



THE LOTUS BUD

Magazine of Mindful Living ~ Issue No 66, December 2014

Dear Sangha,

In this Christmas time edition of The Lotus Bud we reproduce an edited and shortened version of Thay's talk on the subject of our 'true home' from 2012 that we hope that you will enjoy. The message is eternal and of course at this particular time our thoughts and prayers are with Thay during his illness. 🙏

Chris / True Dwelling of the Mind

Home is the way

A Christmas message

Christmas time is a time for the family, when family members return to their home. We all yearn to have a home that is warm and loving; where we feel that we do not need to go anywhere, or to do or to pursue anything anymore. It is what we can call our 'true home.'

Searching for our home

Jesus, as soon as he was born, had to be on the run right away and to be a refugee, a runaway without a home. When he grew up and became a young man, it was the same; he was still a wanderer with no real home to return to. In one of his discourses, he protested that even the birds have their nests to return to or the rabbits and squirrels have their burrows; but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head, no place to call home.

Siddhartha, as an adult, found himself in a similar situation. He was born into a royal family that was wealthy and privileged. He could have anything he desired. He had a beautiful wife and a good son. He had a bright future ahead of him; destined to be king and ruler of a great empire. But still, he did not feel comfortable even with all this. He did not feel at home. He was not at peace. Therefore, one day, he decided to leave his family in search of his true home, in search of inner peace. 🙏

Both Jesus and Siddhartha were searching for their true home. They wanted to find a warm abode where they would not have to search for anything anymore and where they would feel truly at home and at peace. Western people have a saying, "There is no place like home" that expresses the feeling that there is nothing like coming home after being away. Yet still, some of us do not feel at home,

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do not feel that we have a home to return to, even in our own families. It is because in our families, there is not enough warmth, not enough love, ease, peace or happiness.

Some of us have a homeland, living in the country where we were born, yet we still want to escape and go somewhere else. We feel like we do not have a homeland. Some Jewish people feel that they still do not have a homeland. They have been wandering and searching for a homeland for thousands of years – for a place, a piece of land to call home. Even to this day they have yet to find their homeland. And we – the French, the Americans, the British, and the Vietnamese – we all have a country to call our homeland, but still, we do not feel contented and some of us want to leave. This is because we have not found our true home in our heart. This season, even if we buy a Christmas tree to decorate our home, this does not necessarily mean that we have found our true home or that we are at ease living in our homeland. For our home to be true, there needs to be love, warmth, and fulfilment. 🙏

Our true home

In the end, Jesus found his true home in his heart. He found the light in his heart. He taught his disciples that they too have their own light and he taught them to bring that light out for others to see. Siddhartha taught that one's true home can be found in the present moment. He developed practices for his disciples so that they too could find their true home.

Image by Shanta Sava

He taught that we each have an island within that is safe and secure. If we know how to return to this island, we can be in touch with our blood and spiritual ancestors, with the wonders of life, and with our own self. In the island of our true self, we can find peace and fulfilment

The island within

Siddhartha found his true home and wanted everyone to be able to find their true home.

We too, should return and take refuge in that abode and not take refuge in any other person or thing. That abode of refuge is the 'Island of Self'; it is the Dharma, and there, one can find peace and protection; one can find our ancestors and our roots. This is our true home – our inner island where there is the light of the true Dharma. Returning there, one finds light, one finds peace and safety, and one is protected from the darkness. The 'Island of Self' is a safe place of refuge from the turbulent waves that can otherwise sweep us away. Taking refuge in this island within is a very important practice.

We have a song in Plum Village titled, 'Being an Island unto Oneself'. This song is about the practice of taking refuge in oneself. If we still feel that we have not found our true home, that we do not have a place to call home, that we have not truly come home, that we still want to look for a homeland, or that we still feel lonely and at a loss; then this

practice is for us. This song can remind us to return and take refuge in the island within. That abode of refuge is the 'Island of Self'; it is the Dharma, and there, one can find peace and protection; one can find our ancestors and our roots.

Our refuge of practice

If we consider ourselves to be soul mates of the Buddha, to be real students of the Buddha, we should take his advice and not go looking for our homeland, our true home, in time and space. We should look for this true home right within our own self, within our own heart; where there is everything we are searching for. There, we can touch our ancestors, blood and spiritual, and touch our roots, our heritage. There, we can find peace and stability. There, we can find the light of wisdom. Let us take refuge in our own island – in the island of the Dharma. We do not take refuge in any other person or thing, even Thầy. 🙏

The Buddha's love is immense. He knew that there would be many students who would feel lost after he had gone, so he reminded them that his body was not something permanent and eternal. He taught them that which was most worthy for them to take refuge in, was their own island of self. We know that it is always there for us. We do not have to take the plane or the bus or the train to go there, but with our mindful breathing and mindful steps, we can be there right away. Our island within is our true refuge. It is our practice of the Dharma.

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This Christmas, if you buy and bring home a Christmas tree to decorate, remember that your 'True Home' is not found outside yourself, but it is right in your own heart. We do not need to bring home anything for us to feel fulfilled. We have everything we need right in our heart. We do not need to practice for many years or to travel far to arrive at our true home. If we know how to generate the energy of mindfulness and concentration, then with each breath, with each step, we arrive at our true home. Our true home is not a place far removed from us in space and time. It is not something that we can buy. Our true home is present right in the here and now; if only we know how to return and to be truly present to it.

Home in the present moment

The other day, Thầy was reflecting on what message to send to his friends and students abroad so that they can practice, so that they can be like Jesus or be like the Buddha. Thầy then wrote this calligraphy: "*There is no way home, Home is the way.*" 🙏

The means and the ends are not two separate things. *There is no way to return to our home.* Our home is the way. Once we take a step on that path home, we are home right in that moment. This is true to the practice of Plum Village. *There is no way to happiness, Happiness is the way.* Recently, Thầy also shared in his Dharma Talk that, *There is no way to nirvana,*

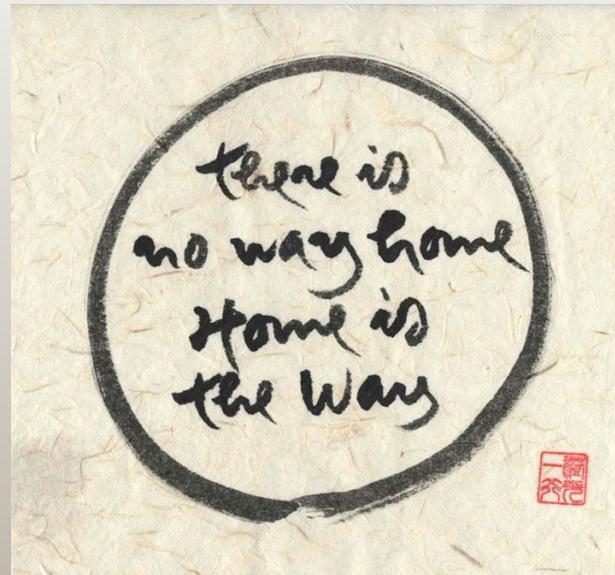
Nirvana is the way. Every breath and every step has the capacity to bring us right back to our true home, right in the here and now. This is the fundamental practice of Plum Village. This is the message that Thầy wants to send to his friends and students during this Christmas season.

Let us all enjoy our practice of coming home this Holiday season. Let us truly be at home within, and so become a home for our loved ones and all our friends.

With trust and love,

Thầy 🙏

Thich Nhat Hanh, 2012



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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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We would love to hear from you.
We want the The Lotus Bud to be a place for sharing our experiences and building the Sangha; so why not write a short piece about your experiences with mindfulness ?

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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 activities

Wednesday Mindfulness Meditation
Sydney, Inner West

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.

Meditation and monthly Mindfulness Days at Canley Heights

Southwest Sydney - 7.30pm
Friday Night Meditation and Monthly Mindfulness Days.
49 Ferngrove Rd Canley Heights.

Mindfulness Days at Nhap Luu (Entering the Stream)
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