

the Lotus seed

Concept intro & Writing ideas

the Lotus seed is an up and coming online platform where any meditator will be able to independently publish their writings and poetry.



Dear meditator,

If you're reading this, you've been invited to be one of the first contributors to this new shared platform for people to freely publish their writings.

If you would like to, you can send in a medium sized piece of writing to be posted with the others when the site is launched at the beginning of April. (Send to lotus.seed.page@gmail.com)

The words can really be about anything you want — best to write about something you feel inspired to!

But if you want some direction, below are a few potential prompts:

- ❖ Something which has changed along your meditation journey. Perhaps a shift in perspective, some new understanding, or a modification in your practice itself.
- ❖ Something you've found interesting about Buddhism, or another form of philosophy.
- ❖ How another person has shaped your journey, and what you've learned from them.
- ❖ Summary of a book you've read, a film watched, or a concept you've recently learned about.
- ❖ What it's meant to you to be part of Sangha of individuals supporting one another.
- ❖ What you aspire to in your practice; what you'd like to cultivate in yourself and for others.
- ❖ Anything else that comes to mind. Really, you should write about whatever you feel inspired to!

Ideally, you can send the piece in a PDF format like this, and that will be what's posted. You may also send the text alone, in which case it will be made into a PDF, either on its own, if it's long enough to fill a page, or in accompaniment with other works if it's short.

In terms of length, best to keep it less than two pages, but you can really make it as short or as long as you want, so no stress if you get carried away.

Idea for the page

This is all still in the early stages, so if you have any thoughts or suggestions about how you think the platform could be arranged, do let me know!

“the Lotus seed” idea was initially formulated by Katrina, an alumni of meditation society. She was an aspiring writer and was keen on the idea of a newsletter where people had an opportunity to publish their writings and poetry, about meditation, buddhism, and philosophy more broadly. We never got around to putting it together and the idea got shelved.

But here we are!

It probably didn’t work out before because the course we had in mind would require consistent effort on the part of someone to arrange and publish all the articles. And we didn’t even have a publication format in mind. Now I hope to present a solution to these problems.

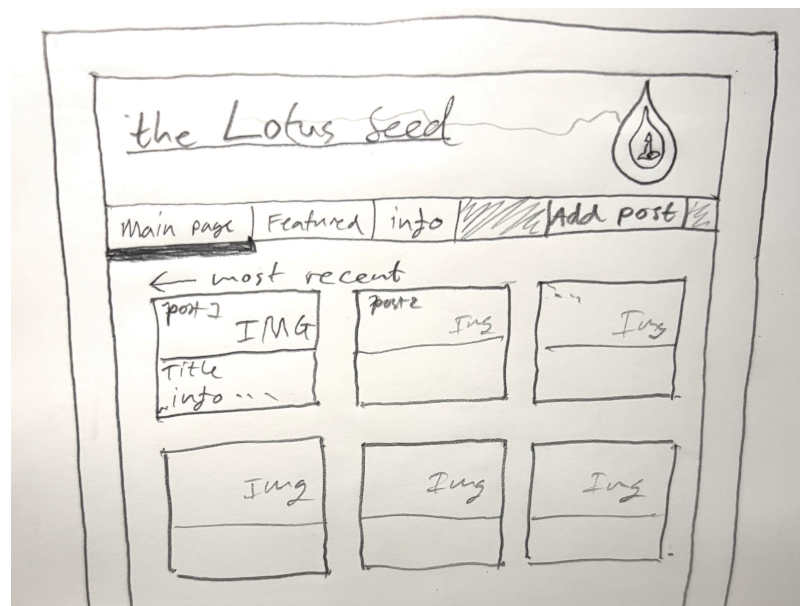
Basically, “the Lotus seed” will be a simple webpage with a main grid displaying the posts. Clicking on one of the boxes in the grid will link to the PDF of the piece, and each box will have an image, a title, and some text briefly describing the content. To get it up and running, I will manually arrange the first few pieces, but in future, any user will be able to upload a post themselves with a button on the page.

The plan is to keep it simple with a shared password that can be given to anyone who asks for it, and this will allow them to upload. Using a password like this will prevent random viewers from spamming the page.

A slightly more complicated version could be that each contributor has a personal password (distributed from a pre-made list), and each access permits a maximum of some number of uploads per week, and perhaps one upload per month to a separate “featured” page.

The webpage isn’t finished yet, but I’ve made a start and have got far enough to be confident that it can be put together to a good standard. Asking for writings in advance like this will give me a sense of accountability, and hopefully I can produce at least a minimum viable product by the beginning of April.

If anyone want’s to partner up on the coding with me, that would be most welcome. Just send me a message and we can jump on a quick call together to chat!



All the best,

AA

Example

(I somewhat hesitate to include this because it would be better if you do your own thing in your own style)

"Those who pursue ignorance (Avidya) enter into darkness, but those who chase vision and insight (Vidya) enter into an even greater darkness."

There are multiple interpretations of these lines from the Isha Upanishad, but to me it resonates with an experience of my early meditation journey. Back then, the Leeds sangha was a thriving group with many who were diligently committed to their practice, and really wanted to make progress.

And at that time, I was no exception. Meditation was a regular and substantial part of the day. Unlike now (😓), in third and fourth year, I had a solid and largely consistent practice of about 20 minutes in the morning and evening, usually also with some yoga in the morning. And it was paying off; there was a centredness and a clarity to my daily interactions and the uni-work was going well.

There were a few members of the society who were trying to take things deeper. A dentistry student called Ali, was particularly engaged with his practice. On the retreat to Rydall Lodge with Elizabeth, he would stay up late meditating for long periods in his bunk bed, nothing could distract him.

Meanwhile, Guilherme (going by Gil, the eccentric Brazilian guy), Giacomo (one of the main committee in Cesare's time), Clara, Xander, a few others and myself would stay up in the main hall chatting and having fun. (This was of course Gii's influence). But Ali could not be persuaded from his committed practice. He would stay there resolutely, meditating.

From time to time, I began to dabble in longer sits. Not quite to the extent of Ali, but maybe 45 minutes to an hour. And in some of these, I started to have glimpses into the underpinnings. There was a feeling that I was beginning to access things in the unconscious that were normally obscured. For example, emotive memories from childhood, traumas that were perhaps yet to be resolved.

And these experiences intrigued me. I had long been curious of the unconscious mind, as a concept and in its implications for the nature of human experience and interactions. And with a taste, I wanted to go deeper. Maybe as deep as possible, to see what I could discover in the depths.

Before continuing, I want to stress that this is not something to be recommended as it can be damaging, and it is an approach which I have since learned not to follow.

It was sort of a product of a few things. There was the culture in the society at the time of dedication to the practice, and for some, a serious pursuit as seen in Ali. There was also the fact that I liked to take things to the extreme and seek new aspects to experience which were one step further. In a time shortly before, I would head up alone into the mountains around Wasdale, in the dead of winter, even waiting for the most extreme snow storms, recklessly climbing steep icy inclines, sometimes it seemed like I was almost trying to get lost so as to seek something.

I had some idea that if I got deep enough into feeling it, that I could somehow purge a particular psychological complex. And this was the goal. It's funny to look back on it now, but that was really this ambition at the time. Carl Jung says something about an analogy of a tree with a large ill growth in the trunk. He comments that if you are successful in purging the damage, what remains is still a disfigured tree.

But that wasn't exactly the problem at the heart of the folly in my pursuit. The issue is that when you force something there can be an opposite reaction; when you try to climb high into insight

with excessive effort, the position is unstable and you will all but likely fall back down to below where you started.

Something like: "don't look too closely into the sun" because it might not be very good for your eyesight.

This was what happened in my case after some efforts in this wrong direction. Occasionally meditating for many hours, sometimes on long walks in the mountains, with the goal of going deep... Maybe there was some brief insight, but the fall back down into confusion was hardly worth it.

You might make an argument for creating a circumstance where you have the mess and the pieces to pick up, and how this secondary process can be helpful. But it doesn't seem like a very good argument.

What I've learned is that progress should be made steadily, like a long and gradually climbing alpine road, rather than a scramble to the top of the crumbling spire.

It's probably clear how pursuing Avidya (ignorance) will lead to darkness, but perhaps here we see how chasing vidya can lead to even deeper darkness.

As a side note, there was a somewhat amusing time in a Wednesday session back then in 2019 where Ali burst out with great animation and vivacity, explaining that the previous night he'd had an acute experience of his whole body being activated with a very strong energisation. Like he'd unlocked something. Whilst telling the story, I seem to remember him jumping up and towards the centre of the circle with excitement. In the same session, another member told a story about their friend who became too energised in some sort of yoga. Him and a couple of others had to throw the friend in a river apparently to calm them down. I can hardly imagine how that came to be, but it does sound like a laugh.

Following the experience of when this misadventure came to a head shortly after my Fourth year graduation, there was long period of about a year where I hardly meditated at all. In fact, I was wary to, concerned that it would do little good. Fortunately, I'm past this now and have a more healthy and steady relationship with practice.