



Food for Thought – A Vision Being Fulfilled



by Niánn Emerson Chase

I grew up on four different Indian reservations—Dulce of the Jicarilla Apache, White River of the White Mountain Apache, Sells of the Tohono O’Odham, and San Carlos of the San Carlos Apache, where I spent the rest of my childhood from fourth grade through high school. After earning a Bachelor’s degree from Arizona State University, I returned “home” to the San Carlos area to live and teach for about fifteen years.

Traditionally the Apache were hunters and gatherers rather than farmers, and the Tohono O’Odham were desert farmers in addition to hunting and gathering. Due to the policies and practices of the U.S. federal government for more than two centuries, the traditional ways of acquiring food for all indigenous tribes in the U.S. were banished when the native peoples were forced off of their homelands to live on designated reservations, often hundreds of miles from the bioregions where they were used to surviving. As a result, the various tribes were stripped of their identity as a people, and their food culture was destroyed as well as their overall health—both physical and psychospiritual.

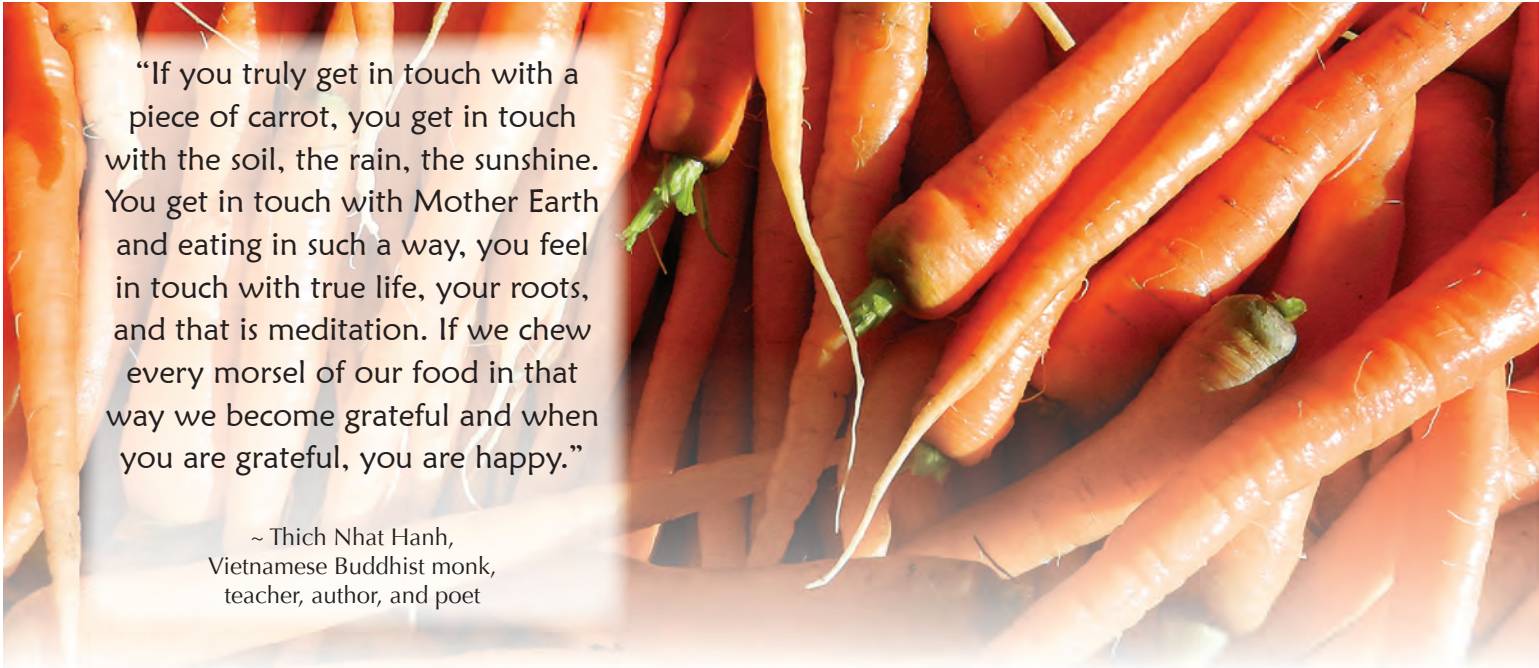
At San Carlos there were a few other white kids like me who joined the ranks of the Indian kids as my peers, and, interestingly, when I was about 12 years old the current popular derogatory term used by the white kids to insult each other was to call someone a *farmer*. Being a descendent of a long line of Midwestern farmers from my father’s side and loving to visit my grandparents’ small farm in Iowa during our summer vacations I did not understand at the time why being a farmer would be something to be ashamed about, so I never called someone a “farmer” with the purpose of insulting them.

“How we grow food has enormous effects on the environment—climate change as well as pollution of air, water, and soil.”

~ Marion Nestle,
Professor of Nutrition,
Food Studies, and Public Health

In retrospect, I now realize that from those white kids’ dominant-culture-oriented perspective, being a farmer and growing food was not the “in” thing to do in those times of increasing migration to urban centers for other types of jobs and the business of agriculture becoming continually more industrialized and corporatized. Though my father was not a farmer per se, he did remain in the field of dirt and growing food by having a profession as a soil conservationist, which involved teaching people how to revitalize depleted soil and how to graze livestock and grow food in a manner that enriched rather than eroded the soil. He was involved in showing others how to capture precious rain water in dry desert regions and how to conserve water usage and protect the quality of ground water.

At the end of his career, my father had become disenchanted with the policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other arms of the federal and state governments in the areas of land management, food production, food processing, and food distribution. He saw the devastating impact on his own parents and other family members who struggled to make a living as small, independent farmers, and he saw what decades of these practices had done to the Indian tribes who he had always admired and loved. He no longer wanted to be a part of something that did not have his values, and I personally think that is why he succumbed to cancer too soon in his life, for discouragement and disappointment can do that to a person.



“If you truly get in touch with a piece of carrot, you get in touch with the soil, the rain, the sunshine. You get in touch with Mother Earth and eating in such a way, you feel in touch with true life, your roots, and that is meditation. If we chew every morsel of our food in that way we become grateful and when you are grateful, you are happy.”

~ Thich Nhat Hanh,
Vietnamese Buddhist monk,
teacher, author, and poet

Recently I have renewed my interest in studying the Hopi prophecies, the ones that were given to the Hopi people around 1100 A.D. Specifically these particular prophecies predict the devastating impact that the invasive culture of European-based capitalism (which is now the dominant culture of most countries) would have on the native or “first” peoples of the Americas as well as on their brothers and sisters of many races from all parts of the world. These prophecies, many of which have already occurred or are happening now, specify what modernization and materialism would do to the well-being of the earth and its plant, animal, and human inhabitants IF the ways of the Creator were left out of this human-instigated procession of progress. Included in these predictions were World Wars I and II and a third one, which now seems to be on the brink of occurring in these politically perilous times.

I personally have seen how some of these prophecies have manifested on the reservations that were my home, and I most certainly have observed how the predictions of the dominant “white” culture has crept into the minds and hearts of the majority of people in this world, creating a restlessness and dissatisfaction that drives many to frenzied attempts to get more, no matter the cost to their health or to the health of others or to the life-giving ecosystems of our planet. In other words, the majority of people in the world have strayed from living in “the pattern of the Creator.”

The prophecies also predict the Time of Purification when every human will have to experience a soul cleansing, a change over, if he or she is to be part of the ascension from the current Fourth World/Cycle (with its disassociation from the ways of the Creator) to the Fifth World/Cycle of light and true life. In order for humans to survive the purification—which involves many earth changes and breakdowns of human institutions—they must re-

Slow Food is an international movement (started in Italy in 1986) that “is about more than food; it is about a lifestyle that connects our food consumption to the wider social, ethical, lifestyle, political, environmental and spiritual elements around us. Slow food is about taking the time needed to cook good food properly and recognizing that reliance on fast food [and fast living] damages our health, social fabric and cultural food traditions.”

~ www.wkhow.com

“Through our food choices we can collectively influence how food is cultivated, produced and distributed, and as a result bring about great change.”

~ slowfood.com

Food for Ascension is part of the Slow Food movement but goes further in exploring the truth that how we perceive and use food is closely linked to our personal psychospiritual states. As we begin to become awakened to our spirituality and divine administration principles applicable to every area of our lives, we awaken to the social, political, economic, religious, and other issues impacting the world that are out of divine pattern and what needs to be done to be restored to that path of the Universal Father/Mother.

turn to the right ways of living, including how to live in harmony with the ways of the Mother Earth and how to harvest her gifts that give us sustenance, nourishment, and healing. Instructions in how to do this are included with the prophecies and require leaving behind the destructive values and lifestyles of the dominant culture that most people desire and instead creating communities that live in respect and adherence to the laws of the Creator, as in times past. The prophecies say that only those who live as brothers and sisters in alliance with the spirit world of the Creator have a chance to survive the vast cleansing of the Purification and live in the new Fifth World/Cycle of light and life.

From the time I was able to roam the desert mesas as a child, I have known that there was a way to think, feel, and live that was in alignment with God, and I desired and determined to discover what the path meant for me. This path included many of the values and ways of my family home and my extended Apache family and friends—mostly comprised of commitment to living a loving life with others of kindred spirit in a clean, simple setting close to the natural world and enjoying food that was gathered and grown in a manner that benefitted the people eating it and the earth it came from. In other words, I envisioned living sustainably in every area of my life and sharing this way of divine pattern with all brothers and sisters in this world.

Now, daily I walk around Avalon Gardens and bask in my dream come

true. My home is housed in the “palm of God’s hand” in the Santa Cruz Valley of southern Arizona, surrounded by the nearby trio of mountains of the Santa Ritas, Tumacacori’s, and San Cayetano, with layers of other ranges of “purple mountain majesty” spreading out beyond them. My home is an intentional community of approximately 120 other extended “cosmic family” (with room for more) who have migrated from many parts of the world to gather together to help fulfill the mission that each of them have felt called by the Spirit to do. We think that we are part of “the gathering of the bird tribes” predicted by various individuals throughout the generations. In relation to the Hopi prophecies, it is said that those of “the good seed” from all colors and cultures will unite together to regain the pattern of the Creator on this world gone awry.

In my walk of communion with the Spirit, I stroll down lanes paralleling pastures that have been transformed from Bermuda grass into gardens with greenhouses, orchards, a food forest, and fields of heritage and heirloom grains, beans, and seeds that had once been grown by the indigenous and very early Euro-American immigrants in this bioregion. We, as a tribe of sorts, are continually attempting to think, feel, and do within the ways instructed by the Creator, which includes using the best that modern science has to offer and the best of the ancient and traditional ways—all within divine pattern.

Across the “big water” of an ocean and the homelands of other nations, in northern India is another group of kindred spirits who have gathered at a small 47-acre farm located between the Himalayan and Shivalik mountain ranges to grow traditional Indian foods, using both old and new methods that are sustainable and not destructive to the culture of the region’s people and the soil that had been successfully farmed for generations before the fields had been turned into sugar and eucalyptus plantations by multinational corporations. Similar to what has happened in southern Arizona (as well as many other regions worldwide), the influx of the dominating laws and practices of intensive corporate agriculture in this foodshed had depleted its soil of the richness it used to once have. Physicist and farmer Vandana Shiva founded the institute Navdanya that acquired the farmland about 20 years ago for Navdanya’s Biodiversity Conservation Farm. The farm has not only regenerated barren, degraded soil through the methods of agroecology and organic farming (as we have done at Avalon Gardens) but has transformed the foodshed into diversity again, rather than the monoculture of industrialized farming.

I like to think of that small community farm in northern India as a sister to Avalon Organic Gardens & EcoVillage here in southern Arizona. Besides rejuvenating soil and regional food cultures, we both use our sites as learning centers where people come to stay and immerse themselves in growing food sustainably, in harmony with the natural bioregion, as was done traditionally by the indigenous peoples of India and the Americas. Our brothers and sisters at the Navdanya farm in India discovered what we at Avalon Gardens realized—that traditional farming techniques retain soil structure, but industrialized, “modern” agriculture does not, which the Hopi prophecies include in their warnings and instructions concerning growing

food. However, land that was devastated by modern intensive agricultural practices and considered to be forever useless for agriculture can be transformed into the dynamic, living farms that grow a variety of food simply by using methods that are within divine pattern, including both ancient traditional methods as well as newer, more technological methods—all within the laws of the Creator that are always sustainable and health-promoting for all aspects of life.

The same principle applies to all life that has been destroyed or ruined in some manner by materialism, greed, and selfishness. Just as land can be restored to its former health and even improved upon, so can a human soul, who suffers dissonance and disassociation due to choosing the dominant culture’s values, be renewed if willing to go through the change-over process necessary to be rehabilitated and reconciled with the Creator. This purification process can be accelerated when living in an environment and culture that is conducive to what the individual is experiencing inwardly. In order to have a congruency of inner and outer reality, an individual must live in a culture that supports his or her values of reconciliation with divine pattern.



Aerial view of
Avalon Organic
Gardens & EcoVillage

“The word or prefix *eco* comes from the Greek word *oikos*, which means ‘home.’ Ecology is knowledge of home, an ability to read and understand the relationships of home. *Nomy* in Greek is ‘management.’ Hence *economy* is not the management of money, as capitalism leads us to believe, but the management of home—the organization and orientation of our relationship to place. Money is one way to measure economy, but why can’t our management of home be measured by other standards? What about health? Happiness? Well-being? When there is no knowledge of home, modern humans wander uprooted, homeless, eco-illiterate, alienated from the landscape and from one another. Mismanagement of home is the direct result, as painfully evident in our current ecological and economic crises.”

~ Adam Wolpert, “Cultivating An Old-Growth Community” from *The Occidental Arts and Ecology Center Cookbook*

As Hopi prophecies instruct, we sister farms—separated by an ocean and other countries but united in world-view, values, and lifestyle—cultivate community, living as members of the Earth community (that includes all aspects of the natural world of which we humans are a part) and as a community of people living together in harmony with each other and with the ways of the Creator. As we live and work together to grow food and build cultures congruent with healing and restoration of each other and the earth, we strive to share our discoveries and knowledge with others so that they too can take part in the Purification.

It is almost impossible to grow food and souls in ways that truly benefit humankind and the ecosystems of the world on your own. It does require coming together in community, in a union of souls, as is instructed in the Hopi prophecies and pulling away as much as possible from the dominant culture’s values and lifestyles. Even in a tight-knit community of dedicated people, the challenges are huge, and it takes commitment and wisdom to continue forward, in spite of the many disappointments and difficulties that emerge almost on a daily basis.

I am saddened by the recent closure of our neighbors’ Walking J Farm, managed by a couple who supplied the region with nutritious, organically-grown food. They wanted a lifestyle for their two children that was wholesome and more congruent with their values of being in harmony with the Earth. As what happened also with our other neighbors of the Agua Linda Farm, no matter how hard and smart you work in growing food and living more sustainably, the mainstream consciousness combats at every turn of the path small farmers’ attempts at making a living. The Hopi prophecies (given in 1100) warn of this reality and indicate that at some time in the future it will be impossible to live purely without the impact of the materialism of the dominant culture unless groups of people pull completely away from every influence that is not of divine pattern. And that’s a big order!



I'd like to share some of the wisdom of more contemporary Hopi elders:

You have been telling people that this is the Eleventh Hour, now you must go back and tell the people that this is the Hour. And there are things to be considered...

*Where are you living?
What are you doing?
What are your relationships?
Are you in right relation?
Where is your water?*

*Know your garden.
It is time to speak your truth.
Create your community.
Be good to each other.
And do not look outside yourself for your leader.*

Then he clasped his hands together, smiled, and said, "This could be a good time! There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly. Know the river has its destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water.

And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate. At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt.

The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! Banish the word "struggle" from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

We are the ones we've been waiting for.

~ Hopi Elders' Prophecy, June 8, 2000¹

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The theme of this issue of the *Alternative Voice* is "Food for Ascension," a concept coined by Gabriel of Urantia, co-founder of Avalon Organic Gardens & EcoVillage. Food for Ascension is about ethical, moral, and sustainable growing, producing, processing, distributing, and preparing food—literally addressing food issues from farm to fork. It is first a philosophy that is based on divine administration principles and is very much a part of the Slow Food Movement but goes beyond that movement in applying spiritual principles also. All articles in this issue reflect some aspect of Food for Ascension, and, with the exception of Lee Allen, all authors live in the community of Avalon Organic Gardens & EcoVillage. Feast at the table of their experiences, knowledge, and wisdom.

At

¹ <http://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=702#sthash.cnilfelo.dpuf>

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Renewing Our Vows

(for Amy Goldman)

by Brother Coyote

We gardeners, farmers, cooks and eaters
wish to affirm our sacred vows
to steward, love and serve
the astonishing diversity of food crops
and their ferment of cultures here on this earth,
through our wounded-ness and in health,
in times of crisis and in times of joy,
to sow the seeds of food justice,
to glean the fruits of food security,
to distill the wild brews of food democracy,
to savor the flavors of true food sovereignty,
through our own actions and our own eating patterns
so that we may all eat what we have heartily sown.

We hereby renew our covenant with this earth
to humbly become one more way that seeds themselves
regenerate into more seeds to nourish all of us.

Now go out to love one another, to sow,
reap and feast in peace.

from the book
Sown by Hand: Afflorisms, Poems and Prayers for Seeds,
published by The Canelo Project
and presented on the 33rd anniversary of
Seed Banks Serving People