



THE LOTUS BUD

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Dear Sangha,

In this edition of *The Lotus Bud* we explore some ideas about faith in the Buddhist tradition. As Thich Nhat Hanh says below, faith in our tradition is not a matter of blind faith but of confidence born from experience.

My faith is built upon my living experience and not on something promised for the future. My faith is an energy based on clear understanding and not on superstition. When I practice and I experience joy, and healing my faith grows stronger, bringing me great happiness. 🙏

The first energy: Faith

In Buddhist tradition we speak of 5 kind of powers; faith, diligence, mindfulness, concentration and insight.

The first power is confidence, faith. You have faith in the Buddha within, the Buddha not as a god, but the Buddha as an energy of awakening, an energy of compassion, an energy of understanding. We do have the capacity to understand, to be compassionate, to be mindful. This is the Buddha in concrete terms, he is not a god, but he is as an energy. So, you have confidence, you trust that this kind of energy is inherent in you, if you know how to practice, you can generate that energy, this kind of energy in order to protect yourself. 🙏

You have to trust in the Dharma, because the Dharma is effective, if you put into practice the Dharma, you will overcome the difficulties, you will be able to nourish yourself to transform yourself. The Dharma as practice not as words.

Suppose you have learned how to do walking meditation, if you walk properly, then every step can bring you solidity, freedom, joy, and nourishment, it can bring concentration. Walking meditation is a practice that can bring results right here and right now, as soon as you begin to do walking, you feel that you are safe, you have arrived, you are at home, and you enjoy every step, you become more solid, you are free from wandering in the past and the future. So the Dharma is effective right here and right now, because you have practice, you have experienced the effectiveness of the practice, that is why you have faith in the dharma, you have confidence in the Dharma. 🙏

Every time when you feel anger is coming up you practice mindful breathing, you recognize the anger, you embrace your anger, then the anger cannot push you to do or say

*From 'Touching the earth'
Thich Nhat Hanh*



things that can destroy, because you have the practice. When you feel distracted you hear the bell of mindfulness, you stop your thinking, you stop your dispersion, then you become mindful, you listen to the bell, you smile, you breath in and out, that is the Dharma, the Dharma helps you to practice listening to the bell and bring you back to here and now, so you become fully alive, fully present, and touching life deeply. So every time you hear the bell of mindfulness joy become possible. That is why you have faith in the Dharma. You have faith in Sangha, Sangha is the community that supports you and embrace you, guides you in the practice. With the Sangha you always feel safe, you feel love, you feel brotherhood and sisterhood.

You have faith in Sangha, without Sangha you feel lost. That is why confidence in the Sangha is something you feel. So, faith here is not to believe in something abstract that you can control, to believe in a deity or a god, but faith here to trust in the effectiveness of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha inherent in you. You bring the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha with you in your body and mind, in every moment of your daily. So faith is confidence, a kind of energy that gives you much power. 🙏

*True Power - talk given by Thich Nhat Hanh, Deer Park Monastery October 2006
www.scribd.com/doc/2547574/True-Power-Ven-Thich-Nhat-Hanh*

Faith and right energy

Lord Buddha, I have great faith in you, in your teachings, and in the community of practice. Whenever I use your teachings and apply them in my daily life I see how my afflictions are calmed and transformed. I see how the energy of mindfulness, concentration, and insight in me is always growing, helping me to overcome my difficulties and sorrow. My faith is built upon my living experience and not on something promised for the future. My faith is an energy based on dear understanding and not on superstition. When I practice and I experience peace, joy, and healing my faith grows stronger bringing me great happiness.

You have taught that a mule or a camel forced to carry heavy burdens does not suffer as much those who, out of ignorance, do not know their direction in life. Not to have a direction in life is the greatest suffering. I do have faith in my path of practice; I do have a direction to go in. I do not need to live in confusion and fear and this is the greatest happiness I could hope for. In the world there are many people who are suffering. They are destroying their own bodies and minds because they do not have faith and they do not have a path to go on. 🙏

Lord Buddha. I want my practice of mindfulness and my actions of body, speech, and mind to enable me every day to advance courageously on the path of transformation and healing for myself and for the world. I know that the energy of faith can help me to do this.



Image by quannum

I vow to practice Right Energy. I vow not to water the negative seeds of infatuation, violence, and hatred in me by being in touch with and consuming toxic items. I do not want to give the seeds of infatuation, hatred, and violence an opportunity to be watered, to develop and grow strong. I want to practice right attention and only give my attention to thoughts, energies, and sounds that can water the wholesome seeds in me. 🙏

If by chance the negative seeds in me are watered and develop into mental formations, I shall do my best to find a way for those mental formations to return to the depths of my consciousness in the form of seeds. I know that if these mental formations

arise frequently, they will quickly grow strong, while if they are allowed to lie still for a long time in the depths of my consciousness they will grow weaker. 🍵

You have taught us to practice right attention, to bring bright and beautiful mental formations back again into our conscious mind. and to allow them to replace the unwholesome mental formations. By my study and recitation of the sutras and by being close to noble practitioners, I shall help the bright and beautiful mental formations to arise frequently and I shall find ways to help these mental formations to remain as long as possible in my mind consciousness. I know that if the positive mental formations of loving kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity are developed and maintained, they will have an opportunity to grow. Their growth will give rise to transformation which will bring me and those around me much happiness.

World Honoured Buddha, you have taught me how I can produce the five kinds of spiritual energy: faith, diligence, mindfulness, concentration, and insight. The energy of faith leads to the energy of diligence. When there is diligence, the energies of mindfulness, concentration, and insight will be produced and will increase the energy of faith.

I touch the Earth before the Lord Buddha and the holy Sangha as I make the vow that I shall practice every day to produce and strengthen these precious energies inside me. 🍵

*From 'Touching the earth'
Thich Nhat Hanh*

Faith and doubt

A Zen proverb says that a Zen student must have great faith, great doubt, and great determination. Common understanding of the words 'faith' and 'doubt' renders these sayings nonsensical. We define 'faith' as an absence of doubt, and 'doubt' as an absence of faith. We assume that, like air and water, they cannot occupy the same space. Yet a Zen student is encouraged to cultivate both. Sensei Sevan Ross, director of the Chicago Zen Center, explains how faith and doubt work together in a dharma talk called 'The distance between faith and doubt.' Here's just a bit:

Great faith and great doubt are two ends of a spiritual walking stick. We grip one end with the grasp given to us by our great determination. We poke into the underbrush in the dark on our spiritual journey. This act is real spiritual practice -- gripping the Faith end and poking ahead with the doubt end of the stick. If we have no faith, we have no doubt. If we have no determination, we never pick up the stick in the first place. 🍵

Faith and doubt are supposed to be opposites, but the Sensei says "if we have no faith, we have no doubt." This kind of faith is not the same thing as certainty; it is more like trust. This kind of doubt is not about denial and disbelief but about openness. Faith is about living in an open-hearted and courageous way and not a closed up, self-protecting way. As Pema Chodron says "We can let the circumstances of our lives harden us so that we become increasingly resentful and



afraid, or we can let them soften us and make us kinder and more open to what scares us. We always have this choice." Faith is being open to what scares us.

Zen teachers talk about "beginner's mind" and "don't know mind" to describe a mind that is receptive to realization. This is the mind of faith and doubt. Rigid and uncritical acceptance of dogma is not what Buddhism is about. The Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh says, "Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth."

*adapted and edited from Barbara O'Brien
http://buddhism.about.com/od/basicbuddhist_teachings/a/faithdoubt.htm*

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

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Notices...

Wednesday night Lotus Bud Sangha at the Buddhist library in Camperdown.

All welcome.



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.

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.

Mindfulness Days at Nhap Luu (Entering the Stream) Meditation Centre
221 Maria's Lane
Beaufort VIC 3733
streammpc@gmail.com www.plumvillageasia.org

Ian Roberts is a neighbour of Nhap Luu and a member of the Present Moment Sangha Melbourne 03 5349 2729