

# Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh is a global spiritual leader, revered throughout the world for his powerful teachings and bestselling writings on the art of mindfulness. He has published over 100 books, ranging from sutra commentaries and meditation manuals, to poetry and children's stories, that have reached a global audience of millions.

This gentle monk from Vietnam is known in the UK as "The Zen Master Who Fills Stadiums" and the US as "An Apostle of Peace and Nonviolence."

Thich Nhat Hanh's key teaching is that, through mindfulness, we can learn to live happily in the present moment instead of getting lost in the past and in the future. Dwelling in the present moment, according to Thich Nhat Hanh, is the only way to truly develop peace, both in oneself and in the world.

Today Thich Nhat Hanh is the spiritual head not only of his lineage within Vietnam, but also of an international Engaged Buddhist community of over 500 monks and nuns, and tens of thousands of lay practitioners, who apply his teachings on mindfulness, peace-making, community-building and serving society in practice centers all over the world.

Born in central Vietnam in 1926, Thich Nhat Hanh became a novice monk at the age of sixteen. During the Vietnam War monastics were confronted with the question of whether to adhere to the contemplative life and stay meditating in the monasteries, or to help those around them suffering under the bombings and turmoil of war. Thich Nhat Hanh was one of those who chose to do both, and in doing so founded the Engaged Buddhism movement, coining the term in his book *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*.

His life has since been dedicated to the work of inner transformation for the benefit of individuals and society.

In Vietnam in the early 1960s, Thich Nhat Hanh founded the School of Youth and Social Service, a grass-roots relief organization of 10,000 volunteers based on the Buddhist principles of non-violence and compassionate action. Despite government denunciation of his activity, Thich Nhat Hanh also founded a Buddhist University, a publishing house, and an influential peace activist magazine in Vietnam.

In 1966, after visiting the U.S. and Europe on a peace mission, he was banned from returning to Vietnam. Yet he continued to travel widely, spreading the message of peace and brotherhood, lobbying Western leaders to end the Vietnam War, and leading the Buddhist delegation to the Paris Peace Talks.

Amidst his peace activism, Thich Nhat Hanh continued to teach, lecture and write on the art of mindfulness and 'living peace'. In 1982 he founded Plum Village Practice Center in France, where he continued his social work and began to teach those who flocked to him.

Under his spiritual leadership Plum Village has grown from a small rural farmstead to what is now the West's largest and most active Buddhist monastery, with over 200 resident monastics and tens of thousands of guests every year. In the last ten years Plum Village has opened monasteries in California, New York, Vietnam, Paris, Hong Kong, Thailand, Mississippi and Australia, and Europe's first Institute of Applied Buddhism in Germany.

In 2008 he launched Wake Up, a worldwide movement of thousands of young people training in the practice of mindful living, and in 2010 he launched an international "Applied Ethics" program training teachers to teach mindfulness in schools in Europe, America and Asia.

Thich Nhat Hanh, now in his 87th year, continues to lead meditation retreats on Applied Buddhism worldwide, including special retreats for teachers, families, businessmen, politicians, scientists, psychotherapists, police officers and even for Israelis and Palestinians.

In September 2001, just a few days after the suicide terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, he addressed the issues of non-violence and forgiveness in a memorable speech at Riverside Church in New York City. In September 2003 (and again in 2011) he gave a retreat for US Congressmen and Congresswomen. In October 2006 he addressed UNESCO in Paris, calling for specific steps to reverse the cycle of violence, war and global warming.

In 2007 he was a keynote speaker at UNESCO's International Vesak celebration in Hanoi, and in October 2008 he addressed the Opening of the Parliament of India. In 2009 he addressed the World Parliament of

Religions in Melbourne, and in 2012 was invited to offer his message of compassion and non-violence at both the UK Parliament in Westminster and the Northern Ireland Assembly in Stormont.