

Fourteen Verses on Meditation

1. Just as a bird has two wings,
the practice of meditation has “stopping” and “deep looking.”
The two wings depend on each other.
Stopping and deep looking go in tandem.

2. Stopping means to be still,
in order to recognize, to be in contact,
to nourish, to heal,
to calm, to soothe, and to focus the mind.

3. Deep looking means to regard in depth
the true nature of the Five Skandhas,
so that understanding may arise
to transform all sadness and pain.

4. The breath and the footstep
generate the source of mindfulness,
which enables one to recognize,
to be in touch with the wonders of life.

5. To calm, to relax the body and mind,
to nourish, to heal,
to protect the six senses,
and to maintain right concentration.

6. Looking deeply into reality
to see the true nature of all dharmas,
meditation helps us to let go
of all seeking, wishing, and fears.

7. To dwell in the present moment,
to transform all habit energies,
to give rise to understanding,
liberating ourselves from all afflictions.

8. Impermanence is nonself.
Nonself is interdependence,
is emptiness, is conventional designation,
is the Middle Way, is interbeing.

9. Emptiness, signlessness, and aimlessness
unravel all sadness and pain.
In the daily practice
one is not caught in conceptual knowledge.

10. Nirvana means non-attainment.
Immediate and gradual enlightenment are not separate.
Realizing this, one lives with freedom
right in this present life.

11. The basic meditation sutras
such as the mindfulness of breathing
and the Four Establishments of Mindfulness,
show us step by step
how to transform the body and the mind.

12. The Mahayana sutras and shastras
open more grand doors
to help us see the depth
of the original meditation current.

13. There should be no discrimination
between the Buddha and the patriarch school of meditation.
The Four Noble Truths must be based on one another
to make the foundation of transmission and reception.

14. With the support of the Sangha,
one can practice successfully, with ease,
and accomplish quickly
the great aspiration to help all beings.

Chanting from the Heart: Thich Nhat Hanh and the Nuns and Monks of Plum Village
Parallax Press