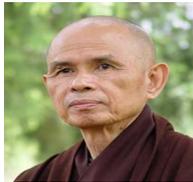




**WELCOME TO THE LOTUS BUD**  
a publication of the Lotus Buds Sangha, a community inspired by the Buddhist teachings of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh (below). We aspire to live fully in each moment for the peace and happiness of ourselves and all beings.

In this edition we are delighted to present more contributions from within the Sangha. It's great to see members of the Sangha sharing their thoughts with us all. Supporting each other and learning from members of the Sangha in this way is a means for us to grow personally and as a community.



**Gatha Practice** Gathas are short verses that help us practice mindfulness in our daily activities. A gatha can open and deepen our experience of simple acts which we often take for granted. When we focus our mind on a gatha, we return to ourselves and become more aware of each action. When the gatha ends, we continue our activity with heightened awareness.

As we turn on the water tap we can look deeply and see how precious the water is. We remember not to waste a single drop because there are so many people in the world who don't even have enough to drink. While brushing

our teeth we can make a vow to use loving speech.

***Brushing my teeth and rinsing my mouth  
I vow to speak mindfully and lovingly  
When my mouth is fragrant with right  
speech,  
A flower blooms in the garden of my  
heart***

Before turning on the engine of our car, we can prepare for a safe journey by reciting the gatha for starting the car:

***Before starting the car  
I know where I am going.  
The car and I are one,  
if the car goes fast, I go fast.***

The gatha brings our mind and body together. With a calm and clear mind, fully aware of the activities of our body, we are less likely to get into a car accident. Gathas are nourishment for our mind, giving us peace, calmness and joy which we can share with others. They help us to bring the uninterrupted practice of meditation into every part of our day. There are many gathas available in the booklet *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment*, often available in the Buddhist Library, as well as in the Plum Village Chanting Book.

## *What is “no-self”?*

The idea of “no-self” is one of the most difficult to understand in Buddhism. “No-self” means that there is no changeless, separate self. Everything is interconnected with everything else.

We tend to think of ourselves as being a changeless essence and as being separate from others. But we are not a changeless essence. Human beings, in common with all living organisms, are continually re-making, repairing and maintaining themselves. Our bodies are in a constant state of flux. Nor are we a separate self. Each of us is indeed a unique person and it is fine to recognize and appreciate who we are. But in reinforcing the separate identity of the self we fall out of sync with reality.



We are all connected in space. Life moves and transforms matter. No boundaries can be drawn between a living being and air, water, or soil, for we are the air, water, soil and remain so with every breath, drink and mouthful we take.

We are all connected in time. All humans share a common ancestor. Family trees do not spread out forever into the past. Tracing back thousands of years we reach a point where there would have been just a few members of the species, from whom all humans have descended.

Similarly, all living organisms share a common ancestor, for the great family tree of life would converge to a single trunk – perhaps some tiny living cell from the underworld that four billion years ago. Thus all living organisms are biological *kin*. All life forms are genetically related through shared evolutionary history.

The universal ancestor was a manifestation of life. The universal ancestor never died. It just keeps on manifesting in many and varied ways. We are manifestations of that same life – different manifestations of the universal ancestor.

Looking up at the pippala leaf imprinted against the blue sky Gautama could see that both the leaf and he had simply manifested – they had never been born and were incapable of ever dying. Both the pippala leaf and Gautama are diverse manifestations or continuations of the one thing - life.



Thich Nhat Hanh tells us that when we see that everyone and everything belongs to the same stream of life, our suffering will vanish. Suffering arises from reinforcing a separate identity out of sync with reality. He reminds us of the important point that no-self is not a doctrine or philosophy. It is an insight that can help us live more deeply, suffer less, and enjoy life much more. We need to live the insight of no-self.

~ **Rob Stevens**

## *Retreat of contrasts*

Heavy rain and strong winds contrasted with the peace and calm that venerables Thay Nguyen Hai and Thay Phap Hai brought to the Lotus Bud retreat in June. This was my first retreat with the Lotus Bud Sangha and I was curious as to what it would be like compared to other retreats. It was also my first encounter with monks from the Thich Nhat Hanh tradition.

The retreat gave me a deeper taste of the experience I have already come to know as part of the Lotus Bud Sangha. Each day started with a silent sitting meditation followed by a silent breakfast and mindful eating. This gave us a wonderful opportunity to touch the earth through the food we ate. To contemplate the origins of each ingredient and feel the love of those who had farmed and prepared the wonderful food for us. After the meal there was plenty of opportunity to talk to others and get to know people.

Our first walking meditation was in the meditation hall with the sounds of wind and rain outside providing a powerful setting for us to be mindful of our impermanence and interdependence. Like caterpillars we weaved our way around the hall deepening our awareness of ourselves and each other.

On the second day the weather cleared enough for us to walk outdoors into the bushland setting. Fresh and crisp after the rain the walk finished in a small clearing where we overlooked the valley and stretched our bodies in mindful movements. We enjoyed the sound of birds and a beautiful rainbow stretched across the valley.

The discussion groups gave us an opportunity to know others more intimately and to share our experiences and concerns. Our workgroups gave us the opportunity to perform simple tasks together. Whether cleaning the kitchen or the toilets this was an opportunity to practice humility and kindness for each other. The ceremony for the taking of the 5 mindfulness trainings and the 14 mindfulness trainings was moving and inspiring. We were all touched by the simplicity of the ceremony and by the strength of aspiration in those who participated.



In our final activity for the retreat we gathered in a large circle and shared small cakes and tea. Sangha members contributed songs, poems, stories or anecdotes about the retreat or their experiences on the path. I realised that it was pointless to compare retreats and that each one offered a special opportunity to deepen my practice and wisdom.

I learned a little bit more about leaving behind my judgemental and comparing mind and to open fully to the experience that each moment presents. In doing so I found the retreat to be a reflection of my own openness and willingness to see, and I left with a desire to bring the retreat into my daily life and return again to continue to open to the dharma that the retreat offers.

~ **Andrew Condell.**

## *HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOTUS BUD*

If you have something you would like to contribute to *The Lotus Bud* please offer it to Chris Barker in the following ways:

- \* In person at the Wednesday night group
- \* By e-mail to: [cbarker@uow.edu.au](mailto:cbarker@uow.edu.au)
- \* By post to: Chris Barker, Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, NSW 2500

Please write an account of your practice, a poem, pass on news or anything else that inspires you. Contributions can be short or long but need to be under 500 words.



*Our Main Activities* See: <http://www.lotusbudsangha.org/>

### **Mindfulness Meditation Class**

Every Wednesday night of the week we welcome all to come join us for a dharma talk and meditation practice at the Buddhist Library.

### **Mindfulness Days - monthly**

Once a month we offer a day of mindful practice and contemplation. The day normally consists of chanting sitting meditation, outdoor walking meditation (If weather permits), a dharma talk and lunch.

### **Mindfulness Trainings Recitation Days - second monthly**

As well as integrating meditation and Mindful Living in our days, our dedicated members take on further commitments and vows by upholding the 5 Mindfulness Trainings and/or the 14 Mindfulness Trainings.

## *What's On in SEPTEMBER?*

*Mindfulness Meditation on Wednesday Nights – current theme is Cultivating the Mind of Love.*

7:30. Buddhist Library, 90 Church Street, Camperdown Sydney.

Sunday 9th September *Mindfulness Day*: 14 Maitland Avenue, Kingsford.

Sept 29th-Oct 1<sup>st</sup>. We hope to organise Mindfulness day's over this weekend. Please see <http://www.loutusbudsangaha.org> for details.