

the mindfulness bell

Touching the Earth – Six Prostrations

By Thich Nhat Hanh in January 1994

We bow down to the Earth, fall deeply, as low as possible, and touch the Earth with our forehead. We empty ourselves, surrender ourselves in order to become one with the Earth. Then we can accept anything the Earth gives, everything that arises. Unafraid, we surrender completely to our own true nature.

1. In gratitude, I bow to all generations of ancestors in my blood family.

I see my father and mother, whose blood, flesh, and vitality are circulating in my own veins and nourishing every cell in me. Through them, I see all four of my grandparents. Their expectations, experiences, and wisdom have been transmitted from so many generations of ancestors. I carry in me the life, blood, experience, wisdom, happiness, and sorrow of all generations. The suffering and all the elements

that need to be transformed, I am practicing to transform. I open my heart, flesh, and bones to receive the energy of insight, love, and experience transmitted to me by all my ancestors. I see my roots in my father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, and all ancestors. I know that I am only the continuation of this ancestral lineage. Please support, protect, and transmit to me your energy. I know wherever children and grandchildren are, ancestors are there also. I know that parents always love and support their children and grandchildren, although they are not always able to express it skillfully because of difficulties they encountered. I see that my ancestors tried to build a way of life based on gratitude, joy, confidence, respect, and loving kindness. As a continuation of my ancestors, I bow deeply and allow their energy to flow through me. I ask my ancestors for their support, protection, and strength.

2. In gratitude, I bow to all generations of ancestors in my spiritual family.

I see in myself, my teacher, the one who shows me the way of love and understanding, the way to breathe, smile, forgive, and live deeply in the present moment. I see through my teacher all teachers over many generations, all bodhisattvas, and the Buddha Shakyamuni, the one who started my spiritual family 2,600 years ago. I see the Buddha as my teacher and also my spiritual ancestor. I see that the energy of the Buddha and of many generations of teachers have entered me and are creating peace, joy, understanding, and loving kindness in me. I know that the energy of the Buddha has deeply transformed the world. Without the Buddha and all these spiritual ancestors, I would not know the way to practice to

bring peace and happiness into my life and into the lives of my family and society. I open my heart and my body to receive the energy of understanding, loving kindness, and protection from the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha over many generations. am the continuation of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. I ask these spiritual ancestors to transmit to me their infinite source of energy, peace, stability, understanding, and love. I vow to practice to transform the suffering in myself and the world, and to transmit their energy to future generations of practitioners.

3. In gratitude, I bow to this land and all of the ancestors who made it available.

I see that I am whole, protected, and nourished by this land and all of the living beings who have been here, and, with all their efforts, made life easy and possible for me. I see George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, and all the others known and unknown. I see all those who have made this country a refuge for people of so many origins and colors, by their talent, perseverance, and love, those who have worked hard to build schools, hospitals, bridges, and roads, to protect human rights, to develop science and technology, and to fight for freedom and social justice. I see myself touching my ancestors of Native American origin who have lived on this land for such a long time and known the ways to live in peace and harmony with nature, protecting the mountains, forests, animals, vegetation, and minerals of this land. I feel the energy of this land penetrating my body and soul, supporting and accepting me. I vow to cultivate and maintain this energy and transmit it to future generations. I

vow to contribute my part in transforming the violence, hatred, and delusion that still lie deep in the collective consciousness of this society so that future generations will have more safety, joy, and peace. I ask this land for its protection and support.

4. In gratitude and compassion, I bow down and transmit my energy to those I love.

All the energy I have received I now want to transmit to my father, my mother, everyone I love, all who have suffered and worried because of me and for my sake. I know I have not been mindful enough in my daily life. I also know that those who love me have had their own difficulties. They have suffered because they were not lucky enough to have an environment that encouraged their full development. I transmit my energy to my mother, my father, my brothers, my sisters, my beloved ones, my husband, my wife, my daughter, and my son so that their pain will be relieved, so they can smile and feel the joy of being alive. I want all of them to be healthy and joyful. I know that when they are happy, I will also be happy. I no longer feel resentment towards any of them. I pray that all ancestors in my blood and spiritual families will focus their energies toward each of them, to protect and support them. I know that I am not separate from them. I am one with those I love.



drawing by Karen Holden

5. In understanding and compassion, I bow down to reconcile with all who have made me suffer.

I open my heart and send forth my energy of love and understanding to everyone who has made me suffer, to those who have destroyed much of my life and the lives of those I love. I know now that these people have

themselves undergone a lot of suffering and that their hearts are overloaded with pain, anger, and hatred. I know that anyone who suffers that much will make those around suffer. I know they may have been unlucky, never having the chance to be cared for and loved. Life and society have dealt them so many hardships. They have been wronged and abused. They have not been guided in the path of mindful living. They have accumulated wrong perceptions about life, about me, and about us. They have wronged us and the people I love. I pray to my ancestors in my blood and spiritual families to channel to these persons who have made us suffer, the energy of love and protection, so that their hearts will be able to receive the nectar of love and blossom like a flower. I pray that that person can be transformed so that he can experience the joy of living, so that he will not continue to make himself suffer, and make others suffer. I see his suffering and do not want to see the suffering continue any longer. I do not want to hold any feelings of hatred or anger in myself towards that person. I do not want that person to suffer. I channel my energy of love and understanding to him, and ask all my ancestors to help him.

6. In gratitude and compassion, I bow down to my ancient spiritual roots.

I see myself as a child, sitting in church or synagogue, ready for the sermon or ceremony—Yom Kippur, Holy Communion...I see my priest, pastor, minister, rabbi, and the people in the congregation. I remember how difficult it was to be there and to do things I did not understand or want to do. I know communication was difficult and I did not receive much joy or nourishment from these services. I

felt anxious and impatient. Because of the lack of communication and understanding between my spiritual family and me, I left my rabbi, my pastor, my synagogue, my church. I lost contact with my spiritual ancestors and became disconnected from them. Now I know there are jewels in my spiritual tradition, and that the spiritual life of my tradition has contributed greatly to the stability, joy, and peace of my ancestors for many generations. I know those who practice my spiritual tradition were unsuccessful in transmitting it to me, to us. I want to go back to them to rediscover the great spiritual values in my tradition, for my own nourishment and the nourishment of my children and their children. I want to connect again with my ancient spiritual ancestors and get their spiritual energy flowing freely to me again. I see Moses, Jesus, and so many others as my spiritual ancestors. I see teachers over many generations in these traditions as my spiritual ancestors, and I bow down to all of them in the present moment.



Author

Thich Nhat Hanh

Thich Nhat Hanh was a world-renowned spiritual teacher and peace activist. Born in Vietnam in 1926, he became a Zen...

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