



Nature and Nonviolence, by Thich Nhat Hanh

You don't discriminate between the seed and the plant. You see that they 'inter-are' with each other, that they are the same thing. Looking deeply at the young cornstalk, you can see the seed of corn, still alive, but with a new appearance. The plant is the continuation of the seed.

The practice of meditation helps us to see things other people can't see. We look deeply and we see that father and son, father and daughter, mother and son, mother and daughter, corn seed and cornstalk, have a very close relationship. That is why we should awaken to the fact, to the truth, that we inter-are. The suffering of one is the suffering of the other. [...] When we see that we and all living beings are made of the same nature, how can there be division between us? How can there be lack of harmony? When we realize our 'interbeing nature', we'll stop blaming and exploiting and killing, because we know that we inter-are. That is the great awakening we must have in order for the Earth to be saved.

We human beings have always singled ourselves out from the rest of the natural world. We classify other animals and living beings as 'Nature', a thing apart from us, and act as if we're somehow separate from it. Then we ask, "How should we deal with Nature?" We should deal with Nature the same way we should deal with ourselves: nonviolently. Human beings and Nature are inseparable. Just as we should not harm ourselves, we should not harm Nature.

Causing harm to other human beings causes harm to ourselves. Accumulating wealth and owning excessive portions of the world's natural resources deprives fellow humans of the chance to live. Participating in oppressive and unjust social systems creates and deepens the gap between rich and poor, and aggravates the situation of social injustice. While the rest of the human family suffers and starves, the enjoyment of false security and wealth is a delusion.

It's clear that the fate of each individual is inextricably linked to the fate of the whole human race. We must let others live if we ourselves want to live. The only alternative to coexistence is co-nonexistence. A civilization in which we must kill and exploit others in order to live is not a healthy civilization. [...] To bring about peace within the human family, we must work for harmonious co-existence. If we continue to shut ourselves off from the rest of the world, imprisoning ourselves in narrow concerns and immediate problems, we're not likely to make peace or to survive. The human race is part of Nature. We need to have this insight before we can have harmony between people.

--Thich Nhat Hanh in "Nature and Nonviolence"

Published at www.awakin.org on May 22, 2012