

~ Embracing Our Responsibility to Nature ~

Mingyur Rinpoche

Hello! Happy Earth Day! Today is the day for our Mother Earth.

We learn through Earth, we survive on Earth, and Earth is the source of our life, actually. Our home is Earth, all the food comes from the Earth, and without all the Earth's elements, we cannot survive. So Earth is like a mother for all of us.

But especially nowadays, of course there is climate change, so we sometimes experience a lot of ups and downs, like with what we call "the four elements." There are ups and downs with the four elements sometimes. We have earthquakes. Recently we have had some earthquakes. As for wind, we have hurricanes and typhoons. Also, there are floods, and fires burning. A lot of those things happen.

I was born in the middle of the Himalayan mountains. There is a mountain, the eighth highest mountain in the world, called "Manaslu." When I was young, there was a glacier near my house, only a half-hour walk away. But I had not been to my hometown for 10–15 years, and then one day I went there and the glacier was all gone. There was a lake. I went to the lake and was really surprised. I could not touch my hand to the glacier anymore. There was dark blue rock around the lake. I looked for the glacier, and it was way up there. [Mingyur Rinpoche points up to his left.] Then I tried to go see the glacier by walking up there, and it took me two hours.

Of course, everything is impermanent, right? So, for me, at the beginning I was scared and a little bit angry, also. But then I understood that everything is impermanent, so now what is most important is what we can do. If we add one drop of water to the ocean, for as long as the ocean is there, the drop of water will also still be there. Similarly, whatever we can do from our side to help Mother

Earth, giving back to the Earth, is really important also. So, after that, we did a lot of social work and environmental work also to take care of the Earth.

Everybody on this planet — all of us are interdependent. We are all connected to each other. If everybody individually makes an effort, the world can transform, the Earth can transform, right? So what we are getting from Earth — from Mother Earth — we can see whatever we can give back to the Earth, according to our own capacity and possibilities. I think this is really important. Sometimes we lose hope. We think, “I am only one person and cannot change the world.” And then we give up. We should not give up.

Then, we should understand that everything is impermanent, changing. Impermanence does not always mean bad things. Impermanence means there are opportunities, potential.

For me, when I was young, my grandfather really liked dahlias. The root looks like a potato, and during the winter, we had to keep it beneath the earth. Otherwise it would freeze and become bad. So me and my grandfather — I was very excited — put it under the earth and put so much soil on top. In the spring, we were very excited, so we dug it up and planted it. Then in the middle of summer, the flower was almost about to bloom, but then suddenly a frost came and the whole flower died. I was expecting the flower to bloom tomorrow, but the next morning, it was all dead. And I cried. My grandfather said, “Oh, it is impermanent. It is okay. It will die, but that will become fertilizer, and it might be good for the soil for next time, and next year, a better flower can grow. It becomes like a cycle. Nothing is wasted.” Wow! That was a really good lesson for me.

So in my life, I try to see that with the ups and downs. Up, for me, is inspirational. I feel very happy. With the downs, I learn more, grow more. Sometimes obstacles become opportunities, and problems become solutions. In Tibet, there is a saying: “No mistake, no improvement. Repeating the same mistake, no improvement.”

The world is up and down, the Earth is up and down, the environment is up and down. Up is good. We feel happy about that. Gratitude! We

appreciate it. With downs, we learn. We grow. We transform, from obstacles becoming opportunities.

So do not give up hope. We can see whatever we want to change from an individual level, and how we can give back to the environment, also. We can try our best to do that. Also, we can transform kleshas, emotions, related with the environment and the Earth. We can also transform these into support for awareness, love and compassion, and wisdom.

So I hope we all learn from the Earth and also, whatever we can on our own level, give back to the Earth. Thank you.