



THE LOTUS BUD

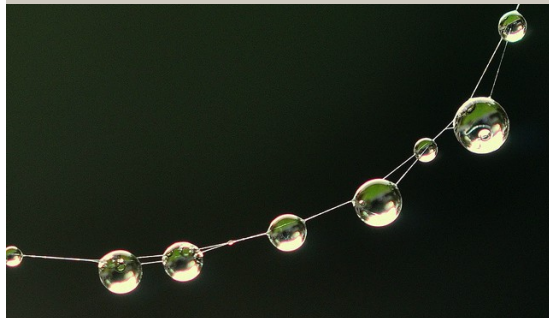
Magazine of Mindful Living ~ Issue No 70, May 2015

Dear Sangha,

In this edition of *The Lotus Bud* we explore the interconnection we have with each other and thus Thay's concept of 'Interbeing', which forms the core of much of his teaching and our practice.

Many readers will be familiar with this idea, but it is good nonetheless to be reminded of its importance to us. 🙏

Chris / True Dwelling of the Mind



The philosophy of starlings

Starling "murmurations", are swirling clouds of birds that twist and turn in the air as one organism, and they are amongst the great visual wonders of the world. Until recently they were a scientific mystery in the sense that while it were understood to be a means of evading predators, their mechanisms were not well known. Now relatively recent research has shed light on how thousands of starlings can coordinate their movements as if they were one creature.

The core findings of the research into starlings is that each bird is connected too and monitors the seven birds around it and if any one starling changes direction, say in response to spotting a predator, then each neighbouring bird

changes direction with it and their movement ripples through the whole flock. Through each starling's connection to its near neighbours, each is also connected to every other starling in the flock, which in this way moves as one for their mutual benefit. 🙏

We humans are a bit like starlings in the sense that we are socially and emotionally interconnected our wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of others. The golden rule is often said to be 'do unto others as you would be done by', but we might also say, 'what you do unto others you do to your self'.

As a metaphor the murmurations of starlings are akin to the Buddhist notion of Indra's net in which at each intersection of the net is located a jewel that reflects every other jewel in the network. Or as Alan Watts puts it;

Imagine a multidimensional spider's web in the early morning covered with dew drops. And every dew drop contains the reflection of all the other dew drops. And, in each reflected dew drop, the reflections of all the other dew drops in that reflection. And so ad infinitum. That is the Buddhist conception of the universe in an image. 🙏

[Online source](#)

The Dalai Lama is credited with saying: "My religion is simple. My religion is kindness". The etymology of the word 'religion' is to 're link', that is, religion is in origin about connection.

Only connect with kindness.

It seems that starlings know a thing or two about that. 🙏

Chris/ True Dwelling of the Mind

The heart of the Buddha

What then is the difference between self and others? No matter how important and precious each person is, we are only talking about the well-being of one person. No matter how acute their suffering may be, we are still concerned here with the interest of one single person. In contrast, when we speak about the well-being of other sentient beings, this word *other* refers to limitless, countless sentient beings. In the case of this *other*, even if we are dealing with slight degrees of suffering, when aggregated, we are talking about the sufferings of an infinite number of beings. Therefore, from the point of view of quantity, the welfare of other sentient beings becomes far more important than that of oneself.

Even from the point of view of our own self-interest, if others are happy and satisfied, then we ourselves can also be happy. On the other hand, if others are in a perpetual state of suffering, then we too will suffer from the same fate. The interest of others is intimately linked with our own self-interest; this is very true. Furthermore, based on our own personal experience, we can observe that the more we hold on to a strong sense of self—cherishing our own self-interest—the greater our own emotional and psychological problems. 🙏

Of course the pursuit of our own self-interest is very important. However, we need a more realistic approach, that is, not to take self-interest too seriously but spend more time thinking about the well-being of other sentient beings.

Being more altruistic and taking into account the feelings and well-being of other sentient beings is, in actual fact, a much more healthy approach in pursuing our own interests. If we do that, we will see a marked change, a feeling of relaxation. We will no longer be easily provoked by petty circumstances, thinking that everything is at stake, and acting as if our whole image, identity and existence is being threatened. On the other hand, if we constantly think of our own self-interest—totally oblivious to the well-being of other sentient beings—then even the tiniest circumstances can provoke deep feelings of hurt and disturbance. The truth of this is something we can judge from our own experience. 🙏

In the long run, generating a good heart will benefit both ourselves and others. In contrast, allowing our minds to remain enslaved by self-centeredness will only perpetuate our feelings of dissatisfaction, frustration and unhappiness, both in temporary terms and in the long term as well. We will waste this wonderful opportunity we have now—of being born as a human, of being equipped with this wonderful human faculty of intelligence, which can be utilized for higher purposes. So it is important to be able to weigh these long-term and short-term consequences. What better way to make our human existence meaningful than by meditating on bodhichitta—the altruistic aspiration to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. 🙏

From Practicing Wisdom: The Perfection of Shantideva's Bodhisattva Way, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. [Online source](#)

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Interbeing

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are. "Interbeing" is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix "inter-" with the verb "to be," we have a new verb, inter-be. Without a cloud and the sheet of paper inter-are.

If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and the sunshine inter-are. And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We now the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger's father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist. 🙏

Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too. This is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of

paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. You cannot point out one thing that is not here—time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. "To be" is to inter-be. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is.

Suppose we try to return one of the elements to its source. Suppose we .

return the sunshine to the sun. Do you think that this sheet of paper will be possible? No, without sunshine nothing can be. And if we return the logger to his mother, then we have no sheet of paper either. The fact is that this sheet of paper is made up only of "non-paper elements." And if we return these non-paper elements to their sources, then there can be no paper at all. Without "non-paper elements," like mind, logger, sunshine and so on, there will be no paper. As thin as this sheet of paper is, it contains everything in the universe in it. 🙏

*From: The Heart of Understanding:
Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita
Heart Sutra Thich Nhat Hanh*



Image by Andreas

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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