

now
is the time
this is
it

INTRODUCTION



The beauty of the Earth is a bell of mindfulness. If you can't see it, you must ask yourself why. Maybe something is blocking the way. Or maybe you are so busy looking for something else you can't hear the call of the Earth.

Mother Earth is saying, "My child, I'm here for you; I'm offering all this for you." It's true: the rays of sunshine, the singing birds, clear streams, the cherry blossom in spring, and the beauty of the four seasons—it's all there for you. And, if you can't see or hear it, it's because your mind is too full.

The Earth is telling you that she is there and that she loves you. Every flower is a smile of the Earth. She's smiling to you, and you don't want to smile back. The fruit in your hand—it might be an orange or a kiwi—is a gift from the Earth. But, if you don't feel thankful, it's because you're not there for the Earth, for life.

An essential condition to hear the call of the Earth and re-



spond to her is silence. If you don't have silence in yourself, you cannot hear her call: the call of life. Your heart is calling you, but you don't hear. You don't have time to listen to your heart.

Mindfulness helps us stop the distraction and come back to our breathing. Paying attention only to the in-breath and out-breath, we stop our thinking and, within just a few seconds, we awaken to the fact that we are alive, we are breathing in, we are here. We exist. We are not non-existent. "Ahhh," we realize. "I am here, alive." We stop thinking about the past, we stop worrying about the future, we focus all our attention on the fact that we are breathing. Thanks to our mindful breathing we set ourselves free. We are free to be here: free from thinking, anxiety, fear, and striving.

When we are free, we can answer the call of the Earth. "I'm here. I'm a child of yours." We recognize that we are part of the wonder. And we can say, "I'm free: free from everything that is preventing me from being fully alive. And you can count on me."

When you wake up and you see that the Earth is not just the environment, the Earth *is* us, you touch the nature of inter-being. And at that moment you can have *real* communication with the Earth. That is the highest form of prayer. In that kind of relationship, you will have the love, strength, and awakening you need to change your life.

The truth is that many of us have become alienated from the Earth. We forget that we are alive, here, on a beautiful planet

and that our body is a wonder given to us by the Earth and the whole cosmos. If the Earth has been able to offer life it is because she, too, has non-Earth elements in her, including the sun and stars. Humankind is made of stars. The Earth is not only the Earth but the whole cosmos.

Only when you have this right view, this insight, will discrimination no longer be there, and there will be deep communion, deep communication between you and the Earth. All kinds of good things will come from it. You transcend the dualistic way of seeing things: the idea that the Earth is only the environment, and that you are in the center; and that you only want to do something for the Earth so *you* can survive.

When you breathe in and become aware of your body, and look deeply into your body, and realize that you *are* the Earth, that your consciousness is also the consciousness of the Earth that can become a liberated consciousness, free from all discrimination and wrong views, you are doing what Mother Earth is expecting you to do: to get enlightened, to become a buddha, so you can help all living beings, not only on Earth but even, ultimately, on other planets.

My generation has made many mistakes. We borrowed this planet from you, and we've done it great harm and destruction. Giving it to you now, we're ashamed. It's not as we would wish it to be. You are receiving a beautiful planet that is damaged and wounded. We are sorry. As someone belonging to the older generation, I hope the young generation can step



up as soon as possible. This planet belongs to you, to future generations. Your destiny and the destiny of the planet are in your hands.

Our civilization is a civilization of borrowing. Whenever we want something we can't afford, like a house or a car, we count on our body and our labor in the future to pay back the debt. We borrow and borrow without knowing if we can ever pay back. In this way, we have borrowed from ourselves, from our health, and from the planet. But the planet can't take it anymore. And we have borrowed too much from you, our children and grandchildren. The planet and future generations are also us; we are not separate. The planet is us, and you are also us. The truth is there is not much of ourselves left.

It is very important to wake up and see that we don't *need* to borrow anymore. What is available in the here and now is *already* sufficient for us to be nourished, to be happy. And that is the miracle of mindfulness, concentration, and insight: realizing we can be happy with the conditions that are already available, that we don't need to strive to get more, exploiting the planet as we do so. We don't need to "borrow" anything. Only with this kind of awakening can we stop the destruction.

It's not something that can be done individually. We have to wake up together. And, if we wake up together, then we have a chance. Our way of living our life and planning our future has led us into this situation. And now we need to look deeply

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to find a way out, not only as individuals but as a collective, a species. You can no longer count on the elder generation alone. I have often said that one buddha is not enough; we need a collective awakening. All of us have to become buddhas in order for our planet to have a chance.