



30th Annual SnowFlower Regional Retreat Resource Packet

Mindfulness, Concentration, Insight, Compassion and Generosity in Divisive Times: What Thich Nhat Hanh's Teachings on Impermanence and Interdependence Offer Us Today

October 13-15, 2023

Led by Dharma Teacher Jack Lawlor

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Guide to Mindfulness Retreat Activities

Regarding Silence During the Retreat

Noble Silence is the ground for the retreat. By practicing in silence, we come in contact with people and things on a deeper level, and that can bring us great joy and understanding. Remember to practice silence with a smile.

Silent Meals

We suggest you eat your meals in silence, if possible. We eat in silence in order to see the preciousness of the food and the friends we are eating with. The food gives us the opportunity to see the close connection between ourselves and the universe, the earth, and all species. Every vegetable, every slice of bread, every piece of tofu contains in it the life of the whole earth and the sun. We can see the meaning and value of our own life in every bite of food. The first time we eat in silence, it may seem a little strange or unnatural, but after we become accustomed to it, we see that silent meals can bring us a lot of happiness, peace, and insight. You may choose to read The Five Contemplations before each meal.

The Five Contemplations

This food is the gift of the whole universe: the earth, the sky and much hard and loving work.

May we eat in mindfulness so that we are worthy to receive it.

May we transform our unskillful states of mind and learn to eat with moderation.

May we take only food that nourishes us and prevents illness.

We accept this food in order to realize the path of Understanding and Love.

Dharma Talks

A Dharma Talk is a wonderful opportunity to sit quietly and listen in mindfulness. We do not engage our intellect while listening, but let our mind be empty, free of thoughts, ideas and perceptions. Sitting straight in a solid and comfortable position, we allow the Dharma rain to fall and do its work in the soil of our consciousness. Unless you have a back injury or feel unwell, please do not lie down during a Dharma Talk.

Sitting Meditation

There are many kinds of meditation practice. During this retreat, our main practice will be mindfulness of our breathing. When we breathe an in breath, we know it is an in breath. When we breathe an out breath, we know it is an out breath. When our breath is short or long, we know it is short or long.

We can be aware of states of our breathing, body and mind in the present moment without judging or trying to change them. To sit is to be a friend to our self. It is interesting enough that no effort or hard work is needed to be still and attentive. Silently repeating "In-Out" while following our breathing can help us to be more concentrated. We can smile to our self with joy and love as we would to our dearest one. While smiling, we know that we are smiling.

Indoor Walking Meditation

After most periods of sitting meditation, to exercise our legs and to practice mindfulness while moving, we will practice slow walking meditation (kahn hanh). We walk together, clockwise, taking one step with each inhalation and one step with each exhalation. We are aware of the feeling of each foot as it touches the floor. We are also aware of our position in the circle and adjust our steps to keep the flow smooth. Each step is an act of peace and harmony.

Group Outdoor Walking Meditation

We walk all the time, but usually it is more like running. When we walk in this way, we print anxiety, instability, and sorrow on our Mother Earth. Let us try to walk in such a way that we print peace and serenity on the earth.

The purpose of walking meditation is to walk, to be in the present moment, aware of our breathing and our walking. We begin by shaking off all worries and anxieties, not thinking of future or past. Again, we are aware of the contact between our feet and earth. From time to time we may wish to stop and greet the flowers or the trees on the path or look at the blue sky. We can only touch these wonders of life when we meet our appointment with life in the present moment. Walking mindfully together as a group is a very powerful experience. We benefit from the collective energy of mindfulness and the peace of the group.

Suggestions for Daily Meditation

by Jack Lawlor

Lakeside Buddha Sangha
www.lakesidebuddhasangha.org

RELAX!

- Practice mouth yoga (Smile!)
- Enjoy a cleansing breath (to come into contact with the full capacity of the lung)
- Find a place where you can sense and feel the experience of your inhalations and exhalations
- Either the lining of the nose; the lips; the diaphragm area between the lungs and the stomach

At that point of contact:

- Sense and feel each inhalation and exhalation in a tactile way
- Say "Sensing, feeling" to yourself, silently. With each inhalation ("Sensing") and with each exhalation ("Feeling");
- Then, touch the breath with your attention, merging your attention in the breath
- Then, be aware of the length of each inhalation, and be alert to the length of each exhalation
- Say "Aware, Alert" to yourself, silently. With each inhalation ("Aware"), and with each exhalation ("Alert")
- Then, recognize how your attention is merging in the breath
- Say "Touching, merging" to yourself, silently. With each inhalation ("Touching") and with each exhalation ("Merging")
- Smile to each distraction, returning to the breath. Say "Smiling" to yourself silently, returning. With each inhalation ("Smiling"), and with each exhalation ("Returning")

For persistent distractions:

- Smile to them
- Breathe in and out through them
- Ask "What is this?" giving rise to curiosity in you
- Pay bare attention to them

Wordlessly observe:

- What is giving rise to them
- What is feeding them
- How long they remain stable
- How they begin changing, fading, turning into something else

Then return to the practice of mindful breathing

Once centered in the breath, while continuing breath practice:

- Practice insight meditation into what is arising, abiding, transforming, and fading away in the body
- Doing an organized body scan, or pay bare attention to whatever sensations arise anywhere in the body;
- Practice insight meditation into what is arising, abiding, transforming and fading away in your emotions and feelings;
- Note how our feelings are influenced by our bodily condition (especially weariness) and what we are thinking
- Practice insight meditation into what is arising, abiding, transforming and fading away in your mind;
- How our thinking is influenced by the condition of our body and our emotions; especially emotional hijacking by
- craving, anger, and misperception.

Finish by enjoying, "Just Sitting"! (Following the breath, letting go of everything else)

Various Expressions of the Bodhisattva's Vows

All beings without number, I vow to liberate,
Endless blind passions, I vow to uproot,
Dharma Gates without measure, I vow to penetrate,
The Great Way of Buddha, I vow to attain.

-- Roshi Philip Kapleau

All beings without number, liberate,
Endless blind passions, uproot,
Dharma Gates without measure, penetrate,
The Great Way of Buddha, manifest.

-- Same as above, with pronouns removed and
substitution of "manifest" for "attain"

However innumerable beings are, I vow to meet them with kindness and interest.
However inexhaustible the states of suffering are, I vow to touch them with patience and love.
However immeasurable the Dharmas are, I vow to explore them deeply.
However incomparable the mystery of interbeing, I vow to surrender to it freely.

-- Thich Nhat Hanh

However innumerable beings are, meet them with kindness and interest.
However inexhaustible the states of suffering are, touch them with patience and love.
However immeasurable the Dharmas are, explore them deeply.
However incomparable the mystery of interbeing, surrender to it deeply.

-- Same as above, with pronouns removed

From "Earth Touching" by Thich Nhat Hanh

Here is the foot of a tree.
Here is an empty, quiet place.
Here is a cushion.
Brother, sister, why don't you sit down?

Sit upright.
Sit with solidity.
Sit in peace.
Don't let your thoughts lift you up into the air.
Sit so that you can really touch the earth
And be one with her.
You may like to smile, brother, sister.
Earth will transmit to you her solidity,
Her peace, and her joy.
With your mindful breathing,
With your peaceful smile,
You sustain the mudra of earth touching.

There were times when you didn't do well.
Sitting on earth, but it was as if you were floating in the air,
You who used to go in circles in the triple world
And be drawn into the ocean of illusion.
But earth is always patient
And one-hearted.
Earth is still waiting for you
Because earth has been waiting for you
During the last trillion lives.
That is why she can wait for you for any length of time.
She knows that finally you will come back to her one day.
She will welcome you
Always fresh and green, exactly like the first time,
Because love never says, "this is the last";
Because earth is a loving mother.
She will never stop waiting for you.

Do go back to her, brother, sister.
You will be like that tree.
The leaves the branches and the flowers of your soul
Are fresh and green
Once you enter the mudra of earth touching....

Interbeing, by Thich Nhat Hanh

The sun has entered me.
The sun has entered me together with the cloud and the
river.
I myself have entered the river,
And I have entered the sun
With the cloud and the river.
There has not been a moment
When we do not interpenetrate.

But before the sun entered me,
The sun was in me --
And the cloud and the river,
Before i entered the river,
I was already in it.
There has not been a moment
When we have not inter-been.

Therefore you know
That as long as you continue to breathe.
I continue to be in you.

Nourishing Happiness Verses from the Plum Village Chanting Book

Sitting here in this moment, protected by the Sangha,
my happiness is clear and alive.

What a great fortune to have been born a human,
to encounter the Dharma,
to be in harmony with others,
and to water the mind of love
in this beautiful garden of practice.

The energies of the Sangha and mindfulness trainings
are protecting and helping me not make mistakes
or to be swept along in darkness by unwholesome
seeds.

With kind spiritual friends, I am on the path of
goodness,
illuminated by the light of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Although seeds of suffering are still in me
in the form of afflictions and habit energies,
mindfulness is also there, helping me touch
what is most wonderful within and around me.

I can still enjoy mindfulness of the six senses:
my eyes look peacefully upon the clear blue sky,
my ears listen with wonder to the songs of birds,
my nose smells the rich sense of sandalwood,
my tongue tastes the nectar of the Dharma,
my posture is upright, stable, and relaxed,
and my mind is one with my body.

If there were not a World-Honored One,
if there were not the wonderful Dharma,
if there were not a harmonious Sangha,
I would not be so fortunate
to enjoy this Dharma happiness today.

My resources for practice are my own peace and joy.
I vow to cultivate and nourish them with daily
mindfulness.

For my ancestors, family, future generations,
and the whole of humanity, I vow to practice well.

In my society I know that there are countless people
suffering.
I vow to cultivate and nourish them with daily
mindfulness.

For my ancestors, family, future generations,
and the whole of humanity, I vow to practice well.

In my society I know that there are countless people
suffering,
Drowned in sensual pleasure, jealousy, and hatred.
I am determined to take care of my own mental
formations,
to learn the art of deep listening and using loving
speech
in order to encourage communication and
understanding
and to be able to accept and love.

Practicing the actions of a bodhisattva,
I vow to look with eyes of love and a heart of
understanding,
I vow to listen with a clear mind and ears of
compassion,
Bringing peace and joy in the lives of others,
to lighten and alleviate the suffering of living beings.

I am aware that ignorance and wrong perceptions
can turn this world into a fiery hell.

I vow to walk always upon the path of transformation,
producing understanding and loving kindness.
I will be able to cultivate a garden of awakening.

Although there are birth, sickness, old age and death,
now that I have a path of practice, I have nothing more
to fear.

It is a great happiness to be alive in the Sangha
with the practice of mindfulness trainings and
concentration,
to live every moment in stability and freedom,
to take part in the work of relieving others' suffering,
the career of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

In each precious moment, I am filled with deep
gratitude,
I bow before the World-Honored One.
Please bear witness to my wholehearted gratitude,
embracing all beings with arms of great compassion.

The Good News

They don't publish
The good news.
The good news is published
By us.
We have a special edition every moment
And we need you to read it.
The good news is that you are alive
And the linden tree is still there,
Standing firm in the harsh winter.

The good news is that you have wonderful eyes
To touch the blue sky.
The good news is that your child is there before you,
And your arms are available:
Hugging is possible.
They only print what is wrong.
Look at each of our special editions.
We always offer the things that are not wrong.
We want you to benefit from them
And help protect them.
The dandelion is there by the sidewalk,
Smiling its wonderful smile,
Singing the song of eternity.
Listen, you who have ears that can hear it,
Bow your head.
Listen to it.

Leave behind the world of sorrow
And preoccupation
And get free.
The latest good news
Is that we can do it.

Walking Meditation

By Thich Nhat Hanh

Take my hand.
We will walk.
We will only walk.
We will enjoy our walk
without thinking of arriving anywhere.
Walk peacefully.
Walk happily.
Our walk is a peace walk.
Our walk is a happiness walk.

Then we learn
That there is no peace walk;
That there is no happiness walk;
that happiness is the walk.
We walk for ourselves.
We walk for everyone
always hand in hand.

Walk and touch peace every moment.
Walk and touch happiness every moment.
Each step brings a fresh breeze.
Each step makes a flower bloom under our feet.
Kiss the earth with your feet.
Print on the Earth your love and happiness.

Earth will be safe
when we feel in us enough safety.

From The Sun My Heart by Thich Nhat Hanh

In meditation on “interbeing on the miraculousness of existence”, a practitioner can take any phenomenon as the object of meditation, but he or she must be able to maintain it for some time, in mindfulness. She may choose the sun, a leaf, a caterpillar. ... the sun, a leaf, or a caterpillar can take the practitioner directly into the world of non-conceptual reality -- a living, direct experience.

During meditation, we focus all our attention on one object, and concentration can arise. This meditation is not passive or dull; in fact we must be very alert. We maintain concentration on the object, which is the mind itself, just as the sun continues to shine on freshly fallen snow or vegetation. We can also synchronize our breathing with our attention to the object, and this may improve our concentration. If we use a leaf as the object of our concentration, we can see, through the leaf, the perfect oneness of mind and the universe.

If we meditate on the presence of the sun throughout our body, we can experience that dharmakaya has no beginning and no end. Meditating on interbeing and interpenetration of reality is a means to destroy concepts, and using such means, we can arrive at a direct experience of ultimate reality in mind and body simultaneously.

The Three Refuges Verses

Incense perfumes the atmosphere.
A lotus blooms and the Buddha appears.
The world of suffering and discrimination
Is filled with the light of the rising sun.
As the dust of fear and anxiety settles,
With an open-heart and one-

[Bell]

The fully Enlightened One, beautifully seated, peaceful
and
Smiling,
A living source of understanding and compassion,
to the Buddha I go for refuge.

[Bell]

The path of mindful living
leading to healing, joy and enlightenment, the way of
peace,
to the Dharma I go for refuge.

[Bell]

The loving and supportive community of practice,
realizing harmony, awareness, and liberation,
to the Sangha I go for refuge.

[Bell]

I am aware that the Three Gems are within my heart,
I vow to realize them,
Practicing mindful breathing, smiling,
and looking deeply into things.
I vow to understand living beings and their suffering.
I vow to cultivate loving kindness and compassion
and to practice joy and equanimity.

[Bell]

I vow to offer joy to one person in the morning,
and to help relieve the grief of one person in the
afternoon.
I vow to live simply and sanely with few possessions,
and to keep my body helpful.
I vow to let go of all worries and anxiety
in order to be light and free.

[Bell]

I am aware that I owe so much
to my parents, teachers, friends, and all beings.
I vow to be worthy of their trust, to practice
wholeheartedly
so that understanding and compassion will flower
and living beings can be free from their suffering.
May the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha
support my efforts.

[Two Bells]

Guided Meditation: Contemplating Limitless Life

by Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh

I see that this body – made of the four elements – is not really me, and I am not limited by this body.

I am the whole of the river of life, of blood ancestors and spiritual ancestors, that has been continuously flowing for thousands of years and flows on for thousands of years into the future. I am one with my ancestors and my descendants. I am life manifesting in countless different forms. I am one with all peoples and all species, whether they are peaceful and joyful or suffering and afraid. At this very moment I am present everywhere in this world. I have been present in the past and will be there in the future.

The disintegration of this body does not touch me, just as when the petals of the plum blossom fall it does not mean the end of the plum tree. I see that I am like a wave on the surface of the ocean. I see myself in all the other waves, and I see all the other waves in me. The manifestation or the disappearance of the wave does not lessen the presence of the ocean.

My dharma body and spiritual life are not subject to birth or death. I am able to see my presence outside this body, even in the present moment. Eighty or ninety years is not my life span. My life span, like that of a leaf or of a buddha, is immeasurable. I am able to go beyond the idea that I am a body separate from other manifestations of life, in time and in space.

Mother earth in me.

Smiling to the most beautiful planet in our solar system.

I am a child of the sun.

I am a star.

I am my ancestors.

Playing my part in the immortality of my ancestors.

Smiling to the stars and galaxies in me.

Playing my part in the immortality of stars and cosmos.

Nothing is created. Nothing is destroyed.

I am free from being, free from nonbeing.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings

The Five Mindfulness Trainings represent the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. They are a concrete expression of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the path of right understanding and true love, leading to healing, transformation, and happiness for ourselves and for the world. To practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to cultivate the insight of interbeing, or Right View, which can remove all discrimination, intolerance, anger, fear, and despair. If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we are already on the path of a bodhisattva. Knowing we are on that path, we are not lost in confusion about our life in the present or in fears about the future.

Reverence for Life

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world.

True Happiness

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and reverse the process of global warming.

True Love

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without **mutual consent**, true love, and a deep, long-term commitment. **I resolve to find spiritual support for the integrity of my relationship from family members, friends, and sangha with whom there is support and trust.** I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are **interrelated**, I am committed to learn appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and to cultivate the four basic elements of true love – loving kindness, compassion, joy, and inclusiveness – for the greater happiness of myself and others. **Recognizing the diversity of human experience, I am committed not to discriminate against any form of gender identity or sexual orientation.** Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.

Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to

transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.

Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

Contemplations on the Five Mindfulness Trainings, A New Paradigm for Racial Justice and the Global Pandemic

The First Mindfulness Training: Acknowledging Beauty as Reverence for Life

Aware of the suffering caused by oppression and generational harm based on racial, cultural, social, and ethnic inferiority and superiority and its resultant structures of injustices and harm, I acknowledge the beauty and violence inherent in life. I vow to resist being complicit in systems and structures that continue to perpetuate violence and hatred instead of reverence of life for marginalized groups. I recognize that each person contributes to my individual and our collective awakening, and the co-creation of a world that celebrates and affirms differences and similarities. All living beings can teach me something, when I remember to pause, breathe, listen deeply with a calm and open mind and heart, and ask myself: 'is there more' or 'what else is here with me'?' I honor and respect all life guided by Right View and Right Energy.

The Second Mindfulness Training: Belonging and Connecting as True Happiness

Aware of the suffering caused by ignorance and aversion of my own and other's racial, ethnic, cultural, and social history, its legacy and how this affects me whether I am aware of it or not, I am committed to connecting to these histories. I know that turning toward these histories with an open heart is my journey of awakening to true belonging. I will take the time to learn the history of the racial and ethnic group with which I identify as well as for other socially constructed racial and ethnic groups. Aware that there is no genetic or biological difference between different racial and ethnic groups, and that these identities were constructed by one group to establish dominance over others, I will turn toward racial and other forms of othering with an open heart and compassionate action. I know that this history has led to fragmentation inside and outside body and mind and brought much suffering to all beings. I vow to transform this suffering through the practice of connecting with an open heart. I will notice when emotions of belonging and othering arise and I will ask myself 'why'? Whatever feelings, perceptions, or mental formations arise, I will embrace and when needed engage with love in action. I am committed to practicing Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood so I can help relieve this legacy of racial and social suffering. I will practice looking deeply to see that true happiness is not possible without true connecting leading to belonging and understanding.

The Third Mindfulness Training: Cherishment as True Love

Aware of the suffering caused by discrimination and oppression, I vow to understand its roots within my consciousness and my body and the collective body of the sangha and larger society. I vow to recognize the ways in which I have benefitted or not-benefitted explicitly or implicitly from systems and structures that foster discrimination and injustice. I am aware of the legacy of violence, especially unlawful police violence, perpetrated against Black people, indigenous people, people of color, differently abled people, people of various gender identities and expressions and sexual

orientation, and others who are marginalized. I acknowledge the lived experience of all people to deepen my capacity for understanding and for greater compassionate action. I am aware that narrowly constructed, prevalent interpretations of intimate relationships constrain how we cherish each other in our expression of love, leaving many further isolated and alienated. I am committed to looking tenderly at my suffering, knowing that I am not separate from others and that the seeds of suffering contain the seeds of joy. I am not afraid of bold love that fosters justice and belonging and tender love that seeks peace and connection. I cherish myself and my suffering without discrimination. I cherish this body and mind as an act of healing for myself and for others. I cherish this breath. I cherish this moment. I cherish the liberation of all beings guided by the wisdom and solidity of the sangha. This is my path of true love.

The Fourth Mindfulness Training: Vulnerability as Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware that vulnerability is the essence of our true nature, our humanness, I vow to risk listening and speaking non-judgmentally with understanding and compassion to alleviate suffering and support peace in myself and others. I vow to live with empathy, compassion, and awareness and to listen for understanding rather than disagreement. When I've hurt others through my unskillful action or speech, I vow to practice making a good apology that acknowledges what I have done and offers sincere regret, knowing that this supports the other person and me. I am committed to speaking that aligns with my highest aspiration and encourages honesty and truthfulness. I am committed to generous and courageous listening that bridges differences and supports understanding of others who may be different from me. I am committed to taking meaningful steps to become a true instrument of peace and to help others to be the same. When I am not able to understand the experiences of others, I vow to come back to my breath and my body, and to offer myself gentle patience while learning to support myself in developing greater awareness and skill. I vow to practice awareness of my beliefs, perceptions, and feelings, aversions, and desires and to take refuge in mindful breathing and in the sangha to support greater stability, peace, and understanding. Through my practices of vulnerability, patience, forgiveness, and deeply listening, I know that my speech will be guided by love and understanding. Practicing in this way supports Right Speech and Right Action and guides me to Right Insight.

The Fifth Mindfulness Training: Welcoming as True Nourishing and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by the consumption of an inadequate history of racial and ethnic forms of social segregation, I am committed to healing myself and the world by welcoming, and practicing with this awareness. I will notice how my thoughts, perceptions, feelings, words, and actions may have been influenced by this inaccurate history. I will look deeply to understand how both physical and mental health, for myself, my family, and my society have been influenced by embracing and denying this racial, social, and ethnic history of inferiority and superiority and its legacy of inequities and injustices. I will cultivate joy to support me toward individual and collective wholeness. I will practice mindfulness of the Four Kinds of Nutriment to become aware of how edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness are all influenced by this history. Practicing with Right Energy and Right Resolve, my Right Action of consumption will include awareness of certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations and how they continue to foster wrong perceptions of racial, ethnic, and social injustices. My understanding of interbeing supports my conscious consumption that sustains a healthy understanding of differences, one that does not oppress or discriminate. This Right Insight will preserve peace, joy, and bring healing in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth. To assure that my descendants do not live in a racially, ethnically, and socially unjust world, I commit to diligently practicing with true welcoming on this path to nourish and heal myself, the sangha, and society.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings keeps us centered in life's storms and joys and reminds us that life is a precious gift. The Trainings are a path to liberation and transformation. Practicing these Trainings supports us toward racial and ethnic reconciliation and social change and heals deep suffering. The Five Mindfulness Trainings helps us cross this shore of suffering and brings us to the side of true awakening and love.

Breath Gathas

Thay's Gathas

From the 1989 Retreat

In, out
Deep, slow
Calm, ease
Smile, Release
Present moment, wonderful moment

From the 1991 Retreat

In, out
Flower, fresh
Mountain, solid
Water, reflecting
Space, free

Upon lighting incense...

In gratitude, we offer this incense to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas throughout space and time.
May it be fragrant as earth herself, reflecting out careful efforts,
Our wholehearted awareness, and the fruit of understanding, slowly ripening.
May we be companions with all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
May we awaken from forgetfulness and realize our true home.

Upon inviting a bell to sound...

Body, mind and breath in perfect oneness,
I send my heart along with the sound of the bell.
May the hearers awaken from forgetfulness
And transcend anxiety and sorrow.

Upon hearing the bell...

Listen, listen,
This wonderful sound
Brings me back to my true self.

Upon waking up in the morning...

Waking up in the morning, I smile.
I have twenty-four brand new hours.
I vow to live each moment fully,
With compassionate eyes.

Upon taking one's first steps each day...

Walking on earth is a miracle!
Each wondrous step reveals the wondrous Dharmakaya.

Upon Looking into the morning mirror...

Beauty is a heart that generates love
And a mind that is open.

Upon taking a shower...

Water flows from high in the mountain,
Water flows from deep in the earth,
Water flows through the Great Lakes system,
miraculously,
To sustain all life.
Water flows over this body...
I vow to use it skillfully, to preserve this precious planet.

Upon donning our clothes...

Putting on these clothes,
I am grateful to the people who made them,
And to the materials from which they were made.
I wish that everyone had enough to wear.

Upon contemplating our meal...

This meal is the work of countless beings...
Let us remember their toil.

Upon completing a meal...

My meal is finished.
My hunger is satisfied.
I vow to work for the benefit of all beings.

Upon brushing our teeth...

Brushing my teeth and rinsing my mouth
I vow to speak purely and lovingly.
When my mouth is fragrant with right speech,
A flower blooms in the garden of my heart.

Upon leaving home for work...

The mind can go in a thousand directions,
But on this beautiful path, I walk in peace.
With each step, a gentle wind blows.
With each step, a flower blooms.

Upon entering one's car...

Entering this powerful car,
I buckle my seat belt,
And vow to protect all beings.

Upon entering an elevator...

Joining my brothers and sisters in this elevator,
I breathe mindfully,
And vow to cultivate lovingkindness among all beings.

Upon greeting someone...

A lotus for you
A Buddha to be

While waiting in line...

Calming, smiling,
Present moment, wonderful moment.

Before dialing a telephone...

Words can travel thousands of miles.
May my words create mutual understanding and love.
May they be beautiful as gems,
As lovely as flowers.

While waiting in the grocery checkout line or negotiating
a crowded grocery aisle...

Body, mind and breath in oneness,
I touch the colors and fragrances
Of fruits and harvests from around the world.
May I practice wholeheartedly to share such joy with
all beings.

Thay's Gatha from the 1993 Mundelein Retreat:

I have arrived
I am home
In the now
I am solid
I am free
In the ultimate
I dwell.

Jack Lawlor's ("True Direction's") insight verse from the
1992 Transmission of the Lamp Ceremony in Plum
Village:

Body, mind and breath in oneness,
The flower of the bodicittotpada blooms, and hearts
grow helping hands.
The Sangha rises, and walks with ancestral teachers
to and from the marketplace;
Village walls and temple walls merge, and disappear.

While turning on a light...

Forgetfulness is the darkness;
Mindfulness is the light.
I bring awareness
To shine upon all life.

When feeling angry or anxious...

Feelings come and go like clouds in a windy sky...
Conscious breathing is my anchor.

When dispersed...

Are body, mind and breath in oneness?

When tempted or irresolute...

I vow to practice all aspect of the path with energy,
So that my practice may bear fruit.
I vow to practice wholeheartedly,
So that understanding and compassion will flower.

When awareness of the joy of meditation rises...

Siting in the lotus position,
The human flower blooms.

While walking the dog...

Body, mind and breath in oneness,
I follow a tail-wagging, ground sniffing, furry
Bodhisattva...
Completely alive to the present moment,
Sharing together the Way...

From the very non-beginning, no coming and going,
no fear, no one to tire.

Thay's response:

The True person is always sitting in front of us.
The Direction pointed by him
Is the path of great togetherness.
Let us hold each other's hand and go.
Our happy song will bring a rosy sun to the East.

Discourse on Love

He or she who wants to attain peace should practice being upright, humble, and capable of using loving speech. He or she will know how to live simply and happily, with senses calmed, without being covetous and carried away by the emotions of the majority. Let him or her not do anything that will be disapproved of by the wise ones. (And this is what he or she contemplates:)

May everyone be happy and safe, and may all hearts be filled with joy. May all beings live in security and in peace — beings who are frail or strong, tall or short, big or small, invisible or visible, near or faraway, already born, or yet to be born. May all of them dwell in perfect tranquility. Let no one do harm to anyone. Let no one put the life of anyone in danger. Let no one, out of anger or ill will, wish anyone any harm.

Just as a mother loves and protects her only child at the risk of her own life, cultivate boundless love to offer to all living beings in the entire cosmos. Let our boundless love pervade the whole universe, above, below, and across. Our love will know no obstacles. Our heart will be absolutely free from hatred and enmity. Whether standing or walking, sitting or lying, as long as we are awake, we should maintain this mindfulness of love in our own heart. This is the noblest way of living. Free from wrong views, greed, and sensual desires, living in beauty and realizing Perfect Understanding, those who practice Boundless Love will certainly transcend Birth and Death. Metta Sutta (Suttanipata1)

Invoking the Bodhisattvas' Names

We invoke your name, ***Avalokiteshvara***. We aspire to learn your way of listening in order to help relieve the suffering in the world. You know how to listen in order to understand. We invoke your name in order to practice listening with all our attention and openheartedness. We will sit and listen without any prejudice. We will sit and listen without judging or reacting. We will sit and listen in order to understand. We will sit and listen so attentively that we will be able to hear what the other person is saying and also what is being left unsaid. We know that just by listening deeply we already alleviate a great deal of pain and suffering in the other person. [bell]

We invoke your name, ***Manjushri***. We aspire to learn your way, which is to be still and to look deeply into the heart of things and into the hearts of people. We will look with all our attention and openheartedness. We will look with unprejudiced eyes. We will look without judging or reacting. We will look deeply so that we will be able to see and understand the roots of suffering, the impermanent and selfless nature of all that is. We will practice your way of using the sword of understanding to cut through the bonds of suffering, thus freeing ourselves and other species. [bell]

We invoke your name, ***Samantabhadra***. We aspire to practice your vow to act with the eyes and heart of compassion, to bring joy to one person in the morning and to ease the pain of one person in the afternoon. We know that the happiness of others is our own happiness, and we aspire to practice joy on the path of service. We know that every word, every look, every action, and every smile can bring happiness to others. We know that if we practice wholeheartedly, we ourselves may become an inexhaustible source of peace and joy for our loved ones and for all species. [bell]

We invoke your name, ***Kshitigarbha***. We aspire to learn your way of being present where there is darkness, suffering, oppression, and despair, so we can bring light, hope, relief, and liberation to those places. We are determined not to forget about or abandon those in desperate situations. We will do our best to establish contact with those who cannot find a way out of their suffering, those whose cries for help, justice, equality, and human rights are not being heard. We know that hell can be found in many places on Earth. We will do our best not to contribute to creating more hells on Earth, and to help transform the hells that already exist. We will practice in order to realize the qualities of perseverance and stability, so that, like the Earth, we can always be supportive and faithful to those in need. [bell]

We invoke your name, ***Sadaparibhuta***. We aspire to learn your way of never doubting or underestimating any living being. With great respect, you say to all you meet, "You are someone of great value, you have Buddha nature, I see this potential in you." Like you, we will look with a wise, compassionate gaze, so we are able to hold up a mirror where others can see their ultimate nature reflected. We will remind people who feel worthless that they too are a precious wonder of life. We

vow to water only the positive seeds in ourselves and in others, so that our thoughts, words, and actions can encourage confidence and self-acceptance in ourselves, our children, our loved ones, and in everyone we meet. Inspired by the great faith and insight that everyone is Buddha, we will practice your way of patience and inclusiveness so we can liberate ourselves from ignorance and misunderstanding, and offer freedom, peace, and joy to ourselves, to others and to our society. [bell, bell]

Discourse on Happiness

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when the Lord was living in the vicinity of Savatthi at the Anathapindika Monastery in the Jeta Grove. Late at night, a deva appeared whose light and beauty made the whole Jeta Grove shine radiantly. After paying respects to the Buddha, the deva asked him a question in the form of a verse:

“Many gods and men are eager to know
what are the greatest blessings
which bring about a peaceful and happy life.
Please, Tathagata, will you teach us?”

(This is the Buddha’s answer):

“Not to be associated with the foolish ones,
to live in the company of wise people,
honoring those who are worth honoring —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To live in a good environment,
to have planted good seeds,
and to realize that you are on the right path —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To have a chance to learn and grow,
to be skillful in your profession or craft,
practicing the precepts and loving speech —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To be able to serve and support your parents,
to cherish your own family,
to have a vocation that brings you joy —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To live honestly, generous in giving,
to offer support to relatives and friends,
living a life of blameless conduct —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To avoid unwholesome actions,
not caught by alcoholism or drugs,
and to be diligent in doing good things —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To be humble and polite in manner,
to be grateful and content with a simple life,
not missing the occasion to learn the Dharma —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To persevere and be open to change,
to have regular contact with monks and nuns,
and to fully participate in Dharma discussions —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To live diligently and attentively,
to perceive the Noble Truths,
and to realize Nirvana —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To live in the world
with your heart undisturbed by the world,
with all sorrows ended, dwelling in peace —
this is the greatest happiness.

“For he or she who accomplishes this,
unvanquished wherever she goes,
always he is safe and happy —
happiness lives within oneself.”

Mahamangala Sutta, Sutta Nipata 1

Discourse on the Eight Realizations of Great Beings

Wholeheartedly, day and night, disciples of the Awakened One should recite and meditate on the Eight Realizations discovered by the Great Beings.

The First Realization is the awareness that the world is impermanent. Political regimes are subject to fall. Things composed of the four elements are empty, containing within them the seeds of suffering. Human beings are composed of Five Aggregates and are without a separate self. They are always in the process of change – constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self and without a separate existence. The mind is the source of all confusion, and the body the forest of all unwholesome actions. Meditating on this, you can be released from the round of birth and death.

The Second Realization is the awareness that more desire brings more suffering. All hardships in daily life arise from greed and desire. Those with little desire and ambition are able to relax, their body and mind free from entanglement.

The Third Realization is the awareness that the human mind is always searching outside itself and never feels fulfilled. This brings about unwholesome activity. Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, know the value of having few desires. They live simply and peacefully, so they can devote themselves to practicing the Way. They regard the realization of perfect understanding to be their only career.

The Fourth Realization is the awareness that indolence is an obstacle to practice. You must practice diligently to transform unwholesome mental states that bind you, and you must conquer the four kinds of Mara in order to free yourself from the prisons of the Five Aggregates and the Three Worlds.

The Fifth Realization is the awareness that ignorance is the cause of the endless round of birth and death. Bodhisattvas always listen to and learn from others so their understanding and skillful means can develop, and so they can teach living beings and bring them great joy.

The Sixth Realization is the awareness that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and actions. When practicing generosity, bodhisattvas consider everyone – friends and enemies alike – to be equal. They do not condemn anyone's past wrongdoings or hate even those presently causing harm.

The Seventh Realization is the awareness that the five categories of sensual desire – money, sex, fame, overeating and oversleeping – lead to problems. Although you are in the world, try not to be caught in worldly matters. A monk, for example, has in his possession only three robes and one bowl. He lives simply in order to practice the Way. His precepts keep him free from attachment to worldly things, and he treats everyone equally and with compassion.

The Eighth Realization is the awareness that the fire of birth and death is raging, causing endless suffering everywhere. Take the Great Vow to help all beings, to suffer with all beings, and to guide all beings to the Realm of Great Joy.

These Eight Realizations are the discoveries of great beings, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who have practiced diligently the way of understanding and love. They have sailed the Dharmakaya boat to the shore of nirvana, and have then returned to the ordinary world, free of the five sensual desires, their minds and hearts directed toward the Noble Way.

Using these Eight Realizations, they help all beings recognize the suffering in the world. If disciples of the Buddha recite and meditate on these Eight Realizations, they will put an end to countless misunderstandings and difficulties and progress toward enlightenment, leaving behind the world of birth and death, dwelling forever in peace.

The Nine Prayers

Thich Nhat Hanh

1. May I be peaceful, happy, and light in body and spirit.
2. May I be free from injury. May I live in safety.
3. May I be free from disturbance, fear, anxiety, and worry.
4. May I learn to look at myself with the eyes of understanding and love.
5. May I be able to recognize and touch the seeds of joy and happiness in myself.
6. May I learn to identify and see the sources of anger, craving, and delusion in myself.
7. May I know how to nourish the seeds of joy in myself every day.
8. May I be able to live fresh, solid, and free.
9. May I be free from attachment and aversion, but not be indifferent.

Note: After practicing “May I be...” you can practice, “May he or she be...” – visualizing first someone you like, then the one you love the most, then someone who is neutral to you, and finally the person whom thinking of makes you suffer the most. Then you can practice “May they be...” beginning with the group, the people, the nation or the species you like, then the one you love most, then the one that is neutral to you, and finally the one you suffer the most when you think of them.

The Five Remembrances

[These five remembrances help us to identify and look deeply at the seeds of fear. They can be recited daily, read aloud as a guided meditation, or used as a silent meditation by individual practitioners.]

I am of the nature to grow old.

There is no way to escape growing old.

[BELL]

I am of the nature to have ill-health.

There is no way to escape having ill-health.

[BELL]

I am of the nature to die.

There is no way to escape death.

[BELL]

All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change.

There is no way to escape being separated from them.

[BELL]

I inherit the results of my actions of body, speech, and mind.

My actions are my continuation.

[BELL, BELL]

Heart Sutra: The Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore

Avalokiteshvara
while practicing deeply
with the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore,
suddenly discovered that
all of the five Skandhas are equally empty,
and with this
realisation he overcame all Ill-being.

“Listen Sariputra,
this Body itself is Emptiness
and Emptiness itself is this Body.
This Body is not other than Emptiness
and Emptiness is not other than this Body.
The same is true of Feelings,
Perceptions, Mental Formations,
and Consciousness.

“Listen Sariputra,
all phenomena bear the mark of Emptiness;
their true nature is the nature of
no Birth no Death,
no Being no Non-being,
no Defilement no Purity,
no Increasing no Decreasing.

“That is why in Emptiness,
Body, Feelings, Perceptions,
Mental Formations and Consciousness
are not separate self entities.

The Eighteen Realms of Phenomena
which are the six Sense Organs,
the six Sense Objects,
and the six Consciousnesses
are also not separate self entities.

The Twelve Links of Interdependent Arising
and their Extinction
are also not separate self entities.
Ill-being,

the Causes of Ill-being,
the End of Ill-being, the Path,
insight and attainment,
are also not separate self entities.

Whoever can see this
no longer needs anything to attain.

Bodhisattvas who practice
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
see no more obstacles in their mind,
and because there
are no more obstacles in their mind,
they can overcome all fear,
destroy all wrong perceptions
and realize Perfect Nirvana.

“All Buddhas in the past, present and future
by practicing
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
are all capable of attaining
Authentic and Perfect Enlightenment.

“Therefore Sariputra,
it should be known that
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
is a Great Mantra,
the most illuminating mantra,
the highest mantra,
a mantra beyond compare,
the True Wisdom that has the power
to put an end to all kinds of suffering.
Therefore let us proclaim
a mantra to praise
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore:

Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!”

“The Insight that Brings us to the Other Shore” translation by Thich Nhat Hanh (2014) is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

The Five Awareness's

[These verses are used in the wedding ceremony. They are also to be recited by couples on the Full-moon and new-moon days.]

We are aware that all generations of our ancestors and all future generations are present in us.

[Bell]

We are aware of the expectation that our ancestors, our children, and their children have of us.

[Bell]

We are aware that our joy, peace, freedom, and harmony are the joy, peace, freedom, and harmony of our ancestors, our children, and their children.

[Bell]

We are aware that understanding is the very foundation of love.

[Bell]

We are aware that blaming and arguing can never help us and only creates a wider gap between us; that only understanding, trust, and love can help us change and grow.

[Bell], [Bell]

The Diamond Sutra: The Diamond That Cuts through Illusion

This is what I heard one time when the Buddha was staying in the monastery in Anathapindika's park in the Jeta Grove near Shravasti with a community of 1,250 bhikshus, fully ordained monks.

That day, when it was time to make the almsround, the Buddha put on his sanghati robe and, holding his bowl, went into the town of Shravasti to beg for alms, going from house to house. When the almsround was completed, he returned to the monastery to eat the midday meal. Then he put away his sanghati robe and his bowl, washed his feet, arranged his cushion, and sat down.

At that time, the Venerable Subhuti stood up, bared his right shoulder, put his knee on the ground, and, joining his palms respectfully, said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, it is rare to find someone like you. You always support and place confidence in the Bodhisattvas.

"World-Honored One, if sons and daughters of good families want to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, what should they rely on and what should they do to master their mind?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "The Bodhisattva Mahasattvas master their mind by meditating as follows: 'However many species of living beings there are—whether born from eggs, from the womb, from moisture, or spontaneously; whether they have form or do not have form; whether they have perceptions or do not have perceptions; or whether it cannot be said of them that they have perceptions or that they do not have perceptions, we must lead all these beings to nirvana so that they can be liberated. Yet when this innumerable, immeasurable, infinite number of beings has become liberated, we do not, in truth, think that a single being has been liberated.'

"Why is this so? If, Subhuti, a bodhisattva still has the notion of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span exists, that person is not a true bodhisattva.

"Moreover, Subhuti, when bodhisattvas practice generosity, they do not rely on any object—any form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or object of mind to practice generosity. That, Subhuti, is the spirit in which bodhisattvas practice generosity, not relying on signs. Why? If bodhisattvas practice generosity without relying on signs, the happiness that results cannot be conceived of. Subhuti, do you think that the space in the Eastern Quarter can be conceived of or measured?"

“No, World-Honored One.”

“Subhuti, can space in the Western, Southern, or Northern Quarters, above or below be conceived of or measured?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

“Subhuti, if bodhisattvas do not rely on any concept while practicing generosity, the happiness that results from that virtuous act is like space. It cannot be conceived of or measured. Subhuti, the bodhisattvas should let their minds dwell in the teachings I have just given.

“What do you think, Subhuti? Is it possible to recognize the Tathagata by means of bodily signs?”

“No, World-Honored One. When the Tathagata speaks of bodily signs, there are no signs being talked about.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “In a place where there are signs, in that place there is deception. If you can see the signless nature of signs, you can see the Tathagata.”

The Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha, “In times to come, will there be people who, when they hear these teachings, have real faith in them?”

The Buddha replied, “Do not speak that way, Subhuti. Five hundred years after the Tathagata has passed away, there will still be people who appreciate the joy and happiness that come from observing the precepts. When such people hear these words, they will have faith that this is the truth. Know that such people have sown wholesome seeds not only during the lifetime of one Buddha, or even two, three, four, or five Buddhas, but have, in fact, planted wholesome seeds during the lifetimes of tens of thousands of Buddhas. Anyone who, for even a moment, gives rise to a pure and clear confidence upon hearing these words of the Tathagata, the Tathagata sees and knows that person, and they will attain immeasurable merit because of this understanding. Why?”

Discourse on the Full Awareness of Breathing

I

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was staying in Savatthi in the Eastern Park, with many well-known and accomplished disciples, including Sariputta, Mahamoggallana, Mahakassapa, Mahakacchayana, Mahakotthita, Mahakappina, Mahachunda, Anuradha, Revata, and Ananda. The senior bhikkhus in the community were diligently instructing bhikkhus who were new to the practice — some instructing ten bhikkhus, some twenty, some thirty, and some forty; and in this way the bhikkhus who were new to the practice gradually made great progress.

That night the moon was full, and the Pavarana Ceremony was held to mark the end of the rainy-season retreat. Lord Buddha, the Awakened One, was sitting in the open air, and his disciples were gathered around him. After looking over the assembly, he began to speak:

“O bhikkhus, I am pleased to observe the fruit you have attained in your practice. Yet I know you can make even more progress. What you have not yet attained, you can attain. What you have not yet realized, you can realize perfectly. [To engage your efforts,] I will remain here until the next full-moon day.”

When they heard that the Lord Buddha was going to remain in Savatthi for another month, bhikkhus throughout the country began traveling there to study with him. The senior bhikkhus continued teaching the bhikkhus new to the practice even more ardently. Some were instructing ten bhikkhus, some twenty, some thirty, and some forty. With this help, the newer bhikkhus were able, little by little, to continue their progress in understanding.

When the next full-moon day arrived, the Buddha, seated under the open sky, looked over the assembly of bhikkhus and began to speak:

“O bhikkhus, our community is pure and good. At its heart, it is without useless and boastful talk, and therefore it deserves to receive offerings and be considered a field of merit. Such a community is rare, and any pilgrim who seeks it, no matter how far he must travel, will find it worthy.

“O bhikkhus, there are bhikkhus in this assembly who have realized the fruit of Arhatship, destroyed every root of affliction, laid aside every burden, and attained right understanding and emancipation. There are also bhikkhus who have cut off the first five internal knots and realized the fruit of never returning to the cycle of birth and death.

“There are those who have thrown off the first three internal knots and realized the fruit of returning once more. They have cut off the roots of greed, hatred, and ignorance, and will only need to return to the cycle of birth and death one more time. There are those who have thrown off the three internal knots and attained the fruit of stream-enterer, coursing steadily to the Awakened State. There are those who practice the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. There are those who practice the Four Right Efforts, and those who practice the Four Bases of Success. There are those who practice the Five Faculties, those who practice the Five Powers, those who practice the Seven Factors of Awakening, and those who practice the Noble Eightfold Path. There are those who practice loving kindness, those who practice compassion, those who practice joy, and those who practice equanimity. There are those who practice the Nine Contemplations, and those who practice the Observation of Impermanence. There are also bhikkhus who are already practicing Full Awareness of Breathing.”

II

“O bhikkhus, the full awareness of breathing, if developed and practiced continuously, will be rewarding and bring great advantages. It will lead to success in practicing the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. If the method of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness is developed and practiced continuously, it will lead to success in the practice of the Seven Factors of Awakening. The Seven Factors of Awakening, if developed and practiced continuously, will give rise to understanding and liberation of the mind.

“What is the way to develop and practice continuously the method of Full Awareness of Breathing so that the practice will be rewarding and offer great benefit?”

“It is like this, bhikkhus: the practitioner goes into the forest or to the foot of a tree, or to any deserted place, sits stably in the lotus position, holding his or her body quite straight, and practices like this: ‘Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.’

1. ‘Breathing in a long breath, I know I am breathing in a long breath. Breathing out a long breath, I know I am breathing out a long breath.
2. ‘Breathing in a short breath, I know I am breathing in a short breath. Breathing out a short breath, I know I am breathing out a short breath.
3. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing out, I am aware of my whole body.’ He or she practices like this.
4. ‘Breathing in, I calm my whole body. Breathing out, I calm my whole body.’ He or she practices like this.
5. ‘Breathing in, I feel joyful. Breathing out, I feel joyful.’ He or she practices like this.
6. ‘Breathing in, I feel happy. Breathing out, I feel happy.’ He or she practices like this.
7. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my mental formations. Breathing out, I am aware of my mental formations.’ He or she practices like this.
8. ‘Breathing in, I calm my mental formations. Breathing out, I calm my mental formations.’ He or she practices like this.
9. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my mind. Breathing out, I am aware of my mind.’ He or she practices like this.
10. ‘Breathing in, I make my mind happy. Breathing out, I make my mind happy.’ He or she practices like this.
11. ‘Breathing in, I concentrate my mind. Breathing out, I concentrate my mind.’ He or she practices like this.
12. ‘Breathing in, I liberate my mind. Breathing out, I liberate my mind.’ He or she practices like this.
13. ‘Breathing in, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas. Breathing out, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas.’ He or she practices like this.
14. ‘Breathing in, I observe the disappearance of desire. Breathing out, I observe the disappearance of desire.’ He or she practices like this.
15. ‘Breathing in, I observe the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena. Breathing out, I observe the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena.’ He or she practices like this.
16. ‘Breathing in, I observe letting go. Breathing out, I observe letting go.’ He or she practices like this.

“The Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practiced continuously according to these instructions, will be rewarding and of great benefit.”

III

“In what way does one develop and continuously practice the Full Awareness of Breathing, in order to succeed in the practice of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness?”

“When the practitioner breathes in or out a long or a short breath, aware of his breath or his whole body, or aware that he is making his whole body calm and at peace, he abides peacefully in the observation of the body in the body, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the First Establishment of Mindfulness, the body.

“When the practitioner breathes in or out aware of joy or happiness, of the mental formations, or to make the mental formations peaceful, he abides peacefully in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the Second Establishment of Mindfulness, the feelings.

“When the practitioner breathes in or out with the awareness of the mind, or to make the mind happy, to collect the mind in concentration, or to free and liberate the mind, he abides peacefully in the observation of the mind in the mind, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the Third Establishment of Mindfulness, the mind. Without Full Awareness of Breathing, there can be no development of meditative stability and understanding.

“When the practitioner breathes in or breathes out and contemplates the essential impermanence or the essential disappearance of desire or the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena or letting go, he abides peacefully in the observations of the objects of mind in the objects of mind, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the Fourth Establishment of Mindfulness, the objects of mind.

“The practice of Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practiced continuously, will lead to perfect accomplishment of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness.”

IV

“Moreover, if they are developed and continuously practiced, the Four Establishments of Mindfulness will lead to perfect abiding in the Seven Factors of Awakening. How is this so?

“When the practitioner can maintain, without distraction, the practice of observing the body in the body, the feelings in the feelings, the mind in the mind, and the objects of mind in the objects of mind, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding her state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life, with unwavering, steadfast, imperturbable meditative stability, she will attain the First Factor of Awakening, namely mindfulness. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner can abide in meditative stability without being distracted and can investigate every dharma, every object of mind that arises, then the Second Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in her, the factor of investigating dharmas. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner can observe and investigate every dharma in a sustained, persevering, and steadfast way, without being distracted, the Third Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in her, the factor of energy. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner has reached a stable, imperturbable abiding in the stream of practice, the Fourth Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in her, the factor of joy. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner can abide undistractedly in the state of joy, she will feel her body and mind light and at peace. At this point the Fifth Factor of Awakening will be born and developed, the factor of ease. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When both body and mind are at ease, the practitioner can easily enter into concentration. At this point the Sixth Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in her, the factor of concentration. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner is abiding in concentration with deep calm, she will cease discriminating and comparing. At this point the Seventh Factor of Awakening is released, born, and developed in her, the factor of letting go. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“This is how the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, if developed and practiced continuously, will lead to perfect abiding in the Seven Factors of Awakening.”

V

“How will the Seven Factors of Awakening, if developed and practiced continuously, lead to the perfect accomplishment of true understanding and complete liberation?”

“If the practitioner follows the path of the Seven Factors of Awakening, living in quiet seclusion, observing and contemplating the disappearance of desire, he will develop the capacity of letting go. This will be a result of following the path of the Seven Factors of Awakening and will lead to the perfect accomplishment of true understanding and complete liberation.”

VI

This is what the Lord, the Awakened One, said; and everyone in the assembly felt gratitude and delight at having heard his teachings.

Anapanasati Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 118

The Four Bodhisattva Vows

All beings without number, liberate
Endless blind passions, uproot
Dharma gates beyond measure, penetrate
The great way of Buddha, manifest

Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness

i

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was living at Kammassadhamma, a market town of the Kuru people. The Buddha addressed the bhikkhus, “O bhikkhus.”

And the bhikkhus replied, “Venerable Lord.”

The Buddha said, “Bhikkhus, there is a most wonderful way to help living beings realize purification, overcome directly grief and sorrow, end pain and anxiety, travel the right path, and realize nirvana. This way is the Four Establishments of Mindfulness.

“What are the Four Establishments?”

1. “Bhikkhus, a practitioner remains established in the observation of the body in the body, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.
2. “He remains established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.
3. “He remains established in the observation of the mind in the mind, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.
4. “He remains established in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.”

ii

“And how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the body in the body?”

“She goes to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty room, sits down cross-legged in the lotus position, holds her body straight, and establishes mindfulness in front of her. She breathes in, aware that she is breathing in. She breathes out, aware that she is breathing out. When she breathes in a long breath, she knows, ‘I am breathing in a long breath.’ When she breathes out a long breath, she knows, ‘I am breathing out a long breath.’ When she breathes in a short breath, she knows, ‘I am breathing in a short breath.’ When she breathes out a short breath, she knows, ‘I am breathing out a short breath.’

“She uses the following practice: ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing out, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I calm my body.’

“Just as a skilled potter knows when he makes a long turn on the wheel, ‘I am making a long turn,’ and knows when he makes a short turn, ‘I am making a short turn,’ so a practitioner, when she breathes in a long breath, knows, ‘I am breathing in a long breath,’ and when she breathes in a short breath, knows, ‘I am breathing in a short breath,’ when she breathes out a long breath, knows, ‘I am breathing out a long breath,’ and when she breathes out a short breath, knows, ‘I am breathing out a short breath.’

“She uses the following practice: ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing out, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I calm my body.’

“Moreover, when a practitioner walks, he is aware, ‘I am walking.’ When he is standing, he is aware, ‘I am standing.’ When he is sitting, he is aware, ‘I am sitting.’ When he is lying down, he is aware, ‘I am lying down.’ In whatever position his body happens to be, he is aware of the position of his body.

“Moreover, when the practitioner is going forward or backward, he applies full awareness to his going forward or backward. When he looks in front or looks behind, bends down or stands up, he also applies full awareness to what he is

doing. He applies full awareness to wearing the sanghati robe or carrying the alms bowl. When he eats or drinks, chews, or savors the food, he applies full awareness to all this. When passing excrement or urinating, he applies full awareness to this. When he walks, stands, lies down, sits, sleeps or wakes up, speaks or is silent, he shines his awareness on all this.

“Further, the practitioner meditates on her very own body from the soles of the feet upwards and then from the hair on top of the head downwards, a body contained inside the skin and full of all the impurities which belong to the body: ‘Here is the hair of the head, the hairs on the body, the nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, bowels, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine.’

“Bhikkhus, imagine a sack which can be opened at both ends, containing a variety of grains — brown rice, wild rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame, white rice. When someone with good eyesight opens the bags, he will review it like this: ‘This is brown rice, this is wild rice, these are mung beans, these are kidney beans, these are sesame seeds, this is white rice.’ Just so the practitioner passes in review the whole of his body from the soles of the feet to the hair on the top of the head, a body enclosed in a layer of skin and full of all the impurities which belong to the body: ‘Here is the hair of the head, the hairs on the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, bowels, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine.’

“Further, in whichever position her body happens to be, the practitioner passes in review the elements which constitute the body: ‘In this body is the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.’

“As a skilled butcher or an apprentice butcher, having killed a cow, might sit at the crossroads to divide the cow into many parts, the practitioner passes in review the elements which comprise her very own body: ‘Here in this body are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.’

Further, the practitioner compares his own body with a corpse which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground and lying there for one, two, or three days — bloated, blue in color, and festering, and he observes, ‘This body of mine is of the same nature. It will end up in the same way; there is no way it can avoid that state.’

“Further, the practitioner compares his own body with a corpse which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground, pecked at by crows, eaten by hawks, vultures, and jackals, and infested with maggots and worms, and he observes, ‘This body of mine is of the same nature, it will end up in the same way, there is no way it can avoid that state.’

“Further, the practitioner compares his own body with a corpse which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground; it is just a skeleton with a little flesh and blood sticking to it, and the bones are held together by the ligaments.

“Further, the practitioner compares his own body with a corpse which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground; it is just a skeleton, no longer adhered to by any flesh, but still smeared by a little blood, the bones still held together by the ligaments.

“Further, the practitioner compares his own body with a corpse which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground; it is just a skeleton, no longer adhered to by any flesh nor smeared by any blood, but the bones are still held together by the ligaments.

“Further, the practitioner compares his own body with a corpse which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground; all that is left is a collection of bones scattered here and there; in one place a hand bone, in another a shin bone, a thigh bone, a pelvis, a spinal column, a skull.

“Further, the practitioner compares his own body with a corpse which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground; all that is left is a collection of bleached bones, the color of shells.

“Further, the practitioner compares his own body with a corpse which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground; it has been lying there for more than one year and all that is left is a collection of dried bones.

“Further, the practitioner compares his own body with a corpse which he visualizes thrown onto a charnel ground; all that is left is the dust which comes from the rotted bones, and he observes, ‘This body of mine is of the same nature, it will end up in the same way. There is no way it can avoid that state.’

“This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the body in the body, observation of the body from within or from without, or both from within or from without. He remains established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be in the body or the process of dissolution in the body or both in the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or he is mindful of the fact, ‘There is a body here,’ until understanding and full awareness come about. He remains established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. That is how to practice observation of the body in the body, O bhikkhus.”

iii

“Bhikkhus, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings?

“Whenever the practitioner has a pleasant feeling, she is aware, ‘I am experiencing a pleasant feeling.’ The practitioner practices like this for all the feelings, whether they are pleasant, painful, or neutral, observing when they belong to the body and when they belong to the mind.

“This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, observation of the feelings from within or from without, or observation of the feelings both from within and from without. She remains established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be in the feelings or the process of dissolution in the feelings or both in the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or she is mindful of the fact, ‘There is feeling here,’ until understanding and full awareness come about. She remains established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. That is how to practice observation of the feelings in the feelings, O bhikkhus.”

iv

“Bhikkhus, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the mind in the mind?

“When his mind is desiring, the practitioner is aware, ‘My mind is desiring.’ When his mind is not desiring, he is aware, ‘My mind is not desiring.’ He is aware in the same way concerning a hating mind, a confused mind, a collected mind, a dispersed mind, an expansive mind, a narrow mind, the highest mind, and a concentrated and liberated mind.

This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the mind in the mind, observation of the mind from within or from without, or observation of the mind both from within and from without. He remains established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be in the mind or the process of dissolution in the mind or both in the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or he is mindful of the fact, ‘There is mind here,’ until understanding and full awareness come about. He remains established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. This is how to practice observation of the mind in the mind, O bhikkhus.”

v

“Bhikkhus, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind?

“First of all, she observes the objects of mind in the objects of mind with regard to the Five Hindrances. How does she observe this?

“When sensual desire is present in her, she is aware, ‘Sensual desire is present in me.’ Or when sensual desire is not present in her, she is aware, ‘Sensual desire is not present in me.’ When sensual desire begins to arise, she is aware of it. When sensual desire that has already arisen is abandoned, she is aware of it. When sensual desire that has already been abandoned will not arise again in the future, she is aware of it.

“She practices in the same way concerning anger, dullness and drowsiness, agitation and remorse, and doubt.

“Further, the practitioner observes the objects of mind in the objects of mind with regard to the Five Aggregates of Clinging. How does she observe this?

“She observes like this: ‘Such is form. Such is the arising of form. Such is the disappearance of form. Such is feeling. Such is the arising of feeling. Such is the disappearance of feeling. Such is perception. Such is the arising of perception. Such is the disappearance of perception. Such are mental formations. Such is the arising of mental formations. Such is the disappearance of mental formations. Such is consciousness. Such is the arising of consciousness. Such is the disappearance of consciousness.

“Further, bhikkhus, the practitioner observes the objects of mind in the objects of mind with regard to the six sense organs and the six sense objects. How does she observe this?

“She is aware of the eyes and aware of the form, and she is aware of the internal formations which are produced in dependence on these two things. She is aware of the birth of a new internal formation and is aware of abandoning an already produced internal formation, and she is aware when an already abandoned internal formation will not arise again.

“She is aware in the same way of the ears and sound, the nose and smell, the tongue and taste, the body and touch, the mind and objects of mind.

“Further, bhikkhus, the practitioner remains established in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind with regard to the Seven Factors of Awakening.

“How does he remain established in the practice of observation of the Seven Factors of Awakening?

“When the factor of awakening, mindfulness, is present in him, he is aware, ‘Mindfulness is present in me.’ When mindfulness is not present in him, he is aware, ‘Mindfulness is not present in me.’ He is aware when not-yet-born mindfulness is being born and when already-born mindfulness is perfectly developed.

“In the same way, he is aware of the factors of investigation, diligence, joy, ease, concentration, and equanimity.

“Further, bhikkhus, a practitioner remains established in the observation of objects of mind in the objects of mind with regard to the Four Noble Truths.

“How, bhikkhus, does the practitioner remain established in the observation of the Four Noble Truths?

“A practitioner is aware ‘This is suffering,’ as it arises. She is aware, ‘This is the cause of the suffering,’ as it arises. She is aware, ‘This is the end of suffering,’ as it arises. She is aware, ‘This is the path which leads to the end of suffering,’ as it arises.

“This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind either from within or from without, or both from within and from without. She remains established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be in any of the objects of mind or the process of dissolution in the objects of mind or both in the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or she is mindful of the fact, ‘There is an object of mind here,’ until understanding and full awareness come about. She remains established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. That is how to practice observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind, O bhikkhus.”

vi

“Bhikkhus, he who practices the Four Establishments of Mindfulness for seven years can expect one of two fruits — the highest understanding in this very life or, if there remains some residue of affliction, he can attain the fruit of no-return.

“Let alone seven years, bhikkhus, whoever practices the Four Establishments of Mindfulness for six, five, four, three, two years or one year, for seven, six, five, four, three, or two months, one month or half a month, can also expect one of two fruits — either the highest understanding in this very life or, if there remains some residue of affliction, he can attain the fruit of no-return.

“That is why we said that this path, the path of the four grounds for the establishment of mindfulness, is the most wonderful path, which helps beings realize purification, transcend grief and sorrow, destroy pain and anxiety, travel the right path, and realize nirvana.”

The bhikkhus were delighted to hear the teaching of the Buddha. They took it to heart and began to put it into practice.

Satipatthana Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 10

The Discourse about Yasoja

Thus I heard: At one time the Gracious One was dwelling near Sāvattḥī, in Jeta’s Wood, at Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then at that time five hundred monks with Yasoja at their head had arrived in Sāvattḥī, to see the Gracious One. Then those visiting monks while exchanging greetings with the resident monks, having the dwelling places assigned, putting the bowls and robes in order, made a loud noise, a great noise.

Then the Gracious One addressed venerable Ānanda, saying: “Who are these making a loud noise, a great noise? One would think it is fishermen with their haul of fish!”

“These, reverend Sir, are five hundred monks with Yasoja at their head, who have arrived at Sāvattḥī to see the Gracious One. These visiting monks while exchanging greetings with the resident monks, having the dwelling places assigned, putting the bowls and robes in order, make a loud noise, a great noise.”

“Now then, Ānanda, with my word address those monks, saying: ‘The Teacher calls the venerable ones.’ ”

“Yes, reverend Sir,” said venerable Ānanda, and after replying to the Gracious One, he went to those monks, and after going, he said this to those monks: “The Teacher calls the venerable ones.”

“Yes, friend,” said those monks, and after replying to venerable Ānanda, they went to the Gracious One, and after going and worshipping the Gracious One, they sat down on one side. While sat on one side the Gracious One said this to those monks:

“Why, monks, are you making a loud noise, a great noise, so one would think it is fishermen with their haul of fish?”

After that was said, venerable Yasoja said this to the Gracious One: “These, reverend Sir, are five hundred monks who have arrived at Sāvattḥī to see the Gracious One. These visiting monks while exchanging greetings with the resident monks, having the dwelling places assigned, putting the bowls and robes in order, make a loud noise, a great noise.”

“Please go, monks, I am dismissing you. You should not live in my presence.”

“Yes, reverend Sir,” said those monks, and after replying to the Gracious One, rising from their seats, worshipping and circumambulating the Gracious One, putting their dwelling places in order, picking up their robes and bowls, they went on walking tour towards Vajji. While walking gradually through Vajji on walking tour they went to the river Vaggumudā, and after going and making leaf-huts on the bank of the river Vaggumudā, they entered upon the Rains Retreat.

Then venerable Yasoja, having entered upon the Rains Retreat, addressed those monks saying: “We were dismissed, friends, by the Gracious One, who desires our welfare, who seeks our benefit, who is compassionate, out of compassion for us. Well now, venerable friends, we must live in such a way that the Gracious One will be pleased with our living.”

“Yes, friend,” those monks replied to venerable Yasoja. Then those monks while dwelling secluded, heedful, ardent, and resolute, within the Rains Retreat all realized the three deep understandings.

Then the Gracious One, having dwelt at Sāvattḥī for as long as he wished, went on walking tour towards Vesālī, and while walking gradually on walking tour he arrived at Vesālī. There the Gracious One dwelt near Vesālī, in the Great

Wood, at the Gabled Hall. Then the Gracious One, having applied his mind, and with his mind fully encompassed the minds of the monks on the bank of the Vaggumudā, addressed venerable Ānanda, saying:

“It is as though something light has arisen for me, Ānanda, in this direction. It is as though something splendid has arisen for me, Ānanda, in this direction. To go to that direction where the monks on the bank of the Vaggumudā dwell and to apply my mind is not disagreeable. Please send, Ānanda, a messenger into the presence of the monks on the bank of the Vaggumudā, to say: ‘The Teacher, venerable friends, calls you, the Teacher desires to see the venerable ones.’ ”

“Yes, reverend Sir,” said venerable Ānanda, and after replying to the Gracious One, he went to a certain monk, and after going, he said this to that monk: “Come, venerable friend, you should go to the monks on the bank of the Vaggumudā, and after going, please say this to the monks on the bank of the Vaggumudā: ‘The Teacher, venerable friends, calls you, the Teacher desires to see the venerable ones.’ ”

“Yes, friend,” said that monk, and after replying to venerable Ānanda, just as a strong man might stretch out a bent arm, or bend in an outstretched arm, in the same way did he disappear from the Gabled Hall in Great Wood, and reappear in front of those monks on the bank of the river Vaggumudā. Then that monk said this to the monks on the bank of the Vaggumudā: “The Teacher, venerable friends, calls you, the Teacher desires to see the venerable ones.”

“Yes, friend,” said those monks, and after replying to that monk, setting their dwelling places in order, and picking up their bowls and robes, just as a strong man might stretch out a bent arm, or bend in an outstretched arm, in the same way did they disappear from the bank of the river Vaggumudā, and reappear in front of the Gracious One in the Gabled Hall in Great Wood.

Then at that time the Gracious One was sitting in imperturbable concentration. Then it occurred to those monks: “Now in what state is the Gracious One dwelling at the present time?”

Then it occurred to those monks: “The Gracious One is dwelling in a state of imperturbability at the present time,” and they all sat in imperturbable concentration.

Then venerable Ānanda, when the night had passed, when the first watch of the night had gone, after rising from his seat, arranging his robe on one shoulder, and raising his hands in respectful salutation, said this to the Gracious One: “The night has passed, reverend Sir, the first watch of the night has gone, for a long time these visiting monks have been sitting, let the Gracious One exchange greetings, reverend Sir, with the visiting monks.”

When that was said, the Gracious One was silent.

For a second time venerable Ānanda, when the night had passed, when the middle watch of the night had gone, after rising from his seat, arranging his robe on one shoulder, and raising his hands in respectful salutation, said this to the Gracious One:

“The night has passed, reverend Sir, the middle watch of the night has gone, for a long time these visiting monks have been sitting, let the Gracious One exchange greetings, reverend Sir, with the visiting monks.”

For a second time the Gracious One was silent.

For a third time venerable Ānanda, when the night had passed, when the last watch of the night had gone, when dawn had risen, when the night had a joyful appearance, after rising from his seat, arranging his robe on one shoulder, and raising his hands in respectful salutation, said this to the Gracious One:

“The night has passed, reverend Sir, the last watch of the night has gone, dawn has risen, the night has a joyful appearance, for a long time these visiting monks have been sitting, let the Gracious One exchange greetings, reverend Sir, with the visiting monks.”

Then the Gracious One, after rising from that concentration, addressed venerable Ānanda, saying:

“If you knew, Ānanda, you would not say even this much about them. I and these five hundred monks, Ānanda, have all been sat in imperturbable concentration.”

Then the Gracious One, having understood the significance of it, on that occasion uttered this exalted utterance:

“He who is victorious over the thorn of sense desire,
Scolding, slaying, and other bonds,
He who stands unmoved like a mountain,
That monk does not shake in regard to pleasure and pain.”

14 Verses on Meditation

Thich Nhat Hanh, Plum Village Chanting Book

1. Like the two wings of a bird,
the practices of stopping (Shamatha)
and looking deeply (vipashyana)
rely upon each other
and belong together, side by side.
2. The practice of shamatha is to stop,
so that I may recognize and touch,
nourish and heal,
settle down and concentrate.
3. The practice of vipashyana is to look deeply
into the nature of the five skandhas,
so that I may develop understanding
and transform suffering.
4. My breathing and my steps
enable me to generate the energy of mindfulness,
so that I can be aware of and touch
the wonders of life within and around me.
5. Calming body and mind,
receiving nourishment and healing,
protecting my six senses,
I maintain concentration.
6. Looking deeply into the heart of reality
to see the true nature of things,
practicing vipashyana enables me to let go
of everything I am searching for, my desires, and my
fears.
7. Dwelling peacefully in the present moment,
transforming habit energies
gives rise to understanding, freeing me from
afflictions and pain.
8. Impermanence is one with non-self,
Non-self is one with interdependent origination,
is one with emptiness, is one with conventional
designation,
is one with the middle way, is one with interbeing.
9. Emptiness, signlessness, and aimlessness
liberate me from suffering,
so that in my daily practice
I am not caught in mere intellectual understanding.
10. Nirvana is nonattainment.
Sudden or gradual enlightenment are not different.
True realization is to live in freedom
right now in this moment.
11. The essential sutras, such as the
Discourses on the Full Awareness of Breathing
and the Four Establishments of Mindfulness,
show me the path to transform body and mind, step
by step.
12. The Mahayana sutras and teachings
open many fresh, wide gateways
allowing me to enter the depths of the stream
of meditation flowing from the Original Source of
the Buddha's teachings.
13. Not discriminating
between the practice offered by the
Tathagata and that of the ancestral teachers,
the Four Noble Truths perfectly interwoven
should serve as the foundation of an authentic
transmission.
14. Supported by the Sangha Body
my practice flows easier,
allowing me to swiftly realize
my great determination to love and understand all
beings.