



# THE LOTUS BUD

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*Dear Sangha,*

**In this edition of *The Lotus Bud* we explore some of the questions that surround our relationship with the planet on which we live and the environmental problems that face us in this era of climate change and the depletion of earths' resources. In an interview undertaken at his home in Plum Village Thay outlined how a spiritual revolution is needed if we are going to confront the multitude of environmental challenges.** 🙏

*Chris / True Dwelling of the Mind*

*Beyond environment:  
Falling back in love with  
Mother Earth*

**Move beyond concept of the environment**

Thich Nhat Hanh believes we need to move beyond talking about the environment, as this leads people to experience themselves and Earth as two separate entities and to see the planet in terms only of what it can do for them. Change is possible only if there is a recognition that people and planet are ultimately one and the same.

"You carry Mother Earth within you," says Thay. "She is not outside of you. Mother Earth is not just your environment. In that insight of inter-being, it is possible to have real communication with the Earth, which is the highest form of prayer. In that

kind of relationship you have enough love, strength and awakening in order to change your life. 🙏

Changing is not just changing the things outside of us. First of all we need the right view that transcends all notions including of being and non-being, creator and creature, mind and spirit. That kind of insight is crucial for transformation and healing.

Fear, separation, hate and anger come from the wrong view that you and the Earth are two separate entities, the Earth is only the environment. You are in the centre and you want to do something for the Earth in order for you to survive. That is a dualistic way of seeing. So to breathe in and be aware of your body and look deeply into it and realise you are the Earth and your consciousness is also the consciousness of the Earth. Not to cut the tree not to pollute the water, that is not enough."

## Putting an economic value on Nature is not enough

Thay says the current vogue in economic and business circles that the best way to protect the planet is by putting an economic value on nature is akin to putting a plaster on a gaping wound. "I don't think it will work," he says. "We need a real awakening, enlightenment, to change our way of thinking and seeing things."

Rather than placing a price tag of our forests and coral reefs, Thay says change will happen on a fundamental level only if we fall back in love with the planet:

When we recognise the virtues, the talent, the beauty of Mother Earth, something is born in us, some kind of connection, love is born. We want to be connected. That is the meaning of love, to be at one. When you love someone you want to say I need you, I take refuge in you. You do anything for the benefit of the Earth and the Earth will do anything for your wellbeing. 🧘

## How mindfulness can reconnect people to Mother Earth

He points to increasing evidence that mindfulness can help people to reconnect by slowing down and appreciating all the gifts that the Earth can offer.

"Many people suffer deeply and they do not know they suffer. They try to cover up the suffering by being busy. Many people get sick today because they get alienated from Mother Earth. The practice of mindfulness helps us to touch Mother Earth inside of the body and this practice can help heal people. So the healing of the people should go together with the healing of the Earth and this is the insight and it is possible for anyone to practice. 🧘

This kind of enlightenment is very crucial to a collective awakening. In Buddhism we talk of meditation as an act of awakening, to be awake to the fact that the Earth is in danger and living species are in danger."

Remaining optimistic despite risk of impending catastrophe  
In Greek mythology, when Pandora opened the gift of a box, all the evils were released into the world. The one remaining item was "hope". Thay is clear that maintaining optimism is essential if we are to find a way of avoiding devastating climate change and the enormous social upheavals that will result. However, he is not naïve and recognises that powerful forces are steadily pushing us further towards the edge of the precipice. In his best-selling book on the environment, *The World we Have*, he writes:

"We have constructed a system we can't control. It imposes itself on us, and we become its slaves and victims. We have created a society in which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer, and in which we are so caught up in our own immediate problems that we cannot afford to be aware of what is going on with the rest of the human family or our planet Earth. In my mind I see a group of chickens in a cage disputing over a few seeds of grain, unaware that in a few hours they will all be killed." 🧘

[Online source](#)

Image by dmitriy korzinin



## *Facing uncertainty*

How do we live with the fact that we are destroying our world? What do we make of the loss of glaciers, the melting Arctic, island nations swamped by the sea, widening deserts, and drying farmlands?

Because of social taboos, despair at the state of our world and fear for our future are rarely acknowledged. The suppression of despair, like that of any deep recurring response, contributes to the numbing of the psyche. Expressions of anguish or outrage are muted, deadened as if a nerve had been cut. This refusal to feel impoverishes our emotional and sensory life. Flowers are dimmer and less fragrant, our loves less ecstatic. We create diversions for ourselves as individuals and as nations, in the fights we pick, the aims we pursue, and the stuff we buy.

Of all the dangers we face, from climate chaos to permanent war, none is so great as this deadening of our response. For psychic numbing impedes our capacity to process and respond to information. The energy expended in pushing down despair is diverted from more crucial uses, depleting the resilience and imagination needed for fresh visions and strategies. 

Zen poet Thich Nhat Hanh was asked, “what do we most need to do to save our world?” His answer was this: “What we most need to do is to hear within us the sounds of the Earth crying.”

## **Cracking the shell**

How do we confront what we scarcely dare to think? How do we face our grief, fear, and rage without “going to pieces?”

It is good to realize that falling apart is not such a bad thing. Indeed, it is as essential to transformation as the cracking of outgrown shells. Anxieties and doubts can be healthy and creative, not only for the person, but for the society, because they permit new and original approaches to reality.

Acknowledging despair, on the other hand, involves nothing more mysterious than telling the truth about what we see and know and feel is happening to our world. 

## **Belonging to all life**

Sharing what is in our heart brings a welcome shift in identity, as we recognize that the anger, grief, and fear we feel for our world are not reducible to concerns for our individual welfare or even survival. Our concerns are far larger than our own private needs and wants. Pain for the world—the outrage and the sorrow—breaks us open to a larger sense of who we are. It is a doorway to the realization of our mutual belonging in the web of life.

Let’s drop the notion that we can manage our planet for our own comfort and profit —or even that we can now

be its ultimate redeemers. It is a delusion. Let’s accept, in its place, the radical uncertainty of our time, even the uncertainty of survival.

With the gift of uncertainty, we can grow up and accept the rights and responsibility of planetary adulthood. Then we know fully that we belong, inextricably, to the web of life, and we can serve it, and let its strength flow through us. 

Uncertainty, when accepted, sheds a bright light on the power of intention. Intention is what you can count on: not the outcome, but the motivation you bring, the vision you hold, the compass setting you choose to follow. Our intention and resolve can save us from getting lost in grief.

When we stop distracting ourselves by trying to figure the chances of success or failure, our minds and hearts are liberated into the present moment. This moment then becomes alive, charged with possibilities, as we realize how lucky we are to be alive now, to take part in this planetary adventure. 

*Joanna Macy is a scholar of Buddhism and deep ecology, and author of ‘World as Lover, World as Self’. This is an edited edition of her article the full text of which can be found online:*

[Online source](#)

## WHO WE ARE

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



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. 🙏

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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: [chrisbarker@iinet.net.au](mailto:chrisbarker@iinet.net.au)

### *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.  
85 Queen St  
Canley Heights.

Mindfulness Days at Nhap Luu (Entering the Stream)  
Meditation Centre  
221 Maria's Lane  
Beaufort VIC 3733  
[streammpc@gmail.com](mailto:streammpc@gmail.com)  
[www.plumvillageasia.org](http://www.plumvillageasia.org)  
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### Online sources for articles in this Issue

<http://www.ecobuddhism.org/wisdom/interviews/tnh-be/>

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/climate-solutions/the-greatest-danger>