



# THE LOTUS BUD

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## *Dear Sangha,*

In this issue of *The Lotus Bud* we are concerned with the value of Sangha. We begin with a short discussion of the sangha from the point of view of the family and children. We then hear Thay answer a question about why the sangha is significant before we learn about the developing sangha at Nhap Luu Monastery in Victoria.

## *The importance of Sangha*

Being an engaged Buddhist is not easy without the support offered by sangha. To change ourselves and to change the way we parent our children is not easy. In our wider community, Buddhist parenting is not common. Therefore there are no readily available role models. The importance of a strong sangha cannot be underestimated. Thich Nhat Hanh has stressed the importance of sangha building as the key to creating a stable foundation for our practice. He wrote



Image by blacklord

in *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* "Dharma books and tapes are valuable, but the true Dharma is revealed through our life and our practice...there are said to be 84,000 Dharma doors...to take refuge in the Dharma is to choose the doors that are most appropriate for us. Dharma is great compassion, understanding, and love. To realize these qualities, we need a sangha... when a sangha shines its light on our personal views, we see more clearly. In the sangha, we won't fall into negative habit patterns." 

Image by ArranET

We need a strong sangha not only for ourselves, but for our children and for our family as a whole. The support of sangha can help us to overcome deeply ingrained habits that are counterproductive to living an engaged Buddhist family life.

The Buddha emphasised the importance of sangha on the spiritual path. Buddhist practice must include all aspects of one's life. Trying to separate one's spiritual life from one's material needs is likely to result in serious self-alienation, and misses the whole purpose of the Buddhist path. In this way the sangha must be part of our everyday life. The association with sangha is equally important for our children, who can be strongly influenced by the people around them. They model other children's behaviour. Association with sangha means the effort you put into supporting them to adopt skilful practices will be reinforced by what they see within other families. 

[http://www.familybuddhism.com/import\\_of\\_sangha.php](http://www.familybuddhism.com/import_of_sangha.php)

### *Thich Nhat Hanh answers a question*

**Q. In your teaching you devote more attention to the principles of sangha, of community, than perhaps any other Buddhist teacher. Why is that so important to you?**

A. Building brotherhood and sisterhood is the foundation of the sangha, and if the sangha is happy, then it can be a refuge for so many people. We began to build our community a long time ago, several decades ago, and it has now grown into a mature, solid sangha. There are many people who have been practicing for a long time, and when there is a retreat like this you can feel the energy of the sangha. There is a story in the sutras about King Presenajit of Shravasti, who met the Buddha for the last time when they were both eighty years old. The king said something like, 'Dear Buddha, every time I see the sangha, I see you more clearly.' It is very meaningful that the Buddha can be seen through the sangha. The sangha is the work, the masterpiece of the Buddha. The Buddha is an artist and the sangha is his artwork. So what the king said is very meaningful: 'Dear Buddha, dear teacher, every time I get in touch with your sangha, I see you more clearly and I appreciate you more and more.' The Buddha is still alive today in the sangha. When you see the monks and the lay people practicing, you see the presence of the Buddha. 

*from an interview in Shambala Sun July, 2010 p. 90; with gratitude  
<http://dhammanovice.tumblr.com/post/5478814111/on-the-importance-of-sangha-thich-nhat-hanh>*

## *A letter from Nhap Luu*



Dear Thay, Sangha brothers & sisters, I practice with the Sydney Sanghas and I have visited Nhap Luu monastery three times in the last 18 months. Over that time the original three sisters Sister Thuan Tien, Sister Luong Nghiem, and Sister Can Nghiem have been joined by Sister Tri Duyen from Brisbane and a novice from another tradition Nguyen Ha, a young friend from New Zealand.

I would like to share with the Community the changes occurring and a little of my experience of this visit. It is extremely cold here at Entering the Stream (Nhap Luu) Monastery in Australia where the Winter retreat will finish on 2nd of September. My reading about Plum Village as it was 30 years ago suggests to me that the conditions then were similar to the situation at Nhap Luu today. For example, there was no electricity or permanent buildings other and black swans.

than the meditation hall when the Sisters arrived in Victoria. However, each year the conditions become a little easier and the Community acquires a greater capacity to tolerate them. 

This has been the third Winter Retreat for the Sisters at Nhap Luu and much has changed since they arrived two years ago and I have witnessed a subtle and substantial transformation. Last

year a member of the Sydney Sangha, with the help of friends from Melbourne, installed a beautiful wooden floor in the meditation hall. Also, the Sisters now have a comfortable home with indoor plumbing. The Sisters' house, named "Peace House", has magnificent views of the lake where there are ducks, wild geese.

The house has a loft with huge windows where the Sisters can listen to talks, meditate and work at the computer. The meditation hall and Peace House now have solar panels for electricity which should offset the energy used at the monastery. The Sangha can use this as accommodation for retreats too. The bush setting at Nhap Luu is exceedingly tranquil and the community has created many beautiful paths for walking meditation. 

Each day we see kangaroos, wallabies, hare and possums that have many young. In the warmer months we can also see echidna, a rare experience for most in Australia. The possums come every night eat from the hands of the Sisters and indeed the wildlife has become quite used to the Sangha. The kangaroos, hares and wallabies eat close to the buildings and allow you to walk close to them. They are fond of eating the flowers that the Sisters try to grow. As I write I can hear kookaburras and crows calling and we observe many other native birds, such as robins, magpies and eastern rosella that call this place home. 🙏

Nhap Luu is an extensive property which requires a lot of work from the four Sisters. Sangha members visit on weekends and some come for longer. The Sangha is quite small in Victoria although recent efforts to promote the monastery locally have seen some new friends joining. Some of the Sangha have been helping with running a monthly market stall and their efforts are bearing fruit as they make contacts within the local community. The Sangha have been of considerable assistance to the Sisters giving both physical support and helping with administering the centre. Many have been generous with time, skills, knowledge and financial assistance.

The Sisters have become more involved with the local community, which has included teaching high school students about taking care of their suffering and helping them to transform. They also have done chaplaincy training so they can assist when needed. At Vesak, they joined



other monastics from Victoria to celebrate with the community and lead a guided meditation. They have also joined the Australian Sangha Association for monastics. The monastery now has a blog and Facebook page to keep the community informed and there is a book shop for visitors to purchase Plum Village merchandise.

Tomorrow a group of 10 community members will visit from a nearby information centre to join in a day of mindfulness and learn about our practice. This is a very rural area of Victoria with many generations of farming families and it will be interesting to see their reactions to this very different culture transplanted into this community. 🙏

In late September and early October two Brothers will visit from Plum Village. They will lead retreats and give talks here and Sydney. Thay Phap Hai and Dharma teachers Kenley Neufeld and Karen Hilsburg have been providing a superb program of teaching for lay friends, those building Sanghas, OI Aspirants and Mentors and Dharma teacher training.

Meanwhile UBC Australia has been accepted as a sponsoring body for more monastics. A lay friend has been tremendously helpful sharing her expertise and helping with immigration paper work and office administration. More hands to lighten the load.

I have been helping Sister Can Nghiem with her English comprehension and pronunciation while she in turn has been helping with my Vietnamese. Sister Luong Nghiem has been instructing me on the bell and I am tremendously grateful to her and all the Sisters for their guidance, sumptuous food and warm smiles while I have been here.

The conditions are basic at Nhap Luu but the environment is quite beautiful. As I sit and write I watch the sun has set and I can hear the crickets are singing against the background of a new moon. We hope to see many visitors come and support the monastery and help us to bloom. 🙏

Yours in the Dharma,

*Ettianne Anshin*  
*True Auspicious Path*

*(photos taken by Ettiane)*

## 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  
[barclayjohn0@gmail.com](mailto:barclayjohn0@gmail.com)

Lismore Area - Tony Mills and Jenny Pittman  
[fivemountains@hotmail.com](mailto:fivemountains@hotmail.com)

Sylvania - Coral Miles  
[coralmiles@iprimus.com.au](mailto:coralmiles@iprimus.com.au)

Blue Mountains - David Moore and Ann Le 4782 9632  
[edenimages@bigpond.com](mailto:edenimages@bigpond.com)

Northern Beaches - Dharma Boat Sangha  
[www.dharmaboat.org](http://www.dharmaboat.org)

Melbourne - Ian Roberts  
0419 581 784

[www.lotusbudsangha.org](http://www.lotusbudsangha.org)

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## Notices...

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

All welcome.



## How to contribute

Email to: [cbarker@uow.edu.au](mailto:cbarker@uow.edu.au)

Post to: Chris Barker, Faculty of Arts, Uni of Wollongong, 2500

## 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](mailto:streammpc@gmail.com) [www.plumvillageasia.org](http://www.plumvillageasia.org)