



EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF APPLIED BUDDHISM

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Dear Readers,

It is a joy for us to be able to tell you that Thay is feeling better. Even though he remains paralysed on one side, his health has stabilised. Despite this improvement he will, unfortunately, not be able to participate in our August retreat.

We have ten monasteries in our tradition around the world founded by Thich Nhat Hanh. It is our practice not to remain in one place for too long, and after a few years to move to another monastery where we can put our practice and abilities to good use, learn new things and be accepted by a new community.

And for this reason there have also been changes at the EIAB over the last twelve months: several sisters and brothers have already gone to other centres and others will soon do the same. In exchange we have been able to welcome eight new brothers and a sister from the monastery in Thailand. They immediately began to familiarize themselves with the German language, although official language tuition will only be possible once they have been here for a year.

Alongside contributions from Thay Phap An and Sister Annabel, in this newsletter you will also find a range of articles on the topic of alternative medicine: acupuncture, Qi Gong, Tai Chi, Shiatsu, fasting.

At the beginning of May we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Order of Interbeing, and you will find three articles about this.

We always receive visits from school classes to our centre, and one class sent us a report with many photos which we are happy to publish.

Amongst the many interesting articles is also one from the Dutch Sangha reporting for the third time on their family retreat, as well as one about the Wake Up retreat.

We would like to thank you for your practice, your friendship and support on the path we share together.

The sisters and brothers of the EIAB

Donation proposal to cover the cost of the newsletter: 1,50 €.



Cultivating True Love

Thay Phap An

The the **first step in cultivating True Love** is to establish a good relationship with ourselves. There are two levels of understanding with regard to the word “self”. One is called the ultimate reality, the other the conditional reality. The ultimate reality is the reality that all things depend on one another. In this reality, you are a continuation of your father. You are a continuation of your mother. You live the life of your mother; you live the life of your father. It is a continuous reality. This is because that is.

How can you be separate from your father? It's not possible. He's living within you. Even if you don't want him to be there, he continues to be with you. You have received half of your genetic information from him and half of your

genetic information from your mother. All of the manifestations and all of the expression of his genes that make him who he is, all of that information, has passed on to you. Due to your experience, your environment, and your experience with your environment, this genetic information will be turned on. You will then behave in certain ways, exactly as your father has done.

But besides the ultimate reality, there is also the conventional reality. The conventional reality is that your father is different from you. He has his own career, his own work, his own life, and you have your own career, your own work, your own life. When we say learn to love “yourself” deeply, we are looking at the conventional level. We mean: this is your emotion; this is your

thinking; this is how you look at things. You learn to love this “me” that feels and thinks and looks at things that way. When the Buddha talked about non-self, in fact what he was talking about is not being attached to the process of self-codification. I rephrase it that way. Most of our experience, the moment we experience it, we codify it right away, and we make it into a single reality, separated from the rest. When the Buddha said to practice non-self, he meant practice not grasping onto things that you have turned into a separate reality.

So, I speak in the conventional reality of establishing a good relationship with ourselves. This is the most crucial part of cultivating True Love – the quality of this relationship, the first relationship, the one towards ourselves. We



need to learn how to be with ourselves. There are always things that are pulling us away from what is happening right now.

Many years ago I suffered from depression. I had a deep depression within me, because I was born in Vietnam in 1961, after the war had begun. The war was in a very intensive period while I grew up. In that time, every year, I had to run away from my house because the communists had attacked our village. On the way, as I ran away from my home, I'd see people dying. I saw a tank, a military tank that was shot down, and it was on fire. People were trying to climb out of the tank, and their bodies hung off of the mouth of the tank. Then, sometimes when there was rain, then the body became putrid and changed color. It looked very awful. Everywhere you'd go, there was fire; there were people lying around. I had many other very bad experiences during the war. But I didn't know that the war had wounded me. I had a deep wound within myself. Because of this, I couldn't find happiness in my life. This deep block of sadness within me continued to operate.

As I grew up, I came to orient myself toward religion. This is a very natural process. When there's pain and suffering within, we look for answers. Religion is something that seems to offer an answer. When I was young and in the 9th grade, I looked into Christianity, and I looked into Buddhism. Very early on, I decided I will be both Christian and Buddhist, to make sure I will either go to Nirvana or go to Paradise. I found a compromise, a solution. Thus, starting early on, I read and studied the Christian Bible, and I studied Buddhism. Anything that offers a solution is fine!

As the years went on, I continued with different practices. In 1992, I escaped again from my home to become a monk. Prior to that, in 1979, I had escaped out of Vietnam. As a monk, slowly, slowly, looking deeply and practicing to look deep within me, I discovered that I do have problems. Before I became a monk, people told me that I have depressive symptoms – I should see a psychologist. But I told, "It's normal. I've been like that since I was young. There's nothing wrong with me." When you've lived with something so long, it seems normal to you.

We do not remain the same, permanently and forever. We change all the time. There's no such a thing as happiness that from the moment you have it, you will have it forever. Happiness is something that you need to cultivate.

So this explains the first part of the title, "Cultivating True Love". You can never have permanent True Love. You need to practice it, to create it, all the time. You need to cultivate your True Love. You cannot have your True Love, and then that's the end of it. This is something that you have to do every day, every moment. Cultivating True Love is a matter of practicing every moment.

So to cultivate True Love, the first step is to learn to love ourselves, learn to be with ourselves, learn to be present, present to ourselves. Throughout the day, do you ever feel your body at all? Most of us are not able to feel our body. We live in a split world. Our body is there, but our mind is somewhere else. Our body and our mind are not together; they are not one. We are split. So being present with ourselves means that we need to learn to go back, to be



able to touch our body, to feel our body, to sense our body.

If you can't, if you don't sense your body, then you don't know what is going on within your body. This means that all of the unwholesome energies of sadness, of depression, of anger and so on, will continue to grow. But the moment that you go back to your body, a reconciliation process takes place.

Feeling my whole body, I breathe in.

Feeling a lot of love for my body, I breathe out.

Feeling my whole body,

feeling a lot of love for my body.

After doing that for 3 to 4 minutes, continue in this way:

Feeling the tension in different parts of my body,

I breathe in deeply.

Releasing all of the tension in different parts of my body,

I breathe out calmly..

Feeling the tension in different parts of my body,

releasing the tension in my body.

You need to practice this all day long. That is the ideal situation. But if you cannot, at least do it every 10 or 15 minutes, or every half an hour. Come back and feel your body.

In all of the relationships that we have with our environment, there is an exchange of information. These waves of information continue to make us unsure about our decision and unsure in our resolution. The moment that we come back to our body and feel our body, we allow time for all of this information to come up and to resolve itself. When we are not so quick to react, we have a chance to embrace the situation. We have a chance to embrace ourselves and all the emotions that are coming up within us. In this way, we learn to truly love ourselves. We learn a process called taking root. We learn to love ourselves by being present to

ourselves. You allow yourself to take root into yourself.

By taking root in yourself, you become very solid. That is the moment you can offer love to someone else. If you cannot be solid, you will be carried away by the situation. Then you cannot offer your love to the other person. When you are stable, when you are rooted, then your mind becomes clear. There is clarity in the way you perceive things. Before that, if you don't do these two steps, your mind is very cloudy. It is very cloudy because your mind is occupied by all of this conflicting information. Your father wants you to behave in a certain way; your mother wants you to behave in a certain way; your culture, your friends, your teachers – they all want you to behave differently.

Learn to be who you are, accepting the way you are. Be with yourself; be happy. Learn to accept yourself completely. This is a difficult part, learning to accept yourself. Many of us have a certain idea about what we want to be. We cannot fully accept ourselves as we are.

So learn to accept yourself, with all of your talent, your intelligence and your

strength, and all of your weakness and shortcomings. It's OK to be like this. The moment that you can be yourself completely, accepting yourself completely, you have learned to love yourself truly. Thanks to that capacity, you are able to change the situation. You don't change the situation by forcing your way through but by learning to accept yourself and learning to be with the situation. In this way, you learn to open the heart of yourself.



With this, we move on to the **second aspect of cultivating True Love**, to learn to love other people. In learning to love another, the first step is to allow ourselves space and to allow the other person space. We learn to respect our space and others' space. This is the crucial step for cultivating true love. Many people think that in order to love another person deeply, we need to have intimacy; we need to have intimate space. But no, the more you have this close space, the more you restrict each other's blossoming.

To be able to love another, we need to respect each other's space. This space



that we give each other is space for growing. Without this space, the flower will lose its identity, and it will die. Nobody will perceive it. So if you really love someone, give that person some space to grow. Don't force him or her to follow your own way. The moment that you can come back to yourself, you can offer other people space. If you cannot come back to yourself, it's very difficult to do this. You always force the other person to follow your own way. But the moment that you can come back to yourself and really love yourself, and you understand the meaning of your existence – the meaning of who you are on this Earth, the meaning of one among the 7 billion possibilities – then you really appreciate the other person.

Then, after learning to give others space, the next step in learning to love others is to learn to feel what the other person feels. This is crucial. Try to put yourself in the other person's position in order to understand how he or she feels about

the situation. If you can feel this, then you will understand him or her fully. Then you can really love him or her and accept him or her. If you only experience the other person through your own feelings, then it is difficult for you to love the other person.

One part of my practice is to learn to listen deeply to another person. Sometimes people share very deeply. A person can share for 15 minutes or a half an hour. Some people cannot share with words, but they just sit there and cry for half an hour. From time to time, they break into tears and screaming. I just sit there and listen and feel what they are feeling. I feel a lot of love for them. That's how you cultivate true love.

True love as I have described it is the practice of really feeling what other people feel. You become one with the other person. The feeling of being one means there is no sense of a boundary.

Thus, you can connect to the other person.

When we practice coming back to ourselves before we respond to a situation that we are facing, some people wonder, does doing this not take too long? Can the other person wait? First of all, yes, the other person can wait. We have the feeling we need to offer an answer right away, but in fact, if we take time to think about our response, the other person also appreciates that.

Unless there is an emergency situation and you have to respond very quickly, you can take time to respond to the situation. The loving way of living is that you take time to do things. You feel your body; you sense your body; you are fully aware; and you respond. Our culture, our society, needs to think differently, collectively, for us to have a future.



Silent Immersion in a different World

15 year-old pupils at the Buddhist Centre in Waldbröl

40 high school pupils eating silently? It can happen – at the eating meditation at the European Centre for Applied Buddhism, EIAB for short. On their visit to this exceptional institution the pupils of the Siegburg Alleestraße Gymnasium were, after having approached the subject from a theoretical angle in their religion and philosophy classes, looking for a genuine encounter with Buddhism.

At the very beginning after the greeting by sister Song Nghiem they were invited to their first walking meditation in the next building. After this came sitting meditation, a longer walking meditation in the monastery garden and a twenty minute eating meditation





with vegan food. And after eating the dishes were washed – in silence. It is perhaps astonishing how willing these 15 year olds were to participate in what for most of them was the strange experience of meditation. However, the pupils have grasped that if they want to extend their horizons they have to leave the well-trodden paths of the past. As the pupils learn, this is just what Sister Song did with great consistency after completing her studies and Ph.D at the University of Darmstadt and spending 15 years working in Munich, when she

decided over ten years ago to exchange this life for life in the monastery.

The young students are also astonished by the way the inhabitants of the monastery deal with the history of the of their listed building. The dark NS past, testified to by the wall frescoes and pompous design which does not at all fit in with the modest and tolerant nature of the current occupants, is integrated into the overall atmosphere. The victims of the NS period are commemorated in an impressive installation con-

sisting of many different hearts, as Sr. Song calmly explains to her young charges.

The monastery residents deserve a big thank-you for the warm welcome, especially as they received all four classes over two days and gave them a closer look at the very different world of Buddhism. The youngsters described their experience in their evaluations as enriching, and a 'great experience'.



Searching for true happiness

It is our wounds that encourage us to seek new paths, to go in search of the true happiness that brings healing. It was several years ago that I took my first steps on the spiritual path taught by the Dharma.

from that of the nuns and monks I encountered at the EIAB.

I can vividly recall practicing a guided relaxation meditation led by one of the sisters at the end of the retreat. Her unwavering determination, empathy and meditative devotion, the moving songs she sang to us flowed through my body as 'brotherly and sisterly love' and calmed my mind. On the following

Monday I stood before the mirror at home while shaving. Then, out of the blue, I saw the 'new image of nuns' symbolized by the sisters of the EIAB, and how it veiled the picture of Sister C which I had internalized through my many years in the children's home.

This 'old image of Sister C' had become entrenched in my soul and at regular intervals I broke down under the weight

On this path I took part in my first retreat at the EIAB in Waldbroöl in autumn 2015 with the theme: 'Mindful Self-compassion'. The first thing that struck me was the equanimity, clarity and loving kindness of the nuns and monks living there. I became aware of their peaceful attitude, and energy of mindfulness. Without doubt I had arrived at a new crossroads. Why? Because my search for true happiness had led me to look inwards, as though guided by an invisible hand. Increasingly, trust grew in me that I could find the way back to the true self I had once abandoned. An example should help make this clear. At one of the following retreats on the same topic, something unusual happened:

At the tender age of 13 months I and my twin sister were passed backwards and forwards between nurseries and orphanages like pieces of meat. After an odyssey that lasted almost four years we landed in a Catholic children's home in a small city in Bayern, where we lived until we were 12. There I experienced unimaginable violence, sexual abuse and never ending humiliation just because I wet the bed, because my soul continued to weep. The criminal actions, and behaviour of the sisters and priests there was light years apart



of this appalling image. Under the veil of the sisters from the EIAB however, this 'painful picture of Sister C' from the Catholic children's home began to disintegrate until days later it had completely disappeared.

A week later things had progressed so far that I felt ready to put a long-held wish into action, and to visit Sister C at the home of the Mellersdorfer sisters and to personally hand her a copy of my first literary work – an autobiographical account of my time in the children's home. My son, who had previously accompanied me to the retreat, also came with me to Sister C., my former tormentor. Before we entered the monastery in Mellersdorf we practiced mindful walking as we had learned it at the EIAB. As we did so the healing words of Thich Nhat Hanh popped into my mind:

'Every step in mindfulness is a step for peace.'

I now carried this energy of peace and mindfulness in my heart and took it

with me into the meeting with Sister C, which lasted over two hours. Then the unimaginable occurred: towards the end of the discussion, after we had discussed the horrifying events of the past in great detail, Sister C., in tears, gave me her hand and apologized for her actions. In this moment I felt how a lead weight slowly fell from the crown of my head through my body, before leaving through my feet and disappearing into the earth. In this magical moment the associated suffering, that had lasted decades, was transformed into happiness. It only became clear to me days later that it was through this experience – which undoubtedly shattered the demons of the past – that I now found myself on the path to happiness.

This liberation now helped me to better and better understand the words of the Buddha: 'There is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way'.

This example shows in all clarity that in order to open up to happiness we also need to be open, with a peaceful heart, with the energy of mindfulness and understanding, for our own inner healing

process. It is about the willingness to be fully present in the 'here and now', to open our hands to the happiness available, to stop running through life with clenched fists intent on revenge and to stop attributing so much importance to our anger that we are unable to see the happiness available.

The way to inner liberation invariably demands that we develop loving kindness for ourselves, and consequently for others. Thanks to my encounter with the nuns and monks of the EIAB, I have been able to experience some healing of the old, encrusted wounds of my childhood. My visits to the EIAB have been and continue to be a godsend.

Clemens Maria Heymkind,
Freiburg im Breisgau

www.heykind.de



The Hai Thuong school – Treating Patients with the Heart of the Buddha

Advanced training in Acupuncture and Herbal Therapy at the EIAB

According to Doctor Blanchard from Colmar, general practitioner, osteopath, homeopath and acupuncturist, 'The purpose of this medicine is to restore the ying-yang balance of the patient, and consequently also his or her health. In many cases school medicine only offers palliative medicine, i.e. we merely suppress the symptoms, and do not restore the patient to good health.' Every two months for the last year, Dr. Blanchard has been coming to the EIAB in Waldbröl. He is one of the approximately ten people attending the acupuncture course of the Hai Thuong school of Dr. Do Trong Le, a student of Thich Nhat Hanh (Thay).

Dr. Do arrived in France in 1979 as one of the Boat People fleeing from the war in Vietnam. Since then he has been working in France as an acupuncturist, and during this time has continued to develop his Hai-Thuong method.

His meditation and mindfulness practice plays a large role in his work as an acupuncturist. Before each treatment he enters into a deep meditative state; this allows him to establish a deep connection with every patient, 'The golden heart of the Buddha is together with us', he says with a smile.

On the advice of Thich Nhat Hanh (Thay) he has been offering this advanced training in acupuncture to those in the healing professions since January 2015. The course consists of nine modules and encompasses theoretical concepts (including a simplified version of the pulse diagnosis) and clinical applications (treating patients), as well as relaxation training (Qi Gong and meditation).

The 70 year old achieves remarkable success with his treatments, and would



The students of the acupuncture school treat patients under the watchful eye of the master.



Restoring the yin and yang balance + the theory of the tree with the three main roots, as well as the eight extraordinary meridians – the Hai Thuong method achieves astounding therapeutic results.

Julie suffers from Parkinson. The acupuncture treatment strengthens her spinal cord and her brain. The result is astonishing.



now like to pass on his knowledge of acupuncture to the next generation to ensure the future of the Hai Thuong method with its wisdom and effectiveness. It is also a wish of his teacher Thich Nhat Hanh that this ancient wisdom and knowledge should be accessible to modern science.

With regard to the Hai Thuong method, Dr. Do says: 'We treat a sick person according to his energy level. Initially we try to restore his or her global yin/yang balance, only once this has been done do we regulate the blocked meridians and impaired organs.'

Dr. Do has incorporated the insights and knowledge of the Vietnamese doctor Hai Thuong, who lived during the 18th century and treated his patients with herbal therapy, into his acupuncture treatments. Inspired by Hai Thuong he recognized that 'the human body is comparable to a tree with three main energetic roots, the kidneys, the liver, and the spleen-pancreas, which nourish the whole body.'

Julie, from just outside Trier, suffers from Parkinson's. She has been coming to the acupuncture weekends as a patient for the last year. The acupuncture treatments strengthen her yin and yang and activate the Renn Mai and Du Mai meridians, which strengthens the spinal cord and brain. In cases of Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis the

bone marrow is severely weakened, as a result of which the nerves emanating from it, are unable to distribute energy. Consequently, the energy no longer flows because the nerves are too weak to carry it. The movements of these patients, which is directed from the brain and bone marrow, is severely limited. By activating the Renn Mai and Du Mai meridians it is in some cases possible to achieve genuine wonders: Julie is one such example: she can once again walk normally, dances every day, practices yoga and is extremely happy that the treatment has worked so effectively.

To witness how the patient's condition changes for the better is the driving force for all the students of the acupuncture school. 'The happiness of the patients is also our happiness' says Dr. Do.

The goal of this modest doctor who lives very simply is to continue to research into severe illnesses such as cancer, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's etc. in collaboration with scientists, and to continue to develop his acupuncture treatments.

The French-Vietnamese compares the brain of someone suffering from Alzheimer's with a room in which the lights are dimmed. Once the energy begins to flow again it is as though suddenly all the lights went on...

Barbara Buggisch, Order of Interbeing



The Hai Thuong method is also effective for severe illnesses such as cancer, Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.

Two year advanced training programme to become an EIAB certified Qi Gong-Practitioner

Christof Martin

(Shining Clarity of the Heart)

As an occupational therapist I am frequently confronted with illnesses for which school medicine cannot offer either satisfactory explanations or sustainable methods of treatment. It is not unusual to find that Traditional Chinese Medicine offers more plausible approaches.

This is one of the reasons why I have been interested in Qi Gong for a long time and have tried to become better acquainted with this ancient Chinese form of movement, concentration and meditation. After all, in China Qi Gong has been a fundamental element of health care for many centuries.

In addition, spiritual practice and in particular the practice of mindfulness is close to my heart. For many years now daily sitting meditation and meditative physical exercises have been an integral part of my life.

Since I had the chance to personally experience Thich Nhat Hanh in August 2014, I come to retreats and other events at the EIAB as often as I can.

When I found out that a two year advanced training programme in Qi Gong was being offered at the EIAB, I was very interested. Here was the chance to spend 17 weekends spread over two years at the EIAB and at the same time support my spiritual and professional development.

When I arrived for the introductory course in January 2016, I very much hoped that Dieter Lorscheid-Wolf (our



course leader) would succeed in shaping the course in accord with the spirit and rhythm of the EIAB. I soon gained the impression that Dieter was very much at home in the mindfulness practice of Thich Nhat Hanh and feels deeply connected with the EIAB.

This now makes me very grateful that am able to attend this course for two years.

I am able to practice and integrate all the techniques that we are taught at the weekend seminars into my daily practice and am increasingly aware of the wonderfully beneficial effects of QiGong on body and mind.

With regard to how I will use the experiences and knowledge I have gained in my professional practice once the course is over - I will just wait and see what happens.

Konrad Bilicki

(Joyful Strength of the Heart)

My Qi Gong practice began very simply. Anuschka, my partner, showed me the two year advanced training programme in the EIAB-programme. I had long

been searching for a new 'life project', and it hadn't been easy. When I then read that Dieter, who I already knew from several morning practice sessions at the monastery and from an evening drumming course, would be leading the course, then I was certain it would be good. On top of this the course was being held at the EIAB, my 'HAPPY PLACE'. I could not imagine anything nicer than practicing Qi Gong there and suddenly everything was clear. My search, which had lasted for over five years, was now at an end. I asked Dieter by mail whether I could still take part in the course, even though I had missed the first weekend, and I received a 'YES' in reply.

I have been taking part since March 2016 and look forward to every course unit. In our practice family we complement each other and the mutual trust and joy is tangible.

I love moving my body and learning the different forms of movement. Movement is something wonderful and getting to know my body is a wonderful journey. In previous years I had danced and practiced Wing Tsung and Yoga.

Qi Gong complemented and extended this joy of movement. But it is not only movement; it is also one of the supporting pillars of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Although I am just at the beginning, what I have already experienced in myself gives me the impetus and motivation to go beyond the movements to also gain an understanding of the energy exercises.

Qi Gong is so beneficial and healing I would like to pass on my experience of it to others.

SHIATSU – Touch, that moves

‘It is not possible to describe Shiatsu in words, it is something one has to experience for oneself – experience oneself through Shiatsu’ is what the friend who recommended Shiatsu to me said.

At that time I had been suffering from the most severe back pain with symptoms of paralysis in the right leg for many years, and the doctors believed that the only thing that could help me was an operation. On top of this I suffered from allergies. It only took a few Shiatsu treatments for me to feel better – different, freer. Thanks to Shiatsu my pains gradually disappeared.

Pain is just blocked energy.

Completely unexpectedly it also opened my mind and made me much more flexible in my thinking. Understandably, this deep healing on both the physical and mental level aroused my curiosity, so it wasn't long before I decided to enrol on a training programme at the European Institute for Shiatsu.

Even after many years working as a Shiatsu therapist, my interest and curiosity has remained with the result that I always want to learn more and more.

I have continued to attend advanced training course with a range of teachers from Asia, Europe and America, and have come into contact with the ‘Hidden aspects of the art of Shiatsu’.

My health problems are long since a thing of the past; I have lived for many years without any medicine and have become increasingly flexible in both body and mind.

After almost 25 years of practicing and experiencing Shiatsu I find that:

What makes Shiatsu special is the quality of touch and the atmosphere of stillness in which it occurs, stillness in which we can heal.

By exerting gentle, but deep, pressure with the hands on the body's energy flow and the meridians, thinking gives way to feeling allowing us to come into contact with the space within. We once again become one with our energy field. We become aware of aspects of ourselves that have been suppressed – we can experience, see and integrate them. Shiatsu enables us to experience peace, relaxation and calm.

My Japanese teacher, Master Kishi, speaks of ‘the spirit of the heart in the hands’ when describing the art of touch in Shiatsu.

In one of his talks Thay spent a long time just looking at his hand, and asked: is this Thay's hand? Whose hand is it?

Is it my hand that touches my clients?

Mindful awareness leads to a new level of consciousness and understanding, and consequently to changes in our energy field and our body.

Thanks to my Shiatsu teachers, the *wonderful* talks and practice of Thay as well as my own experience of life, I have developed a new awareness of myself and of those who have the trust to come to me for Shiatsu treatments.

I bow in humility and gratitude.

Maria Kathrein (‘Complete Realisation of the Heart’)

Maria has been a student of Thay since 2000, and in 2012 she moved from Düsseldorf to Waldbröl to be closer to the EIAB.

Photo DSG



Mindfulness and Health

Mindfulness has been on everyone's lips for several years now - from sport studios to college programmes - and the 'recent' discovery of mindfulness has resulted in a flood of literature the majority of which has been unable to maintain an overview of what mindfulness is really about.

Sometimes I reflect on how lucky I was to have met the monks and nuns from Waldbrol on the occasion of a visit of the Dalai Lama to Frankfurt in 2009. It was my first real contact with the mindfulness practice of Thich Nhat Hanh. After my first visit to the EIAB I **already** knew that I had found my spiritual home.

Since then I have been recharging my happiness on my visits to Waldbrol and, together with the lay Sangha and the nuns and monks, continue to develop and deepen my mindfulness practice. Here, unlike in a book or in a course that is finished at some point, there is continuity.

For the last few years it has also been possible for me to **combine** my expe-

rience of mindfulness with my training as a body therapist and teacher of relaxation, and to pass this on in retreats in Waldbrol.

The insights I gain from the retreats and the everyday life of the Waldbrol Sangha are very precious to me and give my life direction.

The connection between mind and body is not only scientifically proven, the practice of mindfulness clearly shows how these elements interact with each other and how one can influence the other.

Regardless of whether I attend one of the EIAB retreats as a participant or course leader, I always discover new aspects of mindfulness practice - in myself as well as in other participants. It is wonderful to meet those previously at the EIAB for the first time again and to share about the changes and successes that the practice of mindfulness has brought about in our lives. Often people have changed completely, many talk of a different way of dealing with difficulties or illnesses, others of

successfully generating satisfaction in everyday and professional life or of a rapid recovery. Many of us return to Waldbrol to recharge our batteries and to discover more about the healing effects of the practice.

The titles of the retreats that I have organised with Sr. Bi Nghiem and Br. Pháp Xả clearly show the way forward: 'Developing Self-Awareness', 'Being a Good Friend to Oneself' and 'Self-Compassion'...: The conviction that not only our own happiness but also our health lies in our own hands.

Primarily the practice helps many of us to become aware of ourselves, to recognise our own unwholesome habit energies and to learn methods to change them. It helps others to learn how to generate good, health-promoting energies before their minds say to their bodies, 'You do something, because they won't listen to me!'

Jacek Marjanski, Köln



Fasting the middle way,

or

‘Only those who eat immoderately need to fast immoderately’

(Hildegard von Bingen)

When I came across the teachings of Hildegard von Bingen what struck me was that she spoke a great deal about finding the right balance, also in relation to fasting. And so I made the connection between her teachings and the middle way of Buddhism, that I have been following for several years.

Every year in spring and autumn I grant my body and mind a period of fasting. For seven days there are three meals a day: mornings warm spelt porridge; for lunch and evening meal vegetable soup. With the help of a range of remedies, herbs and spices my body is able to cleanse and detoxify itself.

All of a sudden I have so much time – and notice how much time I normally spend in thinking about my diet and what I am going to eat, e.g. poring over cook books, shopping, preparing. I also feel like I have more energy, which would otherwise be spent on digesting the snacks between meals.

I regard the practice of mindfulness as a great support when fasting, and when

“Humanity take a good look at yourself: heaven and earth and all the rest of creation is within you. You are a world in yourself – everything is hidden within you’ Hildegard von Bingen”

(Hildegard von Bingen)

I fast I am even more mindful with myself. I devote more time to my body and mind in sitting and walking meditation, and spend more time in nature. My senses become finer and more alert – how delightful a slice of self-baked spelt bread tastes when eaten in mindfulness and stillness.

I listen to my body and pursue questions such as, what really does me good? What really nourishes my body? I come into contact with my habit energies regarding eating – how often do I reach for something to eat when what I truly need is something completely

“Everyone can perform magic, everyone can reach their goals, if they are able to think, if they are able to wait, if they are able to fast”

(Hermann Hesse „Siddharta“)

different. The hunger in my soul can no longer be satisfied by food. It becomes clear to me just what for a large role food played in my family of origin: my mother expressed her love through cooking and every time we speak we talk about recipes and cooking programmes.

Consciously fasting makes me humble and alert, it gives me clarity of mind and brings me into contact with all the things that truly support me. I am filled with enormous gratitude for everything which life and the cosmos gives me.

An experience from the fasting week:

Early in the morning we go to the Havel and see the dewdrops on the blades of grass, I say a prayer of gratitude to the four elements. In stillness we linger for a while by the water, two whooper swans fly directly past us, above the wild geese call. I am aware of how everything is interconnected with everything else.

Manuela Peters. Berlin

Experience with Tai Chi and Qi Gong

I had my first intensive experience with body work over 20 years ago. For almost 10 years I begin every day with Qi Gong or ITC (Integral Tai Chi). If I let this habit slip for even a few days when I'm on holiday, I soon notice that I don't feel as well and immediately begin practicing again.

For six months I didn't practice regularly and suffered an acute loss of hearing. Luckily I had the good fortune to find a very good TCM doctor and over the last 6 years I have felt better than ever before.

For me ITC is a fountain of youth: I enjoy the practice of moving my body in all directions in the morning for half-an-hour before work, and on my free days for an hour and a half. It is a source of deep joy and gratitude: at 51 I am more flexible than I was 20 years ago!

Two years ago I had the opportunity to practice ITC at the EIAB with Master Hang Truong and his instructors:

the movements provide the basis for enjoyment of the subsequent deep relaxation, meditation and gratitude. It was wonderful to see the development that resulted from practicing for four hours every day for a week. My enthusiasm and curiosity grew, parts of the body that have grown stiff over time began to soften and narrow mindedness opened up: I got to know myself in a new way. The course participants formed small groups and each of these groups was allocated an instructor who then corrected each of us individually – I continue to profit from that to this day.

A key experience for me, and one which came out of the blue, was a sense of liberation following the practice of Spring Forest Qigong; Thay Phap An and sister Song Nghiem had demonstrated it to us and recommended it. Although I was used to practicing Qi Gong (the 15 movements) regularly, my reaction to the first days of learning SFQ was extreme: I felt awful, I had to lie down and I froze miserably. Something happened,

and it didn't feel at all good. In the evenings we practiced the 'small universe meditation' from the SFQ.

The next morning I noticed that the tensions in my lower back which I had experienced for decades had disappeared: I could bend much further forward. And my breathing was deeper than I had ever consciously experienced it before: something I had always longed to experience!

In my youth I had not been able to mourn a deeply painful experience and, although this was a source of suffering, it was only after these old tensions had disappeared that I was only able to re-experience and embrace this suffering.

Qi Gong and Tai Chi can support the process of self-awareness, and help us be upright and dignified. And we can be sure that our own self-care will also be present to help us along the way.

Helke Bier, Stuitgart



Experience with Tai Chi and Qi Gong

Once again I have the great good fortune to be able to spend a few days at the EIAB and to take part in a course offered by Thay Phap An. It is six o'clock in the morning. Before we sit on the cushion to meditate in stillness, we give our bodies the chance move and stretch under the loving guidance of Thay Phap An and sister Song Nghiem. It makes me happy.

After an intensive warm-up, we learn health Qi Gong. Following our in and out breath, we follow certain forms of movement, which stretch and turn our bodies. With great concentration I try to imitate the position demonstrated as accurately as possible. It is a joy to experience my flexibility. It is amazing how quickly the hour goes. To end we stand still for a short while and send our bodies a lot of love. Refreshed and awake I enjoy the meditation.

A day and a night have passed. Once again I am standing opposite Thay Phap An and sister Song Nghiem at 6 o'clock, who begin the warm-up with a smile.

My body feels stiff. Somewhat grudgingly I begin to move my body. I am barely able to concentrate. I have too many thoughts in my head – comments, comparisons, judgements. I feel my resistance. But carried along by the Sangha I don't give up, and continue to move my body. Finally the hour is over. Strangely moved I sit on the cushion. And suddenly sadness arises in me. I immediately focus my attention on this feeling. Connected with my in and out breath, without wanting to banish anything, I attempt to be just present with what is. I lovingly place my arm around myself. Once again I feel the Sangha carrying me. Tears begin to flow and I feel how my body shudders. After a while everything begins to calm down, stiffness gives way to relaxation. Profound gratitude floods through me. I start the day with trust and confidence.

Katrin Santiago (Basel)

Alongside health Qi Gong I also practice Spring Forest Qi Gong, which I learned a few years ago from Thay Phap

An and sister Song Nghiem at the EIAB. I practice this Qi Gong regularly. From the very beginning I found that after completing the exercises I felt more centred in myself, more at home in my body. I always do the exercises in the morning, but I also have a feeling of restlessness that drives me on and tells me to get on with it. I often talk with this restlessness and explain to it, that I am now taking the time to do myself some good. At this moment there is nothing more important than enjoying these exercises. While I practice I can observe how my mind slowly calms. I experience how the length and precision of the exercises allows them to penetrate to layers and regions of my body that have long since been forgotten, and where unwholesome energies have been allowed to build up. These regions open up to receive new healthy energy, and what has grown stiff begins to move once again. This enables me to touch my deep suffering and to transform it.

Lukas Gisi (Basel)



50th Anniversary of the Order of Interbeing

**From a Dharma talk by Thay on 11 June 2010
at the European Institute of Applied Buddhism:**

‘Every member of the Order of Interbeing should be a pillar, an inspiration. Brown as a colour and the brown jacket symbolise humility. When we put on our brown jacket we show that we are humble. In Vietnam brown is the colour of the poor farmers, the colour of humility. Brown is also the colour of great strength, of great spiritual power, the power of peace. Very still, but very powerful.

When we wear the brown jacket or the brown robe of a monk or nun, we must express this spirit, this virtue of humility. We do not say that we are more valuable than someone else, or better, or that we have more authority or power than someone else. We have spiritual strength. This spiritual strength is very still; it makes no noise. It is the stillness of the colour brown. When lay people wear the brown jacket they should do so in the spirit of humility, in awareness of the power of stillness.’

‘We need a Buddhism that helps us when we need it. If we teach the 4 noble truths, the noble eightfold path, the five powers, the five abilities, and the seven factors of enlightenment, then we must also apply them in our daily lives. They should not be just theory. We may be able to teach the Lotus Sutra very well, but we need to ask ourselves how we can apply the Lotus Sutra to help relieve our own difficulties, despair and suffering. This is what we mean when we speak of applied Buddhism. If you

are a Dharma teacher, either as a lay person or a monk or nun, then your life needs to exemplify these teachings. You can only teach what you yourself practice.

When we lead a Dharma discussion or give a Dharma talk, we don’t do so to demonstrate our knowledge of Buddhism. We only teach the things that we genuinely practice ourselves. When we teach walking meditation, then we need to be able to successfully practice it ourselves, or at least to a high level. If not we should wait before we teach it. There are people who do not need to give a Dharma talk, but who are very good Dharma teachers because when they walk, sit, stand or lie down they are in contact with the Sangha. They are always in harmony, peaceful, joyful, open. This is a living Dharma talk. These people are valuable jewels in the Sangha. They are not just monks or nuns; there are also lay people who practice very well, are very still, and they are highly respected by the monks and nuns.

As it is our intention to practice applied Buddhism in every situation, we genuinely need Dharma teachers. This is why we need the Order of Interbeing as an arm that stretches far out into the world. The number of OI monks and nuns is not enough. We need the lay members of the Order of Interbeing as well. The lay members are the hand of the fourfold Sangha that reaches out

into society. We need thousands of lay members of the Order in order to spread the teachings throughout the world.

With our brown jackets, that represent our humility and the power of stillness, we need to build a Sangha in which there is no competition for authority and power, but rather brotherhood and sisterhood. One in which we look upon each other with loving kindness.

This is something that we can do. When we are in harmony with each other, when we have brotherhood and sisterhood, then we can do it. The fragrance of our Sangha will go far, and will also perfume Thay. This is the work we have to do.

I hope that in the future we will be in a position to hold longer retreats for OI members, so that they can strengthen their practice, their aspiration, their happiness and fulfil the duty the Buddha has passed on to them. We need to sustain and realize this. This is what is meant with ‘Tiep Hien’: to do it in reality.

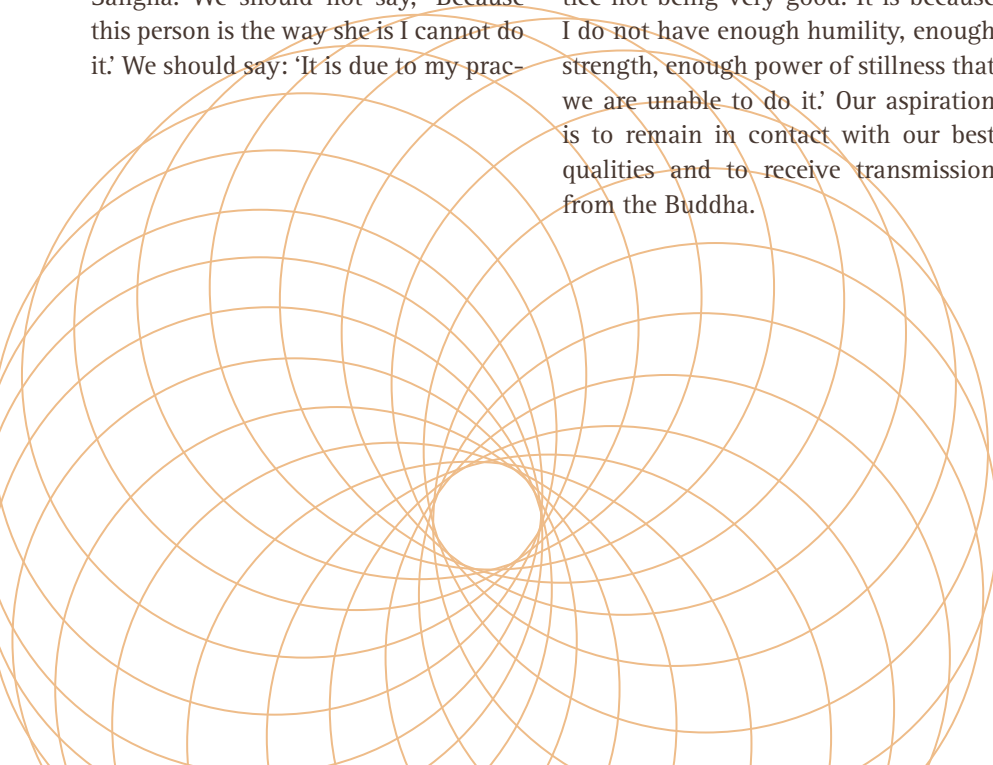
If our Sangha in the West is not a place where people can love one another, then we have not yet been successful. Who is willing to take on the responsibility of making a Sangha a wonderful Sangha with brotherhood and sisterhood worthy of the name of Sangha? We are, as members of the Order of Interbeing. We can do this in our local



Sangha. We should not say, 'Because this person is the way she is I cannot do it.' We should say: 'It is due to my prac-

tice not being very good. It is because I do not have enough humility, enough strength, enough power of stillness that we are unable to do it.' Our aspiration is to remain in contact with our best qualities and to receive transmission from the Buddha.

Every member of the Order needs to have a fire in their heart that pushes us forward and makes us happy. Whether we sweep the floors of the Sangha, cook for the Sangha, water the Sangha garden or clean the toilets for the Sangha, we are happy because we have energy, because we have a goal. The goal is not fame, profit or status. The goal is the great love needed to be a worthy continuation of the Buddha, of our teachers and our ancestral teachers.



The Survival Instinct

In a retreat for lay Dharma teachers in the EIAB the Buddhist teachings on the nature of consciousness were studied and, in particular, one of the functions of consciousness, or rather the subconscious, which is called the self-preservation instinct, the desire always to continue, the fear of death and the desire to survive. That is a particular function of consciousness in the Buddhist teachings. Its official name is manas or the 7th consciousness. Of course if our species is to survive or has survived until now it is because we have been able to use the part of our consciousness that we call the self-preservation instinct to protect ourselves, but we need also to see that that instinct can be very destructive.

What we should ask is: "Are we doing a good job of protecting ourselves?"

Very early on in the Buddhist teachings in a famous Buddhist teaching called the Diamond Sutra we learn that if we do not protect the other animal species and also the plant and the mineral species then we do not protect ourselves. Somehow that teaching has not penetrated deeply the human consciousness. Still we think that we can destroy things around us without threatening our own safety. Since we have consumed too much and have destroyed a great deal of our environment we can say we have not done such a good job of protecting ourselves. All of us, whether we are Buddhist or not, need to come back and look at that part of our consciousness that we call the self-preservation instinct. That instinct is a little akin to what Freud called the id and in the writings of Freud we also have the ego and the super ego to temper and

sublimate the id as in the teachings of Buddhism we have the mind consciousness as an equivalent to the ego and super ego to temper and sublimate manas.

We must remember that this survival instinct is very deep. It is not something that we acquired when we were five, ten or twenty years old. It is something that is in our genes that was there when we were born and before we were born and has been there in all our ancestors from the time immemorial. Therefore it is not something we always recognize because it is so natural in us. We have to practise in order to be able to transform it and if we can do that we can really help the human species to survive.

In teachings given in 2014 Thay suggested 4 ways to help transform the innate survival instinct into an energy



that is truly useful for the survival of all species on our planet earth.

The first of the four ways to look after the survival instinct is to practise the **mindfulness trainings** in such a way that we do not see them as restrictions or prohibitions but as real freedom. The ethical guidelines that we receive as practitioners of the way are not there to prohibit so much as to give us openness and freedom. Spirituality and ethics interare. A spiritual path always includes ethical guidelines. Right mindfulness is at the heart of morality. When we are truly mindful all our actions of body speech and mind are able to relieve suffering and bring more true happiness. However it is not possible to be truly mindful all of the time so we need the guidelines to remind us.

We find joy in protecting life in the measure that we are able, in being generous and sharing our time, energy and material resources, in listening deeply and speaking to promote confidence, joy and hope in the other. We find joy in consuming what is healthy for our body and mind and quite naturally we begin to alleviate the suffering of ourselves and others that is brought about by the tendency of the survival instinct to run after pleasure and to indulge in it without moderation.

The mindfulness trainings are for us *to train ourselves, to learn how to*. We have time to train ourselves and to learn how to do something better. We do not have to be perfect straightaway. That is why we stopped using the word precept and used instead the word *mindfulness trainings* because we know that it is something that is going to take time to perfect. We have many habit energies associated with our survival instinct and it will take us time to be able to transform them into new habit energies, to make new neural pathways in our brain but it is something we are confident we can do because neuroscience has clearly demonstrated that the brain is plastic. We can make new neural pathways and new synapses by our ways of thinking, speaking and behaving.

The second way to transform the innate survival instinct is to practise **mindfulness** in order to be in touch with everything that is wonderful in life. Life is a miracle. If you look at the solar system you will not find another planet that has life on it and somehow all the right causes and conditions came together: the right temperature, moisture, air and because of that life was able to develop on the planet earth and we are a part of that miracle of life. The trees are part of the miracle too. Whenever we walk outside we are in touch

with the trees and the mountains and the rivers and we feel very close to them because they are like our brothers and sister. They are also children of mother earth. We feel how wonderful the human race is, how wonderful the earth is and in that way we do not want to destroy it. We do not want to see it as something outside of us that needs to be exploited for us to be able to consume but we see it as something that needs to be protected and we know that in protecting the planet earth we are protecting our self and there is no other way to protect ourselves than to protect our mother earth.

Whenever we practise walking meditation it is a chance for us to show our love for and protect our mother earth. With every step we take the soles of our feet are in touch with the earth. Maybe in the past we saw that the earth our feet were touching was matter but now because we have a spiritual practice, we see that the earth is also spirit. If the earth were not spirit she could not give rise to the spirit which is in ourselves.

It is true that there is suffering in life. That is the first noble truth. We never can have happiness without suffering. That does not mean to say that life is not wonderful and in fact death is also wonderful, ill-health is also wonderful. If there were no ill-health there would



be no good health. If there were no death there would be no life.

Thay has told us of Alfred Hassler uttering the words: “Wonderful, wonderful,” as he was dying. The Buddhist scriptures recount the death of the lay disciple of the Buddha who, when guided in meditation on his death bed, wept not because he had anything to regret, but because he was so moved by how wonderful and deep the teachings he had received were.

In the 7th Mindfulness training of the Order of Interbeing there is the phrase:

We are determined to learn the art of mindful living by touching the wondrous, refreshing and healing elements that are inside and around us, in all situations.

How does this help us to transform the self-survival instinct? When we recognize what is wonderful in life, our life becomes meaningful and we no longer need to keep running after little pleasures to satisfy us. We see that life is

both happiness and suffering and we no longer try always to run away from suffering and chase after pleasure.

The third way of taking care of the survival instinct is to practice walking and breathing so that we feel **happiness**. Why is it so important to nourish ourselves with feelings of happiness? Why does our world need so much people who have the capacity to be happy?

Because the survival instinct reasons that wherever there is pleasure there is survival and wherever there is pain there is destruction. However, we know that there are many kinds of pleasure that are very destructive. Pornography is a very destructive kind of pleasure, as are drugs like cocaine. They destroy the synapses in your brain that can bring a deep spiritual happiness. So it is a mistake to think that pleasure is survival. We must understand that happiness is to be found in very simple things.

Mindful breathing and walking can bring us true happiness and we do not have to go anywhere to buy them. Just walking mindfully can bring you all the happiness you need and the same is true of breathing mindfully. We do not have to make a great effort to walk mindfully or to breathe mindfully and the effort takes away the happiness. Coming back to our body gives us a

very pleasant feeling. Feeling the contact between the soles of our feet and the earth gives us a pleasant feeling. When the sangha is walking with us we do not have to make much effort. We just become a cell in the sangha body a drop in the river and let the sangha carry us along.

When we practice sitting meditation we can use the gāthā that Thay has transmitted to us:

*Every breath is happiness,
Every breath is healing,
Every breath is nourishing
Every breath is freedom*

The problem with our survival-instinct consciousness (manas) is that it clings to a very small part of the whole of consciousness and calls it ‘mine’. The whole of consciousness is not just individual consciousness. It is also collective consciousness. According to the teachings of Buddhism on the mind there is no such thing as individual consciousness without collective consciousness. Individual consciousness is always part of collective consciousness but there is a part of consciousness that clings to certain things as being I myself and mine and cannot let go.



When we have freedom we have the openness to be able to let go and it is not a danger for our survival. The survival instinct thinks there are certain things that I have to cling to in order to be able to survive. So we have to train our mind again, to keep following our breathing and not thinking about anything. It is very clear that we can unlearn our fear.

The fourth way to help us transform our innate survival instinct is to look deeply into the insight of **interbeing**, co-dependent arising and reciprocity. This is important because it helps us let go of the instinctual feeling that we are a separate self whose happiness and suffering have nothing to do with the happiness and suffering of others.

Reciprocity means that things we usually think are opposite to each other, need each other. The right needs the left. If there is no right there is no left. The mud needs the lotuses and the lotuses need the mud. If there is no mud

there can be no lotus. We always hope that one day there will be only lotuses and no more mud. You can hope as much as you want but you will never find that world.

We grasp to happiness as being separate from suffering. We grasp to good as being separate from evil. We see that good is having a war with evil and happiness is having a war with suffering. We do not realise that good is only there because evil is there.

Evil and good are only relative. They interare. We look deeply in this way to see how opposites interare and we no longer need to take sides. As long as we are caught in dualism, we discriminate. We discriminate against evil, suffering, ill-health, disability. We want a race where there are just healthy people. The self-survival instinct believes that I survive because my enemy does not survive. The right wing flourishes when the left wing is exterminated. In fact without the right there can be no left.

Buddhism is made up of non-Buddhist elements. Every spiritual path can be a way of liberation for different kinds of people as long as it is not fanaticism. What we do want to do is for the spiritual paths to come together because there are certain insights that one spiritual path has had and they can lend those insights to another path to help that path.

In our own time many of us practice double belonging. This means that you belong to two spiritual paths; Christianity and Buddhism for example, at the same time. You bring what is most helpful to you in Christianity into your practice and combine it with what is most helpful for you in your Buddhist practice. You share your practice with your Christian friends and your Buddhist friends. Double belonging can be very positive in helping us not to be caught in religious discrimination.

Sr Chan Duc (Sr Annabel)



Lotus out of the mud: Fifty years of the Order of Interbeing

Sunday morning, 1 May, in a Dharma talk Sister Annabel gives an insight into the history of the Order. Thay composed the original text for the mindfulness trainings as early as 1964. 'The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings are the lotus that arose from the mud of war'. It began in 1966 with six ordines - now approximately 1,500 monastics and lay people around the globe wear the Order's brown jacket. Brown is the colour worn by peasants in Vietnam, it is a symbol of humility and a simple life. Since then the 14 'rules for all those on the path' have been frequently revised, and Sister Annabel explained why a comparative study of the different versions is worthwhile as a way to develop and deepen our understanding.

During the Vietnam war the first mindfulness training was important: rejection of all theories, ideologies and worldviews including Buddhist ones. They are not absolute truths, but a means to learn understanding and compassion. However Manas, our ego consciousness, uses ideologies as a means to survive. We differentiate between good and evil, true and false. The first mindfulness training helps put us on the path towards learning non-discrimination. Using the story of Buddha's encounter with Mara as an example, Sister Annabel explained what non-discrimination means. Ananda, Buddha's attendant, did not want to admit Mara, the spirit of 'evil', into the presence of the Buddha, but the World-honoured one nonetheless invited him for a cup of tea.

In the afternoons, during the public anniversary celebrations, it was apparent

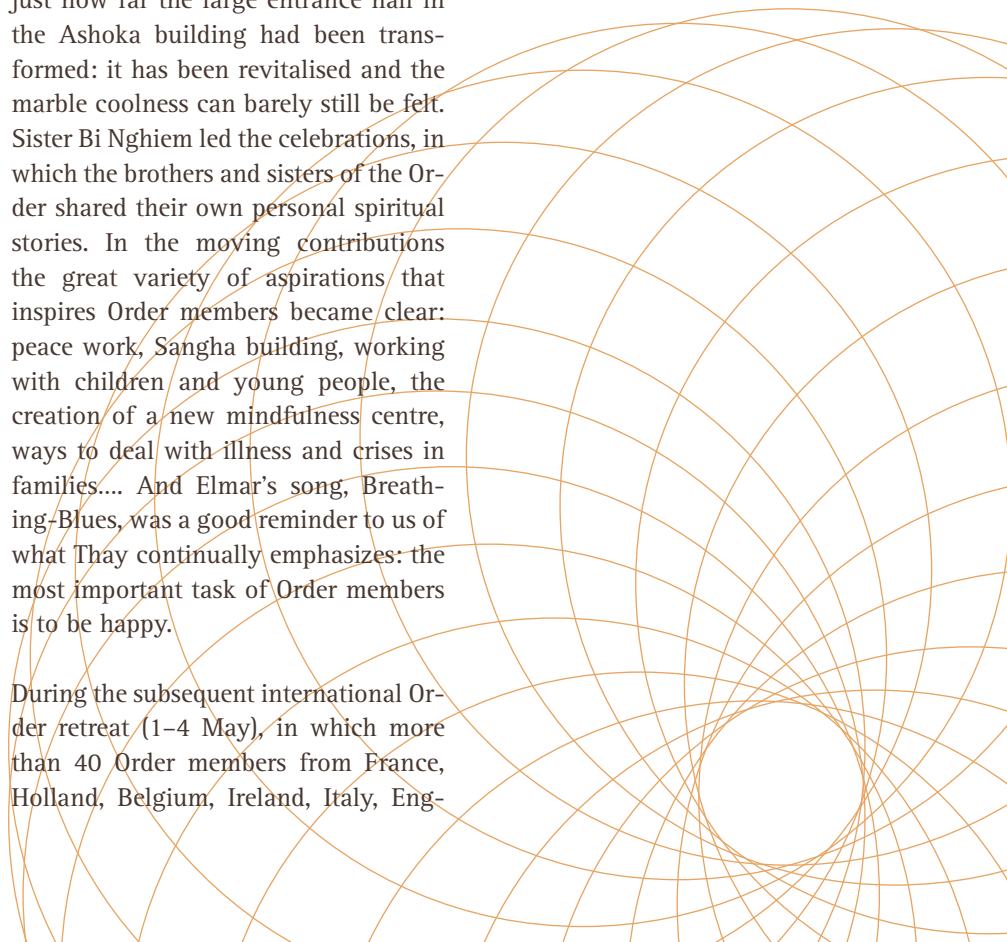


land, Switzerland and Germany participated, Thay Phap An gave an important impulse for deeper understanding: in Vietnamese the Order of Interbeing is called Tiếp Hiện. Tiếp means: to come into contact with, to interact and Hiện means: reality. Consequently, practicing the 14 mindfulness trainings means coming into contact with living reality, with interbeing. This reality has two sides to it: on the one hand suffering and pain, and on the other joy and happiness. You cannot have one without the other – they come as a pair.

Uli Pfeifer-Schaupp, True Deep Meaning, practices with the Freiburg Sangha

just how far the large entrance hall in the Ashoka building had been transformed: it has been revitalised and the marble coolness can barely still be felt. Sister Bi Nghiem led the celebrations, in which the brothers and sisters of the Order shared their own personal spiritual stories. In the moving contributions the great variety of aspirations that inspires Order members became clear: peace work, Sangha building, working with children and young people, the creation of a new mindfulness centre, ways to deal with illness and crises in families.... And Elmar's song, Breathing-Blues, was a good reminder to us of what Thay continually emphasizes: the most important task of Order members is to be happy.

During the subsequent international Order retreat (1-4 May), in which more than 40 Order members from France, Holland, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Eng-



Mindful Business Commitment: First Ceremony of Support at the EIAB

by Kai Romhardt

The Mindful Business Commitment (MBC) was developed by active members of the Network for Mindful Business (Netzwerks Achtsame Wirtschaft e.V.) and encompasses six central practice areas for mindful business.

The declarations of the MBC are not commandments or prohibitions; rather they are an invitation to practice mindfulness and look deeply. The self-commitment to the MBC is a personal step towards wholesome and beneficial goals, actions and insights. A ceremony conducted together with, and in the presence of, like-minded people can help provide support for this step.

On 24 April 2016 just such a 'Ceremony of Support' was publicly held for the

first time at the EIAB. Sixteen participants attending the retreat 'Mindfulness in Organisations' took part and mutually expressed their commitment to practice and deepen their understanding of the MBC in everyday life.

Each of them received a certificate signed by all the others as a sign of mutual support – a moving and a binding moment.

A ceremonial commitment to the MBC neither involves taking refuge in the Buddha nor allegiance to a Buddhist lineage or tradition. Nor does it imply any form of student-teacher relationship. Our hope here is to make the text accessible and helpful for those of all traditions involved in business.

At the end of the ceremony the following sentences are recited:

*I open me and
my heart up to the
mutual connectedness
of all beings and to
universal true love.*

*I ask all teachers
of all times who are guiding,
accompanying and inspiring
me, for support on the path.*

*I ask all my companions,
spiritual friends and the
community for support
on the way.*

May all beings be happy.

The first commitment: **Anchoring my personal practice**

In my personal mindfulness and meditation practice, I will practice...

- Giving my spiritual practice sufficient time and energy, both in my daily life and by participating in retreats and practice days.
 - Keeping my mindfulness alive throughout the day, particularly in difficult situations.
 - Finding reliable support for my path from spiritual companions, connecting to a community of practice or Sangha, and seeking contact with teachers.
 - Opening my heart and cultivate compassion, loving kindness, sympathetic joy and non-discrimination.
- I will stop regularly, return to myself and practice...**
- Touching, understanding and healing my difficulties, my injuries and my suffering.
 - Developing my own personal criteria for success and gradually letting

go of any unhelpful external measures of performance or success.

- Freeing myself from the notion that wealth, influence, popularity or sensual pleasures lead to lasting happiness.
- Treating myself kindly, being patient with myself and smiling lovingly at my imperfections.

I bow in mindfulness.

The second commitment:

Practicing mindful economic thinking and engagement

In my economic transactions and business dealings I will practice...

- Taking the principles of non-harming and non-violence to heart.
 - Cultivating and spreading true happiness, as well as mitigating and alleviating the suffering in myself and others.
 - Putting meaning before profit by investing in, creating and producing truly useful goods or services.
 - Trying out and living out positive alternatives to dominant economic thought and practices.
- I will stop regularly, return to myself and practice...**
- Not taking refuge in consumption, wealth, fame, power or sex.
 - Seeing through dominant economic principles such as growth, success, performance, profit, and competition, freeing myself from unhelpful aspects of these, and integrating healthy alternative concepts into my daily life.
- Letting go of tightly-held positions, ideologies or “truths” and not turning anything – including Buddhist practices and insights – into dogma.
 - Recognizing the differences between frugality and stinginess, generosity and extravagance, as well as satisfaction and laziness.
- I bow in mindfulness.**

The third commitment: Practicing mindful work

In my work, I will practice...

- Choosing work that is meaningful for me and makes a positive impact on the world.
 - Listening deeply and understanding others.
 - Recognizing my limits and finding the right balance between work and non-work.
 - Seeing my colleagues, employees, managers, customers and suppliers for themselves and not as a means to an end.
- I will stop regularly, return to myself and practice...**
- Cultivating mindful working principles such as impulse distance, conscious transitions, regular (re) turning inward, single-tasking and moments of leisure.
 - Comparing myself less often with others and letting go of superiority complexes, inferiority complexes and equality complexes.
- Concentrating on interconnectedness and togetherness instead of losing myself in competition or getting caught in harmful intentions.
 - Disarming unhelpful states of mind such as anger, jealousy or dissatisfaction.
 - Developing loving kindness and compassion for myself and others.
- I bow in mindfulness.**

The fourth commitment: Practicing mindful consumption

When purchasing and consuming, I will practice:

- Consuming that which nourishes both my spirit and body
 - Getting to know my personal shopping cart, taking into account the entire path of a product in order to select wisely.
 - Recognizing how much is enough, taming my wants, and wisely choosing from amongst my wishes. I am conscious that increasing demands often lead to dissatisfaction.
- I will stop regularly, return to myself and practice...**
- Treasuring the already existing conditions for happiness in my life and celebrate the fullness and richness I already have.
 - Protecting my mind and my senses from advertising and professional manipulation.
 - Reminding myself in difficult situations of my breath and my practice,
- and not taking refuge in alcohol, medicine or other intoxicants.
- Taking good care of my difficult emotions.
 - Observing inner and outer impulses in full awareness, slowing my tendency to follow these impulses, and gradually reducing my reactivity
- I bow in mindfulness.**

The fifth commitment: Practicing mindful stewardship of money and resources

When handling money and resources, I will practice ...

- Guarding my financial freedom by living within my means and avoiding unnecessary debt.
 - Strengthening my inner and outer generosity and learn to give without intention and receive without shame.
 - Experiencing and deepen the joy of sharing without expectations.
 - Seeing money as a powerful energy that can produce either healthy or unhealthy effects, aware that every dollar, pound, euro, franc or crown that I spend represents my vote.
 - I will stop regularly, return to myself and practice...**
 - Investing in companies whose products, motivations, methods or working conditions I value.
 - Refraining from speculation or betting.
 - Giving up return on investment or financial gain as the dominant criteria when handling money.
 - Recognizing the joys of a self-chosen simple life.
- I bow in mindfulness.**

The sixth commitment: Acting mindfully in groups and organizations

In my work in and for teams, organizations and companies, I will practice...

- Choosing – and creating – healthy working environments.
 - Joining together with like-minded people to explore and experience mindful forms of community.
 - Seeking wholesome alternatives rather than falling into what is apparently normal.
 - Foregoing cleverness, manipulation and calculation and not taking advantage of others' weaknesses.
 - Seeing the positive in people more often than the negative.
 - I will stop regularly, return to myself and practice...**
 - Not preaching to, misleading or exploiting others in any way.
 - Observing those who act destructively with the eyes of compassion and seeing in them the pain that is our common human condition.
 - Travelling my individual and our collective path of mindfulness with conviction, bravery and modesty.
 - Looking deeply into my environment and honestly contemplating it, remembering to keep my sense of humor and inner lightness to support my mindfulness.
 - Sharing what I have experienced in my personal practice while conscious that the most effective sharing is embodying mindfulness and transformation myself.
- I bow in mindfulness.**

The French Order of Interbeing at the EIAB for a week

In October 2015 around 45 members of the French-speaking Order of Interbeing gathered for a week at the EIAB.

On first impression the EIAB appeared to be both a calm and a relaxing place to be; it was only later that we learned of the inconceivable brutalities and atrocities that had been committed here during the Second World War.

Thanks to the ceremonies carried out first of all on a daily, and later on a weekly, basis over the last five years, and the patience of angels, the sisters and brothers have relieved the suffering

of the 'hungry ghosts', so that friends and visitors now discover a relaxing and pleasant place to be.

We arrived by plane, train, car, as well as almost on foot; we arrived from France, Belgium, Israel and even from close by, all of us happy to see each other and to get to know new soul mates in the Plum Village practice.

For an entire week we were able to participate in Qi Gong courses, to meditate, and to listen to deep Dharma talks delivered in the special, modest and generous way of brother Phap An

and sister Bi Nghiem. The organisation committee met daily to allow discussion of our ideas and hopes...

Five working groups formulated our thoughts about the topics close to our hearts: about ecology

What remains in our hearts is peace: peace in ourselves, with our ancestors, with the world in which we live and acceptance of others just the way they are - great forgiveness.

Gilli Setton, Order of Interbeing, France



"Reconciliation with our Ancestors" at the Eiab in October 2015

Due to the illness of the co-facilitator, Sr. Bi Nghiem decided to combine two courses which at first sight didn't appear to be a good combination ... a good decision as we later discovered.

10 German women of various ages and approx. 50 French, older members of the Order of Interbeing together listened to teachings from Sr. Bi Nghiem on the topic of reconciliation with our ances-

tors and discovered in an impressive way in the Dharma Sharing how similar the psychic scars of the war experiences of the last century are on both side of the Rhine, and across generations.

Prior to this course, and based on the experiences of their parents and grandparents during two world wars in which Germany was indisputably the aggressor, many of the French people present

had consciously made the decision not to set foot on German territory. For our part, we Germans talked of our inability to identify positively with our country because of this feeling of guilt. It was a moving experience for all involved and created a new, deep feeling of understanding and reconciliation.

However, it primarily involved reconciliation with our own ancestors. Sr. Bi Nghiem succeeded in achieving this in an empathetic and practical way in a "Rose Ceremony", in which every participant was asked to thank his or her parents for all the good things they had given him or her for life. A task that for the majority of participants was extremely demanding.

Although I had received psychotherapy for many years in order to find reconciliation with my mother and to find the courage to face life, this exercise helped me, at over 60, to make the emotional break-through and to achieve a deep reconciliation with my mother. Five days after this retreat my mother suffered a fall and had to spend a few days in hospital. For the first time in my life I noticed that I could visit my mother without inner resistance or anxiety and help her with all that she needed, to ensure she was as comfortable as possible. A joyful experience for me as daughter, hopefully for my mother too.

It was the atmosphere in this unusual group, but in particular in this wonderful place of mindfulness and deep looking, that made this experience possible. I say this as a non-practicing 'absolute beginner' with deep gratitude.

Lisa Harless



All is continuation – a new Dharma Teacher from the Netherlands

Breathing in I smile:

Isn't it wonderful that we are able to smile? Smiling is an art that can be developed. I used to think 'how can I smile when I don't feel like smiling?' Practicing with smiling made a lot of difference. It is as if we are making minimal mindful movements. When the tiny muscles around our mouth relax, the tiny muscles around our eyes relax at the same time. Our mouth and eyes – like all parts of our body – interare. Nothing functions separately. So the area of our heart relaxes too and when our heart opens our whole body changes. It has been proven that smiling makes our chemistry change. It's a miracle to have a body. A body that is the continuation of millions of years of life.

Breathing out there is gratitude in me:

Gratitude was in and around me during the Great Ordination Ceremony week in Plum Village March 22th-27th; a Ceremony of Gratitude and Love it was called.

Walking to the Lower Hamlet in the early dark morning there was silence and a full moon. Although the ceremonies took place during the day this full moon felt like the continuation of the tradition at the time of the Boeddha. Ceremonies took place with full moon. There have been countless footsteps of so many practitioners in silent walking

meditation since that time. Our footsteps are a continuation.

The Great Ordination Ceremony week seems to be total immersion: the bright yellow of the sanghati's – ceremonial habits –, the chanting, the many sounds of the bell, the big drum, the offering of incense by "the Venerables" from Vietnam etc. during the opening ceremony. The full ordination of bhiku's and bhikshuni's, the touchings of the Earth, the transmission of the 14 mindfulness trainings make body and mind change.

After the first two ceremonial days in the Upper Hamlet everybody comes to the New Hamlet for another two days and the lamp transmission ceremonies start. About forty monastics – from different countries – and eight lay people – from Canada, the UK and the Netherlands – will receive the lamp. The lamp of the Patriarchs was burning on an empty podium and there was a wonderful picture of Thay on the wall. Beautiful poetry comes with a variety of insight gatha's; the gatha's on behalf of the patriarchs are full of eloquent words and loving speech. Receiving the lamp is a moment of deep gratitude and happiness. Old traditions of transmitting

the Dharma become a continuation in new forms.

During my preparation at home and the development of my insight gatha I suddenly realised that I already had a kind of lamp transmission. I received a green glass oil lamp after my grandparents died. It has been in my study ever since. I often stayed with my grandparents when I was a child. On top of the cupboard in the little bedroom this oil lamp gave her soft light in the dark night. It now represents the love and care of my parents and grandparents and I bow in gratitude to my blood ancestors. Gratitude for life and for being their continuation.

Dr. Hilly Bol, Order of Interbeing, Netherlands

The power of Sangha – Dutch families in the EIAB

From breakdown on the road to a pick nick

On return from the family retreat a family stranded on the road: their car broke down! Fine, that was a good moment to apply the lessons from their retreat: call the emergency services, unfold a blanket and organize a pick nick with each other! They enjoyed each other's company until the tow truck arrived. Fruits from the exercise of cherishing joy and being seen and heard within a Sangha.

The family returned from the third family retreat in the EIAB, 'The family as Sangha', with 23 adults and 32 young participants. Most people knew each other from the mindfulness days for families in The Netherlands; some families were newcomers.

Togetherness

Was it because many already knew each other that a Sangha was formed so eas-

ily and so quickly? Or did the togetherness of the meals in two small rooms especially reserved for us and the presence of sister Annabel at all the meals strengthen the group spirit?

Fact is that a strong feeling of togetherness arose in a short period of time, which was expressed in the care of each other's children and in the unburdening of parents of the baby and toddlers.

Gaining new experiences

Sometimes during a retreat parents see their children from another perspective. A father mailed us later: "Already the third time, but the magic remains. For instance children of friends who participate for the first time, who, although they can be fairly busy, turn out to join the meals being noiseless, against my expectations and prejudices.

The other father, who changed my irritation because my son was talking, into admiration: the boys had actually been silent for 20 minutes! Hopefully I will learn to see the good more often (which I would like to) instead of the other."

And a mother wrote:

"Practicing in observing without judgements, also including the children, helps me to be present in a calmer and more mindful manner. It is a challenge when my child disrupts my contact moments and also sabotages the contact with him by teasing, bullying and causing pain. Then find a way to express my disappointments, shortcomings and frustrations without becoming angry. A good example for me was when sister Annabel (who joined us at all meals) during dinner offered the bell to a lit-



tle boy who was angry and asked him whether he wanted to invite it. He did not but it ended his frustration and the tension.

I plan to also invite the bell at home when there is a conflict and have asked my son to do that too. Additional support and very special to me is to hear and see how other families deal with their struggles and successes.”]

Touching the earth

The program offered many joint exercises and the weather was very supportive, so that many activities could take place outside. In the orchard children played changing trees while another little group made a giant frisbee whiz over the grass.

Under a roof of white blossom parents, children and staff learned how to entrust their worries and sorrow to mother Earth by means of the exercise ‘Earth touching for children’.

Creating harmony by trial and error

Harmony in a group does not come naturally, and this also holds for families. However, it something which can be exercised. Therefore, on the 2nd afternoon of the retreat the families left to the woods to walk together. An exercise where the seeds of harmony and togetherness are receiving water. Some of the children started off sulking because they would rather play with a friend. Other families friskily ran up the hills, happy to have time for each other. Almost all families restored their mutual connection in the woods.

The staff learns too

Members of the staff also practice and reflect on their own emotions and actions. One of the staff members wrote later: “What have I picked up from the retreat?

- miracle moments of really being
- a deep trust in family feelings from inside my heart

- hope and new insights into how to take care of the growth of my family
- a spiritual family to seek refuge in can be found everywhere
- the seeds of how to a be a good father, being vigorous, setting boundaries and being playful have been touched
- letting go of how the program should be and learning to trust on inner wisdom
- learned how to speak publicly and convey instructions; practicing working in teams and cooperating!”

Simple means and materials

The warm spring weather and the large green area of the EIAB offered a wonderful playground, where minimal means and materials created a lot of fun. The good-bye game is a good example of this. After a mindful snack parents and children sat at the sides of a large plastic carpet. In turns the children and parents threw a woolen ball to someone while holding the thread of the ball. With one word they shared how they had experienced the retreat. One of the toddlers had great fun playing as the spider in the web that was created. When the end of the thread was in somebody’s hand the whole group moved the web up and down. Children walked under the web when it was high and jumped the threads when it came low. A lovely chaos of laughing people and little people enjoying being together, being there.

Campfire

On the last evening we looked just like a large family on vacation. Parents and children built a campfire and we ate together around the fire. The children were roasting marshmallows and a number of older children extended their huts in the underwood. A father played to be a life merry-go-round by twirling children around at a very high speed. Children waited for turns. The end of a wonderful retreat

Authors: Marjolijn van Leeuwen and Tineke Spruytenburg; Translation: Elja van der Veer





Wake-Up Retreat: The Music we are

**40 young adults over 6 days gathered at the EIAB
for the Wake Up Music We Are, much love and many songs**

On a warm day on a street just behind the beach in Brighton England, Charlie was making tea and going in and out with a wooden tray and bowls of oat-cakes and nuts, pens and paper - to our 'office', two chairs and a table outside his front door. Tea poured we take pens and write 'The Music We Are' on clean new pages...

A few weeks later with bags and ideas we were under the street lights and trees of Walbrough, the home of Plum Village in Germany, the EIAB. Leaving the street Charlie leads the way up under the branches to the winding path-way and into the grounds, 'ah home from home' he says, we touch the stone sculpture in the entrance and move toward the warm lights across the lawn

It's the 3rd one for Charlie, one of a group of Wake Uppers running gath-



erings here at the centre, a place of much peace and activity all in the same breath. First time for me, a friend of Charlie's, both being involved in the Wake Up London Community. And so were drawn others from across Europe; France, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and others... to come together and experience the place, the Plum Village mindfulness practices, each other and what Charlie and I had put together from them to do!

Joining with us Evelyn, Julia and Hans from Germany returning from the last time to help look after this family.

Over 6 days, 40 of us spent our time together sharing and workshoping what it meant to feel, to play, to listen and know ourselves and each other through music and song. We wrote poems and learned harmony, walked in the woods surrounding listening to the trees and the birds.

Around our plans our time in and around the EIAB was cared for by the resident Brothers and Sisters, making our meals, leading meditations, walks each day and a talk by Sister Ingrid around half way through on ancestry, inheritance and peace. The way they hold the difficult history, ceremonies

Continued on page 36



An Attempt to Live Engaged Buddhism

At fourteen I discovered that my spiritual home was in Buddhism and began my practice in the form of self-study. Just a few years later a book by Thay and Sister Chan Khong, about walking meditation and inviting the bell, fell into my hands. I was deeply impressed – nonetheless, it still took another fifteen years before I visited Plum Village for the first time. What I discovered there moved me deeply: practicing as part of a community, ease, being fully present in every moment and giving the natural needs of the body and the mind the space and attention they need, simplicity, joy, modesty and clarity. In his teachings Thay has given us an invaluable gift. We can live in complete awareness in every moment and realize the Dharma, because we already have all that we need: our body, our breath and our mind. Practicing together with the Sangha means learning together, letting go, growing. I could feel how healing the practice was for my life and began to look for ways to contribute, both to the Plum Village tradition and Buddhism in a wider context, and to pass on what I had experienced.

Jointly sowing the seeds of the practice

In the following years I attended retreats and days of mindfulness and, for a seminar, conducted interviews with Thay Phap An, Sister Annabel as well as other monks and nuns of the EIAB. I soon began to get involved with the children's programme at large retreats and was deeply moved by the mindful directness of the children and the seeds of the practice, that we can sow together. During one of the large annual retreats at the EIAB, I received the Five Mindfulness Trainings from Thay,



and the name 'Joyful Essence of the Heart'. Since then I have been able to co-organize two Wake-Up retreats at the EIAB, in addition to which it was time for a new start-up of the Wake-Up in Vienna. Then Sister Bi Nghiem asked me, and two other Wake Uppers, to act as contacts between the EIAB and the European Wake-Up groups. So, in the course of time the wish grew in me for a stronger bond to the tradition, and to learn ways to pass on the practice.

Practice as Self-love – Aspirant of the Order of Interbeing

Together with two other Wake Uppers, I have been an aspirant of the Order of Interbeing since April. Over the course of the coming years Annette Saager and Aurelia Ellett will act as our mentors and prepare us for the transmission of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. I have thought about this step for a long time, and feel deep freedom and joy when I make well-thought-through decisions and set healing boundaries for myself. For me practicing is also an important act of self-love: in the same way that a mother protects her child

from danger and unwholesome habits, I also want to protect myself and take good care of myself.

Sharing the Practice with Children and Families

In the next six months there will be more valuable opportunities to practice with the Sangha. Tineke Spruytenburg has invited me to help her in July with the 'Family as Sangha' retreat at the EIAB. I am very much looking forward to experiencing this wonderful concept for the first time, to learning together with families, and working together in mindfulness to find ways for loving and appreciative communication. Sharing the practice with children, be it in schools or in the family, is part of my aspiration for the Order of Interbeing. In August I will go to Plum Village and help organize the Wake-Up retreat. And by the New Year retreat at the EIAB by the latest, I want to be once again involved in the children's programme so that we can all say farewell to the old year and welcome the new one together.

Encounters between Religious Studies and the Teaching of Buddhism in Schools

Outside of the tradition there are other areas in which I am also engaged with Buddhism. The focal point of my M.A. in Religion Studies at the University of Vienna is on research into the way Buddhism is lived in the West. Consequently, my final thesis will also deal with the Plum Village tradition. For some years I have been organising 'Religious Encounters' for my fellow students. These are excursions to various communities and events that relate to our religious studies. In this semester we had a thematic focal point for the

first time, which is why we participated in twelve Buddhist events from different traditions. At the request of the students there will be a big annual excursion to a Buddhist retreat, which I will organise on the lines of Plum Village. In summer I would like to finish my translation of a book about the Tibetan- Buddhist Ngöndro practice from English into German. I was recently invited by Marina Jahn, Vice-President of the Austrian Buddhist Religion Society, to give a talk at a training workshop for Buddhist religious teachers about how to teach the Dharma to children. As Buddhism is an officially recognized religion in Austria, it is also taught in

schools. In addition, efforts are underway in a number of Austrian and German federal states (and in part already implemented) to introduce new school subjects which teach social and emotional skills that can be put to practical use in everyday life. Now I have been asked to help design one of these school subjects, with mindfulness as its main focus, and to subsequently familiarize teachers with its contents in training workshops.

This is the way my interest in the practice runs through my life on an everyday, academic, private and public basis, both theoretically and practically.

*May all living beings
be happy,*

*May they be free
from suffering,*

*May they not be separated
from true happiness
that is free of suffering,*

*May they all dwell
in equanimity, free of
attachment and aversion.*

Evelyn Schenk, Wien

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for those who were detained in the building some who passed there. Inspired by this our last workshop was to have us walking slowly through the main corridor reading works from Thich Nhat Hanh's years of calligraphs, displayed right down through the space along with material hearts one, for each person who had passed away there. Sensitivity was moving

close to London, Charlie and stop for tea, traveling and talking through the days passed, what we'd done and who we had met, in each moment becoming closer and so a room of new faces feels like you've always known each other. Beside us a painting by Zarah Reinhard, a beautiful gift signed by everyone, all of us holding ourselves and the world, the knowing of what comes through with song, stillness and being together.



Joe

Joe is involved with Wake Up London and looks after Peace Sounds, a label for peace related music and audio.

https://soundcloud.com/joe_holtaway/dear-friends (link to a 'PV song' i recorded just after inspired by zarah's painting)



Brother Phap Kinh

I was born in 1989 in Da Lat, a very beautiful city situated high in the mountains of Vietnam, which is why it is cooler there than in other parts of the country. We lived right in the city. My parents were farmers. Originally they grew vegetables to sell, later only flowers. I am the youngest of five children.

My mother sold vegetables at the wholesale market from midnight until 5 in the morning. Consequently my parents always had to get up early. As a child I always wanted to go with them, but they thought I was too young. Nonetheless, when I was 8-9 they sometimes took me along. Once when my mother wouldn't allow me to go I waited until she had fallen asleep and then tied one end of a piece of string to her leg and the other to my foot. As soon as she got up at midnight then I also woke up and my parents took pity on me and allowed me to go with them. It was a pure pleasure for me to help my mother sell our vegetables. In particular there was always a good breakfast, including milk (which is not always the case in Vietnam), and it was just something special to be at the market during the night.

My mother loved me a lot and always brought me something from the market when I had to stay at home.

My father has been a vegetarian for 20 years.

As a child I used to enjoy going to the river to catch fish. But not to eat them: I used to put them in a bucket full of water and bring them home for the small pond in front of our house.

I enjoyed going to school and learning. My favourite subjects were maths and sport. In the evening I also had karate lessons.

From the age of around 15 I already wanted to become a monk, but my parents insisted I take the high school leaving certificate. After that they gave their consent. My father was very supportive, but my mother was somewhat sad about my decision. Both my parents are Buddhists.

After the death of my grandfather I frequently asked myself how I can help other people. I often went to the monastery, above all for the chanting.

After I had already visited a number of temples, my older sister, who had already ordained as a Buddhist nun several years before, took me on a visit to Bat Nha monastery. I had already read Thay's book *Old Path, White Clouds*. In this monastery, in this tradition, I immediately felt at home. Above all I liked the fact that there were so many other young monks and nuns of the same age living there. And I didn't want to live too close to my parents, in order to get some distance from their influence. Bat Nha is located approximately 100 km from my parent's home.

In 2008 I was ordained as a novice. I loved the simple life without a computer or telephone. We experienced a lot of



joy, above all on our free days which we usually spent at the waterfall.

There were approximately 300 monks and nuns, and we learned the practice of Thay. I enjoyed above all the walking meditation and deep relaxation.

At Bat Nha there was a day of mindfulness once a month to which around 400 – 500 people came. We also held Wake-Up retreats for young people. Têt, the Vietnamese new year celebration, was something very special: many guests came to spend several days with us.

I lived for 2 years in Bat Nha, until we experienced great difficulties with the Communist Government in 2009 and, unfortunately, had to leave the monastery, which was then temporarily closed down.

It was a difficult time for all of us; however, these difficulties also strengthened our sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. Our greatest concern was to find another place where we could continue to practice together as this was no longer possible in Vietnam.

At the end of 2009 the majority of us went to Thailand. Sr. Linh Nghiem, one of our sisters, was from Thailand and her parents provided the monks with accommodation on their large estate, whilst the sisters were put up in the house of Sr. Linh Nghiem's uncle. We lived there for around six months.

We put up tents in the gardens of both houses. Of course, we lacked many things, but we organized our lives in such a way that we could follow our daily practice: we listened to Thay's Dharma talks, practiced sitting and walking meditation, deep relaxation, had regular Dharma sharings, cooked and learned English.

To be able to go to Germany, France or the USA we had to go back to Vietnam to get the necessary visa for the particular country we wanted to live in.

In February 2011, I arrived here at the EIAB with a group of monks and nuns from Thailand. There was still snow on



the ground, the first snow I had ever seen in my life. We took a lot of photos and spent many hours playing in the snow.

What impressed me were the many large trees, the park and the woods – it is all so very different from the way things are at home in Vietnam.

At first we learned German here at the EIAB for a year, before going for offi-

cial German lessons. The teacher was good, and I enjoyed the lessons a lot. Although I don't speak German very well, I continue to try and learn more and more.

Now I would like to get my driving licence. For this I have to learn lots of new words. This is sometimes difficult, but driving is fun.

In the eight years I have been a monk, I have learned a lot. My path is clear: to continue on the way. I feel very connected with the Sangha and with Thay. And in the future too, I would like to remain here at the EIAB and help to build the Sangha.

This year I was in Plum Village for several weeks and had the opportunity to help Thay as his attendant. I was very grateful for this chance to be close to Thay and learned a lot. Thay's health is weak, but his spirit and mind are very strong. Thay wants to be together with the Sangha as much as possible: on days of mindfulness, during walking meditation, at the Dharma talks, and the ceremonies. Twice a day he goes for a 'walk' in his wheelchair, and when he is in Upper Hamlet he visits the different altars many times a day to meditate.





Here once again are the dates for our popular family retreats in 2016:

- 13.-16.10.** AUTUMN RETREAT with the nuns and monks of the EIAB
27.12.2016 – CELEBRATING LIFE – HOLIDAY RETREAT FOR EVERYONE
02.01.2017 with the nuns and monks of the EIAB

For planning next year, here are the dates for the August Retreat 2017:

Please make a note.

7 to the 12 August 2017

Retreat with the nuns and monks of the EIAB and from Plum Village

Retreat language: English with German translation

A programme for children and teenagers will be offered in German.

You can register at our website: www.eiab.eu.

The EIAB course programme for 2016 is available on request from the EIAB and can also be found at our website www.eiab.eu.

The programme for 2017 will be available in December.

If you visit our website in autumn you will find more information about courses for 2017.

Registration for all Retreats: EIAB – Europäisches Institut für
Angewandten Buddhismus
Schaumburgweg 3
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www.eiab.eu
Tel.: +49 (0)2291 907 13 73

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