



# THE LOTUS BUD

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## *Resting in the river*

*By Thich Nhat Hanh*

My dear friends, suppose someone is holding a pebble and throws it in the air and the pebble begins to fall down into a river. After the pebble touches the surface of the water, it allows itself to sink slowly into the river.

It will reach the bed of the river without any effort. Once the pebble is at the bottom of the river, it continues to rest. It allows the water to pass by.

I think the pebble reaches the bed of the river by the shortest path because it allows itself to fall without making any effort. During our sitting meditation we can allow ourselves to rest like a pebble. We can allow ourselves to sink naturally without effort to the position of sitting, the position of resting. 🧘

Resting is a very important practice; we have to learn the art of resting. Resting is the first part of Buddhist meditation. You should allow your body and your mind to rest. Our mind as well as our body needs to rest.

The problem is that not many of us know how to allow our body and mind to rest. We are always struggling; struggling has become a kind of habit.



Image by sweet little lies

We cannot resist being active, struggling all the time. We struggle even during our sleep. 🧘

It is very important to realize that we have the habit energy of struggling. We have to be able to recognize a habit when it manifests itself because if we know how to recognize our habit, it will lose its energy and will not be able to push us anymore.

When an animal in the jungle is wounded, it knows how to find a quiet place, lie down and do nothing. The animal knows that is the only way to get healed—to lay down and just rest, not thinking of anything, including hunting and eating. Not eating is a very wonderful way of allowing your body to rest. We are so concerned about how to get nutrition that we are afraid of resting, of allowing our body to rest and to fast. The animal knows that it does not need to eat. What it needs is to rest, to do nothing, and that is why its health is restored.

In our consciousness there are wounds also, lots of pains. Our consciousness also needs to rest in order to restore itself.

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Our consciousness is just like our body. Our body knows how to heal itself if we allow it the chance to do so. When we get a cut on our finger we don't have to do anything except to clean it and to allow it the time to heal, because our body knows how to heal itself.

The same thing is true with our consciousness; our consciousness knows how to heal itself if we know how to allow it to do so. But we don't allow it. We always try to do something. We worry so much about healing, which is why we do not get the healing we need. Only if we know how to allow them to rest can our body and our soul heal themselves.

I would like to offer you some instructions about walking meditation. Walking meditation means to enjoy walking without any intention to arrive. We don't need to arrive anywhere. We just walk. We enjoy walking. That means walking is already stopping, and that needs some training. 🧘

Usually in our daily life we walk because we want to go somewhere. Walking is only a means to an end, and that is why we do not enjoy every step we take. Walking meditation is different. Walking is only for walking. You enjoy every step you take. So this is a kind of revolution in walking. You allow yourself to enjoy every step you take.

The Zen master Ling Chi said that the miracle is not to walk on burning charcoal or in the thin air or on the water; the miracle is just to walk on

Image by Federi



earth. You breathe in. You become aware of the fact that you are alive. You are still alive and you are walking on this beautiful planet. That is already performing a miracle. The greatest of all miracles is to be alive. We have to awaken ourselves to the truth that we are here, alive. We are here making steps on this beautiful planet.

This is already performing a miracle.

To meditate means first of all to be there, to be on your cushion, to be on your walking meditation path. Eating also is a meditation if you are really there, present one hundred per cent with your food. The essential is to be there. So please when you practice walking meditation, don't make any effort. Allow yourself to be like that pebble at rest. The pebble is resting at the bottom of the river and the pebble does not have to do anything. While you are walking, you are resting. While you are sitting, you are resting.

If you struggle during your sitting meditation or walking meditation, you are not doing it right. The Buddha said, "My practice is the practice of non-practice." That means a lot. Give up all struggle. Allow yourself to be, to rest. 🧘

Extracts from 'Resting in the River' by Thich Nhat Hanh in *Shambala Sun* March 1998.

# Nothing...

At the end of the Plum Village Chanting CD, "Breath by Breath", there is track called "Nothing". The monks and nuns are heard practicing their harmony to begin in the right key and a monk can be heard calling out "Nothing!" This distracts the group and laughter breaks out, comments go back and forth and the mindfulness of the group is suddenly lost. (How often it is that we need to lose things to really appreciate them!)

With mindfulness suddenly lost, the effect on the group is like a fox in henhouse. But then Thay's voice can be heard with a firm and prolonged emphasis "STOP!" This has the effect of a temple bell sounding across the land and calm is immediately restored. The chanting resumes, this time with the monks and nuns in harmony to the words "I take refuge in the Buddha....." 🙏

If you don't listen carefully to the CD track, it's possible to miss all of this. Perhaps this is a complete misinterpretation what actually occurred when the recording was made. After all I wasn't there at the time. However I do enjoy this track as a wonderful teaching on stopping and each time I listen to it gratitude arises for those who decided to include it as an "out take" on the CD.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, in the time of Master Lin Chi, the teacher would give a shout to his students to "wake them up". None of us were around in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century to see it, but it is doubtful that Master Lin Chi's students actually fell asleep all the time. More likely



the shout to "wake them up" was like a temple bell, restoring mindfulness and bringing students back to the right path. It may have been that in some instances the "shout" of the teacher made the student change their way of looking and sudden insights resulted. 🙏

However it's unlikely that the Master went around shouting all the time. As a parent you know that shouting at your children has a limited effectiveness. Once in a while a shout may be necessary but with over use the impact fades and all it seems to achieve is to teach your children to shout back at you! We can assume that the Venerable Lin Chi was very skilful in the way he used his shout and also that he had many other skilful means to "wake up" his students. One of Master Lin Chi's statements was "Wherever we are, we are our true

Image by piemario

person". To me this means we can come back to the present moment and have peace in our mind at any time and in any place. However we are not always so lucky to have a Zen Master around to remind us. Most of the time, as laypeople, Thay is not there to give us a "shout". So when our mind is distracted, overcome with negative states of worry or stress, who will sound the temple bell for us? Who will give us a shout to remind us of our "true self"?

At the weekend the Sydney sanghas came together to celebrate the Rose Ceremony. It was not held in Plum Village, not in a temple, there was no rainforest in which to do walking meditation. We walked through inner city streets to a park where the sounds of jets taking off and traffic were all around. Yet there we were "sounding the temple bell" with every step. All of us as students, yet at the same time all of us as teachers; giving a "shout" to each other and also a "shout" ourselves.

You could say "Nothing special" or put more simply just "Nothing". 🙏

*John, True Path of Light*

**Join The Lotus Bud Online**

<http://lotusharing.ning.com/>

## 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

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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](mailto: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...

**Informal Lunch**  
Sunday Oct 25th  
12:00 pm to 3:00 pm  
@ Johns House  
1 The Avenue Hurlstone Park