along with sage, sweetgrass, and tobacco). The cedar benefits individuals participating in purification and healing ceremonies. Cedar is offered during sweat lodge experiences, is understood to have restorative and medicinal powers, and is central to fasting observances. Cedar timbers are used to build longhouses, cedar strips are woven into baskets, and cedar branches are incorporated into other spiritual occasions.

In *BAHAI TRADITION*, Baha'u'llah declares that “you are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch.”

In *BUDDHIST TRADITION*, the Bodhi tree, which means the “Tree of Awakening”, gained spiritual value as Siddharatha, also known as Buddha, received enlightenment. He leaned against its trunk and under its branches, he sat upon a heap of straw in the supreme immovable cross-legged posture. There he relaxed, enjoying its shade in peace and tranquility. The birds and the beasts refrained from song and sounds; and the other trees in the forest, when struck by the wind, did not utter a single rustling sound. When he died at the age of 80, he was lying between two lofty Sal trees with the flowers of the trees gently drifting over his body.

In *CHRISTIAN TRADITION*, the cross has links to the tree; as does the crown of thorns; even the manger, the table with grapes, and the boat have connections with the tree. The oak tree has unique *CELTIC TRADITIONS*. The olive tree provides oil generously as a source of light and holy balm. In some parts of Christianity, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is also known as “Our Lady of the Forest”, offering intercession, protection, and companionship.

In *ISLAMIC TRADITION*, the Qu'ran asks the question, “Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches are in the sky; it yields its fruit in every season by Allah's leave. Allah speaks in parables to people so that they may take heed. But an evil word is like an evil tree, torn out of the earth and shorn of all its roots.” (Surah 14:24). In particular, the Tooba tree stands at the heart of paradise providing delicious fruits. The rivers spring from the tree; some flowing with water and others with milk, honey, and wine.

In *JEWISH TRADITION*, “Tu B'Shevat” is the time in the liturgy calendar when the birthday of trees is celebrated. Many trees are planted in local parks and in Israel. In the

Photo: Davis Hyndman

Creation myth of the Garden of Eden, eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil shall surely lead to death. In the Psalm, "Blessed are those who delight in the law of God and meditate upon it day and night; they shall be like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither." (Ps.1:1-3)

In *HINDU TRADITION*, trees are believed to have souls, and should be honoured and cared for. "Two birds, two sweet friends, dwell on the self-same tree. One eats the fruits thereof, and the other looks on in silence." (Mundaka Upanishad, III,1) A tree stands like an avatar embodying the relationship between heaven and earth, between Karma and Credo.

In *OTHER TRADITIONS*, the wisdom and wonder of a tree is celebrated with grace, generosity and gratitude.

### Proverbs, Quotes and Stories of Trees Throughout the Ages

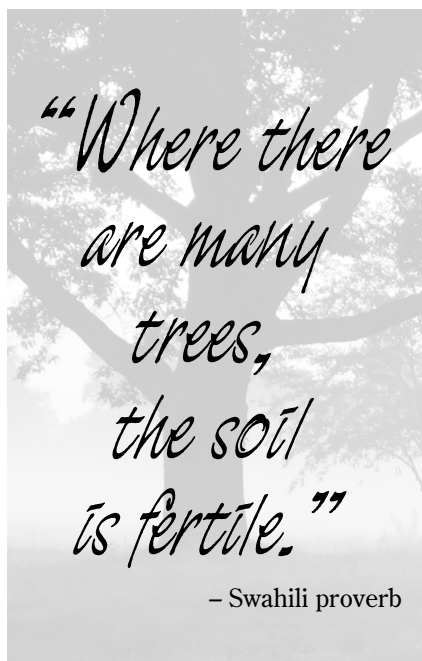
A Swahili proverb reminds us that, "Where there are many trees, the soil is fertile."

Shel Silverstein tells the story of "The Giving Tree". "Once there was a tree... and she loved a little boy. And every day the boy would come and he would gather her leaves and make them into crowns and play king of the forest. He would climb up her trunk and swing from her branches and eat apples. And the boy loved the tree very much. And the tree was happy..."

David McCord describes what it is really like to climb a tree.

"Every time I climb a tree, I scrape a leg or skin a knee,  
And every time I climb a tree I find some ants or dodge a bee and get the ants all over me.  
And every time I climb a tree, Where have you been?  
They say to me  
But don't they know that I am free?  
I like it best to spot a nest that has an egg or maybe three.  
And then I skin the other leg.  
But every time I climb a tree I see a lot of things to see: swallows, rooftops and TV  
and all the fields and farms there be every time I climb a tree.  
Though climbing may be good for ants, it isn't awfully good for pants;  
But still it's pretty good for me every time I climb a tree."

Joyce Kilmer believes that, "I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree."



Nathaniel Altman, in 1994, recalls that, "Trees impart wisdom to those willing to receive it and assist humans in transformation of consciousness bringing us closer to living in harmony with Earth Mother and the rest of the human community." (Sacred Trees)

### Final Blessing

Whoever plants a tree, plants love;  
Tents of coolness spreading  
out above;  
Wayfarers of the future,  
who may not be seen,  
Hear the rhythms of a tree.

Gifts that grow are best;  
Hands which caress are blessed;  
Plant!  
Life does the rest.

Go forth,  
Kneel upon the ground,  
And set gently the roots in the earth  
— fecundous and fertile.

Be warm — wet— wild— wonderful  
— wise.

And everyone said:

"Amen"

"Shanti, Shanti, Shanti"

"Salaam"

"Shalom"

"Hoitch-ka". X

— Rev. Dr. David Spence, Festilogist, a member of FestAviva™, read this Scouts Own at the Centennial Scouter Conference in Richmond, BC, December, 2007. He offers it to all Scouters for use to celebrate trees. For more info, visit the FestAviva web site at: [www.festaviva.ca](http://www.festaviva.ca).

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