



THE LOTUS BUD

Newsletter of the Lotus Buds Sangha ~ Issue No 4, November 2007



Walking meditation

Wherever we walk, we can practice meditation. This means that we know that we are walking. We walk just for walking. We walk with freedom and solidity, no longer in a hurry. We are present with each step. And when we wish to talk we stop our movement and give our full attention to the other person, to our words and to listening.

Walking in this way should not be a privilege. We should be able to do it in

every moment. Look around and see how vast life is, the trees, the white clouds, the limitless sky. Listen to the birds. Feel the fresh breeze. Life is all around and we are alive and healthy and capable of walking in peace.

Let us walk as a free person and feel our steps get lighter. Let us enjoy every step we make. Each step is nourishing and healing. As we walk, imprint our gratitude and our love on the earth.

We may like to use a gatha as we walk. Taking two or three steps for each in-breath and each out-breath,

Breathing in "I have arrived";

Breathing out "I am home"

Breathing in "In the here";

Breathing out "In the now"

Breathing in "I am solid";

Breathing out "I am free"

Breathing in "In the ultimate";

Breathing out "I dwell"

WHO WE ARE

The Lotus Buds Sangha is a community inspired by the Buddhist teachings of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh (pictured below).

We aspire to live fully in each moment for the peace and happiness of ourselves and all beings. We meet regularly to observe the art of mindful living and to foster a supportive community of practitioners.

We meet at 7:30 pm each Wednesday at Buddhist Library, Church Street, Camperdown, Sydney.



www.lotusbudsangha.org



Flowers

Humans are drawn to and fascinated by flowers. The love of flowers is almost universal. Flowers have a special place in many religious traditions. Jesus said “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

Flowers have a special place in Buddhism. Flowers were silent witnesses to the birth of the Buddha. The Buddha was born in the shade of a flowering tree. The Buddha awakened under a tree, a flowering plant. The Buddha is said to have given a “silent dharma talk” once during which he held up a flower and gazed at it.

The lotus flower is the symbol of Buddhism. The opening of the lotus bud, from which our sangha derives its name, is a symbol of awakening – an inner flowering. When we greet each other we offer each other a lotus and say silently “A lotus to you, a Buddha to be”.

Flowers are great dharma teachers. The Diamond Sutra seeks to free us from all notions and concepts - to relax

our mental grip on the world. There are four notions we have to examine carefully: self, person, living being and life span. Contemplating a flower can help free us from these notions.

Self

We know that a flower is made only of non-flower elements, like sunshine, earth, water, and space. All these things come together to bring about the presence of one flower. If we are aware that the self is made of non-self elements we will never be enslaved by the notion of self.

Person

We can see flowers in persons. Humans co-evolved with flowers. We would not be here if it were not for flowering plants. By producing sugars and proteins to entice animals to disperse their seeds, the flowering plants multiplied the world’s supply of food, making possible the rise of large warm blooded mammals – including humans.

We can see persons in flowers. We can see in a wildflower the sense of beauty of the pollinator that the flower seeks to attract. Flowers are windows into the mind of insects, birds and bats. Look into a domesticated flower and you see a human mind.

Living being

No boundaries can be drawn between a living flower and sunshine, rain, and air. Similarly no boundaries can be drawn

between us and air, water or soil. Whatever we do to the air, water, soil, and energy we also do to ourselves because there is no separation.

Life span

Look into the heart of a flower and you see contending energies of creation and dissolution. Look even deeper and you see the unity of these energies – in one life energy. Look into the flower and you can see that the disintegration of your body does not touch you, just as when the plum blossom falls it does not mean the end of the plum tree.

Rob Stevens

**Now is the moon of the moulting
in the shadowy corner
furled on itself
in layers, muffling sound
one light feather
arcs groundward
pushed out by the sky’s swirl
and the nub of the new one
pressing under skin.**

**Now is the moon of the nut
tightly held and armoured
sweetening in secret
swelling on fingertip branches
imploring the clouds
one small leaf
drifts downward
released from the tree’s hold
and, laying down, exhaling,
feeding the earth.**

Joanna Durney

poem

Aim-less-ness

One of the concluding ideas in the Prajnaparamita (the Heart Sutra) is that there is "no attainment". I don't think this means that we can't have goals - having goals is part of being human - but I do think it means that we should try not to be attached to these goals. The Third Door of Liberation - Aimlessness is the practice of "no attainment" or non-attachment to goals.

I've been grappling with aimlessness every Wednesday for the past few years. On the other working days of the week I'm a computer programmer managing a team of programmers. This is a very goal directed world where everything has to be done correctly and at the right time so that the software is ready for clients when they need it. On Wednesdays I'm lucky enough to spend the day at home with my two-year-old Luke. He has a very non-goal directed world, you could call it a world of aimlessness and this is where my worlds collide.

Initially on Wednesdays I tried to stay goal directed, focused on the tasks I wanted to do. My partner and I are in the process of preparing to build our house so there is plenty to do, like finishing the driveway plans or phoning various contractors. This meant I tried to manage or distract Luke so I could do my tasks. For example I might say: "Why don't you play with your trains", or: "Where's your ball? I think I saw it outside...".

This was always tiring, frustrating and in the end I realized it was crazy since the reason I was at home on Wednesdays was to be with Luke.

So I decided to try a different approach and instead let Luke call the shots. I would try to listen, observe and follow along with what he wanted.

So we would end up reading a story on the floor, calling the dog next door, playing chasings, running up and down the driveway for no apparent reason or playing horses.

To my surprise I discovered the joy of aimlessness. It gave me time to sit and watch the birds, lie on the grass and look up at the trees and clouds, to be open to experience, very similar to outdoor walking meditation but through play - you could call it playing meditation.

I also learnt the joy of staying with something and not rushing off. One day Luke wanted to go on the swing in the park. After about 5 minutes I said: "Would you like to go on the slide now?" but Luke said: "No, I want to swing". After 10 minutes I was thinking he should really get off to let other kids have a turn, but decided not to push it and instead just wait and follow my breathing.

When I stopped worrying about the next activity I started to observe things. I noticed



he was tensing up as he came to the top of each swing and for the first time I realized he was experiencing losing his stomach and remembered that feeling from my own childhood. I felt the warmth of the sun on my back. I listened to the other kids on the swings and enjoyed their warmth and openness, their uninhibited laughter. In the end I was very glad that Luke had stayed on the swing and had also helped me to stay in the present moment.

After Wednesdays I often used to think: "I've done absolutely nothing" (as in achieved none of my tasks) but now I realise: "I've actually done everything". By being open to reality in the present moment I have experienced everything through inter-being. I have touched the ocean through clouds, forests and streams through birds, compassion through patting the dog next door, creativity through laughter, touched my own childhood in games and the future generation through smiles. Now I'm very happy I have my Wednesdays with Luke and that I have this little bit of aimlessness in my life.

Philip Rutherford

"...Form is emptiness and emptiness is form, form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness."

*Extract from the The Heart of the Prajnaparamita
Translated by Thich Nhat Hanh*

Our main activities

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.



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
- 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 600 words.

What's on in NOVEMBER

Mindfulness Meditation on Wednesday night
- current theme is Cultivating
the Mind of Love.

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

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11th November *Mindfulness Day*.
Details TBA-see website

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18th November *Half Day of Mindfulness*
1 The Avenue, Hurlstone Park.

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25th November Ancestral Teachers
Ceremony Details TBA-see website

