

We are the world

[This is a spiritual exercise reflecting on our true nature that we are connected with one another and everything else. It is best heard rather than read. As such, you might like to read and record this passage for your own reflection, and in a quiet moment listen mindfully to it. This helps you to have a peaceful and clear mind. It can also be read to a sick or dying person for his or her peace of mind.]

There are four basic ways making us what we are. For simplicity, let us call them elements: they are the world or ecosystem we have created for ourselves.

We are each an ecosystem unto ourselves. The earth is our physical body. Water is our blood, sweat, tears, urine, and the liquid that we mostly are. Fire burns our inner engines, propelling us on, burning up food for energy, burning ourselves up for ourselves. We are the wind: we move. Everything in us is moving: our limbs move, our hearts beat. Our gullets push food and drink down into our bellies. There it churns itself and is then drunk by our bodies. Then it moves the other way down and out.

We are an ecosystem unto ourselves. Like all ecosystems, we are linked to others. The earth in our body is the same earth that we stand on: it supports us unconditionally, just as the trees grow on it, and myriad animals feed on it. The earth is all around us. The earth inside, the earth outside, is the same earth. It is cycling and recycling, perpetually moving, changing, within and without.

The water that is our body is the same water that falls from the heavens; that washes down mountains; that waters the fields; that feeds the plants; that fills the lakes, moves the rivers and fills the oceans. The water within, the water outside, is the same water. It is the water we clean and cool ourselves with; that we drink and quench our thirst. It is the water that flows through our bodily openings and pores back into the water cycle. Water is ever flowing, changing, within and without.

The fire that is our body, burning through the ages, is the same fire that as the stars, the sun's warmth, light and energy. It is in the green of plants and in every colour of life. It is the fire that, uncomplaining, devours everything it is fed. It cooks our food, and burns what we eat, and lights up our lives. It is the fire of decay: we age with it. We begin as a tiny spark like daybreak, then a twinkling star, bursting into a nebula, and then an adult galaxy, only to slowly cool into a white star in the western sky. Like the stars, we are ever burning, changing within and without.

We are an eternal cycle of moving things, never resting a moment, even when we sleep. Our bodies are in a state of ever moving, especially our breath. The wind from outside enters our noses and mouths, and descends into the lungs, to be absorbed into our blood and the rest of the body. Then out again the wind goes laden with bodily impurities. The wind that is our breath feeds us with life, and strengthens our minds. If we breathe rightly, it stills and clears our hearts, too.

The breath that we take, the breath that we give, it is the wind that is all around us. It moves through the windows of life down into all our vital organs, into every cell. And then out again through our system, back into the world outside. This breath is our life, truly and ever a friend, loyal from the start to the end. This is the same breath others

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breathe: those we love, those we hate, those we ignore. It is the breath of all bodily beings.

This breath is the door to our heart. A door that only opens with the key of inner stillness. It is a key we can and must seek for ourselves. This key is not seen by the eye, nor heard by the ear, nor smelt by the nose, nor tasted by the tongue, nor felt by the body. It is a key shaped by our heart, still with joy. It is an invisible key that only appears when we look deep into the living breath. When we look deep and gently, it opens the breath-door into our heart.

Once the breath-door is open, we cannot but enter. It is a world no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, can sense. There is no coming, no going, no standing. It is neither here, nor there, nor in between. There is no rising, no falling, no change. Here, earth, water, fire, and wind find no footing. There is no body to mind, nor any mind to embody.

Only when we return through the breath-door, back into our thoughts and feelings, that we know it is a truly profound bliss. Yet no word can fully describe this bliss. For words need thoughts, words need breaths. We have tasted a sweetness that is beyond both thought and breath. Now we see ourselves and the world anew in a joyful light that is truly still and clear.

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