Also by Thich Nhat Hanh

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How to See
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Living Buddha, Living Christ
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Master Tang Hoi

Parallax Press
P.O. Box 7355
Berkeley, California 94707
parallax.org

Parallax Press is the publishing division of
Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism, Inc.

Cover and text design by Debbie Berne
Calligraphy by Thich Nhat Hanh
Image courtesy of Lion's Roar
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Non-English words are in Sanskrit unless otherwise indicated or made clear by the context.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available upon request.

Ebook ISBN 978-1-946764-19-5

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Contents

Foreword to the Fourth Edition

Sister Chân Không

As a young person, I was deeply impressed by the teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni. This led me to intensify my work helping hungry children in the slums of Saigon, and to make the decision to leave behind my boyfriend of five years to become a Buddhist nun. But when I visited nunneries in Saigon, Bến Tre, and other places, the nuns told me to practice well so I could be reborn as a man and become a Buddha. I knew this was a misunderstanding of the teachings of the Buddha. I didn't want to be reborn as a man in order to become enlightened. I didn't even care about being enlightened. I only cared about helping hungry children, poor people, and suppressed people. I decided to set up my own nunnery. When I was able to meet Thầy, I asked him about what I had been told by the nuns. Thầy smiled, saying that is an old-fashioned way to interpret Buddhism: during the time the Buddha was alive there were many women who were enlightened during the practice. One day a nun gave a beautiful Dharma talk on the functioning of our mind, which her former husband heard. He then asked the Buddha, "Is the teaching given by my former wife correct?" The Buddha answered: "The Buddha would have said the same if asked to give a teaching on the functioning of our mind."

Rather than agreeing that I become a nun, Thầy offered me and others of his students the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. When I read these trainings, I was overwhelmed with joy, thinking that Thầy had devised them especially for the young people of my generation. I did not realize, as Thầy later told me, that they were an expression of the deepest teachings of the Buddha taken from the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Diamond Sutra, and the Lotus Sutra, etc. Thầy explained that the Buddhism being practiced at that time was too outdated and he wanted to renew

not just the teachings but also the practice. He had asked his teacher in the root temple in Huế if he could have a new Dharma name: One (Nhất) Action (Hạnh), which suited his aspiration to renew Buddhism.

He then left the Buddhist Institute in Huế, in order to fulfill his ideal of renewing Buddhism; this was in the late 1940s. In 1950, he wrote his first book, a slim volume on Buddhist logic.

In 1958 I enrolled in the University of Saigon to study biology. But what really inspired me was working in the slums. I found a poor area of Saigon only five blocks from the university. Every noon break, I would run to the slum, spend a few hours there, and then run back to school. I would sit and listen to people talk about their hardships and think of ways to help them. I continued my university studies only to please my parents and the kind and excellent professor who was my mentor.

One project I started was giving "rice scholarships" to orphans and children of single parents. The parents depended on their children to earn a little money selling newspapers or sweets. I knew that well-to-do people rarely thought of the poor, so I began planting seeds of generosity in them, asking them to set aside a handful of rice each day for poor children. I helped set up a daycare center in the slum, facilitated obtaining birth certificates for children so they could enroll in school, and taught those who weren't able to go to school. I helped some of the parents get small loans to start a business, and transported sick people to the hospital on my motorbike. I later discovered that this is called "social work," but at the time, I didn't know I was a social worker.

In October, 1959 Thầy Mãn Giác gave me a book by Thích Nhất Hạnh. I learned that in December Thầy would begin teaching a three-month course at Xá Lợi Temple in Saigon, so I enrolled. The first lecture I heard him give impressed me deeply. I had never heard anyone speak so beautifully and profoundly. It was the fifteenth of November, 1959.

Thầy felt that Buddhism had much to contribute to real social change. He wanted to find ways to support a movement for

social change according to the Buddhist spirit. He said he would help my friends and me with our social projects.

I knew Thầy was the teacher I had been looking for. Inspired by his teachings and encouragement, I attracted seventy friends to join me in caring for five slums around Saigon. We took medicine and food to those who were ill, held night classes for adults, and taught children about the great men and women of Vietnam.

In February 1961 Thầy offered another three-month course. An atmosphere of sisterhood and brotherhood began to develop among Thầy and his students. In April, he began another weekly course on Buddhism for twenty of us university students. Thầy moved to Trúc Lâm Temple, a one-hour motorbike ride from Saigon, and taught the course there.

From May to September 1961, I went with a dozen friends every Saturday to study with Thầy at the Trúc Lâm Temple, and we stayed until late in the evening. Then we rode back to Saigon, singing together under the moonlight. These were wonderful days. We loved and respected each other dearly, like thirteen brothers and sisters. Learning from Thầy, we became the "thirteen cedars" of the Buddhist movement in South Vietnam. Thầy wanted to continue his efforts to renew Buddhism by training a number of young people to become "like strong cedars to help support the Buddha's teachings."

We thirteen cedars decided to apply our Buddhist understanding by setting up a night school for poor workers, soldiers, and working teenagers. We realized we were becoming a happy Sangha, a community of practice, helping others. In September Thầy told us that he had accepted a fellowship to study comparative religion at Princeton University. He was in the US for two years. I continued my social work and my university studies.

In April 1960, Thầy had started the Buddhist Student Union. I was head of the social welfare branch. We held weekly meetings to study Buddhism, discuss the Dharma, plan projects for the poor, and publish a magazine describing our work. The thirteen cedars became eighty, and then there were over 300

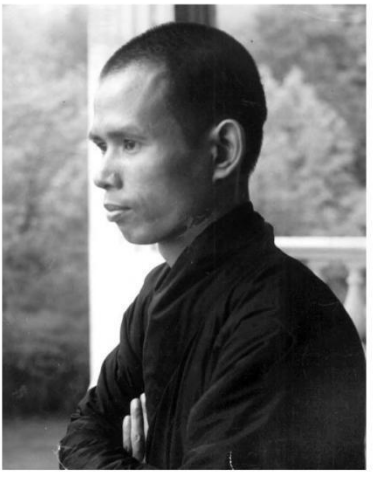
cedars in the Buddhist Student Union.

In December 1963, Thầy returned to Vietnam, when the Catholic US-backed Diệm Regime had just been overthrown. In January 1964, Thầy submitted a Three-Point Proposal to the Executive Council of the Unified Buddhist Church in Vietnam, saying the United Buddhist Congregation must:

1. publicly call for the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam, South and North.
2. help build an Institute for the study and application of Buddhism.
3. develop a center for training social workers to help bring about nonviolent social change based on the Buddha's teachings.

Thầy's idealism appealed to university students, and many volunteered to help with all three of his projects. The Institute of Higher Buddhist Studies opened in February 1964. Young volunteers staffed the office. The program was fully underway in just fourteen months, when its name was changed to Vạn Hạnh University.

Thầy's idea about social work was that it should go beyond traditional notions of charity, supporting the peasants in their own efforts to improve the quality of their lives. Thầy saw social work and rural development as the work of personal and social transformation, with workers and peasants seeing each other not as "helpers" and "those being helped," but as partners in a common task.



Thích Nhất Hạnh in 1965.

In February 1964, Thầy set up a pioneer village on the outskirts of Saigon. I was in France finishing my studies when he wrote to me, "Please come back right away. If you want to work for social change in the ways we spoke about, this is the time. Many people want to help, but you are the one person who can organize this program and make it work."

I finished my thesis and returned to Vietnam in June 1964. I helped start a second pioneer village and spent all my days with the poor in the pioneer villages and the slums. Our goal was to train young people to help peasants establish schools and medical centers, improve sanitation, and develop agriculture and horticulture. We also did flood-relief work whenever Vietnam was hit by flooding.

In September 1965, the School of Youth for Social Service (SYSS) was founded as a program of Vạn Hạnh University, although the groundwork had begun as soon as Thầy had returned to Saigon in 1963.

By 1966, Thầy had finished compiling the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings as part of his deep aspiration to renew Buddhism. The trainings contain the essence of the traditional Prātimokṣa (the monastic precepts) as well as the traditional lay

and monastic Bodhisattva Precepts. Many Vietnamese monks and nuns who practice the traditional precepts are moved when they read the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. They say that these trainings speak to them deeply and water the seeds of the mind of love (*bodhicitta*) in them.

The Fourteen Trainings I received in 1966 along with five other members of the SYSS were the first draft Thầy prepared before again departing for the US, this time to call for peace at the invitation of Cornell University. He compiled the Fourteen Trainings as a matter of urgency before his imminent departure. He thought that there would be another transmission of the Fourteen Trainings for more students of the School of Youth for Social Service when he returned from the US, but as a result of his calling for peace, he was exiled for forty years, and it wasn't until 2005 that the next transmission of the Fourteen Trainings in Vietnam could take place.

There were six of us who were the first to receive the Fourteen Trainings. They were three women: myself, Cao Ngọc Phương, Sister Phan Thi Mai, and Sister Phạm Thúy Uyên; and three men: Brother Bùi Văn Thanh, Brother Đo Văn Khon, and Brother Nguyễn Văn Phúc. At that time the three young women wanted to practice celibacy and become nuns, but the three young men already had fiancées. Thầy's wish for us was to wait until there were both men and women ready for the monastic ordination so that the Sangha would have both monks and nuns.

At the time of the ordination I was a lecturer in botany at Huế University. Phan Thi Mai (or Nhất Chi Mai) was a schoolteacher, and it was she who immolated herself in the cause of peace on May 16, 1967. (My photo appeared in the *New York Times* on May 17, 1967, announcing Mai's self-immolation.)

Sister Phạm Thúy Uyên is still alive and lives in Saigon with her widowed mother. Bùi Văn Thanh was at that time engaged to my younger sister. He was in charge of the credit loans given by the School of Youth for Social Service to poor people. We would loan them fifty US dollars, for example, so that they

could raise ten pigs and develop two acres of rice fields. Meanwhile he also worked as a judge in the tribunal court of Mỹ Tho city.

Đó Văn Khon was very active in the Buddhist Youth Movement (Gia Đình Phật Tử). Three years after the war ended, he died when he was still very young. Nguyễn Văn Phúc was very dedicated in working in the Vạn Hạnh University. After the ordination, he married the woman he loved. He has also died.

The first six members of the Order of Interbeing (*l to r*): Phạm Thúy Uyên, Cao Ngọc Phương, and Phan Thi Mai; Nguyễn Văn Phúc, Bùi Văn Thanh, and Đó Văn Khon.

The six of us were all important organizers in the School of Youth for Social Service. Thầy wanted all of the 300 trainees of the SYSS to receive the Order of Interbeing (OI) Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, but he was exiled beginning in May 1966. After 1966, no ordinations took place until 1981. Then Thầy ordained his niece Anh-Hương. She had come to the United States with her father (the elder brother of Thầy), escaping Vietnam as boatpeople. In 1981 she visited Thầy in Plum Village, France, and Thầy really wanted her to receive the OI training for laypeople. After hearing me recite the Fourteen Trainings, she asked if she could receive them.

Thầy knew that of the 300 students of the School of Youth for Social Service not all of them would become monks and nuns. This is why Thầy compiled the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings to be the same for monks, nuns, and laypeople. The Fourteenth Mindfulness Training, which has separate wording for lay and monastic practitioners, was only elaborated after I shaved my head on Vulture Peak in 1988. When I received the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings in 1966, they were a different version from the one we use today with fewer words.[1]

In my autobiography, I say that Plum Village grew out of Thầy's wish to have a spiritual practice center for the School of Youth for Social Service. Now it is a practice center for all activists in service for this world. When Thầy went to the West, he extended his wish to help all activists, not just those engaged in social service in Vietnam. Plum Village has become a place of practice for ecological activists, for artists, for helping professionals—those who work in hospitals or drive ambulances. They need mindfulness in order to stop, to breathe, and to smile. The OI Fourteen Trainings train people to live deeply in every aspect of their life.

During the war, those who were in the School of Youth Social Service with Thầy were very active. The first OI members did so much. The young OI members of today often have not experienced war in their own country, but their diligence and eagerness to serve are just as strong as they were in us. Of course at that time the situation was very urgent. Because of the atrocities of war we saw being committed every day and because the suffering was so great, the Buddha nature in each of us was called up in response. The Buddha nature is equal in everyone. Nobody forced us to go out and risk our lives in service, and if you had been there, you would have acted as we did then. It was the same for Nhất Chi Mai: before she heard me describe the atrocities that were happening, she was not moved to work for peace. After she saw what was happening, she became deeply committed to working for peace and immolated herself in its cause.

The problem of our own time is that we, and especially young

people, lack ethical guidelines. We need mindfulness trainings so that we do not harm ourselves and others by sexual misconduct, violent speech, and drug addiction, and so we know how to practice in order to not burn out.[2] I have heard of teenagers who threaten to kill their parents if they do not give them money to buy drugs. In Buddhism we learn that whatever we think, speak, or do has repercussions for ourself and for others. The repercussions for ourself are called the main retribution (正報) and the repercussions that create the environment in which we live are called the environmental retribution (依報). The environmental retribution includes our family, our society, and our country. Whether someone's actions are beautiful or not depends largely on their environmental conditions. The environment in the time of the Buddha Śākyamuni was different from the environment in which Thầy and my generation grew up, and the environment now is also different. This is why we need to update the ethical guidelines we practice in order for them to be in tune with the environment in which people are living. The Five and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings need to be revised every ten years or so because society is always changing, and with it, the problems that we need ethical guidelines to face. Those of you who were born twenty or forty years later than me have grown up in a very different environment from the one I grew up in. You may come from an intellectual family as I did, but the intellectual circles when I was growing up were very different from what they are now. If you look at the Eighth Mindfulness Training on True Community and Communication you will see it is very different from the first version.

I think that Thầy has been awarded peace prizes not only because he's peaceful, but also because of his contribution to making the world peaceful with the Five and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. The Sixth Mindfulness Training on Taking Care of Anger has also been revised. When you are angry, you always want to fight. The Training instructs you to stop and to look deeper. Instead of going in the direction your anger is leading you, you are able to stop with mindful

breathing and walking, and when you are calmer, you see another side to the matter, you are less aggressive, and you achieve what you really want to change in a peaceful way. If the whole of humanity tried to practice just the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we would have a wonderful world, without needing the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. However we are very fortunate to have the Fourteen Trainings as well because they help us to go deeper and deeper into the teachings and the practice.

The first step is always to receive and practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Before requesting to become an aspirant to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, you have to practice the Five Trainings for at least two years in order to prove that you are really active, that you really love the practice, and implement it in a concrete and valuable way.

As a monk, Thầy has practiced the 250 Bhikshu Precepts as well as the major and minor Bodhisattva Precepts. When he compiled the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, he was continuing the ancestral teachers who in the past had compiled the Bodhisattva Precepts that are found in the Brahmajāla Sūtra. The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings are a Bodhisattva Vow that are more appropriate to our time.

I want to encourage everyone, whether you are Christian, Jewish, Hindu, or Muslim, or whatever your religious or political beliefs might be, to train yourself in the direction of beauty, depth, and great love. Your own tradition has its own precepts, ethics, and wisdom that lead to understanding and love. When there is great understanding and love, you can call it God in you, or you can call it the Buddha nature in you. Nevertheless, developing great love demands training, and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings instruct us all, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, how to train that great love in ourselves. The word “training” is more suitable than the word “precepts” because it helps us to see that we are training to go in a certain direction.

Hue, Vietnam

August, 2019

[1] See Appendix, this page.

[2] Not only has Thầy compiled the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, he has also updated the Five Precepts (Pañcaśīla) of the Buddha, in the form of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, which can be seen on pp. 146–151 and at: https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/

Introduction

Fred Eppsteiner

The Order of Interbeing (Tiếp Hiện) was formed by Thích Nhất Hạnh in the mid-1960s, shortly before he was exiled from Vietnam and at a time when the Vietnam War was escalating and the teachings of the Buddha were desperately needed to combat the hatred and violence that was dividing his country. On the full moon day of February 1966, Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh ordained six members into the Order, three men and three women ranging in age from twenty-two to thirty-two. All of them were founding members of the School of Youth for Social Service, which he had helped establish the year before.

From its inception, the Order of Interbeing was comprised of all the four groups of the original Buddhist community (Sangha)—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. Of the first six ordinees, the three women chose to live celibate lives like nuns, although they did not shave their heads or take all the formal vows of Buddhist nuns, and the three men chose to marry and practice as lay Buddhists.

The ordination was a wonderful celebration. Each ordinee was presented with a lamp with a handmade shade on which Thích Nhất Hạnh had calligraphed Chinese characters like "Lamp of Wisdom," "Lamp of the Full Moon," and "Lamp of the World." During the ceremony, the six ordinees vowed to study, practice, and observe the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing, a wonderful blend of traditional Buddhist morality and contemporary social concerns.

Forged in the crucible of war and devastation, these guidelines helped the first six brothers and sisters, who were doing war relief work and helping to rebuild bombed villages, cultivate serenity, understanding, and compassion even in the

midst of the tragedy of war. Though they continued to stay busy helping war victims, organizing demonstrations, printing books and leaflets, running social service projects, and organizing an underground network to help draft resisters, they renewed themselves with a Day of Mindfulness each weekend. "I so looked forward to these days," recalls Sister Chân Không. "I dwelled mindfully on each act, starting with the way I put down my overnight bag in my room, boiled water to prepare a bath, and then put on my meditation clothes. First I did walking meditation alone in the woods and picked some wildflowers and bamboo branches for flower arrangements. Then, after a few hours of dwelling mindfully in each act and releasing most of my worries, I began to feel renewed." After practicing sitting and walking meditation, the six members gathered together to recite the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and chant the Heart of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra.

For ten years, no new members were permitted to join the Order's core community. In fact, this "period of experimentation" was extended until 1981, when Anh-Hương Nguyễn, niece of Thích Nhất Hạnh, a microbiologist and lay meditation teacher, living in Virginia, USA became the seventh member of the Order. Today, there are more than two thousand members of the core community and many thousands more worldwide who recite the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings regularly. *The Mindfulness Bell*, a journal of the art of mindful living, inspired by the teaching of Thích Nhất Hạnh lists hundreds of Sanghas around the globe, groups of people in local communities who come together to study, practice, and discuss the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings.

In 1992, the Order of Interbeing held its first International Council in Plum Village. Various committees were set up to take care of different aspects of the life and teachings of the Order. The second International Council, called "Being Wonderfully Together," was held in Plum Village in September 1996 and was attended by more than one hundred core community members from four continents. An Executive Council was formed, and the Order's structure and activities were thoroughly reviewed.

This fourth edition of the book *Interbeing* includes the 2012 revised version of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing, relevant commentary, and the Order's Charter, last revised in 1996–1997. The Order is continuing to take shape as a true expression of the bodhisattva practice of socially Engaged Buddhism.

The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing remain uniquely applicable to contemporary moral dilemmas. The Order was formed at a time when destruction in the name of supposedly irreconcilable "isms" was painfully evident in Vietnam. Thích Nhất Hạnh was acutely aware of the need for all people to overcome ideological divisiveness, and, accordingly, the first three trainings directly reject fanaticism and political or religious self-righteousness.

The Fourth goes to the heart of Buddhist compassion and directs a challenge to all practitioners: contemplative reflection on the suffering of living beings is not enough; we must help diminish suffering through compassionate involvement and this means first and foremost being in touch with and understanding our own suffering. This training suggests that the only way to end suffering is to understand the causes of suffering. This is the teaching of the Four Noble Truths.

The Fifth Mindfulness Training is about consumption. Without mindful consumption we cannot be happy and compassionate people. We need to look deeply into what kinds of nutriments we consume, whether edible food and drink, sense impressions, or consciousness.

The Sixth Training encourages us to take care of our anger as soon as it arises—taking care of it rather than suppressing it, denying it, or being carried away by it—and then looking deeply into its roots in our own consciousness.

The Seventh Training, at the core of all fourteen, shows us how mindfulness, awareness, and returning to the breath are the keys to maintaining peace and happiness in everything we do.

The Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Trainings address communication, loving speech, Sangha building, and harmony

in our community, issues as pressing today as in the war-torn environment in which they were forged. They provide a model of Right Thinking, Speech, and Action, never losing sight of the need to speak out about social injustice and oppression from the all-embracing, nonpartisan viewpoint that has been taught by the Buddha.

The Eleventh Mindfulness training shows how Right Livelihood is important not just for the human species but for the very survival of our planet.

The traditional Buddhist admonition against killing is described in the Twelfth Mindfulness Training, which enjoins us to respect and not destroy life, nor to support any act of killing in our thinking and in our way of life.

And does not the Thirteenth Training on non-stealing speak to the fact that the well-stocked shelves of one country relate directly to the empty shelves of another, that profit-making at the cost of human suffering and the suffering of other living beings is an ethical concern.

The final Mindfulness Training deals with the suffering that is brought about by irresponsible sexual behavior and teaches us to take care of our sexual energy so that we do not harm ourselves and others out of sexual desire. It reminds us that respecting life and committing ourselves to ending suffering is as real an issue within the area of sexual relationships as in the political and social arenas.

The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing are guidelines for anyone wishing to live mindfully. By developing peace and serenity through ethical and mindful living, we can help our society make the transition from one based on greed and consumerism to one in which thoughtfulness and compassionate action are of the deepest value. The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing embody the deepest teachings of the Buddha on Right View and the other aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path. They are a contribution to a global spirituality and ethic. In Buddhism, as in all the great world religions, the embodiment of ethical guidelines and the application of mindfulness in our

daily lives is what leads to a more compassionate society, one in which the sacredness of all things great and small is revealed. These teachings of Applied Mindfulness represent a beacon of hope for today's world.

Part One

The Order of Interbeing (Tiếp Hiện)

The Meaning of Tiếp Hiện

We begin this book with an explanation of the Vietnamese name that Thích Nhất Hạnh gave to the Order of Interbeing, because the essence of the Order can best be understood when we understand the meaning of its name.

In Vietnamese the Order of Interbeing is called the Tiếp Hiện Order.[1] The words Tiếp Hiện (接現) have many meanings.

Tiếp has three meanings. The first meaning of Tiếp is to receive. What do we receive? We receive goodness, beauty, insight and a sense of morality from our ancestors. From our spiritual ancestors we receive the wonderful Dharma, the teachings that lead to insight and awakening. Therefore the first thing a member of the Order of Interbeing needs to do is to be able to receive the good and beautiful qualities that our ancestors have handed on to us. For example, as you watch your teacher or any brother or sister, who is stable in their practice, invite the bell with mindfulness and concentration, you can learn the way to invite the bell from them. Whether you are a monk, a nun, or a lay order member, you can learn a great deal from a stable practitioner. When you observe them closely, with your full attention, transmission happens very quickly. The way that he or she walks, stands, and interacts is their way of transmitting to us. All we need to do is to observe and we shall receive.

We receive from the Buddha, from our ancestral teachers, from our teacher and our fellow brothers and sisters who are practicing diligently. Sometimes people who are younger than we are may be able to embody the transmission better than we do, so we can also receive and learn from them. We receive an inheritance, not of money or jewels, but of the right Dharma.

We can all ask ourselves: How much of my inheritance have I received? Our ancestral teachers are very eager to hand on to us this precious inheritance but are we ready or able to receive it? Learning and practicing the Dharma is a process of receiving. When we put into practice what we have received, we reap the benefits right away; we are nourished by our inheritance.

The second meaning of Tiếp is to continue, as in tying two strings together to make a longer string. It means extending and perpetuating the career of enlightenment that began with the Buddha and has been continuing ever since. We continue the Buddha, the ancestral teachers, our own teacher of this lifetime, and our blood ancestors. Someone who has filial piety is someone who continues to fulfil the deep aspirations of their ancestors. A student who has loyalty to his teacher is someone who is able to continue the calling of his teacher. If we want to continue our teacher then we have to receive his or her aspirations and practice to realize them.

The third meaning of Tiếp is to be in touch. To begin with we are in touch with the wonderful present moment, the miracle of life that is present in us and around us. If we want to be in touch, we have to come out of our shell and look clearly and deeply at the wonders of life—the snowflakes, the moonlight, the beautiful flowers—but we also need to recognize the suffering that exists—fear, anxiety, hunger, disease, and oppression. If we are not in touch with all this, we are are not truly alive. When we are in touch with life, we are nourished, we transform and grow. So to be in touch means to be in touch with the suffering within our self as well as the suffering in our environment, our family, and society. Once we have truly understood this suffering, we will know what to do to transform it, as well as what we should not do. Being in touch with the suffering helps us to understand and love ourselves and others better, and helps us to transform.

Many people distinguish between the inner world of our mind and the external world around us. But these worlds are not separate; they belong to the same reality. The ideas of inside and outside, internal and external are helpful in everyday

life, but they can become obstacles that prevent us from experiencing the ultimate reality. If we look deeply into our mind, we see the world deeply at the same time. If we understand the world, we understand our mind. This is called "the unity of mind and world."

Modern Christianity speaks in terms of vertical and horizontal theology whereby the vertical axis represents our spiritual relation to God and the horizontal axis represents our relation to other human beings. In Buddhism, we also think in these terms, but in Buddhism the vertical and horizontal dimensions are one. If we penetrate the horizontal, we find the vertical, and vice versa. If we touch the vertical dimension deeply, we discover the horizontal. This is the true meaning of "being in touch."

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The second part of the Order's name, Hiện 現, has four meanings. First of all it means the present moment. What we touch in the present moment is life itself. We touch the Pure Land or the Kingdom of God. Sometimes the word is translated as 見, which means to see what is happening around us. The only moment of life available to us is the present moment. It is the only moment that is real. The peace we desire is not in some distant future, but it is something we can realize right in the present moment. To practice Buddhism does not mean to endure hardship now for the sake of happiness, peace, and liberation in the future. The purpose of practice is not to be reborn in some paradise or Buddha land after death. The purpose is to touch peace and happiness for ourselves and others right now, while we are alive and breathing. Means and ends cannot be separated. As practitioners we care about the means, because we see that cause and effect are one. An enlightened person will not say, "This is only a means to an end." While sitting, walking, cleaning, working, or serving, we should feel peace within ourselves. The aim of sitting meditation is to enjoy sitting, to be peaceful and fully alive during sitting meditation. Working to help the hungry or the

build a practice center. Even the European Institute of Applied Buddhism or any of our other practice centers—no matter how big or impressive—is not the most important realization. Thực hiện is the realization of the practice. The most important thing for a practitioner to realize is freedom. That is the aim, the direction a monk, nun, or layperson should go in.

As students of the Buddha, whether monastic or lay, we do not want to live a life of bondage and enslavement, and if we want freedom, we have to make an effort to practice. The value of a practitioner lies in their daily practice. That practice can liberate us from deceptive nets of status, honor, fame, profit, and sensual desire.

The fourth meaning of hiện is to adapt to modern needs (as in *hiện đại hoá*, 現代化). This means that the Dharma that we practice and teach has to be appropriate for the intended audience, in accord with the spirit of the Buddha's teachings, and suitable for the times we are living in.

With all these different meanings how could we possibly translate the words Tiếp Hiện into English? This is why, when we needed to give the Order a name in English, we gave it the name Order of Interbeing, which is a translation of a Chinese term found in the teaching of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra. If you do not know Vietnamese, it is good to become acquainted with the meaning of the words Tiếp Hiện 接現, which have origins in Chinese. If you know the meaning of these two words, you will understand the essence of the Order of Interbeing and know the nature of its practice.

With an understanding of these two Vietnamese terms we can better understand what is meant by Engaged Buddhism, the Buddhism that is engaged in the world and does not stay within the confines of the monastery. The monastery is not something cut off from life. The monastery should be looked on as the nursery garden for the planting of saplings. It is the place where we develop and preserve Dharma doors that can be practiced out in the world. Buddhism is present for the sake of the world. Buddhism is not present for the sake of Buddhism. If the world were not there, there would be no need for Buddhism.

Practice, and *Six Daily Liturgies of Repentance*. Every two hours he would stop what he was doing and practice for twenty minutes before resuming his work on affairs of state. It is highly doubtful that any of our current world leaders do anything like this. A spiritual life nourishes us and gives us the stability and insight to be a good political leader, a good head of state. We should not say: "I have too much work to do. It's not possible to practice walking meditation." If a king could practice many times a day, how can we make the excuse that we cannot practice because we have too much to do?

Engaged Buddhism did not start in 1930. It has existed from the very beginnings of the Buddhist tradition.

As well as the expression "Engaged Buddhism" we now use the term "Applied Buddhism" as in other applied disciplines, such as Applied Science, Applied Physics, and Applied Mathematics.

When we give teachings on the meaning of the Three Jewels —the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha—we also have to show people how to apply these teachings in their daily lives. When we recite "I take refuge in the Buddha" (Pali: *Buddham saranam gacchāmi*), these are just words, a mere proclamation, unless we know how to really take refuge. In order to truly take refuge we have to produce the energy of mindfulness, concentration, and insight. Only when we are protected by these energies can we also be protected by the energy of the Three Jewels.

We practice taking refuge in the Three Jewels with the help of the following gāthā:

Being an island unto myself
As an island unto myself
Buddha is mindfulness
Shining near, shining far.
Dharma is the breathing
Guarding body and mind.
The Sangha is the Five Skandhas

as well as in universities throughout the world tends to be very cerebral, very theoretical, but the kind of Buddhist Studies we really need is Applied Buddhist Studies. Our practice must go hand in hand with our studies. As a monastic or lay Dharma teacher, we offer Applied Buddhism to whoever comes and asks for teachings, and in our daily life we have to be an exemplar of Applied Buddhism. We only teach what we practice. We teach what we have been able to realize.

The Mindfulness Trainings

Members of the Order of Interbeing commit to observe and practice the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. We call them Mindfulness Trainings rather than precepts because this reminds us that they are practices, not prohibitions. They do not restrict our freedom; they protect us. They guarantee our liberty and prevent us from getting entangled in difficulties and confusion. Practicing them brings a lot of joy. We know that the trainings have not dropped from the sky but are the fruit of our own practice of mindfulness, concentration, and insight.

In the Pali Dhammapada we read:

> *Mind precedes all dhammas.*[3] *Mind is their chief; they are all mind-made. If with a corrupted mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows like the wheel that follows the foot of an ox.*
>
> *Mind precedes all dhammas. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-made. If with a clear mind a person speaks or acts, happiness follows like a never-departing shadow.*

That is the teaching of the Buddha. Mind is supreme; mind is the foundation. That is why it makes sense to present the trainings relating to the mind first, and to present the trainings on speech and the body later on.

One of the teachings of the Buddha from which the trainings have evolved is the Sutra Spoken to the King of the Ocean (Taisho number 598 in the Chinese canon; in Sanskrit: *Sāgara-nāga-rāja-pariprcchā sūtra*). In this sutra the Buddha proposed ten precepts of which three pertain to the mind: no craving, no anger, and no wrong view. There are four precepts relating to Right Speech: not lying, not causing division by saying one thing to one person and something else to another,

not insulting, and not exaggerating. And there are three precepts that relate to bodily action: not killing, not stealing, and no harmful sexual behavior.

However, we need to present the Mindfulness Trainings outlined in the Sutra Spoken to the King of the Ocean in such a way that addresses the suffering of our time, so we have reformulated them to make them more relevant to today's concerns. However, it was difficult to fit everything into just ten precepts, which is why we have made them into fourteen. The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings reflect the Eightfold Path, the essential teaching of both Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism.[4] The Eightfold Path can be described as the foundation of all Buddhist training. The Eightfold Path also begins with the mind—Right View and Right Thought. We can arrange the Fourteen Trainings into three categories. The first seven deal with the mind, the next two with speech, and the last five with the body, although we must realize that this division is not absolute as, looking deeply, we see that each training contains all the others.

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[3] Dhammas refers to phenomena and events, whatever we perceive.

[4] See Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1998); (New York: Harmony Books, 2015).

Trainings, and new elements in the Five Trainings were included in the Fourteen. Both are concrete expressions of Applied Buddhist ethics. The Five Trainings are reflected in the Fourteen and the Fourteen in the Five. In 2009 the Five Mindfulness Trainings were revised for the second time. First we took the essential points from the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings to improve the Five, and then in the revision of the Fourteen, which was completed in 2012, we took essential points from the Five to further improve the Fourteen. The present Five Mindfulness Trainings are like Bodhisattva Precepts.[5] You only need to practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings and you can become a bodhisattva. In the beginning the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings were devised as a kind of Bodhisattva Precepts.

For a revision of the trainings to take place, a committee of senior monastic and lay practitioners will work together to make a preliminary draft revision. Once the committee has a final draft version, there should be a General Assembly of the Order to accept the revision.

During the revision process, we may need to conflate one or more Mindfulness Trainings in order to make space for a new training if the circumstances in society at that time demand it.

During the forty-five years of his ministry, the Buddha changed his way of teaching and practice greatly. The Wheel of the Dharma needs to turn a little every day. If we look at the history of Plum Village, we see that we are always making progress, always discovering new ways of teaching that are more effective. This is why we need to revise the trainings from time to time. In the field of information technology, every year there is a new kind of software. In the field of education, there are new methodologies and textbooks every year. It is the same in Buddhism; there has to be progress. The wheel of evolution has to keep turning because only then can Buddhism play its role of spiritual leadership. As Order members we know that we must take the lead in moving forward, in keeping the Dharma Wheel turning; the Buddhas and ancestral teachers expect this of us.

[5] Bodhisattva Precepts are traditionally to complement the Bhikshu and Bhikshuni Precepts, to make them not just proscriptive but also affirmative in the direction of compassionate action. In Vietnam it is the tradition that when monks and nuns receive the full ordination, they also receive the traditional Bodhisattva Precepts. In Plum Village the monks and nuns receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings as their Bodhisattva Precepts.

endeavors leading to reconciliation and peace. They are also the doors that lead to the world of ultimate reality and absolute freedom.

The Buddha regarded his own teachings as a raft to cross the river and not as an absolute truth to be worshipped or clung to. Ideological inflexibility is responsible for so much of the conflict and violence in the world. Many Buddhist texts, including the Kālāma Sūtra, the Arittha Sūtra (Knowing the Better Way to Catch a Snake), and the Vajracchedikā Sūtra (The Diamond That Cuts through Illusion), address this important subject.

The first training teaches us to guard against dualistic thinking and discrimination because these attitudes lead to fanaticism, prejudice, and intolerance. When we observe the terrorism and consequent anti-terrorism in the world at this time, we see how both stem from clinging to dualistic ways of seeing others and the world—the idea that "they" are different from "us"—and the failure to see that we interare.

We need to look deeply into the nature of interbeing because all of us have the seeds of discrimination in the depths of our consciousness which need to be transformed. Those of us who practice as members of the core community or the extended community know that we have to transform this tendency of dualistic thinking.

Clinging to views can prevent us from arriving at a deeper, more profound understanding of reality. Buddhism urges us to transcend even our own knowledge if we wish to advance on the Path of Awakening. Views, *drishti* (*dṛṣṭi*), are regarded as "obstacles to knowledge."

The First Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing opens us to the total openness and absolute tolerance of Buddhism. Openness and tolerance are not merely ways to deal with people in daily life; they are truly gateways for the realization of the Way. According to Buddhism, if we do not continue to expand the boundaries of our understanding, we will be imprisoned by our views and unable to realize the Way.

In our own time, in the fields of politics, sociology, psychology, ethics, and even much of science, as well as in

tolerance and loving kindness, which is expressed in gentle, compassionate, and skillful speech that can move people's hearts. This creates the conditions necessary for people to change. Understanding and compassion must be the basis of all nonviolent action. Actions motivated by anger or hatred cannot be described as nonviolent nor can they be described as wise.

As parents, we can respect freedom of thought in our children, even if they are very young. We can learn a lot from our children. Each human being is unique in his or her characteristics, capacities, and preferences. We remain open in order to understand our children and refrain from merely imposing our views and beliefs on them. Although from the same tree, blossoms are not the same as the roots, leaves, and twigs. We should allow blossoms to be blossoms, leaves to be leaves, and twigs to be twigs, so that each can realize its highest capacity for development. As adults we can share our experience with our children and they in turn can express their feelings, intuitions, and ideas to us.

The Fourth Mindfulness Training
Awareness of Suffering

Aware that looking deeply at the nature of suffering can help us develop understanding and compassion, we are determined to come home to ourselves, to recognize, accept, embrace, and listen to suffering with the energy of mindfulness. We will do our best not to run away from our suffering or cover it up through consumption, but practice conscious breathing and walking to look deeply into the roots of our suffering. We know we can realize the path leading to the transformation of suffering only when we understand deeply the roots of suffering. Once we have understood our own suffering, we will be able to understand the suffering of others. We are committed to finding ways, including personal contact and using telephone, electronic, audiovisual, and other means, to be with those who suffer, so we can help them transform their