



# THE LOTUS BUD

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## *Dear Sangha,*

In this edition of the *The Lotus Bud* we explore the idea of 'interbeing' in relation to the planet Earth, our home. In the readings below we understand the world to be one body, both from the perspective of Thich Nhat Hahn in his message to the United Nations, and through ecologist James Lovelock's articulation of the notion of 'Gaia'.



Image by Don Kennedy Largo Fl

## *Falling in love with the Earth*

This beautiful, bounteous, life-giving planet we call Earth has given birth to each one of us, and each one of us carries the Earth within every cell of our body.

### **We and the Earth are one**

The Earth is our mother, nourishing and protecting us in every moment—giving us air to breathe, fresh water to drink, food to eat and healing herbs to cure us when we are sick. Every breath we inhale contains our planet's nitrogen, oxygen, water vapor and trace elements. When we breathe with mindfulness, we can experience our interbeing with the Earth's delicate atmosphere, with all the plants, and even with the sun,

whose light makes possible the miracle of photosynthesis. With every breath we can experience communion. With every breath we can savor the wonders of life. 

We need to change our way of thinking and seeing things. We need to realise that the Earth is not just our environment. The Earth is not something outside of us. Breathing with mindfulness and contemplating your body, you realise that you are the Earth. You realise that your consciousness is also the consciousness of the Earth. Look around you—what you see is not your environment, it is you.

### **Great Mother Earth**

Whatever nationality or culture we belong to, whatever religion we follow, whether we're Buddhists,

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Christians, Muslims, Jews, or atheists, we can all see that the Earth is not inert matter. She is a great being, who has herself given birth to many other great beings—including buddhas and bodhisattvas, prophets and saints, sons and daughters of God and humankind. The Earth is a loving mother, nurturing and protecting all peoples and all species without discrimination.

When you realize the Earth is so much more than simply your environment, you'll be moved to protect her in the same way as you would yourself. This is the kind of awareness, the kind of awakening that we need, and the future of the planet depends on whether we're able to cultivate this insight or not. The Earth and all species on Earth are in real danger. Yet if we can develop a deep relationship with the Earth, we'll have enough love, strength and awakening in order to change our way of life. 🙏

## Falling in love

We can all experience a feeling of deep admiration and love when we see the great harmony, elegance and beauty of the Earth. A simple branch of cherry blossom, the shell of a snail or the wing of a bat – all bear witness to the Earth's masterful creativity. Every advance in our scientific understanding deepens our admiration and love for this wondrous planet. When we can truly see and understand the Earth, love is born in our hearts. We feel connected. That is the meaning of love: to be at one.

Only when we've truly fallen back in love with the Earth will our actions spring from reverence and the insight of our interconnectedness. Yet many of us have become alienated from the Earth. We are lost, isolated and lonely. We work too hard, our lives are too busy, and we are restless and distracted, losing ourselves in consumption. But the Earth is always there for us, offering us everything we need for our nourishment and healing: the miraculous grain of corn, the refreshing stream, the fragrant forest, the majestic snow-capped mountain peak, and the joyful birdsong at dawn.

## True Happiness is made of love

Many of us think we need more money, more power or more status before we can be happy. We're so busy spending our lives chasing after money, power and status that we ignore all the conditions for happiness already available. At the same time, we lose ourselves in buying and consuming things we don't need, putting a heavy strain on both our bodies and the planet. Yet much of what we drink, eat, watch, read or listen to, is toxic, polluting our bodies and minds with violence, anger, fear and despair. 🙏

As well as the carbon dioxide pollution of our physical environment, we can speak of the spiritual pollution of our human environment: the toxic and destructive atmosphere we're creating with our way of consuming. We need to consume in such a way that truly sustains our peace and happiness.

Only when we're sustainable as humans will our civilization become sustainable. It is possible to be happy in the here and the now.

We don't need to consume a lot to be happy; in fact we can live very simply. With mindfulness, any moment can become a happy moment. Savoring one simple breath, taking a moment to stop and contemplate the bright blue sky, or to fully enjoy the presence of a loved one, can be more than enough to make us happy. Each one of us needs to come back to reconnect with ourselves, with our loved ones and with the Earth. It's not money, power or consuming that can make us happy, but having love and understanding in our heart.

## The bread in your hand is the body of the cosmos

We need to consume in such a way that keeps our compassion alive. And yet many of us consume in a way that is very violent. Forests are cut down to raise cattle for beef, or to grow grain for liquor, while millions in the world are dying of starvation. Reducing the amount of meat we eat and alcohol we consume by 50% is a true act of love for ourselves, for the Earth and for one another. Eating with compassion can already help transform the situation our planet is facing, and restore balance to ourselves and the Earth. 🙏

*Thich Nhat Hanh*  
*Online source*

## What is Gaia?

Most of us sense that the Earth is more than a sphere of rock with a thin layer of air, ocean and life covering the surface. We feel that we belong here as if this planet were indeed our home. Long ago the Greeks, thinking this way, gave to the Earth the name Gaia or, for short, Ge. In those days, science and theology were one and science, although less precise, had soul. As time passed this warm relationship faded and was replaced by the frigidity of the schoolmen. The life sciences, no longer concerned with life, fell to classifying dead things and even to vivisection. Ge was stolen from theology to become no more the root from which the disciplines of geography and geology were named. Now at last there are signs of a change. Science becomes holistic again and rediscovers soul, and theology, moved by ecumenical forces, begins to realise that Gaia is not to be subdivided for academic convenience and that Ge is much more than just a prefix. 🧘

The new understanding has come from going forth and looking back to see the Earth from space. The vision of that splendid white flecked blue sphere stirred us all, no matter that by now it is almost a visual cliché. It even opens the mind's eye, just as a voyage away from home enlarges the perspective of our love for those who remain there.

We now see that the air, the ocean and the soil are much more than a mere environment for life; they are a part of life itself.

There is nothing unusual in the idea of life on Earth interacting with the air, sea and rocks, but it took a view from outside to glimpse the possibility that this combination might consist of a single giant living system and one with the capacity to keep the Earth always at a state most favorable for the life upon it.

The evidence gathered in support of Gaia is now considerable but as is often the way of science, this is less important than its use as a kind of looking glass for seeing the world differently, and which makes us ask new questions about the nature of Earth.

If we are "all creatures great and small," from bacteria to whales, part of Gaia then we are all of us potentially important to her well being. We knew in our hearts that the destruction of a whole range of other species was wrong but now we know why. No longer can we merely regret the passing of one of the great whales, or the blue butterfly, nor even the smallpox virus. When we eliminate one of these from Earth, we may have destroyed a part of ourselves, for we also are a part of Gaia. 🧘

*James Lovelock*  
[Online source](#)



Image by Chris Lofqvist

## WHO WE ARE

The Communities of Mindful Living are inspired by the Buddhist teachings of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh (pictured).



We aspire to live fully in each moment for the peace and happiness of ourselves and all beings. We meet regularly to observe the art of mindful living and to foster a supportive community of practitioners. 

## Contacts

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[www.lotusbudsangha.org](http://www.lotusbudsangha.org)

## Online sources for articles in this issue

<http://newsroom.unfccc.int/1758.aspx>

[http://www.ecolo.org/lovelock/what\\_is\\_Gaia.html](http://www.ecolo.org/lovelock/what_is_Gaia.html)

We would love to hear from you.  
We want the The Lotus Bud to be a place for sharing our experiences and building the Sangha; so why not write a short piece about your experiences with mindfulness ?

Email: [cbarker@uow.edu.au](mailto:cbarker@uow.edu.au)

Post: Chris Barker, Faculty of Arts,  
Uni of Wollongong, 2500

## Reading bell

As you read this magazine you have an opportunity to go back to the present moment.

You will notice a bell:  throughout the magazine.

When you come to each bell, you may like to stop reading, clear your mind and return to your breath before continuing.

## Our activities

Wednesday Mindfulness  
Meditation  
Sydney, Inner West

We welcome all to come join us for meditation practice. We meet at 7:30 pm each Wednesday at the Buddhist Library, Church St, Camperdown, Sydney.

Meditation and monthly  
Mindfulness Days at  
Canley Heights

Southwest Sydney - 7.30pm  
Friday Night Meditation and  
Monthly Mindfulness Days.  
49 Ferngrove Rd Canley  
Heights.

Mindfulness Days at Nhap Luu  
(Entering the Stream)  
Meditation Centre  
221 Maria's Lane  
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