



THE LOTUS BUD

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*I have arrived,
I am home*

I have arrived,
I am home.
In the here,
In the now.
I am solid,
I am free.
In the ultimate
I dwell.

Image by WTL Photos

When we practice this gatha, happiness can be there right away. If we don't have happiness it's because we haven't succeeded in arriving and coming home.

Once we have arrived, once we've come home, then we're successful, and we have happiness right away. To be solid and free means we have stability and we're not pulled away by the past or the future; we have freedom. 🍵

Stability and freedom are the two characteristics of happiness and of nirvana. Coming back to take refuge means coming back to the present moment and taking refuge in the island of self. This island is our mindfulness, our breathing, and our steps.

Mindfulness of our breath and our steps is something very concrete that we can take refuge in. 🍵

Please write these eight words and hang them somewhere you will see them: "Wherever you are, you are your true person." You can write them on a small piece of paper, the size of a credit card,

that you put in your wallet to take out as a reminder. If you can practice these eight words, you are worthy of being Master Linji's student and his continuation.

Master Linji taught us that we have to use our bright shining mind to come back to the present moment and enter the world of the ultimate, the realm of the Buddha, the Pure Land.

With mindful breathing, mindful walking, and these gathas to help us come back to our true self, we can be the 'businessless person' with nothing to do but hold the hand of the Buddha and roam. 🍵

Extract from: Thich Naht Hahn (2007) 'Nowhere to go: Nothing to do'. Parallax Press.

My Plum Village

I have aspired to visit Plum Village and this year I was able to attend the first week of the summer retreat. I hoped to strengthen my practice and to experience Thay's teachings first hand. But like any new experience I had mixed feelings; I was excited but also a touch anxious. I had feelings of trepidation about journeying to Plum village alone with my less than perfect French.

I committed myself to mindfulness throughout the journey. Rather than dwelling on every single facet of my trip and worrying about every possible disaster - a sure fire recipe for anxiety-I concentrated on what I was doing now, and the next step, rather than projecting into the future. One step at a time as the old adage goes- or better still, 'peace is every step' 🧘

And it worked: I arrived in Plum Village less anxious than usual and with a sense of achievement. Step by mindful step I had negotiated my way across the world to the 'home' of our teacher.

I joined the 'Coconut family', an English speaking group that as it turned out contained no one who actually lived in England! We were a group of Australians, Americans, Irish, Israeli's, Germans and Spanish. This coming together of the peoples of the world was one of the joys of Plum Village, but also one of its challenges. I had expected a quieter and more contemplative atmosphere but here I was in the midst of an international festival. I stayed at Upper Hamlet with 300

hundred others. I needed to adjust my expectations and live with that reality.

I sometimes find functioning in groups of people confronting. I have a tendency to be either very quite and 'disappear' or to become rather loud and over assertive. I was committed to finding a middle way and made this the focus of my practice, which led me to feel comfortable with my interactions in the group. In doing so I gained a greater appreciation of why Thay insists that the path of mindfulness cannot be a solitary one but must always involve others. 🧘



A Plum Village day includes Dharma talks by Thay and other monastics; walking meditation; family Dharma discussions and working mediation. It was a pleasure to walk in the beautiful countryside and a joy to hear Thay talk in person. But I was nonetheless reminded of the need for our practices to be quite ordinary. Two things brought this to my attention.

Thay led us in a walking meditation, which included a steep incline. It was hot and at the top of the hill he sat under a tree to admire the sweeping view. Many of us followed suit and sat down, our gaze directed towards Thay. Then it occurred to me: Thay is cool and enjoying the view. I am hot and looking at him. And so I moved into the shade and contemplated the green rolling vineyards that lay before me. 🧘

My second lesson was the importance of our own Sangha. On many occasions I was told by friends that they loved coming to Plum Village but found it hard to maintain their practices when they returned home because they did not have a local Sangha. I reflected on how lucky I was to be a part of a Sangha that is a piece of Plum Village in Sydney.

I was reading Thay's book '*Nowhere to Go; Nothing to Do*'; his commentaries on Master Lin Chi, a ninth century Chinese Zen teacher. For me the central message was one of 'non-attainment'-What it is you lack? asks Lin Chi. We are already the spaciousness of mind and the capacity for mindfulness that constitutes being awake. The teachings of Buddhism are 'pointing at the moon'; they are skilful means for waking us up once more and our practice is to keep finding ways to do so. 🧘

And so I tried to stay in the present and deal with what need to be done in that moment. I tried to return to my breath and to that calm spaciousness where I know I can touch the peace within me.
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Smiling Heart Sangha

Annette from the Smiling Heart Sangha in the Blue Mountains recently visited the Tay Linh temple in Vietnam where she learned of the centre for disabled and orphaned children that they run. The Smiling Heart Sangha then donated funds to assist the nun's work. Sister Chan Nhu Minh of the Tay Linh temple wrote:

"We felt so touched when we heard from Ann that the Smiling Heart Sangha has contributed some charitable money to help our centre. We will use the money you gave to feed the students here, so they can continue to live and study.

On behalf of all the teachers and students I thank you wholeheartedly. I wish you great health and joy in life". 🙏

And she offered this poem:



Compassion Nurtures Life

With our empty hands
and warm heart
We are bringing hope
To the poor
To the unfortunate

There is something
for you elder brother,
for you elder sister,
for you younger sister,
and for all human beings. 🙏

We have warm hearts
We have our hands
Our hearts love
Our hands are dedicated
To all human beings

Assisting the suffering
We help a younger sister
to stand up
We hold the hands
of an elder sister
We share with a brother

Compassion nurtures life
Joy and forgiveness heal
So much pain and hurt
In our poor and hungry country

With our hands and hearts
Let's gather our strength and work
Let's light the candle of
compassion and understanding
And warm thousands of hearts. 🙏

Thich Nu Nhu Minh

And I tried to remain open to what might arise with nothing particular to do. And so it was that the highlight of my stay in Plum Village came to me out of the blue.

Each week Plum Village has 'lazy day' when there are no formal organised practices. At one point I went to the mediation hall in search of a moment of peaceful sitting. Within five minutes the hall was "invaded" by 25 people taking a class in harmonic singing. By initial reaction was consternation- irritation-but then I thought ah well, 'no where to go nothing to do', why not join in. I learned how to do basic harmonics and I thoroughly enjoyed the practice. I found myself able to 'let go;' into my own voice (I am often rather restrained and self conscious about singing) and experienced it as a really deep and profound moment of mindfulness. If we can let go of our expectations of how things 'should be' and open to how to how they actually are, we may get a wonderful surprise. 🙏

*Chris Barker
True Dwelling of the Mind*



Image from www.plumvillage.org

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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www.lotusbudsangha.org

All images for this issue found on www.flickr.com

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 September 21st
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