



THE LOTUS BUD

Magazine of Mindful Living ~ Issue No 10, June 2008

The heart of the Buddha's teaching

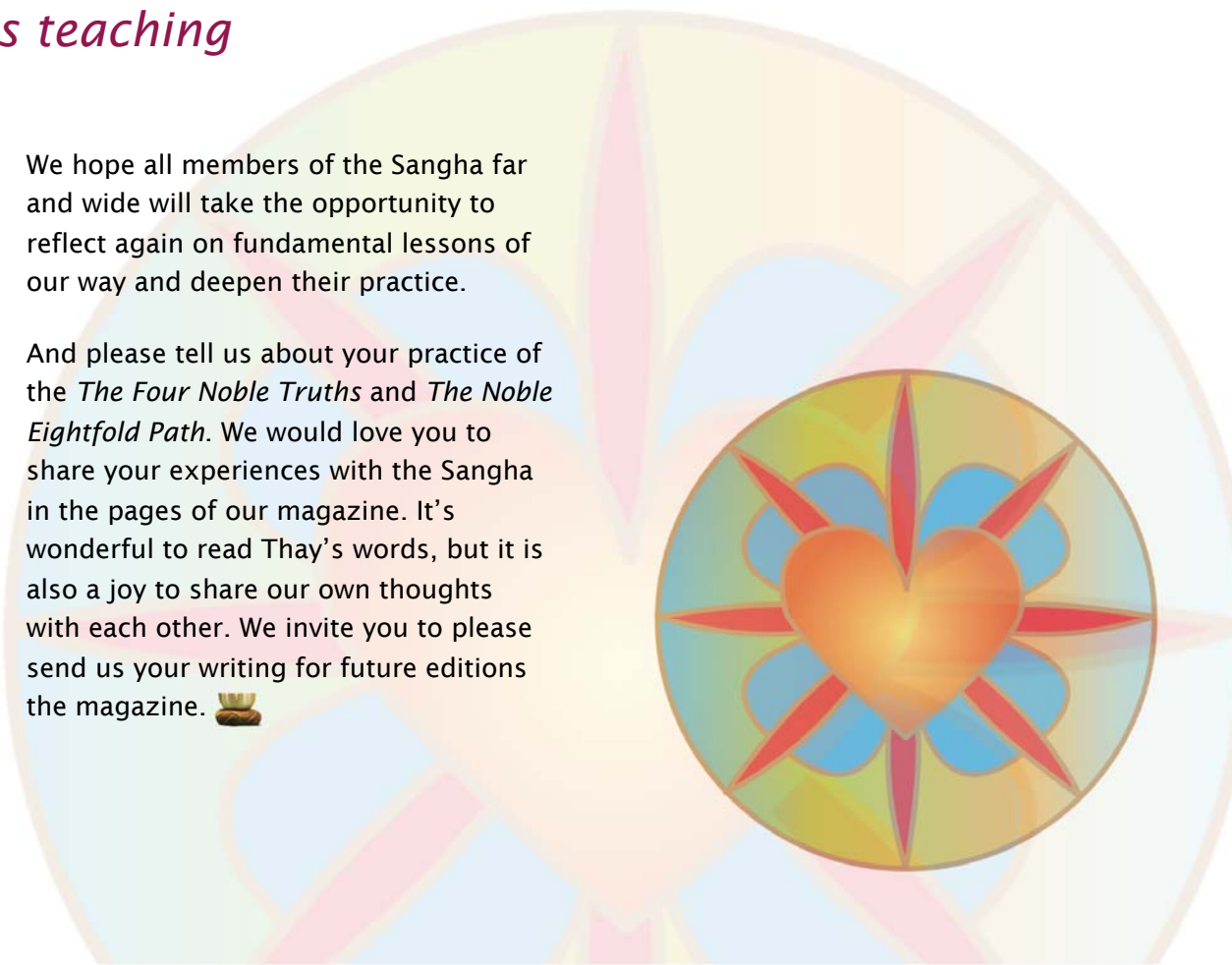
Dear Sangha,

The Wednesday evening group is going back to basics. Over the next few weeks we will be contemplating Thay's presentation of the Buddha's first teachings: *The Four Noble Truths* and *The Noble Eightfold Path*. Many of us will have read these teachings before but we know that there is always something new and enlightening to be found. For Sangha members who have not encountered these teachings, this is an opportunity to grasp the very foundations of Buddhism. 🙏

To coincide with our Wednesday meditations we are reproducing edited extracts from Thich Nhat Hanh's book '*The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*' (New York: Broadway Books, 1999). You don't have to attend on a Wednesday to benefit from the wisdom of Thay's writing.

We hope all members of the Sangha far and wide will take the opportunity to reflect again on fundamental lessons of our way and deepen their practice.

And please tell us about your practice of the *The Four Noble Truths* and *The Noble Eightfold Path*. We would love you to share your experiences with the Sangha in the pages of our magazine. It's wonderful to read Thay's words, but it is also a joy to share our own thoughts with each other. We invite you to please send us your writing for future editions the magazine. 🙏



The Four Noble Truths

The First Noble Truth is suffering (*dukkha*). The root meaning of the Chinese character for suffering is "bitter." Happiness is sweet; suffering is bitter. We all suffer to some extent. We have some malaise in our body and our mind. We have to recognize and acknowledge the presence of this suffering and touch it. To do so, we may need the help of a teacher and a *Sangha*, friends in the practice. 🧘

The Second Noble Truth is the origin, roots, nature, creation, or arising (*samudaya*) of suffering. After we touch our suffering, we need to look deeply into it to see how it came to be. We need to recognize and identify the spiritual and material foods we have ingested that are causing us to suffer.

The Third Noble Truth is the cessation (*nirodha*) of creating suffering by refraining from doing the things that make us suffer. This is good news! The Buddha did not deny the existence of suffering, but he also did not deny the existence of joy and happiness. If you think that Buddhism says, "Everything is suffering and we cannot do anything about it," that is the opposite of the Buddha's message. The Buddha taught us how to recognize and acknowledge the presence of suffering, but he also taught the cessation of suffering. If there were no possibility of cessation, what is the use of practicing? The Third Truth is that healing is possible.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the path (*marga*) that leads to refraining from doing the things that cause us to suffer. This is the path we need the most. The Buddha called it the Noble Eightfold Path. The Chinese translate it as the "Path of Eight Right Practices": Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. (*The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* Pages 9-11) 🧘



image by James G. Lochtefeld

Is everything suffering?

If we practice identifying the causes of our suffering we will see that sometimes it is due to craving and sometimes it is due to other factors. To say, "Life is suffering" is too general. To say that craving is the cause of all our suffering is too simplistic. We need to say, "The basis for this suffering is such and such an affliction," and then call it by its true name. If we have a stomach ache, we need to call it a stomach ache. If it is a head ache, we need to call it a head ache. How else will we find the cause of our suffering and the way to heal ourselves? 🧘

It is true that the Buddha taught the truth of suffering, but he also taught the truth of "dwelling happily in things as they are". To succeed in the practice, we must stop trying to prove that everything is suffering. In fact, we must stop trying to prove anything. If we touch the truth of suffering with our mindfulness, we will be able to recognize and identify our specific suffering, its specific causes, and the way to remove those causes and end our suffering. (*The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* Pages 23) 🧘

Stopping, calming, resting, healing

Buddhist meditation has two aspects — *shamatha* and *vipashyana*. We tend to stress the importance of *vipashyana* ("looking deeply") because it can bring us insight and liberate us from suffering and afflictions. But the practice of *shamatha* ("stopping") is fundamental. If we cannot stop, we cannot have insight.

We have to learn the art of stopping — stopping our thinking, our habit energies, our forgetfulness, the strong emotions that rule us. When an emotion rushes through us like a storm, we have no peace. We turn on the TV and then we turn it off. We pick up a book and then we put it down. How can we stop this state of agitation? How can we stop our fear, despair, anger, and craving? We can stop by practicing mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful smiling, and deep looking in order to understand. When we are mindful, touching deeply the present moment, the fruits are always understanding, acceptance, love, and the desire to relieve suffering and bring joy. (*The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* Pages 24-25) 🧘

The Buddha taught many techniques to help us calm our body and mind and look deeply at them. They can be summarized in five stages:

- (1) *Recognition* — If we are angry, we say, "I know that anger is in me."
- (2) *Acceptance* — When we are angry, we do not deny it. We accept what is present.
- (3) *Embracing* — We hold our anger in our two arms like a mother holding her crying baby. Our mindfulness embraces our emotion, and this alone can calm our anger and ourselves.
- (4) *Looking deeply* — When we are calm enough, we can look deeply to understand what has brought this anger to be, what is causing our baby's discomfort.
- (5) *Insight* — The fruit of looking deeply is understanding the many causes and conditions, primary and secondary, that have brought us about our anger, that are causing our baby to cry. Perhaps our baby is hungry. Perhaps his diaper pin is piercing his skin. Our anger was triggered when our friend spoke to us meanly, and suddenly we remember that he was not at his best today because his father is dying. We reflect like this until we have some insights into what has caused our suffering. With insight, we know what to do and what not to do to change the situation. (*The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* Pages 26). 🧘

Realizing well-being

Please ask yourself:

What nourishes joy in me?

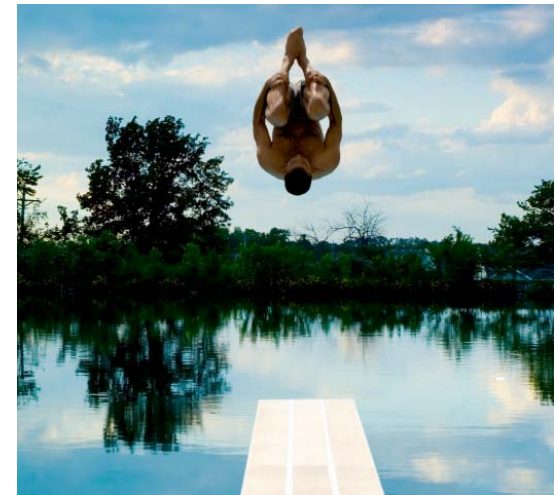
What nourishes joy in others?

Do I nourish joy in myself and others enough?

These are questions about the Third Noble Truth. The cessation of suffering — well-being — is available if you know how to enjoy the precious jewels you already have.

You have eyes that can see, lungs that can breathe, legs that can walk, and lips that can smile.

When you are suffering, look deeply at your situation and find the conditions for happiness that are already there, already available. (*The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* Pages 41). 🧘



WHO WE ARE

The Communities of Mindful Living are inspired by the Buddhist teachings of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh (pictured).



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. 🍵

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Our main activities

Wednesday Mindfulness Meditation at Camperdown

We welcome all to come join us for meditation practice - We meet at 7:30 pm each Wednesday at the Buddhist Library, Church St, Camperdown, Sydney.

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.

How to contribute to *The Lotus Bud*

In person at the Wednesday night group

- By e-mail to: cbarker@uow.edu.au
- By post to: Chris Barker, Faculty of Arts, Uni of Wollongong, 2500

Contributions can be short or long but need to be under 600 words.

Reading bell

As you read this magazine you have an opportunity to go back to the present moment.

You will notice a bell: 🍵 throughout the magazine.

When you come to each bell, you may like to stop reading, clear your mind and return to your breath before continuing.

Coming events...

Sunday June 15th
Half Day of Mindfulness
at 1 The Avenue, Hurlstone Park
9.30am start to 1.30am finish
(shared veg lunch)
Contact: John Barclay
ph: 9559 8805