

My Body is Mother Earth

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

(Sorry to pre-empt the converted! I just need to make the link between body and nature.) The abuse of nature did not really begin till the Industrial Revolution. These days it has been given a quantum burst with the doctrine of Consumerism with its dominant dogma that the growth of possessions, whether things or pleasure giving services, equals purpose of life – a belief held worldwide. Ever since humans have become truly self-conscious they created the other, be it the minerals of the earth, the plants and animals and have set about working with nature to make life safer and happier, alas virtually always for themselves. And the usual suspects – greed, aversion and fear – were soon manufacturing tools as weapons, grew food for warrior lords and trained animals for war. This was true for the time of the Buddha. However, where minerals were once extracted by hard labour, making them precious, giant machines now excavate in abundance and make them valueless. Where crops only grew by the sweat of the brow, giant machines now till and harvest and make food cheap and undervalued. Where once humans lived close to animals, smelled their sweat and knew their pain and valued their work, giant machines have replaced them. Now, save for working dogs, we keep them as sentimental pets (few pet owners acknowledge the huge slaughter of other animals to feed them) and, of course, we eat some with disarming indifference. How do we return to a relationship where we truly value minerals, plants and animals? One way to contact nature is through our very bodies. The Buddha asks us to contemplate the Four Elements. The Earth : the quality of weight, pressure; fire: the quality heat, cold and temperature; water: the quality of cohesion and fluidity; and air: the quality of movement. Sitting, standing or walking especially outside, find these qualities in the body and nature. The hardness of bones and brick or stone; the warmth in our bodies, of the sun or the coolness of the wind; the elasticity of the chest breathing or a branch swinging; the feeling of movement as the body walks or the flight of birds. This is how we actually experience the physical world, our earthiness. The wisdom that grows from the realisation that we are in and of nature, leads to a heart connection - nature as Mother Earth. We need only contemplate the minerals that make up the body, the food that keeps it alive, the air we breathe and the living beings, some that feed us, others that pollinate and those who make such glorious company – and all the microbes that live in our very bodies that manifest this symbiosis. We need to let it be deeply digested into the heart how mothering earth, moment after moment, gives birth to this body and how this body is utterly dependent on mothering earth. We are but one breath away from death! Truly this body is Mother Earth. I've tried to make myself more aware of this with a simple reminder derived from the verse about kamma: "This body is born of Mother Earth, dependent on Mother Earth, fed by Mother Earth. However I treat Mother Earth, it will be to my own benefit or harm." (The Kamma Verse: I am my own kamma, I am a heir to my kamma, I am born [in this life] from my kamma, I am the kinsman of my kamma, I am

protected by my kamma. Whatever kamma-s I shall do, kalyāṇa-s or pāpaka-s, I shall become their heir.

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