



The Overcrowded House

An ECK parable
from *The Book of ECK Parables*,
Volume 1, pp. 99–101

by Sri Harold Klemp

Chester Karrass, author of a book called *Give and Take*, told an interesting story about a woman in a Russian village who sought the assistance of a wise man who lived nearby.

“I’ve got a problem,” the woman told the wise man, “a serious problem with my family. We live in a little hut, and there is barely enough room for my husband, myself, and

our two children, but hard times have forced my in-laws to move in with us.”

The sage thought about the woman’s problem for a long time before answering. “Do you have a cow?” he asked finally.

“Yes,” the woman answered.

“If the house is very crowded and you are finding this a difficulty,” he said, slowly and carefully, “I can show you how this problem can be taken away from you so that you can find happiness.”

“That would be wonderful,” she said, feeling some relief.

“Take the cow into your house to live with you,” the wise man instructed. “And come back to see me in a week.”

The woman thought about the sage’s instructions. It was a very small house, and to have a cow in it seemed very uncomfortable as well as strange. However, the woman knew that the wise man had a very good reputation, and so she went home and brought the cow into the house.

The cow was a nuisance. Every time the cow turned around, the family had to jump off the chairs, which were already pushed up against the wall, and climb over the cow to get to the chairs on the other side of the room. It was a small hut, and the woman realized that this didn’t make any sense at all.

The next week she returned to the sage and told him of the overcrowded conditions in their hut. “The cow is a nuisance. We can’t even eat because the cow is there. We can’t sleep. Every time it’s quiet, the cow will moo.”

“Do you have any chickens?” the sage asked.

She was a little hesitant but she said, “Yes, I have some chickens.”

“Take the chickens into the house with you,” the sage instructed. “And come back and see me in a week.”

The woman was about to tell the sage what he could do with the cow and chickens, but instead she held back, telling herself that she had only given the sage one chance. She would try again. So she went back home and took the chickens into the house. It was just a mess. Every time the cow turned around, the family jumped for the other chairs, which frightened the chickens and they would fly in the air and the feathers would get into the soup. The in-laws were fighting, the husband was screeching, the cow was turning around, and the chickens were squawking. It was the worst situation the woman had ever experienced.

At the end of that week, the woman was beside herself. She hurried off to see the sage. “I’ve had it!” she yelled at the wise man. “The in-laws are difficult enough, but with the cow and the chickens, it is just too much!”

The wise man studied the woman. “All right,” he said, calmly, “if it would make you happier, take out the chickens.”

The woman went back home and took the chickens out of the house. A week later she returned to the sage and said, “You know, I am much happier. It’s much better without the chickens in the house. They don’t cackle the first thing in the morning, and the children aren’t fishing feathers out of their soup.”

“Well, I am happy to hear that,” the wise man said.

“Now you can go home and let the cow out of the house too.”

The woman was so pleased and relieved. She returned home and let the cow out of the house. From that moment on, she, her family, and the in-laws lived happily ever after.

You are wondering what kind of a spiritual point there is to the story. You think about it. I am going to let it hang, like waiting for the other shoe to drop. See what you come up with.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the spiritual point of this story?
2. Think of something that is difficult in your life. Now look for the blessings within it.
3. How can gratitude help when you are having a hard time?

Spiritual Exercise:

With your eyes open or closed, take a relaxing breath. To open your heart and feel God's love, sing *HU* with the Mahanta.

Imagine yourself at home. Now imagine practicing the attitude of gratitude for something about your home or family.

May the blessings be.

* * *

**Draw a picture of your family or a room
in your home here:**

The Laws of Charity
engage Soul's power to love at every stage.

The Law of Gratitude

The attitude of gratitude
allows each Soul to know
that all Its present blessings
are what Soul needs to grow.



The Law of Gratitude

The attitude of gratitude
allows each Soul to know
that all Its present blessings
are what Soul needs to grow.

Draw a picture of something you are grateful for in your life.