

Thich Nhat Hanh

By Plumvillage.org



Zen Master **Thich Nhat Hanh** is a global spiritual leader, poet, and peace activist, renowned for his powerful teachings and bestselling writings on mindfulness and peace.

How to pronounce Thich Nhat Hanh

The English pronunciation is: Tik · N'yat · Hawn. However, since Vietnamese is a tonal language, this is only a close approximation of how one would pronounce it in Vietnamese. By his students he is affectionately known as Thay (pronounced "Tay" or "Tie"), which is Vietnamese for "teacher."

Early Years

Born in central Vietnam in 1926, Thich Nhat Hanh entered Tu Hieu Temple, in Hue city, as a novice monk at the age of sixteen. As a young bhikshu (monk) in the early 1950s he was actively engaged in the movement to renew Vietnamese Buddhism. He was one of the first bhikshus to study a secular subject at university in Saigon, and one of the first six monks to ride a bicycle.

Social Activism During War in Vietnam

When war came to Vietnam, monks and nuns 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.

Exile from Vietnam

Thich Nhat Hanh traveled to the U.S. and Europe to make the case for peace and to call for an end to hostilities in Vietnam. It was during this 1966 trip that he first met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. As a result of this mission both North and South Vietnam denied him the right to return to Vietnam, and he began a long exile of 39 years.

Thich Nhat Hanh 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 in 1969.

Founding Plum Village in France

He also continued to teach, lecture and write on the art of mindfulness and 'living peace,' and in the early 1970s was a lecturer and researcher in Buddhism at the University of Sorbonne, Paris. In 1975 he established the Sweet Potato community near Paris, and in 1982, moved to a much larger site in the south west of France, soon to be known as "Plum Village."

Under Thich Nhat Hanh's 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 over 10,000 visitors every year, who come from around the world to learn "the art of mindful living."

On 11 November 2014, a month after his 88th birthday and following several months of rapidly declining health, Thich Nhat Hanh suffered a severe stroke. Although he is still unable to speak, and is mostly paralyzed on the right side, he has continued to offer the Dharma and inspiration through his peaceful, serene and valiant presence.