



THE LOTUS BUD

Magazine of Mindful Living ~ Issue No 18, May 2009

Dear Friends,

The Lotus Buds Sangha marked the Easter period with a four-day retreat at the beautiful bush setting of Camp Coutts, Waterfall. The retreat was led by Thay Phap Dang and Sister Tu Ngheim whose presence endowed the occasion with a very special feeling. It is a joy to sit with monastics practicing in the tradition of our teacher Thich Naht Hanh.

The theme of the retreat was 'Live Your Life Deeply'. We sat in stillness and walked in mindfulness. We breathed and knew we were alive. We ate, worked and sang as a community and we shared our understandings of the teachings offered to us. It felt like Plum Village, New South Wales. 🧘

Since everyone who participated will have taken something unique from the retreat, any account is necessarily a personal one.

This year I decided to camp, and I am glad that I did. The weather was benign and the landscape simultaneously awe inspiring and calming. I felt closer to the earth as I walked mindfully through the red gums and eucalyptus. I listened to the gentle sound of water flowing by and my heart settled, which enabled me to benefit more fully from the practices and teachings offered by Thay. 🧘



I especially enjoyed the early morning sittings. I felt a sense of peace as we walked in silence towards the meditation hall and sat together in semi-darkness while Thay Phap Dang and Sister Tu Ngheim chanted in the new dawn. I experienced a strong sense of the being in the present moment as the soft pink sun rose over the bush to welcome a new day.

*Waking up this morning I smile
Twenty-four brand new hours
before me
I am committed to living fully in
each moment
And looking on all beings with
the eyes of compassion.* 🧘

The most powerful teachings appear as clear and effortless. I was taken with Thay's reminder to us that the practices of Plum Village are marked by a lightness of touch. I wonder sometimes

Continued over the page...

if I practice with too serious a face and so it is good to be reminded that the practice is meant to bring peace and joy. And as Thay suggested, at their core the practice is simple; there is breathing; there is sitting and there is walking.

As we practice so we develop our mindfulness, our concentration and our insights that enable us to bring about transformation and peace. 🧘

Chris Barker

Why not share your experience of the retreat with us, or any aspect of your practice?

We would love to hear from you with contributions short and tall. We would love to see the 'magazine' develop into a space of sharing within the Sangha.

We welcome contributions from those of you who practice in the tradition wherever and whenever that may be.

The Four Establishments of Mindfulness

On a Wednesday evening we have been using 'The Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness' (Satipatthana Sutta) to give focus to our practice and to deepen our understanding of the teachings. In last magazine we read Thay's teaching on the first establishment of mindfulness, mindfulness of the body in the body. Below for your consideration is an extract from his writing on the second establishment is mindfulness.

Mindfulness of Feelings in the Feelings

The second establishment is mindfulness of the feelings in the feelings. The Abhidharma authors listed fifty-one kinds of mental formations. Feelings (vedana) is one of them. In us, there is a river of feelings in which every drop of water is a different feeling. To observe our feelings, we just sit on the riverbank and identify each feeling as it flows by and disappears. Feelings are either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. 🧘

When we have a pleasant feeling, we may have a tendency to cling to it, and when we have an unpleasant feeling, we may be inclined to chase it away. But it is more effective in both cases to return to our breathing and simply observe the feeling, identifying it silently: "Breathing in, I know a pleasant (or unpleasant) feeling is in me. Breathing out, I know there is a pleasant (or unpleasant) feeling in me." Calling a feeling by its name, such as "joy," "happiness," "anger," or "sorrow," helps us identify

and see it deeply. Within a fraction of a second, many feelings can arise. 🧘

If our breathing is light and calm – a natural result of conscious breathing – our mind and body will slowly become light, calm, and clear, and our feelings also. Our feelings are not separate from us or caused just by something outside of us. Our feelings are us, and, for that moment, we are those feelings. We needn't be intoxicated or terrorized by them, nor do we need to reject them. The practice of not clinging to or rejecting feelings is an important part of meditation. If we face our feelings with care, affection, and nonviolence, we can transform them into a kind of energy that is healthy and nourishing. When a feeling

Continued over the page...



arises, Right Mindfulness identifies it, simply recognizes what is there and whether it is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Right Mindfulness is like a mother. When her child is sweet, she loves him, and when her child is crying, she still loves him. Everything that takes place in our body and our mind needs to be looked after equally. We don't fight. We say hello to our feeling so we can get to know each other better. Then, the next time that feeling arises, we will be able to greet it even more calmly. 🧘

We can embrace all of our feelings, even difficult ones like anger. Anger is a fire burning inside us, filling our whole being with smoke. When we are angry, we need to calm ourselves: "Breathing in, I calm my anger. Breathing out, I take care of my anger." As soon as a mother takes her crying baby into her arms, the baby already feels some relief. When we embrace our anger with Right Mindfulness, we suffer less right away.

We all have difficult emotions, but if we allow them to dominate us, we will become depleted. Emotions become strong when we do not know how to look after them. When our feelings are stronger than our mindfulness, we suffer. But if we practice conscious breathing day after day, mindfulness will become a habit. Don't wait to begin to practice until you are overwhelmed by a feeling. It may be too late. 🧘

Thich Nhat Hahn (1999) The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching. Broadway Books: New York. pgs. 70-72.

Images by romanlily and briho-de-conta

A gatha for strong emotion...

Gathas are short verses that help us practice mindfulness in our daily activities. 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.


*Feelings are like clouds in a windy sky
Conscious breathing is my anchor.*

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 be overwhelmed by strong emotion. Gathas are nourishment for our mind, giving us peace, calmness and joy. They help us to bring the uninterrupted practice of meditation into every part of our day. There are many gathas available in the small book "Present Moment, Wonderful Moment".

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. 

Contacts

Sydney, Inner West - John Barclay 9559 8805
barclayjohn0@gmail.com

Sydney South West - Khanh Le Van 9543 7823
melanie_le_van@yahoo.com.au

Blue Mountains - David Moore 4782 9632
edenimages@bigpond.com

Lismore Area - Tony Mills 6688 6523
fivemountains@hotmail.com

Sylvania - Coral Miles 9544 7892
coralmiles@iprimus.com.au

www.lotusbudsangha.org

All images used with permission from www.flickr.com creative commons unless otherwise stated.

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 May 3rd
Mindfulness day in the Blue Mountains.
9:15am - 3pm
Please bring a vegetarian plate

Hazelbrook Steiner School,
83-89 Clearview Parade,
Hazelbrook
(for directions contact
Miriam Brooks 47512360)