

Verses on Nature and the Environment

Verses from the Buddhist tradition on love & concern for our natural environment

“It was a beautiful, harmonious, peaceful-looking planet, blue with white clouds, and one that gave you a deep sense...of home, of being, of identity. It is what I prefer to call instant global consciousness.”

Edgar Mitchell, Apollo X11 astronaut

Nothing whatever is hidden;
From of old, all is clear as daylight.
The old pine tree speaks divine wisdom;
The secret bird manifests eternal truth.
Sitting quietly, doing nothing,
Spring comes, and the grass grows by itself.
Falling mist flies together with the wild ducks;
The waters of autumn are of one colour with the sky.
If you don't believe, just look at September, look at October!
The yellow leaves falling, falling, to fill both mountain and river.
Mountains and rivers, the whole earth, –
All manifest forth the essence of being.
The voice of the mountain torrent is from one great tongue;
The lines of the hills, are they not the Pure Body of Buddha?
Taking up one blade of grass,
Use it as a sixteen-foot golden Buddha.
(from The Zenrin)

You ask
why I perch
on a jade green mountain?
I laugh
but say nothing
my heart
free
like a peach blossom
in the flowing stream
going by
in the depths
in another world
not among men.
(Li Po)

Just as the earth and other elements
Are serviceable in many ways
To the infinite number of beings
Inhabiting limitless space;
So may I become
That which maintains all beings
Situated throughout space,
So long as all have not attained
To peace.

(from the 'Transference of Merit & Self-Surrender' in the Triratna Sevenfold Puja)

the spring flowers, the autumn moon,
summer breeze, winter snow.
if useless things do not clutter your mind
you have the best days of your life

"The value of an inaccessible mountain peak, or of a serenely floating cloud, consists in its very valuelessness. It has no relevance to our material needs. ... Only too readily do we stop to pluck the flowers of the world's beauty, instead of wondering and passing on."

(Sangharakshita, 'The Religion of Art')

"Mindfulness must be engaged.

Once there is seeing, there must be acting...

We must become aware of the real problems of the world.

Then, with mindfulness, we will know what to do, and what not to do, to be of help."

(Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen master, poet, activist and author. Peace is every Step, p91)

"As Buddhists we are meant, we are urged to direct metta towards all living beings. That doesn't just mean all human beings, it means all animals, insects, plants, birds, beasts of every kind. So this is the basis, we may say, of our ecological concern as Buddhists: we wish well towards all living beings."

(Sangharakshita, talk: 'The Next Twenty Years')

"It is not that you just sit on your meditation mat radiating metta towards the world but keeping well out of the way of the world. It is that metta enters into your action and expresses itself in terms of non-violent action for the benefit of others."

(Sangharakshita)

"I like to walk alone on country paths, rice plants and wild grasses on both sides, putting each foot down on the earth in mindfulness, knowing that I walk on the wondrous earth. In such moments,

existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality. People usually consider walking on water or thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child – our own two eyes.”

(Thich Nhat Hanh)

“We are destined to share this planet together and as the world grows smaller, we need each other more than in the past. But, whether we are trying to reduce the nuclear threat, defend human rights or preserve the natural environment, it is difficult to achieve a spirit of genuine co-operation as long as people remain indifferent to the feelings and happiness of others. What is required is a kind heart and a sense of community, which I call universal responsibility.”

(His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In an address to 'Seeking the True Meaning of Peace', San Jose, Costa Rica. June 25-30 1989)

“Let him not destroy, or cause to be destroyed, any life at all, nor sanction the acts of those who do so. Let him refrain from even hurting any creature, both those that are strong and those that tremble in the world.”

(Sutta-Nipata.)

“He who, seeking his own happiness, punishes or kills beings who also long for happiness, will not find happiness after death.”

(Dhammapada)

“The whole planet groans under a massive disregard of ahimsa by the highly organised societies and corporate economies of the world.”

(Beat poet and Zen practitioner, Gary Snyder, A Place in Space p73)

“The rain has stopped, the clouds have drifted away,
and the weather is clear again.

If your heart is pure, then all things in your world are pure.

Abandon this fleeting world, abandon yourself,

Then the moon and flowers will guide you along the Way”

(Ryokan)

“Buddha Law

shining

in leaf dew”

(Issa)

“The man whose mind is rounded out to perfection
Knows full well
Truth is not cut in half
And things do not exist apart from the mind.
In the great Assembly of the Lotus all are present
Without divisions.
Grass, trees, the soil on which these grow
All have the same kinds of atoms.
Some are barely in motion
While others make haste along the path, but they will all in time
Reach the Precious Island of Nirvana.
Who can really maintain
That things inanimate lack Buddhahood?”
(Chan-Jan)

When Samavati, the queen-consort of King Udena, offered Ananda 500 garments, Ananda received them with great satisfaction. The king, hearing of it, suspected Ananda of dishonesty and asked what he would do with the garments.

Ananda replied, “Many of the brothers are in rags, I am going to distribute the garments among them.”

“What will you do with the old garments?”

“We will make bed-covers out of them.”

“What will you do with the old bed-covers?”

“We will make pillow-cases.”

“What will you do with the old pillow-cases?”

“We will make floor-covers out of them.”

“What will you do with the old floor-covers?”

“We will make foot-towels out of them.”

“What will you do with the old foot-towels?”

“We will use them for floor-mops.”

“What will you do with the old mops?”

“Your highness, we will tear them into pieces, mix them with mud, and use the mud to plaster the house walls.”

From Dhammapada Attakatha 1 (commentary to the Dhammapada)